

THURSDAY, 17 JULY 2014

ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE—NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, SPORT AND RACING

Estimates Committee Members

Mr TJ Ruthenberg (Chair)

Ms RM Bates

Dr AR Douglas

Mr JD Hathaway

Mr JM Krause

Mr DE Shuttleworth

Mrs DC Scott

Member in Attendance

Hon. TS Mulherin

In Attendance

Hon. SL Dickson, Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

Ms J de Winter, Chief of Staff

Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

Dr J Glaister, Director-General

Mr B Klaassen, Deputy Director-General, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Mr R Watson, Deputy Director-General, Sport and Recreation Services

Ms G O'Neill, Principal Project Officer


Racing Queensland

Mr D Condon, Chief Executive Officer

Stadiums Queensland

Mr K Yearbury, Chief Executive Officer

Committee met at 9.00 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Health and Community Services Committee open. I am Trev Ruthenberg, the member for Kallangur and chair of the committee. The other committee members are Mrs Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge, who is here for Mrs Jo-Ann Miller under standing order 202; Ms Ros Bates MP, member for Mudgeeraba; Dr Alex Douglas MP, member for Gaven; Mr John Hathaway MP, member for Townsville; Mr Dale Shuttleworth MP, member for Ferny Grove; and Mr Jon Krause MP, member for Beaudesert. A number of substitute members have been appointed, and I have already introduced Mrs Desley Scott. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to attend. This morning we have notification that Mr Tim Mulherin MP will be attending. Welcome, Tim.

The committee has resolved that the whole of the proceedings of the committee may be broadcast in line with the conditions of broadcasting and guidelines for camera operators which are available from one of the parliamentary attendants in the room. I ask that mobile phones or pagers be either switched off or placed on silent mode.

The committee will spend the day examining the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2014 for the portfolios of the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing from 9 am to 10.30; the Minister for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs from 11 am to 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm to 2 pm, and the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services from 2 pm to 3 pm and 3.30 to 5 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: morning tea from 10.30 to 11; lunch from 12.30 to 1.30; afternoon tea from 3 to 3.30. Under standing order 181, the minister may have advisers present to assist. Some officials and advisers are located in another room. If it is necessary for an official to come from another room to provide advice or answers to a question, I may take another question to allow time for that person to arrive and then return to the initial question.

I remind those present that these proceedings are similar to parliament and subject to the standing rules and orders of parliament. 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. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply here. I refer particularly to standing orders 112 and 115. Questions should be brief, relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles or argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. Where necessary, I will remind ministers, directors-general, CEOs and their advisers that their answers to a question should be finalised so that other issues can be examined. My intent is to do 15-minute blocks of non-government questions and 15 minutes of government questions. There may be a little bit of leeway depending on the answer at the time.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, the director-general and officials of the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, the chief executive officers of Racing Queensland and Stadiums Queensland and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask each official to identify themselves the first time they answer a question and to bring their nameplate if they come to the table to answer a question.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The committee has resolved that ministers may make an opening statement of up to five minutes. Minister, would you care to make a brief opening statement?

Mr DICKSON: Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity to brief members on this year's budget for the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. I am joined today by my Chief of Staff, Johanna de Winter; my Director-General, Dr John Glaister; the Deputy Director-General of the Parks and Wildlife Service, Mr Ben Klaassen; the Deputy Director-General of Sport and Recreation, Mr Richard Watson; Stadiums Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Mr Kevin Yearbury; and Racing Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Mr Darren Condon.

Mr Chairman, before I begin, I seek leave of the committee to table a replacement answer to question on notice No. 4 regarding the Friends of Parks. The answer to the question refers to 32 community based volunteer groups undertaking a range of projects. It should have referred to 31. That was a typo and I do apologise.

CHAIR: Leave is granted. Thank you, Minister.

Mr DICKSON: We have a strong plan to deliver for national parks, sport and recreation and racing—one that ensures a bright and healthy future for all Queenslanders. We are focused on our front-line services and delivering real outcomes for all Queenslanders.

Over the past 12 months we have delivered valuable initiatives to better manage and protect our parks, forests and protected areas, to give support and encourage physical activity, and to ensure the integrity of the racing industry. We have focused on our investments in grassroots sport and recreation as well as in national parks, the racing industry and sports facility infrastructure upgrades.

We have ensured our works have contributed to the continued growth of the four-pillar economy in Queensland and has helped lower the cost of living by providing affordable sport and recreation options.

Our iconic \$47.8 million Get in the Game initiative has helped thousands of Queenslanders to become active. So far this program has issued 54,000 Get Started vouchers to help children with the cost of club registration, provided \$7 million to 960 clubs for the requirement of training and equipment, and paid \$18 million to 220 clubs for better infrastructure and projects. With this new round of funding now open, I am sure we will help countless more clubs and young children to get in the game.

The \$1.5 million nature play initiative is another practical way we are helping Queensland families to build the foundations for lifelong health and fitness. It is another way we are helping kids to get active more often at little or no cost to the government. This government also invests significantly to ensure Queensland has a top level of sports infrastructure for elite competition and major events. This financial year we will invest \$13.4 million into major sporting infrastructure. Conservative estimates put the return on investment at over \$300-plus million per annum which is just for regular seasonal games. This investment helps the Newman government to grow our four-pillar economy through sports tourism.

Many of our major venues also support grassroots participation. Around 1.2 million participants per year use facilities at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, QSAC and the Sleeman Sports Complex. We have continued our initiatives to encourage ecotourism opportunities within our parks. We have conducted a state-wide expression of interest for ecotourism facilities on national parks and issued the first ever ecotourism lease for Mamu Tropical Skywalk. We have also helped to secure major events recreational opportunities including the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup at Smithfield Conservation Park in Cairns which attracted 300 competitors from 33 countries.

Our front-line rangers are the custodians of more than 12 million hectares of protected parks and forests, working hard to ensure proper management and accessibility for Queenslanders and visitors alike. Cleaning up and reopening our parks after the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Ita was essential to keep the tourism industry in Far North Queensland alive over the Easter holiday period. I applaud our rangers for their selfless efforts. Their work has been complemented by a \$20-plus million investment in infrastructure improvements, helping visitors to enjoy these world-class destinations.

In the upcoming year this work will be enhanced with \$4.1 million invested into visitor information upgrades at David Fleay Wildlife Park on the Gold Coast, Mon Repos turtle centre at Bargara and Walkabout Creek in D'Aguilar National Park near Brisbane. Our marine parks will also benefit. The *Reef Ranger*, a new 24-metre long-range vessel, will better support field management operations in the Great Barrier Reef.

We are getting racing back on track through our funding support for racing infrastructure projects and country race meets. Our 30-year waging agreement with the Tatts Group is expected to provide \$4.5 billion to the racing industry over the life of the agreement—a solid platform to help deliver the investment needed for racing to grow and prosper in the long term. We are making a difference. The Newman government's strong plan is delivering great outcomes for a brighter future for all Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will move to questions. We will start with government questions for about 15 minutes and then move across to non-government. I call the member for Mudgeeraba.

Ms BATES: Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS—strategic direction and a response to estimates question on notice No. 1. Given the importance of tourism to the four-pillar economy, can the minister please further elaborate on his answers with some examples of how the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing is delivering on this government's commitment to open up our parks to all Queenslanders and visitors in making our state a world-leading ecotourism destination?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member for the question. When the Newman government came to power in March 2012, we had made many commitments to the people of Queensland and we have systematically gone about delivering on the majority of those commitments that we made. As far as ecotourism is concerned, we put out an expression of interest to see what need there was for ecotourism within national parks. We had numerous responses to that expression of interest. To bring this into context, we need to look at the world. In Tasmania in Cradle Mountain tourism operations

have been occurring within national parks for over 25 years. Throughout the rest of the world, and I use New Zealand as a great example, it has been so successful, creating an economy that did not exist prior to the implementation of ecotourism. Now right here in Queensland we are doing exactly the same thing and we are delivering what I believe are fantastic outcomes for ecotourism.

Through our department we have strong supporters of this DestinationQ partnership between the Queensland government and the tourism industry, recognising tourism as one of the four pillars of our economy. We have gone through this process with the department of tourism, and we have made a very strong commitment to the people of Queensland that we would create the best ecotourism area on the planet by 2020. That is our goal. It is our ambition. We will do everything to reach that point.

I would like to touch on Mamu. It is a tourist walk that we have in North Queensland. It is our first ecotourism development that has been approved by our government where a private operator is now operating a government facility that was making losses. This is about saving the Queensland taxpayer a whole lot of money in the long term. It is about delivering a tourism facility that was not being run to its highest and best use potential. Working with the local Indigenous group, the new proprietor of that facility is going to deliver great outcomes for tourism in Queensland.

When we came to government, tourism was on its knees. Ecotourism did not exist. Now we have gone through the expression of interest process and I hope to report new ventures that will be approved in the-not-too-distant future. We have had so many put forward but we are going through due process to make sure that any operation within a protected area or national park will fulfil all the requirements necessary so the area continues to be protected but at the same time creating economic prosperity within our ecotourism facilities, as has happened throughout the world, particularly in Tasmania. We have been behind the eight ball. Now we are ahead of the game. I look forward to delivering many more of these projects so that the people of Queensland will have long-term jobs, our young people will have an opportunity to promote our national parks to the world, and people will come not from Queensland, not from Australia but from around the world to see just how good our national parks are and the potential that we have to promote them to the rest of the world.

Mr KRAUSE: Good morning, Minister. I refer to page 2 and page 5 of the SDS—investing in better infrastructure and using better planning. Can you please outline how the 2014-15 QPWS capital budget will contribute to this government's commitment to grow the four-pillar economy in Queensland?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member for the question. The Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service manages over 1,085 parks and forests which are dispersed across Queensland and cover over 12 million hectares of land. In addition to these parks and forests, the QPWS manages over 1.8 million hectares of other land and 72,000 square kilometres of the state's marine parks. Within this significant expanse of land and sea, the QPWS has responsibility to manage more than 2,000 kilometres of walking tracks; 470 camping areas; over 200 day-use sites; 30,000 kilometres of roads; 350 administrative buildings, including offices, visitors centres and employee housing; and 151 work bases. Our parks and forests are the cornerstone of the state's ecotourism industry and the development of high-quality infrastructure is essential to help deliver world-class experiences. This quality infrastructure and facilities, including the extensive track and trail work, means that our national parks, our state forests, our marine parks and other QPWS-managed areas are the biggest single resource of outdoor recreation opportunities for Queenslanders and visitors to the state.

In 2014-15, the department budgeted \$22.7 million to help grow our four-pillar economy in Queensland by improving access to our parks, our forests, our high-quality ecotourism and our outdoor recreation experiences. It will provide the resources needed to improve the management of our outstanding natural features found in the state's protected areas, including \$1.25 million for sport and recreation services for recreation projects within these protected areas.

A recent initiative in our vision to develop gateways to our high-profile protected areas is the enhancement of visitor centres and the provision of well-planned park facilities that will provide Queenslanders and visitors a distinct getaway that provides clear and direct access to explore our national parks. We have committed \$4.1 million to the capital upgrade of visitors centres at the David Fleay Wildlife Park, Carnarvon Gorge National Park, Walkabout Creek, D'Aguiar National Park and Mon Repos Conservation Park with each location providing a unique park experience. We will invest

in other visitor facilities and infrastructure to enhance ecotourism and recreation access to our parks, including campgrounds, picnic areas, bushwalks, bridges, lookouts, walking tracks, mountain bike trails, road signage, public displays and visitor amenities.

In 2014-15, \$1.8 million will be spent on various projects within national parks to improve visitor access. This work includes the Curtis Island road and fire line upgrade, the redevelopment of the Dubuji walkway near the Daintree, the Leisha Track and Freshwater Road upgrades at Cooloola, the platypus walk and information node upgrade at Eungella, the Python Rock track upgrade to wheelchair accessibility standard in Lamington National Park and the Sylvia Creek mountain bike trail near Atherton. I have to compliment the walking track that is being built at Eungella. I was up there in recent times and I would say to anybody who is listening to go and have a look. It would be one of the few places in the world where I can guarantee you will see a whole lot of platypus swimming in the creek right beside the car park. It is a great facility. I have to say that our park rangers are doing an outstanding job delivering all of this infrastructure across the state. I can go into a lot more detail, but I think we have many more questions to be asked. Our staff are doing an excellent job delivering the infrastructure within our national parks. They will continue to grow that infrastructure, keep it maintained and well looked after. To each and every one of our rangers: you are doing a great job. Keep up the good work.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms BATES: Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, '...improving access to, and promoting ecotourism in, Queensland's parks and forests' and I ask: can the minister please outline the government's strong plan to improve access to and promoting tourism in Queensland's parks and forests that will benefit my constituents in Springbrook? Is the minister aware of any obstacles that have limited this government's ability to promote tourism in Springbrook National Park?

Mr DICKSON: I thank you very much for the question. Last week I was very privileged to go up to Springbrook with the member for Mudgeeraba to deliver what I believe is a great outcome, a great stimulus for this area but also a solution to a major problem that occurred a couple of years ago. At Purling Brook Falls we had a major rockfall up there which actually blocked the walkway behind the waterfall. I do not know if the members of the committee have been there to have a look at it, but it is a beautiful area and it has a great walking track that was basically cut off. You cannot get access to that track very easily any longer.

It was brought to my attention not long after coming to government that we needed to do some work over there. What we are in the process of delivering is a suspended bridge, 25 metres long, that is about seven metres above the waterline. It is costing the government \$400,000, plus \$400,000 to make the connectivity with the tracks that will marry up to that particular component, the bridge infrastructure that is being built. But what it is doing is creating a stimulus in an iconic area where tourists will come from not just throughout Queensland or Australia but from all over the world to have a look at 106-metre waterfall, one of the 10 biggest waterfalls in our country. This is a great chance for me to do a bit of advertising for ecotourism within Queensland and particularly within Ms Bates' electorate. This is a great stimulus for the area.

But what had occurred over years previously? There had been a buyback program happening in that area where \$40 million worth of land had been scooped up and basically been given the green needle of death. Tourism was killed in that area. This is about providing an opportunity to get the tourists back into that area, to revitalise the community. That is what our government is about. It is about working with the four pillars of our economy to grow tourism, to grow ecotourism in particular. I know that the member is a very strong advocate for that area. When this bridge is built I would invite all members to come and have a look and let the world know how good Springbrook is. The economy needs it, the local bed and breakfasts up there need it, the local shopkeepers need it up there, but more so the environment needed that problem resolved. It has been resolved and it will create a much safer environment for people to come and visit this area where they will be able to walk across the bridge that I talked about earlier instead of having to scurry over rocks, which is very, very dangerous. We advise people not to do that with signage, but they still do it. So we are creating an opportunity for people to do the right thing but at the same time have a look at what our pristine national parks have to offer to the rest of the world.

We will continue doing these types of projects as we can afford to do right throughout Queensland, knowing that we have an \$81 billion debt, knowing that we are paying \$4.5 billion a year in interest. We are living within our means delivering great projects just like this one and I look forward to getting some more put in place in the not-too-distant future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We are going to move now to non-government questions. I call the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: Thank you, Mr Chair. My question refers to page 2, 'Strategic direction'. Minister, in 2014 your department has a budget allocation of \$447 million across three very disparate areas, yet we have only 90 minutes to question that allocation. That is approximately \$5 million per minute of estimates. In contrast, the environment minister has an allocation of just up to \$82 million but twice as much time before estimates as you. Minister, do you ever get embarrassed by the lengths that this government goes to hide you from scrutiny?

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, let me just clarify something and that was that the committee set the determination as to how long ministers were being examined. That was a unanimous decision of the committee. From my recollection there was no opposition to that by the opposition or non-government members.

Mr MULHERIN: With all due respect, Mr Chair, I am not a member of the committee. I am making an observation. I am asking the minister to comment.

Ms BATES: Point of order.

Mr HATHAWAY: It is an inference or imputation on the chair, 115(b).

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, I am clarifying for you that it was not a decision of the minister or the government; it was a decision of the committee as to how long different ministries and ministers were examined for.

Mr MULHERIN: Right. Mr Chair, I withdraw. Minister, I refer to pages 3 and 8 for racing. In April you said that you would resign if you could not deliver a bumper deal for the racing industry. Minister, how can you claim this to be a bumper deal when industry insiders say that it will take at least another \$50 million a year in revenue just to match the current prize money offered for thoroughbred racing in New South Wales? Industry insiders say that it is a dud deal. Minister, when will you admit that it is a dud deal and when will you resign?

Ms BATES: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Your point of order is?

Ms BATES: Mr Chair, the question from the member for Mackay contains an inference or imputation and I ask that you rule it out of order under 115(b) or ask him to rephrase it.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, can you just rephrase it so that you take out the inference.

Mr MULHERIN: Mr Chair, with all due respect, I am quoting from a *Courier-Mail* article dated 6 April, where the minister says that he will negotiate a bumper deal. I am also referring to the stock exchange announcement that TattsBet gave to the stock exchange. I am also referring to Let's Go Racing about what the industry is saying the additional money needed to—

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, I do not dispute the facts. I am asking you to take the inference out of your question.

Mr MULHERIN: The minister said that he would resign if he could not deliver a bumper deal. That is a fact. That is in the *Courier-Mail*. Industry insiders say that the revenue that is being given from this deal will not take the industry up to New South Wales racing standards. So that is a fact. The minister said that if he did not get the bumper deal he would resign. So I am asking the minister: will he resign?

Mr DICKSON: I thank you very much for the question and I am very much looking forward to this type of question. I hope we get many through the day. The first thing that I would like to touch on is the inference that was made originally. The time that you have to ask questions here is twice as long as you had at the last estimates hearing. So let us make that point really clear. Let us not mislead the people of Queensland.

Secondly, let us go to the inference in your question. The deal was brokered on 27 June. That actually gave me three days before your point that I had to resign occurred. So I think that is a little bit off the mark, too. We delivered and we have delivered a great outcome. You have a fellow by the name of Peter V'landys coming out—a man who would criticise a bad deal anywhere, and I will table this for the sake of those opposite just so that they are aware—and saying that this is the best deal that he has ever seen and he would love to get one like it in New South Wales. I know some of the crackpots that you must be getting your information from. I think you must have named one of them—I have forgotten them at the moment but I will let you work out who they are. I think they really do not

like the racing industry. I do not think that they like the idea of 30,000 people having their job secured for the next 30 years. Unlike those opposite and the gentleman who asked the question who used to be the minister for racing, I would love to know what happened under his watch. That is why we had a judicial review and there is lots going on in that area. But I am sure we might get asked about that a bit later on.

Mr MULHERIN: But you have not had a hit with any of the recommendations—

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, he asked the question; I am happy to answer it. He just does not like the answer.

Mr MULHERIN: Is that a commentary on the—

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, he is answering a question you asked. Minister, if you want to table that, I just need to get permission from the committee. All of those in favour of the minister tabling that please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it.

Mr DICKSON: And if I could read from it just before I hand it to the clerks. This is a few highlights that you would like to touch on—

The immediate reaction from the vast majority in the industry was that the \$4.5 billion 30-year agreement was a good one for racing.

...

Racing NSW chief executive Peter V'landys, who is lobbying the NSW Government to secure a similar tax deal to the one Queensland was gifted, said negotiators did 'an extraordinarily good job'.

They exceeded what I thought they would get,' V'landys said. 'You have to remember, you have very little to bargain with. There's not much competition in the marketplace.

'It's easy to sit on the sidelines taking cheap shots, but until you sit down at the table you don't realise how difficult it is. Queensland racing was absolutely gone and this deal changes that.

'They have secured Queensland racing's future and anyone who can't see that is very unreasonable.'

...

The real success though will come down to growing the revenue from wagering, of which racing gets 39 per cent.

...

Grow the wagering revenue pie and grow returns to racing. Working in unison with the wagering giant, as this deal facilitates, is surely the best way to achieve that goal.

It is true. I did put my job on the line. It is true that I did succeed by delivering on 27 June. It is true that our government is doing a fantastic job looking after the racing industry. It is true that we are looking after country racing and the 30,000 employees in that industry. When we were elected in March 2012, our government made a lot of commitments and in racing we have delivered them.

For country racing, we put in \$1 million a year for four years to make racing a great place again. It was brought to its knees under the previous government and the henchman who ran it, the union heavyweights when they were running the Queensland racing industry. That is what the member should be talking about. He should be talking about the days that destroyed racing. Now, we are talking about the days of coming out of the dark into the light for an industry that employs those 30,000 people who I talked about earlier.

I take it personally. This is a huge responsibility to make sure these people have a job for the next 30 years. This deal will continue to grow. As a part of the deal, it is partly indexed as well so that it will grow this year, next year and the year after. I think the member who asked the question does not actually understand finances otherwise we would not have an \$81 billion debt. When the ex-minister sat around the table and watched debt and deficit take hold in Queensland—

Mr MULHERIN: According to the budget papers it is \$76 billion, not \$81 billion, Minister.

Mr DICKSON:—we are living within our means. We are delivering a great outcome for the people of Queensland, particularly in the racing industry.

Mr MULHERIN: Mr Chair?

CHAIR: We will be with you in just a second.

Mr DICKSON: I look forward to going to racetracks. I look forward to supporting that racing industry because these people are good people who deserve to be treated fairly and equitably. I thank Kevin Dixon, the Chairman of Racing Queensland. I thank Robbie Cooke, the CEO of Tatts. I

thank every person who was involved. It was not just a Steve Dickson deal. It was a deal done by Treasury, the AG's department, Racing Queensland—to bring all of these people together to know and understand what needed to happen, and we have delivered a great outcome for the people of Queensland and a great outcome for the racing industry: we have secured it for the next 30 years. This will be the best ever deal ever done in Queensland racing. I look forward to the next one, but I will probably be in a retirement village.

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

Mr MULHERIN: I refer to page 3 of the SDS. Minister, I refer to the announcement of the new wagering arrangements between the Queensland racing industry and TattsBet, and I ask: what is the anticipated income in dollar amounts that the three codes of racing will receive in the financial year 2014-15 by code?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member very much for the question. The overarching deal that has been put in place is \$4.5 billion over 30 years.

Mr MULHERIN: I am talking about 2014-15.

Mr DICKSON: And I am getting to the point of the question, Mr Chairman, if that is okay. I am quite happy to answer it if given the opportunity—\$4.5 billion over that 30-year period, an extra \$850 million, and part of that money is indexed so it will continue to grow. I will pass over to the CEO of Queensland Racing, Mr Darren Condon, so that he can give an exact dollar figure so that the member will be very much aware and enlightened as to where racing is going this financial year.

Mr Condon: Thanks for the question. With regard to the question about the increased revenue for next year, it is a two-part answer in fact. There is increased revenue. It comes out of the wagering deal of \$15.5 million in the first year. There is also an increase in race information fees, which we estimated around \$7 million to \$8 million in additional revenue to the industry in the next year.

Mr MULHERIN: Can you give us a breakdown by code, Mr Condon?

Mr Condon: We are still reviewing the breakup by code, and announcements of that will be in the coming week or two.

Mr MULHERIN: This is also—

CHAIR: Member, I am sorry. You have to ask that question through the minister, because an executive officer cannot be questioned directly.

Mr MULHERIN: Through the minister to the Chief Executive Officer of Racing Queensland, can you advise that with the establishment of quarter horse racing in the Mary Valley no money from this wagering deal will be allocated to the quarter horse racing industry?

Mr DICKSON: I will take this question myself. The racing industry at the moment in Queensland represents harness racing, greyhound racing and thoroughbred racing. We are going through a process at the moment where the quarter horse industry is looking to become involved in racing in this country, and it is a process that we will go through. They will have to cross every 't' and dot every 'i' and make sure that they can deliver what is required in the racing industry, unlike the previous Labor government who took racing for granted, who just buried the industry alive and did not care about it. I do not think they were really interested in the racing industry or those 30,000 people who made a livelihood out of that industry. What we do is very methodical.

Mr MULHERIN: So, Minister, the pie will be split four ways.

Mr DICKSON: I am very pleased to answer the question if the member would not be so rude as to allow me to answer.

Mr MULHERIN: It is very simple, Minister.

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, I will leave it to your discretion. If there is a new question, I am happy to answer it.

CHAIR: Minister, I need to apologise to the member. Member, we have just checked schedule 7 and Mr Condon is an official and you can directly question him. I apologise to you. Minister, I am sorry. We made a mistake.

Mr MULHERIN: Chief Executive Officer of Racing Queensland, can you tell me if the pie will be split four ways once the quarter horse racing gets established in Queensland?

Mr Condon: Thanks for the question. No. It will not be split four ways.

Mr MULHERIN: Thank you. Minister, once again on racing, I refer to the recent announcement of the new wagering arrangements between Queensland racing industry and TattsBet, and I ask: from the total income received under the new arrangement, what will be the individual percentage of this income that will be allocated to harness and greyhound? Will it be 14 per cent for harness and nine per cent for greyhound, or will it reflect what they generate in income?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member very much for that question. The ink is dry on the deal that we brokered just recently with the Tatts organisation. I think the member heard very clearly from our CEO of Racing, Mr Darren Condon, a moment ago. They are still going through a process of how money will be distributed and who that money will be distributed to. But I think common sense has to come into play. We know that the greyhound racing industry is growing at a rate of knots. It is doing extremely well. We know thoroughbreds are doing extremely well and we know harness is doing okay. But that is a decision that will be made by our board.

It is like race days. I do not sit in a little room appointing the race days for Queensland—where they are going to be, what time they are going to be on. That is not the job of the minister. That is why we have a fantastic board in place, and that is why our policies and principles that we actually brought on line when we first came into government by rewriting the racing industry are delivering great outcomes because now we have the best knowledge. We have those people who look after each individual code—be that greyhound racing, be that harness racing or be that thoroughbred racing—because they have self-interest in each one of those industries. Each one of those organisations puts a chairman up to the overarching board and they have their say within that industry. That is where these decisions and these determinations will be made.

What we have delivered as a government is the foundation for a great future of racing here in Queensland. It is just a matter of now how you divide the spoils of a great deal that has been brokered by what I believe is one of the best boards we have had in Queensland ever, and that is shown on paper because of the outcome. You have to give credit where it is due. The great organisation of Racing Queensland right now is delivering those outcomes and that decision will be made in due course—where the money is divided up, where it is sent. I look forward to that day and it is not too far away—within the next three or four weeks, I understand.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We are going to move across to government questions. I call the member for Townsville.

Mr HATHAWAY: If you will just indulge me, the minister during an earlier response indicated the good work of his National Parks, and I would like to echo that locally around Magnetic Island with the upgrade of the Forts Walk and the work of the rangers in my area. Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, providing funding of \$4 million on a joint program with the Australian government in this financial year to target feral pigs for eradication to reduce the impact on marine turtle hatchings on the east coast of Queensland and also along the west coast of the Cape York Peninsula. Can the minister please inform the committee how this initiative will help deliver on the Newman government's strong plan for better management of our protected area estate?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member very much for that question, because this is something I feel very passionate about as our government feels very, very passionate about. Also, we are working in collaboration with Minister Hunt from the federal government. We have great environmental credentials and we are going to continue to grow them but more so through demonstration, not through words but through real actions. This demonstrates the Queensland government's actions and the federal government's actions working collaboratively to do what we can to minimise the impact of feral pigs on our turtle population.

I am going to table a picture which is pretty ugly but it needs to be tabled so the people of Queensland have a very clear understanding of what is happening to our turtle nests right up and down the east coast and also in the gulf area. It is pretty graphic.

CHAIR: All those in favour of the minister tabling the picture? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

Mr DICKSON: The reason why I table that picture is that that is what I took to our meeting with Minister Hunt and all the members sitting around the table and I tabled it, and that achieved the money that you are talking about today—the joint venture between the state and federal government to go out and do everything within our power to minimise the impact of those feral pigs on our turtle population. Feral pigs are taking out up to 90 per cent of the turtle eggs that are laid which is absolutely devastating to the future of turtle populations up and down the east coast and also in the gulf area.

Minister Hunt made an announcement when we were in Cairns just a couple of weeks ago to launch the Reef Ranger, which is also a great iconic item that we have put in place that will look after, care for and maintain the Great Barrier Reef. He announced \$100,000 would go directly to the gulf area to get stuck into eradicating as many feral pigs as possible. We have 4.5 million feral pigs in Queensland. What I would love to know is why the previous Labor government—Yarrabah is the area where they are spending that \$100,000. I should have known that off the top of my head but forgive me; I am not the giver of all knowledge.

What we have done is work in collaboration with the federal government to minimise the number of impacts on those turtle nesting sites up and down the east coast and also in that gulf area, because if we do not do this now and draw that line in the sand it will be devastating for those five species of turtle that come in. I think they are the green, the hawksbill, the flatback—and there are a couple of others which I have forgotten. We have to make that difference. By doing so we are proving the point—the difference between the LNP and the ALP. The ALP always talked about protecting the environment. They did a dirty preference deal with the Green party so they could get themselves elected at a federal level and a state level. We are actually out there doing this stuff. We are going to get rid of as many feral pigs as we humanly can to save those turtle species and we are going to continue to do this. The next target will be wild cats.

We have a lot of challenges out there and I would like to know why the previous government did not do something about it when the rivers of gold were flowing in. They had the finances to take out a lot of these feral and pest species but nothing was done. We heard talk—lots and lots of talk. But now today the Newman government is delivering with action in cooperation with the federal government. I look forward to great outcomes. I look forward to a turtle population that will continue to grow and thrive. I look forward to kids being able to go on the beach and watch the turtles hatch at night and run out onto the sand and down into the water. We want generations to come to see that. You will be able to look back in 30 years time and say the Newman government were the ones who made that possible.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, providing \$0.7 million for the Friends of Parks program, and I ask: can the minister please outline how improving and expanding volunteering and tourism opportunities through the Newman government's Friends of Parks program are part of the Newman government's strong plan for a brighter future for Queensland?

Mr DICKSON: Very clearly our Friends of Parks program incorporates \$1.5 million, which was an election commitment that we made to improve and expand volunteering and volunteerism within our national parks and forests. I would like to acknowledge and to extend my thanks to the thousands of big hearted volunteers who generously give their time each year to help manage and improve our iconic national parks and our vulnerable wildlife species. The Friends of Parks program is strengthening existing partnerships between my department and local communities and forging a new relationship to manage parks and forests.

The first stage of the program has supported 31 community groups across Queensland, providing \$0.53 million in small grants for a wide range of existing initiatives being delivered through to the end of 2014—initiatives including seabird monitoring, mountain bike and walking track improvements, guided cultural tours and beach clean-ups. The second stage of the Friends of Parks program has seen almost \$0.88 million in contracts awarded to the Wild Mob, ECOllaboration, Conservation Volunteers Australia and Australia Nature Tours to manage additional volunteers and volunteerism initiatives. These volunteer coordinators—the equivalent of four full-time officers across Queensland—are delivering recruitment, training and induction of volunteers to support the front-line management of our parks and our forests.

By expanding the role of volunteerism within our national parks and forests and ensuring that the outcomes from these projects align with management priorities, the Friends of Parks program is providing real assistance to achieving positive on-ground results to improving public access, recreation opportunities and species conservation. The Friends of Parks coordinators are working closely with additional dedicated Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service volunteer coordinators and regional officers to ensure these initiatives deliver real tangible improvements to parks and forests right across the state of Queensland. Volunteers have been working and will continue to work alongside Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers in locations as diverse as the Carnarvon Gorge, the Misty Mountain of the Atherton Tableland and the islands of the Great Barrier Reef.

Mr Chairman, I need to make the point relating to volunteers very clear: without volunteers such as those and such as Rotarians, Lions and every other volunteer group in Queensland, I think governments would stop. Without those great hardworking people, we would not get the results that we are getting in our communities today, particularly within the national parks and forests. To all of those organisations, I want to give my personal thanks because it gives us great outcomes in our national parks and it fosters a great relationship. At the same time, those people working there will go out and be ambassadors to say that this is a great park or it is a great bikeway or it is a great place to camp. That is free advertising which sells us to the rest of the world. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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

Mr HATHAWAY: Thank you, Chair. Minister, page 3 of the SDS refers to the new 24-metre long-range patrol vessel for field management operations. Can the minister outline the how the *Reef Ranger* will deliver on the Newman government's commitment to revitalise front-line services while protecting one of our greatest natural resources, the Great Barrier Reef?

Mr DICKSON: I have lived this one right through from construction. The boat was constructed in Coomera. I am going to give that a bit of a plug as well. This created a lot of employment right here locally within Queensland. It has delivered a fantastic vessel, which is a 24-metre cat that can go out, I think, up to 20 days with numerous staff on it. This thing is a floating ranger station. It will do scientific reviews right throughout the Great Barrier Reef region. It will be our ambassador out there. If anybody is looking to do the wrong thing, this boat will catch you. If it is not going to catch you, we will drop off the little boat that hangs on the back and it will catch you. This is a very well thought out vessel that has the ability to basically go anywhere. Just to give you an understanding, the existing boat we had was called the *Kerra Lyn*. It does seven knots. From Cairns to Raine Island, it took three days for that vessel to get out there. That left one day on the job and then three days to come back. With the *Reef Ranger*, it will take one day to get there, five days on the job and one day to get back. Think of the productivity that is being delivered. Think of the opportunities that can now be delivered and the real hard work that is put in by our land and sea rangers to deliver outcomes, protecting the Great Barrier Reef by tracking down those people who do the wrong thing, who illegally fish within our green zones or within our marine parks. That is what this boat will do.

It is also out there doing scientific reviews relating to the crown-of-thorns starfish, in cooperation with the federal government. That is another great initiative that needs to be looked at because there are two main things destroying our Great Barrier Reef. One we have no control over and that is cyclones. They come and they go and they devastate our reef, as they devastate our national parks. They have devastated Queensland at a great cost to our community. But the crown-of-thorns starfish is the real enemy. We have to go after it with all the possible resources that we can put into place, living within our budget. I wish we had that \$81 billion. Can you imagine the damage we could do to the crown-of-thorns starfish? We could really get stuck into them in a big way, but thanks to Labor we are still paying off that debt at \$4.5 billion a year and that is impacting us greatly. We want to be out there. We want to do more and more to get rid of those crown-of-thorns. This boat gives us the ability to go out, to track them down, to find out where the greatest context of these crown-of-thorns are. We have private providers who are going in and killing them. I took a great deal of pleasure in killing some of the crown-of-thorns starfish myself. You can now inject them with one shot instead of having to put a shot into every tentacle to kill these terrible blights on the Great Barrier Reef.

Those men and women, the rangers who are out there working every day, be it in good weather or bad weather, are delivering for the people of Queensland. We need to be united as a state and a country, and as an opposition and a government, to make sure we rid our reef as best as we humanly can of these crown-of-thorns. We will never win the battle, but we have to keep fighting the war.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will move to non-government questions. I call Dr Douglas, the member for Gaven

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you, Mr Chair. I would like to follow up on what was just stated here by both the minister and Mr Condon. Currently, RQ has not provided one extra dollar for prize money. Mr Condon has just stated that \$22 million effectively could be available: \$15 million from the agreement and \$7 million from the product fee. Is that all going to prize money?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member very much for the question. The member obviously was not listening to Mr Condon or me when I answered that question.

Dr DOUGLAS: I listened exactly to what he said.

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, I am happy to answer the question, if the member will be kind enough to let me answer the question. As I was saying, very clearly the statement was made that the ink is now dry on the contract. We have a \$4.5 billion deal, with an extra \$850 million, more than we ever got before, and it is delivering those great outcomes. The board of Racing Queensland is going through a process of how that money will be distributed. My answer a few moments ago was relating to four or five weeks. That is what we will be doing. We will be methodically going through the process and it is Racing Queensland's job to do just that. You do not just go into a dark room and throw darts at a board and hope that it is all going to be good. That is what the Labor Party is doing with its budget process for the future of Queensland, hoping and praying that everything is going to be okay. It does not work like that in business. That is why I admire and I commend the board of Racing Queensland for their diligence and the processes they go through to make sure they deliver the best possible outcomes for racing in Queensland. That is what is happening.

We are not going to be rushed because the member for Gaven says, 'I want an answer now at the estimates committee meeting'. That is not how you do business. You do business by going through a process, making sure the right prize money is delivered to the areas that need it most and to promote racing in Queensland. That is what we are about these days. We are about a business that is going to grow; it is going to get better. We now have the right principles in place, we now have the right finances in place, thanks to Racing Queensland, the Queensland government through Treasury and the Attorney-General's office, and also the Tatts Group. This is the best possible position we have ever been in. The member for Gaven wants an answer immediately, right now, today, because there is an estimates meeting on, about what the prize money will be. Work with us and you will see some great outcomes, but if that is not good enough then I am very sorry, but we are approaching this in a businesslike fashion to deliver the best possible outcomes to the racing industry. The board of Racing Queensland: I have the greatest confidence in them.

Dr DOUGLAS: Excuse me: we will go back through some of those points you just made. You talk in here about transparency. Let us get to transparency. Why will not you tell us about a 30-year agreement? Why will not you tell anyone what is going on? Some people know. Do you know that two days before the deal was announced, the share price of Tatts went from \$2.85 to \$3.20? Who else knew about this? Who was told? Who else has this been discussed with? Did you know that?

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH: Point of order, Mr Chair. There are about 18 questions in there and I think that the member should ask a specific question.

Mr DICKSON: I am happy to take it.

CHAIR: While I understand your concern, the member asked a question and I would ask the minister to answer.

Mr DICKSON: Through you, Mr Chairman, and to the member, I thank you very much. My advice, for a start, to the member, is: do not get too excited. Just relax when you are asking the questions because I am happy to answer any of them, for as long as it takes.

Dr DOUGLAS: Well you answer them.

Mr DICKSON: I am very pleased to answer them. We went through an expressions of interest process and numerous people applied for that, I understand. The Racing Queensland board looked at all those opportunities, working in conjunction with Treasury and the Attorney-General's department. They have brokered the best possible deal that has ever happened in 30 years of racing. The member may not understand what confidentiality means sometimes, as well. There will be components of that deal that are commercial-in-confidence. That is what happens in many business deals. I know that the member is a very astute financial businessman himself and I used to have a whole lot of respect. The reality is that in business and the way we operate here in Queensland and the way we have to operate, it is about transparency, but if there is a confidentiality clause written in there relating to financial matters, we have to adhere to that. It is like the law. You do not leak things if you are on certain committees within government. You do not put things out there because it is inappropriate and illegal to do so, but some people manage to do this. I do not know why or what motivates them. The deal was tabled by the RQ board at 8 am on the day of the announcement. That is when we all knew about it. If the member has any evidence of any impropriety—

Dr DOUGLAS: Publicly available information.

Mr DICKSON: As I was saying, if the member has any evidence of any illegal activity, I would advise him to go to the police and have those concerns aired with them immediately, otherwise stop spreading innuendo and trying to cast aspersions on people who are doing a great job in this state

delivering the best possible outcome for 30,000 people. I think he best look into his facts relating to the question about the shares and the stock marketing increasing. I think I read in the newspaper exactly why that happened and it had to do with a court case in another state.

Dr DOUGLAS: Minister, let us get to some of those points. You have raised some of them. Who did negotiate it? The two members of the overarching board had resigned, so was it just the chairman negotiating? Who negotiated the deal?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member very much for the question. I will use this analogy and the member will understand it very clearly. There is a thing called 'fair weather sailors' in our community. That relates to those people who go out on the sea in a boat and they get sick when the tide starts to turn up a little bit. We did have two people who resigned from the overarching body. They left for unknown reasons. They have left for personal reasons. Things get a bit tough in business. Things get a bit robust when you are negotiating and trying to get the possible outcomes. I am sure that maybe they felt like those sailors: it got a bit rough and they might have felt a bit sick in the tummy and decided to go on and do other things. Those people who were dedicated and determined to get an outcome, the best outcome for racing here in Queensland, did just that. They delivered that outcome. I can only pay great respect and homage to those people who have delivered what never happened under the previous Labor government, never would have happened under the previous Labor government and, by the sounds of it, if the PUP party ever came to power it probably would not happen under them, either.

Dr DOUGLAS: In fairness, Minister, that is not what the deputy chair said when he was leaving. Let us get to one of the other points you just made about the issue of the deal and issues that allegedly have not been stated and what has been stated. What has been stated by Tatts is that they have a better deal because they can increase retail outlets. Minister, does that mean that we are now going to see what happened in the UK with some of the major bookmakers getting honeymoon deals with the government, so we would have betting shops in shopping centres, street corners, service stations and increasing their internet presence? Is that part of this deal that is not stated currently?

Mr HATHAWAY: Chair, point of order.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr HATHAWAY: That contains a hypothetical under standing order 115(b).

Dr DOUGLAS: No, it does not.

CHAIR: Member, I have this. I am actually going to allow it because he is asking a question about the process and I would ask the minister to answer.

Mr DICKSON: Through you, Mr Chairman and to the member, I thank you very much for the question. The member is probably referring to a newspaper article that he read. We all read newspaper articles occasionally. Some of them are factual; some of them may not be factual. Private enterprise has a right to say whatever it likes. It has a right to put any proposition it wants to put forward. This happens every day in the business world.

Dr DOUGLAS: No, that is stated by Tatts—

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, I have never ever seen somebody butt in so much as the member for Gaven. He asks a question and then decides he wants to give the answer. If that is the way it operates here, I am happy to sit back and listen. It is a *Punch and Judy* show.

CHAIR: You have the call.

Mr DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I was making the point extremely clear, private enterprise is exactly that: private enterprise. They will float ideas and they will fly kites and they will do all those things, trying to put propositions and ideas forward. That is up to them. Our government has not agreed to the point that the member has put forward at all. Let me make that point extremely clear. We will never ever stop private enterprise from doing what it does best: get out there and get on with the job. We are all about cutting red tape, we are all about cutting green tape and making sure that business has the right area to work in. We are not out there to stop them from putting ideas forward. We may not agree with them and when it comes down to the government making a decision one way or another, the government will do that when an idea or suggestion is put forward to us, but that will go through cabinet and it will go through the right rigorous process, as the racing deal has at this point in time, to deliver the best deal ever for racing in this state of Queensland. It is a 30-year concrete deal so those mums and dads know where the bread and butter is coming from every week. I think the member opposite seems to overlook those great outcomes. I

think the member opposite seems to want to shoot down good things when they happen for the people of Queensland. My advice to the member is this: go and talk to people in the racing industry and see how they feel about it, because they have all been ringing me, sending me emails and saying, 'We are so happy those days of the past are gone and now we have a future'.

Dr DOUGLAS: I wouldn't seek your advice on this one. You would be the last person I'd get, Minister.

Mr DICKSON: I didn't hear that, Mr Chairman. If the member wants to repeat it really loudly, I would love to hear it.

Dr DOUGLAS: I am not seeking your advice.

CHAIR: Thank you. It is not a question. Member for Gaven, are you finished?

Dr DOUGLAS: Thanks, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay?

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you said that Mr Taylor and Mr Steele, who were former members of the board of Racing Queensland, didn't—

CHAIR: Sorry, member for Mackay, can I just get you to pull that mic closer.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you mentioned earlier that Mr Taylor and Mr Steele, when they resigned from the board of Racing Queensland, did not offer any advice to you about their resignations. As you appointed these people, why didn't you ask them why they resigned? You make a lot of noise about running racing and I would have thought that if these two hand picked people that you have appointed in the first place resigned you would have asked them why they resigned.

CHAIR: Minister, just before you answer it, we have actually got, member for Mackay, standing orders that restrict us from naming people. Is it absolutely necessary in your question for these people to be named?

Mr MULHERIN: I think everyone in this room knows who we are referring to.

Mr DICKSON: I didn't name them.

CHAIR: No, and that is why I am asking before you answer the question. I am just asking the member for Mackay if—

Mr MULHERIN: I will rephrase.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you mentioned earlier that two board members resigned from Racing Queensland. You appointed these board members. You make a lot of noise about how you run racing. Can you explain to the committee why you didn't ask these board members why they resigned? Were there issues with the board?

Mr DICKSON: Through Mr Chairman I thank the member very, very much for the question. Yes, we went through a very thorough process when we went out to get expressions of interest for people to join our boards after we had rewritten the Racing Act. We had to do that because it was in such a shambolic state under the previous Labor government's direction to Mr Bob Bentley and Mr Bill Ludwig, and I must say one was a union mate and the other one was just a really good buddy who decided to decimate Queensland racing, to bury Queensland racing and to put it on its knees. We went through a process after these people were outed from Racing Queensland so that we could get it back on track—no pun intended—to deliver great outcomes and we had a process where we selected three eminent Queenslanders who would look at the recommendations that were put forward and they were numerous. Many people wanted to be on the racing boards in Queensland regardless of if that was harness, thoroughbred or greyhound. We had numerous people put their names forward and I would not be so rude as to mention people's names in public who have decided to go and do other things with their life. That is totally up to them. If they want to talk to the newspaper and say why they decided to leave that is also up to them. Board members come and board members go. We have a couple of temporary vacancies at the moment and those will be replaced in the not too distant future and I look forward to doing that. We will review the Queensland Racing Act in 2015 and I hope, if I am lucky enough to be re-elected and become the racing minister at that time, to follow through with that because what we have delivered since 2012 up to this date is a great outcome. And to all of the existing board members who struck the deal with the Tatts Group and delivered the \$4.5 billion outcome for Queensland, I commend each and every one of you. And to those members who decided to leave when the weather got a bit choppy, I wish them the best of luck with their future and their future endeavours.

Mr MULHERIN: Aren't you casting aspersions on them with your analogy around fair weather sailors?

Mr DICKSON: I am just talking about people who sail on the sea. What do you want to talk about?

Mr MULHERIN: You are using an analogy about these two board members who resigned. Anyway, we will move on. I refer to the new wagering arrangements between Racing Queensland and TattsBet. Now that the wagering tax received by the Queensland government, which has been used to fund the Racing Industry Capital Development Fund Scheme, has been reduced to 14 per cent, how will you fund the scheme to compensate for the reduced funding accruing to the scheme?

Mr DICKSON: Through you, Mr Chairman, what we have done, the deal that was brokered, it gave a tax concession. It has now put us on a much better playing field than we were in previous times and I believe this deal has got the best possible outcomes. We committed \$110 million for infrastructure development when we were elected to government in March 2012 and we have been delivering that systematically throughout the state.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, I refer to your statement at the Racing Queensland awards night—

Mr DICKSON: If I can finish, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR: Member, I am going to allow the minister to finish answering that question. We will come back to you as soon as he has finished.

Mr DICKSON: The government agreed to lower the wagering tax rate from 20 per cent to 14 per cent relating to the parimutuel, which is totalisator betting for racing and sport, and from 20 per cent to 10 per cent for fixed odds for racing and sport. The lowering of this wagering tax was considered to be part of a complete funding package offered to the Tatts Group to make the industry more sustainable in the long-term. And I go back to the document that I tabled originally from Peter V'landys about what a great deal this is.

Mr MULHERIN: So lowering the tax actually increases the funds that TattsBet—

Mr DICKSON: And now how Mr V'landys is trying to convince—

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, please allow the minister to answer. I told you I would come back to you next so if you have some follow-up questions then would be the time.

Mr DICKSON: And now how Mr V'landys is trying to convince the New South Wales government to go down a similar path. The only reason he is doing that is because he knows this is a great deal for the racing industry in Queensland. We have set a template that many others will probably start to follow and I again commend those people in the racing industry. The lowering of the rate allowed the Tatts Group to compete on a more even basis with the online corporate bookmakers who are registered in the Northern Territory and pay no tax with little benefit to the industry.

Mr MULHERIN: You were going to fix that.

Mr DICKSON: The \$150 million exclusive licence fee is shared between Racing Queensland and the government, as it should be. Racing Queensland will receive \$97.4 million to fund infrastructure expansion and the balance, \$52.6 million, will be returned to the government to offset the impact of the reduction of that wagering tax. This is a good deal. It was well thought through and is delivering benefits and it will deliver benefits right throughout the state regardless of where the race tracks are, if they are in Cooktown or on the Gold Coast or on the Sunshine Coast in particular. This is a great industry with a great future. Actually, I am a little dismayed that the ex-racing minister of Queensland wants to continually undermine what is going on and the deal that we have struck here. If he thinks it is a bad deal maybe he should just say that.

Mr MULHERIN: We have the right to scrutinise the deal.

Mr DICKSON: Maybe he should just say it is a bad deal.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, we are out of time, but I am going to allow to you ask a couple of follow-up questions now.

Mr MULHERIN: I refer to your statement at the Racing Queensland awards night that Queensland would overtake New South Wales and Victoria as the leading racing jurisdiction in Australia and ask: when will metropolitan prize money in Queensland exceed the metropolitan prize money on offer in New South Wales or Victoria? Just give us a date, minister.

Mr DICKSON: Through you, Mr Chairman, and to the member, I thank him very much for the question. It is a very good job being the sports minister and the racing minister and the national parks minister for Queensland because I always go in to bat for Queensland, just like I did at the State of Origin. I am sorry to say we actually lost this year.

Mr MULHERIN: Just give us a date when you are going to exceed the prize money.

Mr DICKSON: But I will continue to go in and I will continue to fight.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, the minister is answering your question. Minister, can I ask you to draw to the answer.

Mr MULHERIN: I don't know what rugby league has to do with racing.

Mr DICKSON: I am happy to fight for every industry and particularly the racing industry. My goal and my ambition has always been to win. I don't like to lose. It is nothing that I have ever become good at.

Mr MULHERIN: Just give us a date.

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, why I made those statements very clear is to inspire an industry, to bring people together.

Mr MULHERIN: So it is an aspirational target now.

Mr DICKSON: To make sure that we are the best possible racing industry that we can be.

Mr MULHERIN: It is aspirational.

Mr DICKSON: Well, Mr Chairman, it is better than sitting back in a dark old room letting an \$81 million debt gather.

Mr MULHERIN: But you said that you would lead.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay.

Mr DICKSON: And spending their time in a box watching the footy. We are out there making it happen. We are delivering on behalf of Queenslanders.

Mr MULHERIN: Why don't you just tell the people what you are—

CHAIR: Member for Mackay! Minister! Please.

Mr MULHERIN: What you promise is unachievable.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay! Minister, I would ask you, please, to draw to the answer to the question.

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, the answer is very, very clear. We will never be the same as New South Wales or Victoria because the states are different sizes and the member may not be aware that they actually have a different number of race tracks. We have one hundred and—

Mr MULHERIN: So it is not achievable.

Mr DICKSON: How many race tracks do we have in Queensland?

Mr MULHERIN: 47 per cent of the country's race tracks are based Queensland.

Mr DICKSON: How many race tracks do we have in Queensland? You wouldn't know. You were the racing minister. There are 135.

CHAIR: Members! This is not a place for debate. This is about asking questions and answering them. Member for Mackay, please respect that. Minister, I ask you please to continue answering the question.

Mr DICKSON: I apologise, Mr Chairman. As I was making the point very clearly, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria are very different in size. Different in the number of race tracks.

Mr MULHERIN: It was your promise, minister, so why don't you admit it is unachievable.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, I have drawn the minister's attention to answering the question. I am listening carefully and I am expecting that will come right now.

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, very clearly, as I have made the point, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria are all very different states with a different number of race tracks, each and every one. It is a little bit like the Labor Party: they promise things and then they do things differently to what they promised. They sell assets when they are not asked to. Unlike our side of government. We keep our word and we will continue to keep our word.

CHAIR: Thank you. We are going to go to government questions and I call the member for Mudgeeraba.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS and the investment of \$22.7 million to develop visitor centre upgrades at Carnarvon Gorge, D'Aguilar National Park and David Fleay Wildlife Park. I understand that the minister had the privilege of meeting Rosemary Fleay the other day in Burleigh. I am sure he is well aware that she is a constituent in my electorate. She has been damning of her criticism of the former Labor Party and how they left Fleay's park. Can the minister outline the Gateway Visitor Centre's master planning project and how this important initiative will expand local ecotourism, provide jobs for the community and revitalise tourism, one of the four pillars of our government?

Mr DICKSON: Through you, Mr Chairman, and to the member, I thank you very much for the question because this is all about protecting our environment and educating young people in Queensland about what goes on within our environment, and none more so than through these centres. The Queensland government is supporting the state's tourism industry, investing \$3.6 million towards rejuvenating three ecotourism Gateway Visitor Centres: Walkabout Creek west of Brisbane, Mon Repos, the turtle centre near Bundaberg and David Fleay Wildlife Park on the Gold Coast. These centres have long been underutilised, undersold and in need of reinvigoration. In order to best leverage future investment at these centres and to deliver on Queensland's ecotourism plan objectives for the state and to be a world leader in ecotourism, my Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing has undertaken master planning processes to prepare a fresh vision for these centres to provide and enhance ecotourism, recreation and conservation outcomes for Queenslanders and tourists. The draft master plans for these centres were released in December 2013. This was followed by an extensive community consultation process which included a series of workshops with regional councils, the tourism sector, industry, educators and other key stakeholders, plus online surveys. In total, over 870 stakeholders contributed to the process through the workshops and the surveys. The draft master plan received strong community endorsement, particularly for the delivery of outcomes for regional tourism, education for school groups and new outdoor recreational facilities.

I am pleased to advise that the three final concept master plans were finalised on 27 June 2014, with launches held on 27 June for Walkabout Creek, 5 July 2014 for David Fleay's and the Mon Repos launch being planned for the not too distant future. These concept master plans and the government's accompanying direction paper represent strong visions for these centres. Walkabout Creek will be a celebrated destination for visitors and locals to connect with nature and delight in the nature based tourism and recreational opportunities close to the centre of Brisbane. It is a great facility. If you haven't been there you should go and have a look. They have got a live platypus on display. I have been out there on numerous occasions to see many children getting a very good understanding of what goes on in that particular area, what sort of environment we need to protect and look after. They have got animals there such as quolls. If you haven't seen one of them, again go and have a look. They are like a miniature Tasmanian tiger with little yellow spots all over them. These are beautiful creatures and many of our young children will not get to see these creatures unless we have facilities just like this one. They will not want to protect them into the future unless they understand what they look like, where they live and what needs to be done so that these animals can be seen for generations to come into the future. This is an opportunity, through these three facilities, to educate young Queenslanders, to make people aware. Mon Repos in particular, where we are teaching people about how turtles nest and what type of gender come out of areas where these turtles lay their eggs. Many people wouldn't be aware that because the sands are a different colour they create a different temperature. More hatchlings are females than males. This is something I knew very little about before I took over this role. It has been a great education for myself so I can only imagine what the young people throughout this state are getting from these particular facilities that we are putting in place.

Walkabout Creek will be a great success. Working in conjunction with Seqwater, you are going to be able to go there and have a bit of a paddle on a canoe within the local lagoon. Under the previous government, that could never, ever have happened. Our government is all about collaboration. We have departments working together and resolving problems together but, more importantly, we are delivering these environmental outcomes for all young Queenslanders and Queenslanders alike.

Mon Repos is a great big tick in the box. It will protect turtles from in perpetuity, and it will educate Queenslanders regardless of whether they are young or old. Walkabout Creek is exactly the same. Look at the natural environment there. It is so close to the centre of the CBD and so close for educators to take young children and school groups along so they become aware and they will protect future generations of endangered animals from now into the future.

Down at Fleay's Wildlife Park, we have Wally the platypus who was saved. When we found him, he was just over 200 grams; today thankfully he weighs over 700 grams. He has been on Facebook and he is more popular than most rock stars. I want people to go there and visit this place because it is fantastic. We have rangers working diligently down there explaining to the young men and women of the Gold Coast and visitors alike just how important our environment is. It gives those young people the credentials for the future. They will be custodians and guardians of our protected areas, and one day hopefully they will be in politics looking after it just like we are.

The previous answer on the racing was 135 race clubs not race tracks. I do humbly apologise for that.

CHAIR: Minister, we are going to go to non-government questions just to make sure we have reasonable time. I call the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: My question is directed to the director-general and it is in relation to racing. I refer to the death of a registered racehorse in a pool at the Toowoomba Turf Club on 10 April 2014. As the accountable officer, Dr Glaister, responsible for ensuring the welfare of racing animals under the Racing Act, did you have this incident investigated by an integrity officer from your department? If so, how long after the death did the departmental investigation commence?

Dr Glaister: I do not have those details to hand right now. If the committee is agreeable, I would ask Darren Condon, the CEO of Racing Queensland, if he can add to that.

Mr MULHERIN: Dr Glaister, you are the responsible officer, not the CEO of Racing Queensland.

Dr Glaister: I do appreciate that.

Mr MULHERIN: And it is your department that has to investigate, not Racing Queensland.

Mr DICKSON: I have a point of order, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: Minister.

Mr DICKSON: I ask for your clarification. I think there has been a question asked of the director-general. He, as standing orders state, referred that question through to the CEO of Queensland Racing, and I am sure that he will give the appropriate answer.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, for the answer to be given fully, the director-general has asked that the CEO be given a chance to answer that question and that is quite permissible under the standing orders.

Mr MULHERIN: Yes, but the CEO is not the responsible officer under the Racing Act.

CHAIR: But it may be that there is—

Mr MULHERIN: The D-G is.

CHAIR: I appreciate that and I am not going to debate the issue with you. The question is whether the D-G can pass it across. That is permissible and I will allow that. Director-general—

Dr Glaister: Look, Mr Chairman, the member is correct; it is my responsibility. I was trying to get some information currently to him, but if he prefers that I answer what I can say to the member for Mackay is that our integrity officer, Jim O'Sullivan, is currently reviewing that incident. If there is any further information, I will provide that before the end of this hearing.

Mr MULHERIN: So you will provide a full response to this issue and take it on notice, Minister? So the D-G can report—

CHAIR: Questions on notice need to be provided back—

Mr MULHERIN: Yes, I am just asking the minister if he will agree with the D-G.

CHAIR: I am just clarifying. They need to be provided back within two days so, Minister, if you take it on notice it would need to come back to us within two days.

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, I think very clearly, and the member should realise this, that when there is an investigation occurring that is exactly what is happening.

Mr MULHERIN: It is just about dates, Minister.

Mr DICKSON: I can only give you an open and honest and—

CHAIR: Minister, sorry, the question was directed at the director-general and I ask for that to happen.

Dr Glaister: Thank you, Chair. With all of these issues, particularly something as serious as this, it is not a rushed process. We are—

Mr MULHERIN: When was the report from your department—

Dr Glaister: Can I finish?

CHAIR: Member, please let the director-general answer the question.

Dr Glaister: All of the papers associated with this particular incident are with the Integrity Commissioner for him to do the review. It is not up to me to tell him—

Mr MULHERIN: But, D-G, it is simple. When did you get your advice about the death—

Mr DICKSON: I have a point of order, Mr Chairman.

Mr MULHERIN: And when did you instruct the department to investigate?

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, please stop badgering the director-general. He is answering your question.

Mr MULHERIN: But it is—

CHAIR: Member for Mackay! He is answering your question at the moment actively. I call the director-general.

Dr Glaister: Thank you. So the integrity officer is currently taking that investigation—

Mr MULHERIN: We know that.

Dr Glaister: And he has to look at all of the issues surrounding the incident, including the physical attributes of the pool, and he will be making the appropriate safety improvement recommendations. I can give you a fuller answer on this—

Mr MULHERIN: Including dates: when you were notified and when you instructed the department to investigate.

Dr Glaister: I will provide a full response on notice in the appropriate time.

Mr MULHERIN: Do you agree to that, Minister?

CHAIR: Just a second please. I am just going to take some advice. Minister, will you take that on notice?

Mr DICKSON: Through you, Mr Chairman, I think very clearly there is an investigation going on and how can we—

Mr MULHERIN: So what are you covering up?

Mr DICKSON: There is a limitation I understand to deliver an answer to a question on notice within 48 hours to this committee. What if this process is still happening—

Mr MULHERIN: It is just simply about dates.

CHAIR: Member, please!

Mr DICKSON: I think it is an irresponsible request to come from the member, and he very well knows that. What is going on is that Jim O'Sullivan is investigating this process.

Mr MULHERIN: We know that.

Mr DICKSON: And I do not want to pressure him.

CHAIR: Minister, I am just trying to draw a close to this particular question. The question is whether it can be provided on notice in time.

Mr DICKSON: The answer is no. I do not think it can be—

CHAIR: The answer would need to be provided by Tuesday, which is our requirement. It would have to come to us by Tuesday.

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, I ask your leave. The director-general has further information I understand that he would like to provide to the committee on this particular topic.

Dr Glaister: Thank you, Minister. I am advised that Racing Queensland received information from the RSPCA regarding an anonymous complaint that a horse had died in a training pool at the Toowoomba Turf Club on 10 April 2014. The matter was investigated by Racing Queensland stewards who provided a report for the Racing Queensland Integrity Regulatory Unit, and the gentleman I referred to earlier. The Integrity Regulatory Unit completed an inquiry and found the initial complaint was unfounded, clearing the horse's trainer, Mr Michael Frappell, who was caring for the animal at the time the horse died. However, as a result of the inquiry, the Integrity Regulatory Unit has made a number of recommendations relating to the use of swimming pools for the purposes of training. That was the point that I was trying to make earlier for the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: But, Mr Chair, through you, what I was asking the director-general was this: on what date was his department advised about the death of this horse—because there is an act that he is responsible for the administration—and when did he instruct his department, not Racing Queensland, to investigate the matter? I would like that information answered.

Dr Glaister: Thank you for clarifying the question, and I will endeavour to have that information to you in the required time.

CHAIR: So, Minister, you will take that on notice?

Mr DICKSON: Absolutely, we have taken that on notice.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call Dr Douglas.

Dr DOUGLAS: Minister, the government has reduced the turnover tax which is supposed to be offset by licensing figures. Being a statutory body, we need to know those figures. Why is the government concealing those numbers?

Mr DICKSON: I think very much so, we have been very transparent, very open and very clear. I have made that statement going back to a previous question that you asked relating to the tax—how much money will be distributed to Racing Queensland, also how much money will be distributed to the Queensland government to make up for the loss of that tax revenue. If you would like me to read that again, I am very pleased but that will just chew your time up, not mine.

Dr DOUGLAS: Would you tell us how much revenue has been forgone annually?

Mr DICKSON: Mr Chairman, I am very happy to repeat it once again, and I am pleased that the member has asked that question. The government agreed to the lowering of the wagering tax rate from 20 per cent to 14 per cent relating to the parimutuel which is a totalisator betting, racing and sport, and 20 per cent to 10 per cent for fixed odds racing and sport. The lowering of the wagering tax was considered as part of the complete funding package offered to Tatts for the sustainability of the industry long term. Also, relating to the financial implications that you talked about earlier, the \$150 million exclusive licence fee is shared between Racing Queensland and the government. Racing Queensland will receive \$97.4 million funding, infrastructure expansion, and the balance of \$52.6 million will be returned to the government to offset the impact of the reduction in the wagering tax rate.

This deal—and people should never, ever forget this—is the best possible deal to put us on to a much more level playing field as far as the other states are concerned. We all know that the Northern Territory has been getting a very good deal for a long time. What many members might not know in this room is that over a billion dollars a year of possible wagering income goes to other countries such as the Philippines and Fiji. The logic behind that is that I would like Queensland to get its pro rata balance of that as well and it should do. We are working collaboratively with the Australian Racing Board, the federal government, to be able to shut some of those doors so that part of that billion dollars can also go back into the racing industry.

We never stop working. That is what I think about when I get out of bed every day—how we can make the racing industry better, how national parks can get better and what better deal we can do for sporting clubs and those young people in Queensland who deserve and need our help.

CHAIR: Member, we are coming close to the end of time so if you would make your questions short please.

Dr DOUGLAS: It is a short one. It is just on that point. Minister, you said you would fix that leakage to the Northern Territory. You made a statement on that. You put out a press release on it. Can you tell us what you have done to correct that then?

Mr DICKSON: Very clearly, and I am very happy to read that document to you again if you would like because you are going to get the same answer. It is very clear. What we have done is reduced the tax rate so that we are much more competitive than what we were previously under the

Labor government. They did not care about racing; what they cared about was giving Bob Bentley and Bill Ludwig a great job getting a big swag of money in their pocket. They did not care about the racing industry. We care about the 30,000 people. We care about the mums and dads and that is where, in conjunction with Racing Queensland, the Attorney-General, the Treasurer and the Tatts Group we have delivered the best possible outcome for all of those people who are involved in the racing industry. I went to a meeting with the racing ministers of all of the states a few months back, and we are all 100 per cent determined to make sure we stop that leakage of money that is going overseas because that is the big problem. Unitedly we will succeed.

My advice to those people who are not on board is get involved in another industry and do something else. You do not care about the racing industry; we do. We want to deliver those outcomes that I believe are best for the 30,000 people who derive an income and a livelihood from that industry. We make no apologies for delivering the best deal for racing ever to happen in the state of Queensland. The tax rate gives Tatts an opportunity to compete, to retain the dollars. The opportunity is here and we have taken grasp of it. Under the previous government, they just shuffled their responsibilities off to their Labor mates. They did not care about the racing industry. We have the ex racing minister sitting opposite. He should hang his head in shame.

CHAIR: Minister, we need to get to one more question. We are just about out of time and I am going to ask the member for Woodridge to ask a question.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, this is a national parks question. On page 79 of the capital statement, there is an allocation of \$6.322 million for minor capital works projects in national parks. You refused to provide a list of these projects when asked in question on notice 510. Will you release all 79 of those proposed projects today?

Mr DICKSON: Through you, Mr Chairman, I thank the member very much for that question. We receive many questions on notice relating to the portfolios that I am responsible for, be that the racing industry, the national parks or our sporting areas. Every cent that we spend of capital works goes into delivering what I believe are great outcomes that will deliver tangible work on the ground. Those announcements will be made at the appropriate time because we do not just drop all of these things in one go. It is a little bit like our Get in the Game policy. We re-release that policy each year, twice a year, and it delivers outcomes—there is \$47.8 million involved in that—as there are with the projects that you have just spoken about. One of them we have announced in recent times relates to the Springbrook bridge that I spoke about earlier. All of this money is accountable. It is very, very transparent and it will be going into the care and maintenance and looking after our national parks and our protected areas to build walkways and amenity blocks and those things that are required right throughout the state.

We do not have any slush funds, as Labor used to have, because there is not enough money to go around. When we have an \$81 billion debt and we are paying \$4.5 billion in interest alone, we need to make every cent count as to where it goes. When it gets down to questions on notice, we will answer them in a very similar manner to the previous Labor government. I know that many members opposite can talk to their colleagues and ask them how they used to answer questions and have a look at the format that they put forward.

Mr Chair, I thank all members here today and I thank all of my staff who have gone to a lot of trouble to give the answers that have been received today. Queensland is a great place. It has great opportunities. This is a bright state and we are going to continue to build the foundations for the future of Queensland to deliver great outcomes. We are not like those opposite in the Labor Party. They were about debt and deficit; we are about growing the state, growing the four pillars of the economy, promoting ecotourism—

CHAIR: We need you to draw to an end, Minister.

Mr DICKSON: And building our national parks to be the best in the world.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of estimates of expenditure in the portfolio of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing has expired. On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister, the director-general and officials for your attendance. The video broadcast of this session will be on parliament's website soon. I remind you that answers to questions taken on notice and any clarifying material should be provided to the committee by 5 pm on Tuesday, 22 July. The committee will now break for morning tea. The hearing will resume at 11 am to examine the estimates of the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs.

Proceedings suspended from 10.32 am to 11.01 am

**ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE—
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND MULTICULTURAL
AFFAIRS**

In Attendance

Hon. GW Elmes, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

Mr J Purtill, Director-General


Mr M Skoien, Executive Director, Corporate and Client Services

Mrs C Orange, Chief Financial Officer

Mr A Cunneen, Executive Director, Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office

Family Responsibilities Commission

Mr D Glasgow, Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now commence its examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs. I remind those present that these proceedings are subject to the standing rules and orders of parliament. Members of the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

Questions and answers must remain relevant and succinct. I draw members' attention to standing orders 112 and 115—that is, questions should be brief, relate to one issue and should not contain long or subjective preambles, arguments or opinions. I will guide proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored without artificial time limits. If necessary I will remind the minister, directors-general, CEOs and their advisers that their answer to a question should be finalised so that other issues can be examined.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome to the hearing the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, the director-general and officials of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, the commissioner and officials of the Family Responsibilities Commission and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question and to bring their nameplate if they come to the table to answer a question.

Under standing order 181, the minister may have advisers present to assist. Some officials and advisers are located in another room. If it is necessary for an official to come from another room to provide advice or answers to a question, I may take another question to allow time for that person to arrive and then return to the initial question.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed.

Minister, you are invited to make a brief opening statement. The committee has resolved that ministers may make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Mr ELMES: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman and committee members, for the opportunity to present information and answer questions on how my department is improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting today on the lands of the Turrbul people and I pay my respects to their elders, both past and present. I have with me and available to answer questions my Director-General, James Purtill, and the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, David Glasgow.

The focus of this government and my department is fixed squarely on making sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds can enjoy the same benefits and opportunities as all Queenslanders. We want to do this with partnership as the underlying value, and in such a way as to recognise the sometimes competing needs of cultural background and modern Queensland life.

Queensland is blessed with a multitude of cultural influences which have shaped who and what we are as modern day Queenslanders. The government recognises the enduring traditions and cultures of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people, but also acknowledges the rich migrant heritage which is woven through the tapestry of our increasingly diverse society.

The issues facing Indigenous Queenslanders are historic and, in some cases, entrenched. They have been years in the making, and most will take years to address. That is no reason not to try. I am determined that we will continue working with Indigenous Queenslanders and others to improve the lives and life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. That can only be achieved with cooperation and determination from everyone involved.

Government agencies and non-government organisations must change the way they try to help Indigenous people, moving away from the hand out mentality of previous governments to one of supporting local initiative, aspiration and effort. Communities, in turn, must be prepared to accept responsibility for their own problems and for implementing the solutions to them.

As I travel around the state, I meet new Indigenous leaders who are prepared to accept that responsibility and who are willing to work with government and non-government organisations to help normalise their communities. Our government is taking deliberate actions to ensure Indigenous people have a better future through supporting greater participation in education, employment and business. That is detailed in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economic Participation Framework, and is given life through our Indigenous Economic Participation Action Plan, which I launched during NAIDOC Week last week. With the committee's indulgence, Mr Chairman, I would like to table a copy of that plan.

CHAIR: There being no objection, the document is so tabled.

Mr ELMES: I would like to acknowledge as part of that exercise, the work of my assistant minister, the member for Cook, in bringing that plan into existence.

This government's policies also support equivalent outcomes for migrants and refugees who now call Queensland home. Our focus is on improving the prospects of migrants for attaining jobs and participating in the economy. That will be achieved, in large measure, through our Cultural Diversity Action Plan which I would like to make available to the committee prior to its official release. Again, I seek the committee's indulgence, to table a copy of the plan.

CHAIR: There being no objection, the document is so tabled.

Mr ELMES: I would like to acknowledge the leadership of my other assistant minister, the member for Brisbane Central, Rob Cavallucci, in the development of this plan.

These plans reflect our dedication to provide equality of opportunity for all Queenslanders to participate fully in our strong economy and enjoy our vibrant society. To further promote this goal, I have instituted a new departmental structure with an emphasis on economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. My department now has an active focus on employment and business development for our two principal client groups, while maintaining responsibility for a range of social programs which might be considered its traditional work. We will work with the private sector to identify opportunities for job ready Indigenous people and migrants and refugees.

During the past six months, we have signed the first of what we hope will be many memoranda of understanding with various businesses to place Indigenous people and migrants and refugees in employment. My department is also working with job service providers and fantastic organisations like Myuma at Camooweal which provides job ready training for young Indigenous people.

By harnessing and coordinating the strength and determination of the different forces working towards greater economic participation for Indigenous Queenslanders and residents newly arrived from overseas, we can help shape a better life for them. The extent to which we can achieve that will be my personal measuring stick of my success as minister.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Before we commence questioning, I inform you that we do 15 minute blocks of questions. We do will do 15 minutes of government questions and then 15 minutes of non-government questions.

Mr ELMES: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: We will commence with government questions. I will start the questioning. I refer to the department's strategic direction set out on the page 2 of the SDS. How is the state government working to improve the potential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people recently arrived from overseas to participate more fully in Queensland's economic improvement?

Mr ELMES: As I mentioned in my opening comments, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs now has a new focus on improving economic participation for the people whose interests we serve. Now that, for one moment, does not mean that we have abandoned what may have been the department's traditional business. What it does mean is that we are embarking on new initiatives in an attempt to address historic negligent in Indigenous communities rather than just continuing with more of the same and getting the same unsatisfactory results. It also means we are placing a greater emphasis on the 80 per cent of Indigenous Queenslanders who live in urban environments and the barriers to employment that they face as well.

I have already mentioned that my department has been reconfigured with the establishment of an economic participation division. That is headed by new Deputy Director-General Alan Feely who joins Ron Weatherall as the two deputy directors-general in the department.

Its focus is on employment and business development and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. The modus operandi will be duplicated through our regional office network. That is one of the areas where we are very fortunate. Starting from the Torres Strait and all the way to Logan we have a series of regional offices and very talented people in those regions that are virtually a one-stop shop particularly for Indigenous people and increasingly for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

I am not under any illusion that what we are suggesting is going to be easy. But I can tell you what we are doing. I am referring to myself increasingly as a salesman. I am referring to my DG as a salesman and to deputy directors-general and the people in my department as salespeople. We are going to knock on the doors of business and industry groups and tell them that we are from the government and we are really here to help. We are going to strike deals to ensure that Indigenous people and refugees get full-time, meaningful work.

We have started that process and we are a long way down the road to it. I am hoping that a little bit later on in today's proceedings that I will get the opportunity to outline some of the successes that we have had in particular industry groups and in particular businesses.

What I will be doing is making sure that I work with my cabinet colleagues and NGOs. I will work with absolutely anyone who has got an interest in this space—an interest in making the lives of Indigenous Queenslanders and newly arrived migrants and refugees as good as it possibly can be.

CHAIR: I call the member for Townsville.

Mr HATHAWAY: My question relates to page 2 of the SDS and also the document you have just tabled. Yesterday, I was on Palm Island with the Premier opening new key infrastructure which will facilitate economic development on Palm. I was wondering if you could provide, for the benefit of the committee, a bit more detail on your plan?

Mr ELMES: I have tabled two plans.

Mr HATHAWAY: The economic participation for Indigenous people plan.

Mr ELMES: The Indigenous Economic Participation Action Plan follows on from a framework that we developed a little earlier in the year. We set the general direction of the department. The action plan in front of you contains 34 actions that the government and the department will be pursuing to make sure that we provide the opportunities that I have been speaking about. I had the pleasure of launching that document last week during NAIDOC Week.

The purpose of the action plan is to create that brighter future. Under this government, economic participation is at the centre of what we do, of our policy development and of our program delivery. The emphasis is on improving employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and giving them some real opportunities.

If I can give you a couple of examples that are around the place at the moment, I had an opportunity a couple of months ago to go to the revamped Coles supermarket at Brookside—just down the road from where I grew up—in the member for Ferny Grove's electorate and he indeed was there. There were seven new Indigenous employees who were starting work at that Coles supermarket. More than that, Coles has a policy in Queensland to get to 300 Indigenous employees and 3,000 Indigenous employees across the country. What employers like Coles are realising is that when you walk into one of their stores the people who are behind the counter serving should reflect the people who are coming into the store and buying. It makes for a much better shopping experience, so I congratulate Coles.

We have also partnered and partly funded, as I think I mentioned in my opening remarks, the organisation run in Camooweal called Myuma. That is an organisation which I have been to on a couple of occasions. Unfortunately for me, on one occasion it was in the middle of summer so it was a little on the warm side. They put through groups of 30 to 33 mostly young Indigenous men and sometimes women. These are people who have either been in the juvenile detention system or who are at great risk of going in there. Rather than just train, they have also done their own MOUs with mining companies and so forth so that you go through, you do the course and you come out the other end with a guaranteed job. We did a similar thing with BMA where I think 300 young Indigenous people applied for jobs with BMA. There were 51 selected and at the end of the 12-month period the same 51 were employed by BMA.

There is another point I want to make in terms of what we are doing with economic participation. It is not a matter of just going along and saying to a business somewhere, 'I want to help you park some people in your business.' That is fine to do the deal, but when you put 50 people in that business and come back in six months time the 50 has become 20. I want to come back in six months time and make sure that those 50 are the same 50 and if it is falling away for some reason I want to know why. That is where our regional offices and so forth come in. If you have a state-wide business, it is going and talking to the local manager and making sure that the people who are there are happy and engaged. When we get to the end of our trial period, if there 50 jobs we can say, 'Well, that was a success, wasn't it? Let's do another 50 next year.' That is why I say that we are all salespeople. If you have a product to sell, you go out and sell it but the only way you keep the client is to service the client. We are going to continue to do that as well.

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH: Minister, I should just say that Brookside is in Everton, Minister Mander's electorate, but right next door to mine.

Mr ELMES: I grew up in Everton Park, so there you go.

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH: Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS which mentions an allocation of \$8 million to extend the Cape York welfare reforms to the end of 2015. Can you please inform the committee what you expect from this extension in time?

Mr ELMES: Yes. That is a really important question and I thank the member for Ferny Grove for it. The Cape York welfare reform program or trial—call it what you wish—has been underway now for a number of years. The fact that we still call it a trial is a bit of a joke, because after all of these years it is a bit difficult to continue to call it a trial. I said when I was here last year that the department would be looking at Cape York welfare reform and would be looking at the Family Responsibilities Commission, and I am very pleased to have David Glasgow, the chief commissioner, here with me today and I foreshadow that I would like Commissioner Glasgow to say a few words. The Family Responsibilities Commission is the central plank of what we do.

As members would know, because we have deemed this a trial over the years, towards the end of each sitting year I have to reintroduce legislation into the parliament to renew it for another calendar year—we do not even work on financial years; we work on calendar years—and that I will certainly be doing. However, I can also foreshadow to the committee that as part of what we will do there will be a name change which will be more reflective of what it does. There will also be other changes in terms of the consultation that needs to take place each 12 months which is very time consuming and very expensive from the point of view of the community and the way in which communities can either transition in or out of the Family Responsibilities Commission. We have at least one community that we believe is at the position where we can start to transition out, but on the other hand we have another community where we can see the need to transition in. So be under no illusions: what we are doing here is a continuing, long-term effort and it is something that my department will really be concentrating on.

In terms of the Family Responsibilities Commission, as I said, it is the central plank to what we do. In every community—in every Indigenous community, in every community anywhere in Queensland, regardless of the cultural makeup of that community—there are people who just do not follow the rules. What we are determined to do through the FRC in those four coming on to five communities is to make sure that those parents particularly who do not give a toss whether their kids go to school know that we are going to be after them and we are going to be making sure that via, as a last resort, income management those kids do go to school and those kids have the future that they deserve.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now move to non-government questions.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you, Minister. I have had the great pleasure of meeting Mr Glasgow and recently going up to the cape. I have a family history there. My grandfather was the member for Cook. I know the area very well. I am very proud of what is going on there and I think the government deserves a lot of credit, and your department too. I am not really making an opening statement, but I am basically saying that I think a lot of good is coming out of that and I would like to see it continue. My questions are not strictly any criticism. My first one is about the capital shortfall on page 11 of the SDS. Could you just explain why there is a capital expenditure shortfall? This is an area where those sorts of things are fairly critical and we really need to keep up capital spending.

Mr ELMES: Thank you very much, member for Gaven. I invite Colleen Orange, the department's chief finance officer, to come forward. There is a very easy explanation for that and she will be able to provide you with a full response.

Ms Orange: In terms of the underspend or the difference between the estimated actual and budget for the 2013-14 financial year, the budget that was set for the year just past included an amount of funding that was carried over from prior years in relation to the department. So when the department transferred out of the Department of Communities back in the machinery-of-government change in 2012 we were given funding for unspent capital that had kind of built up over time. Our strategy with spending capital is really to ensure that we spend it as required. We have basically allocated a portion of that in the new financial year—2014-15—in relation to the upgrade in the Kowanyama retail store where we are investing \$1.25 million in upgrading facilities in that store. So for us it is not representing capital that should not have been spent in the past but represents really making sure that we make good use of the funds that we have provided to us.

Dr DOUGLAS: If that is the case, then on page 13—

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, I just remind you that your question needs to be directed to the minister.

Dr DOUGLAS: Minister, I accept that and I have seen some of the elements with regard to the shops. I did not get to Kowanyama this time, but I know that there has been a significant upgrade and I know you cannot easily transfer it. But, Minister, on pages 13 and 14 under supplies and services there are cuts to spending. Would it not be possible just to have moved that across? Can you give me some explanation as to why that would have occurred?

Mr ELMES: Again, thank you, member for Gaven. I will ask Colleen Orange to answer that question for you, but can I just assure you in passing to Colleen that in terms of the department there are no capital programs of any sort that have been reduced or cut.

Dr DOUGLAS: I note that. Thank you.

Mr ELMES: But I will pass to Colleen.

Dr DOUGLAS: I have noted that and I concede that point. I have had a look at that.

Mr ELMES: Thank you.

Ms Orange: Can I ask which item on page 13 you are referring to?

Dr DOUGLAS: I am just looking at what I have seen in the figures there. I have compared previous years and I have looked at actuals and what was budgeted and to me it looks like there were cuts. Were there not cuts?

Ms Orange: No, there have not been any cuts to the department's expenditure.

Dr DOUGLAS: On supplies and services?

Ms Orange: No. Yes, that is correct; there has not been. In terms of the reduction in spend, a large amount of it has to do with the timing of our remote Indigenous land infrastructure development work that we do up in the remote communities. The timing of that program is impacted by a range of things and so we start the year anticipating a certain program of work. Weather, approvals and all sorts of things can push that program—that spend—out to the next financial year, so there have not been any cuts to budget.

Dr DOUGLAS: Minister, if I look at it, there is outsourced service delivery covered within this as well. Can you expand on that and give me some clues on that?

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, are you still on pages 13 and 14?

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, page 13 and it is also covered on page 20.

Mr ELMES: Again, I will pass to—

Dr DOUGLAS: Sorry, Minister.

Mr ELMES: No, that is all right.

Ms Orange: In terms of the outsourced service delivery, that funding largely represents the expenditure on the NPARIH infrastructure development program that I just referred to.

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes.

Ms Orange: I am not sure if you are comparing the first column there where there is nothing and then there is 18—

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, well that is—

Ms Orange: So there has been an accounting change since—

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, I presumed there was something. But, remember, if there is nothing, I have to go and do a bit of homework, which I did. I am hoping you can fill in the gap.

Ms Orange: Sure. If we start at the adjusted budget column—the first column—in the other supplies and services it is \$68 million. That includes funding for the NPARIH program and some others that have been reclassified from an accounting point of view into outsourced service delivery and other supplies and services. This has just followed a change in how we report certain grant expenditure that Treasury have determined, so this is really an accounting representation more so than indicating any unders or overs of expenditure. That \$18 million is largely, as I said, the NPARIH program. Because of the timing of that program and because additional funding has been provided for additional works in 2014-15, that spend is increasing up to that larger number in 2014-15. The department has been provided with additional funding to do additional works.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you. I think that satisfies me.

Mr ELMES: With your indulgence, Mr Chair, could I just say that there have not been any changes to how services have been delivered by the department. The outsourced service delivery expense outlined on pages 13 and 20 reflects the change in accounting treatment for programs previously classified as grants expenditure in line with Queensland Treasury and Trade guidelines. The main item in the amounts under 'outsourced service delivery' relates to the remote Indigenous land and infrastructure development program delivered by the department primarily under the National Partnership Agreement for Remote Indigenous Housing previously reported as grants expense. These accounting changes are explained in notes on page 20 of the SDS.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you. Well, if you are on that path, Minister, can I ask one more question with regards to these grants? On page 16, \$14 million in grants to ATSI and multicultural affairs, is that a new grant system or is that something else? That is on that page as well. Can you explain that? I just need a little bit of clarification on that.

Mr ELMES: What page was that?

Dr DOUGLAS: Page 16.

Mr ELMES: Page 16?

Dr DOUGLAS: Fourteen million dollars in grants to ATSI. The obvious second question is as a percentage what does that make up? Does that make sense?

Mr ELMES: Well, it does, but I am just trying to find where the \$14 million is.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thirteen point whatever it is. I have rounded it up, 13.957 for 2013. It is down about—

Mr ELMES: I have it there.

CHAIR: Minister, there is an opportunity to take this on notice unless—

Dr DOUGLAS: You could take it on notice.

Ms Orange: I always prefer to look at the income statement as opposed to the cash flow statement, because the cash flow is an accounting thing that reflects prior year activity as well, whereas the income statement, which is on page 13, actually gives us a better indication of the grant expenditure expected for the year. The cash flow brings in things that related to last year that we actually paid out this year. So grant spend was provided 5.937 increasing to 7.957 and then to 8.176.

Dr DOUGLAS: So are you saying that is a carryover? Is that a carryover?

Ms Orange: I think—

Dr DOUGLAS: It is a carryover. So it is an accrual type thing and it is a carryover?

Ms Orange: That is right. It is an accrual, yes.

Dr DOUGLAS: We probably need to clarify those things a bit, don't we? It makes it very difficult to follow. I am sorry I had to ask. I apologise. But in things like this it may be significant.

CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Douglas. We are going to go to the member for Woodridge. We probably have time for a question and then we will come back after.

Mrs SCOTT: I just have a short sequence of questions. Thank you, Minister. On page 24 of the SDS and the role of our Family Responsibilities Commissioner in supporting Queenslanders in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, could I ask the Commissioner perhaps to inform the committee: do most residents have a form of identification such as a driver's licence, Medicare card, et cetera, and does the commission actually assist people with obtaining identification?

Mr Glasgow: To the member for Woodridge, we found some difficulties with identification when we first arrived. The DATSIMA office then, or the Department of Communities, had an arrangement to assist Indigenous people to provide their birth certificate, because that is the first really important document in the chain of identification. I indicated to people who did not have their birth certificate, or did not know their date of birth or generally had difficulties with finding that, that one alternative was to go to the medical centre and obtain treatment and thereby obtain a Medicare card, which immediately gives you a form of identification. So in places like Aurukun, where it is essential that you have photo ID, the council provides a photo ID because you cannot travel out of the community by air unless you produce photo identification. So in the main, that has been caught up with. There has been extensive work done within the school system to ensure that children have identification and birth certificates. Where people do not have them, we assist them in obtaining their birth certificates.

Mrs SCOTT: So that would be their main form of ID?

Mr Glasgow: Yes. Driver's licences are transitional in many respects in relation to many of these people. They lose them and obtain them again. Driving offences are quite prominent in the court systems up there so they usually use their identification, which is provided either by counsel, or their Medicare card.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, you may like to also extend this question to the Commissioner. I refer to page 24 and also the recent passing of legislation in the Queensland parliament, in particular the Electoral Reform Amendment Bill 2013 regarding these changes to voter ID laws, which will most likely have an impact on the residents in these communities, some of whom may not have identification. I am just wondering if you would like to comment on this and whether or not we are going to find our Aboriginal and Islander people at a disadvantage having to bring ID—

Mr HATHAWAY: I rise to a point of order. It is asking for a comment and it is related to legislation that is not within this minister's portfolio.

CHAIR: Minister, can you confirm it is not within your portfolio?

Mr ELMES: Well, it is not. But can I just say to the member for Woodridge—

Mrs SCOTT: I think it is an important—

Mr ELMES: Also with the legislation, whether it be for Indigenous people in the Cape or myself in Noosa, if I do not have ID there is a declaration vote that I can undertake that makes sure I am able to cast a vote in the election.

Just going back to the member for Gaven's line of questioning, can I just offer to Dr Douglas that if he would like a briefing on some of those issues that you are raising—

Dr DOUGLAS: That is much appreciated, thank you.

Mr ELMES:—we are more than happy to arrange that. Could I also make the point that we have a section within the department which is the Community and Personal Histories Section. In terms of being able to track down people's identity, if you like, there is a group of people in that section which we do not see too often. They are a bit like librarians: it is a very quiet workplace and they sort of go about what they need to do, but they are experts in their field. I will give you a good example. I was in Kowanyama a few weeks ago and there was a lady there by the name of May Smiler who had just turned 100. We were able to go back through the department and on her 100th birthday I was able not only to sing her *Happy Birthday* and give her a birthday cake—she liked the cake a lot more than my singing—but I was able to present her with her birth certificate, which she had never had before. I know that there are Indigenous people who have lived to 100 before, but this was the first time we were able to prove it. So it was a very special moment in the Kowanyama, and it just goes to show some of the work that we can do in terms of being able to put together a whole series of reference points and to be able to go back and find that really important history.

Mrs SCOTT: I just have one short finishing question. Minister, was there any dialogue between you and the Attorney-General regarding the possibility that Aboriginals and Islanders and new migrants who have arrived here, people who have English as their second language and that sort of thing, may be at a disadvantage with our new voting—

Mr ELMES: No, there was not. This is an issue for the Attorney-General, but we have the language skills translator services in the state. As I have just said, there is also the opportunity for people who have left their Medicare card, or their driver's licence, or their 18 plus card—or whatever it happens to be—at home, the opportunity is there for them to make a declaration vote. So I am perfectly satisfied in my own mind that regardless of where you live in this great state, you will be able to have a vote.

CHAIR: Thank you. We will move to government questions. I call the member for Mudgeeraba.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Mr Chair. This is probably for the benefit of both the Minister and the member for Woodridge: on 612 radio only a few moments ago the ECQ said that 100 per cent turnout for electors in the Stafford by-election showed proof of identity.

Minister, I refer to the section in your SDS about the Families Responsibilities Commission and your frequent public comments that the commission is an important component of the Cape York Welfare Reform program. Obviously with the carbon tax's repeal today, hopefully there will be more money around for everyone to give to these great programs. Minister, can you please advise whether the commission has proven to be successful.

Mr ELMES: Yes, and can I thank the member for Mudgeeraba for her question. As I said a moment ago, we were talking about the Families Responsibilities Commission being the central part of what is at the moment called Cape York Welfare. It is important on a number of fronts, and I think the most important part of this is some of the changes that we made last year to empower local communities and to empower local commissioners. Commissioner Glasgow will tidy me up as I go, but we have now three local commissioners from the community who can convene a hearing if we are looking at some form of income management. So that is not 'white fellas' flying in, as so often happens in these communities, and taking over operations. Of course they are done under the guidance of the Commissioner, but by empowering these local commissioners—and there are more than three in each community—I think we are going a long way back to restoring that local authority that I talked about.

The other thing, of course, is in terms of income management and the triggers for income management: appearances before a court; domestic violence; not sending children to school, which is a real hobbyhorse of mine; and those kinds of things. So there are a whole range of things there that the Families Responsibilities Commission look for and watch for in a very caring way to manoeuvre people through the system.

I had the privilege, I think it was last year, of going to Cairns and meeting many of the commissioners. I meet them as I go around. But I met many of the commissioners in one spot in Cairns, and there are some very caring Indigenous people who make up those commissioners in those communities, and I really do commend David Glasgow and his senior executives. They were there when we came into government. I am very happy that David Glasgow has continued on as the Commissioner because he does an outstanding job. So now that I have put him right on the top shelf, I would just like to pass to him and ask him to explain to the committee a little bit more about the operation.

Mr Glasgow: Thank you for those compliments. I think it should firstly be said that this would not have been as successful as it has been without the work of those commissioners. It is their ability to sit and make wise and reasonable decisions which has shown the system can work with Indigenous commissioners alone. Perhaps I should give you some examples.

Each community sits fortnightly and for the nine sittings this year in Mossman Gorge, the three women commissioners—there are only women commissioners—have sat on their own on all but three occasions. On those three occasions I went up, one was because there was a fairly significant and sensitive matter, but the others were just to keep in contact. So I was able to do other work without necessarily going into the community. Last week while I was on leave the commissioners in Aurukun sat alone, and next week when I go to Hope Vale they will have their first sitting alone. Though I will be there in an adjoining room, they will be sitting alone. Coen does sit from time to time, but I have always sat with them. Aurukun has sat on numerous occasions on their own on days while

I have been there, and I have moved out of the room to allow the commissioners to sit. Some of you from the committee have had the opportunity to be there and you know how effective those women and men are in Aurukun. They can do it and it is done in language, as you have seen.

There are many challenges ahead but, if we look at success, when we went to Aurukun the state attendance figures for the primary school there were under 40 per cent. Now it regularly hits in the 80s. I accept that the following day it can drop to the high 50s because of the intrusion—irregular but frequent—from time to time of alcohol into the community. That alcohol is consumed immediately and, as a result, noise and fighting affect the next day's attendance at school.

In the community of Coen we regularly are at 94 per cent, and it is above most of the state schools. In Hope Vale, if it were not for Friday we would be in the 90s. Unfortunately, in Hope Vale the council and all other activities cease at lunchtime and we will lose 30 children from the school when they go out camping or whatever. We are attacking that as best we can to try and encourage it, but if you lose a third of your schoolchildren the attendance drops. We have had some discussion with council, for instance. I tried to make it a condition of the contract that all council employees with children at school would ensure their children attended. I am told that that cannot happen, but I have asked that they consider it as part of a code of conduct. But we are attacking that area, and the school is itself.

In Mossman Gorge, again we have in the 90s. That can be varied for, quite often, difficult children are sent to Mossman Gorge with their grandparents and their attendance rate at school can affect the numbers because the numbers there are very small. Overall, I think the improvements in the community are self-evident, as I think many of your committee has seen.

There is one thing I should say to you following your visit to Aurukun and the interest you had within the wellbeing centres. Very significant work has happened since that time. I am pleased to tell you that the wellbeing centre is operating much more efficiently and effectively. In addition, we introduced an integrated case management process which, briefly, is organised by my coordinator on the ground and consists of the matron of the hospital, Queensland Mental Health, the wellbeing centre, the parenting, police, the head mistress of the school, Child Safety and the FRC commissioners. They meet every fortnight for an hour and a half to coordinate the actual workload of each of those organisations to ensure there is a balanced, proper and organised approach to the counselling of the people who are referred. At those meetings the organisations there are asked to put up the names of people who need care and attention and there is an organisational structure which is working very effectively. The wellbeing centre, I heard while I was on holidays, is hoping to introduce that sort of proposal into Hope Vale. So there are many things that have happened subsequent to your visit, I am pleased to say. There is a more integrated approach to the care of people who are referred to mutual organisations so they are not each approaching the same person simultaneously, trying to do their own counselling processes.

We will have continuing problems in Aurukun while grog comes in intermittently and is consumed immediately, for that brings the tragedy of noise and violence that is associated with excessive consumption of alcohol. But I think overall, as the minister has said, the improvement of Indigenous authority is quite clear. The desire of the community to have their children educated is significant. Child safety matters right throughout the cape have been reducing over a period of time because of concentrated efforts.

CHAIR: Commissioner, thank you for that update. It is always good to hear about things that have occurred. As you are aware, in our hearing in Cairns Dr Douglas took particular interest in that particular issue, so it is good to see that some of that line of questioning has been addressed. In our report we mentioned that that has in a small way contributed to helping to make that a better outcome, which was desperately needed, I think. It is really good to hear that.

Mr Glasgow: I think you underestimated the 'small'. I think the catalyst of that was significant—something we have been trying to do for some time. But we have new staff—very good staff—coming into those communities now and consistently involved in proper working relationships, particularly with Queensland Mental Health, which is a major problem within that community.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr HATHAWAY: Minister, I refer to page 4 of the SDS and the role played by the department in working with communities to manage alcohol misuse and reduce alcohol related harm. Would you please update the committee on the progress of the review of AMPs in those discrete Indigenous communities where they operate?

Mr ELMES: It is again a very important question, and I thank the member for Townsville for that. Alcohol management plans were put in place by the previous government some years ago. It was certainly necessary, because we moved in those communities from the days of canteens, which conjures up exactly what they were in many cases: some sort of swill house of alcohol being freely available to whoever wanted to consume it for almost as long as they wanted to. Obviously there needed to be a change, and there was.

I launched the review on 3 October 2012. At a meeting in Cairns I had all of the Indigenous mayors together and we talked through what was possible and what we wanted to do. First and foremost was an absolute statement from me to them that this was going to be their review. It was going to be a review done by each community at its own pace, in its own time, with as much help as they wanted but not driven by people living in Brisbane.

We have had some notifications from some communities. To give you an example, Aurukun—the commissioner was just talking about Aurukun—we received a note from the council saying that they wanted to leave their AMP as it was, which was as a dry community.

We have ideas—some of them very detailed ideas—that have come from communities such as Mornington Island, from the NPA and from Napranum and we are going back and offering to help put the bells and whistles on them, if you like. As each application is received I want to make sure it is watertight and I can take it to cabinet and have cabinet tick that particular thing off.

We have communities that range from dry communities, like Mornington and Aurukun, through to communities where there are establishments that sell alcohol. Pormpuraaw is one, Palm Island is another, the NPA is another—and everything in between. They deal with carriage limits, the amount of alcohol you can have on you, the limits when you are buying and so forth.

I have said this a fair few times, but I really want to commend the mayors, the TOs, the local commissioners, the community justice groups and so forth for the really professional way they are going about this. When I go to Indigenous communities, when I get the chance, I like to sort of pop out the back of the council office. I generally find a couple of ladies sitting under a tree somewhere having a yarn and I have the opportunity sometimes to have a talk to them. Women in particular remember the rapes, the bashings and the child abuse and they do not want to go back to that. So they are very nervous about the reintroduction of alcohol in any way, shape or form, depending on the community and the effect it might have.

I can give you a great example, though. I think an outstanding example is Pormpuraaw. In Pormpuraaw there is a community tavern. It opens 25 hours a week and does not open on a Sunday. It is normally a five to nine or five to 10 type operation. They have some special days, like State of Origin and that sort of thing. But people are breathalysed before they go in because there is no alcohol allowed in the wider community. So rather than being breathalysed when you get to your car you are breathalysed before you go in, and if you have any alcohol on your breath you do not get into the pub. That is a fair change to what normally happens.

It is a community club, so each person who is in there has a membership card, and the membership card has their photo on it. In the Pormpuraaw tavern you are allowed six midstrength drinks a day. So when you go up and make your purchase they swipe your card. Your photo comes up on the computer screen. They have your card, so they know who you are and they mark off each individual drink, via the computer network, as you consume them. At the end of six drinks, no more is available unless you want to drink light beer. Overnight the system resets itself.

You can have 200 people in that tavern on a Friday night. Women—single women; women on their own—walk into that tavern on Friday nights, or any other night it is open, on their own, sit down, have a meal, have a drink, get out and walk home without a problem. That is a well-managed community. Again, I also give credit to the Palm Island community for the sports bar they run on Palm Island, with perhaps the best view in the world, because of the very professional way that Palm runs that exercise. There are some great examples around of how you can treat alcohol with respect.

I said right from the start, and I said it in terms of Aurukun and some of the others: all you have to do is go back and watch some of the old movies to see that prohibition on alcohol has never worked. It never worked in the States and it has never worked here. You can go to Aurukun and you can buy a bottle of rum for between \$250 and \$350 a bottle. Earlier the commissioner was talking about sly groggers and so forth. These are people in places like Aurukun and in other communities that trade off the misery of their family, their friends and the rest of the community and truck this poison in. As the commissioner says, when it is there the best thing to do is get rid of the evidence quickly. How do you get rid of the evidence? You drink it quickly. So then you have the opportunity not only for outbreaks of violence and so forth but also for lots of noise and kids not going to school.

The government has underway, I can say to the committee, some pretty substantial plans in terms of how we are going to start to and really try to tackle sly grog and the sly groggers, and it is not through the fine system that finishes up on SPER that no-one pays. I make that point.

The alcohol management plan review continues. We will get back and get communities to the table when they feel that they are ready, not before. As I said, this is their review at their time in their place in their own way. We will help. We are not going to lead it; they will lead it.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, I refer to page 26 of the Service Delivery Statements regarding staffing levels within the Families Responsibilities Commission and page 24 regarding the commission's overall objective. Are they adequately resourced in terms of staffing levels and expertise to carry out the functions within the commission?

Mr ELMES: Thank you, member for Woodridge, for the question. I am absolutely certain that they are, but to be absolutely certain that I am certain I might ask the commissioner to speak to that.

Mr Glasgow: Thank you, member for Woodridge. We work a very lean machine. For instance, I have taken three weeks holiday. I do not get anyone to replace me, so I have my phone constantly available. I make sure that when an accountant takes leave they are not replaced. We have staff to do that. It is a very fine line within the Public Service regulations about how far you can go with that. We feel that we are adequately supplied. We could always do with more, but I think we are charged with running an efficient organisation and working within the system. If I needed more, I would go to the minister to ask.

The minister referred to the possibility of eventually going out of one community and into others. The cost of going into these communities is enormous. The travel costs are phenomenal, as your committee would have found even just flying into Aurukun and, of course, keeping people on those sites. In that process we have reviewed the levels of some of our employees and dropped those levels with new people coming on board because I think some of them were quite generous. Again, we do not wish to be mean, but we need to be efficient. To answer the question simply, I think we are well resourced for what we need to do.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to pages 24 and 26 of the SDS and ask if you would explain. There seems to be a dramatic increase in client referrals, from 225 estimated to over 500 received.

Mr ELMES: This is under the Family Responsibilities Commission? Again, I might ask the commissioner to speak to that.

Mrs SCOTT: It just seemed a very large escalation.

Mr Glasgow: To answer your question, what we decided to do when we found that there was a degree of further efficiencies within the various service providers was to go back to our files where people had been referred. Our case plans run for 12 months. So with a number of those case plans, we would call the people in, revoke the case plan and do a new case plan to try to do it in an ordered fashion. The best way to give you an example is if a woman came in and her partner was in jail and she was suffering from the results of abuse, some alcohol dependency or drug dependency and was not actually looking after her children well, we would try to refer that person to probably three service providers and she might go to one. What we then would do is revoke the case plan, bring the things up to date and then sit down and, through this integrated case management process, work out which was the first priority. Was it to attack her alcohol dependency, look at the parenting or deal with the results of the significant domestic violence she has been through and let the experts decide how they would do that.

The other area which has been brought forward is when we were given the opportunity to provide 90 per cent income management, we brought the people in and said, 'Right, this is what you are going to do now. Because you failed to have your children attend school, you will now attend at this place, you will now attend there.' We then gave those people who had come off their case plans new obligations. Because we really wanted to monitor what the effect of that 90 per cent is, we have been running a monitoring program, watching the day-to-day attendance of those children within that case plan. It is not as though we have referred more; we have actually done a bit of a doubling up in the last 12 months to try to ensure that people were attending. Again, we have had other service providers come on to the community who have offered. For instance, Apunipima has come in and offered to do some things. We have had a mental health officer in Aurukun specifically looking after young girls at school with problems, so they are being referred. We looked around to see where these referrals are best sent and we have done a review. I think that best explains the numbers.

Mrs SCOTT: There was one other in this sequence relating to pages 26 and 27. There has been a prediction that three per cent of clients who have had conditional income management orders will be revoked or reduced. I am just wondering if the commissioner might like to comment.

Mr Glasgow: The commissioners take the view that income management is a last resort. We have often had people who will not come near us on three occasions, so they are income managed. We took the view that we should then try to bring them in on a regular basis. There is no point having them sitting out there being income managed if they are not doing what they should be doing. We always contemplate that we will eventually get some of those people to do the program and to come off the program. So we review after six months and after nine months of each income management order. If we find that a person, for instance, had a case plan and attended to one of three matters but not the other two, we would bring them in and offer them a short period of, say, a month to complete the other two with the promise that they would come off income management. The commission has generally felt that it was far better for the process of consultation and counselling to be effective rather than have someone sit out there and hate us because they were on income management. We have had quite a success with that. We predict that more people will come off the income management by completing their case plans.

Mrs SCOTT: So being more proactive.

Mr Glasgow: We have always done that, but we have concentrated more, as service providers have completed these services, constantly. The other thing we have done, which may interest Dr Douglas, is we have said to the service providers, 'You don't have to do the whole thing in two months. If you've got a 12-month case plan and this lady needs some counselling over a period, don't rush it through and tick it off if she constantly needs. If she is on income management, come back and tell us she is doing very well and we will take her off the income management, but you continue the case plan.' So we did not want service providers to just say, 'We've done the course, tick it off and that's the end.' The case plan can run as long as people like and then they can continue to consult with the council or just attend at the various places from time to time as they wish. That really is to build up a confidence in the service providers so that after the FRC has gone people will know they can go there for help and do it voluntarily.

Dr DOUGLAS: Can I continue that parallel theme, although it is not quite the same thing. I refer to page 9 and the new performance measures statement. I take on board everything Mr Glasgow has stated. These are new measures. It does incorporate, I am sure, what Mr Glasgow has been doing. Minister, can you give me some ideas about—I am just looking for an explanation. I refer to performance measures statement on page 9. They are new performance measures. I realise that it is the number of houses et cetera, which is a really good thing. Can you expand on it?

Mr ELMES: Sure, I am happy to.

Dr DOUGLAS: I could do that at the briefing if you thought that would be easier.

Mr ELMES: Actually in many ways it does go to the heart of what we are doing as a department. I will get the director-general to expand on it as well. We are talking about jobs there for Indigenous people, as I was referring to earlier on. The other thing that is very important in terms of the number of houses being made available for ownership is that we have what we refer to as the program office, which operates out of Cairns. Mr Allen Cunneen, who is with us today, heads up the program office. They are responsible for surveying all of the Indigenous land in the DOGIT. We had a situation where we had houses that sat across two titles, we had a house that did not have a connection with a road and so forth all through these communities. That work under Mr Cunneen's direction has been done so that we can prepare for legislation that will be debated in the House before the end of the year in terms of being able to move into home ownership where that is wanted by the community.

Dr DOUGLAS: That is good. Does it link in to any other grants system? Does this new measure link into—this is also Commonwealth grants—that as well somehow? I went looking for information federally. Are these new measures tied into some other—does that attract some grant that then goes with it? I was trying to follow—and I hate going back about these grants. I was looking at ATSI and MCA grants, which was covered on page 5. I was then thinking does that have some relationship to this?

Mr ELMES: These houses are built under the NPARIH scheme, which is a federally funded—

Dr DOUGLAS: That is what I am getting to.

Mr ELMES: We work in partnership with the Department of Housing and Public Works. The program office that I just referred to goes through and does the surveying of the land, puts in the necessary infrastructure in terms of roads, power, sewerage, water and that sort of thing. They are doing some enormous work at the moment on Palm Island in that regard. Then Public Works and Housing comes in as part of the deal more in negotiation with the federal government and actually builds those houses. There has been a lot of activity over the last 12 months in particular in building quality homes in the communities. On Palm Island we have one subdivision which I think would be completed, another one with 60 homes which would be almost completed and another one on the way. There is some very significant building happening in these communities around these discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Of course, what we want to do is get to a point—once this legislation goes through the House—where Indigenous people are able to take up the opportunity to buy their own home and to be able to sell it on the open market for a profit, will it to their children or whatever the circumstances may be. I remember the words of Minister Cripps, who has passage of the legislation: the passage of this legislation is not going to create one house on a freehold block, but it is going to provide the opportunity for it to happen. Overwhelmingly, when I go and talk with the different communities, I see a real willingness from this new crop of leaders to at least put their toe in the water and see what they might do. We are not going to look at the whole community; we are just going to look at the DOGIT from the point of view of home ownership. It is up to the council and the community to decide whether it is the whole DOGIT, half a dozen blocks down in this corner or nothing at all. It is about making those things possible and available.

Dr DOUGLAS: Will these performance measures link into those Commonwealth grant systems as well somehow?

Mr ELMES: Yes.

Dr DOUGLAS: Just a small aside, in that process of construction has there been involvement of training of people in those areas—apprenticeships and that sort of thing? There has?

Mr ELMES: Yes. One of the things that we are currently doing—and not all councils have taken this up, but the overwhelming majority have—is for the council to be the principal contractor. In my conversations with the federal minister—what happens under NPARIH is that the state is given a certain number of homes to build over a financial year. It does not matter how you build them, where you build them, under what condition or style or whatever it happens to be, you have to build that number. If you do not, there is a financial penalty to the state. I do not have a problem with that, but what we have done—and Aurukun is a great example. We have been building social houses there for more years than I know about. There is not one qualified tradesperson in Aurukun.

Dr DOUGLAS: But there used to be. There used to be a lot. I did the prisons for years. They were qualified. That is what I am saying.

Mr ELMES: What we want to do is look at the building potential of a community and say, 'We just want to slow down this proportion of the homes'—and we might be talking about four or five a year—but put the work gang in place so that they have a continuous stream of work over a three- or four-year period. Then by the time it is finished they come out the other end with their qualification. Whether they stay in town or go somewhere else—whatever it happens to be—their qualifications go with them. That is very much a focus.

CHAIR: We will move to government questions and I call the member for Beaudesert.

Mr KRAUSE: I refer to page 3 of the SDS and the announcement of \$1.25 million in the SDS to upgrade the government owned store at Kowanyama. Can you please inform the committee how important the government owned stores are to the communities in which they are situated?

Mr ELMES: Thank you very much, member for Beaudesert, for your question. I know that I say it every time I get asked a question today, but it is important, because in the communities in which we operate, these stores they really are the central part of it. We operate stores in Palm Island, Woorabinda, Doomadgee, Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama and Lockhart River. As I said, they play a very central role in the provision of foodstuffs and other supplies into the communities. If members of the committee could imagine a sort of mid sized IGA supermarket, they will get some idea of the sort of size and style of the stores that we operate. They sell, obviously, all of the grocery items that would normally be sold but there are also some additional garden type products, some electrical equipment and so forth sold in these stores as well.

We have a very small group that work in central office that look after the buying and so forth for the stores. We aim, over a very long supply line, to be able to deliver into these stores the best possible priced fresh fruit and vegetables and grocery lines as it is possible to get. As an example, fresh fruit and vegetables are landed at a wholesale cost. So there is no profit put on those items. The same applies in the main to low-sugar soft drinks, bottled water—that kind of thing. On the other hand, cigarettes, full-strength sugar type soft drinks and so forth carry a bit of a loading. So that is a way of evening that out and trying to put some emphasis on health.

We partner with service providers like Apunipima, which is a primary health service, in the cape and also the Jimmy Little Foundation. With the Jimmy Little Foundation there are very basic signs on foodstuffs that either give a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down sign in terms of the nutritional value of the food that is being bought.

As you have heard, we are going to in this financial year spend I think \$1.25 million on the Kowanyama store. I think there is a large amount that we need to spend—not quite as much but I think there is another large amount—that we have allocated for Kowanyama next year as part of the overall upgrade of that store. But what is important is that also, when it comes to the wet season, each of these stores has sufficient storage capacity—and it is very large storage capacity—so that in the lead-up to the wet season we can get foodstuffs into those stores so that when they are inevitably cut off from the outside world we are able to supply foodstuffs to the people who live in those communities. So it is very much central to what happens in those communities.

We have, I think, 52 FTEs who work in the stores. Overwhelmingly, they are Indigenous people. I think the manager on Palm Island is an Indigenous person and they do a very good job. We have done a report only fairly recently looking at the future of the stores and where we want to take them. There is a real want within the communities to gain ownership back of those stores. I fully support the aspirations of the communities, but I have said to all of the mayors that I have talked to about this that our primary responsibility is the supply of food and the supply of food means the viability of those stores long term. We do not want to be put in a situation that, in two or three years time, the government has to step back in and take the store over and spend untold millions to bring the stores up to scratch.

Once the estimates hearings are over and when I am out and about talking to the mayors and communities again about what can be done, looking at the report that has been done by very much an expert in his field—he was comparing not only what our stores do but what the stores in the Northern Territory do and other competitors and operators in Queensland in those sorts of environments—at the end of the day I want to be in a position where not only are we providing that service but, bearing in mind that in some places some stores have the capacity to earn and deliver a lot more money into the system than what others do, we want to make sure that there is a return for the community as well. It is going to be a very delicate balancing act. I am not going to be rushed into completing the work but we will get there and we will do it for the benefit of each individual community.

Mr HATHAWAY: Minister, you touched on it, I think, in some of your earlier responses but I refer to page 3 of the SDS and the role played by the department in delivering planning schemes and subdivision development for our Indigenous communities. Specifically, what role does the department play in the provision of housing in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities? How is that benefiting those communities?

Mr ELMES: Thank you very much, member for Townsville. I made mention only a few minutes ago of the work that is being undertaken in your electorate on Palm Island, which is as a result of what I believe is just fantastic work being done by our program office, which is located in Cairns. It is one of our regional offices. I am going to invite Allen Cunneen, who is the head of the program office, to come forward and give the committee a bit of an idea of what he and his great team do. Can I say that, when I go and have a look at the subdivisions that they create, I am looking at subdivisions that you would see in any suburban area anywhere in our state with underground power, a fantastic finish in the roadways and kerbing and channelling. The supply and the look of the development are, as I said, as good as you would find anywhere. When you do something of that quality and then we come along and we are able to build houses on them for people, there is a real pride and you can see it. There is a real pride in the people who come along and take those houses over. I am hoping that, as time goes on and we pass this legislation towards the end of the year, when home ownership becomes available it will really add to it. I just invite Mr Cunneen to detail a bit more information. Allen Cunneen executive director, remote Indigenous land and infrastructure program office

Mr Cunneen: I will just walk through the role of the program office based in Cairns. It is the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office. It coordinates Queensland government agencies and our stakeholders to drive the resolution of land administration and issues to facilitate the rollout of social housing in Queensland's remote Indigenous communities. Forty-year leases are a mandatory requirement under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the program office has established a targeted number of projects to progress tenure and other complex issues that need to be resolved before the sites can be leased. To date, 2,340 40-year leases have been executed across various communities. In the financial year to date—of June just gone—we have allowed 305 house survey lots. The minister touched on these new subdivisions that have been developed to maintain and to provide more housing in the communities. Lease surveys are completed in order to register the social housing leases. This will also assist further home ownership applications to reduce the cost to the applicants. So we get the land surveyed for them. To date, 2,819 social housing lease surveys have been completed.

Road network surveys are also a big project to be done and that is where roads actually exist. There are encroachments, as the minister touched on earlier, that need to be cleared up before a lease can then be executed. Twenty-three road networks have now been completed and registered and 19 of those are on mainland communities and four are in the Torres Strait.

The program office is also now managing a community survey program, which is a whole-of-township survey that will not only map social housing but also staff housing, council infrastructure, reserves and buildings like clinics, shops, parklands and schools. They will all be surveyed out. This program has commenced and we anticipate it to be completed by June next year. In addition, the program office is working closely with councils to develop and implement the land use planning scheme, which will underpin the economic opportunities for these councils.

The major achievement is the Wujal Wujal Planning Scheme, which came into effect in July last year as the first Queensland remote discrete Indigenous community planning scheme. Four planning schemes have now been adopted and are in effect and a further four are expected to be approved in September this year. I would also like to note that the planning scheme for Kowanyama won the Planning Institute of Australia's national award of excellence. The program office leads in negotiations on Indigenous land use agreement, or ILUAs. They are needed to meet native title compliance with the rollout of social housing and related infrastructure as well as home ownership.

The program office, also in cooperation with our stakeholders, includes the local councils, trustees and the building industry to maximise Indigenous employment through the construction of the social housing program and the civil works. The program office also plays a critical role in facilitating home ownership opportunities by ensuring that all cross-agency and intergovernmental policies are aligned. Through the program office, success in improving the land development, administration and, in turn, better housing outcomes and enabling home ownership opportunities is providing great opportunities for economic participation and facilitating sustainable growth in these communities.

CHAIR: Thank you. We are going to do one more question before lunch. I will ask Dr Douglas.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you. My question relates to the issues raised on page 2, which relate to both incarceration and rising population statistics proportionately across the state and a point that was raised by Mr Glasgow when we were up north. It is very difficult to tease it out of the budget. What are we not doing? I did prisons for 20 years. I have met a lot of Aboriginal people. What are we not doing that we did before from this department that would address those specific issues? Mr Glasgow raised some interesting points about the way we manage them when they had hearings in the courts within Aurukun. What are we not doing and what could we do? I know it is slightly hypothetical, but what could we do? Those rising statistics of numbers of people and incarceration statistics are very high. They are disproportionately high and rising. What could we do? I would be interested to hear.

CHAIR: Sorry, we are going to have to get to the question.

Dr DOUGLAS: The question really is: what is it that we are not doing or that we could do or should be doing?

Mr ELMES: I am finding it a little difficult to find the reference.

Dr DOUGLAS: It is at paragraph 3. It basically says—

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland is the fastest growing of all the States and Territories.

So the numbers theoretically that are going into incarceration, it proportionately rises.

Mr ELMES: I think when you look at those figures the make-up of the Indigenous population as against the rest of the community is almost exactly the opposite. In the rest of the community, you have the baby boomers who are moving through and we are a much older community. When you look at the Indigenous community, it is a very, very young community. We seem to have forgotten how to have babies. In Indigenous communities, they have not. One of the things that we have to do and make sure that we are right across—and I was talking about it before—is education.

Dr DOUGLAS: I agree, totally agree.

Mr ELMES: It is getting the kids, not when they are in high school, not when they are in primary school, but when there is availability for prep and kindergarten and so forth to get them on the right track.


The education system also has to suit Indigenous young people. You might remember—and I think I was with the member for Woodridge—going back some time there was a slight altercation over in Logan between some Islander kids and Aboriginal kids. I made the point of going and having just a little quick talk to each of the families—just sort of sitting down in their homes and having a talk to them. When I was talking to the young Aboriginal fellow—and incidentally, as a result of that we sent him to Myuma at Camooweal and he got a job in the mining industry so it was really good—he was made to stand up in class every day and read to the class. The teacher in that classroom knew that he could not read or that he had great difficulty in reading. So, of course, he got embarrassed day after day after day. So what was the solution? To stop going to school. We have to make sure that, whether it is that bloke, or whether it is anyone in our system, that they really do get a good education.

May Smiley, who I was talking about before, when we gave her that birth certificate, we were able to find her 15-year-old mother. That was as good as we got. We could not find any reference to the father. So for Indigenous people to be proud of their culture—I mean really proud of their culture; who they are—they have to be taught appropriately, to have the opportunities to get into the school system and to stay there, because by the time they have finished grade 12 or get into that little loop between grade 12 and the first year of university, there is no difference between them and a non-Indigenous young person in terms of job opportunities; none at all. It is where you are sort moving through. So if I knew the answer to how to keep these young people out of juvenile detention and so forth, I would probably be a very rich man right now.

Dr DOUGLAS: I agree. But I was alluding to the point that Mr Glasgow made when we were in Aurukun. Do you remember he told us about the way that, if you manage them in a particular way when they went through the courts, if you did it in a slightly better way you would get better outcomes in terms of incarceration. Is there a way of expanding that and have we allocated any money towards that?

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, I am sorry, but we are hard up against lunch and I do not want to be in between Mr Hathaway and lunch. So I going to call a break. Maybe there is opportunity during lunch to have a conversation with the commissioner. The committee will now adjourn for lunch.

Proceedings suspended from 12.33 pm to 1.30 pm

 **CHAIR:** The committee will resume its examination of the estimates of the portfolio area of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs. Minister, you have a statement to make?

Mr ELMES: Very quickly, Mr Chair, when we were talking before about employment at the six retail stores which the department operates you will be pleased to know that I was right. It was 52 when the SDS was finalised but the total now is not 52; it is 55. I just wanted to make that point.

CHAIR: Thank you. We are doing government questions now. I call the member for Mudgeeraba.

Ms BATES: Minister, I refer to the department's strategic direction set out on page 2 of the SDS and your opening remarks in which you mentioned that the government had developed a Cultural Diversity Action Plan. Can you please provide some more detail on that?

Mr ELMES: The Cultural Diversity Action Plan follows on from a framework that we put together earlier in the year. Before I go any further, I would like to congratulate Rob Cavallucci, the Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs, who really drove this. He did a lot of the consultation with various community groups not only here in Brisbane but in various parts of the state. So my thanks to Assistant Minister Cavallucci for his input into this.

The Cultural Diversity Action Plan has 170 actions, and those actions are now on the department's website for anyone who would like to have a look at them. They provide a road map for how the Queensland government is going to achieve its vision. It will contribute to fulfilling the Queensland Plan through which we will enable opportunities for all Queenslanders. As I said, there are 170 actions from most departments and a number of statutory authorities. We believe the plan is a living document and it will be updated with new actions over time so that together we can take great strides forward to achieve strong outcomes for our culturally diverse communities.

Queensland today is more culturally diverse than at any other time in its history. The Queensland government recognises this, and we are more committed than ever to support our vibrant culturally diverse communities. We recognise that people from culturally diverse backgrounds offer so much to our state, but they could offer a lot more with better employment opportunities. The action plan addresses barriers to participation by people from culturally diverse backgrounds in our community and in our economy. It will also drive improvements in the outcomes identified in the Queensland Cultural Diversity Policy, which cabinet approved in December last year. The outcomes are language independence, education participation and attainment, economic independence and participation, and community participation. I have already announced a range of initiatives which will support these outcomes which include funding under the inaugural Economic Participation Grants Program, the calling of nominations for the Queensland Cultural Diversity Awards for 2014 as well as signing MOUs with organisations and companies such as Stanbroke Pty Ltd and JBS Australia Pty Ltd to deliver employment opportunities for culturally diverse Queenslanders.

My department led the development of the action plan with my assistant minister, as I just said, and input from other state government agencies and statutory authorities. Queensland is richer culturally and stronger economically for the contribution made by migrants and refugees. The Newman government is committed to supporting the continued growth of the development of strong multicultural communities across the state. We want to be sure that all Queenslanders, no matter what their cultural background or circumstances, have the opportunity to achieve their best and to achieve economic prosperity according to their skills, their determination and their application.

I said this only last night to the member for Woodridge, who was at an Iftar dinner which was held at Parliament House last night: there are 220 different cultures that make up modern-day Queensland. There are many different languages spoken. There are 100 different religious or belief systems practised in this state today. The Queensland that I grew up in, which was very much an Anglo-Saxon enclave tucked down the bottom of Asia, has changed dramatically in the last few decades and it is going to continue to change rapidly. When refugees and newly arrived migrants arrive here, we need to help them out with English language skills. We have to transition them into our communities as best we can. If we look at the Queensland Plan we see how Queenslanders overwhelmingly want to continue to see a decentralised state. I talked before about Stanbroke. If my memory serves me correctly, we placed 50 refugees into the meatworks in the Lockyer Valley. There is the opportunity for that to expand to 500. JBS Swift in Rockhampton is another example. I think 30 people went to work in the works up there in Rockhampton.

There are opportunities all over the state. There are opportunities for this really wonderful group of people who have come to Australia often from refugee camps where they have been there for a long time or from other means—whether it is boats into Christmas island or however they have arrived. The point is that overwhelmingly they are in a situation where they cannot go home. They need to make the most of what this country and this state has to offer them. When I meet with them and when I mix with them, I see a determination on the faces of these people who really want to have a go. They really want to make a success of the opportunity that this country offers them. Everything that we are doing in cultural diversity is based around that. It is based around the economic participation for those people in our community.

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH: Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS and reference that a million dollars is being provided for cultural diversity grants. Can you please outline to the committee how these grants improve the settlement experience for new overseas arrivals and how they benefit Queensland?

Mr ELMES: Thank you very much, member for Ferny Grove. The cultural diversity grants I think bring many benefits to the state. Most importantly, they bring benefits to all of the state, because community groups and organisations from one end of Queensland to the other have the opportunity to take up the grants and showcase their community, their culture. The government's Valuing Diversity Grants Program is designed to do just that, with a focus on events which encourage the sharing of cultures rather than just street parties where people can have a good time.

When I came into this job what I saw in many cases was organisations applying for grants, receiving the grants, holding a function—which was everything that they were supposed to do—in a closed off hall so it was not showcasing. What we are making sure happens now is that those functions, those festivals, are open to the rest of the community so the rest of the community can be educated on the range of cultures that we have in the state. Signature events are one of the things we do and major events and multicultural festivals around the state which will generally have a proven track record of large attendance.

To give you an example of those events, there is Paniyiri, Italian Week, the Cairns Chinese New Year Street Festival and Global Fiesta at Ipswich. They are events that fall into that category. Culturally diverse events are focused on events which promote broader acceptance and understanding of the culture and heritage of small and emerging cultural communities. The significant events and culturally diverse events provide grants for up to \$20,000 and \$10,000 respectively. These community based events give us all a chance to share, acknowledge and respect our differences and the opportunity to learn about other cultures. They also play an important role in developing the state's cultural maturity and reinforcing the importance and benefits of a diversified community.

I am pleased to announce here today that the applications for the next round of cultural diversity grants are open now and this is for events that will be held in 2015. The applications will close on 22 August and I expect to announce the successful applicants in November of this year. Valuing diversity grants funding will support celebrations of cultural diversity and the promotion of its benefits to Queensland. The grants will help new and established events that strengthen our understanding of cultural diversity and its benefits in the wider community. Queensland is home to people from all backgrounds—a place where everyone has the opportunity to participate in our great state and the great opportunities it offers.

The Valuing Diversity Grants Program ensures Queenslanders have the opportunity to celebrate the state's wealth of cultural diversity through a variety of great events. Queensland is proudly a culturally diverse state and it is home for people from all over the globe. In the 2011 census, 20.5 per cent of Queenslanders identified as being born overseas compared to 17.9 per cent at the 2006 census, and that figure would have moved on well beyond that. Our culture and lifestyle are made all the richer by the contribution of migrants who have chosen to call Queensland home. Queensland is a culturally diverse ethnic composition, and the Newman government wants to be sure that diversity is recognised and celebrated in appropriate ways right across the state. I believe the Valuing Diversity Grants Program does just that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will move to non-government questions.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, I refer to page 7 of the Service Delivery Statement. Can you please advise what programs and/or services the department is running in partnership with the Department of Education, Training and Employment to build in-demand skills?

Mr ELMES: Whereabouts is that?

Mrs SCOTT: Page 7 of the SDS.

Mr ELMES: I am just getting the information for you. One of the departments that we partner with very well is the department of education, and we do it on both sides of the portfolio, both on the Indigenous side of things and in the culturally diverse area. I remember—it is probably 12 months ago—going to the high school at Woodridge, and you were with me. We walked into the high school there and there were people from all corners of the globe, from all various cultures. They were playing basketball. They were playing team sports together. They were studying together. And we had a good long talk to the principal of that school. One of the things that came out of that was the harmonious way that all of the students at that school got on. That comes down very much to the attitude of the principal and the teachers and the support staff at Woodridge and at schools across the state.

In terms of the syllabus, if you like, and what is taught and how it is taught, it is very similar to what I was saying before in the Indigenous sphere in that we have to make sure that the education system fits the people that are being taught by it. One of the difficulties that the state has is the waves of refugees and new people who come to the state. After the Second World War we had Greeks and Italians and Eastern Europeans. Now we have Vietnamese and overwhelmingly large numbers of people from the Middle East—Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan—through to North Africa—Eritrea, Sudan and so forth. So with all of this input, government agencies, be it education or anything else, scramble to keep up so that you have the language skills to be able to teach and so forth.

The economic action plan that we have just announced also does provide for I think it is an additional \$1 million a year to go into vocational education and training opportunities. So that is there. But, as I said, it is probably a question better asked to the education minister in terms of specific programs and so forth that Education have. But certainly they are a key partner in what we do. The emphasis, be it at Woodridge state high or the Doomadgee school in the gulf, for me, and I know for John-Paul Langbroek, is to make sure that we get kids into school so that they get an education and they have an opportunity to attain some really good things.

We are in our own way engaging with employers directly, as I said. One of the things that we need to be able to do—in the case of, say, Stanbroke and JBS Swift—is not only put workers into jobs with some further education that they have been able to pick up since they have come to Australia and come to Queensland but also, through our English language section and policy, offer support to their partners who often are sitting at home in a foreign town or city while their partner has gone off to a mining camp for two or three weeks at a time. So it becomes very, very important then that we try to improve the English language skills for those people so that they are not confined to the house with nowhere to go and not a lot to do.

As I said, we will work with Education—we do it very well and we have a very caring education minister—particularly in the English language skills area, which is where I see particularly for refugees a great deal of work being done. I am under no doubt about how much additional work needs to be done.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, we just picked up that one of the programs in Education specifically mentioned migrants and low-skilled workers with no postschool qualifications, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, plus people with disability. I guess one thing that concerned us was that it mentioned participants must not be on income support and/or accessing Australian government employment services or assistance. We thought that most of those people in those sectors would be on Commonwealth government support. So I did not know whether or not you were actually aware of that program.

Mr ELMES: Could I ask what page of the SDS you are referring to?

Mrs SCOTT: We actually linked the SDS with a VET program. We have just linked the two of them together.

Mr ELMES: It really is a question that would be best asked of the minister responsible.

Mrs SCOTT: That is fine. My next question is with reference to page 5 of the SDS. Can you advise how your department has estimated an approximate \$44 million increase in other revenue in the forward estimates? Could you flesh that out a little bit for us?

Mr ELMES: Again, I might ask Colleen Orange to come forward to explain that detail to you.

Mrs Orange: That increase in other revenue is due to the grant funding we receive in relation to the NPARIH infrastructure development work up in Far North Queensland. That funding comes from the federal government mainly through the Department of Public Works.

Mrs SCOTT: Thank you very much. Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS regarding creating connected communities and encouraging communities that are connected by a sense of belonging, trust and common goals. I have really appreciated the interest that you have taken being the stakeholder minister in our Logan: City of Choice program. I would just like to ask you if you want to comment on the particular department's goals in partnering with government agencies and companies to broker job opportunities for Aboriginal people but also to improve community participation through these connected communities. In relation to the Logan: City of Choice Two-Year Action Plan, what is the status of the government's implementation of its response and what is your department doing to facilitate the plan?

Mr ELMES: Thank you very much for the question. I can recall there were five or six I think it might have even been seven ministers who initially went down to Logan and took part in a couple of days of great community engagement. I was very pleased that the Premier decided that, given the cultural mix, if you like, of Logan—and it is probably the most culturally diverse community that we have in the state—I would pick up the leadership from the point of view of the state. I have now on a couple of occasions been down to see Mayor Pam Parker and the group that is led down there, and I have had the mayor in my office talking about this.

I have an offer to the committee to attend at least every six months. I think I am down to go again in September to attend one of the meetings. What I do is report on the actions of all of the agencies in terms of what they promised to do and provide an update to the mayor and her committee

in terms of where that is up to. I am very happy to table this document, Mr Chairman. I am sure Pam won't mind. We have a report that is going to be made available to the mayor and her committee for where we are up to for January-June 2014 and, with your permission, Mr Chairman, I will table that for the benefit of the member for Woodridge.

CHAIR: Are there any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

Mr ELMES: That will provide you with an update as to where we are at and what we are doing. Can I just say specifically in terms of Logan, for a boy who grew up on the north side of Brisbane I am spending an awful lot of time on the south side. There was once a point in time that if you came from the north side and you crossed the river you got quickly lost. That does not apply to me now I can tell you. As I go to many of the events and the festivals and meet the community groups in Logan, yes, sure, it is a highly culturally diverse community; yes, sure, unemployment is high; yes, sure, the take-home pay in many respects is less than in other parts of the state—but, boy, there is a great sense of community in Logan City.

When you go to a festival and you walk up the street—I can remember on a number of occasions walking up a street and thinking I was on a movie set because there were just so many different people dressed in so many different ways. On this particular day—I think it was a Saturday and it was market day—there were all of these vegetables and fruit and so forth for sale, many of which I had never seen before. But everyone was there and there was a real spirit of togetherness and of compassion and of belonging. More than anything else, we have to grab that in Logan. Aside from anything else that might be in that report, we really have to grab that and work on it and continue to foster the pride in the city that is there in spades.

The report is there for you to read; you have it before the mayor. Many of the things that we said we would do—increase police numbers and so forth—have all been done. There are a lot of other things that we are progressively working on. We will get there, and we will get there not only with the cooperation of the Logan City Council but also with the cooperation of the community.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs has expired.

Mr ELMES: Mr Chairman, if you would indulge me for about 60 seconds, I would really just like to thank you and your committee members for the way everyone has been able to conduct themselves today in the hearing. I think it has been a great opportunity to exchange information backwards and forwards. I have sitting beside me and behind me people from my ministerial office and from DATSIMA. You do not work in DATSIMA and you do not work in this sector unless you have a passion for what you are doing. I am really blessed that there are people who are sitting back in William Street in the office and there are people who are sitting in regional offices now watching this on their computers for whom this is really their life's work. I want to congratulate them. I want to acknowledge that particularly over this last 12 months, as we have reforecast and recast the department and made those changes, they have embraced that. I really want to thank them and I really want to thank my DG and senior staff and my ministerial staff as well.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you and the director-general and officials for your attendance. Commissioner, specifically I know you had to cut your holiday short to be here and we sure appreciate your time. The video broadcast of this session will be available on the parliament's website shortly. The deadline for answers to questions taken on notice is 5 pm on Tuesday, 22 July. I ask that ministers and officials make their way fairly quickly out of the room because we have the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and officials coming to the table. Thank you.

ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE— COMMUNITY SERVICES, CHILD SAFETY AND DISABILITY SERVICES

In Attendance

Hon. TE Davis, Minister for Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services

Ms T Smith, Assistant Minister, Child Safety

Mr T Rawlings, Chief of Staff

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Mr M Hogan, Director-General

Mr A O'Brien, Chief Finance Officer

CHAIR: I welcome the minister. These proceedings are similar to parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of parliament. Members of the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearings at the discretion of the committee. It is important that questions and answers today are relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply to parliament apply here. I draw members' attention to standing orders 112 and 115. Questions should be brief, relate to one issue and should not contain long or subjective preambles, arguments or opinions. I intend to guide proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored without imposing artificial time limits and ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members. If necessary, I will remind ministers, directors-general and CEOs and advise that their answer to the question should be finalised so that other issues can be examined. I intend to have 15-minute blocks. There will be 15 minutes of government questions and 15 minutes of non-government questions.

On behalf of the committee I welcome to the hearing the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the director-general and officials of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, our Auslan interpreters, Ms Greta Vaughan and Mr Mark Webb from Deaf Services Queensland, and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question and to bring their name plate if they come to the table to answer a question.

Under standing order 181 the minister may have advisers present to assist. Some officials and advisers are located in another room. If it is necessary for an official to come from another room to provide advice or answer to a question, I may take another question to allow time for that person to arrive and then return to the initial question.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement? The committee has resolved that ministers may make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Ms DAVIS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I would like to make an opening statement. Good afternoon to all members of the committee. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to present to the Health and Community Services Committee for the third year and to discuss many positive features of this year's budget for the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

I would like to acknowledge the Assistant Minister for Child Safety and member for Mount Ommaney, Mrs Tarnya Smith MP; Mr Michael Hogan, director-general of my department; Mr Tim Rawlings, chief of staff; Mr Arthur O'Brien, chief finance officer for my department; and other departmental staff members present here today. For the third year, I warmly welcome the Auslan interpreters who are with us here today.

Over the last two-plus years the Newman government has had a strong and effective plan to get Queensland back on track. We still have \$80 billion worth of Labor debt to repair, but we promised to sort out the mess and create a brighter future and a more prosperous state for all Queenslanders, and we are getting on with this job.

This year's budget allocation of \$2.519 billion for my department contributes to the task of making Queensland a strong state. This includes \$863 million for Child Safety Services, \$190 million for Community Services and \$1.465 billion for Disability Services. Each of these portfolio areas has a vital role in improving the wellbeing of our most vulnerable Queenslanders, and it is government's role to ensure the very best service delivery is able to be provided.

We are revitalising front-line services, cutting red tape, providing value for money and ensuring the right services are in the right locations for those who need the support the most. Ultimately, though, this is a human services portfolio and human services are about stories. I look forward to sharing with you today some real-life examples of how my department is improving the lives of Queenslanders.

This year's budget responds to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry with a substantial new investment of \$406 million over the next five years to transform the child protection and family support system as we have never seen before.

With the permission of the committee, I would like to quickly address matters that may come before the hearing today that would involve the former Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. As the committee is aware, the commission of inquiry recommended that the children's commission not be retained in its current form. Rather, it proposed a transfer of all existing functions of the commission to different agencies to complement the reforms by ensuring whole-of-government oversight arrangements are in place. These transitions occurred on 1 July and, as such, the former commissioner is not present today, as in previous years, to address any questions relating to the operations and functions of that former entity. In the absence of the former commissioner, I will endeavour to answer questions related to the former entity's operations and as they relate to my portfolio responsibilities, but I also trust that the committee will allow me to take questions on notice to enable a more considered response.

I would also like to take the opportunity to make clear that no functions of the former children's commission have ceased. As at 1 July the functions are now being carried out as follows. System advocacy and monitoring for the entire child protection system is now performed by the new Family and Child Commission under the responsibility of the Premier. I would like to add that two commissioners are to be appointed and we are very pleased that, for the first time ever, one must be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.

The Community Visitor Program and individual case advocacy functions are now the responsibility of the new Office of the Public Guardian under the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I was very pleased to be at the launch of the new Office of the Public Guardian on 1 July and thrilled to see the support that our sector partners who were there were showing for the reforms on the day.

Administration of working with children checks, or blue cards as you would know them, now sits with the Public Safety Business Agency under the responsibility of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. They undertook the criminal screening in the past and monitored these, and they will continue to do so under the new arrangements.

My department will continue to review matters of child deaths, as they always have, but we will also now be including reviews of children who have suffered serious physical injuries. We will be finalising the appointment of the new Child Death Case Review Panel, which will comprise qualified external experts who will consider the department's reviews and make recommendations as appropriate. Finally, child related complaint management functions are now the primary responsibility of relevant departmental agencies, with oversight provided by the independent ombudsman.

Staff from the former children's commission have now transitioned into these new arrangements, which are set to deliver a strengthened system. Importantly, these arrangements have been designed to contemporise and complement the reforms of the child protection system that we will be implementing over the next decade.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will move to government questions. I have the pleasure of asking the first question. I refer to page 3 of the SDS which outlines the \$406 million investment over five years to turn the child protection system around. Can you please advise the committee on how these funds will benefit Queensland families?

Ms DAVIS: Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the question. Commissioner Carmody confirmed what we believed. That is, the child protection system had been failing Queensland families and children for far too long. There were record numbers of children coming to the attention of Child Safety and

record numbers of children being taken into care and staying there longer. All the while, Queensland families were left to struggle with their issues because the support simply was not there for them. This is why we placed such a high priority on establishing the commission of inquiry within our first 100 days of coming to government.

We now have the benefit of this comprehensive inquiry behind us. We have accepted all 121 recommendations. Six were accepted in principle. This will transform the entire child protection and family support system as we have never seen before in Queensland. The government investment of \$406 million of new funding over five years will help to implement these reforms. It will focus on reducing the demands on Child Safety and strengthening families so that, wherever possible, their children can stay safely at home.

My department has been allocated approximately \$383 million of the new funding. Amongst other important reforms, this will deliver the largest investment ever made by any Queensland government in intensive family support services. There will be a gradual roll-out of 20 new intensive family support services, commencing in January next year. Like the sector, we believe that getting the right supports in early will help a family before they reach crisis point. Our services will also be supported by significant new investment in domestic and family violence services.

I note my response to question on notice No. 5 in which I outlined the new community based intake and referral services and explained how they differ from the current child safety intake process. If I could extend on this, I point out that as the new intensive family support services are rolled out across the state so will our new community based intake and referral services. As I also outlined in answer to that question on notice, there are non-statutory agencies delivering front-line services that will divert lower risk families away from the statutory system.

I think it is really important to stress that rolling out these services happened gradually, as this will enable us to prepare the sector and build its capacity to deliver the new services in a planned and coordinated way. The sad reality is that there will always be the need for child safety to be involved in protecting children who suffer or are at risk of significant harm. For children who do need the protection of the statutory system to ensure their safety, then my department will be able to fulfil its core role and responsibilities better than ever before.

There will be 77 new front-line workers employed across the state and their focus will be on improving the lives of vulnerable children. We are also going to be developing and implementing a new child protection practice framework for front-line child safety staff. This will also be used by our non-government child protection partners. This will be a contemporary framework that engages with parents to identify their strengths rather than their weaknesses and brings all parties together to work in the best interests of the child.

The government's \$406 million of new investment also delivers on our election commitment to improve outcomes for young people who are transitioning from care into adulthood. They will now have access to increased funding for post care support. For the very first time this support will be available to young people leaving care until they reach the age of 21.

Throughout all of our reform work I have made it very clear that there must be a focus on addressing the serious problem of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. I can assure the committee that there are concerted efforts taking place right across government, in collaboration with our non-government partners, as I speak on tackling this issue. There is no doubt that this will be a challenge, but it is one we are committed to addressing and will continue to place a very high priority on.

This is a government that is investing in Queensland families and is about providing children with a bright future and keeping families strong and keeping families together wherever possible. If we sat back and did nothing to change the outlook then the combination of an increasing demand on the statutory system, low investment in secondary family services along with \$80 billion in debt passed on to our next generation would only ensure that Queensland's children would not be able to realise their full potential.

CHAIR: I am going to follow on from that a little bit. As you referred to in your earlier response, I am pleased that the government is serious about providing support to young people leaving care until they reach 21. I refer to the initiative on page 3 of the SDS and ask the minister if she would outline what work has been done to progress this commitment in the past year.

Ms DAVIS: I thank you, Mr Chairman, for the question. Yes, I did mention that raising the age of support for young people who are leaving care to 21 years was an election commitment of the government. Commissioner Carmody highlighted the importance of this in his inquiry.

There is no doubt that historically Queensland has needed to lift its game when it comes to giving young people the support they need after leaving care. We are the only state or territory that has not dedicated funding or resources to after-care support up until now. Rather support has been provided to a very small number of young people after reaching 18 years of age and what the previous government called a support services case. This often simply involved the purchase of goods such as fridges and microwaves to get young people started. It certainly was not wide ranging.

I have given a bit of information in a question on notice on the initiative and how this will improve outcomes for young people. But I would like to add to that and mention how fortunate we are to have a fantastic working relationship with the CREATE foundation. They are working alongside us on this initiative.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Lucas Moore who is the state coordinator of CREATE. He often comes into my office for a chat, and usually brings a few young people along with him so we can have a bit of a conversation. They are great meetings and some of the most enlightening meetings that I have had as minister. I know the assistant minister would agree with me on that.

I recall when I was opposition spokesperson that one of my very first meetings was with Lucas. We talked about the needs of young people leaving care. We had very similar visions for how this should look. So it gives me a great deal of satisfaction to see how far the Newman government has advanced on this important issue to date. Over the past year Lucas and his team have worked closely with my department co-designing the program for increased support for young people as well as finding better ways to prepare young people who are still in care for that transition to adulthood.

All this work has been informed through round table discussions with leading academics. We have held a number of forums across the state with young people who gave their valuable insight. There were a series of forums held with government and non-government stakeholders in Brisbane, Townsville and Ipswich.

A research and literature review has also been conducted and has helped to identify the best practice being used globally in supporting young people as they transition from care. There has also been a new transition to independence program framework as well as a training package developed that will be used for departmental and non-government organisational staff to increase their skills when they are working with young people transitioning from care.

I am really pleased to inform you that our local child safety service centre staff have been thinking regionally about better ways to deliver front-line services. For example, our north coast region has developed some strategies to boost career aspirations for young people leaving care by giving them access to career guidance and engaging them in extracurricular activities and work experience. In the South Burnett they have a dedicated transitions team that have set up a Facebook page to communicate with young people who have left care. I am really excited about the work that has been done by the department in partnership with our key partners over the past year so that we can ensure that brighter future for young people when they transition.

There are very unique challenges facing young Queenslanders who leave care. We want to offer them the practical support they need before and after they leave care to make sure that their first steps into adulthood are in fact supported ones.

CHAIR: We actually heard in one of our hearings from one of those young men who strongly advocated for this. It is good to see the government following up on that. I am going to pick up on another issue mentioned briefly. I refer to page 7 of the SDS concerning the staffing of child safety. I note the commitment for an extra 77 child safety officers. Can the minister confirm what impact these roles will have on reducing case loads?

Ms DAVIS: Thank you for your question, Mr Chairman. I think we need to put a little bit of context around this. Commissioner Carmody recommended that we strive to achieve an average case load of 15 for front-line child safety officers. We accepted that recommendation and noted that case loads will start to reduce as the number of children in the statutory system reduces as a result of our reforms. Over the coming years we will start to see the full benefit of the average case load held by child safety officers reducing.

As an immediate measure, the additional 77 child safety officers will start to ease the workload on our front-line staff. For the first time in many years we will break the back of the average case load which sits at 20.5 down and reduce it to 19 across the state. That is really good news. It gives the opportunity to focus and work closely with the children and the families that need that support.

As I said, the additional roles will be on the front-line. They will be child safety officers and team leaders in child safety service centres. They will be in regional intake services. They will be front-line practice leaders. The new positions have been created to drive practice and change across the state. That will be their role. Whilst the location of the roles of the 77 staff is still being finalised, I can assure you that they will be directed to the areas where there will be the highest demand. I can also share with the committee that, of the other 49 new positions funded through the reform road map, at least 20 of those will be front-line roles.

I would like to take a moment to highlight the fantastic improvement in the retention rate of child safety officers. The department has worked very hard to be supportive of our important front-line workers. In the past they have not always felt as supported because of the case load level. It is clear, because our retention rate is looking so much better, that they are getting professional satisfaction from the work that they are doing now.

As at April 2014 the retention rate has increased by over 13½ per cent, which is fantastic. I am thrilled with the result. It shows again that our front-line workers are more committed than ever to staying with the department and getting on with the job of doing what they do best. They are excited about the reform and we are excited about that too.

CHAIR: We will move to non-government questions. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS and the delivery of the \$50 million to support the implementation of the NDIS in Queensland. Considering that the Newman government refused to sign up for an NDIS trial site, have you approached your counterparts in other states to organise a sharing of information concerning their trial sites?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. I am really happy to advise the committee that in the last month I have had the great opportunity to visit two of the trial sites in person. My director-general was able to come along to one of those. We learnt a lot from the visit. In the first instance we went to Geelong to visit the NDIA head office and the trial site there.

What was interesting about that visit for us is that we were able to see what was happening at an organisational level or administrative level and how that then looked on the ground. We had the opportunity to speak to a range of front-line workers in Geelong, including some of the managers on site. They were talking to us about the challenges that they had had in rolling out the scheme in early times. They were very excited about sharing with us their learnings to date.

What was interesting about that visit to Geelong is that those managers that we spoke to on the ground said that they were watching what we are doing in Queensland. They were very complimentary about the work that we are doing here. In fact, what they were saying was that we had a very unique opportunity here in Queensland because we were not focussing on a particular area or a particular cohort but working on how the NDIS will rollout right across the state. The challenges we have are unique because of our decentralised nature. There are unique challenges that particular communities might have.

I certainly got the feedback—and the DG might like to expand on this as well—that they think we are doing a great job. In fact, in not so many words they felt that we were doing a trial without a trial, DG. We were doing all those things that we needed to be doing in order to get things in alignment with what we had to prepare for for that transition.

Interestingly, they are also watching some of our initiatives like the Your Life Your Choice program of self-direction. They are very excited about what we are doing in that space and watching that very keenly. The NDIA is also very excited and interested in our light touch of assessment rather than having to go through the full assessment process if that does not have to happen. Interestingly, we are being watched because we are taking the lead in some of these areas. I am very excited and very pleased about where we are.

We went to the Hunter, which was different again. We had the pleasure of talking to a planner. Sam shared with us the issues that people with a disability and their supporter who normally comes along during the planning phase have. That could be their family member. It might be an advocate. It could be a support worker. They will allow anyone whom the participant or potential participant wants come along.

What he was sharing with us was that a lot of people had come into the scheme without being fully prepared about what that process might look like. So his recommendation to us—and we are doing it any way—was to start to have early conversations with people with a disability, or their families, about what that will look like for them because there is a monumental shift in the way people think about receiving their disability services. You build on the choice and control aspect which is central to the theme of the NDIS and extremely important. But, unsurprisingly, because of the way disability funding was provided in the past, people have always looked at how much funding they were going to get so that they could look for block funded arrangements to get some support. It has now gone to a much more person centred look—that is, ‘What are the participant’s goals in life?’—and to try to wrap the supports around them for them to achieve their goals.

There is much conversation to be had. We are ready to announce successful tenderers for a participant readiness initiative to have those conversations so that when people come in the front door of the NDIS they are ready for it and they are happy to go through the process. The other states and territories found early on that people were coming in and then were getting so overwhelmed by the process that they were actually stepping back out. We do not want that for Queenslanders because this is an exciting time. People are really looking forward to what the NDIS can provide them. We want them to be as prepared as possible so that when they come in to the NDIS that process is smooth for them and the NDIS achieves what they want it to achieve for them. It is very exciting that the other jurisdictions are watching what we are doing. Director-General, would you like to add something to that?

Mr Hogan: Just to extend on what the minister has indicated, we are heavily involved in the intergovernmental working groups and fora that are working on the design of the full scheme and looking at the learnings from the trial sites and indeed sharing the learnings from our own reforms in Queensland. I can also advise the committee that we have a very close working relationship with the CEO of the National Disability Insurance Agency. Indeed, they have recruited some of our own staff and we hope they come back in due course. We had the CEO up here at the Queensland Disability Conference a couple of months ago who spoke to the 550 people who attended the conference. I am in regular discussions with David Bowen and others in his senior staff, and my senior staff are on a weekly and daily basis engaging with the NDIA staff in Geelong.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, has the government determined the regions in which the NDIS is to be rolled out first in Queensland in 2016?

Ms DAVIS: That is still under negotiation with the federal government as we put together the intergovernmental agreement, and that will be determined during that process. What I am excited about though is that last week I had the opportunity to go to Townsville and announce with the CEO, David Bowen, that two NDIA staff were going to be located in Townsville to work with our NDIS readiness team so that we can further strengthen that relationship so that everything is in alignment. I think what is really important up there in Townsville—and the member for Townsville would certainly understand this—is that there are very unique challenges in North and Far North Queensland, and the NDIA were very keen to come up and understand that firsthand so we are very excited. It was great that I could join with the member for Townsville at that announcement.

Mrs SCOTT: Apart from privatising Accommodation Support and Respite Services, what exactly is the \$50 million promised in this budget being used for?

Ms DAVIS: There is an extra \$25 million that will go directly towards NDIS readiness initiatives, and I might hand over to Michael to break that down further. I would like to say something about the commentary around the Accommodation Support and Respite Services. As the member would know if she had read the heads of agreement that was signed with the former Labor federal government, clause 36 of that agreement is relevant to this, and I will read it for the benefit of the committee. It specifically states—

Following commencement of the full NDIS, the Queensland Government will no longer provide specialist disability services or basic community care services to those people whose needs are intended to be met by the NDIS. The Queensland Government will, however, continue to provide basic community care services to a range of other people to meet support needs not intended to be met by the NDIS.

So it is quite explicit in the heads of agreement that, by full rollout, the Queensland government will not be delivering disability services. Members would be aware that I made a ministerial statement back in March articulating the process of transitioning from government provided Accommodation Support and Respite Services to the non-government sector. This is to be done in a calm and

considered way over a five-year period. I can share with the committee that I take this very seriously. As well as the people with a disability and their families and carers being involved in this conversation, the staff are involved in the conversation as well.

What we have that is well underway—and I have some numbers here that I might be able to share with the committee—is that the department has been holding forums across the regions where the Accommodation Support and Respite Services are delivered, and we have had a really good response to that. For people who wanted to have the opportunity to have a private discussion with a manager and not their line manager—so someone quite separate from their day-to-day working environment—we thought that was very important. So 850 staff have come to the group briefings, and 911 staff have had one-on-one meetings. We will continue to do that because it is really important that they are part of the conversation. There is capacity in the non-government sector to deliver Accommodation Support and Respite Services.

Government investment in this space towards the non-government sector has been increasing over many years, and the government provided services have been stabilising or decreasing. There are a number of reasons for that. One reason is that they have capacity to deliver; the other reason of course—and it is why the former government continued to put direct funding to the non-government sector—is that they provide a good service at a lesser price. They still get a great service out to the people with a disability whom we are here to provide services for.

I take issue with the tone of the question. We have been totally open about this. I gave a ministerial statement. We undertook to consult with families, people with a disability and staff, and we are doing that. We will continue to talk with staff over the next five years to understand what their aspirations are. It is really important to note that we expect there will be 13,000 more jobs in the disability sector. For those staff members who are still interested in having a career in disability, with the experience that they have, I expect the non-government sector would be very eager to utilise their skills. As part of our agreement with the NDIA, we are working towards getting administrative staff—rather than front-line staff—almost first option if there is a role for them within that new federal agency. I will ask Michael to expand on those opportunities that we are providing staff now to upskill themselves in preparation for this. As I said, it is really important that we work with the staff here. That is why we have given such a long lead time for them to determine where they want to go with their career into the future. Michael, would you like to respond?

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, so you consider that there will not be any people who are so profoundly disabled that the private sector may not be able to accommodate them? You think they will be able to accommodate them, regardless of the level of disability?

Ms DAVIS: The planned way of dealing with this is to consult with the families as well. That is what is really important to us. As we gradually roll this out, we will be able to de-identify for those that may wish to come in and deliver services—the non-government organisations—so that they are aware of the supports that our clients require in order for them to be safe and to live a full and rewarding life. What we plan to do wherever possible is this. We will have proponents that indicate they can provide a service for a particular house, because as you know most of these are houses where three or four people with a disability live under one roof. We will say to the families, 'Here are the options. Who do you think might be best placed to look after your child?' Then the proponents need to be able to tick off some boxes for us to make sure they have the capacity to deliver the services.

I was in Maryborough about 18 months ago having a chat up there. There was a client with very, very high needs and with challenging behaviours. He was provided support by government but he was transitioned to the non-government service which could provide better support and he is doing terrifically well. So please be assured that part of the process is that those who are interested in providing support to our current clients will have to demonstrate that they have the skills and the staff to be able to deliver those services—absolutely.

Mr Hogan: Minister, if I can come back to the issue around what we are doing to prepare our staff for the opportunities and changes associated with our transition into the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We have already made a head start in the last financial year by initiating what we call disability destinations for our own disability staff. That has given our staff an opportunity to upgrade their skills and credentials where necessary to a certificate 3 or a certificate 4 or a diploma. We have had a fabulous response from our own staff. We have had about 529 staff sign up in our first tranche. About 450 of those are residential care officers and we will be offering another round for our disability destinations initiative in this coming year.

The fact that we have the National Disability Insurance Agency setting up here with two advanced small teams also positions us very well. Two years out from when the NDIS starts, our staff will have the chance to work with the NDIA staff, talk to them about the roles, share knowledge, share learnings, share the skills and even share the tools and templates that the NDIA are using. Our staff will have that opportunity to really work into the roles that will be available—the hundreds and hundreds of jobs that the NDIA will have eventually in Queensland—noting of course that we are going to double the number of Queenslanders who get support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme between that period from when the NDIS starts in Queensland in July 2016. So there will be 13,000 extra jobs, as the minister has said, double the investment and many, many opportunities for our staff to take up those jobs with the NDIA or in the NGO sector to set up their own businesses or to work otherwise in the disability sector.

CHAIR: Thank you. We will move to government questions and I call the member for Townsville.

Mr HATHAWAY: Thank you, Minister, and I also thank you for coming up last week for the NDIA announcement. You have touched on this but I was wondering if you could go into some more detail, and I refer to page 3 of the SDS in relation to the NDIS. Can you explain how our government is preparing Queenslanders who have a disability and their families for that transition to the NDIS?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. It was quite an amazing day up there, not only having the opportunity to meet some young people with a disability and hearing about their aspirations for the future but also having the opportunity to speak to their parents about their concerns about how to transition to the NDIS and being able to give them the reassurances that they need that this is going to be great. If we all work together, then we will get the outcome that we want. I think what is important is that the NDIS is more than an acronym. It is absolutely about helping people with a disability achieve their goals. I think that this is in fact one of the most overlooked aspects of the NDIS and I spoke just a little while ago about how that needs to change and how we need to change our focus from thinking, 'How much funding am I going to get because that will make a difference in my life?' to 'How do I want my life to look?' in terms and how we can wrap the supports around them. As I said earlier, in the past organisations were given money on behalf of individuals to provide services for them and whilst many of those organisations did talk about the goals of their clients it did not do it in the way that the NDIS is going to focus on it.

The former funding arrangements naturally led to a situation where many people with a disability and their families felt that the services that they were receiving, while really good, were not necessarily the services that they would have chosen had they had the choice. I think it is fair to say that in the past for people to get disability funding it was the squeaky wheel that got the oil, and that has changed now. The assessment tool that we use is much more equitable so that when people come in they are assessed as they would be assessed against any other person. Those who are quiet and just want to get in and get the supports for their loved one or the person with a disability coming in to get the supports that they need can just speak about their aspirations rather than making their situation seem much worse. From my perspective—and there is much talked about in the disability sector—it is about working on people's abilities, not focusing on their disabilities. I know the way that the NDIS looks in their person-centred way when people come through the system that we are going to be able to achieve that positive outlook for people rather than focusing over the negative.

Many on the committee would have heard me say in the House that the NDIS certainly is about giving people more choice and control over their specialised disability supports. However, the biggest change alongside that is being able to talk to them about their goals. I again refer to the conversation that I had with Sam the planner in New South Wales about how enormously important it is that when people come in they are ready to talk about the things that are important to them and about talking in the positive for the long-term rather than short-term goals. The really terrific thing though about the planning process is that it is quite organic. It is not, 'You're in. We have a plan. That's the plan for the rest of your life and you'll stick to it.' It is more, 'Let's start with this plan and as your circumstance changes or as you're out in the community accessing the services if you think we need to tweak them then come on back and have another conversation with us.' As everyone on the committee would know, even in general life things change which means that there might be a refocus on the things that you want to do down the track. That is what is so beautiful about the planning process through the NDIS—that is, there is flexibility there for people to change as their circumstances change. It was an exciting time to be able to talk about what we need to be doing here in Queensland in order to prepare people for that journey and we will continue to do that, as I said, through the participant readiness initiative that will commence shortly. We are very excited about being able to offer different

means for people to have an interaction, whether it is in a forum or speaking to their local QDAC representative or however they want to have that conversation to at least give some scope for people to engage in a way that is meaningful and comfortable for them.

We are progressing in the right way. We are excited about the NDIA coming to town. I can share with the committee that when we had agreed that there would be four staff from the NDIA coming here to Queensland we were delighted on the day to learn from David Bowen that the two staff who would be in the Brisbane area would be increased to three, so that gives more opportunity for learnings down here in the south-east corner. The NDIS is transformational change. We are very excited about it. We know that the sector is excited about it. We know that people with a disability are excited about it. We know that their families are excited about it. We want to be able to provide the framework and the supports that work for them to prepare to that transition and it will start to rollout in the middle of 2016.

Mr HATHAWAY: I refer again to page 3 of the SDS, but I want to change tack a little. We have the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial providing sustainable living options for adults who have a disability when they can no longer be cared for by their parents. I am just wondering if you can give us an update on how that is progressing.

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for that question because this is an initiative that is very dear to my heart. When I was shadow minister for disability I visited Bundaberg and a local advocate arranged for me to have an afternoon tea with a group of ageing parents of adult children with a disability. It was at that gathering that they shared with me that their No. 1 concern was what was going to happen to their son or daughter when they were no longer able to care for them. It became really clear to me that we had to start looking at innovative accommodation solutions to address those concerns, particularly in light of an NDIS on the horizon. Because our government has a strong plan for a bright future for people with a disability and their families and their carers, we announced of course the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial, or EPCIT, as it is known internally. EPCIT provides \$15 million over three years in one-off capital grants to provide innovative and sustainable accommodation solutions specifically to support adults with a disability who are cared for by their elderly parents. Organisations can leverage off those capital grants as an example of a really great and true partnership between government and the non-government sector to get really fantastic outcomes. That is why it is very exciting that the NDIA is also monitoring this trial because it is aware that there will be increasing demand in the future for this particular cohort. Once again, Queensland is leading the way in this regard.

EPCIT round 1 saw \$4.7 million allocated to five organisations, and that will create up to 39 places for adults with a disability. I recently announced the successful applicants under round 2, which will create 22 places in north Brisbane, South Burnett and of course Townsville. Round 3 will open in the coming months. The dollar investment by government and the NGOs is important of course but it is the personal stories that gives us the human context, and I spoke about that in my opening statement. I have a copy here of an article that appeared in the *North-West News* yesterday, and perhaps the member for Ferny Grove may have seen this particular article. The article is headed 'Mum hopes long search is over'. It is a story about a mother of a 46-year-old man who talks about her aspirations and her son's aspirations to find suitable accommodation. If I could take a moment to read a small excerpt from the article—

Many of the families have adult children in their 30s to 50s and the carers are aged over 65.

'We are concerned about when we are not here,' Mrs Doherty said.


'It's exactly what we wanted for him and we go to meetings and meet other families with the same feelings.

'It would be the perfect situation for our sons and daughters.'

That is there for the benefit of the committee. This story is actually about one of the successful projects under round 2 of EPCIT where construction is going to start in a couple of months, which is fantastic. I return to the issue of Bundaberg, where I returned in February this year when I visited the site where the Endeavour Foundation launched the plans for the block of units that will be built under round 1 of EPCIT. I cannot tell you how emotional it was to catch up at the launch with Mary, the disability advocate that I spoke of earlier who arranged that very important meeting with those quite special parents of those wonderful people with a disability. This is why we do what we do. We are about listening to people and continuing to work hard on our strong plan for that bright future for people with a disability to get them the outcomes that they want to live an included and fulfilled life.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I think we are close enough to afternoon tea, so the hearing will adjourn for that. The video broadcast of this session will be available on the parliament's website shortly. The hearing will resume at 3.30 when the committee will continue with its examination of the estimates for the portfolio area of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Proceedings suspended from 2.57 pm to 3.30 pm

 **CHAIR:** Just another housekeeping issue. We are still trying to get these microphones right. If you are not speaking could you please move your microphone to the side not up because it will echo. Just move it to the side if you are not speaking. Thank you. The Auslan interpreters are having a little bit of trouble with some of the echo so we need to try to facilitate that. Welcome back, Minister, and officials. The committee will continue its examination of the estimates for the portfolio area of Community, Child Safety and Disability Services. We will go to non-government questions. Member for Woodridge?

Mrs SCOTT: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, I am returning to a question that we discussed before the break. I am thinking of an example of a young man with an acquired brain injury who was very severely affected and although the neighbours of this house were very sympathetic they eventually had to move him because of the noise. There were, to my knowledge, four carers caring for him. There was a danger to those carers so they needed two people there all the time. He hardly slept at night. I am just wondering, with there being virtually no DSQ to fall back on, whether the private providers are going to be actually prepared to do the hard yards in cases like this?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. The matter that you raise is an important one to address and certainly at the front of my mind in terms of the work that we do in trying to provide the right wraparound services for clients. Of course, there are clients who require limited extra support to enjoy their life and then there are clients, like the one that you have described, who require more significant levels of staffing in order for that client to remain safe but also, as you indicated, to keep the staff safe. I expect your question is about transitioning to the non-government sector? Is that why you have asked that question, or more generally?

Mrs SCOTT: I guess it is around also if a private provider is finding that staff are leaving and they just cannot cope with that, whether there is something there as a back-up because you are not going to have any staff at all, are you?

Ms DAVIS: Currently the non-government sector provides over 90 per cent of the accommodation support and respite services. That is a mix of clients requiring a range of supports depending on their disability. Acquired brain injury, of course, requires very special attention because the client may require higher levels of support. I feel really confident, because we have a number of years to roll towards the NDIS, that we will start having the right frameworks around the clients so that when a non-government organisation, whether it is provided now or into the future, will have the information that they need in order to provide the appropriate supports. Certainly our providers currently have to reach a certain level of capacity as we negotiate to pop a client. As you would also know, we have to find an appropriate accommodation type for the client. Because there might be a spare place in a house does not mean that we would just put any client in there. We have to consider a range of issues, particularly around the mix of clients that are in the house and the support needs of that new client and how that might intersect with the others. So, we already have those conversations with the non-government sector when we are looking at placing clients in those supported accommodations and we will continue to do that. It is probably fair to say that under an NDIS, when there are new players coming into the market, that people will need to be more vigilant about that. Of course, under the NDIS people can engage a, and I will use the word broker to assist them with the investigation of appropriate providers and that can be part of the package. So, the beautiful thing about the NDIS and, in fact, Your Life Your Choice through our own host providers is that participants and/or their families, if they don't have the cognitive ability to make those decisions themselves, can go through an agency, if you like, to provide a suite of options before any placement is made. I think most people, when you are talking about the care of a family member, would be very vigilant about investigating and making sure that the service that they are selecting under an NDIS is appropriate to the needs of their very loved family member. Did you have anything to add to that DG?

Mr Hogan: Thank you, Minister. Indeed, we are already, in Queensland, seeing many of the non-government organisations that provide accommodation support services developing higher level capability and employing specialist clinicians and therapists. So that gives me confidence that they are already gearing up or already providing support, as the minister said, to as many if not more clients with higher needs than we currently do. The other thing I would add is that this is an issue that

is very significant for us in our discussions with other jurisdictions and the National Disability Insurance Agency. One of the things that we interrogated them about when we visited the Geelong trial site, as the minister referred to earlier, was indeed how many high needs clients have they transitioned so far, how has that gone and how has the capability of the NGOs been. Again we were assured that they were paying close attention to this. There is a very important project under the work toward the national scheme, the full scheme, around what should be the national safeguards and quality system that will give comfort and guarantee and recourse for consumers and their families and carers and advocates so that particularly people who are more vulnerable with more complex needs can be sure that they are getting the appropriate service and the appropriate protections.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, could you advise whether transfers of the DSQ staff to non-government organisations would comply with federal laws covering private non-government organisations inheriting or transferring previously public employees? Are you guaranteeing that carers will not be transferred to outsourced contractors on reduced pay or conditions? If the minister cannot guarantee that, you cannot guarantee that this process is not about reducing the pay and conditions of carers. Are they likely to be working under lesser conditions than they are now with DSQ?

Mr KRAUSE: Mr Chairman, I think that question has a number of issues with it. It is a hypothetical as well as asking for a legal opinion from the minister so I think you should rule it out of order.

CHAIR: I will allow it as far as the minister can answer it, but if the minister is unable to answer a particular section then that is the minister's prerogative, but as far as you can answer that, please go ahead.

Ms DAVIS: Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the question.

CHAIR: Do you want it clarified?

Ms DAVIS: Yes. I do not know where it appears in the SDS, but I am happy to be directed.

CHAIR: Could you just clarify your question, please?

Mrs SCOTT: Let me see if we have an SDS.

Ms DAVIS: And if it could be broken up rather than one large question.

CHAIR: One at a time, yes. Dr Douglas has some questions to ask. Do you want to come back to it?

Mrs SCOTT: Yes.

CHAIR: Why don't we go to Dr Douglas and I will come back to the question.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you, Mr Chair. I wouldn't mind just going through some of the numbers in the SDS. I will take you to page 12 initially. They are only just points of clarification. There is a \$4 million difference between the estimates and actuals in the Child Safety numbers. Can you just explain to me why that is? I have three questions on that page on this. It is a \$4 million difference.

Ms DAVIS: Could I just seek some clarification where that is appearing? I am sorry, Dr Douglas, what figure are you referring to?

Dr DOUGLAS: We have a figure here of state contribution of targeted estimates of 809,798 and we have got actual expenditure of 805,712. It is roughly \$4 million.

Ms DAVIS: Thank you, I have found it. Mr Chairman, I might just ask the CFO to explain that.

CHAIR: Sure.

Mr O'Brien: Thank you. The \$4 million difference is made up of a number of transactions that were undertaken throughout the year. Firstly we deferred some money from 2013-14 out of the budget figure of 809,000 and it then doesn't appear in the 805,000 figure. It then appears in the 2014-15 budget. So, it was related to corporate and some underspends in particularly information technology projects which we reprioritised to support the child and family reforms in 2014-15. That was a figure of \$6.895 million.

Dr DOUGLAS: It leads to the next question because there is \$4 million in Community Services. I just noted that the two figures are roughly the same.

Mr O'Brien: No, they are not related at all.

Dr DOUGLAS: They are non-related.

Mr O'Brien: They are not related at all.

Dr DOUGLAS: Can you then clarify the other one.

Mr O'Brien: If I can just finish the question.

Dr DOUGLAS: Go ahead, yes. Sorry.

Mr O'Brien: The \$4 million is a net figure so there is \$6.895 million that was deferred out of the estimated actual into next year's budget to support the child and family reforms. There was an operating deferral for Child Safety licensing costs which we expected to have the costs incurred in 2013-14. They weren't. We will be meeting those costs in 2014-15. So there was a deferral in that regard. We had some offsets in regard to some reallocation of some funding of 1.438 million. We changed some deferrals. When you budget for an estimated actual you actually have some change between when you estimate the budget and the end of the year.

Dr DOUGLAS: It is 800. I understand.

Mr O'Brien: That was about 1.356 million.

Dr DOUGLAS: I accept that.

Mr O'Brien: We had some changes in terms of our enterprise bargaining costs within the department. That was about \$563,000. And we converted some capital to meet some costs for office furniture, which wasn't able to be capitalised, and that was \$545,000.

Dr DOUGLAS: But there is no symmetry between those two?

Mr O'Brien: There is no symmetry.

Dr DOUGLAS: Whilst numerically they are symmetrical, they are different types of expenditures.

Mr O'Brien: Would you like me to go through the adjustments in the Community Services budget?

Dr DOUGLAS: Just give me a rough overview just quickly: a synopsis. Is that possible?

Mr O'Brien: Again we had adjustments because of enterprise bargaining. We transferred the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and the staff associated with those awards to the Department of Education and Training. We had some adjustments because of some changes to our Commonwealth funding, particularly relating to our homelessness program which was transferred on 1 July to the Department of Housing and Public Works. We got an additional \$2 million in the drought funding in 2013-14 which wasn't in the 2013-14 budget and we got some additional funding to extend the trial of the drink safe precincts of \$531,000. The net effect of those, including some late deferrals into 2013-14 as I explained before, the change between the April figure and the June figure in 2013-14, there was another \$7.4 million which was deferred out of 12-13 into 13-14 that doesn't appear in the budget but does appear in the estimated actual. So the net effect of that is the \$3.719 million change you see there.

Dr DOUGLAS: Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate that. I have one other question relating to this while you are there, through the chair.

CHAIR: Through the minister, yes.

Dr DOUGLAS: Minister, on page 13 there is a \$15 million difference in there and there are some new measures there. Could you clarify that for me? There is a \$15 million difference. It seems like a lot, that is all, with the target estimates and there are new measures introduced above. Is there an explanation?

Ms DAVIS: Are you talking about the state contribution line?

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, the state.

Ms DAVIS: Again, Mr Chairman, that might be something best answered by the CFO.

CHAIR: Sure.

Mr O'Brien: It is a \$15 million change in a \$1 billion budget.

Dr DOUGLAS: I realise that and I am sorry.

Mr O'Brien: Again, the biggest change is the change in the deferrals between 2012-13 and 2013-14 of \$7.75 million. We deferred some money, Commonwealth funding, in the homelessness program in 2013-14 into 2013-14, which was not in the budget, to continue to support some regional staff delivering services to kids in care or kids transitioning from care, which is one of the initiatives under the homelessness program. That was \$1.5 million.

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes?

Mr O'Brien: Perhaps the largest change is the realignment of the funding to do with the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial, which was about aligning the payments to the milestones that were to be delivered under the first phase of that program. \$6.713 million has been re-cash flowed over the next two years to meet the milestone payments of the organisations that have been approved now under the first tranche and the second tranche and that has been offset by about a \$1 million increase for enterprise bargaining.

Dr DOUGLAS: While we are at it, I have one more question, Minister. It is on page 16. It is a much smaller budget, but there is a \$17.5 million difference for capital expenditure, estimated and actuals. I acknowledge the fact of the difference in the size of the budgets previously. Could you clarify that for me? Total capital purchase, the adjusted budget was—

Ms DAVIS: I might hand across to Arthur, again, if that is okay, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR: Absolutely.

Mr O'Brien: This question was answered on a question on notice.

Dr DOUGLAS: Was it?

Mr O'Brien: Yes.

Dr DOUGLAS: Okay. I must have missed it, I am sorry.

Mr O'Brien: It is No. 17.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you.

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, we will just move back to the member for Woodridge. This will be the last question on this group.

Mrs SCOTT: On page 9 of the SDS, transitioning existing clients with ongoing need to individualised services in preparation for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Ms DAVIS: Is this about funding?

CHAIR: We will just get the question restated.

Mrs SCOTT: Can the minister advise whether transfers of DSQ staff to non-government organisations would comply with the federal laws covering private non-government organisations inheriting or transferring previously public employees?

CHAIR: Can we deal with that question first and then I will allow you follow-ups to cover the others.

Mrs SCOTT: Yes.

Ms DAVIS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. If we were transferring staff, their conditions would follow them. I guess I am assuming that this is—

Mr HATHAWAY: Chair, I have a point of order. I am just seeking your guidance, Chair, in accordance with standing order 115(c). To me it sounds like the honourable member is asking for a legal opinion on industrial relations law not specifically related to the minister's portfolio.

CHAIR: I will consider that. Let me understand: please just correct me if I am wrong, but I think the question is that if government staff members transfer to non-government employers, they go from government employee to non-government employee, will they go to lesser pay or lesser conditions; is that accurate?

Mrs SCOTT: Yes.

CHAIR: That is the question.

Ms DAVIS: I will get the technicalities handled by the director-general. The bottom line is that—I am actually not quite sure where the member is attempting to go.

CHAIR: Minister, as far as possible, all you can do really is answer based on current process and procedure.

Ms DAVIS: Currently, if we were to transfer a business, then the conditions would apply. We have a legal obligation to do that. I suspect that the question is around accommodation support and respite services. I can say again, to the member for Woodridge, that this is over a five-year period where people can make decisions about where they would like to be over the next five years. We are not forcing people to transition or not transition. We are giving them five years to consider what they

would like to do in that space and we will continue to have conversations with them about their aspirations. I would agree with the member for Townsville that this is really outside of, certainly, the SDS. The member is asking me to have an opinion on federal law that is not mine.

Mrs SCOTT: Basically, there will be a cessation of working for a government entity and then a reapplication of work in a private—

Mr HATHAWAY: Point of order, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: Member for Townsville, I have it. The issue we have here is that there may be a negotiation that will occur in the future and whatever that is I am sure it has to be done legally. I am not trying to answer for the minister. I am just saying that there is an essence of—

Mrs SCOTT: Because there is a Fair Work Act.

CHAIR: There is an essence of hypothetical here, because the assumption must be that the law would be followed. Do you have further follow-up questions?

Ms DAVIS: The other thing that I think is really important, Mr Chairman, is that, whilst I agree it is hypothetical, awards change. What the award looks like today federally, they may not look that way in the future. I am not pre-empting or am privy to any change to that, but I am just saying to offer an opinion for five years' time when things could change I think is just not appropriate. But certainly we would have to abide by those federal—

Mrs SCOTT: By the laws.

Ms DAVIS: Yes, absolutely.

CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have anything further? No, we are going to go to government questions. We are over time here. We will move to government questions and I call the member for Beaudesert.

Mr KRAUSE: Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS in relation to the social and human services investment blueprint. How will this blueprint make it easier for the social and human services sector to do with business with the government and will it produce better outcomes for vulnerable Queenslanders?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. As the member would know, this government is all about our social services system being the very best in Australia. The Premier talks about it often and I certainly concur with him. We work every day to make sure that we can achieve that goal. To realise the vision and as part of our strong plan for a brighter future, I released the social and human services investment blueprint in June this year. I commend members to have a look at that blueprint. The five-year plan revitalises front-line services by setting out very clearly how my department will invest in social and human services so that vulnerable Queenslanders can get access to the right services at the right place and at the right time.

My department historically allocated around \$1.5 billion each year to organisations across the state to deliver vital front-line services in each of my portfolio areas, but despite that significant investment the system was not working as well as it possibly could. Indeed, when we first came into government we knew a number of things had to change. This was confirmed by the Commission of Audit which found that business as usual was simply not an option. What we found on coming into government was that, under the former Labor regime, red tape and complicated bureaucratic processes made it unnecessarily difficult for NGOs to do business with government. There was little or no mapping of services across the state. Existing programs were not being routinely reviewed and evaluated before new programs were being implemented. The former government was working in silos. In fact, there were even silos within agencies, including my own. In saying that, our staff and the sector were doing lots of really good work and they were hamstrung, however, by process and red tape. This ultimately stifled innovation. It is the good work that we want to build on and over the past two years we absolutely have seen improvements. In my portfolio area alone, we have a reform program to revitalise front-line services that touches each arm of the business, that is, Communities, Child Safety, and Disability Services.

The social and human services blueprint brings these reforms together to help us achieve our vision of the best social services in Australia so that families and vulnerable Queenslanders can be at the very centre of the reforms that we undertake. Through the blueprint, we have established very clear criteria about measuring the success of our investment. The blueprint speaks to six priorities that will enable government to empower our partners to make a positive impact for Queenslanders who, through the blueprint, will be more connected and, importantly, more resilient. The six areas that

are talked about in the blueprint are about more innovative solutions that we are focusing on customer service and results, having smarter investment, simpler processes, stronger partnerships, which I am sure you will agree is really important and, of course, having a dynamic workforce.

The blueprint has already commenced implementation and some of the changes are already beginning to take effect at the service delivery level. By outlining what our priorities are for change and what our measures of success are, organisations can also more easily track their own service delivery progress and achievement. That has not always been done in the past, either. By working in partnership with the government and other service providers, organisations can deliver better outcomes by sharing their ideas and resources. We are making the future of government investment more responsive than ever before, so that when there is change in demand or where services do not get the outcomes that we need we can adjust our investment accordingly.

As I have said, this government has a strong plan to see the social services sector take on new drive in this state and to strengthen, ultimately, the economic and social contributions that the industry makes here in Queensland. The reforms will revitalise front-line services for families so that our communities can be the very best that they can be. Ultimately, that is what the blueprint is all about. It is about making it better and easier for families, communities and people with a disability who need to access services invested in by the government.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Beaudesert?

Mr KRAUSE: Thank you, Minister. I now refer you to page 10 of the SDS. Could you please expand on how the government has reduced red tape for local community groups?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. As I alluded to in my last answer, what we inherited from the former Labor government in terms of its funding approach I think simply could be put as a monumental mess. They did not know; or if they did know, they did not seem to care terribly much what benefits or not they were getting in spending the public's money on vital community services. There were a myriad of funding programs existing, often ad hoc in nature, and there had been, as I said, no real service mapping done across the state, which of course resulted in gaps in some areas and duplication in others. The former government did not seem to like to review their funding programs or even clearly outline their expectations for the services being provided to vulnerable Queenslanders, which left service providers with no clear direction, undervalued expertise and, importantly, untapped potential.

Our government's approach could not be any more different to that, and a key part of our red tape reduction program has been the introduction of the community services red tape reduction amendment act which, as the member mentioned, was passed in parliament earlier this year and it commenced as of 1 July. The most significant benefit these changes will deliver to the social and human services sector a saving of up to \$2.6 million a year, and the member would understand that we would rather see that \$2.6 million directed at front-line services. Less red tape also improves strategic planning and innovation, which in turn leads to a more sustainable social services sector which can be focusing on the future.

Around \$1.5 billion in funding is allocated, as I said earlier, per year to community organisations to deliver those vital social and human services across the state. It is a significant amount of money, and it needs proper management and it needs diligence in administering these funds. So I am pleased that the legislative changes make it easier for the government to administer funding, because the Community Services Act is now the only piece of funding legislation that applies—which, I might add, will also make the application of funding more consistent. Importantly, the legislation has preserved and improved safeguards for vulnerable clients. That is very, very important. What it also means is that we now have a clearer set of service standards, with four quality frameworks streamlined to one and 42 service standards now streamlined to six. All declared funding administered by my department was recently published on my website as required by the Community Services Act. Additionally, as I outlined to the House in March, I will make a statement about this declaration during the next parliamentary sitting.

I might just hand over now to the Director-General to outline how these changes work practically on the ground for the department. I think it is really important to re-emphasise that these changes support the priorities outlined in the blueprint which I mentioned earlier and contribute to our government's strong plan for a very bright future.

Mr Hogan: Thank you, Minister. I am very happy to quickly provide some details as to the progress being made to simplify processes and reduce red tape in order to get better value from these important public resources.

In addition to the legislation the Minister mentioned, from 1 July we are introducing a new standard suite of contracts. For the first time even within our own department we will be using the same contract and other departments will also be using the same contract if they fund the same organisations. That will substantially reduce the number of contracts and substantially reduce the size of the contracts. With our largest funder alone we currently have 99 contracts, and progressively we will get that down to one contract with a set of funding schedules with that organisation, reducing the number of 6,300 pages by about 90 per cent.

As the Minister said, we have implemented the Human Services Quality Framework, and now 190 organisations have transitioned to the new streamlined and integrated human services quality system. Thirteen child safety providers have so far transitioned to a single organisational licence rather than holding the 41 separate outlet and service type licences they previously required. Twenty-one organisations have commenced a trial of performance based acquittals to reduce compliance costs. Six of our organisations have agreed to participate in a trial of an account management model, where they get a single point of contact with the agency when they get funding from multiple streams.

As the Minister indicated, we are streamlining our programs and initiatives, and in this year we will reduce that from over 90 down to three programs with nine specifications. Furthermore, we asked QCOSS last year to survey its members to identify further ideas and opportunities to reduce red tape, and that will inform our next suite of initiatives. These are being undertaken in addition to a range of other internal business processes changes that we are making to streamline our processes, support our staff and enable innovation. I would just indicate that we are well on our way to achieving the agency's 2018 red tape reduction target of 23 per cent set by the Office of Best Practice Regulation.

CHAIR: Thank you. We are going to move to non-government questions. Dr Douglas.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you. Minister, this is a difficult question and I will just go through it. It is on page 12. We have been there before. It is a numbers thing. Now, it is a very critical part of the whole document. I see a disconnect in the presented data of the SDS in service standards between the rate of the substantiated harm per 1,000 with a decline in the actuals even though it is only one year's data—I admit that; I have looked at the previous data in the previous reports—but a higher proportion on care and protection orders—they had one to two placements—34 to 38 per cent. In other words, these are people that are exiting. Those two variables should be independent of one another: but are they?

I would then point you to the fact that there is a higher proportion in the budget allocation for 2014-15 of \$53 million. That tells me that the numbers would either suggest that the exiting will slow, which is either due to the fact that the Aboriginal children in care as a percentage is rising, which is alluded to on page 13—and numerically that is supported by the other data—or the numbers are wrong, or the department is offering greater services or scrutiny for these children. Now, I have tried to go and find out whether that is the case. One of those options is the only option that could explain that. Could you give me an answer on those points? Do you want me to go through it again?

Ms DAVIS: It would be handy to split it up. If I could say, Mr Chairman, that the Director-General would have a better understanding of how some of that performance data was reached, so with the indulgence—

CHAIR: Absolutely. Let's go this way: Director-General, as best you can, answer what you know and then we will clarify with Dr Douglas what you are unsure of.

Mr Hogan: Thank you, Mr Chair. Indeed I am happy to take the member through the performance measures identified in the SDS. The first one, the rate of substantiated harm per 1,000 children, we do see that starting to slow down in this financial year. It will take time, as the Minister indicated earlier, for the full effect of the investment in the change in the child protection system to have a bigger effect on the substantiation rate. That will take time to come down. Indeed, Commissioner Carmody targeted five years, and so this is a step toward the overall reduction.

The third performance measure service standard that the member refers to is the proportion of children on a care and protection order exiting care. We want to increase the number of children who are in out-of-home care having a stable long-term placement rather than having multiple placements. So again I want to acknowledge the excellent work of our child safety staff working very hard with foster carers to increase the number of children who are on long-term guardianship orders, which is more likely to be a stable long-term placement. So we were pleased with the actual result in 2013-14.

Now, again with the introduction of a new practice framework over this year and beyond and the introduction of the new legislative changes, we are confident we will do better, but we did not want to overpromise the proportion. Given the number of kids who are already in care and who have had multiple placements, we did not want to overpromise the proportion of them who had actually had fewer than three placements. So we are confident we are going in the right direction. It is a better result over the last 12 months. I am very confident we will get there again in 2014-15, and I hope we can do better.

In relation to the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed with kin, that is a new measure. It is a measure that goes to the Minister's comments about the very significant focus on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. Indeed as we answered on a question on notice, we set the target for 2014-15—

Dr DOUGLAS: We have been through those.

Mr Hogan:—at 55 per cent before we received the end of March data.

Dr DOUGLAS: Right. So you reset the data?

Mr Hogan: No, no. We actually set a target for 2014-15 before we had received the data for the March quarter for 2013-14. Actually that indicated, I think as it says in the answer to the question on notice—

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, I saw that.

Mr Hogan:—that we have actually already have 55.5 per cent and that has come up from 52.5 per cent.

Dr DOUGLAS: You have sort of covered on the following page that it is rising anyway, but you did not name the percentage difference.

Mr Hogan: So it has come up from 52.5 per cent. The other good indicator is that over the last two years we have increased the proportion of all children in kinship care—I do not have the breakdown for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids—but we have increased the proportion of all children in kinship care from 35 to 40 per cent. So again the indicators are going in the right direction, but it will take some more time to reach the targets that Commissioner Carmody has set over the next five years.

Dr DOUGLAS: But then there is the budget allocation of the target for the forthcoming year where there is a \$53 million increase. If you look at the numbers and then you do the maths, it does not add up. Are you doing something more for them or—

Mr Hogan: Member, I am not sure if you were here when the Minister outlined that one of our key planks of the government's response to Carmody was the initial allocation of \$6.5 million for the extra 77 child safety front-line officers. Because one of the very strong commitments in the government's response is to reduce the case loads of our child safety staff over time and to improve the quality of their work, their ability to work, their time to work with families and children, a very significant component of that funding over the next 12 months goes to reducing case loads and improving quality.

As the Minister also outlined, a very significant component of the extra resources that you have mentioned here actually goes toward the implementation of the 20 community based intake and referral services and extra family intervention services over the next couple of years. So those new investments will take time to get out there. It will build capability and hopefully actually keep kids coming out of the system, and we will see better results at the end as those children work their way through the child protection system.

Dr DOUGLAS: So it is that, plus you believe the slowing of the exiting as well; those two figures together. It is not include a factor of that to allow for what has just happened, this variance that occurred. Have you allowed in the budget an extra factor because of this variance as well? That is what saying. Are there three factors that explain the \$53 million? Do you understand? The three factors would be: the variance that you saw when you had to vary the numbers because of the March numbers; the extra amount would be what the Minister—I am sorry I was not able to be here earlier on—and the extra amount that has come out of the Carmody inquiry; and then there is also the slowed exiting number anyway. So those three things together explain that number?

Mr Hogan: That is correct in part. These measures are a selection of the measures that go in particular to the system targets that Commissioner Carmody recommended be used to track the progress of the system. They do not always go to the quality of the outcomes for children.

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, I do understand that.

Mr Hogan: So I do want to make the point that a significant component of the extra investment by the government has been actually improving the quality of the outcomes for children and families.

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, I take that on board. Thank you. I am sorry I had to tease that out. It is not explained.

Mr Hogan: I appreciate that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Douglas. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs SCOTT: Thank you, Mr Chair. On page 14 of the SDS—this is to do with the cancellation by the federal government of the national partnership agreement on concessions for pensioners. Will the minister please advise when it was that she became aware of the Newman government's decision to pass on the federal government's cuts to pensioner concessions? How is it that this Newman government knew about these concession cuts for three weeks before it brought down the 2014-15 budget and were unable to cover the gap, but within 36 hours it brought down their own budget—

Ms BATES: I rise to a point of order. Mr Chair, I fail to understand what the question has to do with the state government budget. It is unlikely that the minister would be involved in the discussions regarding the federal budget. I think that the question needs to be directed to what the minister actually—

CHAIR: Can I seek clarification? Minister, I am not sure where this fits in your portfolio. Are you able to clarify that?

Ms DAVIS: All I can say is that I am delighted that Queensland seniors and pensioners will continue to receive the support that they need. The question other than that is really one for the Treasurer I would have thought.

CHAIR: I would tend to think that that would be the case, that it is actually a question for the Treasurer. I do not understand where it sits within the portfolio.

Mrs SCOTT: I would have thought that the concessions were very much part of the minister's budget and that we have been able to suddenly find the funding to be able to—

Ms BATES: I rise to a point of order.

Mrs SCOTT: Where is the \$50 million coming from?

Ms BATES: The question is a hypothetical. It is assuming that the minister has any idea what the member for Woodridge is even referring to in the first place. I ask that you rule it out of order under 115B.

CHAIR: I am tending to—

Mrs SCOTT: Could I explain it? Maybe this might clarify. As to where the \$50 million will be coming from, is it out of the department or is it additional money? We have taken this question out of the concessions that the—

Ms DAVIS: We administer the grants. It is a question for the Treasurer. It is not part of the day-to-day running of our operations. We simply administer the grants.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I am going to rule it out of order, member, simply because of the answer that the minister has just provided. Where the money comes from is up to the Treasurer, and the minister will provide that. Have you got a further question?

Mrs SCOTT: Yes. Could the minister please explain the \$8.8 million underspend in the electricity rebate scheme—and this is page 10 of the Concessions Statement—between the 2013-14 budget and the 2013-14 estimated amount?

CHAIR: Sorry—

Mr HATHAWAY: What page?

CHAIR: Is that in the Concessions Statement? Is that where it has come from?

Mrs SCOTT: It is. So the whole Concessions Statement is out of order?

CHAIR: It is part of the budget. Just a second, I am going to seek some clarification. Minister, the question is coming as a consequence of the Concessions Statement. There is a separate book that is the Concessions Statement.

Ms DAVIS: I have the book here. I am on page 10. I have two figures there, the 2013-14 figure of \$128 million and the 2014-15 figure of \$149.2 million.

CHAIR: Member, are you able to clarify?

Mrs SCOTT: We are looking at the underspend of \$8.8 million between the 2013-14 budget and what had been estimated.

CHAIR: As the single figure?

Mrs SCOTT: Yes.

CHAIR: I am sorry, I am at a disadvantage. I do not have the Concessions Statement with me.

Ms DAVIS: I am not quite sure where the member wants to take the question. As I said, I have page 10 of the Concessions Statement. I have two figures on here and it is an increased figure. The member would understand that electricity concessions are paid to reimburse based on actual consumer demand and utility costs. It is up and down. We reimburse based on what people have asked to have reimbursed.

Mrs SCOTT: The thought was that the electricity amount continues to rise—

Ms DAVIS: But that has got nothing to do with—

CHAIR: Member for Woodridge, I just read this now and I do not see any reference here to \$8 million. I think the minister has actually answered quite well. I am struggling to understand beyond that. Do you have another question?

Mrs SCOTT: If I go to any concessions, will that be ruled out?

CHAIR: As long as the concession relates to the minister it is quite legitimate. I just cannot see where in there it talks about a specific figure. There is an increase, not a decrease, in the allocation amount. That is what the minister just stated. That is why I asked that, unless you can explain differently, you please move on to the next question.

Mrs SCOTT: The next one that I have is regarding the medical cooling and heating electricity concessions scheme budget, which has decreased from \$1.8 million for the financial year to \$1.1 million. I guess we have been looking at the electricity prices always increasing. The Concessions Statement going through here—and I do not think the \$50 million is going to particularly cover all of the concessions. There will still be some loss for the pensioners in this next financial year; is that correct?

Ms DAVIS: All I can offer is what I offered in my last answer. I am on page 12 of the Concessions Statement. The estimated actual in 2013-14 is \$0.9 million and in 2014-15 it is \$1.1 million. But, again, we reimburse electricity companies based on the actuals.

CHAIR: Again, I am sorry, member for Woodridge, I am really struggling to understand. Based on what we can see, there is actually an increase, not a decrease.

Dr DOUGLAS: Minister, I refer to page 18. This is an issue of grants and subsidies, albeit the amounts are large. There is a \$9 million difference. I do not think it is covered in the questions on notice. There is a \$9 million difference between the actuals and the adjusted budget amounts. Can you just clarify what that is about? It is on page 18 of the SDS, at the top of the page, reclassification of grants. It could be due to something which is not quite clarified. It does say it is an adjusted budget. I have already spoken to the Treasurer today about this issue because it is almost impossible to read these adjusted accounts under accruals. If you do not have the cash book, you cannot reconstruct the account, and I do that; I reconstruct the whole account. The Under Treasurer tells me you can do it without a cash book. That would be the first I have ever heard of it. Could you explain that for me?

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, we need to get the question, please, because this is not Treasury.

Dr DOUGLAS: There is a \$9 million difference in the grants between the adjusted budget and the actuals. Can you explain what it is?

Ms DAVIS: I thank you for the question. I am not sure whether in part question on notice No. 18 answers your question.

Dr DOUGLAS: I just looked at that.

Ms DAVIS: If you seek further clarification on that, I am very happy to—

Dr DOUGLAS: You can take it on notice if you want to.

Ms DAVIS: I think the Chief Financial Officer might be able to assist you in this regard.

Dr DOUGLAS: There are some reasons here.

CHAIR: Member for Gaven, I have just had a look at that question on notice No. 18.

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes, I have seen it.

CHAIR: I think it addresses that particular issue.

Dr DOUGLAS: All right.

Mr O'Brien: I am happy to elaborate.

CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, would you please do so.

Mr O'Brien: During 2013-14 the Queensland Treasury and the Queensland government issued a distinction between grants and service procurement payment guidelines. We went through all our existing grants programs and we looked at the nature of those programs and whether they were, indeed, grants under the new definition that was proposed in those guidelines or they were, in fact, service procurement payments under those guidelines or, in fact, they were other supplies and services which again was defined under those guidelines. The key for us was: is the payment in support of our clients about meeting one of the fundamental objectives of the department? If it was, then the payment is in the nature of a service procurement. We are procuring services on behalf of our clients. If the payment did not support one of our objectives, for example it was for research which was not about supporting a client but just generally increasing the body of research around community services, then that remained a grant. If it was about supporting a peak body, it was classified then as other supplies and services.

On page 18 what we have tried to do is explain how the \$1.7 billion in grants that was budgeted in 2013-14 has become classified under those three new areas. The difference is talked about in the question on notice, but largely it is because of deferrals of underspent grants that are commitments in 2014-15.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you for that clarification. So it is a reclassification system of those grants? So the funds are then targeted in some way and they are numerically allocated—they are given some sort of an—

Mr O'Brien: It is an accounting classification. So the non-government organisation in receipt of those funds would not see any difference.

CHAIR: We will move to government questions. I call the member for Mudgeeraba.

Ms BATES: I refer to page 12 of the SDS, specifically the performance data for child safety, which shows an alarming rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on protective orders, an issue that was highlighted in Commissioner Carmody's report. Can the minister detail what initiatives are outlined in the reform that begin to address the serious problem of this overrepresentation?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. We did in part answer that in a question on notice which outlined the funding being directed to assist Indigenous communities. As has been discussed during this committee hearing, addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system absolutely is a top priority for this government in our child protection reform agenda. We are funding a number of community controlled organisations which deliver family support and recognised entity services and we are also funding \$8 million into establishing nine safe houses so that children can stay safely in their communities wherever possible. There are a number of other initiatives taking place. One of these is new funding to improve the quality of decision making for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We will be increasing the number of practical support services for families, and my colleague Minister Elmes is working hard with the Premier to ensure a whole-of-government approach is taken through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Reform Project. The project will look at improving outcomes specifically in discrete communities. It will improve service availability. It will propose new models of front-line service delivery and identify where we can find efficiencies and ways to improve access for Indigenous families.

My department is responsible as part of the reform for employing 10 Aboriginal and Torres State Islander practice leaders. These will be senior positions that sit in the regions whose job it will be to drive cultural leadership in this space in the department. It is a \$1.4 million investment. I am certainly looking forward to having these positions filled in the very near future because it is an essential role as part of getting the reforms underway. We are also realigning around \$750,000 per annum of existing funding to implement the lower gulf family intervention support strategy in the North Queensland region. This involves the communities of Mornington Island and Doomadgee as the focus to aligning a more responsive model to those particular areas.

Over the next three years we will also be funding a trial of the culturally responsive Aboriginal family decision-making model for family group meetings. In the Indigenous community, family group meetings are very core to their culture. We are certainly wanting to ensure that that continues as we start to roll out the reforms. But it is also a recommendation of the commission and it is also about ensuring that practice better addresses the needs and the issues of Indigenous families involved with child safety.

To quickly touch on some other initiatives we will be implementing, there will be trials of new models in assessing Indigenous kinship carers. In the last couple of questions we talked about kinship care. Indigenous families are very quick, Dr Douglas, to pop their hands up as kinship carers. What is important is that we work with those families to ensure they have the capacity to look after children, particularly to keep them in the community or around family wherever possible.

We are also working with recognised entities. Commissioner Carmody in his report suggested that we really need to be doing more in that space. We believe we can do more, and we will be reviewing and resourcing their training needs as part of our reforms. So there is much happening in that area. We know that working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families should be a priority. The statistics around the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system should be cause for alarm, but what we do know is that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, wherever they have capacity, want to keep their young people at home and we want to work with them to enable that. That is what this government is all about: being enablers for people to live their lives in the way that they want to.

Ms BATES: Minister, I refer to page 12 of the SDS which provides some performance data for Child Safety. I ask the minister if she would elaborate on the performance of Child Safety over the past year, particularly as it relates to children coming to the attention of her department.

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. I think it is really important to share with the committee and to run through with the committee some of the key performance trends. I have some data for the period 31 March 2013 through to 31 March this year. What the data is telling us during that period is that the demand on Child Safety continues to grow. This is as a result of intakes increasing. It is about 4.3 per cent over that period. I think it is really important to clarify that an intake is a report of harm or risk of harm to a child. The increase is no surprise—disappointing but no surprise—as it has been spiralling upwards for the past decade and hence the reason for our reform.

The growth in intakes being received has been largely driven by increasing numbers of child concern reports being recorded. As the member might know, around 80 per cent of reports of harm do not reach the threshold to trigger a Child Safety statutory response. There has been some shift in the number of notifications being raised by Child Safety. In fact, the numbers have decreased by 4.8 per cent in the period. I am happy to report that investigations into concerns were commenced and completed in a more timely manner than had occurred in the past. Of particular note is that there has also been a 4.1 per cent decrease in substantiations in notifications and a 9.4 per cent decrease in the number of children admitted to out-of-home care.

In terms of improvements to the wellbeing of children in the system, I can report that nearly 38 per cent of children living away from home were placed with kin as at 31 March this year, which is terrific. It is a tremendous improvement. It is the highest that has ever been recorded in terms of the proportion of children placed with a family member or a person of significance in their life. I think it demonstrates the really great work and the commitment of our child safety staff who are really placing a much higher level of importance in terms of identifying kinship placements for children in care and working with those families to keep the children safe and in a stable placement for as long as possible.

These are really early signs that things are headed in the right direction; that there are improvements being made. We know there is still a long way to go. Over the next few years our data will be monitored very closely because this is significant reform. This is a 10-year road map of reform in child protection. We want to be watching the data. We want to be making sure that we are going in the right direction; that the investment matches what needs to be done in order to keep kids safe at home wherever possible but certainly to be supporting families to build capacity in families. Because I think it is fair to say when you can build capacity in families then you build capacity in community. That is what we are ultimately about: Queensland being the safest place to raise a child, to have communities that are vibrant and families that are connected. If we can work with families earlier and keep children at home where it is safe to do so, then that is where our efforts should go.

Ms BATES: Minister, I refer to page 8 of the SDS outlining service performances of Child Safety. Minister, I am sure that under the government's reforms foster carers will continue to have a significant role, and I ask the minister if she could elaborate on improvements that have already been made in Child Safety since coming into government.

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. You are absolutely right. The significance of foster and kinship carers could not be underestimated. We would not have a child protection system that wraps love and support around children in the home if we did not have wonderful foster and kinship carers prepared to put their hands up and look after our young Queenslanders if they cannot remain at home safely with their family.

One thing that we did as a government was to pledge our support of foster and kinship carers. One of the first things that I asked my department to do was to start to listen to foster carers, to make it easier to become a carer, and to do better in supporting and valuing the ones already in the system. As a result, we have continued to see increasing numbers of carers being approved and we have improved the training and support that they receive.

Another area that required attention, and it was certainly outlined in many letters that I have received from foster carers, was the rather punitive matters of concern process. I asked my department to work with Foster Care Queensland to see if there was a better way of dealing with concerns about carers when it appeared that they may not have met their legislative requirements or legislative standards. There is now a new process and a policy in place for managing placement concerns and we call it standards of care.

Legislated standards of care have not changed, though, nor has the requirement for the department and foster and kinship carers services to respond to issues when they are raised. The main difference is that our child safety staff identify issues earlier and start to work with the carers and the services to build stronger supports around carer families. Our approach is far less adversarial, and the feedback I have received from Foster Care Queensland has been extremely positive. In fact, I would say that this would have contributed in part to the increasing numbers of carers coming into the system.

The committee might be interested in knowing that in May this year we transitioned the management of the foster care recruitment line to Foster Care Queensland because this made sense to do so. Foster Care Queensland have been supporting carers for over 38 years in Queensland, and having them as the first point of contact for a prospective carer enables their expert advice to be given from the get-go. I am really pleased that this is working so very well.

On another note, in March this year we extended the carer business discount scheme to include foster and kinship carers for the first time so now they have access to discounts for goods and services at more than 4½ thousand businesses across the state.

I spoke earlier about our commitment to preparing young people for their transition to adulthood. As a result, the number of young people in care with a case plan also continues to increase. I am really pleased to report that the quality of these case plans have also improved, and young people are actively participating in the planning process. Sadly, this had not been the case in the past. Either plans were being done at the very last minute or we found that young people were transitioning out of care without a plan at all. That makes it very difficult for a young person as they embark on a new life outside of the statutory system if there is not some guidance for them so that they can enjoy their adulthood and feel protected, safe and empowered on their new journey.

Departmental officers are also working more collaboratively with NGOs and other government agencies and more particularly in the community to link our young people into the supports they need once they have transitioned out of care. We are absolutely committed to supporting foster and kinship carers, we are absolutely committed to supporting families to keep their children safe at home, and we are absolutely committed to supporting young people when they start transitioning out of state care. We are working very hard. We did not sit on our hands while the commission of inquiry was being undertaken. We were already looking at ways to improve the system. With the extra investment of \$406 million over five years to invest in those family services into the secondary end, we absolutely believe that can build on the work we have already done and get really terrific outcomes for these young people, which is what it is all about.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will move to non-government questions.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to page 33 of the SDS regarding child deaths. Minister, I understand that with the closure of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian a child death register will now be maintained by the newly established Queensland Family and Child Commission

which will also undertake research analysis and reporting on child deaths in Queensland. Can you advise if the CCYP staff previously responsible for undertaking research analysis and reporting on child deaths in Queensland have all transferred to the new entity?

Ms DAVIS: I might have to take that question on notice.

Mrs SCOTT: That is fine. I am happy for you to do that. Minister, are cases where children in out-of-home care have died or sustained serious injury investigated by a team within the department and overseen by a multidisciplinary panel that includes departmental officers? Has this resulted in the accountability and transparency being diminished by having the department investigate the death of the child in care rather than an independent Child Death Case Review Committee?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. As the member may be aware, there are generally two reviews undertaken. One is done internally by the department if a matter is brought to their attention regarding a child death. There is a secondary level of scrutiny, and that is what you are referring to in your question. This review panel would then review the report that had been provided or undertaken by the department. There will be a range of people available from the pool of experts to sit on the panel that you are speaking of.

Commissioner Carmody recommended that they be not just our own departmental officers but officers across relevant agencies—I would have to get the list, but I think there is health, education, justice and police. Depending on the particular circumstances of the death, that means that we could draw from that pool who would be the most appropriate panel members to look at the case. So it absolutely is there to review the department's internal review. I might add that if it is the death of an Indigenous child, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, it must have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member on the panel.

We do have both external and internal people we are considering for this panel at the moment. I really believe that the mix will enable the best arrangements in terms of scrutiny, because at the end of the day we have to learn from something as tragic as a child death. It is important that the review is done to ensure that practices in the future be developed based on practices of the past if they had not been where they needed to be. So I am absolutely committed that we have a review process that gives us a result that allows us to enhance our practice into the future.

So the two-tier review remains. It is just that Commissioner Carmody's recommendation was that the former children's commission had a role 10 years ago but it was time to contemporise, and I accepted his recommendation. I think it is also important to note that the coroner can also have a look at these child deaths. So if there is something suspicious in that he can undertake his own coronial investigation separate to that again. So I really believe that there are measures in place to ensure that full scrutiny of any child death is undertaken.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to page 33 of the SDS. Minister, I am concerned that the transfer of the community visitor function for children to the Office of the Public Guardian, together with the splitting of the child advocacy role between community visitors and a new child advocacy officer, are all now at a further distance from your departmental responsibilities. As all children in out-of-home care are at some level of risk, how will you ensure no child falls between into the bureaucratic crack between the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and your department?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. As the member would know, the Community Visitor Program will still continue to be delivered but it will sit within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. So, to be more explicit about how that looks, that question would need to be directed to him. It is my very great belief that the new system will build on public confidence. It still has that separation from our department. I think there are more eyes and ears in terms of the oversight of the child protection system. Our department is about protecting children. That is what our departmental officers and our front-line workers think about every day. That is why they are in this profession. They want to help families. They want to help children and get the best outcomes for them. The community visitors have a role to play in that and will continue to deliver sitting in DJAG.

CHAIR: There is probably time for one more non-government question; otherwise I will move to government questions.

Dr DOUGLAS: I have a general question. It is something that comes out of page 13 and it was alluded to by the minister earlier on. You talked about the ageing of the carers of people with a disability. It is not really covered as a measure or something in the document, but I am interested to know. You are obviously collecting data on the ages and the regions of carers of people with a disability. I am just wondering whether there is some way we can get some information about that. I

would be willing for you to take it as a question on notice. Are you collecting that information? It is obviously important because you raised it earlier. I am a GP and I am telling you it is a serious question.

Ms DAVIS: And it is a serious question. I would need to take on notice if there is any specific data available; I would not have that here. The best way to put it is that we know who we know—which are those clients that have come to the attention of the department. There are, as the DG spoke about earlier, conversations with the NDIA that we expect that number will grow, because as a GP you would understand that a lot of elderly parent carers have always seen looking after their child with a disability as their responsibility and have not sought assistance from the department and never sought more informal supports, whether it is through their GP or other means. So we would have data on the clients that we know.

Dr DOUGLAS: I raise the point because in the medical literature currently we are seeing what we believe is somewhere between a three and five per cent uplift factor in that 60-plus age group. That is a very, very worrying statistic. In other words, you have people who are probably going to drop dead who are looking after people with a disability.

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, sorry, I need you to get to your question.

Dr DOUGLAS: My question really is: it is an important set of data for a variety of reasons. You do collect the data; is that correct? And you are preparing for the NDIS with it, yes?

Ms DAVIS: I would have to take it on notice. What I am saying, Dr Douglas, is that we would have data—you spoke about ages of carers of people with a disability.

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes.

Ms DAVIS: We would have that data but only for those that have come to the attention of the department. If more broadly in Queensland there are other families that, say, under an NDIS might seek assistance when it becomes time that they are no longer able to look after their adult child with a disability, that is when we they would come to our attention. What we do know is that it is highly likely that as we start to move towards a transition to the NDIS it is likely that we will see more people present in that cohort. What is the projection for that? I do not know. It may very well be in the vicinity that you have quoted. The NDIA is doing a lot of work, a lot of planning, around trying to get such projections. That would be something that would need to be directed to them.

Dr DOUGLAS: Those numbers—this is the carers. The point really is—

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, we do need to move on. I need to clarify: is there a question on notice?

Dr DOUGLAS: Yes and it is the carers as well.

Ms DAVIS: If we have data—I do not know that the data we would have would be exactly what you are after, Dr Douglas. The director-general might be able to add a little.

Mr Hogan: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, member. It is an important question. One of the very important sources of data for the planning about the National Disability Insurance Scheme has been the ABS surveys of carers and the ABS surveys around people with a disability and their carers, along with the data about the ageing population. So I can indicate that that has certainly been available to all of the jurisdictions and has informed our planning and the projections around the number of people who would need to be supported and the types of supports that would be required under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Dr DOUGLAS: You understand that it is the ageing of the carers though. It has always been perceived that that growth in number is—

CHAIR: We need a question, Dr Douglas.

Dr DOUGLAS: The question really is: are you aware that the reason for the growth in that percentage is that more people present later, increasingly? That is why they have targeted this older age group, because they do not necessarily nominate until later, so that growth is artificially increased. That is what I am seeking—that data.

CHAIR: Dr Douglas, I think the minister will take this on notice and get back to you. We probably have time for a couple more questions and we are going to move to the government side. I call the member for Ferny Grove.

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH: Minister, I refer to page 9 of the SDS and how your department is providing services to people with a disability. Can you please outline examples of how the department has made real improvements for Queenslanders with a disability?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the member for the question. There are many great examples of how the department is helping Queenslanders with a disability. We have spoken much today about the NDIS, and obviously that is the centrepiece of the reform agenda at the moment. But at the core of everything that we do in Disability Services is the person with the disability and their family and of course their carers.

Beyond the work to transition to the NDIS, my department has been working very hard to find new ways to help Queenslanders with a disability, particularly looking at how we can help people who have been waiting for a service. So one of the areas that has been targeted in that regard is the waiting list for community aids, equipment and assistive technology, or CAEATI as we refer to it, and the Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme, which is known as VOSS. We had thousands of people on the waiting list to access either of those two areas. I am really pleased to say that in the 12 months to April this year the department conducted a blitz on those waitlists and they have been reduced by 4,000 people. That means that there are an additional 4,000 people with a disability being provided with aids, equipment and assistive technology so that their day-to-day lives can be just that bit better.

It is a wonderful result, an absolutely wonderful result that was made possible because of more efficient assessments, reduced waiting times and a broader choice of aids and equipment. But it is not just that. After working with Queensland Health, we now have a single point of entry for people requiring aids and equipment. In the past it was a bit of a maze and now there is this single point of entry which makes it so much more convenient for people wanting to access some aids and equipment.

Another area where I am extremely proud is that the waiting list in Far North Queensland for people actually waiting to be assessed through Disability Services has been reduced from 115 to zero. This is really important because there are people that had been waiting in excess of three months in order to just have that assessment undertaken. When you are a person with a disability or a family member eager to see what supports might be available to you, knowing that you can get assessed in a timely fashion is very, very important.

I spoke earlier that it is all about the stories, and if I could indulge the committee with a couple of stories that came as a result of this blitz. I just want to take a moment to say that the staff from the department absolutely undertook this with vigour and passion and enthusiasm that I am just so proud as a minister to have seen. They were ringing after hours and they were ringing on weekends because they wanted to see people get access to the aids and equipment that they wanted. I just wanted to put on record my support of the great work that our staff do.

I have two short stories. The first one is about CAEATI and a person who received a scooter. This was an email that the client wrote—

I am writing to let you know that I have received the scooter and I am so thankful to you and the government for the funding and for making my life a lot better as well as more independent. I can't say thank you enough but I am happy that my friends say that I haven't been happy for a very lot of years. So thank you again.

Then under the Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme, this was an email from Jenny who had her car converted—

Thank you so much for my approval. I am so excited. I am getting my independence back. Yay! Hi guys, just wanted to let you know I drove myself to work today in my converted car and made it home safely. Independent Jenny is back and very happy. Thank you so much for all your assistance with this project, and I am very grateful.

Members of the committee, it is hearing outcomes like that for people that just inspires me in my role as a minister. It is what drives me every day, to see a smile on a face or read an email like that to say that we have made a difference in someone's life, and to know that my department is full of wonderful staff wanting to connect with these people and their families to make a difference is just magnificent, and I am very proud to be their minister.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated to considerate the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has expired. Before we close, can you please—and this is from the whole committee—pass on to your department our thanks for the work they do. We are well aware that sometimes it can be quite thankless. But when you hear stories like that, you can go home at night and say, 'You know what? Today, we made a difference.' And that is what it is about. So please pass on our thanks to your department.

Ms DAVIS: I would be delighted to do that.

CHAIR: Director-General, it is really good to see the effort that goes into producing the results that you are able to report. We, the committee, thank you and the department for those efforts.

Mr Hogan: Thank you, Mr Chair.

Ms DAVIS: Mr Chairman, in closing, can I thank you and your committee today. It is a great pleasure to provide responses to the work that we are doing in the department, because it is important work and, as you said, getting outcomes for Queenslanders and hearing stories like that is really important. But can I also thank all of the staff who are sitting behind me from the department who have been working very, very hard in the lead-up to the committee hearing today and to those other staff who are still back in their offices who have contributed to this process. Their work is outstanding and greatly appreciated. So thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you and the director-general and officials for your answers. I also thank our Auslan interpreters, Mrs Brita Vaughan and Mr Mark Webb. Our video broadcast of this session will be available on the parliamentary website shortly. The deadline for answers to questions on notice is 5 pm on Tuesday, 22 July.

That completes the committee's hearing on 15 and 17 July into the proposed expenditures in the Appropriation Bill 2014 for the portfolios of the Minister for Health, the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, and the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. On behalf of the committee, I thank the Hansard staff, the secretariat and the attendants for their assistance.

Just before we close, I think it is correct to mention that for the member for Woodridge this is her last estimates. Can I say, on behalf of the committee, thank you for your service to our community. Sometimes our conversations are robust but the end result is beneficial for our communities. So thank you for your service. I declare this public hearing closed.

Committee adjourned at 5.03 pm