TUESDAY, 15 JULY 2014

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

Estimates Committee Members

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

Member in Attendance

Hon. A Palaszczuk

In Attendance

Hon. JP Bleijie, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Mr D Fraser, Chief of Staff
Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Mr J Sosso, Director-General
Mr G Davis, Acting Executive Director—Financial Services, Corporate Services
Crime and Corruption Commission
Dr K Levy, Acting Chairman
Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland
Mr K Cocks, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Legal Aid Queensland
Mr A Reilly, Chief Executive Officer
Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
Mr P Clarke, Queensland Ombudsman
Office of the Public Trustee
Mr M Crofton, Public Trustee
Office of the Information Commissioner
Ms R Rangihaeata, Information Commissioner
Prostitution Licensing Authority
His Hon. Judge Manus Boyce QC, Chairperson
Electoral Commission of Queensland
Ms Y Zischke, Acting Electoral Commissioner

Committee met at 9.02 am

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare the estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee now open. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Attorney-General and advisers and members of the public to this hearing. I am Ian Berry, the member for Ipswich and chair of the committee. Mr Peter Wellington MP, the member for Nicklin, is the deputy chair. The other committee members in attendance here today are Miss Verity Barton MP, member for Broadwater; Mr Bill Byrne MP, member for Rockhampton; Mr Sean Choat MP, member for Ipswich West; Mr Aaron Dillaway MP, member for Bulimba; and Mr Trevor Watts MP, member for Toowoomba North. The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2014 for the Attorney-General and areas of responsibility allocated to it under schedule 6 of the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: morning tea from 10.45 am to 11 am; lunch from 1 pm to 2 pm; and afternoon tea from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm.

I remind all those participating at the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard, I remind members of the public that, under the standing orders, the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. I ask that all mobile phones and pagers be either switched off or switched to silent. I remind members that the standing orders provide that directors-general and those chief executive officers set out in schedule 7 of the standing orders may be questioned by the committee. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask all witnesses to identify themselves before answering a question. The committee has also resolved that the following non-committee members may be given leave to participate and ask questions throughout the hearing: Mr Carl Judge MP, member for Yeerongpilly, and the Leader of the Opposition, Ms Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, member for Inala.

I now declare the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Attorney, if you wish, you may make an opening statement. Do you wish to do so?

Mr BLEIJIE: A short opening statement, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair and committee members. It is great to be here today for the 2014-15 budget estimates committee for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and I thank all committee members. I note that we have six hours and 30 minutes today and I hope that I will answer my questions as succinctly as possible to give committee members the most opportune time to ask questions to both myself and to the relevant office holders. In 2012 we took a strong plan to the election, and it talked about four pillars of the economy and it also talked about cutting red tape in my department. It talked about restoring accountability in government, making Queensland the safest place to raise a family and also revitalising front-line services. I want to place on record my absolute thanks to all Department of Justice and Attorney-General staff who have over the last 12 months displayed an unbelievable talent in terms of law reform. It has been a particularly busy 12 months.

If I can quickly look at cutting red tape, we only have to look at the reforms that the drafters in our department have undertaken for the property sector, for real estate agents and for lawyers and the very positive response that will have in terms of our economy in Queensland for the property sector. In terms of liquor licensing, community clubs no longer have to have community liquor permits. For our local football clubs and soccer and bowls clubs, that is a fantastic achievement that I thank the department for. If we look at restoring accountability in government, we have established the Crime and Corruption Commission to fix the issues that were noted by this committee and other parliamentary committees last year. We have amended the right to information legislation which means that when an applicant receives information so, too, does the world at large. I think it is great for democracy and it is great for Queenslanders to have access to that information. Of course, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General participates in the open data revolution, making sure that we have as much information out there for the public to see as possible.

One issue particularly close to my heart as a father with three children is that we wanted to make Queensland the safest place to raise a family. We have the strongest laws in the country now dealing with child sex offenders. In the next six months you will see the Department of Justice and Attorney-General work on more laws to strengthen the already tough child sex offender laws so that

we can make Queensland the safest place to raise a family. Finally, in terms of revitalising front-line services, I think there is no greater achievement for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General than the drafting and the legislating and action of the criminal gang reforms that we have undertaken in the last 12 months. That was a particularly busy time for the department and I want to place on record my thanks to not only all of the drafters but also the men and women out there right across our Queensland community who are making sure those laws work on the ground and making sure Queensland is a safe place for our community members. I think nothing sums it up better than today's *Courier-Mail* where the commissioner for police said that criminal gang reforms pay off. This could not have been achieved—a 10 per cent reduction of all crimes could not have been achieved—without the hardworking and dedicated staff of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. I place my absolute gratitude for them on the record. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, I was wondering if you could advise the committee what the government is doing to support healthy workplaces and how this is benefiting Queensland workers.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. This is a particularly strong issue of the government's achievements in the last 12 months. We want, as I said in my opening remarks, Queensland to be not only the safest place to raise a family but we also want workers, mums and dads and family members to be able to go home safely. When we look at workplace health and safety, we have many programs operating right around the state and Zero Harm at Work leadership forums. We also have the great Mal Meninga as our safety ambassador. He has been the safety ambassador for a few years now and he has gone to many breakfasts with many parliamentarians right across the state making sure that there is workplace health and safety partnering and that we have the appropriate partnerships with organisations. In the last couple of years I have seen businesses in Queensland have a remarkable turnaround in terms of their attitude to workplace health and safety. I think they get it. They understand it. They understand that they have to invest in safety mechanisms and attitudes in the workplace, because no-one wants any injuries for their workers. I thank Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and the new board we have, as well as Electrical Safety, for their great work. But I think gratitude should also be shown to the businesses in our community right across Queensland, whether you are in an agribusiness or a coastal business or an exporter. They are all showing an attitude towards enhanced safety in their workplaces.

Mr BYRNE: My question is to Dr Levy from the CCC. I refer to page 58 of the SDS which has staffing rates for the CCC. There are no staffing levels included in the notes and the notes state—

> The CMC is still finalising its organisational structure in 2014-15 to ensure it best meets the changes in its functions resulting from the administrative review of the CMC and the Crime and Misconduct and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.

Are you any closer to finalising your staffing levels?

Dr Levy: I thank you for the question. Yes, we are. We in fact have settled a final organisational structure and establishment. The same range of diverse range of employees—police, lawyers, intelligence analysts and so forth—are all included. In 2013-14 the organisation's structure had 341 full-time equivalent positions. That includes permanent, temporary and casual positions throughout the CCC. Based on the review following both the Callinan-Aroney report and the Keelty review, as well as other internal reviews we have done, taking account of those changes in statutory functions, the new establishment will be 334 positions. The structure really will not change for most of the areas of the commission. They will change, however, in the areas of Integrity Services, because that is where the work of the definition and the assessment of complaints coming in is done. There will be some reduction there. In terms of applied research and evaluation, there will be some reduction in those numbers partly because the legal positions have all been centralised into a Legal Services unit. That was one of the recommendations of the then PCMC last year. Also, the Legal Services unit itself of course correspondingly will have some change to it. With regard to the change from 341 positions to 334, that is a net seven positions which will change. That is made up of 19 positions which will be saved, but correspondingly there are 12 positions created as a consequence. So the effect there will be the net of seven will be disestablished.

Mr BYRNE: So these are FTEs, full-time positions?

Dr Levy: Full-time equivalents, yes.

Mr BYRNE: If I look at the total staffing level from last year from the actuals and look at the forward allocations, it looks to me like there is $3,368,000 additional in the budget for this year. Given that there is actually a reduction in FTEs, what is that additional $3,368,000 in the budget going to be spent on?

Dr Levy: The budget for the coming year is $52.95 million. The increase is $1.49 million or a 2.91 per cent increase. The grant funding was 50.75 last year. The increase essentially is the increase in enterprise bargaining, mostly salary increase for the majority, in terms of the difference in the budget.

Mr BYRNE: So what sort of percentage increase are you projecting? You are talking about salary increases, obviously?

Dr Levy: Yes, that is the answer.

Mr BYRNE: So what sort of percentage range are you talking about?

Dr Levy: It is $1.42 million for that, which is a 2.82 per cent increase.

Mr BYRNE: Right.

Dr Levy: Sorry, let me just add to that: $1.42 million, or 2.82 per cent, is the increase and there is also of that $0.78 million, or $780,000, that is the enterprise bargaining component of the salary increases.

Mr BYRNE: So there is no additional contractual implications, no further contractor/consultant type numbers in that $3 million?

Dr Levy: No, no.

Mr CHOAT: While we are discussing the CCC, I wonder if the Attorney-General would please outline the steps that the government has taken to ensure that Queensland has a strong independent watchdog focused on combating crime and corruption in Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The honourable member would be aware that the Crime and Misconduct and Other Legislation Act 2014, commenced on 1 July 2014, implemented the recommendations of the Hon. Ian Callinan AC, former High Court judge, and Professor Nicholas Aroney in their 2013 landmark report of the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001. Recommendations included that the CMC, as it then was known, should focus on investigating serious cases of corrupt conduct and that there should be a reduction in the number of trivial complaints handled by the commission to ensure that its resources were used most effectively in combating corruption. We have achieved that by creating a new definition of corrupt misconduct and raising the threshold for matters within the Crime and Corruption Commission's jurisdiction. We have amended the legislation requiring public officials to notify the CCC when they reasonably suspect corrupt conduct. We have expanded the use of section 40 directions to units of public administration. We have amended the act to provide that the CCC must investigate only the more serious cases of corrupt conduct. Amendments to the act to expand the grounds upon which the CCC may dismiss or take no action in relation to a complaint also include when the complaint is not made in good faith, made for a mischievous purpose, made recklessly or maliciously, and not within the CCC's jurisdiction.

We have also amended the legislation requiring complaints to be made by statutory declaration except that if the CCC determines in exceptional circumstances that the case may exist. Also, we have put in particular provisions and expanded the provisions with respect to people with an incapacity to make certain complaints so that the CCC can assist those people. We have amended the research function to ensure that it is more focused on the CCC's absolute functions.

We did all of this because—and I do not need to remind the committee members and parliamentarians—that the CCC, as the CMC was then, a couple of years ago had been subject to not only the Nicholas Aroney and Ian Callinan review, the PCMC of this parliament actually conducted an inquiry into the shredding of certain Fitzgerald documents and prepared a scathing report in terms of the administration of the CCC, or CMC as it then was. So over a couple of years, in terms of restoring accountability to these organisations, we tried to take people on a journey in terms of the reviews that we did and the reviews that we undertook. I think that we have achieved what will be probably the strongest crime and corruption fighting body that we have in the nation.

Mr DILLAWAY: Attorney-General, if I could just follow up on that? Could you touch specifically on what measures have been implemented to ensure that oversight and the operations of the CCC are more transparent for Queenslanders?

Mr BLEIJIE: I think what we wanted to achieve, certainly with the amendments that we put through to start on 1 July, was that sometimes the best disinfectant that you could have in these organisations is to let the sunlight in. What we wanted to do was open the CCC so that it was not closed. I do not need to remind committee members of the last couple of years where we have seen

the parliament have to deal with certain motions talking about investigations of the CMC, as it then was, in terms of shredding Fitzgerald documentation, the unauthorised disclosure of certain documentation. The public, I would suspect, would think that the CMC, as it then was, the body entrusted with details of whistleblowers in the Fitzgerald inquiry, would be the body to most protect that. I think that there was an absolute breach of trust when information was released to the public and documentation was shredded.

So we had to do something. I am particularly proud of these amendments that started on 1 July in that the parliamentary crime commissioner will actually have more of a responsibility and oversight. So we still have the PCMC as it then was—the parliamentary committee—with absolute oversight but the parliamentary commissioner now can investigate matters of the CCC. They will not investigate themselves anymore. We know that there was a notable case in the last couple of years where the CMC conducted an investigation into an employee of its own jurisdiction. That, I would hope, will not happen anymore. That is because we have changed the legislation. We have made the body that demands accountability of every Queenslander accountable to the Queensland public as well through these reforms.

Mr DILLAWAY: Thank you.

Mr WATTS: Attorney-General, you spoke about some of the measures that have been implemented to ensure the CCC focus is on serious crime and corruption. My question is: how will matters that are no longer dealt with by the CCC be investigated?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The legislation, which commenced on 1 July 2014, and the changes that we implemented in that legislation focuses the Crime and Corruption Commission on investigating serious corrupt conduct. The act amends the definition of official misconduct in the renamed Crime and Corruption Act to raise the threshold for what matters constitute corrupt conduct and, as such, then necessarily fall within the CCC's jurisdiction.

Under the act, the CCC's CEO may issue a binding direction to the CCC officers about how they are to decide whether a complaint involves or may involve serious corrupt conduct or a case of systemic corrupt conduct in a unit of public administration. Such directions will ensure that there is consistency in the CCC's determination of what is and is not serious conduct—corrupt conduct. The act raises the threshold for mandatory public official notifications of matters to the CCC to a reasonable suspicion rather than the previous requirement of a mere suspicion. That was because it had been noted that the CCC received some 5,000 complaints and I think it was less than 100, if my memory serves me correctly, that were actually investigated and the majority of those were found that there was no case to answer. So we did have a serious problem with the CMC being tied up in what a lot of the time were complaints that could be better dealt with by public administration.

So additionally, under the act, the CCC may issue directions to the units of public administration that direct what complaints need not be referred to the CCC and continues to have a monitoring role in respect of how public officials deal with corrupt conduct, including being able to monitor investigations by public officials into corrupt conduct. Conduct that does not meet the raised threshold of corrupt conduct is not subject to the CCC's jurisdiction and is the responsibility of the units of public administration to manage. Within the government departments, line managers are directly responsible for the management of conduct, complaints regarding non-corrupt conduct, but the departmental CEO is ultimately responsible for the management of such complaints.

The Public Service Commission's—the PSC—conduct and performance excellence service will provide advice and support to CEOs and agencies. The PSC may conduct or commission reviews of an agency's management of matters, access an agency's performance and monitor trends. The PSC and the CCC will work together with agencies to monitor at a systems level to ensure that agencies are appropriately identifying matters as either corrupt conduct or as an employee conduct or work performance matter.

CHAIR: It might be appropriate for me to ask a question. Could you please provide a comparison between the CMC's total budget for 2012-13 and the CCC's budget for 2014-15?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. I think it stems from the member for Rockhampton's question a little bit earlier to the CCC acting chair. The Crime and Misconduct Commission's—the CMC as it then was—operating budget for 2012-13 was $50.43 million, which was an increase of $466,000 from the previous year. This increase was mainly due to a one-off grant payment of $1 million for staff redundancies offset by a CBRC reduction in grant funding of $459,000 and a decrease in interest earnings.

In 2013-14, the CMC's operating budget was $51.46 million. This was an increase of $1.03 million from the previous year. That was mostly due to funding received for criminal motorcycle gang related activities and enterprise bargaining remuneration increases.

In 2014-15, the Crime and Corruption Commission's operating budget is $52.95 million. This is an increase of $1.49 million from the previous year and is mainly due to receiving funding for CMG related activities and enterprise bargaining remuneration increases. As I referred earlier, with just over $6.5 million in additional funding over a period of time for the Crime and Corruption Commission to deal with criminal motorcycle gangs, I think the results speak for themselves. Today, I referred to the *Courier-Mail* editorial today but also the *Courier-Mail* article where the Commissioner of Police is talking about reductions of 10 per cent of crime across all crime in Queensland. Then we have also seen a further breakdown in some police statistics in my own area on the Sunshine Coast, where we have had a 54 per cent reduction in robberies. That is an unbelievable statistic. That is not 54 per cent across the state; that is just on the Sunshine Coast. If my memory serves me correctly, there was a 17 per cent decrease in unlawful entries on the Sunshine Coast. As I said before, as a father of three children and the government wanting to make Queensland the safest place to raise a family, the statistics today released by the Police Commissioner, the state-wide statistics and the work that the CCC is doing, could not have been done without the additional funding. I am very pleased to show to the committee that, over the past two years that I have been the Attorney-General and this government has been in power, the CCC has had essentially nothing but increases in funding each year dealing with corrupt and criminal gangs.

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to Dr Levy. I refer to page 56 of the Service Delivery Statements which states that the Crime and Misconduct Commission has a range of objectives, including reducing the impact of major crime in Queensland and reducing the incidence of serious corruption in the public sector. I ask: is there any division of allocation of resources between these two objectives, or is it the case that there is simply a model of staffing and you respond to matters as they come along?

Dr Levy: Thank you, Mr Wellington, for that question. The staffing numbers that I was referring to before are based on the objectives in the act. There has been a change—a very significant change—over the last six months or so from a focus on just doing what were mainly low-level matters before and now there is actually a greater degree of professionalism among the staff. So the focus now, and the allocation of the resourcing, is based on the professional activities, particularly in crime, organised crime, and major crime. Corruption also, of course, has a focus, but we are only focusing now on the most serious matters, according to the definition of corrupt conduct. So the allocation of the staff is certainly mainly on organised crime, but in relation to corruption—and I know the Attorney-General referred to this before—one of our major functions has been corruption and we are certainly putting emphasis on matters of serious corruption that could amount to criminal offences, of course, which is still within this definition of corrupt conduct.

Mr WELLINGTON: On the issue of focusing resources on serious corruption, is your commission undertaking and focusing resources on doing its own investigations or are you simply reliant on complaints that are made to the commission?

Dr Levy: We essentially up until now have relied on complaints made to the commission. This is in relation to corruption now that you were referring to. Certainly, complaint is the major way that we have proceeded. Nevertheless, there is still intelligence that we gather and do independent survey and surveillance, if you like, of behaviour across the public sector. That has produced very productive outcomes for detecting corruption. There are some current operational matters in hand as a result of that.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have a follow-on question.

CHAIR: I just might make a point, though, that all questions have to relate to the budgetary matters in the SDS. I will allow you to go on but if you could just confine it to that area, I would appreciate that.

Mr WELLINGTON: In relation to page 56 of the Service Delivery Statement and the staffing and resources allocated to fighting serious corruption in Queensland, have you learnt any lessons from the recent ICAC investigations in another state in relation to the need to prioritise additional resources to fighting the incidence of serious corruption or possible serious corruption in Queensland?

Dr Levy: We have been monitoring the inquiries recently of ICAC in New South Wales. The way that the CCC conducts its business in relation to corruption is not dissimilar, and we are certainly focusing on major elements of corruption. Don't forget that the CCC has a role both in crime and corruption and there is an overlap between those. While you are aware that we have had this stimulus of $7 million to focus on motorcycle gangs—which I think has been one of the things that has helped refocus the CCC to make it a very effective organisation, because not only have we assisted the police through crime but also that has revealed issues of corruption both in police and in the public sector or at least alleged matters. So we focus on those as being the most serious things just like ICAC focus on the most serious matters that have been brought to their attention.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, I was wondering if you could provide the total amount of money that was restrained in the last financial year by the CMC.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. In the last financial year the commission restrained $13.8 million against a target of $18 million. As a result of the new legislation, an increased number of matters have been referred to the commission by the police. New staff have been recruited to manage the work, and training of these staff is proceeding satisfactorily although it has affected the productivity of the proceeds of crime team.

The implementation of the unexplained wealth and serious drug offender confiscation provisions involve more complex matters. It is taking longer to obtain restraining orders and finalise matters. It was anticipated that while restraints would not reach the $18 million target they could reach a revised target of $15 million. This revised target was not achieved due to the matters totalling $1.2 million set down to be heard in the final week of the year being adjourned by the court. If it had been moved another couple of weeks we probably would have achieved that target. In the last financial year, to answer the member's question, the commission restrained $13.8 million.

Mr BYRNE: My question again is to Mr Levy. In light of the fact that your future structure is now finalised and some of the things you said earlier in evidence, how many staff are allocated to the public sector ethics component of your new structure? And how does that compare with previous FTE from the old organisation?

Dr Levy: In relation to public sector ethics, the figures of course cover the public sector in the sense of the Public Service plus local government and universities. That is the area that we call integrity services. They receive and assess complaints. There were 37 positions as at 30 June—the end of the last financial year. There will now be 28 positions. That is consistent—more than consistent—with the numbers of complaints received. We have received almost 4,000 complaints annually into that area. Usually 50 to 60 ultimately end up remaining for complete investigation, so you can see the amendments have cut out a lot of unproductive work.

Mr BYRNE: I understand the rationale. I just wanted to get a number to understand the implementation of that rationale. I refer to page 59 of the SDS which refers to the net value of criminal proceeds restrained. The target for 2013-14 was $18 million and it appears that you have achieved $15 million. That is a shortfall of 17 per cent. There is a note to explain that variance that refers to additional inquiries which have been required in the early stages of implementation of the 2013 amendments which have impacted on the time taken to obtain restraining orders and their value. You knew that these laws were coming in. There was a lead-in time of over nine months—when it was introduced on 28 November 2012 until it commenced on 6 September 2013. There were three or four months that you were in the job for the period. In addition, you have had a further 10 months to the end of June. Why did the CCC not allocate more resources when it became apparent you would not be able to meet that target?

Dr Levy: Can I just start with the target? I think the Attorney may have referred to this earlier. We did not meet the target of $18 million, but we would have met another $3 million—that work has been done, but it requires a court order. The matters were on the court list but the court just could not get to them by 30 June. Had that occurred, there was the equivalent I guess of $15 million.

Mr BYRNE: So you are saying you have basically achieved the target. It is judicial delay—

Dr Levy: Well, that does not bring it up to the complete target. It brings it fairly close to the target but there were some matters which were not within the control of the CCC to be able to achieve. At least the $15 million, one could say that that work has been done. In relation to your question of staffing, the additional staff we recruited after the new legislation in relation to the serious drug offender and unexplained wealth legislation came into being. Our experience over the last few years in trying to recruit forensic accountants is that it is not easy. Even when you do find them you quite often have bright young graduates and it still requires quite a bit of time from the officer in charge of that area to get those skills refined.

We did put some staff on but there was a delay. In addition to the additional funding that we got from the government especially last year in relation to the CMC funding, that gave us an additional team of staff to look at proceeds of crime. Again, those delays that I have just referred to are relevant but it certainly produced, in my view, a group of accountants consistent with the rest of the organisation as it was 12 months ago. I think it is a high-performing group in the proceeds of crime, as it is with the police and other parts of the organisation. But to get them up to speed, firstly, that takes time and, secondly, you have to look at the sort of work that is done. Unexplained wealth is much more complex in the sense that quite often bikies and people who do organised crime—and I think the government accepted this by giving us the money—do not keep the names of other people. To investigate, we have to have evidence to be able to seize and go to the court. So we have come into an area which is effective from a crime-fighting perspective, and I think the Attorney referred to it as a good crime-fighting body. I think we are a very good crime-fighting body equal to any other in the state.

Mr BLEIJIE: The best I said. The best in the nation.

Dr Levy: The best. Well, I accept the Attorney's superlative. It really is an important area of the law. It takes time. Of course the police have to bring matters to us, firstly. Putting that aside, once we have got them, the new areas of the law are complex but it is tending to separate criminals from criminal proceeds where previously we just did not have the jurisdiction to go.

Mr DILLAWAY: I want to move on to something else now, Attorney, if I can. With reference to the recent safety data, can you advise how Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has contributed to a reduction in serious injury rates and how we compare across the nation?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The government wants Queensland to have the safest workplaces in Australia. This will be achieved by the government working cooperatively with businesses, not against them, to help them identify and manage risks to safety. This goes into a little of what I said before regarding businesses. When I travel the state I see businesses actively wanting to participate in better safety practices. I think there is a genuine want for their employees to go home to their families at night without injury. In particular, we do not want any cases involving a death at workplaces.

We have moved from a service delivery model primarily focused on inspectors ensuring compliance through inspections and audits of individual workplaces to one which recognises the complexity of the modern work environment, focusing on target initiatives in high-risk workplaces. Initiatives such as the industry participation program, which promotes the development of a positive safety culture through the Zero Harm at Work Leadership Program, have also been important in encouraging a safety culture in workplaces.

I am also pleased to say that the results speak for themselves. There has been a substantial reduction in serious injury rates in Queensland of approximately 18.9 per cent over the five years from 2007-08 to 2011-12. This makes Queensland the second most approved jurisdiction over this period in Australia after the Northern Territory. There have also been significant reductions in the incidence of severe injuries in the priority high-risk industries of construction, agriculture, manufacturing and transport. In the construction industry, there has been a 25.2 per cent reduction in the serious injury rate over the five-year period. In manufacturing, the reduction has been 29.6 per cent. In the transport industry there has been a 22.9 per cent reduction. In the agriculture industry there has been a 21.7 per cent reduction.

Internal Workplace Health and Safety Queensland modelling predicts a further reduction in serious work related injuries in 2012-13. The reduction is expected to result in an overall improvement of 22.9 per cent in serious work related injuries between 2007-08 and 2012-13. Further, the number of Queensland workers who were fatally injured at work have almost halved between 2007-08 and 2011-12 from 69 fatalities down to 39. For the third successive year Queensland has recorded fewer work related fatalities than New South Wales. But, of course, one workplace death is too many so we need to ensure we continue to work towards the goal of zero harm. On that note, thanks must go to Queensland businesses and workers for their ongoing efforts to ensure workplaces in Queensland are safer. It also demonstrates that the reduction and awareness approach taken can work when it is supported by a robust regulator that ensures compliance where appropriate.

Mr WATTS: Attorney, in my electorate I have a lot of boarders who come from regional areas and unfortunately they have been touched by tragedy in relation to quad bikes, either of family members and tragically one student themselves. I am interested in an update from Workplace

Health and Safety Queensland on what has done over the last 12 months to address safety concerns with quad bikes and, in particular, in the rural communities that send their children to Toowoomba North to get their education.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. I completely appreciate and understand the issue of quad bike fatalities. Unfortunately, Queensland is one of the jurisdictions in the nation that has a high proportion of quad bike fatalities. I recently attended with Mal Meninga, our safety ambassador, a breakfast at Roma and a safety presentation. We took all of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland out to Roma in the regions because we know that Queensland is more than South-East Queensland. Queensland is such a diverse place and, unfortunately, quad bike fatalities happen in rural and regional Queensland. I witnessed a quad bike demonstration at the Roma festival where we talked about workplace health and safety. We had many businesses represented.

Also, I met a guy who is, I think, in the electorate of the honourable Minister for Health, Lawrence Springborg. He has designed safety devices for quad bikes. It is quite an interesting device. It is a roll bar on the front or back of a quad bike. He demonstrated how it works. He believes that it can save lives. One of the difficulties, of course, is putting the burden on every farmer to have such a device. What we want to do is actively work with the industry and we want to work with the agriculture sector. I know the Minister for Health and members such as you, Trevor, have certainly put forward ideas to us. We are currently reviewing what we can do with quad bike safety because, as I said earlier, the biggest issue I see in Queensland is t—and I will have to get Simon Blackwood to correct me if I am wrong with the numbers—the fatalities in a year for quad bike tragedies. Queensland had the highest proportion of quad bike fatalities in Australia, which is just unacceptable. We have to work with farmers, we have to work with industry and businesses to work out how we can educate people, particularly young rural operators. I grew up on acreage on the Sunshine Coast and quad bikes were the thing for young people as well. Of course there are tragedies. I will get you the statistic, if I can. The statistic is that five out of six fatalities occurred in Queensland.

This is a serious issue that we have to address right across the state because, as I said earlier, Trevor, one workplace fatality is too many. Although we have had a reduction of over 20 per cent in a lot of areas, quad bike fatalities are still not where I would like and where the government wants it. The committee can rest assured that in terms of the education and awareness of the risks associated with quad bikes, we will be very much onto that. We have actually produced a DVD called *A rush of blood—the Miles Paterson story* promoting quad bike safety. The film tells how Miles was lucky to escape with only minor injuries when his quad bike rolled and landed on top of him while he was mustering cattle. These are the types of stories that resonate with communities, because rural Queenslanders can relate to the circumstances of the messages delivered not by government or politicians but by their peers. I was fortunate, as I said, to be involved in the launch of this DVD at Roma at a successful day-long event with a focus on quad bike safety. It included a quad bike rider demonstration, in which I did not participate. The department is also putting the finishing touches on another short quad bike film. This film encourages rural producers to think about whether quad bikes are the appropriate choice of vehicle for the particular job that they are doing. It provides advice about alternative options.

We have also worked with the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, the peak industry organisation representing manufacturers and importers of quad bikes to release five short films on Workplace Health and Safety's YouTube site. I can encourage you to look at our YouTube channel, where we have posted different DVDs. In the last 12 months we have also carried out a range of assessments and proactive initiatives to promote quad bike safety on rural properties. An on-farm assessment campaign that focused on the safe use of quad bikes and selecting the right tool for the job has been successful in promoting the importance of rider competency and the maintenance of quad bikes. Distributors of quad bikes and quad bike attachments have been visited and provided with written information through an ongoing point-of-sale engagement process, but clearly more needs to be done.

In July 2012, WorkCover New South Wales commissioned the University of Queensland to undertake research and testing of quad bike safety, crash protection devices and accessories. The results of that project, which is due for release shortly, will further inform the direction we take to promote quad bike safety in the state. We will continue to engage with the agriculture sector, industry associations, rural communities and quad bike manufacturers to establish opportunities for collaboration to reduce the unacceptable risk.

I will conclude on this. I know I said I would give short answers, but I think this is such an important issue for Queenslanders with quad bikes, particularly our rural brothers and sisters. From 1 July 2013 to 31 December 2013, 20 fatalities were recorded Australia-wide as a result of quad bike incidents. Fifteen of those were on farms. The source of that is Safe Work Australia's QuadWatch. To date there have been six fatalities in 2014 and five of those occurred in Queensland. Two of the five were children.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Attorney. Member for Ipswich West?

Mr CHOAT: Thank you, Mr Chair. Attorney, under the same line of questioning, my work history gives me a very good understanding of workplace health and safety and the need for strategies like safe working, particularly in appreciation of the zero harm philosophies. Obviously, my electorate is interested in rural matters, but we also have quite a significant and hopefully a growing manufacturing base. Could you update the committee on any other proactive measures that Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is taking to support injury prevention in the state, particularly if there have been any outcomes you can outline?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Ipswich West. As well as having a potentially devastating effect on injured workers, their families, friends and communities, work-related fatalities and injuries also mean productivity losses and cost to business. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and WorkCover Queensland are collaborating to assist Queensland businesses to improve their injury prevention, rehabilitation and return to work arrangements through the Injury Prevention and Management initiative, which is IPaM. This initiative works with selected employers who, compared to other businesses of similar size and nature, experience higher workers compensation rates and costs. Advisers located across the state work closely with businesses over multiple visits to identify and address issues in safety and injury management systems. The goal is to ensure systems are in place to prevent workplace injury and, when unfortunately people are injured, to return them to meaningful and appropriate work as soon as practicable.

I am advised that around 100 businesses have completed the IPaM initiative to date, with a further 250 businesses currently working with advisers. Workers compensation data shows positive trends in terms of reducing claims and costs for IPaM participating businesses and overall costs to the workers compensation scheme. I am advised that in 2012-13 IPaM participating businesses experienced an 8.4 per cent reduction in statutory claim numbers compared to an overall reduction of 6.3 per cent across the scheme; a 14 per cent reduction in average days off work while the scheme average remains unchanged; and a 7.4 per cent reduction in total statutory costs compared to a scheme increase of 0.6 per cent. I also note that participants in surveys consistently rate as high the positive impact of the IPaM, especially for smaller and medium enterprises. Almost 85 per cent of survey respondents found the initiative useful, with many of those considering it very useful.

In view of the success of the initiative, government has more than doubled the number of IPaM advisers available. As at 1 July, there were 13 IPaM adviser full-time equivalent positions. The initiative is innovative and has responded to the needs of participating businesses. It demonstrates the benefits of government working cooperatively with industry to deliver positive health and safety outcomes that will benefit businesses and their workers.

Mr CHOAT: I have a follow-up question: you mentioned the statistics and obviously there is other stuff. Has there have been any additional financial support provided to this program?

Mr BLEIJIE: That is a very good question and I thank the member. Over recent years, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has been repositioning, as I said earlier, its service delivery model to place greater emphasis on education and awareness in an effort to drive longer term improvements. One such initiative that supports this change is, as I have just explained, the IPaM initiative. It has been successful in participation rates, and you referred to the previous statistics I gave. In view of its success, we have doubled the IPaM advisers from 13 to 28. To achieve this increase in advisers, the government allocated an additional $2.35 million per annum to expand the initiative. I am advised that with the additional resources IPaM will be able to assist around 500 businesses per annum and deliver at least six major workshops per year, focusing on priority industries and risks. This will mean reduced claims and costs for participating businesses and safer, more productive workplaces for thousands of Queensland workers.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin?

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chairman. My question is also to Dr Levy. It follows on his evidence to our hearing earlier this morning when he spoke about the resources that have been allocated following the ICAC investigations in another state. I ask: Dr Levy, what resources have

you allocated or what staff have you allocated to investigate possible connections between people or entities that have made significant donations to political parties or members of the state parliament in Queensland, and those same people or entities that have received benefits from this government?

CHAIR: I do not know that I will allow that question, member for Nicklin. It does not really relate to the estimates, unless you can convince me otherwise.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chairman. It directly relates to the resourcing that has been proposed in the budget to deal with organised serious corruption in Queensland. We already have evidence before our committee about staff—

CHAIR: Just give me the question.

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is: what staff have been allocated and what resources have been allocated by the Crime and Misconduct Commission or the Crime and Corruption Commission to investigate possible connections of improper conduct between people who have made donations to political parties or members of parliament and those same entities that have received benefits from the Newman government. It directly relates to what resources this commission is allocating to fight possible corruption in Queensland on both the level of prevention and also, if there is evidence, what resources are allocated to investigate those matters? We have heard from the ICAC investigation—

CHAIR: Just on the question, I will leave it to Dr Levy as to whether you can actually single out particular political parties or whether you can say what money has been allocated to that issue.

Dr Levy: Mr Chairman, I think my answer to the member for Nicklin is this: my knowledge is that in the past, some years ago, there was consideration given to undertaking a project like that, but it was never commenced. Certainly in the last 12 months, on the priority of matters, we have had more matters than we have had staff in so many respects. Well, we have had staff to do the tasks we have, but we have not certainly taken that issue on. I would have to take it on notice to give you a more comprehensive answer, though.

CHAIR: If you want that on notice, it must be through the Attorney-General. You do not know the information now. Only the Attorney-General can take the matter on notice. It is a matter for you, Attorney-General, as whether you want to—

Dr Levy: If the Attorney-General is happy, I would be happy for the CCC to look at it and make a more fulsome answer. But I could not give anything more authoritative than that at the moment. That is my recollection of what the CCC, and its former role as the CMC, had looked at. I may be wrong. I think if there has been some suggestion it would have been looked at, but I would have to check those details. Certainly in the last 12 months—

CHAIR: Just hold on a second.

Dr Levy: As a matter of fact I can say that we have not done anything in the last 12 months.

CHAIR: I just want to acknowledge that the Attorney-General has agreed to do that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you.

CHAIR: Do you have a follow-up question or a new question?

Mr WELLINGTON: I have a follow-up question. In relation to the allocation of resources, in this budget you are saying there is no anticipated allocation of money to do any investigation of possible connections between people who have made donations to political parties or members of the state parliament and possible benefits that they or a similar entity has received? So there is no money and no staffing anticipated?

CHAIR: Before you answer, that is the same question.

Mr WELLINGTON: I know. I am trying to clarify it.

CHAIR: It has just been put on notice. To me it is the same question. Unless you can show to me it is a different question, to me—

Mr WELLINGTON: It is about resourcing. If you want to fight corruption in Queensland, we need to make sure that there are proper resources allocated to do it.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, as I said I am happy for Dr Levy to take the question on notice. I make the point that the CMC receives $52 million to $53 million a year. They are resourced by this government more than any government previously. They have a new structure in place that I think is the best structure in Australia dealing with both serious crime and corruption. I am not speaking

for Dr Levy, but I have no doubt that when they get these types of complaints they investigate them, and if anything comes out of them they will. I note there are members of parliament who have referred particular matters to the CCC under the new regime of the CCC. In terms of funding, they get more funding by this government than they ever have by any other government. It is one of the most generously funded crime and corruption bodies in the nation, in fact, more so than ICAC which just deals with corruption.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin, I am having difficulty understanding the difference between the last question and the first question. The first question has been referred by the Attorney-General to the department to get a response to you. Is there a difference between the first question and the second question of which I am not aware?

Mr WELLINGTON: I suppose the reason for the second question was because clearly it appears to me that there has been no staffing and no resources allocated in this budget to specifically investigate the issues of possible corruption in Queensland. That is one of the key focuses and objects of this organisation.

Mr BLEIJIE: Has the member referred any matters to the CCC for investigation?

Mr WELLINGTON: No. If I could answer that question, Mr Chairman. I have already asked Dr Levy about their own investigative skills and resources. Do you rely only on complaints or are you prepared to have staff allocated to do their own investigations as a result of complaints that you may believe are worthy of investigations or will you only investigate matters that have been referred to you by someone else?

Dr Levy: Mr Wellington, can I answer you this way—

CHAIR: Just one second, I don't want to duplicate the matter. There is not much point in asking for a question on notice if, in fact, the same question is going to be asked again asking for another response. Now, all I am asking for, member for Nicklin: I can't distinguish between the first question and the second question, the first question of which you asked for it to be put on notice and the Attorney has agreed. Now, is there something in the second question which is different than the first question because I cannot detect it?

Mr WELLINGTON: I am keen to hear the answer Dr Levy is proposing to answer.

CHAIR: No, I need for you—

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Chairman, I have asked a question. Dr Levy is indicating a willingness to answer. I would ask you to allow Dr Levy to answer the question the way he wishes to.

CHAIR: I don't know what Dr Levy is going to say.

Mr WELLINGTON: Well, let's hear what he has to say.

CHAIR: No, I'm sorry. You have asked a question and because of Dr Levy's response you asked for it to be put on notice and the Attorney has agreed.

Mr WELLINGTON: He has offered for it to be put on notice.

CHAIR: Just excuse me for one moment. Then you have asked a second question which is the same question as the first question. All I am asking you is have I misinterpreted that? Is the second question different than the first? If it is then I will allow it. If it is not, then the matter is on notice and that will be the last of the questioning.

Mr WELLINGTON: The *Hansard* records will reveal the questions that have been asked. I put to you Dr Levy has indicated a willingness to try to answer the question. I would ask you to allow him to answer the question.

CHAIR: I am not interested in Dr Levy, whether he, in fact—

Mr WELLINGTON: With respect, Mr Chairman, today is an opportunity for members of the government, cross benches and opposition to ask questions to the head of our Crime and Corruption Commission. He has indicated a willingness to answer those questions. Simply because his answer may not go with the flow that you want him to say I would urge you to allow him to answer the question.

Miss BARTON: Mr Chair, should we perhaps take this conversation outside and discuss it as a committee?

CHAIR: I overrule your second question. Next question.

Mr WELLINGTON: Let the record show.

CHAIR: Member for Bulimba?

Mr DILLAWAY: Thank you very much, Chair. I was wondering if the Attorney-General could just give us a bit of a report in relation to workers' compensation and, in particular, how our government's 2013 legislative reform has benefited, importantly, both Queensland workers and employers?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. I thank you, Mr Chair. Reforms to the workers' compensation scheme in 2013 are aimed at improving the sustainability of the scheme while ensuring that every Queensland worker is covered for statutory benefits, medical expenses and journeys to and from work. The WorkCover Queensland Board has set an average premium rate for 2014-15 of $1.20 per $100 of wages, down from $1.45. Prior to the parliament dealing with the legislative reform it was a $1.45 average premium and because of our reforms the per $100 of wages average premium will now be $1.20. This is a reduction of 17 per cent on 2013-14 which means Queensland employers have the lowest premium rate in Australia out of any of the schemes. I am advised that Victoria has the second lowest average premium rate for 2014-15 with an average rate of $1.27 per $100 of wages. This is followed by New South Wales at $1.47, Western Australia on $1.55 and South Australia on $2.75. This 17 per cent reduction we have achieved in Queensland in the average premium rate represents an estimated saving for employers of $250 million in the 2014-15 period. These savings can be used by employers to grow their businesses and employ more Queenslanders. In addition, 93 per cent of the 150,000 businesses who insure with WorkCover will have their claims history wiped clean through a simpler premium model and employers will have greater flexibility to pay their premium in instalments.

The compensation scheme faced an unsustainable level of risk in the form of low-end common law claims which, left unchecked, had the potential to overrun the scheme and threaten WorkCover's financial viability. The 2013 legislative amendments introduced a threshold of greater than five per cent degree of permanent impairment to access common law claims. This is a low threshold when compared to the Commonwealth and other states which range from a 10 to 30 per cent threshold making Queensland's threshold the lowest in the nation. We have also retained journey claims. The government's response to the growth in low-end common law claims balanced the needs of injured workers with the cost to employers and the overall viability of the scheme. We are the only state that covers for injuries that occur while travelling to and from work. In a large decentralised state it is vitally important to afford workers this necessary protection. In addition, Queensland employers are now able to require prospective employees to disclose any pre-existing injuries that could reasonably be aggravated by performing the duties of employment. They are able to request a prospective worker's claims history summary with the worker's consent. That is about not giving an employee a job, that is about making sure the employee gets the right job, one that is not going to aggravate a pre-existing injury. These are sensible amendments. They are helping to reduce red tape and the financial burden on employers and provide incentives for business to employ Queenslanders and promote our economy while retaining appropriate protection for injured workers. If we look at 2009—we always should do a compare and contrast with this government compared to the former government—since 2009 workers' compensation premiums in this state increased by 20 per cent. We have achieved, in two years, an average premium reduction of 17 per cent.

CHAIR: Member for Rockhampton?

Mr BYRNE: Thanks, Mr Chair. Again to Dr Levy. One of the ongoing criticisms, I suppose, of the CMC/CCC, and often reflected on, from my recollection, by the Attorney, is the time taken to finalise matters. I see on page 59 of the SDS the target percentage for investigated matters finalised within 12 months was 85 per cent and the actual was 75 per cent. I see the note to that entry is 'It is anticipated that there will be no matters older than 12 months outstanding as at 30 June 2014'. How many matters older than 12 months were there actually at 30 June 2014?

Dr Levy: I am reliably advised that there were two as at 30 June.

CHAIR: Do you have a follow-up?

Mr BYRNE: No, not really. I just wanted to find out exactly where we were.

CHAIR: Member for Ipswich West?

Mr CHOAT: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Attorney, I have just got a question with regard to high-risk licences, which are of quite interest to a lot of people in my community. I was just wondering if you could update us of any initiatives being undertaken for the online renewal of such licences and how this will benefit Queenslanders, particularly people in areas such as Ipswich West?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, member, for the question. Under the workplace health and safety legislation, a high-risk work licence is required for persons performing high-risk work such as operating tower cranes or forklifts and erecting scaffolding. These licences are issued by the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland. Currently there are approximately 260,000 licence holders covering 29 different licence classes. I am advised that over the last three years the average number of new high-risk licences issued per year has been approximately 29,700. The new high-risk work licensing renewal system was released in early September 2013. Under this system all licence holders receive a renewal notice at least four weeks prior to the expiry date and the notices outline options on how they can renew the licence. Like a driver's licence, the system enables a high-risk work licence holder to renew their licence online. By moving licence renewal to an online service, benefits to Queensland businesses and applicants include quicker and easier processing for applicants, the service is available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week and, of course, a more convenient access to services particularly for applicants living in rural and remote areas and those who work on a fly-in fly-out basis. I am advised that licence holders who do not have access to online services will be able to undertake the renewal process over the telephone. However, it is expected that this alternative approach will only apply to a small minority of the applicants. In addition, recent legislative changes passed by parliament have made it easier for licence holders to notify the department if they change their address or the licence document is lost, stolen or destroyed. Instead of notifying the department in writing, a licence holder can now simply provide this notice over the telephone. These changes have significantly reduced the administrative burden on businesses, licence holders and the government and the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland is continuing to look at ways it can reduce the administrative burden for both business and licence holders. To this end, the feasibility of moving the initial application for these licences and other licence types to an online format is being investigated, the aim being to increase accessibility and deliver a more customer focused service.

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater?

Miss BARTON: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. Mr Attorney, I was wondering if you might be able to update the committee on any awareness and education campaigns that have been undertaken by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and whether or not there are any plans to expand on these campaigns?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question, Mr Chair. Workplace Health and Safety and the Electrical Safety Office, and it is important to distinguish we have two offices in Queensland, the Workplace Health and Safety office and the Electrical Safety Office and, of course, it is separated by two boards that we have operating on the two issues. We want Queensland workplaces to be safer, healthier and more productive through a broad range of awareness and education campaigns. Most recently, for the member's benefit, we have released the Stay Safer Up There, Switch Off Down Here campaign. It is urging householders and tradespeople to turn off all main power switches at the switchboard before heading up into a ceiling space. This campaign involves television, radio, online, outdoor advertising and a brochure that contains warning stickers to be placed in ceiling spaces, manholes and switchboards. I know, when I have, Mr Chair, been looking online at our media outlets across Queensland, online versions of the *Courier-Mail* and *Brisbane Times* for instance, that the advertisements are running quite effectively across all those jurisdictions. I think we may also have it on social media. We have distributed brochures through all major metropolitan newspapers and they continue to be handed out to homeowners by electricians and are on display at hardware stores.

We are also committed to raising awareness about the asbestos in our community. Some of the great work to date has included holding joint displays with the Asbestos Related Disease Support Society of Queensland at the Ekka and home shows and producing *Losing Breath—The Adam Sager story*. This video tells the tragic story of Adam Sager who was unknowingly exposed to asbestos fibres during the renovation of the family's home when he was only 18 months old. We released recently the state-wide strategic plan for the safe management of asbestos in Queensland. For those members of parliament who were not present, Adam Sager's family were present and spoke at the launch of that asbestos campaign. It was a hard story to hear from the Sager family because their son Adam, when he was 18 months old, they told the story that they, like any Queenslander who renovates their home, buys an older house and renovates it, they were doing it all themselves. They were telling the story that they were, if I recall correctly, sanding the walls of their home to repaint and Adam, 18 months of age, was on the floor, crawling around the floor, in all the dust that they were sanding from the wall. Unfortunately, many years later it was revealed that that incident caused him the asbestos disease and they lost him. We have benefited from the Sager

family in that they have helped us produce a DVD talking about the risks associated with asbestos. I just want to thank them. I also want to thank the Fuller family for their dedication in the Stay Safer Up There, Switch Off Down Here campaign. They lost their son in a home insulation death which is subject to an inquiry. Unfortunately, it is better to educate Queenslanders using real life examples like the Fuller and the Sager families than it is using parliamentarians, bureaucrats or brochures that we develop and I just want to thank these particular families, the Sager and the Fuller families, because they have, through their personal tragedy, come out of that and hopefully will save the lives of Queenslanders in the future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Attorney. Member for Nicklin, what we might do—this is the last series of questions for you, Dr Levy—we will need to have a five-minute break after that just to arrange some chairing changes. Member for Nicklin?

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chair. I have a number of questions to Dr Levy. I take Dr Levy to page 56 of the Service Delivery Statement where it talks about one of the stated objectives of the commission is to keep politicians and public officials ethical and accountable for their behaviour and I ask: when a member of a community organisation makes a complaint to a local Sunshine Coast mayor and the local council chief executive officer complaining about a councillor's bullying behaviour—this is all documented in writing—and the only response that the complainant receives is a letter from the councillor that they complained about saying 'I apologise for my behaviour', does your organisation have any involvement, any supervisory role, where they can perhaps say, 'We think this councillor has not handled this matter appropriately. We have had no response from the mayor or the CEO. The very person they complained about does a two-paragraph letter and says I apologise.' Do you have any role in supervising that behaviour?

Dr Levy: There is a general supervisory role. If it is brought to the CCC's attention we would certainly look at it. In the past we would have perhaps even taken a more active role. One must keep in mind though that from 1 July part of the element of the definition of 'corrupt conduct', which is what the CCC now must focus on and specialise in, is that it must be a criminal offence. From what you have just indicated, I suspect—

Mr WELLINGTON: It is not a criminal offence; it was more misconduct. I am actually the patron of the organisation and so my involvement was as a local member. I did indicate that I did not think your new organisation would have any supervisory role whatsoever. So that is—

CHAIR: Dr Levy, I just want to make the focus on process.

Mr WELLINGTON: It is about resourcing.

CHAIR: I am happy to proceed on that basis, thanks.

Dr Levy: Legally it is not that we would not have a supervisory role yet but generally speaking we would assess it if it came to us, but unless it fits within the definition then we would not allocate resources to it now.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have a further question of Dr Levy. This also refers to page 57 of the Service Delivery Statements. It talks about strategies and resources that have been allocated to improve the timeliness of misconduct investigations older than 12 months. Is it the case that the improvement is simply by way of your organisation handing the complaints over to, say, the Police Service to now investigate? They started with you. There was a case to answer. One matter that springs to mind involves a serious complaint against a councillor. Almost three years after the last election the matter still has not been resolved and is now with the Police Service. A resourcing issue—

CHAIR: Process in terms of the question you have asked though, is it not?

Dr Levy: As a matter of fact, three years ago the processes were such that everything that came in the door they kept and tried to do. That is no longer the case. In terms of new matters coming in we would mainly be concerned with matters that fit within the definition of corrupt conduct. But, in any event, perhaps central to your question is the efficiency of how the corruption group would do its work.

I think it is fair to say that the processes have been looked at. We have checkpoints along the way. There is one at six weeks after the matter is commenced, if we accept the matter in. As you would understand, oftentimes once you start getting further into the evidence the complexion of that evidence can change and so we need to either make a decision to keep going or to stop. Rather than matters going on for three years, I think that has been part of the inefficient processes of the past.

Now we are looking for a return on investment. It is government money. There must be some justification that we will get an outcome out of this at the end. So we are looking for best practice and best value both for corruption and also for the organisation.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. We might take a break for the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to come in. I now reopen the estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. I welcome Mr Kevin Cocks to the hearing.

Mr Cocks: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Would you like to say anything before we start? You do not have to if you do not want to.

Mr Cocks: No, thank you.

CHAIR: I call the member for Ipswich West.

Mr CHOAT: I refer to page 48 of the Service Delivery Statements and ask the Attorney-General to update the committee as to Anti-Discrimination Commission's commitment to revitalise front-line services, be that the business sector, the general community or vulnerable Queenslanders?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. I welcome the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to the estimates hearing. As I said in my opening remarks, the government is committed to revitalising front-line services. The Anti-Discrimination Commission has a key role to play in continuing the great work that the commission is doing in the anti-discrimination area.

I point out for the member's benefit that for a number of years now the Anti-Discrimination Commission has been taking a proactive approach to engage with a broader cross-section of the community to increase their reach geographically and to deliver services in new areas. During the past year ADCQ has: completed phase 1 of the schools project and launched the discrimination and sexual harassment at work resource kit for Queensland senior school students and teachers; commenced the development of educational resources to support small business operators meet their obligations under the act; partnered with QCAT, which is the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, to develop a video entitled 'How to prepare for a QCAT hearing', which is now available at both the ADCQ and the QCAT websites; published two fact sheets on topical issues such as incapacity in work, in consultation with the Public Service Commission, and medical information recruitment, in consultation with WorkCover and the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland. It has had significant community engagement in Townsville, Yeppoon, Cairns, western Cape York and the Lockyer Valley and launched a new website, including access to a new online training product.

These new services have been delivered without jeopardising the commission's core functions of complaint management, training and information services. Indeed, the commission has met or exceeded targets in these areas. The ADCQ is a small organisation with only 34 staff. Under the leadership of Commissioner Kevin Cocks, it has embraced a model of service delivery which relies on developing partnerships with private, public and community organisations. This leverages the strengths of these groups to provide opportunities for communities to solve problems locally.

A great example of this process in action is the community development project currently being undertaken by ADCQ and the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships, LAMP, office in the Lockyer Valley Regional Council. This project supports the creation of opportunities for increased participation in work and access to accommodation and local services for migrants and other vulnerable groups. By engaging with businesses, organisations and communities in this area this partnership is providing opportunities and improving the quality of life for vulnerable groups, in particular migrant communities. Projects adopting similar approaches are underway throughout the state. I am sure Commissioner Cocks will be happy to expand upon the important work of ADCQ if the committee affords him the opportunity to do so.

Mr CHOAT: I have a follow-up question and quite a general one to the commissioner. On Saturday I had the privilege of attending a rally against racism in Ipswich. We had had an unfortunate incident. It was an opportunity for our community to show that we do not accept that sort of intolerance and nonsense. We certainly do not want those people to be part of our fabric if they want to do things like that. How are we going as a state in terms of discrimination? Has there been an improvement?

Mr Cocks: It is a very difficult and complex area because discrimination is insidious and often covert and hidden. Having said that, because of the work of the commission and particularly the work of the antiracism strategy that we partnered with the Commonwealth it starts to bring out into the public the discussion. What I think is important is for communities, and local communities in particular, to have these conversations about how our communities have become very different and multicultural over the last 20 or 30 years. It is important that we have conversations about valuing everyone and respecting where people are coming from. I think the actions that happened in Ipswich and the way the community came to address that is a really important thing. That is the sort of work that the commission is encouraging and trying to work with local communities on to be able to take control of themselves.

CHAIR: I might just ask you a question, Commissioner. I was at the same rally of course with Minister Glen Elmes and it was a successful one. I go back to a mantra of Microsoft which was: 'Don't do anything you can't measure.' I know that with discrimination it can be hidden under a lot of other guises. How are you able to compare progress from the last budgetary year to this budgetary year as to whether a particular innovation or idea or scheme is working more so this year than last year or over a longer period obviously? Have you got any thoughts about how you measure those things or how confident you feel you are making progress with some of those initiatives?

Mr Cocks: As you say, these things are very difficult in how you quantify or use qualitative type measurements. I think it is best to probably do that through a qualitative approach. We will need to do that over time. But just to give you an example: in Townsville last year we held a 'Does racism get under your skin?' forum in partnership with a number of agencies in Townsville. That forum came about because there were issues in Townsville around racism. As a result of that forum, the communities got together—including ADCQ supporting them—and they got some funding from the federal government to then progress building a program called Many Cultures One Community. One of the issues was that the first nation peoples were feeling they were not fully understood or respected by immigrants and vice versa. So that program was about bringing together people from different cultures to think about the issues. So in some ways I see that as a progression from those actions that were undertaken from the initial forum.

CHAIR: It is certainly consistent with the Queensland Plan: it is not about 'me' but about 'we'. Is there anything that you can say, whether it is on a qualitative or a quantitative basis, that has worked?

Mr Cocks: In reducing—

CHAIR: Yes. If you are able to say it—I appreciate how difficult the issue of racism and discrimination is. But is there anything you are able to give as an example, whether it be school based—

Mr Cocks: I think education—training people about their rights and their responsibilities under our act—is probably one of the most strategic and probably quantifiable ways to do that. Unfortunately, to be able to say that we are having a significant impact is difficult because of our capacity to reach everyone. That is why we are developing strategies like working with small business to be able to provide timely and relevant resources for them because they are time poor more than a lot of people to understand their obligations in the workplace towards their employees and also their employees to understand their obligations in the workplace. I think those sorts of strategies are what we do or what we believe we can get some better results with. In terms of counting, I am not sure whether we can do that in a way that is usually done. It is something that we are talking about in terms of how we do measure our success.

CHAIR: I am going to hand you over to the member for Rockhampton. Before I do so, I have one parting question for you. It is probably about process. In your expert opinion, does there seem to be some demarcation—for example, children appear not to have discrimination, and I think each one of us in this room would probably have our own childhood ideas. Is there a point at which we develop discrimination, whether it be through work or high school? Is it something you have ever encountered?

Mr Cocks: The research demonstrates that we are all hard wired to discriminate, and that goes right back to flight or fight. So we make decisions about what could be dangerous or not and we discriminate against—if you saw a tiger coming you would make a decision to run. The research also shows that we take in 11 million pieces of information but our brain only has the capacity to process about 40 pieces of information at any one time. So what we do is we take short cuts and those short cuts are based commonly on the mythologies or stereotypes about—

CHAIR: Generalisations.

Mr Cocks: Yes, generalisations—and that is one of the great challenges to overcome. But there is some good news around that and that is called unconscious bias. By having conversations in the workplace or in the school yard and bringing people's consciousness to their biases, it is not going to eliminate discrimination but it will make people more informed and perhaps they may think before they act in a discriminatory manner.

CHAIR: Thank you. I call the member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: Commissioner, page 48 of the SDS talks about public discussion of human rights. I was wondering whether you on behalf of the Anti-Discrimination Commission here in Queensland have provided a view on behalf of Queensland or the commission itself to Senator Brandis' review of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act federally?

Mr Cocks: Yes, we did put in a submission.

Mr BYRNE: Are you able to summarise that briefly?

Mr Cocks: Yes. Our position is that—and we based our whole submission on our vilification laws because we think Queensland has very strong and balanced vilification laws. We recommended that if changes are made to section 18C they are based upon Queensland's vilification laws.

Mr BYRNE: With the removal of the federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner, do you foresee any additional workload for your group out of that?

Mr Cocks: I think that is probably a difficult one to answer because usually when people make a discrimination complaint there are a number of variables in making that decision. For instance, Queensland has a no-cost jurisdiction, so people might choose to go down that line or, because of the other variables and how the federal scheme runs, people may choose to do that. In the sense of making complaints, I do not think it will—I cannot actually say whether it will increase our workload or decrease it.

Mr BYRNE: I understand.

CHAIR: I doubt whether you will ever stop forum shopping either.

Mr Cocks: No.

CHAIR: It is lawyers' armoury. I call the member for Broadwater.

Miss BARTON: Mr Attorney, I was wondering if you could perhaps update the committee on some of the new projects that have been undertaken by the commission over the past 12 months. Again, I would be very happy for the commissioner to also contribute to the answer after you, Mr Attorney.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Anti-Discrimination Commission has had a very busy year and I think the commissioner is probably best placed to talk about that. But I can make some introductory remarks and then Kevin can follow on from that. It has been pursuing a vision, as it should, for a fair and inclusive Queensland—a vision I trust we all share in this committee room. In addition to delivering the complaint management process that leads the nation in terms of percentage of complaints resolved through conciliation and a significant training program, the commissioner has found the time and energy to undertake a number of new projects.

As I mentioned a little earlier, the schools project began in 2012-13. It reached a significant milestone in 2014 with the launch of the *Discrimination and sexual harassment at work* resource kit for teachers and students. This resource educates young people about their rights and responsibilities under the Anti-Discrimination Act when entering the workforce. It also provides teachers with content, teaching notes and activities for the classroom.

I have talked about the small business project which commenced to support small business operators to meet their obligations under the Anti-Discrimination Act, including consultation with small businesses. The commission also introduced the first online training module at the end of the 2013-14 financial year, *Discrimination Awareness in Queensland*. It was developed to complement the successful face-to-face training programs being run by the ADCQ.

It has also undertaken a number of community development projects within specific communities, with the most significant of these being the Lockyer Valley project. In partnership with the Lockyer Valley Regional Council, the commission has been addressing issues of racism and encouraging inclusiveness within the Lockyer Valley community. This has involved free information sessions.

I think it might be worthwhile if the commissioner wants to talk about some of the things that he has spoken to me about for the future, if he has the details to hand—potentially some of the future projects of the Anti-Discrimination Commission in ensuring that we continue to have a Queensland that is inclusive, and we all aspire to that objective.

Mr Cocks: Thank you, Attorney. In building on some of that work, we have been developing strategic partnerships. We have been working with the police, particularly the Police Commissioner, in Logan and particularly with young Muslim youth in trying to build relationships between police and the young Muslim youth community, which I think is really critical work. We are also looking at building partnerships strategically with the new Public Safety Business Agency in helping them achieve their objectives of cultural reform and change.

In looking at building partnerships, I have just met with the State Librarian because they have some fantastic innovative programs there. One of the things we would like to build on for the schools project is an app. So we are exploring opportunities work perhaps in partnership in those sorts of areas and other community engagement areas.

Also, we are looking very preliminary at how we could develop a strategic government plan for future housing to meet universal design principles, which I believe is quite critical given our ageing population, as well as with the roll-out of the NDIS. I had a bus conversation only this morning with a fellow traveller whose mother has just been diagnosed with motor neurone disease. They are looking for an accessible unit and of course cannot find one.

Just recently we held a Robert Jones Memorial Oration—he was a disability access advocate and consultant, well respected in Australia. At that, Dr Margaret Ward gave the inaugural speech, which is on our website, which outlines the policy imperative to build housing to universal design standards, and it looks at the costs of doing that. It is very minimal. Based on research in the ACT and Victoria, for a house it is $197—and I think she referred to that as the cost of a party dress. But for high-rises or multilevel dwellings it can get up to $1,000. The industry says it is about $5,000. But when we think of the cost of a house and then the cost of retrofitting and the cost shifting to the health system when people have to stay much longer in hospitals, not because of more serious impairments but when even with a broken leg or a bad back they cannot get home earlier, there are significant cost savings that can be made to government by planning and developing more housing that will be suitable to the changing needs of our community over the next 50 years. That is just an example of some of the future programs that we are looking at developing.

CHAIR: We have one last question for you. I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner. I take you to page 48 of the Service Delivery Statements where it refers to the main services required under the commission and one of them is to promote public discussion on human rights. To me one of the greatest human rights is the right to vote and to exercise our vote as fully as possible. My question is: are resources available to you to assist in the publication of and bringing to the attention of Queenslanders the opportunity to maximise their vote at the election? I realise the Electoral Commission has certain resources and funding priorities, but are there any resources and funding available through your organisation to assist in the publication and awareness of when people cast their vote they make sure the person they do not want to get elected does not get elect—and by that I mean that they number every box on the ballot paper to make sure that not just their preferred candidate gets their vote but, most importantly, the candidate they do not want to get elected does not get their vote?

Mr Cocks: I am not sure if that fits in our jurisdiction.

Mr WELLINGTON: That was the reason for the question. Are there resources or funding available to assist in those important public relations?

Mr Cocks: Where we would have a role in promoting is that all voting booths and voting sites are fully accessible and that people who may need assistance are not discriminated against in that process. Yes, we do have resources available if we thought that was an issue. But I understand the Electoral Commission has been working with a number of different groups to make sure that elections are as accessible as possible.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: On that basis, thank you very much, Commissioner, for attending the hearing today. The committee will now break for morning tea. The hearing will resume at 11 am with the continued consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Proceedings suspended from 10.48 am to 11.04 am

CHAIR: The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will continue with the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Mr DILLAWAY: Attorney-General, with reference to the performance of the Electrical Safety Office, can you provide an update on the rate of serious electrical incidents in the 2013-14 period and how this compares to previous years?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, member, for the question. The Electrical Safety Office—and I will refer to it now as the ESO—undertakes a range of compliance and engagement activities with contractors and electrical workers to reduce the rate of serious electrical incidents. I am pleased to advise that there has been a significant reduction in the rate of serious electrical incidents from 25 in 2012-13 to 17 in 2013-14. That is a reduction of 32 per cent.

The Electrical Safety Office compliance and engagement activities for 2014-15 will build on this reduction in the rate of serious electrical incidents. Initiatives will focus on assisting businesses, educating workers and the community across the key priority areas of powerlines, electrical installations and electrical equipment. Initiatives include electrical contractor workshops and one-on-one consultations with electrical workers; comprehensive compliance audits of new electrical equipment offered for sale; educational activities at trade shows and rural events; providing practical general electrical safety assistance and advice on working safely around powerlines; and in conjunction with training organisations such as TAFEs, continuing to educate electrical apprentices about safety in the workplace.

It is also proposed that the ESO will build on the recent success of the electrical safety in ceiling spaces campaign, which we launched at Master Electricians Australia, Queensland branch. The ESO will work with stakeholders in the electrical industry, workplaces and the community to ensure that the downward trend continues of serious electrical incidents. On that note, can I thank the ESO—the Electrical Safety Office—in Queensland and also the Electrical Safety Board which, with their great work over the past couple of years, has achieved a 32 per cent reduction in electrical incidents.

Mr CHOAT: Mr Attorney-General, I am just wondering if you would be able to update the committee on the government's response to the Queensland Coroner's report on the federal Labor government's home insulation program, particularly with reference to the government's response.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. It is probably a question that I would like nothing better not to answer, because we should not have to be talking about this issue. We should not have to be talking about the fatalities resulting from electric shocks whilst installing insulation because of a program that I will probably limit my language today as to what I think about the program because there is a royal commission considering its findings. Between 2009 and 2010, there were three fatalities resulting from electric shocks while installing insulation in ceiling spaces of Queensland homes under the federal government's home insulation program. As a result of these incidents, I directed that an inquest into these fatalities be convened. It was unfortunate that, whilst this debacle was unfolding in Queensland, the former Attorney-General and minister, Cameron Dick, was fighting with Peter Garrett about who was responsible. There was a war of words in correspondence between the two ministerial offices. Whilst they were doing that, men were dying. It is a conversation that we should not be having, because if people had taken responsibility for their actions back then, if ministers had not been derelict in their duties that should have been afforded to these individuals, mainly Cameron Dick and Peter Garrett at the federal level, then we would not have to have a coronial investigation.

I know that the Fuller family were at pains to have an inquest into these fatalities. They had contacted me about an inquest. They were on the verge of going—in fact, I think they had lodged an application in the District Court to direct the Coroner to actually have an inquest into the deaths. A family should not have to go through the pain and suffering of a District Court application to have a government body have an inquest. I recall picking up the phone to the legal representative of the Fuller family and I told the lawyer that they can withdraw the District Court application. He asked why and I said, 'Because I am directing, under the powers that I have, the Coroner to have an investigation inquest into these deaths.'

On 4 July 2013, the State Coroner delivered his findings and made three recommendations. The first recommendation involved a review of workplace safety agencies investigating these fatalities. The matter was referred to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's incidents governance group for consideration. The group subsequently agreed that a review of agency operations would be postponed pending the findings and recommendations of the royal commission into the home insulation program. In addition, since the findings were delivered, there had been significant organisational change to the two agencies involved. I am confident that the restructuring of the agencies within the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland will eliminate questions of jurisdictional responsibility for incidents such as those encountered during the home insulation program. Further reviews will be undertaken depending on any recommendations from the recently completed federal royal commission into the home insulation program.

The second recommendation was to undertake a public awareness campaign. The campaign would provide awareness to homeowners and tradespeople of the potential risk of electric shock from entering ceiling spaces. On 18 May 2014, a public awareness campaign was launched urging home owners and tradespeople to turn off the power at the switchboard before entering the ceiling space. The key message was 'Stay safer up there, switch off down here'. The campaign included television and radio advertisements in addition to a brochure containing warning stickers to be placed on ceiling space manholes and switchboards. The brochures were distributed to all major metropolitan newspapers, supplied to electricians to provide to clients and displayed at hardware stores. The campaign is supported by the Electrical Safety Board, Energex, Ergon Energy, the National Electrical and Communications Association and Master Electricians Australia. The companies supporting this initiative include Bunnings, Masters Home Improvement and Mitre10.

Work is well underway towards a third and final recommendation to assess whether there is a requirement to further extend the mandatory requirement for safety switches to Queensland homes. The department is undertaking a detailed analysis on this issue to consider the balance of costs imposed by further mandatory requirements against the safety outcomes achieved. While the analysis is yet to be completed, I can say that right now, apart from Western Australia, Queensland homes have a higher level of safety switch protection than that of any other state. I am happy to report the following survey of 180 new homes by the Electrical Safety Office inspectors. There is strong evidence to suggest that many electrical contractors routinely provide additional safety switch protection on new homes above what is currently required. Most importantly, since the cessation of the home insulation program in 2010, there has not been a single fatality in a ceiling space in a Queensland home.

I conclude by saying this. A part of the education campaign that we are trying to undertake in terms of safety switches is that many Queenslanders would think that, if they open their power box—and I would encourage all Queenslanders at any stage today, tomorrow, the next day, when they next go to have a look at their power box—to see their safety switch. If they have one safety switch, it is likely that they are not fully protected. New homes are now required to have safety switches on all circuits on the house. Just because we have one safety switch, that covers only a couple of circuits. It, in fact, does not cover every switch. So if you are drilling through a wall and you hit the lights, if you are dealing with a pond pump, they are all different switches. Unfortunately, one of the occasions of the insulation deaths was because of that: one safety switch does not cover a house. For people like me who have never been an electrician or tradesperson—

CHAIR: I thought that you were going to say that you have not been into a ceiling, but continue.

Mr BLEIJIE: I, like any Queenslander, have had to dig out the odd dead rat or mouse from a ceiling space. So I understand about getting up in the roof, but completely disregarded the safety issues of getting in a ceiling, not realising that wear and tear over the years may lead to the corrosion of circuits or wiring in the roof that can expose a whole roof, as it did in the home insulation debacle.

So what I would encourage Queenslanders to do is to really have a look at this campaign and have a look at their safety switches. If we can encourage Queenslanders to actively spend $200 to $300 on more safety switches and make sure that all of their circuits are covered, that is the best way that we can try to prevent injuries and fatalities by electrical shock.

Mr BYRNE: Attorney-General, I refer to page 7 of the SDS where, among the strategic directions section of the document, it states that in 2013-14 the department—

Continued reform of the youth justice system by implementing youth boot camps for the Gold Coast, Cairns/Townsville, Rockhampton and Fraser/Sunshine Coast.

Particularly with reference to the Hervey Bay boot camp, you announced that the successful tenderer for the Hervey Bay boot camp was Hard Yakka on 21 August last year. When did you make that decision?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. I will give the answer for the member in terms of when we made the decision. Can I in general, though, very quickly talk about the program for fixing a lot of the issues of youth justice that unfortunately this government were left by the former Labor government. We had a revolving-door cycle around youth justice in the state. We had a statistic of 32 per cent of young Queenslanders having served in our youth detention centres five times or more. That was a statistic that we were not happy with, Queenslanders were not happy with, and we had to do everything we could to try and fix that.

So we have done a few things: one, we stopped the fun in detention centres. We got rid of bucking bulls, jumping castles and all that extra stuff that Queenslanders would really question why the taxpayer were funding such activities in our youth detention centres. Secondly, we wanted to make sure that young people were held responsible for their actions, but also making sure and recognising the fact that we have to ensure that young Queenslanders can turn their lives around and that we have programs in place for them to turn their lives around. There was a two-stage strategy, one of which was the youth justice amendments which have been passed through the parliament dealing with naming and shaming; other provisions include deleting the detention-as-a-last-resort provision in the legislation.

I guess the two broader aspects of youth justice reform for this government in terms of revitalising front-line services is the youth boot camps which are operating—the three early intervention camps across the state and one sentence youth boot camp in Cairns and Townsville—and of course the youth justice blueprint. We have prepared a draft youth justice blueprint and currently we are consulting with legal stakeholders and community not-for-profit groups right around the state in terms of developing a bigger strategy for youth justice: how we can stop the revolving-door cycle that the Labor Party handed us in 2012; how we can get young people back on track; how we can get young people a job and an education. That gets to the question the member for Rockhampton asks in relation to the boot camp.

Now, the boot camp at Hervey Bay that the member talks about is Oz Adventures. If we talk about the procurement process, I can say to the honourable member and this committee that the procurement process was guided by the state purchasing policy and an external probity adviser was engaged to guide the entire procurement process. I hold the legal authority to enter into contracts such as between the department and Beyond Billabong under section 51 of the Constitution of Queensland Act. I hold the legal authority to enter into service agreements such as between the department and Oz Adventures under section 24 of the Community Services Act. The Financial Accountability Act 2009 provides that the Director-General has the authority to sign contracts to engage service providers approved by the minister. The delegation is provided that the Assistant Director-General can sign service agreements with providers approved by the minister. These delegations were followed in the signing of the Beyond Billabong contract and the Oz Adventures contract.

On 21 August 2013 we announced Beyond Billabong, Hard Yakka and the PCYC as the successful providers and advised that Townsville and Cairns sentence youth boot camp will be combined. The announcement did not guarantee the opening of the boot camp until contractual considerations were finalised. So on 21 August we announced it. I assume the decision was made just prior to that announcement being made, and I have to say, Mr Chair, that I attended the sentence youth boot camp in Cairns and Townsville recently and we are, through this program, turning young lives around. There have been over 20 young people through the camp; 120 young kids have been through the camps across Queensland.

We are an outcome-driven government, not a glossy brochure government. In terms of revitalising front-line services, we determined that the providers of all the boot camps, including the Hervey Bay boot camp, were Oz Adventures. They were the best provider to deliver the Fraser and Sunshine Coast early intervention camps. Can I say, Mr Chair, that all four boot camps are providing regular programs for young people. As at 30 June 2014, 121 distinct young people have been accepted into the boot camps across Queensland: 28 in the sentence youth boot camp, and 93 in the early intervention youth boot camps. While it is still early days in the trial of the boot camp, the Early Intervention Youth Boot Camp program is showing a 91 per cent success rate in stopping participants from entering the youth justice system, while the sentence youth boot camp is providing

an 83 per cent success rate in reducing reoffending. The programs are working. We are an outcome-driven government, and I would hope that in the not-too-distant future we see young people being diverted from detention centres and more young people in our youth boot camps.

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Mr Chair. I am still not sure when the decision was made out of that rather lengthy history lesson, which we have all heard before, but I am assuming it is somewhere before 21 August. Was there a signed briefing note or directive from you to give effect to that decision?

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, as I explained to the member for Rockhampton, the process was lengthy. It was an expression of interest process. Certain recommendations were made to me as the one that ultimately had the call. The process was sufficient. It was a procurement process overseen by a probity advisor and ultimately I made the call—the government made the call—for Oz Adventures because we saw an operating account in Hervey Bay. It was achieving the results that the government wanted to achieve, and ultimately I think that the decision has been vindicated in the results that we have seen—

Mr BYRNE: We will test all of those assertions very shortly. You received an evaluation report—

CHAIR: You have to allow the Attorney-General to finish what he is saying. Your question is?

Mr BYRNE: You received the evaluation report from the panel at that stage prior to making a decision, I would assume, so you were well aware that Hard Yakka had been ranked 10 out of 12 tenderers, were you not? You were aware that they were ranked 10 out of 12 from that evaluation; is that correct?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes. Yes.

Mr BYRNE: They had not been selected to proceed to the next round by that evaluation; that is correct as well. So it is not as though they were even one of the tenderers selected to go through to the next round. In fact, the panel determined that Oz Adventures' training and development submission did not demonstrate an understanding of the intention of the early intervention program. That is a fairly damning assessment from your panel, I would think, about their capacity to deliver the program, is it not?

CHAIR: That is making an assumption. I do not know that—

Mr BYRNE: Their submission proposed a 28-day residential camp which the panel said was inconsistent with early intervention philosophy. What is now the length of the residential component of that camp?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Mr Chair, if I can go back. The member has asked a few questions in there, so if I can try and address them in turn.

If the member wants to know what evidence there was to support Oz Adventures operating the Hard Yakka Boot Camp program, the submission from Oz Adventures displayed the following attributes which validate my decision: a greater level of demonstrated emphasis on the camp as a consequence of antisocial behaviour and an opportunity to instil discipline, structure and respect than any of the other applicants; a greater level of demonstrated experience in providing opportunities for young people to gain qualifications through the program, increasing their capacity to find and sustain employment than the other applicants; and a greater depth of demonstrated experience and local support according to letters of support than the other applicants. Including, I might add, we take great comfort in the support local members of parliament provide. It would be great if the PCYC in Rockhampton was provided with the level of support as other members of parliament are providing to our other boot camps, but that is not the case.

The government made a public commitment, when announcing the expressions of interest to the camp, to have the new boot camps operational by September 2013. Oz Adventures was assessed as being able to commence operations immediately, as they were an established local provider for camps. Oz Adventures had a strong reputation in the Fraser-Sunshine Coast region for providing quality and effective training and development programs in a safe but challenging environment. I think a lot of people underestimate what people are trying to achieve in these programs. We are dealing with young people, some of whom are already in the youth justice system. Some have been in and out of detention before. In fact, by far the majority of young people in our Far North Queensland boot camp have actually been in detention centres over three times.

As I said, Oz Adventures has a strong reputation in the Fraser-Sunshine Coast region for providing quality and effective training and development programs in a safe but challenging environment. They also demonstrate an emphasis on the camp as a consequence of antisocial behaviour and an opportunity to instil discipline, structure and respect.

A number of local organisations, including Southern Cross Support Services, Bay Connect, the Hervey Bay Chamber of Commerce, JobSmart, sunrise rotary and Anglicare have publicly declared their support for Oz Adventures.

I will now address the second element of the question that the member raised. The member will know that in parliament when this issue was raised in terms of procurement processes for all of the boot camps we tabled a document from Mr John Sosso, the Director-General, and I think it might be worth, Mr Chair, reading at this juncture into *Hansard* today where Mr John Sosso said to my chief of staff he confirms that, over the past week and since he was provided with the memoranda and supporting documentation from Youth Services on the results of the tendering process for the provision of funding to enable camp services for Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and the Fraser Coast, he was satisfied that the procurement process was appropriate and that government procurement guidelines were complied with. He was not satisfied that the recommendations flowing from that process were optimal; not satisfied that all of the successful parties had either the experience in residential boot camp related service or even had the capacity to provide such services in the locations the subject of the tender. He was not satisfied that the selection committees had given sufficient weight and concern to the publicly stated position of the government and the department that, following the cancellation of the Kuranda boot camp, the safety of the community was paramount. He was particularly concerned about the recommendations for the Townsville and Fraser Coast boot camps. In short, he was of the view that the net result of the tendering process was the provision of flawed recommendations that placed both the government and the department in an invidious position.

If I can also say, Mr Chair, that at the commencement of the boot camps we wanted to ascertain and ensure that there was an expression of interest process in place. We had a situation in Cairns which I did not want repeated again, and that was the Kuranda boot camp in the residential community. No-one wanted that repeated again. No-one wanted boot camps in residential communities. We said, in fact at this estimates last year, Mr Chair, that we would make sure that the next boot camp for that area was in a very remote area. As I said, I went there a few weeks ago, Mr Chair, and I can confirm to the committee that it is in a very, very remote area achieving some great results.

I think in contrast, Mr Chair, if we look at going into the 2012 election campaign where boot camps were a clear strategy of this government, in contrast the Labor Party also had a boot camp policy but, Mr Chair, their boot camp policy was not subject to an expression of interest tender process. Their boot camp policy was direct funding to a Gold Coast boot camp provider without any checks and balances, without any procurement process and without any probity advisors. The documentation will be here, Mr Chair, which we will table later, where Anna Bligh, the former Premier, announced the boot camp. Incidentally, we gave the tender to the group that they were going to fund and they are running a fantastic program, the Kokoda Challenge program and the Hard Yakka program at the Fraser Coast. So compare and contrast how we went about this. We set up independent procurement processes but at the end of the day, the government and the minister in charge have to make a call. If it is not my view and the Director-General's view that the camp will provide the outcomes that the government intended when we announced it at the election, then that is the prerogative of the government to ensure. I am glad we did, Mr Chair, because we did not want another incident like Cairns. We have not had an incident like that in Cairns. We have four boot camps. We are changing kids' lives. We have a 93 per cent success rate in terms of non-reoffending and 83 per cent for the Far North Queensland boot camp.

CHAIR: Mr Attorney, perhaps it might be an appropriate time for you to give an update of the outcomes of the sentence boot camp at Lincoln Springs.

Mr BLEIJIE: I attended the Lincoln Springs Boot Camp with my colleagues Gavin King, the member for Cairns, and Michael Trout. Beyond Billabong are providing the camp and Boyd Curran, who, incidentally, won the Anna Bligh premiership award for excellence in training programs for young people. It was great to see a program that had been recognised by both sides of politics, both at the federal and state level. In fact, not only did Boyd Curran win Anna Bligh's premiership medal for excellence, but also the program they are running won federal government awards and financial assistance from the federal government. In fact, I am sure, if memory serves me correctly,

a former Indigenous affairs minister for the Labor Party is on record as saying how great this program was. So it is fantastic that Boyd Curran and Beyond Billabong are doing such a fantastic job.

As we said, the sentenced youth boot camp is established. It has been working well with young offenders since December 2013 to reduce their offending and teach them skills to assist in future development. We did change the legislation, though, to introduce in the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill the mandatory boot camp order. We had a particular issue in Townsville in that on some occasions five cars were being stolen in any given evening on a Friday and Saturday night. That program is proving to be particularly popular in the area in Townsville that had that particular issue. I met a young fellow at the boot camp—an Indigenous young fellow. His name was Walter and he had been at the camp. He had been in jail in the detention centre before. He then was referred to the camp at Lincoln Springs, which they call Valley of Lagoons, and he had participated in that program. He greeted me on the day as a former participant in the boot camp and he is now mentoring other young Indigenous kids at the boot camp. If he did not have that opportunity, he would likely be back on the street. He would likely be back in the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, which is where most of the young offenders in Townsville end up. This is all about diverting—diverting our young kids from detention centres into something else. He would not have had the opportunities that he had had he not attended the boot camp. I have to say that that young fellow and the other young kids I met there who are participating in the camp are now actively encouraging and engaging in programs. They are going back to the camp to talk to young offenders who are at the camp. We are seeing fantastic results.

Mr DILLAWAY: Attorney-General, just going on a little bit more from what you have just suggested as the outcomes from the boot camps, are you able to give the committee an expected forecast as to the economic benefits to Queenslanders resulting from the outcomes achieved through your boot camp program?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The costs incurred in conducting the trial youth boot camp could potentially result in longer term economic benefits for Queenslanders, including a reduction in youth detention centre costs and harm to the community. I recall that the cost of an adult in a detention centre is around $70,000 or $80,000. A youth participant in detention needs a lot more than that, somewhere around $150,000 to $200,000 a year. Obviously that is at the taxpayers' cost, so we have to do everything we can to try to avoid that cost. As at 30 June, the sentenced youth boot camp had been running for just over six months and has had 28 young people commence the program. In March 2014 we introduced the mandatory sentencing boot camp for recidivist motor vehicle offenders from Townsville to combat the high level of motor vehicle crime in the city. The capacity of the boot camp centre and program will now be increased to over 100 young people per year with the forecast cost of the program increasing to $5.33 million for 2014-15.

If these 100 young people are not provided with the opportunity to be diverted away from crime with the sentenced youth boot camp program and were sentenced to detention for the same period as the boot camp order, this would cost the government an estimated $14.98 million per annum. Let me repeat that: if those 100 young people who we are diverting from a detention centre were not going to boot camp but were going back to detention centres, it would cost the taxpayer $14.98 million as opposed to $5.33 million for the 2014-15 period. The sentenced youth boot camp program is expected to provide a potential longer term saving of $9.65 million per annum in detention costs. There are many other economic benefits that are more difficult to cost such as reduced harm to victims, property damage, young people's participation in employment, economic contribution to the community, safer communities and a reduction in the cycle of intergenerational offending. Importantly, it will reduce the flow into adult offending, which costs the community an estimated $177.63 per day to keep an adult offender in custody.

In terms of the longer term benefits ultimately when I talk about the boot camps, we talk about getting these kids a job and an education. The problem with youth detention centres is, yes, we do have education in the centres and we have programs in the centres, but it is very much a different attitude and culture within a detention centre because the detention centre focus is very much on community safety whilst the boot camps, although having community safety at the forefront, are about the individual. It is about making sure that the individual concerned leaves the boot camp a happier person. They are more skilled in terms of job opportunities and developments. A lot of the young kids who have gone through the boot camp, particularly the sentenced youth boot camp, will in fact end up with jobs at cattle stations because it is a working cattle station. In fact, I have ridden a horse twice in my life, and the second time was at the youth boot camp. The young

people in the boot camp were training me in terms of horsemanship. That is an experience that those young people would never have had at a detention centre and would never have had the opportunity given the homes or the environments which they came from. It is about turning their lives around. What we are seeing in some of the early outcomes, bearing in mind this is a trial, is that these kids are getting their lives turned around.

CHAIR: I have a follow-up question about that. Whilst I appreciate it is a trial, what are your inclinations in terms of expanding the boot camp service into the south-east such as the Ipswich, Boonah, Beaudesert and Toowoomba regions?

Mr BLEIJIE: As I travel around the state I hear from communities about the positive response to revitalising front-line services and the positive response to crime and law and order with our legislation and the positive impacts that the boot camps are having on young people. I have to say that the former government recognised boot camps and the response they can have because—and I am happy to table this article for the benefit of committee members—I have an article from the *Brisbane Times* in 2012 and the headline reads 'Bligh pledges $1 million for Kokoda Challenge', which essentially was the boot camp. So the former government recognised the positive aspects of boot camps, so much so they in fact produced a policy document on it where one of their actions—not talk but actions—was to invest $1 million over four years to support 100 vulnerable or at-risk young Queenslanders to participate in the Kokoda Challenge youth program where they will walk the Kokoda Track, provide an additional $300,000 grant to support the establishment of Camp Kokoda and critical capital works like roadshows, four-wheel drive and improvements. So the former government recognised it. We recognise it. I recognise that there are lots of members of parliament who want boot camps operating around the state. I know that I have had the member for Toowoomba North have a discussion with me. The member for Beaudesert and the member for Ipswich West have had a discussion with me. The member for Morayfield has had a discussion with me about expanding these programs.

I represent the electorate of Kawana and at the Anzac Day ceremony I attended a very nice ceremony at Meridan State College. A young fellow at the morning tea break came up to me. I had never met this young fellow. I think he was in year 11. He came up to me whilst the principal was standing next to me and he said, 'Sir, I want to thank you for saving my life.' I had no idea in what context he was referring to. I was very humbled by the suggestion but of course inquired as to what he was talking about. A few months earlier he had completed the Hervey Bay boot camp, the Hard Yakka boot camp trial. He had gone off the rails at school. He was not attending school. He had disengaged with his family and his parents. The school referred this young individual to the Hard Yakka boot camp at Hervey Bay. I am immensely proud when a year 11 student who is attending school commemorating Anzac Day comes up to me at a morning tea break and says, 'You've saved my life.' It is not me; it is the great work that the boot camp providers are doing. We simply make the policy and give the investment and commitment to that. That young person says that they certainly would not be where they are now. When the young person left I talked to the principal at the school and I asked what the young fellow was talking about. I asked if it was true and if he participated and what the story was, and she said absolutely. He had participated in the program and come back from the program. He is back at school. He has re-engaged with his family and I think they were undertaking counselling services. A part of the boot camp process is a mentoring program to make sure that once they are on track they stay on track. I have not heard an update recently with respect to this young fellow, but I am immensely proud of not only the team in the department—the youth justice team—that have been distributing these programs but also the boot camp providers for literally turning the lives of these young people around. So, in answer to your question, I would love to—

CHAIR: I do have a follow-up question, though. I am just curious in that you mentioned the mentoring aspect of it, because it is obviously important to ensure that the person stays on track because a lot of difficulties with youth offenders is that they sometimes recommunicate with their old colleagues et cetera. Can you give us some enlightenment as to the mentoring such as how long it goes for, if you have any details about that?

Mr BLEIJIE: The sentenced youth boot camp is a 28- to 30-day program, but we have really left capacity for the providers to adjust that accordingly if they need to, because some providers who have skills in this area may say that we can deliver a 21-day program to achieve the objectives. We do have a diverse group of the not-for-profit sector running these places like PCYC in Rockhampton that runs its camp, Hard Yakka and then Beyond Billabong operating the North Queensland boot camp and the Kokoda Challenge operating the Gold Coast boot camp. So we

have left it very much to them to design a program, but the intent of the program is for the sentenced youth boot camp to have approximately a 28- to 30-day intensive program at camp and then it can be a six- to 12-month mentoring program after that.

One of the benefits of the sentenced youth boot camp and the young people I was talking to when I visited Lincoln Springs boot camp was that there were a couple of the mentors on the day when we met the young people and they make sure that they are going to school. They make sure they are participating. For instance, they might be doing Meals on Wheels preparation for the local Townsville community or Cairns community. The mentor keeps them on track. Unfortunately, on many occasions they come from a very dysfunctional family environment—not all Queenslanders are blessed with proper functioning families—but we must not discard the family. Too much emphasis—and I think this was borne out in the Carmody commission of inquiry into child protection—is on what we do and spend at the end of the day to fix the issue and stop them going to jail. The best way to stop both adult offenders and young offenders from going to jail is to go back where it starts. Where did the relationship break down? Was it the family? Is it the gangs they are involved in? If we can go back and understand the story and rebuild and repair some of the relationships with the family, then that is a better start than what we have been doing in the last 15 years in Queensland.

CHAIR: Back to the future, so to speak.

Mr BYRNE: Continuing this discussion about boot camps, you have again reflected on the email dated 21 August from your director-general to your Chief of Staff which expressed some concerns about the tender process to that point, and I will go to some of that if we get the opportunity in a moment. What we did not know when you tabled that document was the director-general's advice to you, which is bizarre by any government measure that I have ever had exposure to in the past, was prompted by an email from your Chief of Staff to the Attorney-General asking for that advice. How usual is that practice where your Chief of Staff is seeking documented advice virtually on the day a decision is being announced?

Mr BLEIJIE: I suspect in all ministerial offices and departments we actually speak and communicate with the director-general on a daily basis—sometimes more than the DG probably wants of us—but that would be no different to any department where, to run government effectively on behalf of the people of Queensland, you have to communicate with your director-general. We do it on a daily basis, many times a day.

Mr BYRNE: This request was made, by your own admission this morning, at some point before the 21st. The decision was already made. Surely communication would have been fully and frankly revealed prior to the decision being made that you said occurred some time shortly before the 21st. Why is your Chief of Staff communicating in retrospect backfilling this arrangement?

Mr BLEIJIE: The email was a confirmation of earlier discussions, and you may be guided by the email from the chief of staff and the director-general back where he says, 'I confirm that over the past few weeks discussions were ongoing about the whole process.' The email—

Mr BYRNE: Can you table the minutes of those discussions?

Mr BLEIJIE: The email confirmed it, but the point is—and I just say this—that the tender process was undertaken, there were probity advisers put in place, I was not satisfied, the director-general was not satisfied that the outcomes of the tender process were in the best interests of Queenslanders and, ultimately, at the end of the day, we said at this estimates hearing last year that we were not going to allow community safety to be put at risk by the processes of what happened at Kuranda, and it has not been put at risk because the boot camps have now been operating at that particular camp for 12 months quite effectively.

Mr BYRNE: Well, we will get to the essence of whether we appropriately followed the procurement processes. In that correspondence from the director-general, he points out the fact that there is a police officer on the panel and that the PCYC was one of the nominated applicants and that that raised concerns about the appearance of a conflict of interest, even though you were satisfied that there was no actual conflict of interest. Was this a significant consideration in deciding not to award the tender to the PCYC?

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, it is one of the considerations.

Mr BYRNE: If that is the case, why wasn't this matter raised with the Rockhampton submission, given that there was a police officer present on the PCYC submission? Why wasn't it similarly reflected on that occasion—just on the basis of consistency, after all?

Mr BLEIJIE: As I said, it was one of the considerations and there were many considerations we took—whether the groups had the runs on the board, whether they had community support, whether they had member of parliament support. As I said, it was one of the considerations for Hervey Bay, amongst lots of considerations.

Mr BYRNE: So for Hervey Bay you ruled out the PCYC because of this conflict supposedly. You did not consider that in terms of your consideration at Rockhampton. Then when you looked back at Hervey Bay, in ruling out the PCYC you did not go to the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth or anyone except the 10th rated recommendation, which you decided was the best value for money for Queensland. Is that correct?

Mr BLEIJIE: I formed the view that it was the best boot camp for Queensland and the results speak for themselves. We were right.

Mr BYRNE: How is the question of experience being dealt with here? What experience in operating boot camps was the decisive criteria used for you? When we looked at the reading of the document, the requirement in the expression of interest was 'evidence of the outcomes achieved from previous programs'. The evaluation work sheet from the panel for Hard Yakka rated them as zero—I repeat: zero. Despite your suggestions that they had some fantastic record, your own independent evaluation said they had zero, where other offerers were rated at four to five in that criteria. Did you seek any further information from Hard Yakka that would change your view about the zero rating from the tender panel?

Mr BLEIJIE: The tender panel may have said that, but what I said is in considering which would be the best group to provide the best boot camp in that particular area I was guided by many things—one of which was local support. As I read out before, this particular organisation, Oz Adventures, has many, many community groups supporting it, both business and not-for-profit groups, but they also had been operating a boot camp. I am not sure why the evaluation panel made that recommendation, but the point is that I discounted that to the fact that one only has to pick up the local newspaper in that area and find stories from former participants in the boot camps and stories from parents of participants at the boot camp to show that it actually had a boot camp that was operating, the land was there and it was quite effective.

Mr BYRNE: Do you understand your obligations in exercising your delegations? You talk about the basis of information and the information you apparently have exclusively available only to yourself as the Attorney-General. Do you understand your obligation in terms of documenting a basis of decision that makes for transparent decision making consistent with the procurement policy of the state? Do you understand that? If so, where is the documented statement of reason?

CHAIR: Member for Rockhampton, it is the same question. I have recorded probably the last three questions which really are asking the same thing.

Mr BYRNE: Well, they are not. They are building evidence from the Attorney-General relating to this matter which I have very substantial concerns about. They are quite different questions. I am asking does the Attorney understand—

CHAIR: This will be the last question.

Mr BYRNE: Does the Attorney understand his obligations under exercising his delegations in terms of documenting a statement of reasons and making that publicly available? Also, does the Attorney understand the flowthrough back to the other tenderers who are required to receive advice from government about why they were precluded from the tender? Has any of that been done in this process?

CHAIR: Member for Rockhampton, that is the same question as the zero et cetera. You have been through this three times so unless you ask something that is different I am going to allow somebody else on the panel to ask questions.

Mr BYRNE: On how many occasions, Attorney, have you overturned the recommendations of tender evaluation boards within your department since you have been the minister?

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, I would not have that detail.

Mr BYRNE: Is it one, 20, 100?

CHAIR: He just said that he did not have the detail. That could be taken on notice. I call the member for Broadwater.

Miss BARTON: Mr Attorney, if we could move to a different topic. I want to look at how the department has particularly revitalised front-line services. Could you provide some detail on what is happening with regard to commemoration certificates?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. We have done a couple of things in relation to commemoration certificates, and I will do this in the order of the commemoration certificates we have. For births, deaths and marriages, we have a normal original birth certificate that one obtains when they are born, as well as a death or marriage certificate for that matter. We have instigated a few commemorative birth certificates, including from when Prince George was born. We had a special approval from the palace in terms of a special commemorative birth certificate for people born in that particular year when Prince George was born. I have got to say that we had a great response to that. I think 8,000 to 10,000 Queensland babies took up the opportunity to have that birth certificate.

We are also looking very much at historical records and going online for a lot of our services to make sure historians have information that is easier to obtain. The most recent commemorative birth certificates include three around the Anzac centenary and a Queensland maroons certificate. In the last financial year, over 20,000 commemorative certificates were purchased through births, deaths and marriages. The recent State of Origin commemorative certificate competition received over 10,000 votes and over 5,000 pre-orders for the winning certificate. We had four certificates available and we launched them at Parliament House. We had a Chevron, which was the ultimate winner and which received the majority of the votes. Unfortunately we did not win this series of State of Origin, but the certificates are still available—not only for Queenslanders born this year but for any Queenslander who is proud in their sport and proud of their state—and they can order one of these maroon certificates. The winner was in fact a Chevron design. Despite my best efforts to have the artwork with a cane toad design get over the line, unfortunately it lost completely; it came last.

CHAIR: That is a good thing, Mr Attorney.

Mr BLEIJIE: It just shows that people do want commemorative certificates but they still are very conservative in their view of birth certificates. So that was good, but I think the most important is the centenary of the Anzac and the birth certificates that we are going to have available that we will be releasing shortly for those. We have instigated a lot of commemorative birth certificates. I think we should at some stage review our birth certificates because some of the designs are getting quite old and outdated. If anyone has any suggestions on any of these issues then we are always happy to take Queenslanders' advice.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Attorney. I might change the subject because I am particularly interested in our courts of course. Can you outline what steps are being taken to support the work of the Queensland courts in administering the area of justice in our great state?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Queensland courts play an important role in both the administering of justice in Queensland and also in terms of making sure we have a society and a court system where people can access justice, they can equal justice to law and we must obey the rule of law. I am very proud that over the last couple of years, although we have seen some of our case load in our courts increasing, we have seen the clearance rates of our courts certainly be assisted by the judicial officers. Also, a lot of the administration of justice of course occurs at the ground level with our departmental staff when one goes into a courtroom and lodges documentation. I know at times lawyers might find it a bit frustrating in times and delays and so forth, but our courts are extremely busy. I think the heads of jurisdiction have done a great job in making sure that the courts continue to provide that level of service that we need.

As we look at your question a little further, the functions and the duties and the powers in the Magistrates Court are obviously exercised by the Chief Magistrate head of jurisdiction, the Deputy Chief Magistrate, the regional coordinating magistrates and the coordinating magistrates. Regional coordinating magistrates control the courts within a particular region. The magistrates and coordinating magistrates receive an additional allowance to reflect the management responsibilities that they have and that they exercise within their powers. Management of the court sittings, with reduced levels of acting judicial officers, has meant existing resources have been deployed effectively and efficiently to ensure prompt disposition of matters. This is only one of a range of strategies deployed to manage the courts effectively and efficiently within the available resources.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has invested $3.8 million into the Community Justice Group Program for the 2014-15 financial year. From this investment, 52 community justice groups are funded throughout Queensland, with a majority of groups located in

North or Far North Queensland. In fact I visited one of your own community justice groups, Mr Chair, and saw the great work they are doing in your region. The grants provided by my department relate to two primary activities—the making of cultural submissions to the courts and the identification and promotion of supporting programs that assist the judiciary in their decision making.

In the upcoming year, I will support the increase in jurisdiction and numbers of judicial registrars that will give the Queensland community more timely access to justice. Judicial registrars are a cost-effective and efficient way of disposing of less complex matters, including call-overs where there is no need for a full consideration of a magistrate. The appointment of judicial registrars is an innovative service delivery approach that will reduce court waiting times and increase the efficiency of the justice system. It is proposed that 2014-15 will see additional judicial registrars placed in the Southport and Brisbane Magistrates Court and the Brisbane coroners court with the opportunity to circuit the surrounding courts.

During this financial year, amendments were made to the Bail Act 1980 and the Justices Act 1886 to enable the conduct of a bail proceeding outside of a Magistrates Court, district or division using video or audio link technology. This encourages the use of shared judicial resources and ensures the efficacy of the court to hear applications. These amendments are being supported by the provision of three additional videoconferencing suites to both the gulf and the cape areas and an additional 21 videoconferencing units across the courts in the upcoming 2014-15 financial year.

CHAIR: I am particularly interested in the justice of the peace scheme that is operating in QCAT. Can you inform the committee as to how that is proceeding?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. This is a commitment that we took to the 2012 election dealing with justices of the peace and making sure that justices of the peace could more fully participate in the justice system. We have set up a trial program and we have five trial sites across Queensland—in Ipswich, Southport, Maroochydore, Brisbane and Townsville. The idea of the program is to ease the burden on magistrates and QCAT. Members will know that we used to have about 22 tribunals in the state and the tribunals were amalgamated into one super tribunal in 2009 with the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and we dealt with effectively the Small Claims Tribunal and so forth. It is all in one tribunal now.

There has been pressure placed on QCAT, which is currently under review, to make sure that they look at these matters in a timely way. The JPs QCAT program, which is very much supported by the JP associations, entitles two JPs to sit at a bench and deal with minor civil disputes under $5,000. So in these five trial sites which have been operating for a little under a year now, we have got over 130 JPs participating in the program—one of whom must have legal qualification when two of them sit at the bench. They are dispensing justice for matters under $5,000. If I can get you the statistic of the number of matters that have been held by the JPs, they have heard over 3,200 matters. So as at 30 June 2014, JPs who have been appointed to QCAT have heard over 3,200 matters dealing with the delivery of front-line justice services. If the JPs were not delivering that service, that would be delivered by magistrates in regional Queensland or adjudicators or members of QCAT. So what we have seen effectively is time slashed.

If I can give you an example, the trial has also delivered lower levels of adjournment, complaint and appeal, and the overall time to hear all minor civil disputes in QCAT has almost been halved, from six weeks to 3.3 weeks. It could not have happened any other way than our JPs getting in there dispensing justice. I have attended the JP forums across the state where I have seen probably over 5,000 JPs in groups myself and our JP branch has seen a lot more than that. When I go to the electorates of members of parliament and see all these JPs, the feedback that I am getting is that JPs feel very much part of the system and the process and they are enjoying the program. Once we have finalised the trial, I would love to see it expanded across Queensland because I think the preliminary results we are seeing from the trial—the halving of the time taken in QCAT matters—would mean for the mum and dad on the street less time to get matters heard before QCAT. There is capacity to look at the threshold increasing—JPs handling more matters—and this will be of particular assistance in our rural and remote areas of Queensland where magistrates will be able to get on with the higher duties of a magistrate and the JPs will be able to deal with the lower end matters. One never likes to conclude things before the trial is finished, but the interim advice that I am getting on the ground and also through the department is that it has been very successful.

CHAIR: Is there any suggestion that, subject to the pilot scheme being rolled out, JPs ought to receive a recognition or qualification other than qualified if they, in fact, participate in court processes? Is that something you anticipate, or is that something that has not been considered as yet?

Mr BLEIJIE: I do not think it is necessary as yet because we have about 84,000 JPs in Queensland. When I say JP, I am talking about justice of the peace, justice of the peace (qualified), JP (C.dec), JP (Magistrates Court) and commissioner for declarations. We have about 84,000 at the moment. The QCAT trial does not give them a complete distinction; they are not JP (QCAT). They have QCAT training because every JP that participates in the QCAT program actually undertakes training through QCAT, but it is not necessary at this stage to move them to a level of permanency. We should be looking at reducing the classifications of JPs. Unfortunately, we had a problem in the mid-nineties when the JP branch undertook the last review of the JP system and classifications. Of that 84,000, we have JPs (C.dec) from under the old scheme. They do not have stamps and do not have official numbers, which does lead to an issue of potential fraud in that people are able to sign as a JP without identification. That does lead to an issue. We have the structure of commissioner for declarations and justice of the peace (qualified)—they are the two main ones. Of course, JP (Qualified) can do a lot more things: issue warrants for arrests and be called by the police at two o'clock in the morning if a youth justice participant is arrested. JPs can then go down and witness the interview being undertaken.

Mr DILLAWAY: Attorney, I would like to thank you. I think Bulimba was the first place that you attended a JP forum. Hopefully we will have you out there before the end of the year again. As part of our government's commitment to front-line services, I wonder if you could update the committee a little bit more on what has been achieved overall in the justice of the peace branch?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. One of the things we wanted to do with the JP branch was to effectively change the JP branch from being a reactionary unit of public administration to being proactive, engaging with JPs more, feeding out information to JPs, holding more workshops across the state. The JP branch—and I have to thank everyone who works in the JP branch; we have had a lot of reform in the last two years—used to conduct training for JPs. We do not do that anymore. We have saved money by outsourcing the training of the JPs to three organisations: the Sarina Russo jobs academy, TAFE Queensland and also the QJA, which is the Queensland Justices Association. They now conduct all the training for new JPs. That has meant that our public servants in the JP branch have actually been able to go out and deliver front-line services for JPs, be responsible to JPs, be responsible for JPs and talk to JPs. We have had an extraordinary number of forums where we go out for free to JPs; we invite them through the local members of parliament to forums across the state. We talk to JPs directly. We usually bring the Adult Guardian along to talk about state issues, capacity issues and documentation, for instance, enduring power of attorney and advance health directives. We have had very much a success.

When members of parliament have invited us out to their electorates, we have seen thousands and thousands of JPs. Not only do we upskill the JPs at those forums, but we also thank and congratulate the JPs who are working for us in the justice system for the work they do and we give them certificates. JPs are able to be awarded 25-year, 40-year, 50-year and 60-year certificates. In the last two years I have had the pleasure of giving out a few 60-year certificates to Queenslanders who have been justices of the peace for 60 years and certainly a lot of 25, 40 and a few 50-year certificates as well. They are doing a tremendous job right across the state, but it is important for the JP branch to actually be more engaged in the delivery of this service.

There is another thing we want to do. Put it this way: you do not become a JP for the income because there is no income; it is against the legislation to be gifted or paid anything other than under the QCAT trial where they get $100 a day for incidentals. Everything about being a JP is a burden on the person. We have a great Justices of the Peace in the Community program where JPs sit at shopping centres, town halls and libraries. We give them a nice maroon shirt. Although we have invested another $3½ million into the Queensland JP system, I would like to come to the situation where we can thank our JPs by not charging them for some of the stationary, for instance, stamps. I had a situation once when I was in opposition and I was the member for Kawana where a JP handed in their stamp. They were having a bit of a blue at the time because they could not get a new stamp without paying $25, or whatever the cost was. That might not seem like a lot of money, but for a pensioner who goes out every day doing JP work delivering this type of service, it can be a lot of money. If there are ways that we can adjust the system, adjust what we do in the JP branch to give the JP something back, then I would be very much inclined to look at that.

We complete surveys. At every JP forum that I do we complete surveys. We want to make sure that the JPs are hearing from us. Some of our other initiatives, if the committee is interested, include an online app for phones so people do not have to go to a website. Instead, they can go to an app and they can find a JP and there are frequently asked questions. I am a JP. That has been a great service. We also have a JP Advisory Council, which was previously abolished. We have re-established it. With all due respect to the public servants behind me, it is not an advisory council made up of public servants; it is actually an advisory council made up of JPs giving me advice on what they think we should be doing to help and assist JPs. The JP Advisory Council has implemented a voluntary code of conduct. That came from this council of JPs. More recently, they have introduced a mentoring program. So every new JP has a mentor attached to them just to help them through the system. We have made it mandatory for all training; all JPs have to have training. Under the old regime, you could either go and do an exam, or you could go get trained and both could then become a JP. We have now amalgamated that and you have to be trained now to become a JP, and that is proving quite successful. The feedback I am getting from members of the community and JPs is that they are very much liking the mentoring program.

Mr WATTS: One of the great things I see is people out in shopping centres signing things. That sometimes stops some in my community who need things signed coming into our office where we have a JP. I am interested in the signing sites and if there are any future plans to expand them or to know what has happened in the past with signing sites. I see them in the shopping centres and I think it is a really good initiative that people know they are there on a regular basis.

Mr BLEIJIE: I agree entirely. The more shopping centres we can include in the JPs in the Community program, the better. I was recently at a few JP areas. I went to Ashgrove with the Premier and spoke to his JPs on a Saturday morning. They told me of their experiences about their particular JPs in the Community program. I have been to Far North Queensland to talk to the JPs in that area and the Gold Coast. Last weekend I was at Brisbane Central with Mr Cavallucci and talked to JPs at both Brisbane Central and Stafford. I note the community support that Bob Andersen also gave the JPs on that particular day. It was fantastic to hear about the JPs all turning up very proudly in their JPs in the Community shirts. If we can do more, we certainly will. The only way we can achieve that, though, is by restructuring the JP branch. We have to get it out of the training area and let people like the JP associations, the QJA, do the training. We still own the course and we still develop the course, but that allows our public servants in the JP branch to go and deliver a lot more of these front-line services. It really has to be community driven. We do not just want to go and impart, 'The JP branch thinks this is a good place to have a community centre.' We really need it to be through the JP community associations or local members. If we are requested, if you have a particular area in which you want more JPs in the community, then we are more than happy to work with any member on that. I thank the members who have had me out to their areas wanting me to speak to their JPs about these important things.

Mr WATTS: Toowoomba is in your diary.

Mr BLEIJIE: Toowoomba is in my diary? Very good.

Mr CHOAT: I would like to change the focus a little bit to the Office of Fair Trading, if I may, but still in keeping with the themes that we have discussed about young people and youth. Might I say it is always good to see that your department also does provide for those young people who do behave themselves, which is obviously the overwhelming vast majority. Could you update the committee on initiatives undertaken by the Office of Fair Trading to educate young Queenslanders about being savvy consumers?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is very important because, as I said, I am a father of three. I have an 11-year-old daughter, an eight-year-old daughter and a four-year-old son. Thankfully, I have prevented this for a couple of years, but now my 11-year-old daughter is wanting to engage with her friends at school with text savvy devices and all sorts of things—chat programs. My wife and I have at all stages in the last couple of years stopped that from happening until the last couple of weeks when it just became too much of an issue in the family household not to look for something for my daughter to communicate using her device. However, it leads then to big problems as a community. We have seen bullying in schools because of these devices. Mobile phones and so forth used to be banned from being taken to schools and now schools teach with these electronic devices. One of the areas, to answer your specific question about the Office of Fair Trading and savvy consumers, is the campaign that we run for young school students, the Buy Smart Competition. That is about making sure that young kids understand the risks associated with these smart devices. Yes, it is easy to communicate, but we have seen the potential problems that exist. I was horrified when we

were talking to a year 7 group about what the Department of Justice and Attorney-General does and what I do as Attorney-General. We were talking about online bullying and how Attorneys-General across the Commonwealth are trying to deal with this issue. I conducted a straw poll across this year 7 group as to how many of the students had an iPhone or Samsung—all those sorts of devices. There were probably two out of a hundred kids who did not put up their hand. That just shows the world we live in now.

The Buy Smart Competition is very important because the technological advancements in these sorts of devices leads to people buying online a lot of the time. There are cons and others in our community who prey on people who do online shopping. We have undertaken some work in the fair trading office. We have spoken to over 3,800 school students to explain their rights and responsibilities in the marketplace, delivered information to over 3,000 young people at other events and functions, attended university orientation events at most Queensland universities, maintained the Get out there website dedicated to young consumers and conducted the Buy Smart Competition. Research has shown in these days of the internet and social media that young people get information about their consumer rights principally from their family and from their schools. Accordingly, a critical component of fair trading's engagement with young consumers remains the annual Buy Smart Competition that has been run since 2002.

I launched the 2014 competition at Meridan State College on the Sunshine Coast in February. This year the launch of the competition also kicked off a state-wide back to school campaign with fair trading officers speaking, as I said, to over 3,800 students across the state to explain their consumer rights and responsibilities. The aim of the competition is for students to research a consumer issue—for example, online shopping—and develop a creative and memorable way to transmit their new-found knowledge to their peers.

The Office of Fair Trading has mapped competition learnings to the school curriculum and has developed classroom resources which enable teachers to incorporate age appropriate competition activities into their classrooms. Students constantly come up with new and exciting ways to communicate their consumer messages including developing web pages, writing, performing songs, videos and board games. Last year over 1,100 Queensland students entered the competition, and the winning students were presented with prizes at a special ceremony I hosted at Parliament House. I strongly encourage all members of the House to promote the competition to all schools in their electorate. Entries for the 2014 competition close on 12 September 2014.

Finally, to finish my answer to the member, the Get out there campaign is hosted by the Office of Fair Trading. We host a website which is specifically designed for young people. The site contains information young people need—for example, they can access information about keeping their money under control, buying a car, their rights as consumers, finding the right job, protecting themselves against scams and identity fraud. During the 2013-14 period there were more than 5,200 visits to the Get out there web page. Young consumers can also download fair trading's Buy Smart app to keep on their smart phone information on consumer rights and the facts about the rules around repairs and replacements. The app also lets consumers store photographs for their receipts and gives alerts when lay-by payments are due and so forth.

Mr BYRNE: Let us keep going on with Hervey Bay. Can I ask that the questions that I put previously about the number of times the Attorney has overturned the recommendation from a tender or evaluation panel be taken on notice?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes.

Mr BYRNE: I want to note particularly a meeting referred to held on 24 February 2013 which is referred to on the Facebook page of Mr Robert Davis, the CEO of Hard Yakka. Mr Davis's Facebook post states: 'Well, we might well be a step closer. Possible future funding for Operation Hard Yakka. I spoke to the Attorney-General last night and he mentioned then funding for the program as well. Don't forget to share the e-petition, cheers Bob.' If Mr Davis was of that view at that time, do you consider those sentiments would present a potential conflict of interest for you in relation to your dealings with Hard Yakka?

Mr BLEIJIE: No.

Mr BYRNE: What other government funding, if any, has ever been provided to Hard Yakka?

CHAIR: Is that in relation to the estimates period or outside the estimates period?

Mr BYRNE: Has there been any other source of funding for Hard Yakka other than their receipt of boot camp contract?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I am not aware of the Department of Justice giving any other funding. We can check that. In terms of other government portfolios, I would not be aware of that.

CHAIR: It can only relate to the estimates period anyway.

Mr BYRNE: On 16 August at about 8.52 am you put out a media release confirming that you were finalising the tender arrangements for Cairns, Rockhampton et cetera. Are you aware that it appears from photographs posted on Mr Davis's Hard Yakka Facebook page that the accommodation blocks so integral to this proposal for their successful tender were being completed around 7 or 8 August in advance of your announcements? Do you find that unusual?

Mr BLEIJIE: No.

Mr BYRNE: When did the staff from your department book flights and commence making arrangements to announce these tenders being awarded in various locations?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I would not have that information on me in terms of booking flights and details such as that.

Mr BYRNE: At what point was Hard Yakka given a commitment from this government to fund its proposal? If he is saying in February that he has a commitment from you that you have eliminated the PCYC because of a perceived conflict of interest and now they magically come from 10th place on a tender board to be successful, I think that is a reasonable question. At what point were they made aware? Where did they get the funding from? How were these accommodation units built in advance of the tenders being awarded?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, the best answer I can give to that is that the funding provided to Hard Yakka and all our boot camp providers was not provided before the contracts were signed and was provided after the event after the boot camps had started. If they had a pre-existing established boot camp, which Hard Yakka did, then it is completely up to them to do what they want to do on their site—if they wanted to put buildings on. There were no discussions. We did not tell anyone to put buildings on site. They already had a boot camp operating and they were probably expanding their boot camp and good luck to them. They are a great provider, as many other providers are across the state.

Mr BYRNE: My next question is to the director-general. Director-General, what was your view when you received the memorandum with recommendations from Steve Armitage which recommended PCYC for Hervey Bay? What was your view at the time? Did you endorse that recommendation or that recommended course of action, or did you just note it?

Mr Sosso: According to the memorandum which I have a copy of, I noted it on 22 July.

Mr BYRNE: You said in your e-mail, and this was again mentioned by the Attorney—

CHAIR: Just for my purposes: 22 July 2013; is that it?

Mr Sosso: 2013.

Mr BYRNE: You said in your e-mail that has been referred to already on a couple of occasions here that you were concerned about the perception of a potential conflict of interest because of the inclusion of a police officer on the panel. Did you have any input into or oversight of the make-up of that panel?

Mr Sosso: No.

Mr BYRNE: When were you first made aware that a police officer was on the panel?

Mr Sosso: When I received the memorandum from Steve Armitage.

Mr BYRNE: When was the first time you raised this concern and issue you have with Steve Armitage?

Mr Sosso: When did I raise it with Steve Armitage? I cannot recall that, member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: Obviously after you received—

Mr Sosso: Obviously but in the sense that the horse has already bolted once I received the memorandum. As you would appreciate, as I said at last year's estimates hearing, I put in place a probity process that was totally independent of me. I allowed the then head of youth justice to conduct that process without interference, and I relied upon his professionalism and the integrity and the acumen of the people on those panels to produce a result that would not only serve process but also achieve best results having regard to the commitments we made at the last estimates hearing.

Mr BYRNE: That is what we expect from an appropriate procurement policy. I think that is what we are trying to get to. Wouldn't you agree that it is unfair for the government—your department—to include someone on the panel who made it impossible for that tenderer to be awarded the contract?

Mr Sosso: That is not the case at all. Why do you say it made it impossible?

Mr BYRNE: Well, that was on the basis the Attorney has already said was the reason that one of the considerations was excluded.

Mr Sosso: No, he didn't and I did not say that either. I said it was a factor.

Mr BYRNE: That is the basis of the decision surely—

Mr Sosso: Hang on, just let me finish.

CHAIR: That is what I understand the Attorney said. There are several factors. Your question almost has an assumption.

Mr BYRNE: I would like the community under the banner of transparency to understand what these factors were, the weighting given to them and the recommendation, the sign-off, the exercising of that delegation. I am very concerned. I am not worried about what happened up to the point that you received the information from the tender board. I understand there is a probity mechanism in place there. The question is what happened after this went into the minister's office? Where is the probity report from that decision? Where is the decision that supports the exercising of the minister's delegation in this matter? That is the piece that I am after.

CHAIR: I might halt you there because there are two or three questions. If you would not mind, just state the question you want to ask of the director-general.

Mr BYRNE: I have already asked it.

CHAIR: You asked two questions and I think he is entitled to one. You pick your best one and ask it.

Mr BYRNE: He can pick one.

Mr Sosso: I am not greedy, Mr Chair. Let me go back to the fundamental premise and then we will move on. What I said in that memo to the chief of staff was that I was concerned there was a potential impression, not an actual conflict of interest, in that the police officer was on the panels for both Rockhampton and the Fraser Coast-Sunshine Coast. I did not say that the fact that a police officer was on those panels automatically precluded PCYC from being a successful tenderer and in fact they were the successful tenderer for Rockhampton, but I said it raised an issue. Let me put it very bluntly: I was very disappointed that, having given the independence to people to run a probity and independent selection process, something as simple and as fundamental as that was done. I think you would say, member for Rockhampton, that was poor. I thought it was poor, too. But you can move on to question No. 2.

Mr BYRNE: Okay. Did the Attorney-General ever inform you that he might have a potential conflict of interest with Hard Yakka, especially in relation to the revelations that Bob Davis believed the Attorney-General had spoken to him about funding for that camp?

Mr Sosso: I am just trying to think now; it is a little while ago. After I received the memoranda and they were transferred to the minister's office, I left it for the minister to make the decision as to where he wanted to go. I expressed to him that I felt disappointed that a suboptimal process and a suboptimal series of recommendations were made. I indicated to him that under the Constitution and under the relevant legislation it was available for him to make another decision. I also pointed out to him that a series of unfortunate events had intervened. The legislation had been operational since the beginning of 2013. We had the Kuranda incident and still the power was vested in the Magistrates Court in Cairns to sentence people to a pre-sentence boot camp. They had the power to order a pre-sentence report and then to sentence people to a boot camp. There was no boot camp in operation. I indicated to the minister a very serious circumstance was arising whereby we had legislation in place allowing for a particular circumstance to arise—that is, diverting people from a detention centre—but there were no camps currently in existence and an urgency had moved into it. I indicated to him that I did not believe as a matter of practicality we had the luxury of basically closing the process down and moving to another tendering process. That was not an optimal result, but having regard to the seriousness of the situation, having regard to the fact that we had put the courts in an impossible situation, we had to move forward rapidly. I think they were the discussions I had with him.

Mr BYRNE: So what you are saying, which has not ever been put to me in these terms before, is that there was a time and space issue—

Mr Sosso: Yes, member.

Mr BYRNE:—that informed the decisions made and the recommendations given about the collapsing or changes to conventional procurement processes; is that correct?

Mr Sosso: Yes, I was embarrassed that that situation arose.

Mr DILLAWAY: Attorney-General, I was wondering if you could advise the committee on what the government is doing to address alcohol related violence? I welcome you to compare the government's plan in contrast to the policies of the Labor Party.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Alcohol and drug related violence is a serious issue not only in Queensland but across the nation and governments must do whatever we can to try to address these issues. We have recently released our Safe Night Out Strategy, which I would say is probably one of the most comprehensive strategies in the country dealing with alcohol and drug related violence. There are things completely different from our program and our strategy that other jurisdictions have not implemented.

I note that some of the jurisdictions are now seeing that they took the wrong approach and they are now seeing, for instance in the CBD of Sydney, where they in fact implemented earlier closing hours, that the suburbs have had an increase in violence. So although violence decreased in the CBD in Sydney and in Kings Cross, statistics show that, while people are not going there, they are completing the violence in the suburbs. This is a big issue because, in terms of police resourcing, it is far easier to be in one area—for instance the Valley in Brisbane—than to be spread around the suburbs where those issues can take place.

We widely consulted with the community—Queenslanders, stakeholders, members of the public—on issues surrounding alcohol and drug related violence in recognition that substance related violence and antisocial behaviour can happen at any time. We did develop the Safe Night Out Strategy to change the culture to promote personal responsibility, change the law to hold offenders accountable and create safe environments where young people can have a good time. We all know that a good time out is a safe night out.

Education is essential to changing the culture. The strategy we released provides for alcohol education in schools and for a public awareness campaign that will help everyone understand the expected standards of behaviour. However, the strategy also sends a clear message that there is a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to irresponsible behaviour by patrons and licensees. Patrons who refuse to leave licensed premises after being directed to do so by licensees will face tough penalties. Queensland police officers will have the authority to issue banning orders which exclude offenders from venues, areas or entire precincts.

Offenders will face tougher penalties, and coward-punch deaths will be punishable through a new offence of unlawful striking causing death. Coward punches is one of the issues that all jurisdictions have had to tackle. On that point, I have to thank the Matthew Stanley Foundation, the Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group and Ross Thompson for the great work they do in making sure the One Punch Can Kill campaign continues.

We had to come up with an offence that dealt with these issues of alcohol and drug related violence better than murder and manslaughter. Murder is never used by prosecutors because rarely you can prove intent of a drunk person. Manslaughter then is used but it opens up many defences—provocation, self-defence and accident, which under the Criminal Code has two limbs. What we had to do is come up with an offence which sits in the middle of manslaughter and murder. So we have come up with unlawful striking causing death. What that means is that if one person conducts a blow to the head or neck and ultimately this results in a fatality, they will be charged under this new offence.

Self-defence will be a defence. Provocation will not be a defence. Of the two limbs of accident—willed act and unwilled act—only one will apply. In simple terms it means that if someone is walking out of a pub or a club and they trip, fall down the stairs and their elbow blows someone to the head and they fall down and die, then that is a genuine accident. No-one could foresee that was going to happen. If, however, it is a blow to the head and neck, whether they thought that would ultimately result in the death of the individual but they deliberately punched the person in the head

or neck, then that will result in a charge under this new offence. It attracts life imprisonment but not mandatory. We have put a provision in there, though, that if one is sentenced under that new provision by the court then the court must impose a mandatory 80 per cent order, which means that the person will serve 80 per cent of their sentence.

As part of the Safe Night Out Strategy—it is a big strategy—we will be establishing the safe-night precincts. These are an extension or amalgamation of the current drink-safe precincts. We have three operating in the state—Townsville, Surfers Paradise and the Valley. The night-safe precincts will operate in 15 areas, including those three, right across Queensland. It will mean that there are a few restrictions on people. Anything that happens in there will be guided by a local board. We are, again, devolving responsibility to locals. There will be a local board set up and it will be an incorporated association. It will have a governance structure. They can apply for funding for particular programs, for instance transport. If government cannot provide transport and council cannot provide transport, this local body can apply for grants to provide transport.

There is no silver bullet for this issue and one size does not fit all. I was in Bundaberg in the past couple of weeks. The mayor of Bundaberg and some stakeholders there whom I met are very happy in relation to them achieving one of these safe-night precincts. What happens in the precinct? If there are particular licensees, there will be more obligations on licensees to make sure they are providing a safe environment. ID scanners will be required by every licensee that trades past midnight. This has been a very thorough process. It has been consulted on extensively with the Queensland community—not once, not twice but on three occasions. It has now been introduced into parliament, subject to a parliamentary inquiry.

In fact I attended Newcastle, because everyone was talking about the great work in Newcastle. Accepting that Newcastle is quite different from the Queensland entertainment environment, I attended there before we made any announcements. You asked a question to specifically compare and contrast that to the Labor Party opposition in Queensland. They announced a strategy to deal with alcohol and drug related violence, talked about Newcastle and relied in fact on Newcastle for their strategy. And then it was revealed that they actually never went to Newcastle until after they announced the strategy. For me, if you want to know if it works or does not work you have to go and talk to the people. I sat down in the clubs in Newcastle. I sat down in the pubs. I sat down with the police. I heard firsthand of the things that work and do not work. One of the things I ascertained from that investigation was that the ID scanners are proving particularly popular. One of the issues they have, though, of course, with trading hours is that what you do in one area has unintended consequences for other areas. That is young people going to the bottle-o, buying grog and then going to suburbs. You then bring the violence to homes. You then have 200 people turning up to someone's home for these parties, whereas it is far better to have an entertainment precinct where you can allocate the appropriate resources in that area.

We are a tourist destination. We want people to come to Queensland. We want Queenslanders to go out and have a great night out. But that is going to be because they have had a safe night out. A safe night out will be a great night out. It is not a silver bullet dealing with these issues. You have to comprehensively look at this issue and all sorts of things.

I have to say that we consulted extensively. The biggest issues Queenslanders wanted us to deal with have been dealt with in there in terms of changing the culture and making sure the liquor licensing division of my department has the appropriate tools, skills and resources to go after licensees that are doing the wrong thing. We need the laws appropriate to make sure patrons are doing the right thing.

In terms of the trading hours issue, we do not want to punish. Why punish the majority of good Queenslanders who want to go out and have a good night out on the town because of the sin of a few? We are not going to entertain that debate. Queenslanders through the survey did not want us to entertain that debate. What we have seen now is that rush jobs, rush policy announcements—like they did in New South Wales and like the Labor Party have done in Queensland—are now leading to more violence in the suburbs of Newcastle and now the government has to undertake an inquiry and investigation to find out how to fix that problem in their suburbs. They should have dealt with the issue at hand in Kings Cross and so forth. That is what our policy does that other jurisdictions have not done.

The Labor Party have no positive alternative policy. They just want to tell everyone, 'You are bad. You ought not go out and have a good night out on the town because the Labor Party opposition do not trust you to go out and have a good night out on the town.' Well, we in the LNP trust people. We want people to go and have a good night out. We want international tourists to

come here and have a good night out. Statistically, it is shown that in jurisdictions around the world that have reduced trading hours it is not having the effect on violence that the opposition would have Queenslanders believe. The best impact on that is a comprehensive package, which is the Safe Night Out Strategy. In fact, in Europe most venues operate 24 hours a day and they have less violence than Queensland has.

CHAIR: I might just follow up on one question in relation to the offence that hovers between manslaughter and murder. You said that self-defence will be a defence but I assume provocation is not—the homosexual defence where somebody hit on you so, so to speak—

Mr BLEIJIE: No.

CHAIR: Okay. Thank you for that.

Mr WATTS: Attorney, as you know, this is an area I am particularly interested in as a proud publican in the past, although I have no investment or otherwise at the moment with the industry. I have been involved for over 25 years on different LIAGs and different groups implementing these kinds of strategies. One of the difficulties that is always faced is the funding of initiatives. A lot of my issues would turn up at my door from other places. I am particularly interested in the support funding that will be involved in this and particularly interested from the perspective of organisations like Red Frogs and other organisations that provide some of the help to people who find themselves out on the street but in a precinct. Precincts obviously are where people want to end up, because they want to be entertained, but often they might arrive in a condition that does not allow them to enter any premises in that precinct. So I am interested in the funding and some of the other funding of initiatives that might be able to help in that area.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Like you, my family has a hospitality background. My uncle established the Ettamogah Pub in Albury-Wodonga and then we travelled to Queensland in the late eighties and he built, owned and operated the Ettamogah Pub on the Sunshine Coast. I, too, come from a background not too dissimilar from yours, Trevor. I have seen the industry change over the years. I have seen the regulation change. A lot of the things that my uncle would have been dealing with at the Ettamogah Pub at Aussie World back in the early nineties are not dissimilar to what groups and licensees are dealing with now.

I think we have now recognised that the only way to address this issue is, as I said before, with a comprehensive strategy. Comprehensive strategies cost money. We are not beating around the bush in relation to that. This Safe Night Out Strategy will cost approximately $44 million over four years to implement. We have identified across agencies the funding—$15.4 million from internal reallocation and the remaining $29.1 million from new funding.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will receive an extra $22.3 million over four years to 2017-18 to support the implementation of the strategy. From 2018-19 the department will receive $3.8 million per annum to provide continuing support for the strategy's provisions. These funds will provide additional liquor inspectors, specialist investigators who will work with the Queensland Police Service on the joint task force team, legal officers. Collectively, these new roles will assist in the implementation of the strategy's provisions for compliance testing on the prosecution of cases involving drug and alcohol related violence.

The money will also be used to support the launch of an awareness campaign for components of the strategy and a social marketing campaign to change attitudes about alcohol. We will use this money to fund drug and alcohol testing for offenders who commit serious violent offences, trial a sober safe centre in Brisbane and for the non-government sector organisations to supervise community service orders.

In addition to providing these services, the money will also be used to fund a review of the strategy one year from its commencement. So, importantly, we do not want to cut and run. We want to review what we have done and make sure it is working and see if it can be improved.

A further $8.8 million will be reallocated from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to create a pool of funding that will support the creation of local boards in each of the proposed 15 safe-night precincts. Money from the pool will be used for one-off start-up payments to help each precinct establish a local board that will take the lead in developing and implementing a community management strategy for addressing issues around alcohol and drug related violence. Funds from the pool will also be made available to help local boards with the implementation of initiatives around transport, lighting, public facilities, closed-circuit television and other components of their

community management systems. In addition to providing these funds we will also ensure that local boards have the ability to raise private funds and apply for grants from local, state and federal governments to support the ongoing development and implementation of initiatives to manage alcohol and drug related violence in the precincts.

Miss BARTON: Attorney, I wonder if we could move on to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I am wondering if you can provide an update on some of the work that has been undertaken but also the number of matters they have dealt with in the past 12 months.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions was established under the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1984 with the independent statutory positions of Director of Public Prosecutions, held by Anthony Moynihan QC, and Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, held by Michael Byrne QC. I spoke to the director yesterday. He is actually not in the state at the moment. He is helping the royal commission into child sexual abuse from a Queensland perspective. He will be down there for a couple more days.

The ODPP prosecutes criminal matters in district courts, supreme courts, mental health courts, while representing the Crown in criminal appeals in the Court of Appeal and the High Court of Australia. The office also manages criminal proceedings and committal hearings in a number of Queensland magistrate's courts—Ipswich, Brisbane Central, and limited matters in Southport.

The ODPPs primary role and function in relation to victims of crime is to provide timely information to victims regarding court processes, events and outcomes and the referral of support services and organisations. Importantly, the office's contact with victims is underpinned by the fundamental principles of justice identified in the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009.

A review into performance and resourcing of the ODPP was conducted by former director-general, Brian Stewart. Mr Stewart's report was released in June 2013. Since its release the office has established a board of executive and administrative management to lead the reform process. Changes to the organisational structure are being implemented and the early plea strategy is being developed. In terms of other reforms, including reviewing the office's case management system and data collection and reporting, the ODPP board reports quarterly to the director-general on the progress of its reforms.

The following figures are provided in relation to the office's workload. From 1 July 2013 to 13 April 2014, 30½ thousand offences were received for prosecution relating to 6,844 accused. The average number of accused referred to the office per month was 684. The average number of charges referred to the office was 3,051 per month. Some 937 committal matters were prepared and conducted, predominantly in Brisbane and Ipswich magistrate's courts, and limited matters in the Southport Magistrate's Court. Some 803 trials and 3,380 sentences and breaches were conducted in the supreme, district and children's courts. Some 88 matters were discontinued or withdrawn before committal and 220 matters post-committal. There were 283 appearances at Supreme Court bail applications. Some 511 appeals were processed, excluding Attorney-General appeals, in the Court of Appeal, High Court and District Court jurisdictions. Some 12 Attorney-General appeals against sentences were filed on behalf of the Attorney-General.

During the 2013-14 reporting period the office prosecuted a number of high-profile matters, including Brett Peter Cowan and Gerard Baden-Clay. At this point, I advise the committee that Mr Baden-Clay has been found guilty by the jury that was brought back before the court a few moments ago. I thank the prosecuting authorities in the state—the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—for the work that they do in these major trials. We have had some substantial trials in the last few years—Brett Peter Cowan and Gerard Baden-Clay today. I would not have mentioned it had a verdict not be handed down a few minutes ago.

In addition to criminal law reform, the office has a small team of civil lawyers whose role it is to confiscate the proceeds of crime. The office's confiscations unit is responsible for administering chapter 3 of the Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act and is the solicitor on the record for the Crime and Corruption Commission in respect of proceedings under chapter 2 and 2A. In relation to chapter 3 proceedings, a direct connection between the property and criminal charges must exist. The three separate schemes within the act achieve this through the confiscation without conviction, drug offender and confiscation and confiscation after conviction. The Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act came into operation on 6 September 2013. It amended the Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act 2002 by introducing two new confiscation schemes in Queensland—a scheme for recovering unexplained wealth and a serious drug confiscation scheme.

I thank the member for the question. I want to place on record my thanks, on behalf of the people of Queensland, for the way in which the Director of Public Prosecutions and all the staff proceed in these big trials, particularly trials like that of Gerard Baden-Clay that have intent media scrutiny on a daily basis, but also for the way the courts and prosecuting authorities deal with everyone involved in the process—the defendants, the victims, the victims' families. We have many support mechanisms in place.

I put on the record my thanks, on behalf of the people of Queensland, to the prosecuting authorities who I think have done a remarkable job in the Gerard Baden-Clay trial not only in terms of the prosecuting of it but the police authorities in obtaining the evidence. I cannot say much more on that particular case because it is subject to an Attorney's appeal.

CHAIR: The member for Broadwater wishes to ask a follow-up question.

Miss BARTON: Mr Attorney, in your very detailed answer you mentioned the more than 800 trials, but you also mentioned the early guilty plea scheme. I was wondering if you could provide some information on the number of trials where a guilty plea was provided on the first day of the trial compared with those cases where a guilty plea is heard earlier and what the economic impacts of that might be?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. I will give the member a shorter answer than my previous answer.

Miss BARTON: Detail is fine.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is committed to the early and appropriate disposition of matters referred for prosecution. The following data is provided in relation to matters that I am advised are dealt with the supreme, district, and children's courts of Queensland for the reporting period 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014. Some 187 matters resulted in a plea of guilty on the first day of trial and 21 matters resulted in a plea of guilty after the commencement of trial. It should be noted that 2,769 matters were resolved by a plea of guilty prior to trial.

In relation to the matters resolved in the Magistrate's Court in Brisbane Central, Ipswich and some limited matters in Southport, 171 matters were resolved either as a summary trial or as a summary plea of guilty. These matters were therefore resolved prior to being committed for trial in superior courts.

As I indicated, a review into performance and resourcing was conducted by Brian Stewart, the former DG. His report was released in June 2013. Since its release the office has established a board of executive and administration management to lead the reform process. A number of the reforms have been implemented, including changes to the structure. Importantly, the office has been developing the early plea strategy and has been engaging with other stakeholders regarding a fundamental change to the criminal justice process in Queensland. The board reports quarterly to the director-general on the progress of all DPP reforms including the early plea strategy.

CHAIR: I call the member for Ipswich West.

Mr CHOAT: Attorney-General, you mentioned in a previous answer the community benefit funds. Can I say that members of my community, particularly my great community groups, are very appreciative of the opportunities they get through this sort of funding. It really makes a great difference. Just last week I was out with a number of groups who have had the benefit of those moneys. I wanted to ask in general about the government's plans to revitalise the community benefit fund grants program to make it simpler and more user friendly for community groups, such I referred to, right around Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Community groups are the bedrock of our society. Our local bowls clubs, sporting clubs and surf clubs and the community participation in these clubs and the money they give back to our communities is unbelievable. I know that all honourable members thank all their local community groups. Some go very much unnoticed in terms of what they do every day.

The OLGR, the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, administers four grant funding programs providing one-off grants to eligible not-for-profit community organisations to fund their activities to benefit Queensland communities. At this juncture there are four programs: the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, the Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund, the Breakwater Island Casino Community Benefit Fund and the Reef Hotel Casino Community Benefit Fund.

In 2013-14 period the four funding programs received more than 6,700 applications and collectively distributed in excess of $50 million to more than 2,300 applicants. In 2012-13 the Department of Justice and Attorney-General audit unit and the Queensland Audit Office undertook two significant audits of the programs. A number of recommendations were made to increase efficiency and reduce red tape.

Additionally, recommendation 56 of the Queensland Commission of Audit's final report, released in April 2013, was for the grant programs across Queensland to be rationalised and consolidated. We have committed to implementing reform programs aimed at reducing red tape and ensuring we remain efficient and responsive to the ever-changing needs of the Queensland community.

One of the measures to achieve this and to streamline the way gambling benefits the Queensland community is to amalgamate the four programs into one fund to service the entire state. The legislation amalgamating the funds will commence on 24 August 2014. The new committee will have 12 members comprising six community representatives, five stakeholder representatives and one departmental representative.

The benefit to community groups in amalgamating the funds will be consistent funding guidelines. The one complaint I always get from the different groups that want to apply for more than one grant where they can is the different guidelines and the pros and cons of each application. We will have one guideline for all eligible organisations. The grant value, application process and organisation eligibility will be the same for all applications resulting in less time being spent time interpreting eligibility and applying for funding. All eligible organisations will have the same access to funding and improved client service, including implementation of a new, more efficient grants management database. Community organisations can have confidence in knowing that the total budget for grants will not decrease with the new state-wide funding program. Application forms and funding guidelines will be available from mid-July, with applications closing on 31 August 2014.

The other point I make on the grant process is that one of the issues that came up in the audit requirement was that a community group would put in a grant and before hearing whether they had the grant the next round would come around—pardon the pun—and they would then have to put in another application. It meant there were double ups. Some organisations received both grants for the one item. The Audit Office said that that process had to change. That was the process under the former government regime for many, many years.

We took seriously the recommendations in the Auditor-General's report. Again, we have shown that within a relatively short period of time we will not only talk the talk and walk the walk but we will action what these groups say. So we now have legislation in. There will be one body. We are in the final process of selection for the new board. I can assure the committee that it will be Queensland representative. There are will be rural and regional stakeholders and community groups represented as well as the stakeholders, like the casinos, that ultimately fund the programs. We will announce the new board very shortly.

CHAIR: I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: Before I commence, can I just flag that I would like our committee to have a meeting prior to the resumption of our hearings at two o'clock, if that is all right. My question is to the Attorney-General and relates to the Attorney-General's answer to question on notice No. 18 and I ask: how did the government decide that $3 million would be available to gift to the Liberal National Party, the Labor Party and the Katter party? This relates to the policy development funding.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chairman, that is decided by the Treasurer and is not actually subject to this committee's deliberations. That is actually a matter for the Treasurer to ascertain each year.

Mr WELLINGTON: I have a follow-up question. Why are the political parties not required to account for how the money is proposed to be spent?

Mr BLEIJIE: In relation to that question, the member will no doubt be aware that the former government introduced a system whereby in 2009 Queensland taxpayers were providing funding of about $3.9 million to candidates and political parties. The member will also be aware that the former government, in the dying days of government—prior to 2012—introduced a new regime that took the $3.9 million taxpayer funding to political parties to $24 million. A large portion of that was administration funding—that is funding to administer an organisation. I recall at the time the Independents also received a level of administration funding.

Mr WELLINGTON: Nothing to the tune that the political parties have, with respect Mr Attorney-General, and every cent had to be accounted for. With respect, your party did not have to account for one cent.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin—

Mr WELLINGTON: Let's put it in context.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin, this is estimates. You are entitled to ask questions. You have asked the question and the answer we are entitled to receive.

Mr BLEIJIE: We went from a situation in 2009 where taxpayers were funding $3.9 million to the Labor Party's regime of over $24 million for political parties and candidates. We ascertain that the arrangements under our new legislation will save anywhere from $4 million to $6 million, and potentially more. We are saving the taxpayer millions and millions of dollars compared to what the Labor Party burdened taxpayers with.

Mr WELLINGTON: The follow-up comment is that, as a result of the evidence the Attorney-General has just provided, there is no connection whatsoever through the heading—

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin—

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Attorney-General.

CHAIR: I just need to the question.

Mr WELLINGTON: The question is: what connection is there through the heading of the policy development fund and where the money is actually spent by the political party? What is the connection? What is the accountability? Is there any?

Mr BLEIJIE: The easiest answer I can give to the member for Nicklin is that political parties are established and their one role is to develop policies to make sure that we have good government. The Liberal National Party is there to make sure that the Labor Party does not return to wreak havoc and chaos in the state of Queensland as it did for over 12 years. I think Queenslanders can see that in the last few years we are a government with a strong plan for a brighter future. We have revitalised front-line services and made Queensland the safest place to raise a family. Political parties, by their nature, are there to make sure that chaotic Labor Party policies and Independents, like we are seeing in the Senate in the federal parliament at this time, are held accountable and to make sure that we have good government in the state.

CHAIR: On that note, the committee will now break for lunch. The hearing will resume at 2 pm with the continued consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisations within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Proceedings suspended from 1.01 pm to 2.00 pm

CHAIR: The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will continue with the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. The committee welcomes the attendance of the member for Inala and opposition leader, Ms Annastacia Palaszczuk, who has joined this committee for the next session. For the first question, I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Chair. Good afternoon, Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: Hello.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I refer to page 5 of the SDS where it says that one of the strategic objectives of the department is to improve the administration of Queensland's justice system. Specifically, I wanted to ask some questions about the provision of court transcripts. You announced that the successful tenderer for the provision of court transcription services was Auscript in February last year. I note that your diary showed that you had a meeting with Peter from Auscript prior to the contracts being awarded and you have said you met with him while you were in opposition. Were you aware that Peter Wyatt of Auscript and another company that Peter is a director of, InterRISK, had all donated money to the LNP?

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I was not aware of that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You were not aware at the time? Attorney, you advised by media release at the time you awarded the contract that the expected savings to Queenslanders from the outsourcing was $6 million per annum. In response to question on notice No. 17 for estimates, you advised that the actual saving is $2.4 million in its first full year of operation and that the Department

of Justice and Attorney-General is also on track to save a notional $1.2 million as a result of no longer having to maintain office space. Do you intend to put out a media release telling Queenslanders what the actual saving was, to correct the media release about the $6 million?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Considering question on notice No. 17 is tabled and I understand will be available for the public at large, I can direct the many thousands of Queenslanders who are watching this estimates process to go online and have a look, and if it is not online it certainly will be. All the details that the opposition leader has referenced are in that fulsome answer to question on notice No. 17.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. My question now is to the director-general. Good afternoon, Mr Sosso. Did you have any discussions, either in person or by telephone, with Peter Wyatt or anyone else from Auscript during the tender process for the court transcription services?

Mr Sosso: No.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Have there been any written complaints received by the department or the Attorney-General about the quality of the transcription services since being outsourced?

Mr Sosso: It is a bit difficult for me to answer that question in that the department receives so much correspondence. I would have to say it would be unlikely that we would not have received some feedback. It was a difficult transition, as you are aware. People were used to a particular provision of service. I cannot in all honesty say yes or no, but my gut feeling would be that there would have been some complaints, yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Would you be able to find out for us? Is that okay? Are you happy to take that on notice?

CHAIR: He cannot. Would you like the Attorney-General to? Attorney, you have been asked to take on notice the question of complaints to the—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I think the easiest answer is that, as the director-general said, no doubt when you restructure these things there will be some level of complaint. That information is certainly available to the Leader of the Opposition through processes under the Right to Information Act.

CHAIR: Member for Bulimba?

Mr DILLAWAY: Thank you, Chair. Just staying on Auscript, Attorney-General, could you provide an update on the rollout of Auscript transcription services in courthouses across the state?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. This was one of the first outsourced regimes in terms of the new way of looking at contestability in the private sector and more fully engaging with the government sector. Following the independent commission of inquiry led by Peter Costello, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General went straight to business and looked at what we had in our own portfolio. As you would appreciate, the implementation of the outsourced recording and transcription service model represented a wholesale change in the way recording and transcription services are delivered in Queensland courts and tribunals. A change of this magnitude has been challenging for both Auscript and the Queensland courts and the tribunals as they adjust to the new service delivery model. This model replaced the previous services provided by the State Reporting Bureau at a cost of over $12 million annually. During the first year of outsourcing, the state is estimated to have saved $2.4 million. In addition, the ownership of the recording equipment and the costs associated with its maintenance and operation have transferred from the department to Auscript. There has also been a range of notional savings achieved, approximately $1.2 million, with the department no longer having to maintain SRB office space and administer the SRB workforce.

Between 1 July 2013 and 20 June 2014, Auscript recorded 101,000 hours of proceedings and produced approximately 1.8 million folios or 6 608,000 pages of transcripts. Strategies have been implemented to manage and create an environment of continual improvement in the delivery of accurate and timely transcripts. While every reasonable effort is made by the department and Auscript to produce a quality and accurate transcript, it needs to be remembered that court rooms are not recording studios and the interaction and behaviour that can occur between participants in proceedings means it is not necessarily conducive for people undertaking the transcribing to identify every spoken word.

Monthly operational meetings continue to be held between DJAG officers and Auscript key personnel to provide a face-to-face link for the dissemination of stakeholder feedback or concerns. The department and Auscript continue to work closely with the judiciary and key stakeholders to

ensure that all stakeholder needs are being met. I point out that the judiciary is well represented within a group that has been established where they do these face-to-face monthly meetings. I understand Justice David Thomas is one of the judiciary representatives on that. From time to time, issues may arise that we try to deal with through appropriate collaboration with the judiciary. I also make the point that the SRB and the old court reporting transcript process also had its challenges and also received complaints when transcripts were produced and if there were issues they were fixed. I do not have the statistic or the figure on me, but I know that lot of State Reporting Bureau staff who worked for the department now work for Auscript delivering the same service—a better service—under the new arrangements of Auscript than they were delivering under the SRB process.

Mr DILLAWAY: Thank you, AG.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North?

Mr WATTS: Attorney, earlier on you outlined some of the steps that have been taken to support the work of the Queensland courts in administering justice. My question is: what effect have those steps had on the clearance rates in Queensland courts?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. As I said earlier, the justice system is the Magistrates Court, the District Court, the Supreme Court and a tribunal that is taking a lot of the burden and the workload off those other jurisdictions, that is, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It is always our endeavour to ensure that the courts operate as efficiently as possible. That can be done in two ways. One is with departmental assistance and government resources. To maintain an adequate independent judiciary, we must ensure that, as the Chief Justice reminds us all the time, it is a well resourced institution. Our courts are very well resourced. The department works with the judiciary on that, but also the judiciary operates within the timeliness of matters. Sometimes that can be delayed by nothing more than the trial. The latest trial I spoke about earlier today was a five-week trial, so it really depends. I can give you the statistics that you require in terms of the clearance rates. Just bear with me a minute.

CHAIR: While you are considering that, Mr Attorney, for the purposes of the record in relation to the issue, I note that the questions on notice are now published.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. In the criminal jurisdiction, there are significant increases in criminal lodgements in the Supreme, District and Magistrates courts during the year, meaning that clearance rates will not exceed 100 per cent for the 2013 financial year. For example, in the criminal jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, lodgements increased by 18.3 per cent as at 30 April 2014 compared to the same period for the previous year. At the same time, finalisations decreased by 15.1 per cent, primarily as a result of decreasing guilty pleas. In the District Court, criminal lodgements increased by 9.9 per cent over the same period and in the Magistrates Court lodgements increased by nine per cent, with finalisations of almost 6.6 per cent.

In the civil jurisdiction, the Supreme Court is the only court where the clearance rate is likely to exceed 100 per cent for the 2013-14 financial year. As at 30 April 2014, finalisations in the District Court had decreased by 11 per cent compared to the same period last year, primarily as a result of the complexity of matters and the readiness of parties to proceed, which as I said a lot of times is out of the hands of the judiciary and the department. In the Magistrates Court, civil finalisations, including domestic violence and civil claims, increased by 0.1 per cent despite lodgements increasing by 6.6 per cent.

We will continue to work with the Chief Justice, the Chief Judge and the Chief Magistrate on a regular basis to ensure our courts are adequately resourced so that we can ensure that Queenslanders have equal access and that justice is administered efficiently, but in an appropriate time as Queenslanders would expect. Particularly the Magistrates Court and the QCAT jurisdiction will be benefitted by the justice of the peace program that I talked in length about earlier.

CHAIR: Member for Ipswich West?

Mr CHOAT: Keeping with that line of questioning, a number of recommendations were made by the Commission of Audit relating to the justice portfolio. Which ones have you accepted and what has been done in terms of achieving those?

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for the question. The government accepted the majority of the Queensland Commission of Audit recommendations directed specifically at front-line service delivery. With respect to justice and court services, three of the four recommendations were accepted. Recommendation 122 focused on cost recovery and was not accepted because the

government made an election commitment that increases in lodgement fees for civil court matters for the District and Supreme courts should be limited to CPI increases. However, it should be noted that an offender levy has now been introduced to assist in recovering the court costs, but that is an offender levy. The former Labor government, I might add, introduced a new round of increases. I remember the Law Society and the Bar Association were at pains to point out how unfair that was, denying people access to justice with the increases in the lodgement fees. Not only were they increasing all the fees; in fact, they introduced new fees. We took to the 2012 election a commitment to not increase those other than by CPI. I am very proud of that, because the Labor Party often stands on a pedestal in terms of access to justice and yet they denied many Queenslanders access to justice with their unfair increases in civil and criminal lodgement fees and the introduction of new fees. As I recall, at the time the Bar Association and the Law Society were quite outspoken against the increases that the Labor Party was putting on Queenslanders, wanting to deny access to justice.

Recommendation 120 suggested that judicial resources in the court system be reprioritised to address the length of delays in criminal proceedings occurring in the Magistrates Court and Children's Court. DJAG is currently considering options for increasing the jurisdiction of judicial registrars. As I said earlier, it is proposed that 2014-15 will see additional judicial registrars placed in Southport, Brisbane and the Brisbane coroner's court, with the opportunity to circuit in surrounding courts.

Recommendation 121 advocated expanding the use of video conferencing between correctional centres and courts for all bail, procedural and committal matters. I am pleased to announce that for the 12 months ending May 2014 there were 13,76 video conferences conducted with in-custody defendants in correctional centres for court matters. That is an increase of 58.6 per cent. We will continue to drive achievements in this area. The government will also be progressing the recommendation to make greater use of ICT to drive cost savings and efficiencies in court operations by developing a 10-year blueprint for justice and court services.

Recommendation 123 of the Commission of Audit report recommended that the government expand and continue the reform process commenced with the Moynihan review. The first one was expanding the range of summary offences. I wrote to key stakeholders last year requesting their views on certain aspects of the Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Reform and Modernisation Amendment Act 2010. One of the aspects under review is the summary disposition of indictable offences. Accordingly, stakeholders' views were sought on the report's recommendation extending ticketable offences. In late 2013 the department commenced a whole-of-government review of the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2000 which is due to expire on 31 August 2014. We are also currently working on the proposal to streamline any multiple review or appeal mechanisms for administrative decisions.

On 8 May 2014 the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2014 was introduced to the parliament. The Bill contains amendments to the Justices Act to complement the introduction of a new web based portal developed for electronic pleas of guilty in Queensland Magistrates Courts, including, for example, amendments to allow notices of adjournment and orders to be provided electronically. The web portal and amendments do not extend written pleas of guilty to indictable offences. On 1 July the pilot Plead Guilty Online service was released. The department is committed to implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Audit aimed at delivering faster, more effective justice in Queensland by finding ways to better manage the pressures on our court system.

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater?

Miss BARTON: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. Mr Attorney, I was just wondering if you could provide the committee with an update on the important work that is undertaken by Crown Law, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Acknowledging the Crown Solicitor, Mr Greg Cooper, behind me here, when I praise the work of the department in the last couple of years, it is no secret the Department of Justice in the last couple of years has been very hard at work making sure that we are rebalancing the scales of justice, making Queensland the safest place to raise a family, making sure that we are addressing the issues neglected by the Labor Party, particularly in youth justice reforms. We have statistics and research coming out today, as I told the committee this morning. 'Criminal reforms pay off', was an exclusive in the *Courier-Mail* this morning. A big part of that is not the politicians talking about the reforms, but it is the people behind the scenes. And I want to thank Greg Cooper, the Crown Solicitor, and Crown Law for the effort they put in in providing advice on these particular types of laws and other matters of state.

We know that Crown Law has been the principal provider of legal services to the Queensland government since 1859. Since 1997, it has operated as a completely self-funded business unit of the department. Its role is to provide legal services to departments and agencies, statutory bodies and government owned corporations, commercialised business units, disciplinary boards and tribunals. During the year Crown Law continued to represent the state in relation to significant civil and criminal matters, including the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse, the royal commission into the bungled home insulation program, which unfortunately led to the deaths of Queenslanders, the Queensland Racing Commission of Inquiry, which found the likes of Mr Bill Ludwig potentially having cases to answer for connections with the racing industry—they have now been referred obviously to ASIC for further investigation—and the people core country claims 1 and 2. They are some of the big matters Crown Law have worked for, but in the other matters that Crown Law do on a day-to-day basis they are a great unit of public administration within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. As I said in the estimates last year, they also have a great choir which was on full display yesterday at the opening of the law year, the Crown Law choir. As I understand, it was the Crown Law choir at the opening of the law year yesterday at the cathedral and they did a tremendous job in that service with the Chief Justice and so forth. I thank and pay tribute to all Crown Law officers who do a mighty job in making sure that they continue to provide the legal service to the state.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin?

Mr WELLINGTON: Annastacia, do you want to?

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. Attorney, I refer to page 13 of the SDS which refers to justices of the peace services. On 21 November 2013 the Premier tabled a document in the parliament entitled, 'File note, dated 6 August 1996, by Barry Read, Acting Executive Director, Administration of Justice & Criminal Justice Program relating to Jo-Ann Miller.' Attorney, I just want to check, had you ever seen that document before the Premier tabled it in parliament?

Mr BLEIJIE: No, but, Mr Chair, I think the Director-General may be able to provide some advice on that. If the member wants some information with respect to that, I am sure he will be able to provide it and if the Director-General does not have it at hand we will surely be able to provide some information on that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Okay.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Sosso: Perhaps I could invite the Leader of the Opposition to ask me any questions she may wish to ask about that issue.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure. The Attorney has said no. This is in relation to a file note about Mrs Jo-Ann Miller. Director-General, had you ever seen this document before the Premier tabled it in parliament?

Mr Sosso: No, I hadn't seen the document prior to its tabling. Subsequent to the document being tabled in parliament, the member for Bundamba did make a complaint under the Information Privacy Act and that complaint was subject to investigation. I wrote to the member for Bundamba on 3 February and I attached to that letter a copy of the report that had been prepared. An extensive investigation was carried out. I could just read into the record, if I may—it will not take long—the conclusion that was reached and that was as follows:

> The investigation has found there has been no substantiated breach of any IPP by DJAG in relation to the file note tabled by the Premier. The original file note and a stamped copy are located on a personnel file for Jo-Ann Miller that was transferred to Parliamentary Services in 1997. DJAG employees have not had access to this file since that time. Searches made of DJAG records could not locate a copy of the file note held by DJAG. Unofficial copies might have been made in 1996 and have existed in the private holdings of individuals during the intervening years. However, it is clear that departmental officers have not accessed the official file since 1997, meaning that a disclosure of the file note from DJAG could not have occurred from the time that the IP Act came into operation on 1 July 2009.

As I said, I attached a copy of that letter to the member for Bundamba. She wrote back to me requesting that further inquiries be made of a departmental officer. Further inquiries were made and I wrote back to her on 6 March along those lines.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Just to be 100 per cent clear, you had never seen that file note before?

Mr Sosso: No.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Okay. That is great. Can I move on, if I can.

CHAIR: Well, member, you are surrendering your position to the Leader of the Opposition? Are you happy with that, member for Rockhampton? Okay.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I move on, because confidentiality I believe is central to the way government is administered. I refer, Attorney, to page 13 of the SDS where it says under the department service area of criminal and civil justice, 'criminal and civil justice contributes to a fair, safe and just Queensland' through courts and tribunals. On 23 March 2014 there was a story in the *Courier-Mail* where you were reported as divulging details of a conversation you had with the President of the Court of Appeal by way of consultation on a possible replacement for Justice Margaret White on the Court of Appeal. Attorney, could you explain why you publicly divulged confidential details?

CHAIR: I am not going to allow that question. It is not relevant to estimates.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It goes to the heart of the way a government operates.

CHAIR: It may well be to another forum but it will not be in this forum.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you are not allowing that?

CHAIR: That is, I am fairly sure, what I have said, yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, may I ask then, on 4 March this year the Attorney wrote to me seeking my advice as to possible nominees for the position of Chief Justice of Queensland. I proffered a number of names which I expressed were by way of consultation. It was my expectation that, as is the practice with all such consultations, my suggestions would be treated with the appropriate degree of confidentiality. I was surprised to read those nominees were in the *Courier-Mail*. Attorney, did you, or anyone from your staff, leak details of my letter to the *Courier-Mail*?

CHAIR: I am overruling that question as well on the basis that it is irrelevant.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So, secrecy. Not answering questions.

CHAIR: It is irrelevant.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is extremely relevant. It is a letter I wrote in confidence to the Attorney-General about names to be put forward for the Chief Justice, the highest position in the court. I want to know was it leaked.

CHAIR: I don't think the status actually makes the question any more relevant.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is about the breach of confidentiality.

CHAIR: This is estimates and that is a matter for parliament. It is not a matter for here. I overrule the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Outrageous.

Mr BLEIJIE: We have had a few hours of civility, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Next question, otherwise we will just move on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is absolutely a pattern of this government: refusing to answer the questions.

Miss BARTON: I am happy to ask a question, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater?

Miss BARTON: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. Just continuing on from your answer provided earlier with regard to—

CHAIR: Just excuse me just for one moment. Leader of the Opposition, if you are questioning my ruling I will take the committee away and we will have a discussion about it, but I have made the ruling. To say that it is outrageous is not appropriate. There is a forum, there are several forums in parliament; this is an estimates hearing and we are dealing with estimates. I have allowed a reasonable amount of latitude with the member for Rockhampton because it really dealt with process. But in the confines there are other places in parliament that you can use if you wish to pursue a subject such as privacy, but it is not relevant to estimates and I take some objection to my ruling being challenged. I have made a decision and that is where it sits. Member for Broadwater?

Miss BARTON: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. As I was saying, Mr Attorney, if I could take you back to your previous answer with regard to Crown Law, I was just wondering if you could outline some of the policies that are in place with regard to the briefing of counsel by Crown Law, please?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, member, and Mr Chair. The criteria that Crown Law use in choosing to engage a particular counsel are professional merit and value for money. The policy is that in relation to regional areas consideration should in the first instance be given to using local counsel. In addition to professional merit and value for money, the relevant consideration is whether it is more cost effective to use local counsel. Unless a compelling case can be made for the briefing of senior counsel, junior counsel are to be briefed. This assists in ensuring value for money. While every effort is made to use regional counsel, there are a number of factors which impact on our retention of regional counsel, including in some cases clients requiring that only Crown Law officers appear by reason of their expertise in these cases. In relation to some matters filed in Brisbane, sometimes the conference is heard in the regions but these are generally done in-house by Crown Law. Also these conferences are often conducted by teleconference from Brisbane. Often it is more cost effective to prepare for a hearing in Brisbane given all the things that need to be done and then simply fly counsel from Brisbane.

I am committed to ensuring value for money for the services provided by counsel and ensuring regional barristers are briefed where possible. I recall an early discussion when I became Attorney-General with the Crown Solicitor that in our regions particularly—as I said earlier, Queensland is not South-East Queensland, there are so many fantastic areas of Queensland right across the breadth and we have some great barristers and counsel that operate in areas not only in South-East Queensland but right across the state and it is important for those areas that, particularly for government work, yes merit, yes value for money, but a priority should be given to the regional barristers and counsel who are actually living and working in those communities.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. Member for Toowoomba North?

Mr WATTS: Attorney, as you would be aware, in Toowoomba North we have a forensic mental health unit and we also have Baillie Henderson where some people are transitioning from Baillie Henderson into community care units. I am interested in getting an update regarding the important work being undertaken by Crown Law specifically as it relates to the Mental Health Review Tribunal and associated jurisdictions.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, member, for the question, and Mr Chair. The Mental Health Act 2000 gives me a right of appearance in a range of proceedings relating to forensic patients. My role in those proceedings is to represent the public interest. Since 15 April 2013, Crown Law has been responsible for representing the Attorney-General in all proceedings in which he or she has the right of appearance before the Mental Health Review Tribunal. This important work involves the regular reviews of orders made to forensic patients who have been found unfit for trial or of unsound mind at the time they committed serious criminal offences. When undertaking review hearings, the Mental Health Review Tribunal deal with significant issues, including what access to community is permitted for forensic patients, how they are supervised and the conditions upon which they may return to living in the community. In 2013-14 the Mental Health Review Tribunal conducted 1,637 hearings for patients on forensic orders in Queensland. In Queensland there are currently 771 patients under forensic orders. Each patient's forensic order must be reviewed by the mental health tribunal at least every six months. The Mental Health Review Tribunal must also regularly review patients who have been found by the Mental Health Court to be temporarily unfit for trial as a result of a mental illness.

Also in 2013-14, crown law officers represented me at more than 900 hearings before the Mental Health Review Tribunal. Crown law has also briefed me on a further 816 matters considered by the Mental Health Review Tribunal during this period. Crown law also represents me in relation to appeals against the decisions of the tribunal on the forensic order review matters. In 2013-14, crown law officers represented me in 36 matters.

CHAIR: If I might just take you to a matter that once concerned me, the LPITAF fund and the review of the LPITAF. There were seven recommendations in respect of that review. I would be interested to know which recommendations were taken up and what was the impact of the uptake of those recommendations.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. I am a big fan of community legal centres. For the committee's benefit, the way community legal centres are funded is by three ways. One, they could have direct funding—grant funding—from the Commonwealth, from the state, and the third element of funding is from LPITAF, which is the interest earned on legal practitioners' trust accounts. Practitioners in Queensland have trust accounts and interest earned does not go to the lawyer,

does not go to the client; it, in fact, goes to the fund. The fund then is split up between Legal Aid and community legal centres, and we have great community legal centres operating right around the state.

One thing that was obvious to me when I became the Attorney-General and going around to the community legal centres was the dysfunction of the funding arrangements that the Labor Party put in. But when we look at other areas of JAG and other areas of government responsibility, it did not surprise me. It was just another dysfunctional area of the Labor government. The problem was is that community legal centres were getting money. They were getting grant money. They were generally finding out that they had money approved or not approved after the financial year had already commenced. It was 12-month funding. They could not plan. They could not plan programs for two or three years. Staff in all our community legal centres were not knowing if they had a job come 1 July, because the Attorneys of the Labor government could not, on most occasions in fact, tell these people that they actually had funding for the next 12 months.

So we realised that it was a major issue and we did not want our community legal centres to be put in that environment. We were elected in March 2012. The first round of funding was announced after July, because we had only been in government for a few months and we were trying to get our heads around the dysfunctional issues that we were left by the Labor Party and the former cabinet. But after that, I have to say that what we did was then conduct a substantial review of LPITAF funding. We had input by all the community legal centres. The feedback that we got from community legal centres, some of the things that they said to me was, 'This is the most systemic review that has ever been undertaken in our community legal centres,' and we came up with various recommendations. One of the recommendations was to get rid of 12-month funding and actually put three-year funding in place.

So I am pleased to say that, from 1 July this year, all community legal centres across Queensland actually have three-year funding in place. They can now properly plan projects. They can properly talk to clients. Their staff know that they have jobs for three years. The boards, the managers, can make sure—with the south-west community legal centre in the Inala electorate, for years they were in a dodgy donga that they had to move out of last year because the floor caved in in one of the corners. This was in the Inala electorate. But we have provided some emergency funding to try to get them into some better accommodation. We will continue to work with that group, because I do not think that I have had any representation from their local member—I cannot recall if I have or not—but we certainly are very committed to that organisation to make sure that they achieve what they need to achieve, because they are delivering a great service to the member's constituents of Inala. We will continue to fund them as we do through the LPITAF program.

To just conclude the answer, it was a basket case. The community legal centres were doing a fantastic job with a government administration that had no idea of a plan for the future. They were doing 12-month funding. These groups were not getting notified that they had money until after the financial year had started. There were a couple of newspaper articles, I remember, from two years ago where highly profiled, skilled lawyers actually went public and left community legal centres because they did not know if they had a job. They had families at home and they had to put food on the table. They did not even know if they had a job or not. So they left those. That should not happen now going forward, because we have the new funding arrangements. We have three-year funding in place.

This government introduced increases by CPI to community legal centres—something which was neglected by the former government. So I think that the future is bright for community legal centres. The areas that I go to, whether that be Inala talking to the community legal centre, whether it is Bundaberg, as I did a few weeks ago, or Cairns, very much we support community legal centres to keep offering the type of service that they offer.

Miss BARTON: Just following on from that, are you able to then perhaps detail for the committee what LPITAF and state government funding has been made available to the Law Society as well as the Supreme Court Library?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is pertinent to recognise that, since 2008-09, the legal practitioner fund has been significantly impacted by global economic conditions. A number of measures have been implemented in an effort to reduce expenditure pressures on LPITAF. The aim is to maximise the revenue that can be invested in the delivery of legal assistance services to vulnerable

Queenslanders. As such, the Supreme Court Library is primarily using its accumulated surplus funds to cover operating costs in 2014-15. This is reducing expenditure pressure on LPITAF funding. The government has invested $290,000 of state government funds in the delivery of the Supreme Court Library services in 2013-14 and will invest a further $290,000 in 2014-15.

In relation to the Queensland Law Society, it has a longstanding policy that the Attorney-General will only consider making a LPITAF allocation to the extent that the cost of the legal profession regulation cannot be met through practising certificate fees or other sources. Since 2011-12, the Law Society's practising certificate revenue has covered associated regulatory costs. The Law Society willingly returned $2.563 million in accumulated surplus LPITAF funds at the end of 2011-12 and $1 million at the end of 2012-13. In 2014-15, the Queensland Law Society will fund the Ethics Centre for solicitors from existing practising certificate fee revenue other than LPITAF funds. This is consistent with the longstanding policy position and reduces expenditure pressures on LPITAF. We acknowledge the contribution that the Law Society is making to maximising the LPITAF revenue that can be used to provide legal assistance services to vulnerable Queenslanders. I thank them for that. In 2015-14-15, the Law Society will continue to receive some LPITAF investment indirectly through a service agreement with the Legal Services Commission for the delivery of legal profession regulation services.

Mr DILLAWAY: Attorney-General, could you outline to the committee what steps have been taken by the government to drive organised crime out of Queensland?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Mr Chair, I get accused of many things in my life, but I probably going to get accused of repetition today in referring to an article about the Commissioner of Police in the *Courier-Mail*. I understand some other estimates committees have been referring to the article. I heard the Police Commissioner on radio this morning talking about the strength of the additional police that this government has given but also the laws. I will not address the police issue, because that is a subject of this committee in two days time.

In terms of organised crime, I will be as simple as I can for the committee in terms of why we introduced some of the toughest criminal gang reforms in the country and the results that we are now seeing of those reforms. A couple of years ago we had a lady shopping at the Robina shopping centre, going about her business, just shopping like we all do on weekends and during the week. She was shot. She was shot in the middle of crossfire of gang warfare. Fortunately, she lived to tell the tale. It is a situation that should never have arisen but, because of neglect in the criminal organisation law reform area by the previous government, we had arrived at that stage.

We then had a situation in September 2013 where criminal gangs took over a suburb, took over a city of the Gold Coast, took over a cafe as women and men were dining. Tourists were there. They were just enjoying time with their families and we had 50 Bandidos members take over the cafe, drag a couple of people out and then proceed to have what could be called a riot in a street on the Gold Coast. The government then drew a line in the sand. We said, 'Enough is enough. We are not going to let organised crime, whether that be serious paedophile rings, operating here and globally, whether that be the underworld gang mentality and the gangs that we have operating there or whether that be criminal motorcycle gangs operating here.' So I think, in the last couple of years certainly, that has been the emphasis, both from a police and a legislative reform perspective from DJAG, in relation to our criminal gangs reforms.

It is no secret that every jurisdiction in Australia has been attempting to deal with this. The South Australian Labor government was the first government in the nation to try to outlaw criminal motorcycle gangs in relation to anti-association laws. I have to be a little careful of what I say today, because these Queensland laws are subject to a current High Court challenge. The South Australian Labor government tried and failed with the High Court. The New South Wales government then tried to rid their state of criminal gangs. We were the next jurisdiction with the political will to take on criminal gangs. We introduced a series of legislation. I think we have had lots of community debate about the laws. I think the men and women in blue have been doing a fantastic job in understanding the laws but also on the beat making Queenslanders safe.

We said in 2012 that we wanted Queensland to be the safest place to raise a family. We wanted to rebalance the scales of justice. The only way we could do that was to make sure that we rid the state of Queensland of criminal gangs. I have to say that, if we look across-the-board in some areas, police statistics show 15 per cent to 30 per cent decreases in crime, depending on where you are in the state and what crime it is. But on the Sunshine Coast where I come from, as a

father of three children attending a local public school, knowing that there are 54 per cent fewer robberies happening on the Sunshine Coast since these laws have been put in place gives me great confidence that my kids on the Sunshine Coast are living in a safer world than they did two years ago.

Also, referring to the article in the *Courier-Mail* today with the Police Commissioner saying that there is beyond a doubt a 10 per cent across-the-board—across crime—reduction across the state, that is a good thing. Our communities are safer because of these criminal gang reforms. Women, children, tourists are safer. If you talk to people, particularly members on the Gold Coast—you—if you talk to members on the Gold Coast they will tell you that the change in culture, the change of atmosphere on the Gold Coast, going and getting their haircut, going shopping, going to the mall, they are feeling safer.

However, one must not rest on their laurels. There is more work to be done. The CCC is doing a fantastic job in combating organised crime and you heard Dr Levy talk about some of the reforms this morning. The police are doing a fantastic job. We will continue to do what we do in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in terms of the law reform and the Criminal Code. As I said, the laws are subject to a High Court challenge.

One of the risks that is here, though—and it is a big risk—is we will not see headlines like '..criminal reforms pay off says Queensland's top cop'. Ian Stewart is a decorated officer by both administrations and he would not say this stuff lightly, but he is seeing it. He has been in the police force for many, many years. What is the risk of all of that? What is the risk of it coming undone? Unfortunately, it is the Australian Labor Party Queensland division, because we know that the Labor Party is going to repeal all of these laws.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And replace them.

Mr BLEIJIE: They are going to repeal all of these laws that have led to such a dramatic reduction. If it is working and the community sees the actions, communities are safer, why would you get rid of it? I would give one more credit if they had the fortitude to stand up and say that their position is wrong and they changed their position and actually recognised the fact that their communities are safer because of these criminal gang reforms—their children, their grandchildren are safer.

I have heard a lot of hype in the last couple of months from the Labor Party that they are going to repeal it but they will replace it. Well I hope they replace it with something better than what we have at the moment, because if it is going to be replaced again with the Criminal Organisation Act 2009 that has achieved nothing. It has not declared any criminal organisation a criminal organisation. It is not working. It has not worked. The laws that are working are the laws of this government that are in place today.

CHAIR: I call the member for Ipswich West.

Mr CHOAT: Attorney-General, in a similar vein, you have mentioned a few times today about the government wanting Queensland to become the safest place to raise a child. Are there any policy or law reforms that deal with that issue specifically?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, and thank you for the question. One of the government's priorities is not only tackling criminal gangs. As I said, we have indicated that the laws on all accounts are absolutely working. The other area that we have wanted to tackle is the issue of child sex offenders. We want Queensland to be the safest place to raise a family. How do we do that? We have to have the strongest possible laws in place dealing with child sex offenders.

I have told many people and many media outlets that child sex offenders are monsters in our community. We have to protect the most vulnerable in our community, and that is our children. All Queenslanders deserve to feel safe, and we have introduced a comprehensive suite of law and order policies aimed at making Queensland communities safer. We want Queensland to be the safest place to raise a child, as I said. We have acted swiftly to deliver on this commitment by introducing some of the toughest legislation in the country including the Criminal Law (Two Strike Child Sex Offenders) Amendment Act 2012, which introduced a new mandatory sentencing regime of life imprisonment with a minimum non-parole period of 20 years for certain repeat child sex offenders.

The Criminal Law (Child Exploitation and Dangerous Drugs) Amendment Act 2013, which further strengthened child sex offender laws by significantly increasing the maximum penalties for child exploitation material offences and other child sex offenders, also created a new offence of

grooming a child which specifically targets offenders who engage in grooming conduct with the intention of making it easier for them to procure a child to engage in sexual activity. This offence carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment if the child is under 12 years of age. The Criminal Law and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2013, which made amendments requiring drug traffickers to serve a mandatory minimum 80 per cent of their sentence of imprisonment in actual detention, toughened sentencing laws for drug traffickers who target children.

Queensland sex offender laws are currently under consideration with particular emphasis on the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003, which does see unfortunately child sex offenders walk free from courts. Further, the government has recently introduced amendments to the dangerous prisoners act which, if passed, will ensure the dangerous sex offenders subject to GPS monitoring who remove or tamper with their electronic monitoring bracelet will be sentenced to one year mandatory jail time with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment.

Amendments are also currently before the parliament to increase the maximum penalty for procuring a child or a person with a mental impairment for engagement in prostitution from 14 to 20 years imprisonment. In May this year the first stage of the legislative reforms recommended by the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, led by at the time Commissioner Carmody, were passed to build on an effective and sustainable child protection system over the next decade.

The Public Guardian Act 2014 implements two of the commission's recommendations to establish the new office of the Office of the Public Guardian. The Office of the Public Guardian started operating on 1 July 2014, and we will work to promote and protect the rights of children and young people in out-of-home care and vulnerable adults who have impaired capacity to make their own decisions. The Child Protection Reform Amendment Act implements the government's response to other recommendations of the commission, including clarifying the Chief Magistrate is the leader of the Children's Court, as constituted by magistrates, which will facilitate the creation of a child protection case management framework.

We have done of all this not because we believe these laws will be popular, not that we think they are popular with the legal fraternity, the Bar Association or the Law Society. We have done this so young kids in Queensland are not preyed upon by monsters in our community, so young kids can live a day without sexual abuse and the torment around sexual abuse. We have had high-profile cases in Queensland. I am very proud of this department's record in making sure we are leading, I think, one of the most reformist regimes in this department in the last 20 years.

CHAIR: I just might make a statement. What I am doing, just for the information of the Leader of the Opposition, is I am offering questions to each member. Now I will offer the next question to the member for Nicklin. I understand you are deferring your questions to the opposition. That is your choice. I will ask the member for Rockhampton if he wishes to ask a question. If he wishes to defer to the Leader of the Opposition, that is his choice. That is the position and that is the fair position.

Mr WELLINGTON: Well we had a meeting. The committee has not decided. The standard protocol in the past has been estimates committee hearings—

Miss BARTON: I think we should take this conversation outside.

Mr WELLINGTON: No. I am responding to the chairman. The chairman has just made a comment and I want to respond.

CHAIR: Let him respond.

Mr WELLINGTON: This is a public meeting. We talk about openness and transparency. Estimates have traditionally been conducted on the basis that the time was evenly allocated between government and non-government members. What clearly has been happening today—and I believe the *Hansard* record will show—is that you have tried to be fair so that every members gets a question.

CHAIR: Correct.

Mr WELLINGTON: But there are two non-government members—Annastacia has stepped in here as the Leader of the Opposition—as against the government. We are clearly outnumbered in relation to questions. There is not an even opportunity for government or non-government members to share in the questioning. This is a chance, as you are on the record as saying and the Attorney-General is on the record as saying, where the opposition and non-government members can question the government.

CHAIR: Correct.

Mr WELLINGTON: Clearly that is not happening under your chairmanship and leadership of this committee today.

CHAIR: All right. In response to that, you have deferred so far. I have kept a record of all the questions and in each session the member for Rockhampton has well exceeded the culmination—

Mr WELLINGTON: With respect, Mr Chairman, it is not about questions; it is about timing. The Attorney-General has taken over 20 minutes to answer two questions. I think the *Hansard* record will show that. It is not on questions; it is on timing.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chairman, would it assist the committee if we all left?

CHAIR: No. The decision has been made. I am simply explaining for the record. You are deferring. Leader of the Opposition, your question, if you have one.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In fact I do.

Mr WELLINGTON: I certainly have many too, but I am deferring to the opposition to ask some questions.

CHAIR: You have constituents. You are entitled to ask a question. If you choose not to then please do not come and complain to me.

Mr WELLINGTON: Let Queenslanders see how this committee is operating in 2014.

CHAIR: I think it is on the record, I suspect. It is on the record. They will see how many questions you have all asked. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney-General, I refer to question on notice No. 15. This is about the Industrial Relations (Transparency and Accountability of Industrial Organisations) and Other Acts Amendment Act 2013. Can the Attorney-General please elaborate on how much of taxpayers' money was used in relation to departmental legal advice—and part 2 of the question is—and other costs used to prepare materials to defend the challenge of the legislation? How much of taxpayers' money?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. The answer—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is not there.

Mr BLEIJIE:—to question on notice No. 15 provides that it is estimated that the cost of the policy development of the relevant provisions was $2,300.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you are telling me there was no expense at all on any legal advice in relation to these laws?

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, there will have been. No, I did not say that at all. I said the answer that I provided to question on notice No. 15 says that it is estimated that the cost of the policy development of the provisions was $2,300. We then would have received obviously crown law advice or Solicitor-General advice. But I make the point that the Solicitor-General is already on the payroll of the taxpayer at approximately $300,000 a year to provide whatever advice the government requires and that the crown law is the solicitor for the government.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Attorney, I move now to workplace health and safety inspectors and I refer to question on notice No. 14. I note there are 17 fewer inspectors comparing June 2014 to June 2012. Under the government's changes to workplace health and safety provisions, what analysis has the department done on the expected increased workload on inspectors?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Unfortunately the opposition leader was not here earlier when I gave quite extensive answers to workplace health and safety, where we have had in some areas a 20 per cent reduction in workplace incidents across Queensland and that is because of the great work of the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland. We also have the Workplace Health and Safety Board. We also have the Electrical Safety Board. By all accounts, the feedback that I get from business and as we talk to the Safety Ambassador, Mal Meninga, is that our inspectors are doing a tremendous job.

The level of service and the efficiencies we have achieved in the department have not impacted on any issue with respect to the inspectorate going out and having a look. The point is that, if there is a matter that is complained of at a particular business, the inspectorate will go out and investigate it. Our inspectors have been, what would you call, inspired by recent activities because we have changed the law saying that militant union thugs have to give 24 hours notice. So the quasi-inspectors from the unions are not the official inspectors of workplace health and safety. Now our officers are actually out there doing a great job in making sure—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, Chair. What did the Attorney say—'militant'?

Mr BLEIJIE: Militant union thugs. I will say it slowly if you like—militant union thugs who are stopping—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I find those comments quite offensive.

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, I just say that we have had situations—actually why don't I refer to the royal commission in relation to—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. I am talking about Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE:—union governance and corruption. We have had incidences of bullying—

Ms PALASZCZUK: What about workplace health and safety?

Mr BLEIJIE: We have had unions bullying businesses. We have had unions bullying electrical contractors on work sites. We introduced the laws because of those concerns from the Master Builders Association and the Master Electricians of militant union activity. The problem is that the unions use workplace health and safety for industrial disputation purposes. So the laws have been amended to say that unions have to give—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, they actually care about the health and wellbeing of their members.

Mr BLEIJIE: The unions can still go on site. They just have to give 24 hours notice. I give thanks to Julia Gillard. Some of my colleagues will get angry at that, but I give thanks to Julia Gillard because we copied her law—in fact, the Labor law where they introduced the 24-hour right of entry notice for unions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, Chair. These are quite serious issues here and I feel that the Attorney-General is not addressing them in detail. Going back to the inspectors, what fields of expertise do they have?

Mr BLEIJIE: I guess the same expertise that they had under the Labor Party regime. I suspect they are probably the same people in fact.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Were any of the workplace health and safety inspectors redirected to monitor or visit union workplaces under the government's so-called transparency legislation?

Mr BLEIJIE: The office would have had obligations to inspect records under accountability but that might not necessarily have been safety records. There were two—the legislation referred to talked about accountability and governance so members can understand where the unions are spending their money, their hard-earned money. It would not have been workplace health and safety inspectors. That would have been the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland who has responsibility for that legislation and workplace health and safety inspectors going out on to, for instance, construction sites. Construction is one of the key pillars of the economy. The Premier refers to the crane index. We have a 30 per cent increase in the crane index across Queensland which is good for business and it is good for young Queenslanders to have jobs. When you see cranes up that means there are jobs there. That means young Queenslanders can afford to feed their families and go on holidays, living the dream that we would all want to aspire to of having a good job.

CHAIR: Thank you for that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair—

CHAIR: I call the member for Broadwater.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I still have five minutes.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Chairman, with respect, the Leader of the Opposition's questioning went for approximately seven minutes. The last block of questions from government members went for nearly 20 minutes. There is no equality in what we are seeing here this afternoon with questioning during the conduct of this estimates hearing.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Other committees are doing it equally. I have been to two other committees.

Mr WELLINGTON: There is no equality. You are simply going on question by question. There is no balance between the time allocated by non-government members to put questions to the Attorney-General or other heads of departments. Do we need to adjourn so you can reconsider your decision as to how you are going to allow the rest of this estimates committee to be conducted for the balance of today and on Thursday? Quite clearly, I think there is no balance in the way you are chairing this committee meeting today.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nicklin. I appreciate what you have said and your input and I certainly take it on board. The position is that I have no control over how the Attorney-General answers the question. What I do have control of is the conduct of the hearing.

Mr WELLINGTON: Exactly.

CHAIR: Thank you, and I have called the member for Broadwater to ask a question. She represents, as I have indicated before, a constituency. She is entitled in that representation to be able to ask a question of the Attorney-General. I have called her and she will ask the question.

Miss BARTON: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. The issue that I wanted to ask a question about is of quite significant concern to residents in my electorate of Broadwater where I have a significant number of bodies corporate—in fact, one of the highest number of bodies corporate in any electorate in Queensland. With that in mind, Attorney, would you be able to update both the committee and the residents of my community on what is happening with regard to the review into body corporate legislation in Queensland?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Mr Chair, through you, this is a very important issue in property law and the construction industry in Queensland. We have had a situation over the years where unfortunately body corporate law, community titles law, has been used as a bit of a political football. By that I mean that the previous Labor government just before the election moved certain amendments to the body corporate legislation. Interestingly, I note it was just before the election and that the minister at the time was Peter Lawlor who represented a Gold Coast seat which had lots of high-rises in the electorate and he had quite an interest in making sure there was some body corporate agenda at the election.

I will explain for the purposes of the committee what the issues with the law were and why we are doing what we are doing. For a development, the developer develops the land, the building goes up—it could be 10, 20, 30 storeys—it is registered as a community titles scheme. The developer sets the process by which lot entitlements are set and then the sinking funds. What generally happens though after the development is built is the lot entitlements or the entitlement is then adjusted and there may not be enough to actually cover the cost of administering the building so it is adjusted. That is the case when the building gets established. What then happens is that under the previous law a person who feels aggrieved by that particular provision could go off to QCAT and get what they call an adjustment order. The adjustment order meant that, despite what the developer said and despite what the committee have said, QCAT can adjust it and change the lot entitlements. Of course the minute you amend lot entitlements then people pay more and people pay less; there are winners and there are losers.

What happened is that, just before the last election, the Labor Party—with Peter Lawlor representing a very high-rise-centric electorate—moved the law that said that, despite the fact you have been to court, despite the fact an independent arbiter has adjusted the entitlements, one person of the body corporate can go into a committee and can move a motion and upon moving the motion it is deemed accepted without dissent and then despite the court order it is completely disregarded and lot entitlements are taken back to what they were before the adjustment. So you had the developer, you had the committee then adjust them, you had a court then adjust them after taking all the evidence and then you had the Labor Party come in and say, 'despite an independent arbiter'—and I happily heard a lot about the independence of courts and so forth recently. We had a government in the dying days of its government actually put legislation in that completely disregarded the provisions of independent courts and then allowed community titles to go back to what they were before the adjustment orders. We have come into government and we have changed it back. I understand it is a bandaid and it is not a complete fix, but we allowed the community titles that had in fact done that to actually go back to what the court had said. So it is re-establishing what the position was before Peter Lawlor amended it.

What we have now done is recognised that there are big issues in community titles. We need to look around the world about these issues. We have coordinated with QUT law school and the professors at the law school and we are undertaking a full review of body corporate law. We have issued issues papers on lot entitlements, on seller's disclosure; there are a couple more to be issued in the future about governance and that is about trying to get everyone in a body corporate to get along with each other. I know that is going to be a difficult process because in community titles you are all living sometimes under one roof and personalities persist in committees.

We are very excited about the prospect of law reform in this regard but we do not want to rush it because that is what the Labor Party used to do in this reform. They used to rush it. We want to take a very slow, methodical look at this issue and get the experts in to look at it. I heard recently

that the New South Wales jurisdiction is very impressed with how Queensland is conducting itself in terms of our review and engaging with the law school. We as the department give as much information to the law school as possible. What will be achieved out of that we do not know yet, because for the member's benefit we have not had the outcomes yet. The law school have been very much conducting the review. Of course I do not have to mention all the property reform we have made to benefit the construction industry and real estate industry in the state.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I call the member for Ipswich West.

Mr CHOAT: We spent some time this morning discussing youth justice. Recently, I attended the high school which is located at the youth detention centre at Wacol, and I would like to put on the record my admiration for Mike, the principal, and his teaching staff because they are truly doing some fabulous stuff for the young people there. I guess my question revolves around that. What steps have been taken to ensure that programs provided to young offenders—like the ones who I saw who were learning, which was great—at each of our youth detention centres are appropriate and cost-effective?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. We spent a bit of time on this this morning in terms of youth justice reforms. We want to make sure that we try to divert young kids from detention, and that is through the boot camps. There will always be an occasion whereby the young offender is not suitable to a boot camp, because we actually put provisions in there depending on the offence. If they are serious violent offenders or sexual offenders, they will not be able to participate in the boot camp, so we will always have the youth detention centres. What we have to do is make sure that the programs that we are offering in those detention centres try to sort the lives out of these young people to make sure when they leave they do not come back. It is one government service where I am happy to say to young people, 'We don't want to give you any more because we want you to go and get a job and an education and not be back in detention.' If that happens, that benefits everyone—it benefits our community because they are not being robbed and their cars are not being stolen.

We have ensured that young people in youth detention are provided with the opportunities for rehabilitation, as you mentioned with the visit you had the other day. Within each detention centre, the educational and vocational programs operate five days a week, 40 weeks a year. These programs ensure young offenders are provided with educational and employment based skills to assist their transition back into the community. The detention centres also offer a range of programs that target offending behaviours and the risk factors in young people's lives to promote positive life choices. These programs are selected by dedicated program coordinators based at each of the detention centres to ensure they are dynamic and responsive to the changing profile of young offenders within youth detention centres.

However, to ensure that the programs offered are appropriate and cost effective, I initiated a review of the suite of programs delivered at every centre in late 2013. These reviews were designed to examine the appropriateness of the programs offered in the context of their capacity to address the main factors contributing to offending behaviours, the capacity to meet the individualised needs of the cohorts of young offenders detained at each centre, and the resource and cost effectiveness of the programs. Based on these reviews, a unique and streamlined suite of preferred programs has been identified for each youth detention centre.

Before implementation, the programs are tailored to the specific developmental and criminogenic needs of each cohort of young offenders. As you would know through the program you saw, they are targeted at: offending behaviour and behaviour modification; promoting positive peer relationships and pro social behaviours; teaching strategies for anger and stress management—we should teach some of that to committee members, Mr Chair; addressing substance abuse areas; strengthening empathy for victims of crime; and building emotional and psychological resilience. These programs also represent a cost-effective approach to program delivery. They will maximise use of available resources as they can be delivered in-house by operational psychologists and caseworkers within the centres. Work is underway to implement these programs. This will ensure that all programs within youth detention centres are contemporary, cost effective and appropriate for addressing the offending behaviours of Queensland's young offenders. The implementation of these programs I suspect will be completed late 2014.

CHAIR: I call the member for Bulimba.

Mr DILLAWAY: Attorney-General, could you provide an update on the work being undertaken into the Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice? It is more of a broader context.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. The Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice is an exciting initiative. When we came into government we recognised that, first, there was a problem with youth justice and, second, there had been a complete neglect of this issue by the former government. It was in the Department of Communities, and the Labor Party just completely neglected this issue in terms of dealing with it. We had a situation where over 30 per cent of young offenders had been in detention five times or more, and it was just a revolving-door cycle. The Labor Party just allowed it to happen because they thought if they were in detention at least they were off the streets. That is not how you deal with youth justice; that is not how you deal with the issues.

We have done four things. Firstly, we stopped the fun. We got rid of the jumping castles, we got rid of the bucking bulls—which incidentally made kids want to go back to boot camp—and we got rid of the Xboxes. A lot of the time, what was provided in the youth detention centres was far better than what they had on the outside so why wouldn't a young person want to re-offend to get into the youth detention centres? Unfortunately, the Labor Party parliamentarians just did not understand the concept that the best way to deal with youth justice is to sort the issues at home—jump in first, before they become issues, repair relationships with family and not just keep the detention centre door open and let young people come and go as they please. That is essentially what they were doing. The Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice is the overriding policy of the government in terms of, firstly, yes, we stopped the fun in the detention centres.

Secondly, we set up the boot camps and that is diverting young kids from detention. As I said earlier to the committee, we have had an 83 per cent non-reoffending rate in the Lincoln Springs boot camp and a 93 per cent non-reoffending rate out of about probably 100 young kids who have been through the early intervention camps. As I said, the kids are coming up to us and saying that their lives have been changed.

The third element of the four-stage process was the amendments to the Youth Justice Act—making sure that young kids are responsible for their actions, naming and shaming provisions, getting rid of detention as the last resort, making breach of bail a specific offence. The fourth element and the overriding element is the blueprint. In May 2014, I wrote to 23 organisations across Queensland seeking feedback on a draft blueprint for youth justice, with 12 of these organisations providing feedback. I have also written to all government ministers seeking their commitment to work with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in implementing the blueprint. Future work will include the development of enhanced policies, programs and practices to improve government effectiveness and reduce future costs and the impacts of youth offending on the community. The department has also undertaken substantial consultation with key government agencies, including Health, Police, Education, Training and Employment, and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services as part of laying the platform for enhanced collaboration across government to reduce youth offending.

The blueprint identifies a range of priority initiatives which are at varying stages of development and implementation but which are to be implemented within the blueprint's first 12 months. This includes the family action plan program which is being trialled in Townsville, Mount Isa and the Gold Coast and is soon to be introduced at Aurukun. The family action plan program delivers intensive support to families and involves coordination of services that reduce offending and strengthens a family's ability to supervise and care for their children. Since it began, 10 families have been provided intensive support with positive outcomes, such as increased stabilisation of family circumstances and young people and parents being involved in education and other targeted support services. So it is not just putting kids in detention and leaving them there and letting them come out and go back; it is about dealing with the issues at home.

DJAG is also transforming its outlook facilities to promote the use of an adventure based learning experience as part of the supervision, rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders. Business and communication plans have been developed which identify key activities, time frames and milestones for implementing changes to the outlook facilities starting in 2014-15. As part of the recently introduced boot camp vehicle offences order, a motor vehicle offender program which focuses on the causes of motor vehicle offending, victim empathy and a cognitive behavioural component has been developed for delivery during the community phase of the order. The Gold Coast, Rockhampton and Fraser-Sunshine Coast early intervention boot camps are achieving positive results and we will continue to maintain the success and goals of the program. A total of 93 young people have participated in the program across the three sites, with many re-engaging in

school. The Townsville-Cairns boot camp has been running for just over six months and has had 28 young offenders accepted into the program with early stages of success, with youth linking up with employment which reduces the likelihood that they will re-offend.

Due to the introduction of mandatory sentencing for recidivist motor vehicle offenders in April 2014, the department is negotiating with service providers to increase the capacity of the program to more than 100 young people per year. Work is currently being undertaken to progress an external evaluation of the youth boot camp program, with this evaluation schedule occurring in 2015. As part of implementing a coordinated youth offender strategy in Townsville, we have allocated funding to the successful Supervised Community Accommodation program in Townsville previously funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. This supports young people transitioning from detention and boot camp orders. Work will be undertaken to evaluate the longer term cost effectiveness of this program, with a revitalised program rolling out in 2015.

Planning is also underway for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to lead an Innovation Lab, which will allow government and non-government partners to come together to explore priority youth justice initiatives under the blueprint and develop integrated, coordinated and collaborative responses to address underlying causes of youth justice problems. The blueprint is our framework for a strategic reform to the youth justice system in Queensland and will serve as the catalyst for innovative investment and collaborative and shared government outcomes. That is the short answer.

CHAIR: Member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: I defer.

CHAIR: No, you cannot defer. I have offered you the opportunity to ask a question. Toowoomba North has yet to ask a question.

Mr BYRNE: All right, I will ask a very simple question. After hearing the Attorney-General speaking at length about the success of his bikie legislation and organised crime attack, how many people are wearing pink jumpsuits in the Queensland corrections system?

Mr BLEIJIE: I would have to take that on notice, Mr Chair. I cannot answer that off the top of my head. I do not take account of what people wear every day of the week and I will take it on notice, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Are you happy to take it on notice?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I will take it on notice, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North.

Mr WATTS: Attorney, you have given us some of the results in relation to youth justice. I guess I am always interested in results and outcomes. I am wondering if, from the legislative reforms that have been undertaken in the Youth Justice Act in the last financial year, there are other outcomes and results that you might be able to share with us, particularly in relation to the changes in the appeal jurisdiction.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question, Mr Chair, through you. The reforms to the Youth Justice Act were, as I said to the honourable member for Bulimba before, stage 3 of our youth justice program reform. They were effective from 28 March 2014. Initial results are available in relation to repeat young offenders appearing before the court. From 26 May to 29 June 2014, there were 1,620 appearances in the lower courts for repeat young offenders. Of these, 82 per cent, or 1,324 offenders, were held in an open courtroom. The remainder were held in a closed courtroom where the court was satisfied that it was in the interests of justice to do so. Higher courts were already open to the public.

In many instances where a court has made a determination to close a courtroom or prohibit publication, it is in relation to a young offender also involved in the child protection system or where a victim is likely to be negatively impacted and consequently further traumatised. In both the lower and the higher courts there were a total of 1,751 appearances during this period. In 73 per cent, or 1,304 cases, the media was free to report and publish identifying information on the offenders. This reform was about making sure that the fourth estate has open and equal access to our courts, because we do want open courts. That is the going position. As I said, in 1,304 cases the media was free to report and publish identifying information on the offenders which would have been closed if the Labor Party had been in power. They do not believe in open courts in these particular

situations; we do. Identifying information in the remainder of the cases could not be published, as the court determined it was in the interests of justice to prohibit publication. The court is still to determine in the appropriate circumstances if it is in the interests of justice to allow the information to be published, and that was a protection we put in the legislation.

Throughout the same period of 26 May to 29 June 2014 there were 144 applications to close the court, of which 127 were successful. In addition to this, 225 applications were made for an order prohibiting publication, of which 202 were successful. So that is 225 applications made. That is not dealing with the whole number of matters before the courts; that is just applications made. The applications may be made because the defendant or the defendant's legal representative puts a case to the judge that in the circumstances the court should still be closed. So again the position is that the court is open, but the defendant is able to reliably argue for closure of the court or an order prohibiting publication. As I said, 225 applications were received and when the judge looked at that, 202 were successful in terms of prohibiting publication.

Since the introduction of the new reforms to automatically transfer a young offender to an adult prison if they are 17 years old and have more than six months to serve, five young offenders have been transferred. At this stage it is too early to provide data on the reforms for creating a new offence of breach of bail, removing the sentencing principles of detention as the last resort, making juvenile criminal histories admissible on adult sentencing and changing the appeal jurisdiction.

If I can just point out to the honourable member who asked the question with respect to transferring 17 year olds to adult correctional centres if they have more than six months to serve, that came about because I visited the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. I was talking to the staff at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre who I have an immense amount of respect for, our men and women who care for our community by keeping those people behind bars. I think we underestimate the difficulty of the job that Corrective Services has in terms of making sure that communities are safe when looking after prisoners in prison. They also have to care for prisoners in prison as well for their own protection. I just want to place on the record my thanks to all staff, men and women, in our correctional centres. Can I also place on the record my thanks to the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre and Cleveland Youth Detention Centre staff in Townsville for the great work they do. These are challenging roles. The police deal with front-line delivery service in terms of investigating and charging; the DPP then prosecute—or the police prosecute in some instances—the judiciary then deal with the person; and then it is up to the hardworking staff in corrections and youth detention to administer the sentence in terms of keeping those people behind bars for that period of time.

One of the issues that came up in my Brisbane Youth Detention Centre visit was there were a few youth detention centre people that I saw who I thought looked a lot older than what a youth justice participant should look like in a youth detention centre. I was advised that it is a difficult area because having people in their early twenties, which there were a couple at that stage, mixing with 14, 15 and 16 year olds is not conducive to an environment whereby you can train and educate and put these mentoring programs in place, so it is quite difficult. That is why we put the policy in place and we put the protection there that they have to have over six months to serve and they are transferred. However, once they are transferred they do have a program in corrections that a 17 year old does not go in the general population with 30, 40, 50 and 60 year olds. There are some programs in place to make sure that a higher level of degree of responsibility is placed on the Corrective Services officers to ensure the safety of the 17 year olds. But it is far better to have them out of the youth detention centre environment so they can actually have proper programs in place because they are adults.

The department of justice will continue, remember, to monitor the impact of the reforms and their outcomes over the next 12 months, and this will ensure that there is an accurate assessment of how the new laws are functioning to achieve the goal of the youth justice system of holding repeat young offenders accountable. I would just make the point again to the committee that the ultimate goal of this government is rebalancing the scales of justice. Yes, young people have to take responsibility for their actions, but we would prefer to see far fewer young people in our detention centres. We would rather see them in jobs, getting an education and having good stable family environments. That is what the blueprint is all about; that is what the boot camps are all about. By all accounts, they are working. The reform agenda in terms of law and order is certainly working with the stats that we have released today.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will put a question to the Attorney-General. Maybe he will take 15 minutes to answer it and not just the one minute it took to answer the member for Rockhampton, when I note he takes significant time to answer questions from government members. So I would love to put a question to the Attorney-General, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin, correct me if I am wrong, but I thought it was a question taken on notice.

Mr WELLINGTON: No. I am going to ask a question because it seems that you are not ensuring that there is a balance between the times allocated for non-government members as against government members, which is contrary to the intent, I believe, of the conduct of these estimates committee hearings. So I will ask the question of the Attorney-General—

CHAIR: And before you ask the question, I repeat: the reason why the Attorney-General did not take 20 minutes is because he took the question on notice. If you listen, you may hear. Member for Nicklin, your question, please.

Mr WELLINGTON: Attorney-General, I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 11 and I ask: how many charges are pending the outcome of the High Court challenge? What resources have been provided to investigate how many people have been refused bail? Have you any idea how much the cost will be to the taxpayers of Queensland in proceeding with this High Court challenge?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, as far as I understand, police charge people; I do not. I think the member would be better placed putting that question to the police minister on Thursday.

Mr WELLINGTON: In the relation to the conduct of the High Court challenge, again are you saying that's not under your portfolio; that's the police?

Mr BLEIJIE: The High Court challenge is, but it is not my challenge. It is a challenge—

Mr WELLINGTON: You are defending it.

Mr BLEIJIE: We will defend it, but, Mr Chair, it is not appropriate that I talk about a matter that is—

Mr WELLINGTON: How much taxpayers' money has been spent to date then?

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, Mr Chair, we will get the figure for the member. But it is the early stages of the High Court challenge, and I am not going to pre-empt what may or may not happen in the High Court challenge. It is a matter of subject and I will, as Attorneys-General have forever in Queensland, not discuss matters before the court.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Chair. I refer to SDS page 18 about providing funding to support the awards modernisation process in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. Attorney, can you assure that through the award modernisation process for nurses, no nurse in the public sector will lose take-home pay and conditions?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, in the service delivery statements I do not think the Department of Justice mentions nurses.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Perhaps the Director-General can assist.

Mr BLEIJIE: And the QIRC, Mr Chair, is an independent body of government. What they determine is what they determine.

CHAIR: I do not think it is relevant to this hearing. Do you have another question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do, thank you, Chair. How many officers from JAG, DPC or other government departments are currently seconded to the QIRC for the award modernisation process?

Mr BLEIJIE: Approximately two or three.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, do you want to ask the last question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. In relation to Budget Paper 4, page 46, is the department, Attorney-General, expecting higher legal costs will be incurred because of the government's award modernisation?

Mr BLEIJIE: Can the member refer to the page again, please?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Budget Paper 4, page 46, higher legal costs for industrial negotiations. Is the department expecting that higher legal costs will be incurred because of the government's award modernisation? You must have some sort of idea.

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, if that's the sort of answer you want, then I suspect there will be a higher cost to legal services provided by Crown Law, as has been the case for 150 years in Queensland.

CHAIR: We still have a couple of minutes left. Do you want to ask another question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: If we can go back to transcript services, can the Attorney-General outline what is the cost of court transcripts for parties now compared to when they were prepared by the State Reporting Bureau?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I have answered that in questions on notice. I remember signing off on that, and we actually set out all the costs associated. It is a user-pay system now.

CHAIR: Perhaps if you could just indicate what number that is? I think I have seen it.

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

Mr BLEIJIE: I did about a week ago and it has been answered.

CHAIR: We just might look it up. I have seen it.

Mr BLEIJIE: You can find the number and I will refer to that.

CHAIR: Seventeen. Yes, I think we have already referred to it.

Mr BLEIJIE: I refer the member to question on notice No. 17, and all the details are in there set out. The point was it is a user-pay system.

CHAIR: Member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: Thanks, Mr Chair, I will be brief. This is all about prisons—I suppose bikies in prisons—page 8 of the SDS, which talks about achievements in 2013-14 and mentions the commissioning of existing infrastructure at Woodford Correctional Centre. I note that in February there was a briefing note from the Acting Commissioner of Queensland Corrective Services to the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General which states—

Since November 2013, Queensland Corrective Services has requested advice from the Queensland Police Service in relation to the criminal organisation participant status of 40 prisoners, with only one being confirmed as such to date.

Do you accept that, after four months of operation to that point, only being able to declare one prisoner at that stage in the prison system as being a participant in a criminal organisation is a reflection of the problems with the legislation?

Mr BLEIJIE: No. But I understand the opposition leader publicly does not want yes or no answers, so I will give a more fulsome answer in the minute we have remaining before afternoon tea.

CHAIR: I make it 30 seconds.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is fine, Mr Chair. The member will know that the matter is now subject to a High Court challenge. Charges that have been implemented under VLAD or the anti-association laws are effectively stalled until such time as the High Court decides the validity or otherwise of the legislation. So there actually have not been successful prosecutions because of the stall of the prosecutions because of the High Court challenge. I suspect that once we know what the High Court says, then it will change after that.

CHAIR: The committee will now break for afternoon tea. The hearing will resume at 3.45 pm with the continued consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Proceedings suspended from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm

CHAIR: The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will continue with consideration of proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I call the member for Bulimba.

Mr DILLAWAY: Will the Attorney-General please provide the number of new Legal Aid offices opened in the last financial year and provide a forecast as to the impact these new offices will have on the provision of front-line services?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. Legal Aid Queensland has not opened any offices in new locations in 2013-14. However, some offices have been relocated to new premises in their regional locations. Legal Aid Queensland provides, as we know, front-line legal assistance service delivery across Queensland. There are 13 regional Legal Aid Queensland offices throughout the state, many of which provide outreach services to surrounding areas.

I know that Anthony is here from Legal Aid. On the record I thank Anthony and his team for delivering the great service they do with Legal Aid Queensland right around the state. For example, the Cairns office provides outreach services to Cooktown, Mossman, Ravenshoe and Tully. The Toowoomba office provides outreach services to Charleville, Cunnamulla, Dirranbandi, Goondiwindi, Miles, Roma and Tara. In addition to the offices in Queensland, there are 34 community access points providing information about Legal Aid Queensland services including access to publications, assistance and free telephone legal advice.

In relation to other services in Queensland, there are 376 preferred supplier private law firms in Queensland. Of these, 122 firms are located outside of South-East Queensland. Criminal law duty lawyer services are provided at 69 Magistrates courts and Children's courts across Queensland. Family law duty lawyer services are provided in Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Maroochydore, Toowoomba, Southport, Hervey Bay and Ipswich. There is a state-wide legal helpline and an Indigenous information line which can be called from anywhere in Queensland at the cost of a local call.

Mr BYRNE: I would like to ask a question of the Electoral Commissioner. The SDS references are many, but we can start with the summary covering page of public expenditure administered by ECQ. I ask in particular about the government's changes introduced to the voter ID requirements. At a committee hearing on the bill the commissioner said that there were still details that would have to be worked out in terms of the practical implementation of the government's changes at booth level. The day of the Stafford by-election, as you are aware, is likely to be the first test of how this all operates—the practicalities of it. What happens if a voter does not have an acceptable ID and needs to do a declaration vote? I suppose what we are asking is: do we have this sorted out and what is the mechanism that will be used?

Ms Zischke: When an elector fronts to a polling booth, either at prepoll or on polling day, they are now required to bring along with them an acceptable proof-of-identity document in order to cast an ordinary vote. The acceptable proof of identity is set by regulation. I am very pleased to say that the procedures have been worked out. We commenced prepolling for the Stafford by-election last Monday, and at close of business yesterday we had 100 per cent turnout for electors showing proof of identity.

Mr BYRNE: Is this at the point where they are actually fronting up to give their names and details?

Ms Zischke: Yes. So they are required to show a proof of identity and confirm their name and details against the electoral roll. If they are unable to provide a proof-of-identity document they will be diverted to the declaration vote table, where they will be asked to complete details and then they will be able to cast a declaration vote.

Mr BYRNE: And what happens then? You have done a declaration vote, which I assume is simply where you provide your name and go through the electoral roll, like the usual process. Are they then required to take any subsequent steps?

Ms Zischke: A declaration vote for uncertain identity, proof of identity. They will be required to complete a declaration as to their eligibility to vote in the election—so that they are on the electoral roll—and whether they have voted in that election previously. They then move to a polling booth to cast their secret ballot and they return to the declaration desk to place their vote in the declaration envelope. So subsequent to polling day those votes will be scrutinised and if they are eligible then they will be admitted to the count.

Mr BYRNE: Good. I suppose what I am getting to is: there is no requirement for that voter to then revisit the Electoral Commission in any way, shape or form after that? The transaction is concluded on the day?

Ms Zischke: At that point, and then the Electoral Commission will go through robust procedures to ensure that vote is admitted to the count. But there is no need for them to turn up to the Electoral Commission on subsequent days to show a proof-of-identity document.

Mr BYRNE: I ask that only because I have heard something indirectly from people working in the prepoll. There is some evidence that has been presented to me—admittedly I was not present, but people whom I trust were—suggesting that people, once they had these matters made aware to them, displayed an emotional reaction and left. Obviously that did not happen in front of your officers.

Ms Zischke: No. It is not the experience that we are having at the prepolling centre in the Stafford by-election at the moment.

Mr BYRNE: Thank you.

CHAIR: May I just follow up on that, just to clarify. It is almost a hypothetical, but I need to do it in order to illustrate as to what happens. Declaration voters, as the member for Rockhampton has indicated, place the cast vote in the declaration ballot box and it is subsequently opened and it is difficult to validate. Do you make some attempt to go back to that voter to have them attempt to validate or is it just simply cast as a non-vote?

Ms Zischke: Before the ballot is actually placed in the declaration envelope, we will administratively check with the elector that the details are clear on that envelope. I would imagine it would be very difficult to re-engage with that elector subsequent to them casting the vote to ensure that those details are correct. So we prefer to be on the front foot and do that in the first instance.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, may I just add something to that?

CHAIR: Yes, Mr Attorney.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think it is good to report to the committee that, following the acting commissioner's advice about the identity requirements, at the moment in Stafford about four per cent of the roll have already voted in the prepoll and that attributes 100 per cent voter ID requirement. As this is the first time Queensland has had compulsory voter ID, I just thank the Electoral Commission. The intention, of course, was to have it at the next general election next year but the by-election was brought on early. But the law is the law. I think the Electoral Commission understands the difficulties arising from doing it a bit earlier. But I just think, at this stage, having 100 per cent of the four per cent of the voter turnout meeting proof-of-identity requirements is a good result. I am not saying we are not going to have any issues in the future. Although the Electoral Commission acts independently of the government in office, of course—as it always has—I know that I have been, as the minister responsible, on to the Electoral Commission making sure they are comfortable with the process they have put in place. They have advised me that there are advertisements running on radio—I heard one the other day—on TV and in print. The voters also have letters. So at this stage I am very comfortable with where that particular example—the Stafford by-election—is in terms of proof-of-identity requirements.

CHAIR: I go back to this committee's consideration of the electoral reform bill, as it then was. There was a visually impaired lady who gave an impassioned plea that she would like to talk to a machine and not a person. If the visually impaired person who made that submission lived in Stafford, would she be talking to a machine or a person who would record her vote on the phone?

Ms Zischke: Unfortunately, the electoral reform bill came in close correlation to the calling of the Stafford by-election. We were unable to provide a full service of electronically assisted voting to our electors in Stafford. It is our vision for the next Queensland state general election to have that piece of technology in place. We are continuing to engage with the relevant community groups to ensure we deliver a service level that meets their needs. To date the technology that we have developed has been tested with those community groups and we have had a good level of satisfaction and feedback from those groups.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you for allowing me to ask a question.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin, it is always a pleasure.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. My question is also to our Acting Electoral Commissioner. I refer you to page 92 of the Service Delivery Statement, which simply refers to the commission's responsibility for the conduct of the next state election which you have already touched on. My question is how much money do you anticipate you will make available to inform Queenslanders on how they can maximise the value of their vote by not just voting 1 for their preferred candidate but by numbering every box on the ballot paper to make sure the person they do not want to represent them is last?

Ms Zischke: Thank you, Mr Wellington, for your question. This was raised this morning in the context of the Anti-Discrimination Commission. Our available budget for the next financial year to run the Queensland state election is $19.2 million. While I cannot give you a precise breakdown,

there are certainly funds within that to do an effective advertising campaign. One of our roles is to educate the community in terms of our system of voting, which we all know is the optional preferential system of voting. While it is the role of the commission to educate, it is not the role of the commission to dictate, I suppose, to people as to how to cast their vote. We are very clear in terms of our communication to our electors. We have various channels, with one of the most effective being the voter information letter that will contain information on how electors can cast an optional preferential vote. Within that electors have the responsibility to inform themselves as to how to cast their vote in a negative way, I suppose.

Mr WATTS: Attorney, I think now would be a good opportunity to outline for us the steps that the government has taken to ensure that Queensland has a fair and transparent electoral system.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the question. It is a good question from the member. On being elected to government in 2012, the government made a commitment to review the Electoral Act 1992 to ensure Queensland has an electoral system that meets high standards of integrity and accountability with fair and effective electoral laws that promote participation in our democracy through political representation and voting. As part of this commitment, I released the electoral reform discussion paper for community consultation in January 2013. The discussion paper canvassed a wide range of options for reform and sought feedback on where improvements could be made to other areas. More than 250 responses were received from that discussion paper.

Feedback from the discussion paper developed the Electoral Reform Amendment Act 2014, which highlighted integrity and accountability as well as providing opportunities for full participation in Queensland's electoral processes. The act was introduced into the Assembly in November 2013 and assented to on 28 May 2014. The act returns to a dollar per vote model for the public funding of elections. This model is generally considered to be the fairest and most transparent and the least open to abuse of process. It removes the caps on political donations and electoral expenditure to ensure individuals and groups have the opportunity to fully take part in the electoral process whether through donations, advocacy or community engagement activities. The act aligns the disclosure threshold for gifts and donations with the dollar amount in the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918. The act will ensure further consistency with the Commonwealth threshold over time. The act now requires proof of identity requirements which provides more protection against voter impersonation and ensures greater confidence in the electoral process.

Other important integrity and transparency reform in that legislation include how-to-vote cards to be published on the Electoral Commission of Queensland website which allows for greater scrutiny of the cards and the commission to reject a card it believes is likely to mislead or deceive a voter in casting their vote. The act will also enable those requiring assistance to vote through electronically assisted voting. This includes people who are vision impaired or those requiring assistance because of a disability, motor impairment or insufficient literacy. This is our immediate priority and when developed will allow these voters to vote in secret and independently for the first time in Queensland. Another reform to enhance voter participation is the removal of the eligibility criteria for postal voting and allowing voters to apply online. This will make the postal voting process more accessible and simpler for voters.

Finally, the government is reviewing the Electoral Commission of Queensland's report on its inquiry into the 2014 Redcliffe by-election. This is to ensure individuals and groups in Queensland's electoral process can participate fully without intimidation or harassment, as seen in Redcliffe, as part of its ongoing commitment to a fair and transparent electoral system.

I make the point to the member for Toowoomba North that following the Redcliffe by-election and the complaints that the Electoral Commission and political parties received on unfair treatment, thuggish behaviour, misbehaviour, yelling abuse at certain individuals, whether they be candidates or poll workers, I think at that juncture it was very much an appropriate time to review whether we need to amend the provisions relating to how-to-vote card poll workers and political parties and candidates having those people there. We saw in Redcliffe, I think, an unacceptable level of behaviour that I do not think Queenslanders would tolerate or want to participate in in going to vote. Queenslanders want to vote in peace and quiet to reflect on the candidates. They want to reflect on the policies of individual candidates. They do not need to run the gauntlet, as I have said on many occasions, of running into a booth.

As one who was out there and witnessed all this on the Redcliffe by-election day and the abuse hurled at individuals, I think it was appropriate that the Electoral Commission conducted a review. We went a little further following the recommendations in saying not only should we consider that but should we consider a complete ban on poll workers? So the electors can go

straight to the polling station without fear and intimidation or threats being made by individuals or people dressed in costumes or the like and participate fully in the voting process without that fear and intimidation.

I have written to all the major political parties in the state. I understand, if memory serves me correctly, I also wrote to the Independents about the Redcliffe by-election and the review the Electoral Commissioner undertook but also to get further information with respect to whether it is time to look at other options for reform that the government has not made a decision on. We went through a process of public consultation which closed just recently. We will now through the department work with the Electoral Commission in looking at these sorts of issues and work out a way that we can have people participate in our democracy in a full but peaceful way.

CHAIR: I am hoping to have about 20 minutes per section. Do you want to ask any other questions of the Acting Electoral Commissioner?

Mr BYRNE: No.

CHAIR: Does anybody else have any questions they want to ask? Thank you very much, Acting Electoral Commissioner, for coming. I ask Judge Boyce from the Prostitution Licensing Authority to come forward. I think I may be the only one asking you a question.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is such an interesting area, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: What can I say? Judge, I was always conscious of the fact that when you were in office you had the short matters first, so I will return the favour. In relation to prostitution, I heard anecdotally that because of illegal prostitution—I will not say flourishing—legal brothels might be doing it hard, to use the pun. They might be having difficulty in making their organisations profitable.

Mr Boyce: Well certainly some licensees tell us that trading conditions are difficult. It depends a great deal on the business skill of the particular individuals. Some licensees have a very prosperous business. I think they could probably sell refrigerators to Eskimos. I think the business skills of others are not as great and they are struggling. Perhaps it has a lot to do with location. Some locations I think are much better than others, but there is a fairly wide variation in profitability over the industry as a whole.

CHAIR: Thank you for that. I had heard that from sectors and I was not entirely sure as to how that really epitomised what the industry was doing. Does anybody else have any questions?

Mr BYRNE: I think you have covered it.

CHAIR: Judge, there are no other hard questions for you, I am afraid, so you can leave. Thank you very much for coming. We will turn to Legal Aid Queensland. Mr Wellington?

Mr WELLINGTON: I did not know we were going to do it in that order. I would prefer that you go to other members and then see how we go. I certainly have a question but the question I would like to put is to the Ombudsman. I was not aware that we were going to go through it in a—

CHAIR: I see what you mean. I was only allowing the officer to be available on the front line but that opportunity will be given to you and you can have the first question if you so wish. Any questions for the Legal Aid director, Mr Reilly?

Mr CHOAT: My question is a general one. Could you give the committee an insight into how Legal Aid Queensland goes about delivering its priority services to Queenslanders in need?

Mr Reilly: I thank the honourable member for that question. Legal Aid Queensland uses a mixed service delivery model in which we use both employees and the private sector to deliver our services. We are very proud of the fact that we outsource about 80 per cent of our legal representation services to private law firms and the other 20 per cent of legal representation services are then provided by our employed lawyers including some of the regional offices that the Attorney has already mentioned. Our employed lawyers also perform other useful functions such as criminal law duty lawyer in the Magistrates Court, family law duty lawyer and providing legal advice including over the phone.

We work hard to maintain the quality of our legal services at Legal Aid Queensland. A few years ago we introduced a quality legal services framework that applies to our employees. It has a number of elements. Those elements are, firstly, merit based recruitment and selection, because to have quality you have to have good people. Secondly, when those people arrive they are all inducted into the organisation, into public sector standards and all of the operational matters that pertain to them carrying out their roles.

Thirdly, we have an ongoing continuing professional development program for staff including a really good in-house program that we run every Tuesday lunchtime which employees of community legal centres and also employees of private law firms are welcome to attend and they are well attended. We make sure they are accessible to our regional colleagues as well through distributing DVDs and having other forms of access.

One of the things I have introduced as CEO is a regular auditing program of all of our in-house lawyers. Their files are audited twice a year for quality, and they are audited against case and practice management standards that we maintain. Those case and practice management standards are very detailed and ensure that the way in which we provide our services to clients is of a high quality and is consistent throughout the state. It is something we take very seriously providing those services to our clients. Something else we have introduced is a legal profession supervision policy. It is very important, particularly for younger lawyers, to be well supervised.

CHAIR: Is this in-house or out-house?

Mr Reilly: This is in-house but externally there are some requirements, too. We have it set up so that all lawyers have a clear supervisor—someone who is responsible for providing them with guidance and supporting them in their work. I think Legal Aid is a very good place for young lawyers to work. It is a safe place to practise and to become a good lawyer. We do regular file reviews, which I have mentioned. We have a complaints management system including a dedicated complaints management officer, and we try very hard to solve complaints upfront as quickly as possible informally when we can, and if we cannot we have our more formal processes to go through. We take all complaints very seriously.

We conduct regular client satisfaction surveys, and I think we are due for one this year. They are always really interesting and important to find out what our clients think of us, how we are going, if we are doing the right thing, and if we are not doing the right thing we try to change what we do and do better. It is a continuous improvement approach. Finally, we have a workshop once a year to go through that whole process and make sure it is working well and see what we need to do better at.

In terms of the preferred supplier private law firms, we have a contract with those private law firms and they cover a whole range of issues, including the fact that they are required to comply with the same case and practice management standards. Their compliance with those standards is regularly audited by an audit team. When there is a failure to comply, we then follow that up with the private law firm and have a talk about it and take it from there. That is the main way we get quality. That is the quality process. I can, of course, also talk about the range of services we provide if the committee would like me to.

Mr CHOAT: A number of my constituents have come to me who have had dealings with LAQ. I am happy to say the vast majority are very happy. In terms of the law firms that provide that service, are they subject to audits and those sorts of things as well as the LAQ staff?

Mr Reilly: Yes, they are. We have contractual arrangements with all of the law firms. So they are quality assured, if you like. We call them preferred suppliers because they are quality assured. Those contracts have within them requirements about how their business is set up and the conduct of the files. A key requirement is that they comply with a set of case and practice management standards that we maintain. They are available on our website publicly. They are very good standards. Those are audited by an audit team. The audit they conduct is a compliance audit, if you like. The people who provide those services are also legal professionals. So consumers also have the option of taking up any concerns about their practice as a professional, if you like, with the relevant agency such as the Law Society.

CHAIR: It is a balancing act though, isn't it, in the sense that compared to private practice, you are doing a job for two-thirds of what it pays?

Mr Reilly: It depends on the benchmark you are comparing to, but it could possibly be even lower than that.

CHAIR: I suspect it was, but I was giving some latitude and yet you are subject to audit. So in 12 months time you get all your files out. I am just trying to work out is there a procedure by which it can be acknowledged that they are getting paid less than in private practice, that red tape ought to be—there are 65c stamps here. Has that all gone, or are we still doing all of that?

Mr Reilly: Absolutely. We have introduced some red-tape reduction initiatives over the past year. For example, we have started to introduce some standardised disbursement amounts. For example, the most voluminous criminal law grant of aid is the plea of guilty in the Magistrates Court,

and we have introduced a standardised disbursement fee for that. So it is a flat fee that applies every time. We have also introduced a standard fee for plea of guilty as well. We work that through with the profession. It was a really good process to undertake and the profession seems happy with the rate we settled at.

CHAIR: That is on the criminal side?

Mr Reilly: That is on the criminal side.

CHAIR: And the family law side? Do you still have those composite amounts I might call them? Do you still audit those even though it is two-thirds?

Mr Reilly: Yes, we do. We have actually put out a discussion paper recently called 'Improving family law grants of aid'. One of the aims is to have less touch points for us with the lawyers, so in the sense of the gateways that we make the lawyer step through to get a grant of aid through the progress of a family law matter. We are trying to reduce those and then provide a guarantee of a certain amount of fees past each gateway. We hope that that will make life easier for the preferred suppliers in terms of them having certainty to go through to the next stage, because family law is all about these stages. From an administrative perspective, it is more efficient for us, too, because it means we are not constantly reassessing things when really it is okay to let it go through to the end of that stage. We have been putting quite a bit of effort into red-tape reduction over the past few years. We have also shifted to an electronic document record management system that is really delivering a lot of benefits on that front, too. For example, the provision of information about a client's financial situation is much easier for lawyers now than what it used to be and that sort of thing.

We hope we are getting better at that. We try very hard to. Our new chair, Brian Stewart, is very supportive of the business partnership approach that we take with our preferred suppliers. We have recently established a new industry reference group with three members of the Bar Association of Queensland and three members of the Queensland Law Society from regional Queensland and South-East Queensland. We practise in different areas of law. We are using that industry reference group as a place to bounce ideas around how we can help the profession and work better with them. We had our first meeting about a month ago. It was really good. I think things are going well on that front. We are very dependent on our preferred suppliers and are very grateful for the great support that they provide for legal aid services in Queensland.

CHAIR: I must say back in day—and I do not know whether you remember—they used to issue certificates for fixed amounts. There were no audits, no nothing; you did your work, got the certificate, paid. Have you ever thought of that as an idea?

Mr Reilly: We are tending more and more towards fixed amounts. I think we do need to have some system of audit. It is taxpayers' money so there is an obligation there, but we are very aware of the fact that we have to balance that with letting people get on with the job and doing the good work they do.

Mr WATTS: Just briefly, you mentioned a DVD that you send out to regional Queensland. I am interested in how you are delivering the quality service to regional and sometimes remote Queensland if someone needs support at the office and contrasting that with what happens in South-East Queensland.

Mr Reilly: We are a state-wide organisation and are very proud of that fact. We are committed to the delivery of quality legal services across all of Queensland—regional and remote. Approximately one-third of the Legal Aid Queensland staff are employed in regional offices. We have grant staff, customer services staff and lawyers out in the regions. We have a large network of preferred supplier law firms in regional Queensland. Approximately one-third of our preferred supplier law firms are located in the regions. Having that mixed service delivery model where we rely heavily upon the private sector to deliver our services is fantastic in terms of flexibility and reach. We cannot have a regional office in every town, but we have a lot of law firms in different towns across Queensland. So that is a really important part of how we get out there.

During 2013-14 approximately half of our legal advice and representation services were delivered to clients from non-metropolitan areas. Legal aid services available in regional Queensland include criminal law duty lawyer services in 69 Magistrates Courts and Children's Courts in regional towns across Queensland; and Family Court duty lawyer services, which can I say is an extremely popular and growing service, in Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Maroochydore, Toowoomba, Southport, Hervey Bay and Ipswich. Having that duty lawyer service available in family law as well as the crime stuff has been really good. The

community really appreciates the service. We also run legal outreach clinics where lawyers travel to surrounding regions or link in by videoconference to different remote communities. For example, Cairns, being up in the far north and with a huge geographical area to cover, provides services to Cooktown, Mossman, Ravenshoe and Tully. Toowoomba has another huge geographical area to cover. They provide services to Charleville, Cunnamulla, Dirranbandi, Goondiwindi, Miles, Roma and Tara. We have a state-wide telephone legal help line which runs five days a week, nine to five, covering all sorts of issues for people from domestic violence through to crime, child protection and all the sorts of legal issues that affect financially disadvantaged people. We also have the Indigenous information hotline.

Another way we support the provision of legal services to financially disadvantaged people in Queensland is through administering the funding for community legal centres. Legal Aid is one component of a larger legal assistance sector, and community legal centres are another very important part of that. Whilst the Department of Justice strategically manages that program, we provide some administrative support for it as well and have lots of ongoing contact with the CLCs to help them do their important work. One of the things we do, for example, is we coordinate regional assistance forums which were established to enable legal assistance service providers in a particular region to work together cooperatively and collaboratively. They are these great little forums where the Legal Aid people get together with the people from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, the local community legal centre, other NGOs and so on. They talk about how to make sure they are working together to provide their services in the local area. If you ever have the chance to attend one, it is a really good, positive process and I think it is working really well. We are very committed to supporting that into the future.

Another thing we have been doing which has also had a lot of impact in regional Queensland is the Community Legal Education Collaboration Fund. As I said, we are always committed to finding new ways to deliver services. What we do with this one is we provide grants for community legal centres to undertake community legal education activities. A lot of the grants we provide are to regional Queensland. There are all sorts of really good initiatives that have been happening under that one, including the Suncoast Community Legal Service, which has done some really good stuff.

Miss BARTON: I have a quick question. You mentioned earlier that you thought that Legal Aid was a great place for young lawyers to work. I wonder what programs and incentives you have in place for graduate lawyers who are coming through if they have either finished their university degree or they are first admitted to practise. What programs do you have in place?

Mr Reilly: Thank you. That is a good question and a really interesting one. We do not have a formal graduate program at the moment. What we are finding is that a lot of young lawyers are coming to work at Legal Aid, but they come to us through our call centre; they start off as paralegals. They get to know Legal Aid through working in the call centre and we get to know them. Then when an opportunity comes up in the legal practice for them to practise as a lawyer, because we have gotten to know them, we then provide them with those chances. They get a chance then to get into the practice, have a go, get supported to improve their skills and then hopefully apply for an ongoing job. It is a way of getting the graduates in. It is actually working pretty well, but it is not a formal graduate program as such. The idea of having a graduate program is something that I am very interested in. Over the coming year we will be looking at whether getting the graduates in through that sort of informal approach is the best way to do it, or should we have a formal graduate program? We are going to have a think about that. At this stage that seems to be how the flow-through is coming in. It is not a bad way to do it I do not think.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Reilly. I think we might go to the Queensland Ombudsman. Mr Clarke, welcome. I think your first question is from the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Ombudsman. I refer you to page 107 of the Service Delivery Statements where reference is made to the office's use of own-initiative investigations to address the issue of systematic problems in public administration. It is great to see you promoting own-initiative investigations. I am a great fan of that. I would be interested to see if some other agencies are prepared to be so proactive. I note you lead in by saying that the office has a minimal capital program. My question is: how much money is available to do your own-initiative investigations? Is it really tight, or are you able to have some flexibility as to how many you can undertake and how far you can take those sorts of investigations?

Mr Clarke: Thank you for the question. This year the Ombudsman's budget increased quite significantly year on year; there is just over an extra $1 million in the budget. That has largely come about through some carryover funds for particular projects in the office, and they relate to

information technology projects. There is additional staff in regard to the child safety reforms that have been put in place across government. My office now has returned to its historical role of oversight of complaints in regard to child safety matters, which is a role that was given to the Children's Commission some years ago. That now has returned to the office with additional resources to continue to perform that function. There is some recognition for salary increases. So the office has had a significant increase in budget year on year.

In regard to the specifics of your question about do I have discretion about how to spend the money, yes, I do have discretion. The act provides that I am the ultimate discretionary person within the office to be able to provide, whether I use those funds in a way to manage my first objective in the act which is to provide a complaints service for Queenslanders or the second objective in the act which is to provide for administrative improvement across government and the own-initiative investigations largely sit in both of those spaces. If I have a series of complaints, for example, which would indicate to me that there is some pattern of issue in public administration, I need not investigate the individual complaint but can, in fact, investigate the systemic issue, if I can call it that, under my own initiative. An example where that has occurred would be the ownership transfer fee report I released under the Speaker's permission last financial year. Alternatively, information can come to me by other means, whether that is through the media or information that simply comes by some other mechanism. I can decide to do an own-initiative investigation. Perhaps an example of that would have been the asbestos report I tabled in the House some time ago. Because of a range of issues that I had seen over my career, I decided that there was a need and a benefit to do a report on asbestos regulation in Queensland. Both of those reports give an example of how that work can be done.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. Mr Chairman, I have one further question for the Ombudsman. Thank you. I am really keen to see that retained. I understand though, with the recent changes to the Crime and Misconduct Commission to now the Crime and Corruption Commission, the change in definition of 'misconduct' to 'corruption' will, I believe, result in you taking on significantly more workload, if I can be as frank as that. Can you give any advice as to what additional resources or how much extra money you think you will need to manage this increased workload?

CHAIR: Do we need to put that to him, though? Do you accept that misconduct to corruption will mean more work to you?

Mr Clarke: Thank you for the question. I do believe there will be more work come to my office as a result of those changes. At the moment, it is very difficult to say how much additional work will come. In the first instance because of the legislative structure that has been put in place, those matters that would previously have been in the jurisdiction of the Crime and Misconduct Commission and now no longer in the jurisdiction of the Crime and Corruption Commission, are likely to return to agencies to be dealt with. The amount of work that flows to my office will depend very heavily upon the satisfactory treatment of those complaints by agencies. If agencies do a wonderfully good job, then the impact on my office may be less. If agencies do not have in place very sound complaints management systems, investigation systems and the like, then there may be a more significant impact in my office.

By way of example, last year my office has received about 25 public interest disclosures. In the previous year, I only had about seven or so public interest disclosures. That is the area where I suspect there will be the greatest impact in my office, that is, in PIDs, because about 80 per cent of PIDs made across the public sector related previously to misconduct, which was in the jurisdiction of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. I anticipate that at least a significant proportion of that will ultimately end up in the office, but it is virtually impossible for me to predict what that will be at this point in time. I will, of course, make submissions to the government when I am aware of what those impacts are.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Chairman, if I can ask a follow-on question, following on from the question that I put to Dr Levy earlier this morning in relation to a complaint of bullying by an elected council official. The complaint was made to the mayor and also to the chief executive officer of the council. I am actually the patron of the organisation that deals with this complaint of bullying. The response to the complaint was actually a letter from the councillor effectively saying, 'Well, I apologise'. That was all that was happening. Is it the case that if the organisation wants to pursue that matter further, they would then raise the matter with you? Would that be a matter under your resourcing responsibility, if they are not happy with that way of handling it by the local council?

Mr Clarke: Local councils are certainly within my jurisdiction. For matters that are no longer in the Crime and Corruption Commission's jurisdiction, in other words, they do not meet the four-limb test of being corrupt behaviour, if someone is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, whether it is a public interest disclosure or otherwise, handled by a local council, they are at liberty to refer the matter to my office. In general terms, most local government matters would be within jurisdiction, yes.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: You have a process, though, do you not, where in fact you will not take it on if there is still an avenue which that complainant should pursue?

Mr Clarke: There are general and specific provisions in regard to what matters should and should not be investigated within my office. The general policy approach is that we expect that complainants will have initially raised a complaint with an authority and then subsequently sought a review with that authority if they are dissatisfied with the first decision. In the conduct of any review one would anticipate the chief executive would become aware of that or at least a member of the senior executive of that body would become aware of it if there was a review undertaken in the body. If they remain dissatisfied after that review, then as a policy position my office would then consider it.

There are also, under section 23 in the Ombudsman Act, a range of provisions that allow me to not investigate a matter if I think there is another organisation or avenue available to the individual. For example, if I thought that it was more a discrimination matter than a public administration matter, I would either recommend to the complainant that they talk to the ADCQ or seek their permission for me to directly refer the matter to the ADCQ on their behalf, and we are increasingly doing those direct referrals through the office.

CHAIR: And I understand the Public Service Commission has something in place to streamline, to ensure there is a process for the handling of complaints within the Public Service. Are you aware of that?

Mr Clarke: I am aware generally of the provisions that apply in the Public Service. Each and every agency, of course, after the amendments the government put through recently, is now required to have a service delivery complaints management system in place that complies with the Australian standard and, indeed, is reported annually in annual reports, et cetera. That has been a very positive development. The work that the Public Service Commission is doing in terms of management of performance, if that is what you are referring to, Mr Chair—

CHAIR: It was really the line of inquiry in relation to something between corruption and misconduct, where you get a complaint. Really my question is this: will you refer those to the Public Service Commission or the appropriate department for them to consider their process before you handle it?

Mr Clarke: I am sorry, I misunderstood. Yes, we will. If the matter has not yet been through due process within the agency, we will either ask the complainant to refer the matter to the agency or seek their permission to directly refer it on their behalf if that is easier and more streamlined. That is a process that we have done. Over the last couple of years, it increased quite substantially the number of direct referral matters that we deal with within the office.

CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any other matters? Member for Broadwater.

Miss BARTON: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. In previous years, you have advised the committee that your office had information sessions and development programs that you have made available to agencies about the management of complaints at an internal level and they have been quite successful in the past. Could you detail what you have been able to do in the past 12 months and whether or not you intend to continue with these professional development sessions and so forth for state agencies?

Mr Clarke: Thank you, Ms Barton, for the question. The training program and the administrative improvement elements of the office include a couple of streams. One is that we will continue to work with agencies to review their complaints management systems and processes. Last financial year, we completed 15 of those reviews of state agencies. In the previous year, I think we did 17 local governments. We are working our way through public agencies to conduct reviews of their complaints management systems. A particularly important one that has just been finished is a review with the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services around their complaints management system in preparation for the child safety changes across government.

That has been an important initiative. We have also continued to offer the training programs that we have offered now for a number of years. I think they were introduced in about 2005/2006. Last year, we offered 137 training sessions to about 2,200 participants. That was a very significant increase on the previous year, which was impacted by the change of government processes and machinery of government processes that followed the last state election. It is very pleasing that agencies have now returned, so to speak, to participate in those programs. I am hopeful that that will continue at least in its current form if not in increased levels.

Finally, the other thing we do in regard to administrative improvement is provide advices to agencies. We do about 50 or 60 advices a year and those advices relate to queries from agencies about complaints management investigations or any aspect of being able to deal effectively with complaints. I have very experienced officers within my organisation who can provide that advice. We try to provide that advice to agencies in a very timely way, so we assist them to improve their systems each and every time they get an opportunity to look at them.

CHAIR: Are there any other questions? Thank you very much, Mr Clarke. The member for Rockhampton wishes to ask the director-general about a question on notice.

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Mr Chair. This is a legacy of matters that were raised previously, Director-General. It is question on notice No. 15, where there has been some discussion previously that raised a number of issues about the spend on the High Court challenge and various other things. I find it hard to reconcile the answer provided there, which is about policy development and a number, the inference being that there is no price put to any work done by the department in relation to that High Court challenge. Does that remain the position?

Mr Sosso: Member for Rockhampton, I was just reading the question on notice here and getting it in context.

Mr BYRNE: While you are thinking, the piece that intrigues me is the last part of the question on notice, which is 'and the departmental legal and other costs used to prepare materials to defend the legal challenge to the legislation'. I understand the first part of the answer that has been provided.

Mr Sosso: Sure.

Mr BYRNE: But I assume you must have an activity based costing funding model inside the department. That would be natural. You would be able to attribute resource and effort against particular functions or tasks or however you break this up.

Mr BLEIJIE: It depends how many laws are appealed.

Mr BYRNE: Yes, fair enough.

Mr BLEIJIE: Which is not subject to us.

Mr BYRNE: You must have a body of work that goes on; it does not happen without a price. I am simply asking what is the price, the estimate even, of that body of work that must have been done to put us in that position, that put the department in the right position prior to anything that went forward in the High Court.

Mr Sosso: I think my reply to the member for Rockhampton is that it would be very difficult. I presume we could get some figure for you, but it would be inherently problematic. The reason I say that is twofold. First, there are fees that would be paid to external lawyers and barristers, which one could obtain relatively easily. Then there is the notional cost of staff in terms of people within the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland. Then there would be the notional costs of staff within the Crown Law office. As was indicated earlier today, that is an office that since 1997 has been self funding. The mix of that information and the timing of it is volatile. Sure, it would be relatively easy if you were to ask me on notice what would be the cost of external lawyers, to get one. I could obtain that information from the Crown Solicitor, who is not there. I was just looking to see if he is there, but he is not there. The rest of it is inherently problematic. Certainly, I do not think I could provide you with a realistic estimate of the costs of the notional time spent by the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland, because there would be a plethora of officers doing a range of work that they do not keep time costings on. Public servants do not charge by a unit. I would not require them to say, 'I've spent five minutes on this and 10 minutes on that'. It is different in an external unit like an external firm of solicitors or possibly Crown Law. Having a look at that question, it covers the whole gamut. If it was a more confined question, possibly an answer could be given.

Mr BYRNE: If I can just park the difficulties in establishing a cost, if you like—if I can park that, and I accept what you are saying; maybe the systems are not sophisticated enough or whatever—but you do accept that there is a cost for—

Mr Sosso: Absolutely. It is just a question of ascertaining from the honourable member the component of the cost, because there is not a time-costing model used by public servants. I have a special projects legislation area where officers are involved in the development of policy and legislation five days a week, 52 weeks a year. It would be impossible for me to say how much money was expended in the development of powers of attorney legislation, if you know what I am saying. The same applies throughout the whole Public Service.

Mr BYRNE: That all sounds entirely plausible to me. I am not trying to make more of it than it is, but that answer you have just given me would have been far more useful to me looking at the answer to the question and knowing what was being asked in the first place. If no other criticism, that explanation you just provided there might have been more helpful than some of the language that was wrapped around that answer to understand what has happened here. I will leave it at that. Thank you.

CHAIR: Does anybody have any questions of the Information Commissioner?

Mr WELLINGTON: Yes.

CHAIR: Information Commissioner, would you kindly step forward? The member for Nicklin has a question for you.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you. My question relates to page 74 of the Service Delivery Statements. Halfway down the page it is headed 'Resources and Performance' and it then states—

Major deliverables for 2014-15 include:

…

- encouraging agency leaders to champion an open culture to maximise information access

…

- continuing to improve regional awareness and compliance

What sorts of resources do you anticipate you will need to allocate to do this? I suppose the reason it has to happen and the reason you have worded it that way is that some public servants are very reluctant to reveal what people are asking to see. Whether they want to protect a minister or protect a senior public servant, a director-general or whoever it might be, there must be some reluctance there otherwise there would not be this need. That is a hypothetical. So what sort of money are you looking at and how big is the problem?

Ms Rangihaeata: We do not allocate a specific budget to that work. However, I have been engaging with CEOs and councillors across Queensland, and I am continuing to do that throughout this financial year. It is critically important that we engage at that level because our work has confirmed the importance of active leadership in this area to result in that cultural change which was anticipated to be quite a challenge when the right to information legislation was introduced. We are, however, seeing positive change in this area through our performance monitoring work and certainly our interactions with agencies which include government departments, local governments, statutory authorities and so on. So it is quite a range and diverse group. Certainly when I have been travelling and meeting with regional organisations of councils and departments I have been quite reassured by the commitment to openness there is. Through our discussions it has become quite clear that at a CEO level there is quite a good commitment to openness. I think the challenge really is the communication and demonstration of that throughout the agency. That is an ongoing challenge to ensure that people understand that their CEO and senior executives are committed to that. The open data initiative is a good example of clear leadership in relation to a specific issue of pushing information out because it has really challenged people to think about those issues in relation to data, because there are risks associated with releasing data and people need to think about how they manage those risks and how they communicate to their staff their commitment to it and what they expect of them.

Mr WELLINGTON: How prevalent is it the case that you have to go back to the staff and say, 'Look, this should be released. You're too protective'? How big a problem do you see it as?

Ms Rangihaeata: In that respect, our only exposure to that really is through our external review function and we see a very small proportion of applications that come to us on review—

probably, I think, about three per cent to five per cent, depending on the year. In a lot of those cases—approximately 90 per cent—we are able to informally resolve those applications without resorting to a formal decision. So both the agency and the applicant and third parties, where it is relevant, agree with our view and we settle it on that basis. It is a mixture. A lot of issues relate to what is considered to be insufficient searches. People are concerned that there should be more documents. Sometimes that is on the basis of misunderstandings about how an agency works and records information on what has occurred. Other times there are more documents and an agency locates those documents, considers those and may well release them. There is a wide variation in outcomes. Certainly our decisions where we are required to make a decision where we have not settled all of the issues in the review do not show a clear trend in terms of a concern about release. Generally, decision makers who are required to make independent decisions within their agency are quite good at applying the legislation.

Mr WELLINGTON: One of the concerns is that, whilst there was criticism of the previous Crime and Misconduct Commission managing complaints, the message I received was that many people felt more comfortable that someone external from the local government or from the same department was actually going to look into it or supervise it. Under the new model, effectively a local department or a local council all do their own thing and the concern is that they are protecting their own. They might have their ethical standards units, but by crikey some of the evidence that I have seen is questionable about their willingness to really get to the bottom of the complaint. Is it the case that there is not a significant resource cost for people to proceed to that next step and say, 'We're not happy with our local council handling of our complaint. We'll now proceed to the Ombudsman'?

Ms Rangihaeata: We do not handle complaints that arise from the CCC. However, we do see a number of external review applications that relate to a complaint and we do consider whether or not documents requested under the right to information or information privacy application should be released. But we do not actually consider CCC complaints.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you.

Miss BARTON: I have a quick question for the commissioner, and I appreciate that you have not been in the role 12 months yet. Firstly, congratulations on your first estimates. I hope you have not found the experience too trying or too troublesome. I just wondered if you could detail in the period of time that you have been in this role some of the important work that you have seen that you have been able to do as the Information Commissioner but also whether you might be able to provide some detail about the budget of your office and how that is distributed within the office.

Ms Rangihaeata: Certainly. We have just seen five years since the introduction of the legislation, so we are certainly well past the implementation stage and we have done some very important performance monitoring work that has not only shown what the state of right to information and information privacy compliance is but also assisted in raising awareness, which is one of our functions. Last financial year we also finalised a record number of external review applications—501 applications—which is a very substantial amount of work, because we are also seeing that the external review applications are far more substantive in their nature now. We have not seen the quick closures, as people might refer to, which may be because of the increasing awareness of what people do come to the office for and the increasing quality of practice by the agencies in the first instance.

In terms of the budget, approximately half the budget goes to the external review function—that is, merits review of agency decisions on access and amendment applications. We have a small team that run the inquiry service that provide advice and assistance to the community and agencies. We have another small team called the performance monitoring team—three FTEs—which conduct a range of activities that include in-depth compliance audits of agencies and also privacy reviews of systemic nature issues. We also have a program of desktop audits of online information agencies provide in their compliance with right to information and privacy requirements, and in this past financial year we focused on hospital and health services and departments in that respect. We have a very small privacy team that are in very high demand for their services in providing expert privacy advice to agencies. Certainly, the technological issues are a real challenge for all agencies and pose a lot of potential risk that they seek advice on in terms of how to manage not only in terms of their compliance with the legislation but also meeting community expectations, which is an ongoing issue and risk to their reputation and their relationship with their clients.

Miss BARTON: I was just wondering, with your indulgence, Mr Chair, if you could also clarify what your office has been doing to promote an understanding of the requirements under the IP Act

for some of the regional and rural communities and areas of Queensland so that they are aware of what their obligations and requirements are as well.

Ms Rangihaeata: In the 2013-14 financial year we completed finalising a range of online training modules that are available to anyone anywhere across the state whenever they need to access that training, and that was a large investment by the office and has had significant take-up, including whole agencies requiring all of their staff to complete the general awareness components. There is also a series of modules for decision makers that really steps them through the process to ensure that they are aware of their obligations under the legislation, because after providing that training which we had done previously face to face in Brisbane it is obviously quite difficult to reach the very small numbers of regional decision makers spread across the state. We have had difficulties with turnover and often they are not a dedicated officer; they are someone where an application lands on their desk and they are required to quickly pick up the Act and figure out what to do. So that online training is a key resource for regional agencies. Also when we conduct training we prepare webinars and record those webinars. We have had great participation from regional decision makers and other practitioners in that training as well and great feedback, not only in terms of the individuals but as I have met with CEOs and councils around the state they have commented on the feedback that they have had from their staff about the range of our training and resources and enquiry service, which often do on-the-phone training if required.

Miss BARTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: I call on Mr Crofton, the Public Trustee. Mr Crofton, we have time to ask the question; we do not have time for you to answer it.

Mr Crofton: I am perfectly comfortable with that.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will be brief. My question is to the Public Trustee in relation to page 123 of the Service Delivery Statements where reference is made to the Public Trustee's continued business improvement through program restructure and outsourcing arrangements. Reference is made to the appointment of a service provider to provide financial planning services to clients, and my questions are: is the service provider a private entity and if they give advice that is flawed will there be insurance cover to cover that flawed advice so we do not see a repeat of the Commonwealth Bank fiasco? The final part of the question is: do these service providers have to cover their own costs or are their costs met by the department?

Mr Crofton: Thank you for the question. That reference relates largely to the Public Trustee Office's or the public trust office's activities as an administrator for adults with an incapacity where appointed by QCAT—the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal—or sometimes the courts. The obligation, if I may, is to prudently manage the funds and property of such clients with a decision-making incapacity. That is mandated not only by the Guardianship and Administration Act but there is a reference there and an inclusion—indeed an obligation—to observe part 3 of the Trusts Act. So the obligation is to invest clients' funds.

The Public Trustee has for a long period of time had a partnership by way of contract with a financial planner or planners. The reference in the SDS is to a process that was undertaken to revisit that arrangement and to contract given price, service level, insurances and other mandatory requirements with an appropriate financial planning service. Happily, the contract engaged is with, I think, the largest financial planning firm in Queensland and has representation, importantly, for the Public Trustee's clients throughout Queensland, that is, accessibility. Yes, that organisation carries insurances.

The Public Trustee also has its own staff in a program of the office, some of whom, or many of whom, have financial planning qualifications. So the management of that contract, both generally and at a specific file level, is attended to earnestly not only by individual trust officers but also others within the organisation. We have had a long relationship with this particular planning adviser and I must say that their performance has been very sound. They are certainly insured. I cannot speak to the Commonwealth Bank fiasco.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice has expired. On behalf of the committee, Attorney-General, I thank you and your advisers for your attendance today. Attorney-General, I remind you that your answers to the questions taken on notice at today's hearing are to be provided to the research director by the close of business Friday,

18 July 2014. This completes the committee's hearings in the matter. Before I conclude, on behalf of the committee I thank Hansard staff and the attendants for their assistance today.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, excuse me, before you declare the committee closed, I think I said that I was going to table something for the committee's benefit earlier in the day, which I neglected to do. One was the newspaper article that I referred to and the other was the Labor Party policy on the establishment of boot camps in the state. So if I could seek leave to table those?

CHAIR: Does the Attorney-General have leave to tender those documents? Right. Carried. I declare this public hearing closed. Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 5.02 pm