

## THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST 2015

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### ESTIMATES—COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE—COMMUNITIES, WOMEN, YOUTH, CHILD SAFETY AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

#### Committee Members

Ms LE Donaldson (Chair)  
Mr MF McArdle  
Miss N Boyd  
Ms AM Leahy  
Mr MJ McEachan  
Mr RJ Pyne

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#### Member in Attendance

Ms TE Davis  
Mrs T Smith  
Mr S Knuth  
Mr AP Cripps

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#### In Attendance

Hon. SM Fentiman, Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety,  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs


Ms C Kennedy, Chief of Staff  
Ms G Williams, Adviser

#### Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Mr M Hogan, Director-General  
Mr A O'Brien, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate and Executive Services

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#### Committee met at 9.00 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee open. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which our parliament stands. I am Leanne Donaldson, the member for Bundaberg and chair of the committee. Mr Mark McArdle, the member for Caloundra, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are: Miss Nikki Boyd MP, the member for Pine Rivers; Ms Ann Leahy MP, the member for Warrego; Mr Matt McEachan MP, the member for Redlands; and Mr Rob Pyne MP, the member for Cairns. The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend and ask questions during the hearing. I would like to welcome Ms Tracy Davis, the member for Aspley.

The committee has resolved that the whole of the proceedings of the committee may be broadcast in line with the conditions for broadcasters and guidelines for camera operators, which are available from one of the parliamentary attendants in this room. I ask that mobile phones either be switched off or switched to silent. Also, I should remind you that food and drink is not permitted in the chamber.

The committee will spend the day examining the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2015 for the portfolios of the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs from 9 am until 1 pm and the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland from 2 pm until 5.30 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: morning tea from 11 to 11.30; lunch from 1 until 2 pm; and afternoon tea from 3.45 to 4.15 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2015 for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. I remind those present today that these proceedings are similar to parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the 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 that apply for questions in parliament apply here. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 and, therefore, questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles or argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings today so that the relevant issues can be explored without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure that 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 answer to a question should be finalised so that other issues can be examined.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Can I start today by also acknowledging that we meet on the lands of the traditional owners, the Turrbal and Jagera people, and pay my respect to elders, past, present and emerging. Can I acknowledge you, Madam Chair, and, of course, all the committee members. Can I also acknowledge the parliamentary staff supporting the committee today, my director-general and staff from the department.

I am very pleased today to be able to discuss in detail my vision and priority for my portfolio areas. I feel very privileged to have policy areas that so closely align with my own personal values: supporting vulnerable people, helping out families, creating opportunities for women and young people and, importantly, leading the development of a plan to tackle domestic and family violence. Our government has a commitment to rebuild and engage with the community sector, which does such crucial work helping families and vulnerable Queenslanders.

The rebuilding is necessary after three years of pain caused by the LNP's callous cuts. The LNP's fiscal repair continued to be felt right across 2014-15 and included cuts to Child Safety totalling \$73 million and cuts to Community Services totalling \$63 million. More than 225 full-time equivalent roles were lost in Child Safety and 140 in Communities under what was badged fiscal repair. The former government displayed absolute disdain for the community sector and nowhere is this more evident than in the gagging clauses that were introduced to stop community groups from playing an advocacy role. We have removed those gag clauses because we are not afraid of what the sector has to say and we want to hear it.

The 2015-16 budget provides funding for 341 community organisations big and small right across Queensland. Preventing domestic and family violence is a huge priority for me and for the Palaszczuk government. Since becoming Minister for Communities and Minister for Women, I have met many incredible people working in the field of domestic and family violence prevention—people like Di Mangan, the CEO of DVConnect. Di proudly tells me that they will work tirelessly to get a woman to safety no matter where she lives across Queensland. We have given them an extra \$1.5 million over two years to help them with this vital work.

I am so pleased that the Palaszczuk government will invest more than \$66 million this financial year on a broad range of measures to reduce domestic and family violence in Queensland. I am proud to be the Minister for Women in the Palaszczuk government. The former government chose not to have a minister for women which, to me, reflects the value they place on this area.

For the last three years, Queensland was the only jurisdiction in the country without a plan to tackle domestic and family violence. In delivering our response to the landmark *Not now, not ever* report, we have righted that wrong. Planning is in full swing for the delivery of our two new 72-hour crisis shelters in Brisbane and Townsville. Through the Office for Women we are working to support Queensland women to achieve their best and promote equality and opportunity across the state. We are delivering a women's strategy—something noticeably absent during the previous government. This strategy will be released in Queensland's first Women's Week in March 2016.

Of course, at the heart of what we do is helping support families. We made an election commitment to continue the implementation of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry recommendations. Child safety deserves to be bipartisan. It requires a sustained effort that must outlive any political term and rise above any political wrangle. That is our commitment to the children and families of Queensland. We are building on our commitment to early intervention and helping families get the help they need to thrive with the introduction of a universal system of parenting support. We are investing \$6.6 million over two years to make the world renowned PPP parenting program available to all Queensland parents. Parents have been asking for this. On the Family and Child Commission Talking Families Facebook page, access to parenting support programs was one of the most frequent issues raised. When we announced that PPP would be available at a launch in Bulimba, many of the parents said how excited they were to learn of a free source of practical advice about parenting.

We are also supporting our hardworking neighbourhood centres. That is why we are investing \$12.2 million over four years for upgrades and replacements for our much loved neighbourhood and multipurpose centres. This is in addition to the \$14 million in support for 121 neighbourhood centres across the state. I know firsthand from my work at the Beenleigh Neighbourhood Centre what an invaluable community service our neighbourhood centres provide.

As Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I want to make sure that we genuinely engage with Queensland's multicultural communities. I have enjoyed attending a large number of these events since becoming minister—from Chinese new year to Buddha Birth Day, the India Day Fair, the Ingham Italian Festival and the Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival just to name a few. In this budget, for the first time, we have made funding recurrent for the \$1 million which supports multicultural celebrations right across Queensland. Of course, our government is committed to a multicultural recognition bill and charter. We are investing \$770,000 a year to rebuild Multicultural Affairs Queensland to strengthen its capacity to expand on the highly regarded work that it does at a community level and right across government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, good morning.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Good morning.

**Ms DAVIS:** I refer to page 5 of Budget Paper No. 4 and the minister's response to question on notice No. 2, specifically with regard to the \$7.542 million that will be returned to government to be reprioritised. Minister, in your response to the question on notice you note three areas of savings and I would like to explore that. The first savings area refers to employee expenses due to ongoing productivity and efficiency improvements. Can the minister provide the expected savings in WorkCover costs?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. As outlined in the question on notice, I am pleased to say that in the reprioritisation there has been no impact on front-line services. Unlike the fiscal repair from the LNP—

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you. Excuse me, Madam Chair, my question was pretty simple. It was: can you just provide the expected savings with regard to WorkCover costs? That is all I would like to know, thank you.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member and I am getting to that. As I have said, I am very proud that our reprioritisation does not impact on front-line services. In relation to the WorkCover budget savings, the department's WorkCover premium continues to be managed downwards. Funding available to pay for the premium has remained at 2015 levels.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. Can you provide the savings expected with respect to fringe benefits tax?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. In relation to fringe benefits tax budget savings, the department has maintained an FBT budget to meet expected costs based on the 2014 FBT liability. Since this time, improvements in a number of areas, including logbook administration and reductions in the fleet size for SES vehicles, has resulted in FBT cost savings being below budget.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. Just to clarify, you are saying reduced numbers of vehicles. So that is reduced fringe benefits tax?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** There has been a reduction in the fleet size for SES vehicles.

**Ms DAVIS:** Right. None of those front-line workers?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Let me be very clear: there has been no impact on front-line services due to the reprioritisation target of this department.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. Can you provide some detail around the savings in costs associated with employee housing, for example? Is it for property assets?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes, thank you. The funding for the employee housing budget was allocated on 113 houses at an estimated rental of \$2,288 per month. Rental costs are set against market rent which, in some locations, has reduced due to the mining downturn. The estimated costs for this financial year are \$2.8 million against an available budget of \$3.8 million.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. The second area is around reducing expenditure relating to contractors, consultants, travel and advertising. You have mentioned that no front-line services will be impacted, but given that the department of child safety does engage contractors to fill front-line child safety positions, can you absolutely confirm and ensure that no child in Queensland will be put at risk as a result of these measures?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, I also note in your response to the question on notice and in your opening remarks about the LNP's fiscal repair task—and we all know the fiscal repair task was undertaken because of the dreadful financial mess that we found ourselves in when we came into government—your absolute despair about what those measures meant in terms of the budget. Given you were so incensed by that process, could you confirm that through your CBRC budget submission you asked for all of that money back?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. It is probably useful for me to outline just how severe these cuts were from the LNP's fiscal repair. In my own department we had 1,105 full-time public servants sacked.

**Ms DAVIS:** Excuse me, Madam Chair. It was a pretty simple question.

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, member for Aspley. The minister can answer the question in any way she sees fit. Can you please allow her to finish answering the question.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Some 362 community organisations had their funding reduced. Some \$60 million in grants were cut across the department. Staff across the Office for Women and the Office for Youth were cut by over two-thirds. Multicultural Affairs Queensland had a number of their staff cut. More than 225 Child Safety staff and 140 Communities staff were lost. This budget, the 2015-16 budget, rebuilds the Office for Women and the Office for Youth. It rebuilds Multicultural Affairs Queensland. We are now reinvesting in strategies to combat domestic and family violence. We are filling gaps left by the previous government to introduce universal parenting support. This budget absolutely goes some way to repairing the LNP's fiscal repair, but I have to say that it was so significant that we are doing what we can to rebuild the community sector. We took our election commitments to the people of Queensland. We stand by each and every one of them. This is a responsible government, having more than offset the cost of our election commitments through a range of measures. Unlike the LNP's fiscal repair, as I have said a number of times already this morning, our reprioritisation target had no impact on front-line services.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. In your response you failed to answer the question, which was quite simple: through the CBRC budget submission process did you request all of the money back?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As the member is aware, I am not at liberty to discuss cabinet-in-confidence discussions, but you can see in the budget papers—

**Ms DAVIS:** I will move to the next question. Thank you, Minister. The other thing I noted in your response was that through the fiscal repair task that had to be undertaken departments and services were cut to the bone. They were your words, not mine. If that is the case, Minister, why, then, are you handing back a further \$7.5 million? Minister, what is below the bone for your budget if you can slice an extra \$7.5 million from the budget?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We met our reprioritisation target without impact on front-line services, and we are delivering \$770,000 in additional money each year to rebuild Multicultural Affairs Queensland and \$6.6 million over two years for universal parenting support. We are developing a strategy to tackle domestic and family violence. We are spending \$8 million to establish 72-hour crisis shelters. We are meeting our reprioritisation target using savings found without impact on front-line services and we are announcing great initiatives to support vulnerable Queenslanders.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, you noted that you are handing back \$260,000 in unallocated community services funding. Could you explain why this could not be reprioritised within your department so that front-line community services could be delivered, rather than handing it back to Treasury?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We have reprioritised dollars to be put towards rebuilding the Office for Women and supporting the domestic and family violence strategy.

**Ms DAVIS:** That is where the \$260,000 is going to?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No, we are reprioritising in a number of areas. So, we have reprioritised some unallocated funding for the reprioritisation target but we are also reprioritising a number of funds to support our domestic and family violence strategy and rebuilding the Office for Women.

**Ms DAVIS:** \$260,000 in your budget is not that great an amount of money. I simply ask: why would you hand back \$260,000? Given your preamble and your great concern about funding not going to community services under the LNP government, why would you not reprioritise to within your own department?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I have said, we are a responsible government. We took our election commitments to the people of Queensland. All our election commitments are offset by savings. Every department has a reprioritisation target. We have met ours without any impact to front-line services, but we have also reprioritised other funds within the department to support key areas for this government in our election commitments around domestic and family violence and multicultural legislation.

**Ms DAVIS:** I put it to you that the reason you are able to say that is that all of the hard work was done over the last three years. What is disappointing is that, having made pronouncements about your great disappointment that services were not receiving the same amount of money, you did not ask for the money back.

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order. Madam Chair, I ask you for your guidance in this matter around the question that has just been posed to the minister. It was actually opinion that was put forward and I ask for your ruling.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Madam Chair, I am actually happy to answer this question. There has been an increase of \$9.6 million in community services. The fiscal repair from the LNP was still being felt in the last financial year in community services: cuts totalling \$63 million. We had a responsible reprioritisation target which did not impact front-line services. We have increased the community services budget by \$9.3 million. We are doing all of this despite still feeling the impacts of the LNP's fiscal repair, which last financial year was \$63 million in community services.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I think the minister has answered the question, but I would like to remind members that they cannot seek an expression of opinion or legal opinion.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I refer to the SDS staffing table on page 16 which talks about staff in the SES stream in the department of child safety, and I thank the minister for providing that breakdown. Minister, do you consider SES positions front-line?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** They are not considered front-line positions.

**Ms DAVIS:** How many of the SES positions on that list have been employed since 1 February this year?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am just going to refer to the director-general to provide that answer.

**Mr Hogan:** I am very happy to get to the answer to the member's question, but perhaps I can provide an outline of the SES structure of the department. As at 1 July the department had 37 substantive SES officers and four SES or equivalent officers on section 122 contracts. As at 30 June

2014 there were 35 such officers and three SES or equivalent officers on section 122 contracts. The department's increased SES profile of two over that period is a result of the inclusion of Multicultural Affairs Queensland due to the machinery-of-government changes which involved one SES position moving from the former department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural affairs to my department and one additional SES position being created this year to lead our new Strategy, Engagement and Innovation Division, which brought together a number of existing functions within the department. There was also, I note, a reduction of one corporate SES position in that period and the creation of two additional section 122 roles. One of those was in 2014, the role of executive director, Whole of Government NDIS, and the other was this year an SES2 role in relation to executive director, Legislative Reforms. As you will see, there has been a net increase of two. That is actually a lower SES profile that we had two years ago and then three years ago, but there have been two additional positions created this year.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Director-General. We might now move to question on notice No. 14, which is also in respect to the staffing table on page 16 of the SDS. Minister, are you concerned that your department has 289 vacancies?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No. I am happy to refer to the director-general for some more information about those vacancies.

**Mr Hogan:** Thank you, Minister.

**Ms DAVIS:** No, I am happy with the answer, thank you. Can the minister advise, with 289 vacancies, what capabilities are not being met, given that you have less resources? Given that—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to refer to the director-general to explain the number of vacancies.

**Ms DAVIS:** If I could complete the question, Minister.

**Mr Hogan:** Thank you. I am happy to explain.

**Ms DAVIS:** If I can complete my question.

**CHAIR:** One moment. The member for Aspley had not finished asking the question.

**Ms DAVIS:** I will repeat the question for the benefit of the committee. Can the minister advise what capabilities are not being met given that you have less resources because you are handing back \$7.5 million and you have 289 vacancies?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Firstly, I thank the member for the question. We do not have less resources. As I have said, there has been an increased budget across both Child and Family Services and Community Services. In relation to the vacancies, we have provided an answer to the question on notice and I would like to refer to the director-general now to explain why there are those vacancies.

**Mr Hogan:** Thank you, Minister, and I thank the member for the question. As the staffing table on page 16 of the SDS statement indicates, we had a funded staffing budget in 2014-15 that provided us with 5,937 funded FTE positions. As at the last pay period for 2014 we actually had a funded establishment of 5,934 positions, so we were four short of our funded establishment. I do note that the department's funded establishment makes provision for the regular vacancies that any organisation will have as staff come and go. In addition to our funded establishment we actually have a headcount of some 6,429 staff. That is because many of our staff, particularly many staff with parenting responsibilities, work part time. So we have a headcount of 6,429. We have an approved FTE establishment to allow for the movement of staff of 6,120 and the vacancy rate, and the vacancy number that the member has referred to is calculated off that approved FTE. They are the number of approved positions. We made a decision a number of years ago for a funded FTE count, which is what is in the SDS. The vacancy rate is on top of that. If we did not do that then we would have had to lose another 200 positions.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** If I can just add, as outlined in the answer to the question on notice, the vacancy numbers are a snapshot at a point in time and currently represent a proportion of the total positions, at 4.6 per cent.

**Ms DAVIS:** I refer to page 8 of the SDS, which outlines the domestic and family violence reforms that will respond to the recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report. As the committee is aware, the LNP in government took the lead in addressing this dreadful scourge that pervades our community by establishing the task force that was headed by Dame Quentin Bryce. A point of clarification, Minister: will you be the lead minister and your department the lead agency with the responsibility of overseeing the delivery of the government's response?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am supporting the Premier. The Premier is the lead minister and I am supporting the Premier and also working with the Attorney-General and the Minister for Police, as well as the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health. This is a whole-of-government response. One of the great things that we have seen in the government's response to the *Not now, not ever* task force report is that we immediately set up an interdepartmental committee. Every DG met regularly and ministers were also involved in putting together a very comprehensive response to the task force report—all 140 recommendations were accepted. We have been working across government to put forward our response and, importantly, release a draft strategy. For the first time, we have righted a wrong in that Queensland did not have a strategy to tackle domestic and family violence. I am very proud to be the Minister for Communities and Women supporting the Premier as we work through these recommendations.

**Ms DAVIS:** I agree with you: it is very important that you have a whole-of-government approach. Does the minister have confidence in the police minister to competently lead any reform in her portfolio area, given the significant role that police play in incidents of domestic and family violence?

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order. Madam Chair, the member is asking the minister for an opinion.

**CHAIR:** Member for Aspley, again, you cannot seek an expression of opinion. Could you please rephrase your question?

**Ms DAVIS:** Chair, thank you for your guidance. This does go to the very core of successfully delivering on the recommendations with a hapless minister going from crisis to crisis leading an agency that is a significant stakeholder. However, I assume that in not answering that question the minister does not have any confidence in the Minister for Police.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Madam Chair, I am happy to answer this question. Two women die every week at the hands of their partner or former partner. I am just appalled that we are at day 8 of estimates and, while the government investment in my portfolios is well over \$1 billion supporting some of the most vulnerable Queenslanders, all we have from the opposition, once again, is questions about Jo-Ann Miller. As I have said, I work closely with all of my cabinet colleagues, particularly on this issue, which I personally am extremely passionate about and I know is a top priority for the Palaszczuk government. I have confidence in all my cabinet colleagues.

**Ms DAVIS:** I refer to page 27 of Budget Paper No. 4, Budget Measures. I note there is \$31.3 million in funding over four years to address some of the recommendations of the report. With respect to the \$26.1 million of internal reallocation, can the minister advise whether this is existing funding in the DV program area or whether it has come from another program area?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to answer that question. It is \$31 million over four years that has been committed by the Palaszczuk government as an initial response to some of the high-priority recommendations in the *Not now, not ever* task force report. Some \$5.2 million of that across government is new funding; \$26 million is reprioritised funding. That includes \$12.2 million to be invested over four years by my department. To make available that \$12.2 million, I have committed \$2.4 million in new growth funding, \$8 million from unallocated capital and reprioritised \$1.8 million in existing community services funding. There is no higher priority for my portfolio than tackling domestic and family violence. In 2015-16, this department will spend a total of \$39.3 million tackling domestic and family violence in Queensland. That is implementation of the high-priority recommendations in the task force report and also other activity that is funding support services for victims of domestic and family violence. It is \$66 million in this financial year across government.

**Ms DAVIS:** So just over \$5 million in new money?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Across government, obviously, millions of dollars reprioritised and that is just to tackle the first high-priority recommendations. As you will have seen from our response, there will obviously be further submissions and further budget announcements as we work our way through the recommendations. Importantly, one of those recommendations is for the government to commence an audit of existing domestic and family violence services in Queensland so that we can invest where the money needs to go. That audit is already underway. We have engaged KPMG. The results of that audit will be delivered by the end of the year. We want to make sure that we invest where the gaps in services are. That will inform our investment moving forward. But this is an initial investment for the high-priority recommendations and, of course, millions of dollars reprioritised across government departments. This is a top priority. We have also committed \$3 million towards the national campaign to reduce domestic and family violence that has arisen out of COAG.

**CHAIR:** Member for Aspley, you have one last question.

**Ms DAVIS:** Just over \$5 million in new funding, the rest reprioritised and you mentioned that there was money reprioritised for community services, but I missed the amount. Was it \$1 million?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Some \$1.8 million has been reprioritised. Again I remind the member for Aspley that there is \$66 million in this financial year to tackle domestic and family violence. There is no higher priority for me or this government than to tackle domestic and family violence. That includes money reprioritised towards rebuilding the Office for Women and the domestic and family violence unit to support, for the first time, a strategy to tackle domestic and family violence.

**CHAIR:** Minister, as per page 8 of the SDS, you are establishing a multicultural council and introducing multicultural recognition legislation. What will be the effect of these initiatives?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Since coming into office, I have acted on the Palaszczuk government's election commitment to promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community through the introduction of legislation that recognises and promotes multiculturalism in our state. Queensland, currently, is one of only a few jurisdictions that does not have a legislative statement from its parliament recognising our multicultural heritage and committing support for our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia all have multicultural recognition legislation. Those other jurisdictions recognise that a multicultural society provides many opportunities for a diversified workforce, business ventures and access to tourism and export markets.

Despite these benefits and opportunities, strong evidence shows newly arrived migrants are often disadvantaged in participating in our economy, so the proposed multicultural recognition bill will introduce a multicultural Queensland charter and establish a multicultural Queensland advisory council. The proposed charter will set out principles to promote harmony and inclusiveness in Queensland. The multicultural Queensland advisory council will advise and make recommendations to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs in developing and implementing government policies concerning multiculturalism. Multicultural recognition legislation will provide a strong instrument to strengthen multicultural policy, program development and implementation across government that will support people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to live in communities that are inclusive and have equitable access to services. I want to see strong accountabilities in this bill, including reporting on outcomes of the multicultural policy, as well as implementation of the action plan across government, requiring chief executives to inform their staff about the charter and the new policy and build capacity to translate the charter into practice, providing for the advisory council to undertake consultations with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, followed up by a public communique after each meeting to stakeholders and, of course, strengthening data collection across relevant agencies to improve the evidence base to better target our programs and services.

The bill will not just be principles based. It will also commit all future Queensland governments to give due respect to our multicultural society through a whole-of-government multicultural policy and action plan. It will also complement existing anti-discrimination legislation such as the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act and the Australian Racial Discrimination Act. By statutorily entrenching multicultural recognition, our government is not only ensuring the protection of culturally and linguistically diverse communities but also symbolically recognising their contribution to Queensland's public life. The law is an expression of the general will of the community and, as a multicultural success story, Queensland law should reflect multiculturalism at its core. We are providing new recurrent funding of \$770,000 per annum to support the implementation of the proposed bill. That will include secretariat support to the council, whole-of-government policy and action plan coordination and monitoring, working with our government agencies to improve service delivery for our multicultural communities, stakeholder engagement and project management of new initiatives.

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

**Mr PYNE:** Can the minister please advise why the funding for Community Action for a Multicultural Society, known as the CAMS program, has been reinstated? How will the program contribute to social cohesion, as stated in the departmental overview on page 2 of the SDS?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I know how strongly he supports our multicultural communities in the Far North. I am really pleased to be able to talk about the CAMS program because it is such a successful program. Our government will always ensure that it is responsive to the diversity of the people of Queensland. We want Queensland to be a place where everyone can thrive and where there is a strong sense of belonging for people from all cultural backgrounds.



The previous LNP government really did slash Multicultural Affairs Queensland, its policies and its programs. I am determined to turn that around. That is why, after feedback from stakeholders and leaders in our multicultural communities, I made the decision to continue to expand the Community Action for a Multicultural Society program, the CAMS program, with a total funding commitment of \$6.3 million over three years. The CAMS program funds on-the-ground dedicated workers in communities to promote harmony, diversity and inclusion across Queensland. After speaking to community leaders and experts from our CALD communities, I could see that the CAMS program was held in such high regard by the sector. That included a number of letters and concerns from members within the Australian South Sea Islander community stressing their concerns about the previous government's decision to cease this important program.

The CAMS program really is valued for the way that it builds connected communities. It removes barriers to participation for locals and makes a positive difference to so many people's lives. Importantly, I am very proud that CAMS will now have even greater coverage. For the first time, Rockhampton and Mount Isa will have dedicated CAMS workers. There will also be a new statewide CAMS position to focus on the challenges faced by Muslim women, who confront particular challenges in their communities as so often they are the visible face of their faith. As we know, women are also critical links to their communities and play a crucial role in the wellbeing of families and social connectedness.

Recently I was in Toowoomba for the annual Languages and Cultures Festival and I had the opportunity to meet with one of the region's celebrated CAMS workers, Mr David Barton. After the arson attack on the Toowoomba mosque earlier this year, David was on the ground immediately liaising between police, representatives of the mosque, the local Muslim community and the wider Toowoomba community. He was of great assistance to Minister Miller when she visited the site of the attack because of his local knowledge of the issues facing the Muslim community, as well as the positive relationships with people living in the area. The highly sensitive case of the Toowoomba mosque attack demonstrates to me why we need to invest in multiculturalism, not cut funding to Multicultural Affairs Queensland. That is why I decided to extend the CAMS program and continue it.

An open, competitive tender was issued in June to engage organisations to deliver outcomes in social connectedness through the three new CAMS positions, and I have asked my department to work closely with funded organisations to ensure investment is appropriately targeted to contemporary needs and remains outcomes focused. Continuation and expansion of the CAMS initiative puts into practice our government's commitment to promoting and strengthening multiculturalism and community harmony.

**Mr PYNE:** Minister, can you provide more information about the \$1 million allocated to the wonderful multicultural events mentioned on page 11 of the SDS such as the vibrant, exciting Tropical Wave Festival that is happening in just a few weeks in Cairns?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Our government understands the economic and social benefits derived from having strong and active multicultural communities across Queensland including in Far North Queensland. Close to 900,000 Queenslanders were born overseas—that is more than 20 per cent of our state's population—and we have all benefitted from that diversity in so many ways. That is why this government is committed to celebrating our diversity through our multicultural communities' wonderful festivals and events, from large events that attract thousands of participants to smaller events created by new and emerging communities, that build cross-cultural understanding and harmony.

More than a million people are expected to participate in the more than 100 events and projects across Queensland this year alone. That is why, for the first time, our government has guaranteed recurrent funding for these events that promote the state's harmony and diversity. Community organisations and local councils across Queensland are now able to apply for a share of \$1 million from the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland Grants Program to stage events and projects from 2016 that celebrate and promote multiculturalism and community cohesion. This means that popular yearly cultural events such as Chinese New Year celebrations, India Day and the Italian Festival will be guaranteed access to apply for funding. Multicultural groups and organisations will now be able to plan their budgets. This stable source of grants funding is also great news for Queensland's new and emerging multicultural groups to plan future events and projects that will promote diversity and cultural understanding.

Over the past few months I have participated in a number of community celebrations and met with many community leaders working hard to benefit our multicultural communities. These events have not only showcased the variety and vibrancy within our multicultural society but also provided me with

the opportunity to hear directly from communities about what matters to them. We have guaranteed this funding because we recognise that these multicultural events and projects are crucial in bringing together Queenslanders from all backgrounds to strengthen social cohesion. We want to work together with our multicultural communities to celebrate our rich cultural diversity and to strengthen multicultural identity. I am excited by the opportunity to focus on the government's commitment to strengthening our inclusive and harmonious society and to emphasise that multicultural Queensland is about all Queenslanders.

**Mr PYNE:** Thank you very much for that comprehensive and informative answer. In light of the growing Indonesian presence in towns like Cairns, where that community is growing significantly, can you elaborate further and advise on the engagement specifically with Muslim communities, given that they are the subject of particular negative attention from some members of the community?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have a strong commitment to support Queensland's Muslim communities, as I do for all our key stakeholders, and I am strongly focused on promoting community cohesion so that everyone feels safe and welcome in Queensland. Not long after I was appointed the Minister for Multicultural Affairs I had the pleasure of having lunch with a group of 30 Muslim women leaders, who showed me just what a wonderful, caring community they are and also shared with me their concerns and issues including some of the challenges they face in their everyday lives.

Earlier this year I was honoured to be invited to participate in a World Cafe gathering on the Gold Coast organised by the Anti-Discrimination Commission. Women from local Muslim communities get together with women from other faith based organisations and churches to share food and talk about the issues facing their community.

At the beginning of July I met with a diverse range of respected Muslim community leaders to hear their concerns and ideas for dealing with such things as supporting young people to remain in school or making sure people are not discriminated against because of their appearance. I have asked my department to ensure that actions are followed up as a result of these meetings, and I will be hosting further meetings in the near future.

During the holy month of Ramadan, which was held across June and July this year, members of the Queensland Muslim community kindly opened their doors and their homes and welcomed me to share a dinner or iftar with them. I also was honoured to co-host a bipartisan iftar dinner here at Parliament House for the Muslim community, attended by both Tarnya Smith and Glen Elmes.

I have enjoyed visits to mosques including the Toowoomba and Logan mosques and, just as importantly, I have not been afraid to show my support by using social media to highlight these visits. When the arson attack occurred at the Toowoomba mosque, I immediately contacted a key representative of the mosque to offer my support. I have also offered public support through social media to denounce right-wing extremism, including Reclaim Australia. It is one thing to offer private support; it is very different to offer public support. I know that the community including non-Muslims have welcomed leadership on these matters.

I was delighted to announce in April that we will continue the funding for the CAMS program we spoke about earlier and that one of these new positions will be a statewide position to work with Muslim women.

**Mr PYNE:** We know that there are particular concerns for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their experience of domestic and family violence. What work is being done in that area?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and as Minister for Women, I understand that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can sometimes face particular challenges when facing domestic violence. Challenges facing women from our CALD communities often include a lack of support networks, socioeconomic disadvantage, language barriers, community pressure and other cultural sensitivities.

The need for the whole community to work together to combat domestic and family violence was one of the central themes in Dame Quentin Bryce's *Not now, not ever* landmark report. Last Tuesday, of course, the Palaszczuk government accepted all 140 of those recommendations. The report also made recommendations about leadership and driving cultural change to help prevent domestic and family violence and support victims of abuse. This is why I brought together community leaders from our CALD community, to discuss ways we can work together to combat domestic and family violence.

The roundtable session, held at the Beenleigh Neighbourhood Centre on 6 July, was an opportunity for community leaders to harness their ideas for local solutions to help tackle unique issues facing women in Queensland's CALD communities. One of the main issues that came up at that

roundtable discussion was the cultural sensitivities and language barriers facing our CALD women when trying to access domestic and family violence services. Participants also discussed the need for flexible programs which allow working with the family within the home and cultural change programs to empower women and also educate men.

In March of this year, as per the Bryce report's recommendation 84, I announced that our government will be building two new 72-hour crisis shelters, one in Brisbane and one in Townsville. I will ensure these new shelters are 100 per cent culturally appropriate so that they are accessible to all women and children fleeing violence.

Since coming into office I have reaffirmed support for the Queensland Language Services Policy and the need for Queensland government services to engage qualified interpreters for customers with difficulty communicating in English. This will include better bilingual and multilingual staff to assist our CALD women when accessing domestic violence services.

Earlier this month in Sydney I also discussed the unique challenges facing our CALD women with my fellow state ministers, experts and community leaders at the national CALD round table on tackling domestic and family violence. At that meeting we heard some incredibly compelling stories from women who had experienced violence. One of those stories really has stuck with me. I refer particularly to Our Watch ambassador Khadija Gbla, who is a proud Australian woman of African heritage who is working to abolish female genital mutilation in Australia. Khadija bravely described the violence she endured over many years and her survival to be the successful, happy woman that she is today, mother to a six-month-old baby. I had never before heard so clearly articulated the internal struggle faced by women from diverse cultural backgrounds. She said that her traditions and culture were telling her one thing but her new world was telling her another, and that constant debate meant she could not focus on what to do next or how to get out, but eventually she did get out. The comment that sticks with me the most was, 'I did not escape the bombs and bullets to die at the hands of this man.'

So many women from CALD backgrounds have escaped various forms of violence and trauma in home countries that stays with them and compounds the effects of violence they may experience here in Australia. That is why, as we continue with our community consultation and collaboration to develop the Queensland government's strategy to tackle domestic and family violence, we will work with representatives of our CALD communities to ensure these specific, additional needs are addressed.

**Ms DAVIS:** We will still chat about domestic and family violence reforms, because I think we both are in solid agreement that it is a terrible problem facing our community. We must do whatever we can to support victims, primarily women and children, and there are some particular issues the minister has outlined around the CALD community. Minister, some work was done with the Sikh, Muslim and Hindu communities with regard to spreading the message to the men in their communities about domestic and family violence. Posters were made which were culturally sensitive but confronting enough that the community is taking some notice, but it is very hard to change cultural behaviour over a short period of time. What conversations have you had with the Muslim community about providing resources to educate members of their communities about domestic and family violence and about how it should never be tolerated?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is important to make the point that violence against women and domestic and family violence cross all cultures and occur in every socioeconomic group and in every geographic location. Of course, as I just outlined, there are some unique challenges faced by some of our CALD communities. That is why I was very pleased to convene a round table in July with CALD community leaders in Brisbane, to talk about some of those unique challenges. That will certainly be part of our strategy to tackle domestic and family violence.

Another initiative that I am so pleased was announced when we handed down the government's response to the *Not now, not ever* task force report is that Australia will finally implement its obligations under the national plan to eliminate violence against women and their children, an action plan to tackle violence against women in all its forms in Queensland. Again, there will be significant community consultation in developing that action plan which will involve our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The issue of domestic and family violence was also discussed with our Muslim leaders at the meeting to which I referred earlier. That was one of the agenda items. We will continue to have that discussion. We continue to consult with communities, particularly our CALD communities, as we further develop our strategy to tackle domestic and family violence and implement an action plan.

The posters to which the member for Aspley referred were funded under the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Grants Program, and we are continuing to address this in communications with the sector. We are continuing those programs, and that will certainly be part of our strategy to tackle domestic and family violence here in Queensland.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am very pleased, Minister, that you are continuing along those lines. There was a lot of work done when I was minister with those communities to start to make a difference in providing information. I know that the representatives from those communities are very keen to continue. I understand that they were nominated for an award.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes, and I would like to congratulate Yasmin Khan on her award.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am very proud to have been the minister and to have been part of that. Minister, I refer to page 28 of Budget Paper No. 4 and the response to the 140 recommendations. Can the minister advise what preliminary financial modelling might have been done to start to deliver on the government's response to the recommendations? I think the minister would agree that, whilst \$31 million is a start—it is a shame that it is only an extra \$5 million—it certainly will not be adequate to deliver on all of the recommendations. I ask this in the context of when the former LNP government was undertaking the child protection reforms there was work done between the department and Treasury to indicate what sort of figure such significant reform would cost.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Absolutely. I thank the member for the question. As I said earlier, the \$31.3 million is an initial investment really just to tackle those high-priority recommendations—the specialist DV court trial, the two 72-hour crisis shelters and a range of other high-priority responses. The figure for combating domestic and family violence in Queensland for this year though is \$66 million. Our investment going forward as we implement the recommendations will be based on the outcomes of the audit.

One of the recommendations in the *Not now, not ever* task force report was for government to undertake an extensive audit of what services are already being provided so that our investment going forward can be based on evidence about where the highest need is. So that audit, which, as I said, is being undertaken by KPMG, will be released at the end of this year and that will then inform further budget submissions going forward. We want to get this right and we want to make sure that our investment is based on evidence about what is needed.

**Ms DAVIS:** How much is that audit costing?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We will have to get back to you. We will take that on notice and get you the figure.

**Ms DAVIS:** If you could have that by lunchtime, that would be great. Minister, within the Carmody reforms there was an allocation of around \$50 million specifically around the child protection reforms. Can the minister confirm that that \$50 million will not be reprioritised to fund the recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report, because that was very specifically for matters of families that had an interaction with the child protection system?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. It was \$49 million that was allocated over five years to provide new and enhanced domestic and family violence support services as part of the government's response to the Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. There is obviously, and as was highlighted by the commissioner, a large overlap between domestic and family violence and child protection. There is \$7.1 million being delivered in this financial year. That includes \$4.32 million from the rollout of stage 1 services, approximately \$0.8 million that was reprioritised within the domestic and family violence funding area, and \$1.818 million in new investment to be advertised shortly for new and enhanced specialist services for domestic and family violence in Far North and Central Queensland. I was with the member for Pine Rivers this week to open the new Pine Rivers Domestic and Family Violence Service. They do fantastic work. The Caboolture Regional Domestic Violence Service will be running that service. So now for the first time victims of domestic and family violence will have a place to go and meet with counsellors face to face. I am so pleased that we are rolling out those important services.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, is the terminology 'reprioritisation' the Palaszczuk government code for cuts?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No. It is reprioritisation.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, you have mentioned a number of reprioritisations away from community services. You have reprioritised money in domestic and family violence. It is a little unbelievable that the reprioritisation from one service to another does not mean that there will be cuts to particular program areas. To clarify that, if I move funding from neighbourhood centres or services delivered out

of a neighbourhood centre and I reprioritise that to domestic and family violence, that neighbourhood centre is no longer delivering a service. So I put it to you, Minister, again, that reprioritisation is simply a cutesy way of saying cuts?

**CHAIR:** Before—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** That is okay. I am happy to answer this, Madam Chair. I know this may be difficult for the member for Aspley. We have met our reprioritisation target without any impact on front-line services. That means that there has been no money taken from programs. It was unallocated money as well as the savings that we took you through in your first few questions, savings that have been made in a number of areas including reducing costs associated with consultants. This is in stark contrast to the previous government where the fiscal repair task directly reduced funds provided to the NGO sector for the outsourcing of services, not to mention 1,105 full-time staff. So reprioritisation does not mean cuts. It means that we found savings that do not impact on front-line services to meet other election commitments, commitments that we proudly took to the election that members of the Queensland community voted for. Our reprioritisation does not impact front-line services.

**CHAIR:** Before you ask your next question, I would like to remind members that under standing order 115(b) questions are not to contain arguments, inferences, imputations or hypothetical matters. Can you ask your next question, member for Aspley?

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, I refer to the performance statement, specifically the service area description, which appears on page 4 of the SDS where it talks about implementing the majority of the initiatives arising from the recommendations of the 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. I am genuinely pleased that the minister has indicated that the reforms will proceed, as outlined under the LNP government. Minister, in addition to the \$406 million that was allocated for the reforms—and you have outlined today some of those areas that are being rolled out at present that were funded by the LNP in that \$406 million—there was a contingency fund of around \$20 million that was sitting in Treasury for the express purpose of addressing emerging issues in delivering reform, because child protection is such a risk averse area or a risk laden area. Can the minister advise if this contingency fund has been accessed?

**CHAIR:** Before you answer, Minister, I would like to introduce Mr Shane Knuth MP, member for Dalrymple, who has sought leave to ask questions and attend the committee this morning.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I believe that is a question for the Treasurer. It is not contained in the budget for this department.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, we have just discussed how passionate you are about delivering services to families and vulnerable people, and that will include children, and you just talked about all the great work that is being undertaken in order to deliver on the recommendations of the Carmody inquiry. It is a simple question. I am just asking whether that has been accessed—either it has or it has not. Just a simple answer is required.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** And it is a question to be put to the Treasurer.

**Ms DAVIS:** So I will take that as it has. Thank you, Minister.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am sorry, Madam Chair. That was not my answer.

**Ms DAVIS:** You know the answer to the question, I assume, because it would be your department that would need to—

**CHAIR:** One moment, member for Aspley. The minister may answer a question in any way she sees proper. Please allow the minister to answer.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you for your guidance, Madam Chair. I think it goes to the point that child protection is a very risk laden area. There was a significant investment by the LNP of \$406 million for which this government continues to roll out reforms, and, as I said, I am very pleased that that is happening. But there was an amount of money that was specifically put aside in case any emergent issues became apparent, issues like what may happen as a result of a—

**CHAIR:** Order, member for Aspley.

**Ms DAVIS:** I will end my point—

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, member for Aspley. I would just like to remind you that the minister has answered the question. Under standing order 112, you are now making a speech rather than asking a question. Can you please move on to your question?

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you for your guidance, Madam Chair. We might address that a little later. I might move on to page 3 of the SDS which is about the child protection reforms given that we were just talking about that. Minister, during the estimates hearing of Premier and Cabinet on 18 August, the acting interim commissioner for the Queensland Family and Child Commission was asked for an update on the 121 recommendations that were contained in the inquiry report. The acting commissioner said that he did not have that information. In fact, no-one appeared to be able to step up with an answer when this question was asked. There were a bevy of people from Premier's there, just as there are a bevy of people here today. As the minister who really has the lead on this in delivering the reforms, you must have been very concerned that no-one from Premier's could even give a basic overview of where we were at with regard to those 121 recommendations. I ask the minister: how many briefings has the minister received from the Premier or the Premier's staff on the child protection reforms and the progress that has been made by the reform leaders group?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I, along with my staff, meet regularly with the Premier and her staff to discuss these issues. I am really pleased to be able to talk about the implementation of the Child Protection Commission of Inquiry reforms. As the member has quite rightly pointed out, the Premier's department oversees the implementation of the reforms, and there is a Child Protection Reform Leaders Group which manages that. I can tell the member for Aspley that the reform leaders group is responsible for the implementation of all 121 of the recommendations. Eighty-two of those recommendations sit with my department, and I can advise her that 73 of those recommendations are underway.

**Ms DAVIS:** That is very good news. I am very pleased to hear that. Minister, that sounds like things are on schedule, which is a great relief given past efforts of Labor governments when systems simply failed because the finger was taken off the pulse.

**Miss BOYD:** Chair, I ask for your guidance on relevance.

**CHAIR:** Member for Aspley, can you explain to the committee how your question is relevant to the consideration of the budget estimates?

**Ms DAVIS:** I was speaking, Madam Chair, to page 3 of the SDS which was around the child protection reforms. That is the relevance. Minister, I refer to the service standards on page 4 of the SDS and the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system. We know that there is a major concern with the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system. I note the minister's commitment again to the reform of the system.

I would like to ask some questions around the Indigenous cadetship program, for which there was a budget line item in the \$406 million reform package. That was recommendation 10.5: \$2.4 million over five years. Other than this program being listed on your website, what is the government doing to actively promote this program?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** This program is an important program. It supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attain qualifications to become child safety officers. The department implemented the scholarships and cadetships program. To date, 12 people are participating in the program—11 scholarships and one cadetship. We continue to work with all stakeholders in child protection to promote this important program.

I am extremely passionate about reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care. It is a longstanding and complex issue. We are determined to do better. It is not okay that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are five times more likely to be the subject of a notification, six times more likely to be substantiated for harm and eight times more likely to be in out-of-home care. A key priority for this government is to listen and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to co-design and implement community driven services. There are many child and family reform initiatives underway that will directly or indirectly help in reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation. This includes the community based intake and extra Intensive Family Support Services, the new practice framework and the specific Indigenous projects underway, of which the scholarships and cadetships program is one.

**CHAIR:** Before we move to the next question, I would like to advise the minister that, although you agreed to take a question on notice by midday today, the committee has resolved that 12 noon on Monday, 31 August is the deadline for questions on notice.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you for that, Madam Chair. I can report that the KPMG audit cost is \$242,685 and is sourced from existing funds within DPC.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr PYNE:** Minister, could you please advise how Multicultural Week and celebrating the various communities that call Queensland home, such as the mighty Papua New Guinean community, contributes to promoting social cohesion, particularly in regional Queensland, as stated in the departmental overview on page 2 of the SDS?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question and for his involvement in Queensland Multicultural Week, which officially kicked off last Saturday, 22 August and will be celebrated until 30 August. The aim of the week is to celebrate inclusion and fully recognise Queensland as a multicultural society. It is a time for communities to come together and acknowledge the rich cultures and traditions that make up our great state. The Palaszczuk government's support for Multicultural Week demonstrates our strong commitment and dedication to enhancing a welcoming, inclusive and harmonious Queensland.

We also recognise the importance of promoting multiculturalism across the entire state and recognising the great work that has been done by individuals and organisations to promote harmony and cultural diversity in regional, remote and rural Queensland. I was pleased to officially launch Queensland Multicultural Week at the Australian Italian Festival in Ingham on 1 August. This was the first time that Multicultural Week was launched outside of the Queen Street Mall. It was a great day to celebrate not just Italian culture but all of regional Queensland's rich diverse cultures with the local residents in Ingham. I would like to thank the event organisers and the Ingham community for their generous hospitality.

I also acknowledge members of the PNG community and others in the gallery today. I would like to give my particular thanks to Pino Giandomenico, the president of the Italian Festival and the former mayor of Ingham, who does such a fantastic job preserving and promoting Italian culture and multiculturalism in his community. Grazie!

A big part of Multicultural Week is the multicultural awards. The awards promote the benefits of multiculturalism and celebrate the work and volunteering efforts of individuals and businesses that support an inclusive society. I was so proud to hear that this year the judging panel received more than 123 award nominations, the highest in five years. One in five of those nominations was received from outside South-East Queensland. I was pleased that a number of the winners of this year's awards were recognised for their efforts in promoting multiculturalism in regional Queensland: Daphne Fung, the winner of the Volunteer of the Year award, for example, is the founder and vice-president of the Toowoomba International Multicultural Society who has spent countless hours volunteering to help increase cultural understanding in her local community; and the incredible young people from Welcoming Intercultural Neighbours who run the Gladstone Youth for Cultural Diversity group, coordinate cultural events and innovative activities in Gladstone that promote social inclusion, cultural learning and sharing in their local community.

The Ethno Roadshow initiative is once again celebrating the state's multiculturalism through a cross-cultural music tour that expanded this year. The 11 leading culturally diverse artists who are currently on the road have been performing a series of free concerts and workshops across multiple locations in regional Queensland, from Dalby to Cairns. I acknowledge the program coordinator of the Ethno Roadshow, Jo Pratt from BEMAC, who has done an exceptional job organising all the performances and workshops, which have been thoroughly enjoyed by Queenslanders right across the state.

**CHAIR:** Prior to the next question, I, too, would like to acknowledge the visiting delegation from Papua New Guinea who are in the gallery today. I call the member for Dalrymple.

**Mr KNUTH:** First of all, I would like to acknowledge and thank the government, the department of communities and departmental officers for their response to my constituents following the tragic events at the Serves You Right Cafe in Ravenshoe. On behalf of the KAP, I thank the government and the departmental officers for their response to recent tragedies in the Mount Isa electorate. Minister, I refer to page 10 of the SDS and community recovery, and I ask: can you detail the disaster recovery assistance made available for Ravenshoe following the tragic events at the Serves You Right Cafe in Ravenshoe and the explosion in Mount Isa?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of the Ravenshoe community and for working so hard with me, other ministers and members of my department to ensure his community gets the services they need in such a tough time. The gas explosion at the Serves You

Right Cafe on 9 June resulted in two deaths and severe injuries to more than 20 people. My heart goes out to the families and loved ones of Nicole Dempsey and Margaret Clark, who lost their lives in this terrible accident. There are also those who suffered serious harm and have a long road to recovery ahead of them.

It has been a traumatic event for the whole community. Many people in the town are still doing it tough and are struggling to come to terms with what has happened. That is why I was pleased that my department provided additional hours to the Ravenshoe Community Centre and psychological first aid from UnitingCare Community in the immediate aftermath. The community centre is leading community based recovery efforts, supported by the department and local regional community sector partners such as Community Services Tablelands and other agencies including GIVIT, to provide a coordinated response. The department has provided the Ravenshoe Community Centre with \$159,509 for an extra 1½ positions to address individual and community support needs. Again, I thank the member for Dalrymple for his hard work supporting the community. You have certainly been an effective advocate in getting this additional support for the community centre which will provide long-term recovery for so many residents.

The Palaszczuk government also came through with additional funding to the Tablelands Regional Council to employ a community development and engagement officer for 12 months to assist the community with the recovery task ahead. We have also contributed \$20,000 to the Ravenshoe appeal being run by GIVIT. I am pleased to advise the member that the total funds donated to the appeal was \$540,586.95 as at 20 August 2015. An independent Ravenshoe appeal distribution committee was established to distribute the GIVIT appeal funds, and it works in partnership with the Ravenshoe recovery group. The appeal committee includes representatives from the Tablelands Regional Council, GIVIT, Red Cross and my department. To date, \$166,000 plus \$22,000 in value of donated items have been distributed across the community to individuals and families. \$53,000 was distributed to victims and their families within the first month of this disaster.

As the injured are being discharged from hospital, the fund is now addressing longer term needs. For example, \$20,000 has been approved for one family for the installation of medically required air conditioning, water filtration systems and home modifications. There have been no requests for assistance that have been declined by the appeal committee. The department will continue to work with the Ravenshoe Community Centre and the regional council to support the delivery of community led initiatives to help Ravenshoe rebuild and recover.

**Mr KNUTH:** Minister, I refer to page 10 of the SDS and community recovery, and I ask: how is the government ensuring that agencies are working together to deliver specialist services like occupational therapists and physiotherapists to burns victims as part of the community recovery program from the tragic event at the Serves You Right Cafe?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am working closely with my colleagues to ensure the Ravenshoe community is getting the support it needs. We responded quickly to make sure that injured people and their families were well supported. Specific questions about ongoing health response I can follow up with my colleague the Minister for Health, but I know from my discussions with him that Health has worked hand in glove with other agencies to provide victim support and will continue to do so. I do know that Queensland Health, under the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme, supported at least 18 family members to come to Brisbane. Queensland Health social work units provide support to victims and families in respective hospitals.

As I said earlier, as the injured are being discharged from hospital the appeal fund will move to address the longer term needs of the community. I know that the member for Dalrymple will keep us well informed of the needs of the community. As I said before, you have been a fantastic advocate for that community. My regional director, Michael Linnan, visited Ravenshoe yesterday and will follow up with the health and hospital CEO.

**Mr KNUTH:** Minister, I again refer to page 10 of the SDS and community recovery, and I ask: what plans does the department have to deliver much needed long-term services like the community development officer and counsellors as part of the community recovery following the tragic event at the Serves You Right Cafe?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Sometimes some of the more difficult challenges do arise after the immediate aftermath of an incident such as this, and making sure that we have the support services for the longer term recovery is so vital. As recovery processes are continuing to work with local counsellors, you, the Ravenshoe Community Centre and the regional council, we will ensure longer term recovery services are available. The emotional toll of this incident is extremely high, and we cannot underestimate the



longer term impacts that will have. These will not be healed overnight, and we are committed to providing ongoing support. As I said earlier, we have identified funds to support an extra 1½ positions at the Ravenshoe Community Centre to support the community's needs. The Ravenshoe community, as you know, have been very clear that they want to lead their own recovery, and we are here to support them every step of the way. Again, I know that you have been advocating very hard for your community to lead some of these recovery initiatives. Again, I urge you to keep in touch and continue your advocacy on behalf of your community. My door is always open, as you know, as are the doors of my cabinet colleagues.

**Mr KNUTH:** Thanks, Minister. I refer to page 2 of the SDS, creating diverse and inclusive communities, and I ask: there is a significant need with rural and regional communities to engage Indigenous youth with alternative programs that both align with the wishes of local elders and equip youth for their careers within the agriculture and beef industry. Is the minister willing to support small, locally run programs such as the Mona project that will be receiving funding?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I am unaware of the specific program, but as Minister for Youth I am always looking at ways to better engage our young people and to drive community led initiatives. We are continuing to engage with young people. We have an innovative new program to engage with young people. I had the pleasure of meeting a number of young Indigenous leaders at the Indigenous Youth Parliament program. I am happy to continue to work with you about specific community led initiatives in your own local community.

**Mr KNUTH:** Thanks, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Minister, page 8 of the SDS mentions the government's response to the *Not now, not ever* report. I am really interested to hear about the activities of your department in the implementation of the response.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question, and I know she is a strong advocate for victims of domestic and family violence. I was absolutely delighted to stand with the Premier and the Hon. Dame Quentin Bryce last week to announce the government's response to the *Not now, not ever* domestic and family violence report. I was horrified to learn when I became the Minister for Communities and Minister for Women that Queensland has been the only state without a strategy to tackle this scourge on our communities. We now have a unique opportunity to really make a difference and tackle this important issue. We are determined to deliver on this. There is huge momentum behind tackling domestic and family violence, and we are absolutely prepared to tackle this issue.

Over four years, we are investing \$31.3 million to implement the high-priority initiatives. It is a huge undertaking which starts with all of us—every one of us—to start challenging the attitudes and beliefs that underpin the cycle of violence. The government's response includes a range of actions—actions in schools, in workplaces, in our neighbourhoods and in our justice systems—and, vitally, more effective coordinated help for victims. As I have said a number of times, we are spending \$66 million this financial year on preventing domestic and family violence and better support for victims, but more needs to be done. We are accepting all of the 140 recommendations. We have brought together representatives from all the key departments to develop a strategy which we are now taking to the people of Queensland. We want to work with communities right across Queensland to make sure that we can deliver local services which fit local needs and that all parts of the community play their role in this together.

The draft strategy sits within my own department, and I am proud to be the lead on this important undertaking. In addition, responsibility for running domestic and family violence shelters across Queensland now sits with my portfolio and this includes the development of the two new crisis shelters. The budget allocates \$8 million over two years in capital funding to set up the shelters, and this is an urgent priority for us. They are in fact the first new shelters built and funded by government in 25 years. These shelters will provide practical support and help for women and their children fleeing violence. It is vital that when women have the courage to speak out against abuse that we have the services they need. Those services work together to provide wraparound care for victims, joining up the service response so there is a seamless level of care provided.

My department will also lead the government's actions to improve service system integration so that people affected by domestic and family violence receive the help and support they need no matter where they live or where they turn to for help. This will involve working closely with other government agencies, including police, courts, probation and parole, housing and health. Non-government service providers will also be key partners.

At a local level, communities will be asked to provide input to ensure integrated service models suit local strengths. I have had many conversations since being appointed with Amy Compton-Keen, who is the director of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre on the Gold Coast, about the importance of an integrated response that brings together various government departments and community services to ensure that women are kept safe, that perpetrators are held to account and that no-one falls through the cracks.

An integrated response requires the following: a common risk assessment framework to make sure that specialist and mainstream services can identify those people most at risk, a multiagency response for high-risk cases, and information-sharing guidelines to make sure that government and NGOs can pass on the information they need to prevent harm. Recommendations 9 and 74 of the Bryce report relate to trialling integrated service response models in three settings—an urban centre, a regional centre with an outreach to surrounding rural and remote communities, and a discrete Indigenous community. This will really give our government an opportunity to test and evaluate what works best in different locations to inform integrated response models across the state.

So, as you can see, my department has hit the ground running on the implementation of the government's response to the *Not now, not ever* report. We are deeply committed to addressing domestic and family violence, and we will not stop until we see some of these dreadful statistics turn around.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Pine Rivers.

**Miss BOYD:** I refer to page 8 of the Service Delivery Statement and note that the Queensland government has announced a commitment to join Our Watch. Can the minister please advise how national engagement with Our Watch benefits Queensland's response to domestic and family violence?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. As a volunteer working in my local community at the Centre Against Sexual Violence and also as a board member of the Logan women's health centre, I saw firsthand in my own community the impact that domestic and family violence has on women and their children, and I also saw the dedication and determination of those grassroots services who work tirelessly to help victims of this insidious problem. No-one should be in any doubt about the commitment and passion that this government has to tackle domestic and family violence. We absolutely are delivering on this.

I was so pleased to meet with Natasha Stott Despoja from Our Watch earlier this year to ensure that Queensland joins this important organisation. It is a foundation which works to prevent violence against women and children. I believe that Queenslanders overall are people who value fairness and respect each other, and this is completely at odds with the fact that our state has a huge problem with violence against women. When we look away or excuse people for violence or behaviour which demeans women, our community grows weaker. It is time we stepped up and challenged the attitudes that underpin violence against women and their children. I want the next generation of young boys and girls to grow up in a state where they are equals and where violence and mistreatment of women is not tolerated. Our Watch, which is chaired by Natasha Stott Despoja, was established in 2013 to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children. Our Watch takes a preventative approach which they describe as being about challenging the deeply ingrained attitudes, beliefs and distorted values that give rise to men's violence against women and it includes engaging the institutions that reinforce, allow or do not challenge these attitudes to make change.

The need to address and challenge the attitudes that breed domestic violence was one of the central themes in the *Not now, not ever* report. Membership of Our Watch signals Queensland's intention to play a key role in a national movement to eliminate violence against women and their children, and I was so pleased to announce earlier this year that Queensland is finally joining the Our Watch foundation. Membership of Our Watch does signal our intention that we are taking this extremely seriously. Queensland now along with other states will have input into the development by Our Watch of the national framework to prevent violence against women and their children. This builds upon the work that we are already doing to implement this strategy. It is absolutely essential that we recognise the role that everyone plays in combatting domestic and family violence.

Targeting young people to encourage attitudes that support equality and respect is essential if we are able to prevent violence and reverse the alarming statistics of violence against women. Our Watch does this through The Line, which is a social marketing campaign for young people aged between 12 and 20 focused on changing attitudes and behaviours that condone, justify and excuse

violence against women. I am so pleased that within a couple of months of coming to office we acted upon the invitation to join Our Watch, which the former government in 2013 declined. I seek leave to table the previous government's response to the invitation to join Our Watch.

**CHAIR:** Does the committee agree to table that?

**Mr McARDLE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Miss BOYD:** Page 8 of the SDS mentions work to implement the recommendations from the *Not now, not ever* report. Can you advise if the government is working with business to implement other recommendations in the report, including the development of training packages for workplaces and their employees about domestic and family violence?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Last week the Premier and I launched the government's response to the report, and we also launched the draft strategy which we are now consulting with the Queensland community on to make sure we have a strategy which is created by Queenslanders for Queenslanders. While I absolutely applaud the former government's decision to commission the Bryce report, I also note that during the three years of the Newman government there was no strategy in place to tackle this important issue, and that is something we are absolutely changing.

The *Not now, not ever* report has a range of recommendations for business and workplaces, recognising the important role that employers can play in supporting people experiencing domestic violence and in raising awareness among all workers about domestic violence. The only way we can prevent domestic and family violence is by the whole community working together.

The Queensland police receive 181 reports of domestic violence every day and we know so many more incidents go unreported. Too many women and children in Queensland are suffering and we need to take action. Two of the recommendations in the *Not now, not ever* report deal directly with the need for a training package to provide more appropriate responses to the issue of domestic violence in the workplace and the role that CEO Challenge can play in this. As an employment lawyer for many years, I firmly believe that workplaces have a responsibility to support their employees with issues in and outside the workplace and that businesses benefit when they do this.

As we all know, what happens outside the workplace impacts on what happens in the workplace. In terms of sheer economics, it is more cost effective to support an employee who has experienced domestic violence than it is to replace that employee if they leave the workplace. An Access Economics study into the cost of domestic violence to the Australian economy calculated that dealing with absenteeism in the workplace costs \$14.2 million a year, whereas the cost of replacing staff was \$36.6 million. That is why my department has worked with CEO Challenge to develop an online workplace training program—Recognise, Respond and Refer—which provides an important resource for employers to raise awareness and support staff experiencing domestic and family violence. I was really pleased to launch this training program at Minter Ellison's domestic violence prevention month breakfast. The collaboration agreement allows the Queensland government to use the product at no further cost, while CEO Challenge as product owners will promote it as resources within the private sector and non-government organisations. The program is being rolled out across all Queensland government departments to promote positive cultural change in the Queensland public sector, with 10 public sector departments already signed up to the CEO Challenge and 16 currently utilising the domestic and family violence online awareness raising program, Recognise, Respond and Refer.

It is clear that supporting staff affected by domestic and family violence makes economic sense, as well as giving emotional support and creating an opportunity to help bring about social change. The government will introduce additional paid leave for victims of domestic and family violence. I am pleased to see that many big corporate employers are also introducing paid leave for staff affected by domestic and family violence.

**Miss BOYD:** I refer to page 8 of the SDS which discusses funding to tackle family and domestic violence. I note that the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month occurred earlier this year. Can the minister advise how, in her role as Minister for Women, this month was recognised and how it was beneficial to preventing domestic and family violence in Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Domestic violence prevention month is held in May every year. This year there was an even greater focus as the media and community attention on the insidious issue in our state really ramped up. I attended a series of events across the month,

including the annual candlelight vigil at South Bank with the Premier, and I was heartened by just how much determination and passion I encountered everywhere I went. At every event, I found people who were keen to act and ensure this issue was recognised and acknowledged and that actions were taken to fight it. The government funded 36 organisations to run activities across the state during May to help bring public attention to the issue of domestic and family violence, and many other events were held as well.

There was a wide variety of opportunities for people to show their support by attending a local event or simply by talking about the issues with others and bringing it out into the open. In Logan I helped our local community organisation, WFS, hand out mini footballs with antiDV messages at a football match. The Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Centre on the Gold Coast curated a violence against women international poster exhibition at Upper Coomera. The exhibition, which I launched, highlighted that violence against women is a global problem of epidemic proportions and that violence crosses every social and economic class, every religion, every race and every ethnicity.

I also launched the government funded Trust Your Instinct campaign, which urges anyone who suspects someone they know is being abused to trust their instinct and call DVConnect before serious harm occurs. This year's campaign focused on raising awareness about the danger of controlling behaviours. Domestic violence takes many ugly forms including verbal abuse, stalking, threats or controlling what a person can do and say. This sort of behaviour can also lead to physical abuse. We worked hard to get the Trust Your Instinct message out in communities across Queensland. Only by bringing this issue out from behind closed doors can we progress the elimination of domestic and family violence.

Our government's response to the *Not now, not ever* report recognises the vital role that awareness raising and education play in helping to break the cycle of violence. In fact, the *Not now, not ever* report specifically recommended that the good work being done during domestic and family violence month continue. I look forward to progressing activities for next year, along with ensuring that we take as many other opportunities as possible to raise this important issue.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, I refer you to page 4 of the SDS which outlines the Child Safety data on substantiated harm. There have been some recent concerns in Tasmania where staff have reportedly failed to follow up on around 151 cases of alleged abuse of children. Is the minister confident that all notifications of child abuse and neglect received by the department have been investigated?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I can confirm that they have been investigated or are being investigated.

**Ms DAVIS:** So there are no backlogs in the department?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I might refer that question to the director-general.

**Mr Hogan:** Thank you very much, Minister. The member may be referring to the data that we publish in relation to the number of intakes, the number of concern reports, the number of notifications and the number of substantiations. There is in our information system a period after which the initial operational data is reported where data is then checked, cleansed and updated. There is a lag in our data. One of my priorities is to ensure we actually have best quality data entered as quickly as possible so that we can be very clear that we are not missing any child at risk who requires investigation or assessment, particularly where there is substantiation, or action to intervene and protect that child.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Director-General. I am sorry, I did not catch all of that. Are you saying that you are working on improving, or there are potential issues there?

**Mr Hogan:** There has been a longstanding issue about a lag with the periods for which we collect and report operational data. There is a two-month window provided for checks to be run to make sure that if there is a gap, for example, in relation to whether an investigation has been completed or a substantiation followed up, we go back and make sure that that has been done, firstly, but, secondly, that the data is updated. There is sometimes a lag. One of my priorities—and I have recently met with my senior staff—is to make sure that we continue to impress on our service delivery staff the importance of making sure that that data is contemporary and that we are checking that to ensure every single matter is followed up.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I might add that there is some good news in this area. The number of intakes has decreased by 11.6 per cent and notifications also continue to decrease, down 4.7 per cent. I am absolutely confident that the department has acted on or is acting on all concern reports. There is some good news about the notifications and the number of intakes both decreasing.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, could you advise over what period that data was collected?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We can get you that. We will take that on notice.

**Ms DAVIS:** Director-General, can you provide some data—and I understand the lag and the issues that you have outlined—on how many notifications are currently under investigation and how many have not yet commenced the investigation process?

**Mr Hogan:** Given you are asking for current data, I will take that on notice.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Sorry, Madam Chair, in relation to the last question, we have that. The trends that I outlined are at 31 March 2015 compared to 31 March 2014.

**Ms DAVIS:** That is terrific. That sounds like the reform program that we commenced in government is starting to yield some positive results. Minister, on Tuesday in estimates the education minister indicated that there were 27 cases where children were at significant risk of harm but were missed because of an IT issue. Could you advise the committee when you learned that there could be an additional 300 cases where children could be at risk?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I say at the outset that the safety of children will always be paramount to this government. When the department learned about OneSchool emails not being received by Queensland police, my department immediately began double-checking records and systems for any issues from our end. Up until this point, referrals from school personnel to Child Safety had been occurring in consistent numbers. For the year ending 31 March, more than 18,000 reports from school personnel had been received by Child Safety and much of this was through the OneSchool system.

Since we learned about the IT issue with OneSchool, we have worked with Education through a thorough matching and checking process to look into the reports going back to the commencement of OneSchool in September 2013. The initial check went back to January; that is when we found 27 reports of children not known to us. We have now gone back to September 2013. We have absolutely erred on the side of caution and we have utilised a high-level matching process to identify any referrals that may not have been received over those many, many months.

After rounds of automated and manual checks I can confirm that 272 matters were identified as potential matters not received from September 2013 to 18 January 2015. Our IT staff and child safety officers, from after-hours services and from all our regional intake officers, have put in a huge amount of effort to get all these matters checked. Each of these 272 matters has now been assessed and the appropriate action taken in every case.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister, but my question was: can you advise the committee when you learned there would be an additional 300 cases where children were at risk? What day did you find out?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Sorry, what date did I find out?

**Ms DAVIS:** What was the date that you became aware that there could possibly be an additional 300 cases where children could be at risk?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Monday of this week.

**Ms DAVIS:** So beyond what you have just indicated there, will there be some additional resources from the department to continue—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I said, all of the 272 that we have matched—and this is a very, very long process. There are manual checks going back to September 2013. Preliminary checks identified 272 matters. They are all being acted upon.

**Ms DAVIS:** Can the minister advise what level of risk these children were at?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The 272 matters have been acted upon or are being acted upon and all the appropriate action is being taken.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, can you advise the committee whether any of these children were at significant risk?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As the member is aware, Child Safety receives more than 300 reports each and every day about concerns people hold for a child. The known protective needs for any one child can change with every piece of information that a child safety officer receives. These officers provide advice and referral and record and investigate matters where appropriate. The question of safety or risk to children is a day-to-day question that child safety officers are routinely asking for more than 300 children every day. I have to say that these officers do a tremendous job.

**Ms DAVIS:** They do.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** All of these cases are being actioned. They are being given absolute priority and they have all been acted upon or are being acted upon.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. I agree with you: Child Safety staff do a magnificent job in often very difficult circumstances. So we agree on two things today. But, Minister, I am not asking for any identifying information about particular children in that 300 cohort. What I am asking is: of those 200-odd to 300 that you spoke about, were any of those children at significant risk of harm?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Of the cases that were not known to us, none so far have required intervention.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you. Minister, I would like to talk a little bit about the parenting program that you have spoken about today here at estimates. It is noted on page 4 of the SDS. I note that it is new funding of \$6.6 million, not reprioritisation. What I do note is that this program is funded for two years and there will be an evaluation of the benefits thereafter. Having met with PPP, I note that they have their own evaluation methodologies. Will your decision as to whether to continue to fund PPP be based on their self-assessment tool, or will you be engaging someone to perform an independent review?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am always very pleased to talk about the announcement that PPP will now be available universally to all Queensland parents. It is \$6.6 million over two years to trial this universal access for parenting programs. I do know that PPP previously approached the former government but, unfortunately, no funding was provided for universal parenting support. I am really pleased that we are providing this program, given it was something that was raised by parents themselves under the Talking Families campaign run by the Family and Child Commission. Parents will be able to access this program voluntarily in a range of ways: self-help workshops, online seminars, one-on-one consultations and individually designed programs.

In the evaluation of this important program we will work with PPP providers to establish a robust evaluation of the initiative. That information will then help us understand how the rollout has helped parents and children and the extent to which practitioners are equipped to support families. A range of data will be collected to inform this evaluation, which is being conducted by the University of Queensland. It will be rigorous, it will be independently validated and it will stand up to public scrutiny. We also want to know from parents about how it has helped them. This will all be part of the evaluation.

**Ms DAVIS:** How many parents do you expect or project might access the program?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We will just get that information for you and take it on notice.

**Ms DAVIS:** You have signed off on some funding—\$6.6 million—and you do not know—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have that information. It is estimated that up to 140,000 parents will access the program over two years through various means.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** The time has elapsed this morning. Before we adjourn, member for Aspley, the minister answered your first question on notice. I would just like to ask if you are happy with the answer.

**Ms DAVIS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The committee will now adjourn for morning tea. The hearing will resume at 11.30 am with a continuation of the examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth and Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 11.00 am to 11.30 am**



**CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now continue its examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. I would also like to welcome to the committee Ms Tarnya Smith MP, member for Mount Ommaney.

**Mrs SMITH:** I thank the committee for allowing me to participate in today's proceedings. Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS, 'Ministerial and portfolio responsibilities'. You are the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. There are multiple portfolios which are very important and sometimes quite complex, and I understand you are running a couple of reviews and a task force. As a first-time member and minister, can I ask if you feel that you are across all of the portfolio areas? Do you have your finger on the pulse?

**CHAIR:** Member for Mount Ommaney, you are asking for the minister's opinion. Can you please rephrase the question or are you happy to answer the question, Minister?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to answer the question. You do not put your hand up for this job unless you are prepared to work hard. I am absolutely across my portfolios. As I said earlier, I am really privileged to have portfolios which align so closely with my own values about helping families, building cohesion in our multicultural communities and supporting women and children who are fleeing domestic violence.

In my first months in office I have had twice as many meetings with community stakeholders as the former minister for communities and disabilities. I believe I am out there talking to community groups and across the detail of my portfolios. There are also incredible overlaps in my portfolios between domestic violence and child protection, as I am sure the member would understand, and between domestic violence and supporting our CALD communities and of course community groups, who are our partners in delivering services to vulnerable Queenslanders right across my portfolio.

**Mrs SMITH:** In your introduction you said that you would like to make a stamp on your portfolio, yet six months later it appears that the LNP's policy and action plan is still on the department's multiculturalism website. I seek leave to table these documents.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted.

**Mrs SMITH:** The action plan as well as the cultural diversity policy are both still on the website six months on. What is your commitment to the previous government's policy with regard to the cultural diversity policy and the action plan?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. As was evident in my opening remarks, this government is committed to introducing multicultural recognition legislation. Queensland, which is one of the only jurisdictions that does not have a legislative statement about our commitment to multiculturalism, will now join other states in having that commitment to multicultural communities in our legislation.

The former government's cultural diversity policy and action plan, I have to say, had no legislative base and limited built-in accountability measures. I am working on developing a multicultural development recognition bill which will also include a multicultural action policy and charter. They will embed the principles and work of government. There will be a set of outcomes for government action. There will be a coordinated whole-of-government approach to developing policies and providing services that are culturally appropriate. Importantly, in the draft bill there will be accountability measures for every government agency to promote the charter and report on the action plan.

Since coming into office my department has undertaken an audit of the former government's cultural diversity action plan and I can report to the member that of the 170 actions, 129 are continuing, 26 have been completed and 15 have either ceased or are no longer appropriate. Once the draft bill is introduced into the parliament and once that bill is passed, there will be a new multicultural action policy and charter that has a legislative basis and that holds all government agencies to account to make sure that the services we are providing are culturally appropriate.

**Mrs SMITH:** How much is that going to cost?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As the member can see in the budget papers, we have allocated \$770,000 a year to rebuild Multicultural Affairs. Multicultural Affairs lost a number of its staff under the former government's fiscal repair. I draw your attention to the question on notice and my answer that was provided to the question on notice about the \$770,000 per annum that is rebuilding Multicultural Affairs to support that legislation.

I would like to point out to the member that we are committed to rebuilding Multicultural Affairs Queensland after significant cuts by the former LNP government, and this really is just the start. As the former minister for multicultural affairs, Glen Elmes, said at the 2012 estimates hearing, there was a reduction of \$1.255 million in grant and program savings in the 2012-13 budget, including—

... \$335,000 in budget savings applied to CAMS, LAMP and the ECCQ programs; \$500,000 in savings in the multicultural partnerships grants; \$100,000 from the reduction in the Queensland Multicultural Festival budget of \$250,000 in 2011-12; \$60,000 from the cessation of the Premier's Multicultural Photographic Awards; \$50,000 from the cessation of the interpreter and translator scholarships; \$125,000 from the cessation of the planned anti-racism strategy given the release of the National Anti-Racism Strategy; and \$85,000 from the reduction in funding to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters ...

As my answer to the question on notice states, this funding is essential in order to rebuild Multicultural Affairs Queensland and to support the introduction of legislation which reaffirms our commitment to multiculturalism and multicultural communities. It will provide a number of positions to form a secretariat to support the new advisory council as well.

**Mrs SMITH:** Minister, you were quoting Glen Elmes in 2012. The extensive amount of work in this comprehensive document, which came out in 2014, talks about how we will measure and ensure that we have those four important areas such as language and participation. More importantly, let us talk about economic participation for the CALD or multicultural community. As I said, it has been six months now and we still have Glen Elmes on there touted as the minister for multicultural affairs and also Rob Cavallucci—I am sure it would distress the current member for Brisbane Central to see his name still on the website. But that is another area and I am sure that, as you are across your portfolios, you may want to look at the website which is six months old—

**CHAIR:** Point of order, member for Mount Ommaney. You are making a speech rather than asking a question. Under standing order 112, can you please get to the point and ask a question or I will rule it out of order.

**Mrs SMITH:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Given the scant detail in the SDS with regard to economic independence and participation for people of a CALD background, can you detail what the cornerstones of your policy will be?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Absolutely. I thank the member for the question. This government has identified job creation as its core policy objective to lead Queensland to a prosperous and inclusive future. This government recognises the worth of investing in multiculturalism and will ensure that our government is responsive to the needs and issues of the people of Queensland. We take our migrant communities and multicultural communities seriously, and we will invest strategically and wisely in them. We believe that people from all cultural backgrounds have the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, economic, social and cultural life here in Queensland.

We also recognise the importance of economic participation by newly arrived migrants and refugees as the key to successful settlement. After speaking with a number of representatives of migrant communities across the state as well as migrant and refugee agencies like Access, Migrant Services and MDA, what is clear is that jobs are essential for their community, livelihood and civic engagement. A number of migrants and refugees, particularly people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, encounter difficulties in obtaining employment mostly due to barriers including insufficient language proficiency, limited work experience in Australia and overseas qualifications not recognised by local employers. That is why we are reintroducing the highly successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative.

The Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative is part of the Palaszczuk government's \$1.6 billion Working Queensland Jobs plan and a key feature of the government's vocational, education and training investment plan. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are identified as one of the target client groups for this initiative, and larger benefits with more sustainable outcomes are expected. To sustain employment outcomes and business development support for migrants and refugees, Multicultural Affairs will work with agencies responsible for the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative to foster delivery of culturally appropriate support and longer-term employment assistance.

**Mrs SMITH:** Minister, what targets for employment positions do you have in mind?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I have said, the government's key policy objective is creating jobs. Part of that program is to create jobs for our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This was a highly successful program which was scrapped by the former government. This is central to our key election commitment to deliver jobs in Queensland and, as I have said, one of the target groups for this program being rolled out is culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

**Mrs SMITH:** I will give you a hand. Last Tuesday the Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships outlined the job creation targets set under the previous government and they included CALD and ATSI people in a single target. He separated them out and specifically set a target for ATSI people alone, leaving core job creation strategies in limbo. What is your job creation for the CALD and where can I see the targets in the SDS?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I have said, this government is absolutely committed to ensuring that migrants and refugees in our CALD communities gain employment. We are reintroducing the highly successful program Skilling Queenslanders for Work. This also supports our decision to continue and expand the Community Action for a Multicultural Society programs and the CAMS program, which the previous government decided to scrap. These two initiatives will better support our migrant and refugee CALD communities gain employment.

**Mrs SMITH:** If you have not set a target, how can you measure it?



**CHAIR:** One moment, member for Mount Ommaney. The minister has answered the question. Please move on to the next question.

**Mrs SMITH:** Minister, if you have not set a target how do you measure it?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Questions about the target in relation to this program should be directed to the Treasurer.

**Mrs SMITH:** No, the Treasurer separated it as part of the ATSI partnerships under his portfolio. The two were combined. How do we then measure what is going to happen, because you do talk about economic participation being important? I think it is a reasonable question to ask how you measure the target and what the target is.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mount Ommaney, can you please—

**Mr McARDLE:** The member is asking a valid question when you consider that the minister has made certain statements.

**CHAIR:** The member is being argumentative and I would ask her to kindly rephrase her question.

**Mr McARDLE:** The member is simply asking, I think, a back-and-forth question trying to clarify the position.

**CHAIR:** The minister has answered the question, so could you please rephrase or kindly move on to the next question.

**Mrs SMITH:** Thank you, Chair, and again I return to the SDS at page 2 where it talks about advancing strategies for multicultural Queensland and CALD people. I am interested that on the website you are promoting the former LNP government's strategies, which clearly set out economic participation and how we are going to manage the language gaps and barriers and also the education. I am just interested to see how you are going to advance those strategies that are in place currently on your website which you are promoting.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The former government's policy is still on the website. I have already reported the work that the department has done to report against this policy, but this government has a very different policy approach because we are introducing legislation. Like Victoria, like New South Wales and like South Australia, for the first time in Queensland we will have a commitment to multiculturalism enshrined in legislation. This was a bill that was introduced when Labor was in opposition by the now Premier, and members of the LNP voted against this legislation.

The current policy—the LNP's policy—that is on the website will stay there until we have replaced it with our legislative policy. The accountability mechanisms in this bill include agencies being able to report on outcomes of the multicultural policy—that does not currently happen under your policy—as well as reporting on the implementation of an action plan; requiring chief executives to inform staff of the charter and new policy and build capacity to translate that charter into practice; providing for the council to undertake consultations with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, followed up by public communications with key stakeholders after each meeting; and, importantly, strengthening data collection across relevant agencies to improve the evidence base to better target programs and services. This is something our multicultural communities have been asking for.

In the consultations to date with the interim advisory group, I have to say that the feedback from key leaders in our multicultural communities has been overwhelmingly positive. Yes, your former policy remains on the website until we have introduced our bill which will create a new policy and, importantly, have accountability measures across government. Stakeholders are extremely pleased that we are committed for the first time in Queensland to have a statement enshrined in legislation about just how committed we are to our multicultural communities.

**Mrs SMITH:** Thank you, Minister. You are spending \$775,000 of taxpayers' money and at the end of the day we cannot identify how many jobs that will create. Is that what you are saying? It is some \$775,000 yet we cannot point to where your policy is going to be different from the current policy and we cannot point to how we are going to measure the job targets, Minister?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I think there are a few parts to that question. We have not developed our new policy yet because we are working with key stakeholders on our interim advisory group before we implement a draft bill that will for the first time recognise in legislation Queensland's commitment to multiculturalism. That will then create a policy and an action plan and a charter. Where the \$770,000 per annum to rebuild Multicultural Affairs Queensland goes is provided in the answer to the question on notice.

**Mrs SMITH:** Thank you, Minister. I refer to the SDS. I heard you earlier talking about the Trust Your Instinct campaign. You launched the Trust Your Instinct campaign on 1 May this year. Given your extensive involvement with women's legal services and domestic violence in your own electorate, I am very interested to know: on 20 March, when you received the same email as I received from a person alleging domestic violence against one of your former members, did you trust your instinct then? I know I trusted mine and I responded. I would be interested to know if you trusted your instinct.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mount Ommaney, I remind you that your question needs to be relevant to the appropriation bills being discussed.

**Mrs SMITH:** And I believe it is when we have already talked about the violence prevention strategy and domestic violence as well as the minister introducing her Trust Your Instinct plan on earlier occasions. It has already been discussed in today's appropriations.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to take the question. I have previously answered this question in parliament during question time. I refer the member to *Hansard*.

**Mrs SMITH:** But, Minister, did you trust your instinct and what was your instinct? On one hand I have to ask the question—

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order.

**Mrs SMITH:**—are you leading by example?

**CHAIR:** There is a point of order, member for Mount Ommaney.

**Miss BOYD:** Madam Chair, the minister has answered the question.

**Mr McARDLE:** Madam Chair, on the point of order: the member has the right to seek clarification. The minister has taken the question and therefore has opened the question up for debate. The minister has provided an answer, but the member has the right to seek clarification of that answer at any time. I think the minister acknowledged that fact as well.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Caloundra, but I also remind the committee that the minister may answer a question in whatever way she sees proper. I would remind the minister that it would assist the committee if you could keep your answer relevant to the question. I call the minister to continue.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have previously answered this question. This is a matter under police investigation.

**Mrs SMITH:** Oh, okay! All right.

**Ms DAVIS:** Another protection racket.

**Mrs SMITH:** It is another protection racket.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I note from page 4 of your SDS and a list of new measures in Budget Paper No. 4 that a number of existing programs are being expanded and new programs are being rolled out to help families. Minister, how are these programs addressing the root causes of children needing protection?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I said in my opening statement, the area of child protection should be above politics and we have had a bipartisan approach to reform in this area. I am pleased to say that a number of the initiatives aimed at early intervention and prevention that are having a positive impact on reports to Child Safety are built on by the previous Labor government's initiatives in the Helping Out Families initiative. As a former Child Safety worker, I know, Madam Chair, that you understand the complexities of child protection and how we need to intervene not only early but also in ways that address the root causes of family dysfunction. Earlier this year I was pleased to join you and the member for Maryborough to announce \$4 million to help vulnerable families across the Wide Bay area. This investment was part of a statewide rollout of Family and Child Connect and, most importantly, boosting local intensive family support services. The positive feedback and commitment that we are heading in the right direction was evident from discussion that we had with Churches of Christ in Queensland and Act for Kids. These local service providers are operating the new Family and Child Connect and intensive family support in the Wide Bay area.

This direction is not just mapped out by the one strategy of Family and Child Connect. We are ensuring in each of these services there are specialist domestic violence support practitioners that will be on hand to help address some of the root causes of children needing protection. We know that problems with relationships, children or money at times can lead to violence. Too many children are in need of protection because of violence in our homes, and that is why we are delivering on the \$49 million

over five years for extra domestic violence prevention support services in Queensland. As I said earlier, we have also engaged KPMG to do a comprehensive audit of services to identify gaps and inform a future investment framework. We cannot have families calling for help if we do not have the services there that they need. We also need to look at ways to address domestic violence at its root causes, and giving families the skills to cope with parenting can play a key role in prevention. That is where we really are filling some of the gaps left by the LNP.

This year's budget sees \$6.6 million over two years to trial the delivery of Triple P as a universal parenting support program. Of course, financial stress is another key that we know can lead to family dysfunction. With regard to the LNP's cutbacks on established support and emergency relief funding, which have been compounded by recent cuts by the federal government, I am pleased to say that the Palaszczuk government is stepping in and we have had the commitment to address the short-sightedness by the LNP with a commitment to fund financial literacy and resilience programs from next financial year with a commitment of \$5.5 million per year. I look forward to working with many local members of parliament on both sides to promote these new Triple P and financial literacy programs in their electorates over this term of government.

**Mr PYNE:** Minister, I refer to page 8 of the Service Delivery Statements which mentions \$1.5 million was committed to DVConnect over two years. Can you please advise what services DVConnect provides to the people of Queensland and how its work assists women and children fleeing violence?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Our government is fiercely determined to tackle domestic and family violence here in Queensland, and we are walking the talk on that pledge. I remember walking in to DVConnect's premises one day—its location is, for obvious reasons, a well-guarded secret—to meet with its energetic and passionate CEO, Di Mangan. There was a board on the wall with flashing numbers and it said '107'. This was the number of callers to that service that day—and it was before lunchtime. Across Queensland 107 women had been both frightened yet brave enough to call about what had been going on in their home. Di said that that was not even a busy day.

DVConnect is the voice at the end of the phone which offers support, understanding, help and hope to women across Queensland in dire situations. The service proudly commits to getting a woman and her children who are fleeing violence out of their situation no matter where they live in Queensland. Having confidential and easily accessible support available 24 hours a day can make all the difference to women experiencing domestic and family violence. In the recent budget we committed an extra \$1.5 million over two years for DVConnect on top of their funding of \$3.16 million for the 2015-16 period for services including additional counsellors for its Womensline telephone support service. This is because the organisation had experienced a surge in demand, with calls up 40 per cent from December last year when compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The CEO of DVConnect welcomed that funding. Di Mangan said—

We sought and received the financial support from the government that we needed to meet this demand. DVConnect is very grateful for such a significant financial boost to allow us to keep the increased staffing level and the ability to meet the increased urgent client needs.

I am sure she also appreciated the \$100,000 the former government gave them in November 2014.

Behind these statistics are vulnerable women, children and families being subjected to abuse. Domestic violence is a scourge on our state and we must all work together to tackle this problem. Increased awareness of domestic violence issues is playing a part in the rising demand for services. Our Trust Your Instinct campaign, launched during Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month, urged the community to speak up and contact DVConnect if they suspected a friend, colleague or loved one was experiencing abuse at home. It is so vital that when we encourage people to trust their instinct and speak out we have the services there to help them. Additional funding for DVConnect is part of that.

During 2015-16 across government we will invest more than \$66 million on services and initiatives relating to domestic and family violence. Within my own department that is \$28.2 million for this financial year for DV prevention and support services. This funding supports 161 domestic and family violence prevention and support services, counselling and assistance for adults and children, court support, perpetrator intervention programs and a coordination of service delivery responses at a local level to promote service system integration. I am extremely proud of the work that this government is doing to eliminate domestic and family violence from our state and we will continue to deliver on this.

**Mr PYNE:** I refer to page 4 of your Service Delivery Statements and note that more than \$125 million is being allocated to support foster and kinship carers in 2015-16. Minister, what other support networks are in place to support children in care?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. While it is the wish of all of us that children and young people can live safely at home we know that that is unfortunately not always possible. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all of our foster and kinship carers across Queensland who provide that safe place and who make a positive difference to so many children and young people.

An invaluable support network for children in care is the Pyjama Foundation. They do incredible work raising awareness and, importantly, funds to support kids in out-of-home care to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The Pyjama Foundation recruits and trains volunteer pyjama angels and matches them with children in foster and kinship care to deliver their Love of Learning program. The pyjama angels visit a child each week to read to them, play educational games and help school-age children with their homework. They form long-term relationships as consistent, caring adults whom these children can trust. These incredible, inspiring people have volunteered their time to give children and young people love, stability and a chance for a better life. The foundation supports the angels through local libraries, where they can borrow books, games, puzzles and resources to take on their visits to kids.

We know that, unfortunately, due to disrupted lives many kids in care fall behind with their literacy and numeracy. This program helps them catch up in a really supportive way. This is why one of my very early announcements as the Minister for Child Safety was to boost funding to the Pyjama Foundation, bringing their annual funding from the Queensland government to \$320,000 a year. I was very pleased to support National Pyjama Day on Friday, 17 July—a day when more than 15,000 people went to work or school in the comfort of their pyjamas to raise awareness and funds to support children in care. Together with the member for Bulimba, I was proud to wear a Pyjama Day T-shirt in the House of parliament. I continue to encourage all members to support the foundation by making a donation online and to promote the fantastic work that the pyjama angels do.

I was honoured to be able to speak about support for the Pyjama Foundation in parliament, especially following the opposition leader's budget reply speech earlier that week, where he did not mention any community support, let alone support for vulnerable children. The Palaszczuk government absolutely supports vulnerable families and unashamedly invests in community support.

**Mr PYNE:** Minister, I refer to page 3 of your SDS and note the department's approach aims to deliver services that engage collaboratively in building strong partnerships. Minister, can you provide any recent examples of how your department is building those partnerships for carers and young people in the area of child protection?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. A perfect example of how our front-line staff are supporting carers and young people to have their voices heard has been championed by Child Safety officers in our south-west region. *Together as one* is an exhibition of images and stories that have grown out of the experience of children in care, foster carers and kinship carers. The exhibit is currently on display at the grid gallery in Toowoomba throughout August. The exhibit is a collaboration between my department, Mercy Community Services and PhotoVoice Australia. For members who may be unfamiliar with PhotoVoice, it is a process that enables people to document their own lives and to educate others about issues that affect them through photography. For this project, six small-group sessions were held with six children in care who were aged six to 12 years. Similar sessions were conducted with five carers and also two kinship carers. Participants get trained in photography techniques and are invited to take photographs of the following topics: what is good about your life now? What are some of the challenges we face? What would you change? What are your hopes for the future? Participants brought the resulting images back to the group to help them develop stories showing how the images relate to the life of children in care or foster and kinship carers.

The children made statements about missing their mothers and the way in which they remembered their mothers and described how hard it was to leave their mother after a contact visit. These are incredibly powerful and moving statements that remind us that family connections, no matter how traumatic, are lifelong connections that cannot be broken. One child provided a very moving picture and story about not having had contact with her mother for two years. One child found it difficult to go to sleep without her mother. Some also expressed that their hope for the future was to be reunited with their mother.

I have attended PhotoVoice exhibits at the Gold Coast made by domestic and family violence victims. They are powerful stories and worth viewing. They are educational for viewers as they are empowering for the participants. With the Speaker's support, I hope to be able to display the *Together as one* collection in Parliament House for Child Protection Week for members' viewing during the September sitting. I look forward to viewing these images and works and hope that members of parliament take the time to reflect on their messages.

**Mr PYNE:** I refer to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements released by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services which mentions the Next Step After Care program. Can you tell me what support this program offers children leaving care?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I know this program is something that the member for Aspley took an active interest in and I am pleased to say again that this is an area that enjoys bipartisan support. I believe that child safety is something that should be above politics. Ultimately, this is an area that we are working in which is vital. Every case that my department deals with represents a childhood. As those children, particularly those in out-of-home care, approach adulthood we must continue to give them the support they need. That is why I am a firm believer in Next Step After Care services.

Our government is providing \$11.8 million over four years so that for the first time support will be offered for young people aged 18 through to 21. Next Step After Care is a collaborative project delivered by Life Without Barriers, UnitingCare Community and the CREATE Foundation. About 500 young people transition from the child protection system in Queensland every year. Next Step After Care services provide young Queenslanders transitioning from care with practical help and tailored support to help them as they go out into the world to build independent lives.

One of the first meetings that I had as minister was with a group of passionate young people from the CREATE Foundation. I was fortunate enough to run into them again at the Next Step After Care launch earlier this year. When I talked with these young consultants, Julia, Tiffany, Cody, Angela and Jake, I was struck by their enthusiasm and their commitment. They have not had an easy time growing up and it speaks volumes for their character that they have chosen to mentor other young people still in care and to work in partnership to develop the Next Step After Care service. Their input has been invaluable.

Leaving care and becoming independent can be an exciting time for young people but, of course, it has its challenges. That is where the program comes in. It provides helpful information on how to find a job, find accommodation and to get access to more educational opportunities. The service consists of a 24-7 statewide information and crisis support telephone service, social media forums, an app to connect with and engage with people and, on top of this, vitally, there are face-to-face services. It is all going very well so far. Since the successful launch in April, approximately 200 young people from across Queensland have accessed these services. The Sortly mobile app, which provides young care leavers with help during their transition to independence, has been downloaded more than 1,600 times since its release.

Next Step After Care is delivered by Life Without Barriers; the South Burnett CTC; Integrated Family and Youth Service, north coast region; and Youth Empowered Towards Independence in Far North Queensland. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of these organisations for their dedicated work so far. Next Step After Care will certainly go a long way in supporting young people across Queensland as they start a new chapter in their lives.

**Mr PYNE:** Minister, I note on page 3 of your Service Delivery Statements that Child and Family Services is responsible for implementing the majority of initiatives arising from the 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. I note that one of those initiatives is considering adoption as a permanency option for children in out-of-home care. Why is permanency important for children in out-of-home care? Is adoption the only option being considered?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. We all know that the links between attachment, permanency and continuity are very important in a child's life. Children need opportunities to develop positive and secure attachments with family and significant people throughout their childhood. We need to ensure that we are providing children with these opportunities in out-of-home care while we are working towards reunification and when reunification may no longer be an option.

Adoption may be a suitable way to achieve this for some people when reunification is not an option, but we must be realistic about its use and we need more options than just adoption alone. We often have other goals in the interests of children that can limit the use of adoptions, such as the

preference to place children with family and increased permanency with kin wherever possible. When children have found stable and loving homes within their family an adoption order distorts those pre-existing legal family relationships. For example, if a child was cared for by their maternal grandparent, an adoption order to the grandparent makes the child's mother their legal sister. So family adoption is not supported for these reasons in the wider community.

But the simple fact presents real challenges for the 38 per cent of children in out-of-home care already placed with family. There are also wider family connections to consider. An adoption order legally severs pre-existing family connections to siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles in favour of the adoptive parent and their relatives. For many children in out-of-home care these connections are important. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the legal separation caused by adoption has implications for their connection to country that extends to their legal participation in native title. These limitations are why many child protection experts have argued that adoption should be an option but should not necessarily be the preferred option.

What is clear, though, is that we need more options than just adoption. Otherwise we will exclude too many children from celebrating permanency. That is why we have expanded consideration of this recommendation to consider all permanency options, including adoption as one option. The recommendation to improve permanency options is being progressed in partnership with key government and non-government stakeholders, including CREATE, PeakCare, Queensland Alliance for Kids, Key Assets, Foster Care Queensland and International Adoptive Families of Queensland. Feedback from these groups has been incredibly positive and I look forward to the outcomes of this consultation and recommendations about a way forward.

The Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry considered the limitations of adoption in its discussion paper in 2013. The commission considered but never reported on developing a new option to overcome this. The commission asked if a new order between long-term guardianship and adoption was needed. This may be one option that we need to reconsider as our reform continues.

**Miss BOYD:** Minister, I refer to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements and note the funding committed to establishing the new Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support services across Queensland. Can the minister advise on the success of Family and Child Connect services so far and how they are benefiting the families and children of Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you for the question. Our government is strongly committed to early intervention and giving families the support they need before they reach crisis. The Child Protection Commission of Inquiry has given us a 10-year road map and it is an area which, again, I believe has bipartisan support, which is important.

Family and Child Connect services assist struggling families to access a range of support while the complementary Intensive Family Support services help at-risk families with more critical problems. These two services are at the heart of the government's move towards early intervention. As I said earlier, these kinds of programs really build upon the former Labor government's initiatives such as the Helping Out Families initiative. This is about offering help early to prevent bigger problems developing when children are at risk of harm or ending up in care.

We know that parenting can be stressful and hard but we also know that if we can reach out to parents who are having trouble coping earlier that we can prevent those families reaching crisis point. Services commenced recently in six locations across Queensland, including Browns Plains, Beaudesert, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Emerald, Bundaberg, Maryborough, South Burnett, Caboolture and Ipswich. I had the pleasure of attending events at a range of these services in Browns Plains, Rockhampton and Ipswich.

The Ipswich Family and Child Connect is being run by a community partnership involving the Kummara Association, Mercy Community Services, the Domestic Violence Action Centre and the Ipswich Independent Youth Service. It is the first time that an Indigenous organisation, Kummara, is the lead to run a Family and Child Connect. I was really impressed by the passion and dedication of Kummara's CEO, Gerald Featherstone. Gerald and his team have had fantastic results helping Indigenous families in Ipswich over the last few years and are now expanding their services to support families right across our communities who need help.

The 2015-16 budget has allocated \$8.3 million to continue and expand the Family and Child Connect program, including \$4.5 million for six new Family and Child Connect services in Brisbane, Mackay, Mount Isa-the gulf, Cairns and its surrounds, Cape York and the Torres Strait. A further \$3.8 million has been committed for new intensive support services in the same areas. By 2016 Queensland will have 19 Family and Child Connect services, with funding of \$39.8 million over three years, which will help 35,000 families each year.

Approximately 360 new jobs will be created by Family and Child Connect and intensive family support programs over the next three years. We want to give parents the skills so their families can stay safely together and thrive, and it is working well so far. From January to June 2015 nearly 2,800 families have been helped by Family and Child Connect. Teachers, health workers and police and members of the community who have concerns about a family that may be struggling to cope will all be able to refer them to Family and Child Connect for information, advice and referrals. And families or their relatives who need a bit more guidance or support to access local services can contact Family and Child Connect themselves.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS and note that the department's priorities include providing responsive and integrated services. Can you please advise what integrated services the department is prioritising with its partners in the early childhood education and care sector and how this work is supporting children and families?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Palaszczuk government values and supports our community services, especially when it is about protecting young children who have been affected by domestic violence, abuse or neglect. In early June the education minister, Kate Jones, and I announced over \$2.5 million towards a new statewide Intensive Early Childhood Development Support program to help families most in need as a collaboration between our two departments. The pilot program will fund service providers in Queensland's urban and regional areas to support local parents and children and provide early services matched to some of the problems that they may be facing. We want to support our local service providers to develop new evidence based programs that produce better outcomes for our most vulnerable children. This funding will enable community organisations to support the learning, social and emotional development of children affected by complex issues such as domestic violence, abuse or neglect.

When I was in Bundaberg in May with you, Madam Chair, I visited the Phoenix House Association, which runs the Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool program for young children between the ages of three and five who have experienced domestic violence, abuse, neglect or are at risk of harm. I was appalled when they told me that the federal government had walked away from funding this vital service. The federal government's \$270 million in funding cuts to community programs across Australia included essential funding for Bundaberg's Phoenix House Association to run the Bumblebees preschool program. Services like the Bumblebees preschool are essential for our local communities to be able to protect our most vulnerable children.

Unlike the federal government, the Palaszczuk government values and supports increased investment in family support and domestic and family violence services, particularly those that provide vital facilities for young children who have been sexually abused, physically abused or are at risk of harm. That is why our government is giving \$396,000 over 18 months to Bundaberg's Phoenix House Association as part of the new statewide Intensive Early Childhood Development Support program. Madam Chair, I would like to acknowledge your work in advocating for this important community service. This new funding will allow Phoenix House Association to build on its existing Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool program as well as examine the outcomes for families to help improve future program design and performance. I do really hope that the federal government changes its mind and joins the Palaszczuk government in supporting the vital work that Phoenix House does.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, I refer to page 8 and the \$4 million provided in 2015-16 to extend community support measures in drought declared areas. I will just advise you that my electorate is one of those drought declared areas—my entire electorate. Minister, what organisations will be eligible for this funding, how and when will this funding be distributed and what type of support is envisaged to be funded?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question and acknowledge how tough her constituents and many Queenslanders across the state are doing. It is an ongoing issue for so many Queenslanders. We know that local communities and their councils often know best about what is required to sustain them through the enduring circumstances. This government, the Queensland government, is listening and responding to what councils and communities are telling us.

Local communities are doing a wonderful job of rallying together to support each other in times of crisis. I acknowledge the important work on the ground that is being done by the Country Women's Association and other women's networks and volunteers. I recently met with Robyn McFarlane, the state president of the CWA, and she told me some of the heartbreaking stories of the families that they

are supporting. We know that these communities need additional assistance to get back on their feet and that is why the community support measures package that we are providing responds to the effects of drought in a number of ways. It includes funding for UnitingCare Community to provide direct telephone and face-to-face support and counselling to all community members across affected areas who seek help, as well as funding to a number of local councils and statewide support agencies to provide much needed support.

From travelling and listening to people in affected communities, such as Winton in the central west and Charleville in the state's south, the Queensland government has heard firsthand about the drought's debilitating effects and the hardship created financially and emotionally, with flow-on effects to family violence in some of the most extreme cases. Given the enduring nature of the drought and the long-term impact on affected communities, my department has also undertaken a review of the benefits achieved from the community support funding in previous years. Early review findings support continued funding for locally relevant events and activities as well as a greater emphasis on community planning and practical supports to enable communities and individuals to manage the short- and long-term effects of the drought. This high-level approach, working with the community, will be tailored to individual communities to deliver the targeted and sustainable support and responses in the 2015-16 year. Future measures are also likely to emphasise greater government and service provider collaboration to value-add and make sure that we are not duplicating services, and that may include consideration of, for example, a government champions approach for affected communities.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, drought waits for no-one, so when would you expect some of this \$4 million to be flowing through to councils and these other organisations?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I said, we want to work with the community to find community led projects. That review is now underway so we hope to be able to provide that funding to successful organisations very soon.

**Mr McEACHAN:** Page 8 of the Service Delivery Statement outlines \$10.6 million for women's health and sexual assault services, and I ask: what services are planned to be delivered in my electorate of Redlands?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I was very pleased earlier this year to see that WAVSS, the Working Against Violence Support Service, based in Logan, has now been successful in being able to deliver services in the Redlands because the Redlands has been without domestic violence and sexual assault services for some time. I was really pleased that the government recognised that this was a gap and an area that needed to be filled. As I have said, having worked with Linda-Ann and her team at WAVSS for many years through my involvement at the Centre Against Sexual Violence in Logan I know that the residents of Logan are in fantastic hands if they need to contact a support service for domestic and family violence.

I am pleased to confirm that the funding given to WAVSS to establish the service in the Redlands is \$732,000 per annum. That will deliver a regional domestic and family violence prevention service dedicated for the Redlands area. The south-east region is leading the development of a community engagement strategy to raise awareness and address domestic and family violence to ensure that our approaches, partnerships and engagement are developed and maintained at a community level, and I would welcome the member's involvement in our draft strategy to tackle domestic and family violence moving forward.

**Mrs SMITH:** Minister, I refer to the SDS page 8, the investment where you talk about the Queensland Multicultural Advisory Council. Minister, will this council take the place of the current peak body ECCQ? Are they being defunded?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No.

**Mrs SMITH:** Minister, can you then expand on the role of the Multicultural Advisory Council and how it will be different to the current ECCQ?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. ECCQ do a fantastic job as a peak organisation for our multicultural communities across Queensland. The advisory council advises the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. At the moment the interim advisory council advises me on draft legislation before it is introduced into the House. Once the bill is through parliament and we have that legislation and a policy and an action plan and a charter, the interim group will advise me on the implementation of the policy and action plan and provide high-level advice to me as the minister about some of the challenges facing our communities. In no way has it replaced the role of ECCQ.

**Mrs SMITH:** How will that be made up? What will be the make-up of this other advisory group instead of the peak body advisory group which will currently continue on?



**Ms FENTIMAN:** As outlined in our multicultural election commitments, the council will be made up of 12 members, including me as minister and chair, and it will be established under the new Multicultural Recognition Bill. Once it has been finalised, considered by parliament and enacted there will be an open nomination process for the membership of that committee.

**Mrs SMITH:** Minister, SDS page 8 talks about the recurrent funding of a million dollars to ensure ongoing support for multicultural celebrations, projects and diverse cultural events across Queensland. More than 100 multicultural events and projects are supported by this funding. What are you expecting that each of these events will look like, given they are going to get roughly \$10,000 per event?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** That is not quite right. We have just announced that there is an open process for organisations to apply for funding in this grants round and I believe they can apply for funding up to \$25,000. Groups apply for the funding for multicultural events and initiatives. It is a tender process, and those organisations who have submitted ideas for the best events or programs will be selected for that funding.

**Mrs SMITH:** Page 11 of the SDS details the discontinued measures, one of which is people participating in cultural diversity events who believe that the event enhanced their appreciation for that cultural diversity. If that is the case, how will you measure the effectiveness of that funding? At the end of the day, what are you expecting to achieve with these events? Couldn't that possibly leave it open to pork-barrelling?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** This was a service standard that has been discontinued, as outlined in the budget. The measure was introduced by the previous government seeking to determine if attendance at our multicultural events enhanced the attendee's appreciation of cultural diversity. The measure has been discontinued because people attending these events already have very high levels of cultural diversity appreciation; hence the result of 94.5 per cent. The measure is considered, therefore, to be more of a measure of satisfaction and enjoyment of attending the event rather than improving cultural diversity.

Discontinuing this measure is aligned with the conclusions made by the Queensland Audit Office in its report *Monitoring and reporting performance: report 18: 2013-14*. The QAO highlighted the overreliance of Queensland government departments on satisfaction measures acting as proxy indicators of service effectiveness. The QAO report concluded that all Queensland government departments would benefit by enhancing the measurement of non-financial performance through the development of direct measures of efficiency and effectiveness of the services, so we will be replacing that discontinued measure with some new measures in the next budget.

**Mrs SMITH:** That sounds very convoluted, but that is good—so long as you have new measures in there.

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am sorry if it is a bit difficult.

**CHAIR:** One moment. What is your point of order?

**Miss BOYD:** My point of order actually goes to the commentary from the member for Mount Ommaney. This is not the first time that the member has expressed her opinion in relation to the answers from the minister and I seek your guidance on this matter.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Pine Rivers. I believe that comment was argumentative under standing order 115(b).

**Mrs SMITH:** Thank you so much. Minister, I will probably just finish on a question in regard to Queensland Multicultural Week and all things multicultural. We had the awards ceremony on Saturday night and many events around the area. It was wonderful. I congratulate Yasmin Khan for all of her work at the Eidfest and her involvement there with her committee. It was terrific. It was great that she was actually one of the recipients of an award. On 5 September I see that Caboolture Multicultural Festival is being held for the 12th year. Minister, are you confident that the member for Pumicestone will behave appropriately given his recent reported shenanigans?

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order. Madam Chair, the member for Mount Ommaney is asking the member to express an opinion. I ask for your guidance on this matter.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Could you please rephrase your question?

**Mrs SMITH:** Will the minister have the member for Pumicestone represent her at that particular event?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to answer the question, Madam Chair, although I am a little surprised at it, given we are here to talk about some of the challenges being faced by our multicultural communities. A recent report from the Australian Multicultural Council identifies managing Australia's diversity effectively as the main challenge to fostering and maintaining social cohesion into the future. I would have appreciated, perhaps, some questions about what this government is doing to promote social cohesion in our community, rather than who will be representing me at one of the many events that are being held across Queensland during Multicultural Week.

**Mrs SMITH:** And this is what you are doing at the moment; our policies. I have asked questions on that. Thank you, Minister, you have answered my questions.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am very pleased, again, to say that our government's policy for multicultural affairs is introducing legislation. For the first time in Queensland, we will have in law our commitment to our multicultural communities. We will be following Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia in putting our strong commitment to multicultural communities in legislation that—

**Mrs SMITH:** Has not been developed yet. Thank you.

**Ms FENTIMAN:**—the member for Mount Ommaney voted against in the last term of government.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I will ask you both not to be argumentative, thank you. Do you have other questions, member for Mount Ommaney?

**Mrs SMITH:** No, thank you. I am fine.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Aspley. We have time for you to ask one question.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My question is to the director-general with respect to page 3 of the SDS and child protection reforms. Director-General, you are a member of the Child Protection Reform Leaders Group and the minister talked a bit today about the work of the reform leaders group. One of the opportunities for the reform leaders group is to determine whether any emergent issues are arising as a result of the implementation of the commission of inquiry into child protection. There are specific protocols around that, I understand, before that goes to Treasury. My simple question is: can the DG advise whether he is aware of any requests to Treasury to access the contingency funds?

**Mr Hogan:** I thank the member for the question. Indeed I can confirm that the reform leaders group is active in overseeing the implementation of the whole-of-government program of reform for child and family arising from the commission of inquiry into child protection. We are very active participants in the reform leaders group and, indeed, we have our own very robust governance arrangements in place to ensure that we are delivering not only the implementation of the actions that we have responsibility for but also that they are actually making the difference we want. I will reiterate the minister's answer to the same question earlier, which was that the contingency fund is actually controlled by Treasury and is a matter for the Treasurer.

**Ms DAVIS:** My question, DG, was: are you aware of any requests to access the contingency fund?

**Mr Hogan:** Again, I appreciate the member's interest in this, but those decisions are a matter for the CBRC. It is not a matter for me to comment on what has or has not been considered by the CBRC in this regard.

**Ms DAVIS:** I have my answer, thank you, DG.

**CHAIR:** Minister, page 9 refers to women on boards. We have seen the advertisements to recruit women, asking them to send in their CVs. What else will be done to encourage women's participation on boards and why is a target necessary?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. It is something that I am very passionate about. I acknowledge the member for her continued commitment to gender equality. The Palaszczuk government's target of 50 per cent of women on all boards by 2020 is a key plank in a broad strategy to harness the hidden powerhouse of the Queensland economy, and that is women. The government has also set a target of 50 per cent female representation on Queensland government boards by 2020 and has agreed to a target of 50 per cent of all new appointees to Queensland government boards and bodies to be women. It seems obvious, but we actually did need to reinstate the government's commitment to this target after the LNP stepped away from it and ended the previous Labor government's women on boards strategy upon coming to government. Under the LNP's watch, the representation of women on Queensland government boards fell, after rising steadily over the previous term of government.

Having more diversity on boards is good business sense and this is reflected in the bottom line of companies that have women around the top table. As I have said before, it is a disgrace that there are currently more men named Peter in the chair or CEO position in our top 200 listed companies than there are women. I believe that here in Queensland we can lead the way to be a strong voice for women in leadership roles across the workforce, while increasing productivity and also growing our economy. We are leading the way.

This government is committed to gender equality in all aspects of society to promote and protect women's rights, interests and wellbeing, to ensure women's full social and economic participation in society. There is no better demonstration of this than our cabinet, which is led by women and made up of more than half women, including a minister for women again, after it was deemed not important enough by the previous government. The LNP's current level of women's participation in the shadow cabinet reflects their attitudes towards targets and quotas. This attitude was best described by the member for Aspley herself who said, in her first speech—

I am not convinced of the merits of quotas because I think they can devalue and undermine the contribution of women...

Contrast that with Dame Quentin Bryce who said she believes affirmative action might be the only way to break the stranglehold of the old boys' network. She has stated—

I believe the old boys' network is a powerful one.

And further—

No-one gives up power and privilege willingly, do they?

Targets and quotas force people to focus on the issue and not put it off for another day. The makeup of the Labor frontbench here in Queensland and in the federal parliament is evidence of that. These are all women of merit, dispelling the myth that you have to choose between merit and quotas. These targets will be part of a broader women's strategy being developed by the Office for Women that will look at ways to break down barriers, address gender inequality and drive a cultural change to ensure that there are more opportunities for women, both inside and outside government. We will engage with women across Queensland on key issues such as women's health and safety, economic security and jobs, the gender pay gap, superannuation, education and training, and, of course, the concerning issues of violence.

We are also ramping up the celebration of women's achievements next year, transforming International Women's Day into International Women's Week. In my first couple of weeks as minister, I had the great pleasure of participating in a range of International Women's Day events to celebrate just how far we have come and to collaborate on the work yet to be done. It was a shame I could not be joined by my opposition counterpart for women, because there is no shadow spokesperson for women.

In order to get all this work done, we are rebuilding the Office for Women after it too was significantly cut by the previous LNP government. We have re-established a dedicated Office for Women because the community expects that government will invest in supporting real engagement and development of strategy and policy that advances the opportunities for women and girls here in Queensland.

**Miss BOYD:** Minister, the Palaszczuk government has obviously prioritised taking action on domestic violence. We have seen the recent release of the government's response to the Bryce report. Can you please explain how this aligns with the development of a broader violence against women strategy, which is mentioned on page 2 of the SDS?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you for the question. I am privileged to be the Minister for Women at a time when government is ready to take a stand and address violence against women. While the Bryce report focused on domestic and family violence, we all know and I fully recognise that domestic and family violence and sexual violence come from the same place and are built from the same societal attitudes towards women and girls. I am determined to address violence against women in all its insidious forms. I was pleased to announce last week, with the Premier, that the government will develop, in consultation with the community, the Queensland Violence Against Women Action Plan in parallel with the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy.

It is important that we do this because Queensland has some catching up to do in this area. In recent years we have not met our obligations under the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children. We have been the only state without an implementation plan for meeting the targets of this national plan. It is totally unacceptable. The national plan focuses on preventing violence by raising awareness and building respectful relationships in the next generation. We already

provide more than \$6 million for 19 sexual assault services across Queensland, but we acknowledge there are gaps—gaps in services and gaps in policy. We will review the causes, forms and impacts of violence against women and develop a plan to focus all relevant government departments and our community partners on the prevention of violence against women and the provision of support to victims. We know that experiencing violence such as rape and sexual assault creates barriers to participation. Women need a range of services and support if they are to reach their potential and, sadly, nowhere is this more evident than in the area of violence against women. Its effects are pervasive across society and each and every one of us has a responsibility to do something about it.

We need to create real cultural change to eliminate damaging and harmful beliefs about women and girls. A recent research survey by Our Watch showed that one in six 12- to 24-year-old young Australians believe that women should know their place and one in three believe exerting control over someone is not a form of violence. More than one-quarter of young people believe that male verbal harassment and pressure for sex towards females are normal practices. I was absolutely horrified by this research. That is why the Queensland government has joined Our Watch and will help drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children. It is about time that we stepped up and challenged these attitudes, and make a safer and fairer Queensland for women and girls. It is the responsibility of the whole community and extends beyond just legislation and government programs. It has to be in our living rooms, our pubs, our parks, our streets and our schools. I look forward to collaborating with service providers and the broader community to develop and implement a plan to prevent violence against women and to working on behalf of Queensland women on actions in the national plan.

**CHAIR:** I refer to page 8 in the SDS. Minister, can you advise what you, as Minister for Youth, are doing to engage with our young Queenslanders?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question and congratulate her on her commitment to engaging with youth in her own community of Bundaberg. I was particularly excited to hear about the youth forum that you are planning, which focusses on education, training and employment opportunities for young people in your electorate.

Youth unemployment is a key priority of this government. Talking to young people about the issues they are facing and hearing their ideas about the solutions is vital. The Office for Youth in my department does a great job, despite the best efforts of the former LNP government, which ruthlessly cut the Office for Youth by 75 per cent, as well as cut funding to youth organisations and services. These actions scratch the surface of how indifferent the LNP is in terms of really engaging with the young people of Queensland.

Since coming into office, I have prioritised meeting with and hearing directly from young people about what they need to meet their goals and ambitions. The youth ambassador program was a program of the former LNP government that really provided limited opportunity for the Queensland government to engage with young people in a way that gives them a voice to inform and influence policy and programs relevant to them. I want to thank the six young people who participated in that program for their hard work and leadership. I congratulate Benjamin, Amiel, Justice, Jeremy, Alexander and Bridie on their commitment to the role of Queensland youth ambassador over the past 12 months. We want to continue engaging with young people like Benjamin and Bridie, but we also want to hear from a broader range of young people from across our whole state, including our most vulnerable youth. I have asked my department to look at exciting new ways we can support and empower young Queenslanders. The previous LNP government's Queensland Youth Strategy was developed with limited input from young people themselves. Unlike the former government, we will be inclusive and undertake statewide consultation with young people from all backgrounds to develop a strategy for young people in partnership with the real experts on youth issues, that is, young people themselves.

We will talk to young people across the state and work with them to design a shared vision for how young people, our community and all areas of government can work together to support young people to participate in Queensland's social, economic and cultural life. This presents an exciting opportunity to consider new and innovative ways of engaging young people. I am pleased to advise the committee that we will tender for and partner with an organisation with extensive experience in innovative engagement with young people. We will consult young Queenslanders, non-government and community service providers across Queensland to inform the government's new strategic direction for Queensland's young people. The Office for Youth is already well underway in scoping and planning this exciting project, and I look forward to making further announcements on this work in the near future. The former government had a \$15,000 youth ambassador program. In 2015-16 we are putting more than \$75,000 into an engagement with young Queenslanders across the state in a meaningful way.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, I refer to the answer to question on notice No. 2 in which you talk about a number of things but also about 225 full-time-equivalent positions in Child Safety being cut under the former LNP government. I have here an extract from *Hansard*, which I am happy to table, where the minister talks about 225 full-time front-line Child Safety staff being cut. Is the minister aware of anyone in her department or herself requesting a change to *Hansard* such that 'child safety officers' becomes 'Child Safety staff'? Is the minister aware that there is a significant difference between the two? How can we believe that the minister has any integrity if she cannot go back and retract what she knew was an error?

**CHAIR:** Before the minister answers that question, the member needs to seek leave to table the paper.

**Ms DAVIS:** I seek leave to table the paper.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The irony of the LNP asking about cuts to front-line staff! I changed the *Hansard* because I realised that I misspoke and, consistent with the Queensland Parliamentary Procedures Handbook, I corrected the remarks. It was an obvious error—from 'child safety officer', which has statutory obligations under the act, to 'Child Safety staff'. I did not seek to alter the point I was making. I am happy to make it again. With all respect to the member for Aspley, she was part of a government that told the Public Service that their jobs were safe, that they had nothing to fear—

**Ms DAVIS:** Excuse me, Chair –

**Ms FENTIMAN:**— and then in my department alone sacked 1,105 staff.

**CHAIR:** One moment, Minister. Member for Aspley, what is the point of order?

**Ms DAVIS:** My point of order is that I am simply seeking from the minister why she went to *Hansard* and had the record changed rather than coming into the parliament and retracting the statement. Why would the minister do that and not come back to deliver a ministerial statement to say, 'I am sorry, I made a mistake'? It seems very underhanded and very tricky, Minister.

**CHAIR:** One moment, member for Aspley. The minister is able to answer a question in whichever way she sees proper. I call the minister to continue answering the question.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am answering the question. I do know the difference between child safety officers, who have specific legislative obligations under the act, and Child Safety staff. That is why I amended *Hansard*. I misspoke. It is consistent with the Queensland Parliamentary Procedures Handbook and I did not seek to alter the point I was making—that is, under the former government's fiscal repair 225 staff from Child Safety were sacked after the LNP had told public servants they had nothing to fear. The member cannot change the fact that 225 positions were slashed. People whose jobs contributed directly or indirectly to child safety were cut on the member's watch, and that is just the Child Safety area. Another 140 full-time-equivalent positions were cut in Communities. It does not end there. Some 362 community organisations had their funding cut, \$60 million in grants across the department were slashed, and staff from the Office for Women and the Office for Youth were cut by 75 per cent. In 2014-15, as I have already said, the impact of fiscal repair on Child Safety was a \$73 million cut and in Community Services a \$63 million cut. I cannot understand why the member for Aspley is asking me questions about why Child Safety staff were cut under her watch.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am not, Minister. I am going to the point, of course, that you changed that record because you knew it was an error. It shows that you had no integrity at all.

**CHAIR:** Point of order. Thank you, member for Aspley. Under standing order 115(b), questions are not to contain arguments, inferences, imputations or hypothetical matters, so I rule that question out of order.

**Miss BOYD:** Page 15 of the SDS refers to capital funding of \$12.2 million over four years for upgrades to and maintenance of our state's vital neighbourhood centres. Can you advise why this is necessary?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Neighbourhood centres are really the focal point for so many of our communities. They are front and centre in the delivery of community and family services such as counselling, parenting programs, free legal services, the distribution of emergency relief funds, accommodating visiting health services, and programs to assist people with financial advice. I acknowledge and thank all of the hardworking and dedicated staff and many volunteers who do such

important work in neighbourhood centres across Queensland. I have worked as a volunteer duty solicitor with the Beenleigh Neighbourhood Centre and know exactly the broad range of help it offers. I have seen firsthand how it helps support vulnerable people and their families.

When people are in a jam they turn to their neighbourhood centre for help. I understand that. In fact, I have been heartened by many in this area and across the community sector saying that they greatly value having a minister who understands what they do and why their work is so important. As Minister for Communities, it has also been my pleasure to visit many great neighbourhood centres across Queensland—from Mossman to Palm Beach, from Port Douglas to Nundah, from Mareeba to Logan East, from Townsville to Nerang—to learn more about their contributions to their local communities.

The Palaszczuk government is firmly committed to supporting our much needed and much loved neighbourhood centres. A total of \$12.2 million over four years will fund a new capital upgrade and replacement program for these community hubs in our towns and suburbs. I am happy to announce today that, commencing from 2015-16, 11 neighbourhood centres are prioritised for compliance and upgrade works over the next two years including Mackay, Murgon, Monto, Capalaba, Sherwood, Inala, West End, New Farm, Upper Mount Gravatt, Nerang and Palm Beach. Our neighbourhood centres need to be vibrant and welcoming, and we will work together with them to invest this funding in the smartest way possible. This funding is in addition to the almost \$14 million in operating funds provided to support over 100 neighbourhood centres around the state in this year's budget.

While we are supporting our neighbourhood centres Tony Abbott is showing services such as this the door. This is on top of the cuts made by the previous LNP state government. The previous LNP government's so-called fiscal repair efficiency dividend hurt our neighbourhood centres as did their abolition of the Neighbourhood Centre Capital Program.

The combination of cuts, neglect and disrespect by both levels of government is hitting our community centres hard. When I visit neighbourhood centres, I hear stories of staff cuts and of making ends meet by increasing volunteer hours and scaling back the programs they offer. Thanks to the LNP cuts, this is the impact on the ground, and it is being experienced right across Queensland. At last count, over \$900,000 was removed by Tony Abbott from local neighbourhood centres in Queensland. The Commonwealth has cut almost \$400,000 from local community organisations that provide services such as financial counselling and emergency support to people in the Darling Downs-Maranoa region. This includes cuts to the Granite Belt Neighbourhood Centre, run by the local community development services in Stanthorpe. The Palaszczuk government supports this service and others in the Southern Downs electorate, with more than \$370,000 to the community development services Care Goondiwindi Association and the Millmerran Community Support Service.

The Palaszczuk government will not turn its back on these communities. As we move forward with rebuilding the Queensland community services sector, as we advance initiatives such as drought assistance, Triple P parenting and other child and family reforms as well as community hubs, the Palaszczuk government is keen to partner with and rebuild our neighbourhood centres. As the director of QCOSS, Mark Henley, said in response to this year's budget, we are an engaged government and we have listened to the community. I am pleased that Queensland has a premier who knows the value of supporting communities right across Queensland at the grassroots level.

**Miss BOYD:** On page 9 of the SDS, reference is made to work to rebuild the community services sector including development of a jobs, skills and industry strategy. Can you give us more detail about this strategy and work being done to rebuild the community services sector?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Community services are a lifeline for many Queenslanders. Under the previous LNP government, these vital organisations were under attack. More than \$360 million over four years was ripped out of the community sector by the previous government's first budget. As we heard today, vulnerable Queenslanders are still paying the cost of this fiscal repair. Under the last government, community organisations were gagged. They were unable to advocate for the people they serve. This is why upon entering government one of the first things we did was remove the no-advocacy clause from service agreements.

Over the past six months and since my appointment as Minister for Communities, I have met with many community organisations to discuss how the government can best support and improve the community sector. They have told me about the sense of relief throughout the sector that they are now working with a government that understands how important community services are to the people of Queensland.

The community services sector is a key economic driver of the Queensland economy, contributing more than \$5 billion annually. Queensland's health and community services sector is Queensland's largest employer, providing 12.4 per cent of all employment across the state. This is five times larger than the mining sector.

Demand for community services is increasing. Disability reforms alone are likely to require an additional 13,000 Queensland jobs over the next five years. That is why the Palaszczuk government is committed to rebuilding our community sector. We have established an Office for Community Sector and Industry to lead the department's participation in industry approaches to rebuild the community services industry. We are partnering with industry to develop a jobs, skills and industry strategy.

We are collaborating with a broad range of non-government organisations to improve services for Queenslanders and to build a community services industry that has long-term viability and sustainability. We have commenced five-year funding agreements to give greater certainty to non-government organisations. Micah Projects were delighted to sign a five-year contract to deliver much needed and ongoing services to people who identify as forgotten Australians or former child migrants.

I am committed to building the capacity of community organisations in regional Queensland to deliver services locally and provide much needed jobs to our smaller towns. The Palaszczuk government knows that employment is critical to improved outcomes for individuals and communities. That is why we are working with community organisations across Queensland to rebuild the community services industry and to deliver jobs for the future.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Before we adjourn, I understand that you have an answer to the question from the member for Aspley that was taken on notice?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The director-general has a response to the question taken on notice earlier.

**Mr Hogan:** In relation to the member's question about the number of child abuse and neglect notifications currently under investigation in Queensland and how many notification investigations had not yet commenced, the latest available verified data, for the year ending 31 March 2015, is that that year there were 22,471 notifications recorded. Of the 22,471 notifications, 20,364 had finalised investigations and 2,107 were not yet finalised at the end of the reporting period. Pleasingly, I note that 92.8 per cent of the notifications that required a 24-hour response were responded to within that time frame.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** If I could just offer my thanks before we adjourn. I would like to thank you, Chair, and everyone for the robust discussion this morning. Thank you, Chair, for doing a wonderful job. I thank the deputy chair, Mark McArdle, and other members. I thank the parliamentary staff who have worked tirelessly over the past couple of weeks. I thank my director-general, Michael Hogan, and the chief financial officer, Arthur O'Brien. I also thank the department staff behind me who I know have to continue this afternoon. Thank you all for all of your hard work. I thank my office staff, in particular my chief-of-staff, Cynthia Kennedy; my senior advisers, Shane Bevis, Alana Tibbetts, Grace Williams and Alex Burnell; and all of my office staff. I look forward to continuing this important work together.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure of the portfolio of the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs has expired. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you, the director-general and officials for your attendance. The transcript of this session of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website within two hours. The committee will now adjourn for lunch for one hour before resuming at 2 pm. The committee will then examine the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility of the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.01 pm to 2.00 pm**

**ESTIMATES—COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND  
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE—DISABILITY SERVICES,  
SENIORS AND ASSISTING THE PREMIER ON NORTH QUEENSLAND**

**In Attendance**

Hon. CJ O'Rourke, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland

Ms C Whitton, Chief of Staff


**Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services**

Mr M Hogan, Director-General

Mr A O'Brien, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate and Executive Services

**Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

Mr D Stewart, Director-General

 **CHAIR:** Good afternoon. The estimates hearing for the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee is now resumed. I am Leanne Donaldson, the member for Bundaberg and chair of the committee. Mr Mark McArdle, the member for Caloundra, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are: Miss Nikki Boyd MP, member for Pine Rivers; Ms Ann Leahy MP, member for Warrego; Mr Matt McEachan MP, member for Redlands; and Mr Rob Pyne MP, member for Cairns. The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend and ask questions during the hearing. I would like to welcome Ms Tracy Davis, member for Aspley.

The committee has resolved that the whole of the proceedings of the committee may be broadcast in line with the conditions for broadcasters and guidelines for camera operators which are available from one of the parliamentary attendants in the room. I remind those present today that these proceedings are similar to parliament and subject to the standing orders and rules of the 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 to standing orders 112 and 115. Therefore, questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles or argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings this afternoon so that relevant issues can be explored without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure that 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 answer to a question should be finalised so that other issues can be examined.

Before we commence, I ask that mobile phones be either switched off or switched to silent mode. Also, I remind you that food and drink is not permitted in the chamber.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2015 for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. The committee will suspend proceedings for afternoon tea at 3.45 pm.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general and officials of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; our Auslan interpreters—Mr Mike Webb and Ms Maree Madden; and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.



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

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet today and pay my respects to their elders both past and present. Good afternoon, members of the committee, officers of my department and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and welcome to the Auslan interpreters from Deaf Services Queensland. For me, this afternoon is a great opportunity to talk to the committee and also interested members of the public about my portfolio responsibilities in the context of the Palaszczuk Labor government's first budget, a budget for the people of Queensland.

For people with disability, this budget offers this government's unwavering commitment in two ways: the first is to continue to deliver quality services to Queenslanders with disability, their families and carers. Unfortunately, Disability Services growth in Queensland over the past three years decreased considerably, from a compound annual growth rate of 15.1 per cent under Labor governments between 1998-99 and 2011-12 to just 3.9 per cent under the previous LNP government. It is the passion and commitment of both the government and non-government sector workforce that has managed to bring people with disability in Queensland the dignity and opportunity into their life during this difficult time. I am pleased that this budget offers an increased Disability Services budget for 2015-16 of \$1.57 billion, a 5.58 per cent funding increase.

The second commitment that this budget gives to the disability services sector is to the successful rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Queensland. In 2015-16 the budget commits an additional \$30 million as part of the \$868 million the state has allocated to the NDIS, bringing our investment to date to \$155 million. Additionally, the budget commits to significant NDIS readiness activities and the state's funding of an early NDIS launch site. However, a smooth transition to the NDIS needs to have both state and Commonwealth governments on board. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my department for the tireless work that they have undertaken with the Commonwealth and the NDIA to make sure that Queensland is NDIS ready. I am happy to report to the committee that Queensland has done absolutely everything asked of it for both the launch and the full rollout, and from where we sit we are ready to go.

For Queensland's seniors, this budget helps rebuild the Office for Seniors and makes sure seniors have a voice at the cabinet table. What this has translated into is a budget that shows commitment to real measures that address cost-of-living issues, including key issues like housing options and utilities, as well as ensuring that our seniors can take an active role in our community. For seniors, this comes as a welcome relief after the previous government's cuts to the Office for Seniors and the slashing of important concessions by the Abbott LNP government.

The third area of my portfolio that I am also delighted to talk about is my role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. These responsibilities give me an opportunity to work closely with the Premier and my cabinet colleagues to deliver on our government's commitment in North Queensland. The commitment of creating North Queensland jobs, growing the economy, providing quality health and education for the north, ensuring our communities are safe and secure, and protecting our environment are front and centre of my discussions and interactions with stakeholders in the north and at the centre of my discussions with my cabinet colleagues. My ministerial charter letter details my priorities to include consulting with stakeholders, identifying infrastructure priorities and improvements to service delivery, and to assist in building resilience to North Queensland communities to natural disasters.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to a respectful and professional conversation about all three of my portfolios with the committee today and sharing how this Palaszczuk government's budget is a budget for the people, a budget for Queenslanders with disability, Queensland seniors and people of North Queensland.

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

**Mr McARDLE:** My question is to the director-general. Director-General, in relation to this estimates hearing today, did you or your department receive any instructions as to what questions the minister would or would not answer at any time?

**Mr Hogan:** The answer is no.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, are you aware of any instructions in relation to what questions you would answer or not answer today?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Again, I will say no.


**Mr McARDLE:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee move into closed session to seek publication of certain documentation.

**Ms LEAHY:** I second that motion.

**Mr McARDLE:** I ask for the Clerk to be in attendance as well.

**CHAIR:** I will now adjourn proceedings until we recommence.

**Proceedings suspended from 2.10 pm to 2.36 pm**

 **CHAIR:** The motion in relation to the publication of documents has been resolved in the negative under the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001.

**Mr McARDLE:** Madam Chair, I ask that you publish the vote count in regard to the motion.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Caloundra. We are happy to do that.

**Mr McARDLE:** Publicly, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** The vote was in the negative—three votes all.

**Mr McARDLE:** It was in the positive three votes—three votes positive and three votes negative.

**CHAIR:** So the motion was defeated.

**Mr McARDLE:** Obviously.

**CHAIR:** Would you like to move to your next question?

**Mr McARDLE:** I am fine.

**CHAIR:** Do any other non-government members have a question?

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I start by also welcoming the Auslan interpreters. It is fantastic to have them here so that everyone can access the estimates process. I appreciate the work they are doing and I look forward to people benefiting from them being here. I hope they get a lot out of this estimates process. Minister, we will start with an easy question. I refer to page 6 of the SDS which refers to disability service plans. Minister, how many agencies have not published their annual DSP reports?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for the question. I am very happy to talk about disabilities. We know of the importance of supporting people with disabilities, families and carers alike. I will take that question on notice if I can, please.

**Ms DAVIS:** Is your department up to date?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** For details on the departmental side of things, I will refer the question to my director-general.

**Mr Hogan:** As the minister said, we will take that on notice and come back to the committee.

**Ms DAVIS:** Director-General, are you advising that you do not know whether your department's DSP is up to date?

**Miss BOYD:** I raise a point of order, Madam Chair. The director-general has said that he will take the question on notice. I believe that he has answered the question, and I ask for your guidance.

**CHAIR:** The minister may take the question on notice. Are you happy to do that?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** The committee has resolved that 12 noon on Monday, 31 August is the deadline for responses to questions taken on notice.

**Ms DAVIS:** With respect to the disability service plans, given that there is reference to them in a number of questions on notice and through the budget papers, I am confused and would like to know why the minister would not check on something that is so important as we lead into the NDIS where we have whole of government and there are many agencies which are responsible for delivering on the transition to the NDIS. One would hope that the DSPs, which, as I said, are featured in a number of areas, should be up to date so that all agencies are doing what they need to be doing. My next question—

**CHAIR:** Member for Aspley, the minister has already answered the question. She has resolved to take it on notice so can we move on to the next question, please.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I refer to page 29 of the SDS, the infrastructure program. Can the minister explain the \$2.2 million reduction in the Disability Services infrastructure program?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for the question. As I said earlier, I am absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to talk about disabilities and what that means for people with disabilities. With reference to the infrastructure, my department's capital program funds the construction, purchase, modification and upgrade of properties throughout Queensland. These properties support organisations to deliver disability services, community care services, including accommodation for people with disability, respite and day services.

This is a rolling program, and the priority in 2015-16 and coming years is to finalise longstanding projects. In 2014-15 the department expended \$17.745 million on capital works. In Disability Services, capital works funding for 2014-15 was \$11.457 million, of which \$4.567 million was expended. This financial year my department has a total capital works budget of \$29.403 million, and projects proposed for this year include \$5.390 million to complete the construction of Disability Services specialised accommodation at Woombye and Wacol. The new facilities at Woombye and Wacol are not providing additional places but are to be used to better support existing clients. Some \$3.101 million will continue the upgrades of Disability Services facilities including \$701,000 for general upgrades and \$2.400 million for Building Code of Australia compliance upgrades. I refer to the director-general for further detail on that.

**Mr Hogan:** In addition to the minister's response to your question, I am pleased to advise that in the 2015-16 budget the department has also moved unallocated equity funding into capital grants to assist organisations prepare for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and to boost accommodation provided through non-government organisations.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much, Director-General. I am pleased to see that a number of initiatives that were LNP initiatives, including Your Life Your Choice and the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial, have been mentioned in question on notice No. 12, which refers to page 7 of the SDS and which talks about the number of Queenslanders accessing disability support services. I also noted in question on notice No. 12 a reference to the AEIOU Foundation. I am sure the member for Bundaberg is very pleased to have AEIOU in her electorate. I have had the great pleasure of visiting a number of their services including the one in Bundaberg, and I know the great work that they do. Your response notes that the department is assisting AEIOU, which is terrific, but there is no budget allocation for it. I want to confirm that the AEIOU services that were delivered before 1 February this year retain the same number of places as they do now.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** In 2005 the then Labor government commenced the autism early intervention initiative. We started the intervention because we understood how important early intervention is. Speaking from my previous experience in early childhood, I also understand how important early intervention is. There are 376 children accessing these supports today. The initiative continues to deliver specialist supports for zero- to six-year-olds across the state. As I have said, I know that early intervention for children with autism is incredibly important. It enables them to have an opportunity to engage in social interaction, build independence and focus on learning outcomes. Early intervention supports young children with autism to access specialist early intervention services including speech therapy, occupational therapy and behavioural support. As a proud Queenslander, I know that most of the innovative services for children with autism and a strong network of services are across Queensland.

Unfortunately, from 2012-15, as the number of people with autism requiring disability supports grew, disability services budgets were slashed. Under the previous Labor government, the annual growth in disability services funding averaged over 15 per cent and, shockingly, it dropped to just 3.9 per cent over the past three years. We need to make sure that funding for disability services goes where it is needed. That is why in March I was pleased to announce the funding of \$100,000 for children with autism in Bundaberg and surrounding areas and to allow AEIOU to offer more places within its funding in the Gold Coast area.

In 2015-16 the government will provide over \$5.67 million to Autism Queensland and the AEIOU Foundation Ltd to deliver specialist early intervention services for zero to six-year-olds with autism across Queensland. This funding will assist children to access the important supports that I mentioned earlier. This year more than 233 service providers will support people with autism across Queensland. I will also say that I had the pleasure of visiting an AEIOU centre and I was very pleased to see the service provided there and the children who were receiving the support.

**CHAIR:** Before we move to the next question, I would like to welcome Mr Andrew Cripps MP, member for Hinchinbrook. You may continue, member for Aspley.

**Ms DAVIS:** That was wonderful, Minister, and I agree that we know there are increasing numbers of young people presenting with autism and it is a challenge to be able to provide quality services across the state in order to support them, particularly across the regions. So thank you for your response but my question was this: can the minister advise whether any placements that were existing prior to 1 February this year have changed? I will give you an example because clearly I did not ask the question so you could understand it. In Bundaberg, there were X places for children under the previous government. My question is whether there are still the same number of placements so that children can access services. If you have put more funding to AEIOU on the Gold Coast, I am sure that will benefit very well. I am just asking whether existing placements still remain as they were prior to 1 February. That is all I am asking.

**Miss BOYD:** Madam Chair, on a point of order under standing order 115, I ask for your guidance around hypothetical matters.

**Ms DAVIS:** This is not hypothetical at all. I am simply asking the minister to confirm that the placements that were funded in the last budget across Queensland remain the same in those areas that the service is being delivered. It is a simple question and it is a yes or no answer. However you answer it, Minister, I will ask the next question.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** So the \$100,000 was an additional \$100,000 for additional places. I will refer further detail to my director-general.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you.

**Mr Hogan:** Thank you, Minister, and I thank the member for the question. As the minister has indicated, the additional \$100,000 that the minister announced in March for Bundaberg was indeed to provide additional places for families with children with autism, and the funding for AEIOU continued. As we do with many providers, we continue to negotiate the number of places and where they are best applied by those services, and there was no funding cut to AEIOU.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Director-General. I did not ask if there was a funding cut. What I was asking was the number of placements—

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Aspley. Both the minister and the director-general have answered the questions and they can answer that question in any way they see proper.

**Ms DAVIS:** By not answering the question.

**CHAIR:** Can you please move on to the next question.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much for that, Chair. I would like now to move on to Accommodation Support and Respite Services. The minister referenced that in question on notice No. 12, in that she mentioned that retaining government provided services will provide certainty to clients. Minister, can you provide the current budget for government provided AS&RS?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Aspley for the question. The Palaszczuk government went to the election with a commitment to AS&RS clients and staff and we are keeping that commitment. Unlike the previous minister, since becoming minister, I have visited AS&RS houses and met with residents and their families, and I have also had the opportunity to speak directly with AS&RS workers to understand the great job that they do. This government will continue to provide high-quality accommodation support and respite services to Queenslanders with a disability who have high and complex needs. My department will be registered as a provider with the NDIA, and existing clients with a disability in their families will be able to continue to choose AS&RS services as their provider under the NDIS.

I visited Aitkenvale and Mount Louisa AS&RS locations and in all honesty the pride that was displayed not only by the staff but also by the residents in those homes was really quite heartening. It is only when you actually have the opportunity to meet the staff and the residents of Accommodation Support and Respite Services that it really sinks in that this policy is more than just about dollars and cents; it is about the people who live in those homes and the place that people with a complex disability can feel safe and supported. Unlike the previous LNP government, the Palaszczuk government values the work that the dedicated AS&RS staff do and we will give people with a disability certainty and the ability to choose their provider. The amount that you are referring to is \$126 million on page 6 of the SDS.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much for that, Minister. Can the minister advise whether there has been any progress in terms of the NDIA setting the price points around accommodation support?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for the question. With regard to discussions around pricing, I do know that that is quite a conversation that is being had out in the community at the moment and it is a conversation that I have had with service providers. It is something that is in negotiations at the moment. I have been advised it will be finalised throughout the process of the negotiations around the bilateral agreement. We will have further information once that is fully completed and signed.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, thank you for that. So given that you have indicated you are going to be a registered provider of accommodation support and respite services—is it both arms of the service?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Yes.

**Ms DAVIS:** I would have thought you would have been very interested to understand what the price point is for accommodation support and respite. As the minister is aware, participants in the scheme will be assessed and provided with a support package of care and, depending on that assessment, there is a price point for a whole range of services that are delivered, including accommodation support. So given that you are moving down the path of becoming a registered provider—and that is your choice as government of the day—I would have thought that would have been extremely important because there is going to be a gap between what the NDIA is going to provide the clients who are in government provided services—

**CHAIR:** I remind the member for Aspley that under standing order 112 the member may ask a question not make a speech.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you for your guidance, Chair. Minister, are there any projections that the department has provided you about the increased cost to provide government AS&RS services, say, in the next 10 years?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I was saying, the importance behind Accommodation Support and Respite Services was the commitment that we made to the staff and also families and people with a disability. Over the past three years, they have been living with a lot of anguish and concern about whether or not they would have the opportunity to choose. My department has started detailed planning to support AS&RS, particularly with the transition to the NDIS environment. This has included a major review of the current processes and procedures that will be there to support the department to become a provider of services in the NDIS environment. Workshops have been held with regional staff to focus on future planning and preparedness as a service provider under the NDIS. These have been very well received by the AS&RS staff.

As I said, my department will be registering itself as a provider with the National Disability Insurance Agency and we will continue to prepare our valued AS&RS staff to operate within the NDIS market. Preparation does include preparing the staff through focus sessions to provide them with a platform to voice their ideas and thoughts and additionally to continue providing the service with certainty to people with a disability and their families.

The priority here obviously is to continue to provide choice and control for people with a disability. In addition, it is also a priority to ensure that our highly skilled staff have certainty for their future employment. My department is working through various models and approaches to provide this service and support for clients, especially those with complex needs, in the best possible way. The awake shift in the current award recognises the high-support care and safety needs of most of our clients. As vacancies arise, we will prioritise entries for new clients who require that level of support.

As I said before, registering the department as a service provider with the National Disability Insurance Agency will provide and ensure the right services for clients, given their needs. Also as I said before, the cost side of things will be determined through the bilateral agreement negotiations.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. So is it your expectation that in finalising the bilateral agreement those participants who are currently in government provided accommodation support and respite services will receive a higher package because the cost to deliver the service will be higher than the price point will be for clients? The reason I say this, Minister, is I agree with you—we need to have choice and control for clients but we need to ensure that the government, in providing a service, is competitive and provides a level of care that is reflective not only of the needs but also of what support packages the clients will require. Minister, what is your department doing to ensure that the clients who are presently housed and supported in government provided accommodation support and respite services will receive adequate funding so that their needs can be met at the higher price point of government provided services?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I have said, until the bilateral agreement and final scheme price is finalised between the Queensland and Australian governments, it is not possible at this stage to fully quantify the cost involved in the AS&RS operating as an NDIS provider with the NDIA. We are still currently working on those figures. When that is finalised and when the bilateral agreement is signed off, that information will be provided.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, is it the intent that when that figure is negotiated that is the price that government will charge to deliver the services?

**CHAIR:** Point of order, member for Aspley, under standing order 115(b). I think your question is talking about hypothetical matters. Could you please rephrase the question or move on to the next question.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much for your guidance, Madam Chair. Minister, will the state government pick up the tab? Is that the intent, because the cost to deliver your service exceeds significantly the current market rate?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I have said prior, until the bilateral agreement is signed off, work between the Queensland and Australian governments continues. At this point in time it is not possible to provide you with an answer on fully quantified costs.

**Ms DAVIS:** But surely you must be doing some modelling. Surely there must be some modelling.

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order, the minister has answered the question already, Madam Chair. I ask for your guidance on this.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Pine Rivers. I think we will move on to the next question, thank you.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. While we are talking about the bilateral agreement, let's start to flesh that out a bit. In a number of her responses to questions on notice the minister said that the bilateral is going quite well but there is one thing holding out. Minister, what have you been doing to really nut out and get this bilateral agreement signed?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for the question. I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about the work that is being done with regard to the lead-up to the NDIS, with the NDIS being a legacy of the former Labor federal government. Unfortunately, particularly in Queensland, we are in a situation where the previous government was basically dragged kicking and screaming to sign the heads of agreement with the Australian government to make the NDIS a reality for approximately 97,000 Queenslanders. Since becoming minister I have spoken to a number of people who attended rallies begging the Newman government to sign up so that Queenslanders with disability would have a better life.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to doing what we can to have a smooth transition from the state disability service system as it is to a national system under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The previous government chose not to have an NDIS trial, making Queensland the only state or territory in Australia not to have a trial, leaving us without the opportunity to test the implementation before full rollout and meaning that Queenslanders missed out on tens of millions of dollars of extra funding from the Commonwealth. The Palaszczuk government went to the election with a commitment to have an early launch of the NDIS in Queensland. We are keen to test the NDIS in a Queensland setting because we know in Queensland we have a very different geographic makeup and demographic features. For this reason, we would like to have the early launch in an area where people with disability have high support needs as well as an area that considers the uniqueness of Queensland. We have honoured our part of the plan by providing \$1.9 million in the budget for the launch. At this point in time we are still waiting for the Australian government to approve the launch and provide \$2.7 million in funding to make the launch a reality.

The Palaszczuk government also made a commitment to the departmentally delivered Accommodation Support and Respite Services clients and we are keeping that commitment. By contrast, the Palaszczuk government will continue to provide the high-quality Accommodation Support and Respite Services for Queenslanders with disability who have high and complex needs. I am also committed to continuing to engage across a variety of forums. First and foremost as Minister for Disability Services, I regularly engage with people with disabilities, their families and carers about their views, concerns and opinions. The Queensland Disability Advisory Council, the Queensland NDIS Transition Advisory Group and the peak and representative bodies are key channels for me to obtain independent advice on regional, state and national disability and related matters. I will continue to engage with these key stakeholders as we move towards the implementation of the NDIS.

Regrettably, Tony Abbott and his assistant minister, Mitch Fifield, are playing politics with the NDIS and holding Queenslanders to ransom. To make the NDIS rollout in Queensland a reality, the Queensland government and Australian government need to have a bilateral agreement in place—the details of the how, when and where the NDIS will be rolled out in Queensland over three years from July 2016. But Mr Abbott is holding out on Queensland and will not commit to giving us our full and fair share of the DisabilityCare Australia Fund. This is despite the fact that Queenslanders have been paying into that fund through an increased Medicare levy since July 2014. Instead, the Prime Minister wants to ration our share. What this means is that in the first year of rollout we will be able to take in approximately only 13,000 people of the 97,000 people with disability, leaving the final year with approximately 62,000 people required to enter the scheme. We are not asking for anything more than our fair share, but Mr Abbott is putting our transition to the NDIS in jeopardy. By not telling us whether or not we will have our fair share, Mr Abbott is making people with disability wait too long to find out when and where they will have the opportunity to enter the scheme.

Officers in my department have done absolutely everything they can to get the bilateral agreement to a stage where both the state and the Commonwealth can sign off on the agreement and give people that certainty. However, I am disappointed to inform the committee that earlier this year, when my office met with the former minister, she refused 'to advocate for Queensland' to the federal government to get Queensland its full and fair share of funds. We are keen to advise Queenslanders with disability, their families and carers, providers and staff about who, when, where and how the NDIS will roll out over three years from July 2016. I can reassure the committee that I am and will continue to advocate for Queenslanders. I have had a number of conversations with Assistant Minister Fifield and the Premier has also spoken to the Prime Minister. Basically, now the ball is in Tony Abbott's court.

**Ms DAVIS:** Can I just seek some clarification there? Minister, did you say that I would not advocate for Queensland's fair share of funding? I am sorry, I missed it. Could you clarify what you said?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** It was a conversation you had with my staff when you met with my staff earlier this year.

**Ms DAVIS:** May I address that please, Chair? If the minister is going to raise private conversations, I am happy to share what happened in that conversation. The minister was not there to brief me and what was asked of me, Minister—

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order.

**Ms DAVIS:** No, I am being asked—

**CHAIR:** Order, thank you.

**Miss BOYD:** I raise a point of order under relevance, Madam Chair.

**Ms DAVIS:** The relevance is that the minister has made a statement that is factually incorrect. The minister was not at the meeting. I did not for one moment suggest that I would not support bilateral negotiations. What I asked for was the opportunity to sit at the table so that I could understand where Queensland was at so that I might then be able to advocate. Minister, that was not forthcoming from your office and I ask you to retract what you said because it is factually incorrect.

**CHAIR:** I think the member has made her point so we might just move on to the next question. I would like to now call the member for Pine Rivers.

**Miss BOYD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I refer—

**Mr McARDLE:** I wish to clarify one point. Is the member for Aspley seeking a withdrawal?

**Ms DAVIS:** I would like the minister to withdraw.

**Mr McEACHAN:** It is personally offensive.

**CHAIR:** Minister, will you withdraw?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I retract.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you.

**Miss BOYD:** Minister, I refer you to page 1 of the SDS. Can you advise the committee how, as a new minister, you manage your three separate and complex portfolios of North Queensland, Disability Services and Seniors?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. I take the responsibility that comes with my three portfolio areas very seriously. I am pleased to be working hard every day to deliver for North Queenslanders, for people with disability and for Queensland seniors.

We promised to be an open and accountable government that consults with stakeholders, and that is exactly what we are doing. Every day I meet with stakeholders from across my three portfolio areas. I also meet with constituents from my electorate to discuss a range of local issues. When I made the decision to run for the seat of Mundingburra I knew that I would have a big job ahead of me but I was definitely up for the challenge right from day one.

As with any other minister, I balance my time between my ministerial and electorate responsibilities, including travelling between my Brisbane and Townsville offices and throughout Queensland. It is important to note that I am not doing it alone. I do have the support of my staff, my department and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I also work closely with my cabinet colleagues on any matters relating to their portfolios. After all, I am not here to do their job for them.

As I said in my opening remarks, my charter letter details my North Queensland priorities as consulting with stakeholders, identifying infrastructure priorities and improvements to service delivery, and assisting in building resilience of North Queensland communities to natural disasters. I am pleased to say that I am already achieving results in each of my three portfolio areas.

In North Queensland I was delighted to have the opportunity to reopen the government's North Queensland office after it was closed by the LNP and commence a series of economic business round tables with business leaders and investors. For people with disability, I am happy to have delivered an increased Disability Services budget for 2015-16 of \$1.547 billion including \$1.9 million for an early NDIS launch. In relation to Seniors, we are holding a seniors summit as we speak which will feed into our overarching seniors strategy, something which was well and truly missing after three years under the LNP. I love my job. I am committed to working hard to get the best outcomes for North Queenslanders, for people with disability and for seniors.

**Mr PYNE:** I refer to page 1 of the SDS and ask the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland: how many North Queensland businesses and non-government organisations have you met with in the six months since you became minister in February 2015?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Cairns for the question. Can I say that with six members of parliament—three in Cairns and three in Townsville, including two ministers—the north is very well represented by the Palaszczuk government. As Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, I am incredibly proud to be an advocate for the north. This does involve meeting with a range of stakeholders in North Queensland including businesses, non-government organisations and government representatives.

We are a government that is committed to being open and transparent. My ministerial diary is published every month on the cabinet website, and this includes meetings I have had with North Queensland stakeholders. I will give you a glimpse of some of the people I have been meeting with as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland and they include: the Queensland Music Festival; the Property Council of Australia; the Cardwell District Community Futures Forum; the North Queensland Cowboys and National Rugby League; the Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland; Consult Australia; Rio Tinto; the Cassowary Coast Regional Council; the Tully Support Centre; CQU Townsville; Commerce North West; the Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Development Zone; James Cook University; North Queensland Transport Trades & Mining; North Queensland arts; Suncorp Insurance; Townsville Enterprise Ltd; Australian Institute of Marine Science; Aurizon; the regional economic development subcommittee; MMG Century; Townsville Cross Cultural Police Liaison Unit; the Townsville Hospital; North Queensland employment; Canegrowers; Ergon; Queensland Investment Corporation; the Port of Townsville; the Townsville private mental health clinic; the Ayr library; the Townsville City Council; the Mount Isa Regional Council; the Charters Towers Regional Council; and the Local Government Association of Queensland. I have also had the opportunity to meet with some of the mayors at the LGAQ Indigenous leaders forum. Obviously, these meetings do not include meetings that I have had with disability or seniors organisations.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS and the expansion of the Abbot Point coal terminal and ask the minister what the government is doing to balance economic development and jobs in North Queensland with ensuring that our environment is protected?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for the question. As the member and others on the committee have heard the Premier, my ministerial colleagues and I say many times, we are committed to working with business and investors to identify economic opportunities and create jobs in northern



Queensland. This government fully supports opening up the Galilee Basin. A number of mine proponents are in the basin, and we are working with all of them to progress the projects. The Abbot Point terminal development is important to Queensland's economic future, and that is why this government is dedicated to ensuring that it progresses in a transparent and environmentally responsible manner. We recently announced an agreement with Adani and GVK Hancock to progress a responsible and sustainable proposal for the expansion of the Abbot Point coal terminal.

This agreement will see the dredge spoil placed on the industrial site known as T2 next to the existing coal terminal. We all know that the Great Barrier Reef is one of the great natural wonders of the world and it is our job as a government to ensure that we protect it. That is why since winning government we have taken strong and decisive action to protect the reef. Part of that action was to end the dumping of dredge spoil on the reef. No dredged material from Abbot Point will be dumped in the Great Barrier Reef or the Caley Valley wetlands. The expansion of the port involves dredging just 61 hectares of the nearly 35 million hectares that make up the Great Barrier Reef Marine World Heritage area. The construction and dredging work will generate up to 155 jobs for about six months, with most of this workforce expected to be sourced locally.

The Australian government has determined that an environmental impact statement will be used to assess the project, and the Palaszczuk government welcomes this decision. The draft EIS was publicly released by my colleague the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Dr Anthony Lynham, on 20 August 2015. There will be at least 20 business days for public consultation. Once the final documentation has been received from the proponent, the Australian government minister has 40 business days to make an approval decision. Given the steps and time frames, a decision is likely within the second half of 2015.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to a balanced approach to protecting the environment and delivering vital infrastructure for Queensland's economic future. The agreement reached between Adani and GVK earlier this year reflects this commitment and will pave the way for the responsible and sustainable development of the Galilee Basin and Abbot Point. Under the agreement there will be no dumping of capital dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef and no dumping on the nationally significant Caley Valley wetlands. It will rather be dumped on the site known as T2. This is how we will balance the objective of saving the reef with that of continuing to grow our coal exports through projects like the opening up of the Galilee Basin.

**Miss BOYD:** Can the minister advise what funding is in place to assist people with a disability who are living in hospitals and health facilities?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. This government believes that people with disability deserve to live in their communities. People with disability with high and complex physical support needs face a chronic shortage of accessible accommodation and constrained resources for disability support which have limited their choices. This is why some people are unable to be discharged from hospital when their treatment is complete and why some people have remained in health facilities long term. People with disability in hospital may also be at risk of entering aged-care facilities if the support and accommodation that they need is not available. There are some Queensland hospital and health services that operate facilities that have historically provided long-term supported accommodation for people with disability who have high and complex needs. For example, Birribi in Rockhampton and the Halwyn Centre in Brisbane. Unfortunately, there are still approximately 240 people with disability across Queensland who are unable to be discharged from hospital or who are living in facilities like I just mentioned.

This government is committed to supporting people with disability, their families and carers. That is why I am pleased to say that our budget provides funding through a number of avenues to support the transition of people with disability with high and complex needs to the community. In 2015-16 we will: provide an additional \$2 million to support 20 people to move out of public health facilities; provide \$6 million in capital grants for non-government organisations to build suitable housing so that younger people with disability can move out of public health facilities and residential aged-care services; contribute funding of \$700,000 towards new accommodation to enable 10 people with high physical support needs to move from Casuarina Lodge and the Jacana Centre; allocate \$3.2 million to support up to 27 people with spinal cord injury to return home with necessary support arrangements in place; and work closely with Queensland hospital and health services to ensure people living in public health facilities are supported to transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Queensland government will transfer funding of current services for people who will move from the NDIS to the NDIA, and the NDIS will enable all eligible people to receive the disability support they need when they need it. The shortage of housing options will still be a critical issue. Unfortunately, as I have regularly spoken about in the House, and also as outlined in question on notice No. 4, despite the Productivity Commission forecasting that there would be up to \$700 million per year of Commonwealth NDIS funding available to leverage investment and stimulate the construction of disability housing options across Australia, the Abbott government refuses to provide clear advice on the delivery of housing options for people with disability.

I conclude by saying that this government is a government that is committed to supporting people with disability, their families and carers. We are picking up the pieces and putting disability services back on track in the lead-up to the NDIS after the previous LNP government sacked public servants and slashed funding.

**Mr PYNE:** How is the department ensuring that disability service workers in Queensland are using best practice when working with people with a disability who have high and complex behaviour issues?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Cairns for the question. I have been fortunate enough to meet with disability services workers both from the department and the non-government sector who work every day with people with disability who have high and complex needs which may include behavioural issues. It is apparent that these incredible Queenslanders find the work both highly challenging and rewarding, and I believe it is essential that these workers are equipped with the resources they need, including world-leading professional development. I believe that the best way we can support workers is to make sure they have the resources and the skills to get the best outcomes for their clients in a safe environment.

My department's Centre of Excellence for Clinical Innovation and Behaviour Support plays a lead role in making sure our disability workers are leaders in the field. After 18 months of uncertainty and angst, it took a change of government to give certainty to some of our most vulnerable clients—people with high and complex needs. We made a commitment to AS&RS staff and their families that we would not privatise services and that we were keeping our commitment. The previous LNP government and current LNP Abbott government show a lack of care for Queenslanders with disability, with Mr Abbott playing politics with Queenslanders and not committing to allowing us access to our full and fair share of the Disability Care Australia Fund—a fund that, as I have previously said, we have been paying into since July 2014.

I will not do that to Queensland. I will continue to advocate and fight for Queenslanders to get what is rightfully ours. The centre of excellence supports the disability sector, including workers, through its specialist training and support for the disability sector. This includes providing cutting-edge research and practice education relating to issues that impact people with disability, especially people with high and complex needs. The centre has developed a reporting system to record the use of restrictive practices at the individual client level and is currently working collaboratively with the sector to implement this system. The evidence gained through the legislatively based reporting requirement has the potential to reduce the use of restrictive practice and improve the quality of life for some of Queensland's most vulnerable clients.

I am pleased to advise that in every region of the state the centre of excellence delivered multiple courses that addressed eight separate issues themed around positive behaviour support and meeting the requirements of the legislation. These courses were in addition to the workshops tailored to address emerging sector needs with the explicit aim of building sector capability. These events were attended by 647 people and delivered as cost neutral to the sector. In addition, the centre of excellence delivered the Disability Support Workers Conference in Brisbane in partnership with Multicap and the Cerebral Palsy League for over 180 support workers.

The important work of the centre of excellence will continue to grow in this coming year, with the continuation of complex cases as well as continuing to build the sector's capability and deliver more events and activities. The first and very exciting event will be hosting the Delivering Clinical Governance—Practice and Research Symposium in September 2015. This is an internationally renowned event and will attract the world's brightest and most innovative minds in the area. Secondly, the centre is developing a Graduate Certificate in Positive Behaviour Support, which is an accredited program to be delivered through the University of Queensland in 2016. This work will position Queensland disability workers to be among the best in the world.

I conclude by thanking all disability service workers whose passion and commitment helps improve the lives of people with disability.

**Mr PYNE:** Minister, I have met with families in my electorate of Cairns who rely on respite funding. Can the minister explain what her department is doing to provide respite to assist carers and families of people with a disability?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I again thank the member for Cairns for the question. I am sure what the member is hearing is what I hear when I meet with families: that respite services can strengthen the family's ability to deliver the care that they need to provide for their family member with disability. I am happy to inform the member for Cairns that this budget has targeted assistance to carers and families of people with disability.

From a carer's perspective, respite might mean a night of uninterrupted sleep once a week. It might mean that they get to have a break for a weekend and the opportunity to just spend some time as a family. It might mean that for just a couple of hours a day they can do something just for themselves. Respite does come in all shapes and sizes. It may be centre based, providing a person with disability with daily supports and community activities, or it could be home based. My department provides in-home respite, centre based respite, community access support, host family respite, vacation programs and emergency respite.

Unfortunately, the previous government had no regard for people with disability, their carers or families when they slashed disability services funding under the guise of fiscal repair and when they made the decision to privatise the department's Accommodation Support and Respite Services—or AS&RS, as I refer to it. I have visited some of the department's AS&RS houses, I have met with residents and their families and I have spoken with the incredible staff, and the respite offered to families through this service is incredibly appreciated. The Palaszczuk government made a commitment to these AS&RS clients and staff and we are keeping that commitment. I am happy to be providing certainty to those staff and the families of an estimated 440 adults and children with intellectual disability who rely on AS&RS by keeping our election commitment to keep AS&RS services running by my department.

The 2015-16 budget provides for investment in respite which includes \$81.745 million to non-government disability service providers to deliver respite services, \$23.268 million for centre based day care, and \$21.5 million for home based respite care through Community Care providers. Community Care funds low-intensity support services for people under 65 or for Indigenous Queenslanders under 50 with disability, health or mental health conditions who need basic support to remain living independently in their home and participating in their community. Services include home care, social support, respite, transport, meals, home maintenance and modification, centre based day care, allied health care and case management. In conclusion, I want to reassure the committee that as Queensland transitions to the NDIS all respite users will be provided with detailed information about their current respite services so they are well prepared.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I refer to page 10 of the SDS and ask you to expand on the services currently being provided to Queensland Seniors Card holders.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** After they had been ignored for three years by the previous government, I am pleased to be the voice of older Queenslanders to the cabinet. This government highly values the contribution that older Queenslanders make to our community, and in this budget we have recognised the diverse needs of older Queenslanders and provided \$7.67 million towards senior support programs and services.

I am pleased to advise the committee that, as at 30 June 2015, 519,913 seniors held a Seniors Card, which enables eligible seniors to access government concessions and a wide range of business discounts; 143,136 seniors held a Seniors Card +go, which provides the same benefits as a Seniors Card with the added function of a go card; and 94,809 seniors held a Seniors Business Discount Card, which enables holders to access offers and discounts at more than 6,600 business outlets. To assist Queensland seniors to access discounts, a Seniors Business Discount Directory has been developed and the online directory can be used to search for Queensland discounts by card type, location or discount category. Queensland seniors can also use their Queensland Seniors Card to access discounts and special offers on goods and services from businesses in other states. Each Australian state and territory has their own Seniors Card scheme and some have reciprocal arrangements in place for seniors to use their Queensland Seniors Card in other states.

To strengthen the Queensland Seniors Card scheme, the department will release some enhancements in September 2015 which will focus on improvements to the business interface and the addition of special short-term offers. A second phase of enhancements will occur in December 2015 which will include Google Maps to identify business locations.

In addition to the Seniors Card, we will be reviewing how we provide information to Queensland seniors. One of the commitments we made during the election and on coming into government was to create the one-stop shop for seniors. My department will be undertaking an expanded coordination role to work across government to ensure that information about all services essential to seniors is accessible at one central point. The suite of initiatives connected to the one-stop shop for seniors will be introduced in a phased approach, with the initial phase incorporating a review of all government information and services for seniors to ensure information is available online in December 2015. I can assure the committee that the Palaszczuk government is working hard to ease the cost-of-living pressures for Queensland seniors and, unlike the previous LNP government, we are committed to looking after older Queenslanders rather than completely overlooking them.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, we might just talk about the early launch, which is referred to on page 6 on the SDS and in your response to question on notice No. 8. You have spoken about an allocated \$1.9 million for 12 months. If I understand, that will be delivered by the NDIA along with \$2.7 million; is that correct?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The commitment of \$1.9 million was a state government budget commitment.

**Ms DAVIS:** Yes, but the NDIA will be running the trial?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Yes.

**Ms DAVIS:** The language was a bit oblique in your response, but there is \$2.7 million coming from the NDIA or from the federal government; is that correct? So it would be 1.9 plus 2.7?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The request has been for 2.7 from the Commonwealth, but to date we are yet to hear back from them.

**Ms DAVIS:** Have you had any indication at all?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Not at this stage.

**Ms DAVIS:** Not at officer level?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** We have had a lot discussions. I have not been advised that we have had confirmation of the 2.7 being committed at this stage.

**Ms DAVIS:** Great. Minister, given you requested \$2.7 million and you are popping in 1.9, that gives us \$4.6 million in total. I note that you expect to transition up to 600 people to the NDIS through the launch. Given that the average annualised package for a participant in the NDIS is around \$38,000—and a quick calculation of this is about \$7,500—for these high-needs clients that I understand are going to be targeted to transition across, is \$7,000 per client enough?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Having an early launch for the NDIS involves four phases. The first phase involves the Queensland government and the NDIA logistic and operational preparation on the ground. The second phase is when participant and sector readiness activities intensify so that participants have the knowledge they need around eligibility and the sector can put a local plan into place. The third phase progressively involves individual planning, preparation and planned development with around 1,600 participants. People with disability will work with NDIA planners to plan their reasonable and necessary supports. The final phase is participants receiving their funds, and that will be where there will be progressively up to 600 participants receiving reasonable and necessary support under the NDIS between April and June 2016. I am sorry I cannot give you more information about the launch, about where it will be. Until Mr Abbott approves the launch our hands are tied. But I can assure all of the committee that I will continue to fight for Queensland and the Queensland government is committed to investing in the early launch. The calculation of package costs for participants is based on average package costs of approximately \$35,000 per annum, and that was what was tested in the trials.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. Just to clarify, the \$1.9 million in the first 12 months and the \$2.7 million that you have requested is not for packages?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** For a more detailed response to that, I will hand over to the director-general.

**Mr Hogan:** Thank you, Minister. As the member is clearly interested in the explanation around the early launch, as the minister has outlined it will take place in four phases with a view to the NDIA commencing their work with potential participants in early 2016, if we get confirmation soon from the Australian government, with a view to people moving into reasonable and necessary packages funded through the NDIA progressively from April, May and June. So the annualised average package cost is as has been tested and trialled in the other jurisdictions, so of course if they are commencing in the last quarter of this financial year it will not be for a full year until that full package cost is expended.

**Ms DAVIS:** So we are talking about one-quarter of the annualised cost. That is what the costings have been based on, Director-General?

**Mr Hogan:** That is correct. If I could just clarify, it is up to one-quarter depending on when people enter into the scheme over April, May and June and of course depending on the number of clients that come in at different levels and at which point.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you. Minister, you have mentioned that the expected profile of the participants is high-needs clients and the annualised package will sit under that. That will be lower, so there will be more money required in order to provide the reasonable and necessary supports. Are you targeting particular cohorts? You have indicated that you cannot announce the trial until you have made an arrangement, but you have mentioned you are going to go for the complex needs clients, so their package is surely going to be higher than the average. In terms of the amount of money that you have allocated, are you confident that is enough to move up to 600 people with high and complex needs?

**CHAIR:** Member for Aspley, your question is seeking an expression of opinion. Can you rephrase your question, please.

**Ms DAVIS:** Certainly. Minister, this is very important. It is something that you have been out talking about in terms of the launch. You have indicated numbers. Today you have indicated the cohort. Can you guarantee that those that enter the launch phase will receive the reasonable and necessary supports? I did not come up with the cohort. I did not come up with the figure, so I think it is fair, Chair, to ask the minister whether that is going to be sufficient money.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** First if I can clarify, I have not indicated that the trial would only be to people with high and complex needs and obviously at this point in time I cannot discuss what cohort would be in the early launch side of things. At officer level, model and costing has been discussed and there is in-principle agreement at this stage.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Minister. My question, then, is: of the 600 people that you hope to transition, will these people likely already have a package or part package through your department?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I said, I cannot disclose the cohort that we have been talking about, but we will probably be looking at there being a mixture of existing and new clients with that figure of up to 600 people.

**Ms DAVIS:** Minister, I am pleased that 600 people are likely to get access. Could you please advise whether these individuals, in the absence of a signed bilateral agreement, will receive recurrent funding, given that the \$1.9 million is only for 12 months?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Yes, I can.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** We have a few more minutes, so I do not know if you have a further question given the minister's brief answer. You may have one more question before the break.

**Ms DAVIS:** I do not know that my next ones are quick-answer questions, Chair.

**CHAIR:** That is okay. We might break a little early then. The committee will now adjourn for afternoon tea. The hearing will resume at 4.15 pm with the continuation of the examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 3.44 pm to 4.14 pm**



**CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now continue its examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. Before the break there was a question taken on notice and I understand, Minister, that there is a response available?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Yes, the director-general has a response to that question.

**Mr Hogan:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Chair. Can I just refer back to the question from the member in relation to how many agencies have not yet published their disability service plans and is the department up to date with its reporting. I am pleased to advise the committee that all agencies, including my department, have completed their disability service plans and actions are ongoing as required under the Disability Services Act 2006.

I am advised that all Queensland government departmental disability service plans are published on their websites. My department's disability service plan 2014-16 outlines the actions that we will take to deliver on the priorities of the *Queensland disability plan 2014-19: enabling choices and opportunities*, as do other departmental disability service plans. That indeed also built on the previous Queensland plan, which was titled *Absolutely everybody: enabling Queenslanders with a disability 2011-2014*. Absolutely everybody and then the Queensland Disability Plan and disability service plans also contribute to Queensland's commitments under the National Disability Strategy 2010-20. Queensland government departments will continue to publish their yearly report on achievements under their disability service plans on their websites and whole-of-government reports will be prepared, as has been indicated, in 2016 and 2019.

In addition, all agencies that are impacted by the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme have prepared agency transition plans for the NDIS. That process is coordinated through my department. I chair the Queensland NDIS reform leaders group and we regularly meet to engage on the readiness of every agency that is impacted in relation to their planning and their own agency plans for the NDIS.

I can indicate to the committee that each agency has played an active role in whole-of-government preparations for the NDIS. They have contributed to our contributions to the national Integrated Market, Sector and Workforce Strategy. They have contributed to the advice in relation to the bilateral agreement under negotiation and they have also contributed to the very detailed operational plan that the government will enter into with the NDIA once the bilateral agreement is finalised.

**CHAIR:** Thank you director-general. I call the member for Aspley.

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, I refer to your earlier reference to your ministerial charter letter, of which I have a copy here. Under the portfolio's priority statement it talks about integrity and accountability. I ask: Minister, in your time as a minister of the Crown, have you repaid any of the thousands of dollars you received in the lead-up to the election from lowly paid and hardworking United Voice members such as cleaners, waitresses and childcare workers?

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order.

**Ms DAVIS:** With regard to the payments of your salary by United Voice.

**CHAIR:** Point of order, member for Aspley. Can you explain under standing order 181(g) how your question is relevant to our consideration of the budget estimates?

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am referring to the ministerial charter letter that the minister was happy to refer to during this estimates hearing, but I would seek your guidance on the matter. A question regarding Abbot Point was allowed to be asked of the minister and Abbot Point does not appear in any of the budget documents.

**Mr McARDLE:** I have a point of order as well, Madam Chair. The minister in her opening statement did refer to her letter of engagement signed by the Premier and but she also referred to her ministerial diary that had been published and ran through a number of organisations or bodies that she had met. On 16 April this year she met with the secretary for United Voice. The minister herself has put into question the content of both the letter of engagement with the Premier and the content of her ministerial diary by her own admission. In my opinion, it is therefore fair for a member of this committee to ask the minister questions in relation to both of those matters because she herself has raised them as part of her opening statement and in answer to a question she took from a committee member.

**CHAIR:** Yes. I am ruling that question out of order as it does not relate to the Appropriation Bill that we are examining.

**Mr McARDLE:** Madam Chair, can I ask you to explain the background as to why the question, given the minister's statements and reference to both the letter and her diary, is now out of order? If the minister can refer to the content of those documents to substantiate her basis for being a minister, why can those documents not be the basis for questions by this side of the committee?

**CHAIR:** Under standing order 207, member for Caloundra, are you dissenting from my ruling?

**Mr McARDLE:** You have not made a ruling yet.

**CHAIR:** I am ruling the question out of order.

**Mr McARDLE:** This is simply—

**CHAIR:** So that is my ruling—that the question is out of order.

**Mr McARDLE:** This is simply another protection racket. Yet again, the Labor Party protection racket is now rolling on.

**CHAIR:** Is the member dissenting from my ruling?

**Mr McARDLE:** Yet again, it keeps moving forward and forward.

**CHAIR:** Is the member dissenting from my ruling?

**Mr McARDLE:** No, I am just making the observation.

**CHAIR:** I would just like to remind members that under standing order 181(g) questions must be relevant to the Appropriation Bill being considered. Member for Aspley, do you have another question?

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, at the National Disability Services conference earlier in the year you made a presentation. At that presentation you indicated that you would be seeking to help disability care workers, or people in the sector, get higher wages. You talked about your work in child care and the work that you had done in that space. My question is: what have you done to progress that promise to those many hundreds of people in that room?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Aspley for the question. This government, the Palaszczuk government, is 100 per cent committed to ensuring that the disability staff in the sector are valued and acknowledged for the great work that they do. An exciting aspect of the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is that it will contribute to approximately 13,000 new jobs in the sector and this is just in disability services alone. Once the scheme is fully implemented by June 2019, these jobs will include support workers, allied health professionals, support coordinators, managers, administrators, local area coordinators, planners and assessors.

Unlike the previous LNP government, which put forward a jobs plan for more politicians, my department has developed a comprehensive work strategy for Queenslanders, which has been funded in this year's budget. This strategy, as part of our Jobs Now, Jobs for the Future agenda will focus on workforce intelligence, leadership, workforce skills and connecting Queenslanders to the approximately 13,000 jobs that will be generated out of the NDIS by attracting people to the disability sector. As I have stated earlier today, the Abbott government is playing politics with regard to Queenslanders' accessing their full and fair share of the DisabilityCare Australia Fund that we have been paying into for over 12 months; instead, wanting to ration our share. This is critically impacting on our workforce planning and causing great uncertainty across the sector. Supporting people with a disability is a very important role. At the moment their actions speak louder than words and they will continue to put the NDIS in Queensland in jeopardy.

Unfortunately, there have been ongoing delays with regard to the Abbott government releasing the funds due to this delay and the need for immediate work to be done. Just last week I met with the Community Services Industry Alliance, National Disability Services Queensland, the Workforce Council and QCOSS, who make up the sector consortium of disability peak bodies leading the strategy in Queensland. The consortium is ready to hit go to ensure that the extra 13,000 skilled workers that we will need for full implementation are available and trained. The Queensland government is committed to working in collaboration with the NGO sector to ensure that Queensland has the workforce capability and capacity required to achieve full implementation of the NDIS by July 2019 and beyond.

I have already hosted industry forums with local disability, employment and training providers to talk about Queensland's workforce needs, local solutions and NDIS opportunities for local businesses. These forums, NDIS: Creating jobs for Rockhampton and NDIS: Creating jobs for Brisbane South, have been very useful starting points for local stakeholders to start coming together to work through the local issues, concerns and opportunities. At its core the workforce strategy identifies that there must be local solutions for local needs. A key factor to the success of this workforce strategy is local place based leadership roles that bring together local intelligence around workforce supplying capability. Key stakeholder groups will collaborate to develop a comprehensive plan to meet the local workforce challenges. That is why this government will invest in the sector to enable them to lead important work.

This government's Working Queensland plan has been developed and will be implemented in partnership with the newly established Jobs Queensland. This will make Queensland's vocational education and training sector the strongest and most productive in Australia. If I can just finish with two key messages: while there are many components needed to address the issue, the opportunities ahead for job development are really exciting for Queensland and I want to clearly state that no Queensland public servant will be left without a job.

**CHAIR:** I call on the member for Pine Rivers.

**Miss BOYD:** I refer to page 8 of the SDS and I ask the minister to outline what is being done to support seniors in my electorate of Pine Rivers?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Pine Rivers for her question. I know the member for Pine Rivers is a keen advocate for older Queenslanders. It is great to have someone who is absolutely committed on our team. I am sure the constituents of Pine Rivers are also pleased to have you on board. As Minister for Seniors, I am committed to implementing the Queensland government's election commitments that will assist Queensland seniors across the state. I will be working with older people in Queensland to develop a seniors strategy—something we have not had since 2012. That process, as I said earlier today, started today with the seniors summit that is currently underway at the State Library.

Our seniors, who make up almost 10 per cent of the population in Pine Rivers, have a wealth of experience. So it is important to recognise them and the significant contribution they make as volunteers, employees, community leaders, carers, grandparents and also generational advocates. This government values our seniors and I have been privileged to meet with many seniors and seniors organisations since becoming minister.

In Pine Rivers, seniors have recently enjoyed a number of Seniors Week events, supported by my department, including a community event to assist individuals and families to learn about the recent changes to the aged-care funding and also information sessions with local service providers, Deception Bay Active 60 and Better Incorporated and Encircle Ltd. The Older People's Action Program has commenced to help build on their capacity to deliver quality services to older people.

In 2015-16, the Palaszczuk government will support and recognise older Queenslanders through a range of key services, building on the achievements of the previous Labor governments and that includes \$2.55 million for Seniors Legal and Support Services across Queensland; \$1.469 million for the Older People's Action Program, delivered by 20 services across Queensland to strengthen personal and community connectedness of people over 60; \$1.456 million for the 60 and Better Program, delivered by 23 services across Queensland; \$189,865 for older men's groups; \$334,924 for the Seniors Enquiry Line—a statewide information and referral service; \$504,233 for the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit to coordinate a statewide telephone helpline; \$98,491 for the Older Women's Network; \$799,985 for the Time For Grandparents program; and \$269,615 to the Council on the Ageing Queensland to engage with the community to build the capacity of services to deliver program improvements and to run Seniors Week.

In 2015-16 the Queensland government is also supporting and recognising older Queenslanders with a range of events and campaigns including Grandparents Day in October 2015 and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June 2016. We also supported a number of events held across the state for Seniors Week last week. During Seniors Week I had the opportunity to attend many events across the state that recognised the valuable contribution of older Queenslanders. The Queensland government's vision is for older people to lead healthy and productive lives whether in work or volunteering or in retirement, with access to a range of lifestyle opportunities and care and support appropriate to their needs. As Minister for Seniors I want to ensure the needs of seniors are being met and I am committed to providing seniors with the support they need.

**Mr PYNE:** Can the minister detail how this government is assisting Queensland seniors to meet cost-of-living pressures?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Cairns for the question. This government understands the impact of cost-of-living pressures on older Queenslanders. I am honoured to be the Palaszczuk government's Minister for Seniors and I am committed to implementing the Queensland government commitments to contribute to the improved provision of information about relevant services and increase the social and economic participation and connectedness of older Queenslanders. We know that seniors enrich our communities with their wide range of experience and achievements and they are very often involved at a local level. After they spent three years being invisible under the previous government, I am here to show Queenslanders that this government is committed to listening and to caring for them. It is important that we show them how much we value their contribution, unlike the previous LNP government, which made savage cuts of 63 per cent to the Office for Seniors, attempted to cut pensioner concessions and allowed the cost of utilities such as electricity to skyrocket by an average of 43 per cent.

The Palaszczuk government committed \$56 million in the 2015-16 state budget to reverse the cuts made by the federal LNP government. Some \$2 million in funding will also go towards rebuilding the Office for Seniors after it was cut by the former government, establishing a one-stop shop for seniors



and establishing the Advisory Taskforce on Residential Transition for Ageing Queenslanders. We value the significant contributions seniors make in our community which is why we are investing in important initiatives to support them.

In 2015-16 my department will administer \$242.9 million in concessions to assist pensioners, seniors and veterans with cost-of-living expenses. This includes funding for the Electricity Rebate Scheme, Electricity Life Support Concession Scheme, Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate Scheme, Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity Concession Scheme, Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme, SEQ Pensioner Water Subsidy scheme and the Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme. The Seniors Card scheme, which I mentioned earlier to the member for Bundaberg, also enables eligible seniors to access government concessions and a wide range of business discounts to help reduce the cost of living. As I have said before, this government will invest in Queensland's seniors so that their wealth of knowledge and expertise continues to be valued. We will not sell our seniors out.

**Mr PYNE:** Minister, I have met with a number of parents and carers in Cairns who are concerned about how they will make a seamless transition to the NDIS. Can you advise the committee how this budget is addressing this priority?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I am truly honoured and humbled to appear before the committee as Minister for Disability Services during this extremely exciting time with the monumental level of change that is taking place with the rollout of the NDIS in Queensland from July next year. You have probably heard me say before that the NDIS is the most significant social welfare reform since Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam established Medicare in 1975. Nationally, investment in the NDIS will total more than \$22 billion by 2019-20. For Queenslanders, as I said before, this will mean an additional 13,000 jobs by 2019. In answer to your question, there are three key areas that I will speak to that I think are pivotal to a seamless transition: the bilateral agreement, participant and sector readiness and the development of the workforce to meet the demands for the jobs that will be generated.

In relation to the bilateral agreement, to make the NDIS rollout in Queensland a reality, the Queensland government and Australian government must have a bilateral agreement in place that details how the NDIS will be rolled out in Queensland over three years from July 2016, including locations, timing and funding. To ensure the smooth transition this government has been on the front foot working with the Australian government and the National Disability Insurance Agency to negotiate and finalise the bilateral agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth. Senior departmental officers have regularly met face to face and via teleconference and telepresence with the Australian government throughout the past 12 months to negotiate the terms of the bilateral agreement. Officers in my department have done everything they possibly can to get the bilateral agreement to a stage where both the state and the Australian government can sign off on the agreement and give people certainty. However, the key issue of how the funding will be distributed is an area that is unresolved.

This government is fighting for Queensland to receive its fair share of the Medicare levy while the Australian government wants to ration the funds. Under this approach we will not receive our fair share until the third and final year of the rollout. I want the committee to understand what this means and why I am fighting for our fair share. I have said this before but, just to reiterate, it will mean that approximately 13,000 participants out of 97,000 will be the ones that will enter in the first year. We will then be able to take in only about 18,000 in the second year, leaving a staggering 62,000 people with disability to enter in the final year. As we have been contributing to the Medicare levy since July 2014, I will be perplexed if we do not have full and fair access to our share of the NDIS levy that will enable us to ensure we have smooth transition to the scheme. Unfortunately, despite numerous attempts by the Premier, the Treasurer and me to talk to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and Assistant Minister Fifield in Canberra, we have been met with deafening silence. Mr Abbott is holding out on Queenslanders, but I can assure the committee that the Palaszczuk government will fight for what is fair and what is right for Queenslanders with disability.

The second area where significant preparations are occurring for the transition is in the preparedness work on the ground for both participants and organisations, whether they be not-for-profit or for-profit businesses. Workshops attended by more than 4½ thousand people, seminars, one-on-one meetings and other activities are giving people with disability, their family and carers the right information to help them understand what the NDIS will mean for them. Considerable preparedness activity with the sector, including work to help small, rural and remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities develop local approaches is gaining momentum. In this year's budget we have allocated \$6.6 million to fund preparedness activities for all stakeholders. Additionally, an extra

\$283,379 has been allocated to National Disability Services Queensland to work with small to medium disability and community care service provider boards, management teams and organisational leaders to build their capacity to transition to the NDIS. To help organisations we have also developed a range of tools that will assist them to understand their business and to respond to consumer demand in the NDIS.

The final area of preparedness I want to alert the committee to is around workforce capacity building. The Queensland government is committed to working in collaboration with the NGO sector to ensure Queensland has the workforce capability and capacity required to achieve full implementation of the NDIS by July 2019 and beyond. The Australian government has allocated over \$57 million nationally in 2015-16 and 2016-17 from its sector development fund. In part, this funding will assist the disability sector workforce to transition to the NDIS, but, in what is becoming an all-too-familiar story, I am pushing for Queensland's fair share and the Commonwealth is sitting on its hands, silent. However, the need is for the immediate work to be done on building the sector's capacity.

In response to immediate action, my department has played a key role in the development of a comprehensive workforce strategy for Queensland. The Queensland NDIS workforce strategy sits under and is aligned to the overarching NDIA national market sector and workforce strategy, and from the outset it was clear that the Queensland strategy could not be a plan or strategy that was forced onto the non-government sector. What this strategy represents is a collaboration between my department, other government agencies and the sector to enable the workforce supply to match the consumer driven demand for services that will generate 13,000 more jobs and build a sustainable NDIS workforce for the future.

Just last week I met with the Community Services Industry Alliance—National Disability Services Queensland, Workforce Council and QCOSS—who make up the sector consortium of disability peak bodies leading the strategy in Queensland. The consortium is ready to hit 'go' on its sector plan to ensure the extra 13,000 skilled workers we will need for full implementation are available. As I have said before, I have hosted industry forums and the key factor to the success of this workforce strategy is the local place based leadership roles. Through this government's Working Queensland plan this strategy has been developed and will be implemented in partnership with the newly established Jobs Queensland, and this will make Queensland's vocational education and training sector the strongest and most productive in Australia.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, can you explain to this committee what you are actually responsible for as the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I would love to explain my role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

**Mr CRIPPS:** What you are responsible for.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I said, I would love to explain my role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

**Mr CRIPPS:** That was not my question. My question is: what are you responsible for in your role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland?

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order. The member for Hinchinbrook is interjecting and not allowing the minister to answer the question. I ask for your guidance on this, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Member for Hinchinbrook, can you allow the minister to answer your question.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Is it appropriate for the minister to redefine my question in answering it?

**CHAIR:** Can you allow the minister to answer the question and then if you have any follow-up questions to her you may put them.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Defining my role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland I think will highlight what my responsibilities are, so if I am allowed to continue.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Hurry up.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** A key part of my role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland is, as I stated in my opening statement, to explore economic development and infrastructure priorities with a view to improving economic growth and employment outcomes, including leveraging opportunities presented by the Australian government's *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. The Palaszczuk government is committed to listening to business leaders about regional development in Northern Queensland and to achieve this I am undertaking extensive engagement with individuals, business leaders, peak body stakeholders and local government leaders in the region.

To deliver outcomes from this engagement, I take to the cabinet each week key issues relating to North Queensland, and recent communication between the Premier and the Prime Minister on the Northern Australia white paper reflects those concerns. A key component of the engagement also includes five business economic round tables, which I have already started holding: the first held in Cairns, the second in Townsville and we will continue with ones in Mackay and Mount Isa, and the final one in Brisbane for those interested in investing in the north. Among other things, the round tables will discuss how North Queensland businesses can take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Northern Australia white paper and will demonstrate that the Palaszczuk government has listened. As part of those round tables, I will actually be identifying and championing five priority projects identified from the round tables to promote North Queensland development. On top of that, with the Premier I will be championing the North Queensland Economic Summit to be held in Cairns on 4 to 6 November this year to showcase to investors that the region and the state are open for business. In addition, I will be working with the Premier in engaging Northern Queensland local governments on opportunities for Queensland arising from the Australian government's white paper at a Townsville forum in early October.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, this is the Service Delivery Statement for your portfolio. The words 'North Queensland' appear in your ministerial title on page 1 of the SDS, where you are listed as the responsible minister. The words 'North Queensland' do not appear in the following 29 pages of the SDS. Minister, you have just given an answer. Why are the things that you are supposedly responsible for as the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland not described in anyway in the SDS for your portfolio, apart from your ministerial title?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I said, my role is Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. My role is to actually engage with stakeholders to, as I said, identify infrastructure priorities, engage with stakeholders—everything that I listed in my opening statement. My job is not to actually do the job of another minister. There are dedicated ministers across all portfolios with whom I work very closely on a weekly basis. I engage with businesses and key stakeholders across the north to identify and understand issues that are directly impacting their communities and take that information back to cabinet. I also have a role when North Queensland issues are identified around the cabinet table to ensure that North Queensland has a voice.

**Mr CRIPPS:** As I said, Minister, none of that appears in your SDS. How is this committee and the parliament as a whole, as part of the estimates process, able to scrutinise your performance as far as your responsibilities are concerned in relation to being the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland when there are no service areas associated with that role, when there are no service area objectives listed in your SDS, when there are no service area descriptions listed in your SDS and when there are no service measures in your SDS? Is this an acceptable level of transparency and accountability in terms of your role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I refer to page 6 of the SDS of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It states, 'the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, including establishing the DPC North Queensland Office in Townsville'.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Good. I was just about to get to that matter. That is not in your SDS as the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland; it is in the SDS of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Those estimates hearings were held not last Tuesday but the Tuesday before and you were not present at that time. Is there a particular reason you were not present, because you are listed as a responsible minister under the SDS for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The SDS that is my budgetary responsibility is actually the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Yes, but you are listed as a responsible minister in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet SDS. If you are unaware of that it is on page 1 of the SDS for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Actually, I think the member for Cairns may have mentioned that in the introduction to one of his questions.

**CHAIR:** Member for Hinchinbrook, that was a statement. What is your actual question?

**Mr CRIPPS:** I am trying to ascertain, Madam Chair, what the minister's responsibilities are and how we can scrutinise her role as the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland when there are no service measures, there are no service area objectives and there are no service area

descriptions in the SDS. All other ministers for their responsibilities have service measures. All other ministers for their areas of responsibility have service area objectives and descriptions. This does not exist for this minister in respect of her responsibilities as the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order. The member for Hinchinbrook still has not posed a question.

**Mr CRIPPS:** I did and it was not answered.

**CHAIR:** Could you repeat your question, please?

**Mr CRIPPS:** I certainly can. Not to have any of these things in your SDS, Minister, is this an acceptable level of transparency and accountability in terms of the parliament, in a budget estimates process, being able to hold you to account in that role?

**CHAIR:** Before you answer: member for Hinchinbrook, your question is seeking an opinion and you cannot seek an expression of opinion, so could you please rephrase your question?

**Mr CRIPPS:** What is the level of transparency and accountability that is established by the absence of any of these measures in your SDS?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I have said, my Service Delivery Statements responsibilities lie with the Minister for Disability Services and Seniors in the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. In my role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, North Queensland is in the DPC SDS six times: on page 1, page 6 twice, page 17, page 20 and page 26. My charter letter actually outlines exactly what my responsibilities are.

**Mr CRIPPS:** You did not turn up to those budget hearings the Tuesday before last when you would have been able to be scrutinised as part of the estimates process—

**CHAIR:** Member for Hinchinbrook, you are again making statements. Can you please ask a question?

**Mr CRIPPS:** It is a statement of fact that the minister was not at a portfolio estimates hearing for an SDS in which she is listed as a responsible minister. Nevertheless, we will move on because I do not appear to be making much headway with the minister in that regard. Since you mentioned your charter letter and your responsibilities for matters in your charter letter, one of those responsibilities is engaging with the federal government on employment and developing opportunities arising from the Northern Australia white paper. In fact, you touched on this in one of your answers earlier today. Can you outline to the committee what engagement you have had specifically with the federal government about this issue and what progress you have made to date?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for the question. The Queensland government, as I have said before, is committed to developing North Queensland and that is why we have reopened the North Queensland office, which was closed by the previous government. I would like to say, as a North Queensland, I do actually really enjoy this part of my portfolio because it enables me to engage with people across the north regions. The Australian government released its white paper on developing the north on 18 June and we are working with industry and investors to make sure that Queensland maximises its benefits. I have been advised we are awaiting the public release of the \$5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility guidelines by the federal government before we can progress projects with the private sector to maximise opportunities for Queensland. Unfortunately, despite releasing the white paper over two months ago, the federal Treasurer has not publicly released any detail about the eligibility criteria for the concessional loan scheme. However, I can say that the Queensland Treasury officials have been working closely with the Commonwealth Treasury officials on the principles and objectives of the loan scheme. The Queensland Treasurer has also written to his federal counterpart to progress the eligibility criteria and flag potential projects, including the Townsville Eastern Access Rail Corridor and Nullinga Dam.

Of concern for Queensland is that the \$800 million of the infrastructure funding in the Northern Australia white paper was raided by Queensland's allocation under the Asset Recycling Initiative and this funding is now spread across Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland, despite more than two-thirds of Northern Australia's population residing in Queensland. The federal government has also agreed to special one-off infrastructure funding of \$499 million for Western Australia. It is unfair for the federal LNP government to be punishing Queenslanders by withholding infrastructure funding because they refuse to support the record \$37 billion sell-off of our government owned assets.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Madam Chair, is that an opinion that the minister is offering in reply? Are opinions allowed in answers, but not in questions?

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you stay with answering the question and being relevant, thank you?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** An issue that has come up at the first two of the five economic round tables that I have held so far, when we have had the discussions, is about water resources. Water security is obviously a key aspect of economic development in the north and that is why it is important that we are able to work with the Australian government to make sure that this issue is addressed through the white paper. For that reason, the funding of up to \$5 million for a detailed examination of the economic feasibility of Nullinga Dam is a welcome inclusion. As the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, I work closely with the Premier and the newly re-established North Queensland office of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and the government is listening.

In my role of Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland I am committed to meeting with business leaders and local government leaders throughout North Queensland. I am doing that through the five economic round tables to identify economic growth opportunities and job creation. As I said, we will have the Queensland Economic Summit in Cairns in November. This will give us the opportunity to actually showcase North Queensland and what it has to offer and to demonstrate to investors that we are open for business. We are committed to growing North Queensland. We cannot do it on our own, though. We need to work in partnership with business and investors and the Australian government. Therefore, as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland I am calling on the Prime Minister to do the right thing by North Queensland.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, while your SDS does not have anything in it about North Queensland, North Queensland is mentioned in the Capital Statement where, on pages 14 and 15, it talks about how the Palaszczuk government is going to try to leverage funding out of the Abbott government's Northern Australia infrastructure fund, and you just mentioned that in your previous answer. Does the Palaszczuk government have any ideas of its own about developing North Queensland and what are they?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I have said, one of the roles I play in my position as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland is to hold the five economic round tables across North Queensland. It is from those round tables that we are actually working and consulting with business leaders and the community on areas of interest or concern in their communities. It is from those round tables that we will feed back into the state infrastructure plan that will be released later this year.

**Mr CRIPPS:** One of those initiatives that you are pursuing as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland is to convene those five round tables that you have already mentioned, in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Mount Isa and Brisbane, to discuss these economic development opportunities. Minister, how do you justify convening one of these round tables in Brisbane when those round tables will be involved in the future of economic development in North Queensland?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I stated in an earlier response to a question, we will be holding one of those round tables in Brisbane, specifically identifying investors who are interested in investing in the north. Investing in the north, obviously, will contribute to economic development and job creation.

**Mr CRIPPS:** And investors were not able to meet in any destination in North Queensland itself?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I have already also said, being part of the Palaszczuk government is being committed to listening to all Queenslanders, not just Queenslanders in North Queensland; it is Queensland as an entire state.

**Mr CRIPPS:** But these round tables are specifically about the future of economic development in North Queensland. The investors were not able to travel to North Queensland for the purpose of discussing investment in North Queensland?

**Miss BOYD:** Point of order. The minister has already answered the question. I ask for the chair's direction on this.

**Mr CRIPPS:** I do not think that is up to you. I think that is up to me.

**CHAIR:** Excuse me. Member for Hinchinbrook, you are being a bit argumentative. Can you please move on and ask your next question?

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, you mentioned before that you are participating in discussions with the Australian government about the Queensland government's involvement with the Northern Australia infrastructure fund. In fact, on page 15 of the Capital Statement, there is a statement by the government

that the participation of the Queensland government remains the subject of discussions with the Australian government at this time. I think you outlined that in your previous contribution. What are the terms that the Palaszczuk government has put to the Australian government regarding its participation in projects under the Northern Australia infrastructure fund?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The Queensland government is working closely with the Australian government to progress the \$5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility scheme. We want to see as many Queensland projects as possible funded from this scheme. As most of the Northern Australian population resides here, there is the greatest potential for job-creating economic growth. The scheme will support investment in economic infrastructure in Northern Australia by providing concessional loan terms such as a longer repayment period or reduced interest rate. I am working hard to ensure that the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility will be an important enabler for critical infrastructure investment in North Queensland.

As the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility is a Commonwealth initiative, the eligibility criteria for the scheme is set by the Australian Treasurer. I am told that the detailed criteria will soon be released publicly for consultation. I note that our respective treasuries are in touch on this. The Queensland government will partner with the Australian government to deliver aspects of the scheme, for example assisting in the facilitation and assessment of projects. The Commonwealth has budgeted for the scheme to commence on 1 July 2016, with the Australian Treasury now accepting expressions of interest.

While this is a positive initiative for future investments, I and the Premier still are very disappointed about the \$100 million in infrastructure funding raided from Queensland. This funding obviously spread across the three areas and not just in Queensland. The federal government has also, as I said before, agreed to the Western Australia one-off payment. But for specific issues on this matter, I would refer the question to the Treasurer.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Why? Your charter letter says that you are responsible for engagement on behalf of the Queensland government with the Commonwealth government in relation to opportunities under the Northern Australia infrastructure fund—the white paper in fact. Why would you have to refer that to the Treasurer?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I would refer that to the Treasurer with regard to detail around the financial side of things.

**Mr CRIPPS:** But I did not ask about the financial side of things; I asked about the terms that the Palaszczuk government has put to the Australian government regarding the Queensland government's participation in projects under the Northern Australia infrastructure fund.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Once again, I refer to the Treasurer as the Treasurer is leading negotiations around this particular issue.

**Mr CRIPPS:** So is it fair to say that you are not responsible for engagement with the Commonwealth government in relation to opportunities under the Northern Australia white paper?

**Miss BOYD:** Chair, I raise a point of order. Ministers may answer questions as they see fit. I ask you to make a determination on whether the minister has answered the question.

**CHAIR:** The minister is here to answer questions about her portfolio area. The minister has already objected to questions about areas outside her areas of responsibility. As the minister said, questions about financial responsibility should be directed to the Treasurer. Can you ask your next question, please.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I am also more than happy to refer further matters to the DPC director-general.

**Mr CRIPPS:** I am sorry, could you repeat that?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I am also more than happy to refer any other details around that issue to the DPC director-general.

**Mr CRIPPS:** I see. That would be Mr Stewart, and Mr Stewart is attending today's estimates process, despite the fact that he would not be on the list of statutory officers or people who would be eligible for examination. He is on the list? Very good. Would Mr Stewart like to come forward and tell us all about who is responsible. I am inviting you up, Mr Stewart. Can you shed any light on who is responsible for leading the engagement with the Commonwealth government in relation to opportunities that may present themselves under the Northern Australia white paper? The charter letter of the Minister

Assisting the Premier on North Queensland says that the minister is, but the minister appears to be reluctant to answer my question. For your benefit, the question specifically is: what terms are the Palaszczuk government putting to the Commonwealth government about its participation in projects under the Northern Australia infrastructure fund?

**Mr Stewart:** Thank you for the question. I think the minister has addressed that. As far as the fund goes, Treasury is leading those discussions. We really are waiting to see how the terms are developing. In relation to the other infrastructure initiatives, there is certainly a cooperative process happening. We are talking about initiatives and looking at opportunities, whether it is in the land transport network, water infrastructure or other infrastructure, under that white paper. Of course, where we usually start with our discussions with the Australian government, particularly in areas of road infrastructure, is that it is funded 100 per cent. That is certainly a position that we have put forward. I have spoken to the federal secretary for transport and infrastructure, Mike Mrdak, and, of course, we have started talking about how we work up these proposals and their costing. In my discussions with him we have put our proposals clearly. I believe that we will probably get to more of a percentage that we normally see in the delivery of infrastructure, whether that is 80/20 on the national network or whether it is 50/50 as it is sometimes in the regional areas. There are guidelines under those other schemes, particularly for National Highway funding, but we are trying to get a better deal for Queensland so we get a fair and bigger share of that available funding for rolling out infrastructure. There is a very good process happening at officer level. As the minister said, the fund itself is being led by Treasury, but we also have an interdepartmental committee of the major agencies looking at rolling out those projects as part of the white paper.

**Miss BOYD:** Minister, you have identified the priority of working with the Commonwealth government and the NDIA to implement an NDIS launch site. Can you advise the committee how this budget is addressing this priority?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The Palaszczuk government, true to its election commitment, has announced in the 2015-16 state budget the funding of \$1.9 million for the early launch of the NDIS. The launch forms part of the \$1.47 billion 2015-16 Disability Services budget, an increase of \$82 million on the previous financial year. This government believes that establishing an early NDIS launch in Queensland was a key election commitment for this government after Queenslanders missed out on the opportunity for a trial under the previous government.

I cannot overstate that the NDIS is the biggest social reform since Medicare. It will change the lives of people with disability and create up to 13,000 jobs in the state's disability sector. It is essential that Queenslanders are ready for this transition. An early launch will allow us to test the rollout process and to see how the scheme will operate in Queensland. The launch will give us vital information about how we can transition to full NDIS across the rest of the state from 1 July 2016.

To ensure a smooth transition to the NDIS, this government has been on the front foot working with the Commonwealth government to negotiate and finalise the bilateral agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth. We have also involved the National Disability Insurance Agency where necessary. The best preparedness activity would have been to have the NDIS trial site in Queensland. Every state and territory except Queensland had it. Other state leaders, most from the conservative side of politics, recognised the opportunity an NDIS trial provided to ensure the full rollout of the scheme went as efficiently as possible.

When the federal government announced \$1 billion in 2012 for the NDIS, every other state and territory made people with disability a priority and allocated their share to the trial. Sadly, the previous government did not make people with disability a priority and Queensland missed the boat. That is why we in opposition made the election commitment to establish a launch for the NDIS and why I am now working with the department to keep that commitment.

This government believes that the establishment of a launch to test the process for participants in a Queensland context will ensure a more streamlined and effective transition into the NDIS. Our commitment is to an inclusive Queensland where all people are participants in all aspects of community life. As I mentioned, we committed the \$1.9 million as Queensland's contribution to this early launch. Our launch will not be a trial site like the other states; it will be an early launch of the NDIS in Queensland ahead of the start of the scheme on 1 July 2016. The launch will allow us to test the scheme in a Queensland setting. That will involve testing the process for approximately 1,600 people, with up to 600 of those receiving their approved packages before 1 July 2016.

I am sorry that I cannot provide information about the launch or about where it will be. Although we are ready to go, we are still waiting for Mr Abbott to step up for people in Queensland and approve the launch here in Queensland. I can assure the committee that I will continue to advocate for Queenslanders.

**Miss BOYD:** With the NDIS taking over responsibility for disability services, how is your department providing certainty for its Disability Services staff?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The past three years of the LNP government was a time of great uncertainty for public servants. The Palaszczuk government is committed to employment security and to providing support and choice to our staff as well as to our clients. Unlike the previous LNP government with its agenda of job destruction, we have a commitment to job creation through our Jobs Now, Jobs for the Future agenda. As the NDIS is rolled out we are determined to work in partnership with staff, service providers, universities, training bodies and unions to enable a workforce supply to meet demand, including for staff in my department.

One of this government's election commitments was to ensure that Disability Services staff working in Accommodation Support and Respite Services have the opportunity to continue in their current role under existing conditions. True to our word, we have stopped the forced transition from my department of Accommodation Support and Respite Services clients with high and complex needs and enabled the department to continue providing high-quality services.

As Queensland transitions to the NDIS, I can assure the committee that my department is working hard with the affected staff to get their ideas and concerns and to be an active part of the solution and create certainty for their future. There are approximately 3,000 staff in my department who are impacted by the NDIS in one way or another, including approximately 1,600 AS&RS staff, approximately 530 clinical services staff, just under 60 local area coordinators, 280 other regional staff, and 160 policy and program central staff. I remind the committee that, under the previous LNP government, these 3,000 staff were uncertain whether they would retain their jobs.

I am happy to inform the committee that the Queensland Public Service Commission has developed a consistent approach to managing government staff affected by the NDIS, including how staff will be supported, in accordance with the government's employment security policy. Under this approach, all government agencies, including my department, are preparing their own workforce plans to ensure government is ready to manage the workforce through the change and transition to the NDIS.

This government is working closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency and the Australian government Public Service authorities to ensure opportunities for staff working on programs in the scope of the NDIS to be employed by the NDIA. Through a first-offer-of-employment process, no public servant will be left without a job. We are making sure that we provide certainty to Disability Services staff, and to do this we have developed a Queensland NDIS workforce strategy in collaboration with key sector and government stakeholders, are currently undertaking a review to determine the best solution for clinical services staff and will provide government with options for consideration in September this year. We are looking to facilitate employment opportunities through the workforce schedule in our bilateral agreement and reinstated 28 FTEs in Accommodation Support and Respite Services.

This year my department will also register as a provider with the National Disability Insurance Agency and this will ensure that the staff of Accommodation Support and Respite Services can be certain of their future and continue in their current roles under existing conditions. I would like to reinforce that, while there are many components needed to address this issue, the opportunities ahead for job development are really exciting for Queensland. This government is committed to jobs for Queenslanders. I finish by reiterating the commitment that during this process no public servant will be left without a job.

**Miss BOYD:** Thank you, Minister. That is quite a reassuring response. Given the nature of disability funding will completely change into block funding that is individualised under the NDIS, can you advise what steps your department is going to take to make sure that both organisations and clients are prepared to move away from the block funding model?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for Pine Rivers. Work to individualise funding has been underway in Queensland for a number of years. The self-directed support pilot was initiated by the former Labor government in 2009. The objective of this pilot was community inclusion and empowerment of service users to make their own choices about their support which is also known as self-direction. Broader work in relation to a self-directed framework was also commenced under the Labor government in late 2011 and was informed by the pilot. This work led to the development of the



Your Life Your Choice framework for how self-directed support now operates in Queensland. Self-directed support is a funding approach that enables people with disability and their families to have greater choice and control over the disability services they receive. It is a key part of preparing Queenslanders for the NDIS.

The department is continuing to support people with disability and their families to move to Your Life Your Choice as it prepares them for the transition to the NDIS. Support includes informing people with disability and their families about Your Life Your Choice and the options available and developing strategies to help Your Life Your Choice participants to transition to the NDIS. As Queensland transitions to the NDIS, my department is doing a lot of work across the state to prepare organisations, clients, their families and carers. This government understands the enormity of change that the NDIS will bring. That is why we have provided funding in this budget of \$6.6 million for participant and other readiness activities across the state.

In 2015-16 the department will continue to fund nine non-government organisations to deliver NDIS participant preparedness activities across the state to people with disability and their families. I have met with representatives from Parent to Parent, one of the organisations funded to provide these activities. I have to say I was particularly impressed with the support that this organisation provides in schools and the workshops that they deliver to Indigenous communities. I am pleased to announce that the organisations funded to deliver the participant readiness activities, including Parent to Parent, have had their funding extended to 30 June 2016, and Parent to Parent will be funded \$333,000 to continue this important initiative.

In this budget we have also allocated \$283,379 to National Disability Services Queensland, as Queensland's peak body for non-government disability service providers, to assist providers prepare for the NDIS. National Disability Services Queensland will work with small to medium disability and community care service providers, boards, management teams and organisation leaders to build their capacity to transition to the NDIS. Tools and resources are also available to support service providers, people with disability, their families and carers through the department's website. The department is also working with block funded organisations to collect accurate information about the services that they deliver. This will help people with disability in organisations to prepare for the NDIS.

For people with disability, knowing the supports they receive may help them to think about the supports they might need to achieve their goals. For block funded organisations, having information about the services they deliver, how much and to whom will help them to understand their current business model and plan for their transition to an individualised model. Block grants do not need to be broken into individual grants as part of this process. However, should an organisation wish to do this, a range of resources and information is available to assist them.

We will continue to work with the National Disability Insurance Agency to finalise a joint operational plan to enable Queensland's smooth and seamless transition to the NDIS. We are ready. We are just waiting for the Abbott government to come to the party and provide Queensland with its full and fair access to the Medicare levy, something we have been paying into for over 12 months.

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

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, one of your responsibilities under your charter letter is to identify opportunities for improved service delivery in North Queensland. Last week the Attorney-General shut down the boot camp trial in North Queensland. Answer to question on notice No. 546 shows that the rate of unlawful entries in the Townsville police district has increased by about six per cent between February and July this year compared to the same period last year. Given this increase, do you have confidence in the police minister and does she have an alternative strategy to tackle youth crime in Townsville?

**CHAIR:** Member for Hinchinbrook, under standing order 115(c), you are asking the minister for her opinion. Can you please rephrase your question?

**Mr CRIPPS:** Certainly, Madam Chair. What is the alternative strategy of the police minister to tackle youth crime in Townsville and do you have confidence in the police minister in this regard?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The Queensland Police Service is working hard to provide safer communities in North Queensland. Police in Cairns, Mount Isa and Townsville continue to tailor police operations to address local issues. These police districts face a number of challenges, particularly in relation to recidivist youth offending. This includes an overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system as a result of continued offending and recidivism, particularly in relation to property crime.

In the QPS and across government, considerable effort is being expended to tackle these challenges. For example, the QPS is coordinating with the proactive and early intervention strategy of Project Booyah in Cairns and Townsville for at-risk youth. The project aims to upskill our youth and encourage them to make good choices, to take responsibility and to plan for the future so they can have positive opportunities and less interactions with the criminal justice system.

In relation to Townsville, considerable success has been achieved in the Townsville district in reducing crime, particularly as it applies to property crime offences. The Townsville Rapid Action and Patrols commenced operation in Townsville on 28 November 2014 and has a focus on youth crime, particularly as it applies to property crime offences. This unit supplements and supports the policing effort in Townsville.

**Mr CRIPPS:** That would seem to be in contradiction to the answer the police minister gave to question on notice No. 546, which says that, during the period February to July this year, unlawful entries in the Townsville police district increased by six per cent. Is the Minister for Police correct in her answer to that question on notice or is the material that you have presented to the estimates committee correct in relation to unlawful entries?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I have given an answer on advice that I have received. I would have to refer the matter further to the police minister.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, you have avoided the question that I asked about whether or not you have confidence in the Minister for Police. The Minister for Police is the architect of the response to this increase in unlawful entries in the Townsville police district. Do you have confidence in the police minister?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I understand it, this issue has been referred to the Ethics Committee through the Speaker which is the appropriate course of action for the matter to be dealt with, and I do not intend to make any additional comment. The Attorney-General stated in her hearing that members will appreciate that there are parliamentary processes to be followed and those processes should be allowed to be conducted, just as the LNP did when the former minister for communities, child safety and disability services was referred to the Ethics Committee for allegedly misleading the parliament. There is a correct process which is now being undertaken, and the minister should be given the opportunity to continue her work while that matter is considered. That is the last I will say on that matter.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, one of your responsibilities under your charter letter is to engage with stakeholders and to implement the priorities of the Palaszczuk government in North Queensland. One of those priorities, of course, is the 1 am lockout initiative and the 3 am closure of licensed venues. Minister, yesterday the Cairns City Council passed a motion opposing the Palaszczuk government's 1 am lockout and 3 am closure of licensed venues and specifically in its motion requested that the Palaszczuk government maintain the former LNP government's Safe Night Out Strategy. What engagement have you had with the hospitality and tourism stakeholders in North Queensland about the Palaszczuk government's lockout and closure policy and, in view of the opposition from the community, do you support the Palaszczuk government's policy?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Firstly, I will say that the Queensland government is committed to tackling alcohol fuelled violence. We will introduce a 1 am lockout, stop the service of alcohol at 3 am and ban the sale of high alcohol content drinks including shots after midnight. Venues with an existing 5 am closing licence will still be able to trade in entertainment, food and non-alcohol drinks through to closing time. Evidence from Newcastle and Sydney shows that these measures to reduce violent crime. A long-term evaluation of Newcastle also shows that the night-time economy continues to thrive. The government is committed to evaluating these new policies after they have been implemented.

We will be continuing to increase inspections by liquor licensing officers, particularly during peak times, and are continuing increased resources of \$6.555 million for nine liquor inspectors, three special investigators, one legal officer and continuing the mystery shopper initiatives. The results are strong consequences for troublemakers and improved safety for patrons and staff. Lockout was not actually mentioned in the economic round tables that I held in either Cairns or Townsville, and tourism organisations were actually in attendance at both of those round tables.

**Mr CRIPPS:** It seems to be generating quite a lot of commentary in the community though and, indeed, so much that the Cairns City Council yesterday specifically passed a motion opposing the introduction of the Palaszczuk government's 1 am lockout and 3 am closure, but it is full steam ahead regardless of the feedback that is being obviously expressed in the communities affected?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** This was an election commitment that we went to the election with.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Therefore, regardless of what the community says, it will be implemented by the Palaszczuk government.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** As I said at the end, they are committed to evaluating the new policies once they have been implemented.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, what is the total budget associated with the Office of the Premier in North Queensland for this financial year?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I will refer that to the director-general.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Which one?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** The director-general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

**Mr Stewart:** In the total budget for the office in North Queensland, there are employee expenses of \$325,874, telecommunications costs, including a secure data link, of \$40,500 and other costs adding up, including administration costs, to \$422,374. These costs are being met within the existing budget of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. That includes three employees—we have an office manager, a project officer and an admin officer.

**Mr CRIPPS:** It just did not appear as a line item in the Capital Statement.

**Mr Stewart:** It is in our numbers in our SDS. So it is covered in our SDS within our total funding.

**Mr CRIPPS:** In your SDS it does not appear as an individual line item though.

**Mr Stewart:** But it is part of the initiative. It is included in the total employee numbers in our SDS.

**Mr CRIPPS:** It is included in those numbers but not in—

**Mr Stewart:** But the clear message is that we have funded those within the existing budget of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

**CHAIR:** Member for Hinchinbrook, we have time for one last question.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Minister, in relation to your responsibilities as the Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland, are you responsible for any legislation under the machinery-of-government arrangements?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I am sure I alluded to this in an earlier answer. My role is Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. I have no budgetary responsibilities. My role is to work with the Premier and my cabinet colleagues, so the answer to that is no.

**Mr CRIPPS:** Thank you, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the minister's portfolio has expired. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you, the director-general and officials for your attendance. I also thank our Auslan interpreters, Mr Mike Webb and Ms Maree Madden.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Can I make a correction; it is just a small matter. In my opening statement, I referred to the figure for the Disability Services budget in 2015-16 of \$1.57 billion. I did miss a number out of that. It should have been \$1.547 billion. As I said, that is a 5.5 per cent increase.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for correcting that. The transcript of this session of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website within two hours. That completes the committee's hearing into the matters referred to it by the parliament. Before I conclude, on behalf of the committee I thank Hansard staff, the secretariat and attendants for their assistance. I declare this public hearing closed.

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** Chair, can I also add my thanks. I thank the chair and the committee for this afternoon's proceedings. Building on Minister Fentiman's thanks earlier this afternoon, I would like to pass on my heartfelt thanks to my department. The support I have received from my director-general and his staff is second to none. I also want to thank the director-general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and his staff for their ongoing support. I would also like to thank my ministerial staff, who have worked tirelessly in preparing for this afternoon. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Committee adjourned at 5.30 pm**