

THURSDAY, 2 AUGUST 2018

ESTIMATES—EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE—EDUCATION AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Estimate Committee Members

Ms LM Linard (Chair)
Mrs JA Stuckey
Mr N Dametto
Mr MP Healy
Mr BM Saunders
Mrs SM Wilson

Members in Attendance

Ms SL Bolton
Mr JP Bleijie
Mr MC Berkman
Ms FS Simpson

In Attendance

Hon. G Grace, Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations
Ms S Durham, Chief of Staff
Department of Education
Mr T Cook, Director-General
Mr J Hunt, Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services
Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Mr C Rider, Chief Executive
Office of Industrial Relations
Dr S Blackwood, Deputy Director-General

The committee met at 9.00 am.



CHAIR: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee open. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. My name is Leanne Linard. I am the member for Nudgee and the chair of this committee. Mrs Jann Stuckey, the member for Currumbin, is the deputy chair. Other committee members are Mr Bruce Saunders, member for Maryborough; Mrs Simone Wilson, member for Pumicestone; Mr Michael Healy, member for Cairns; and Mr Nick Dametto, member for Hinchinbrook. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to attend and ask questions at its hearing today, so other members may be present over the course of the proceedings.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2018 and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I remind all present that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: Education from 9 am to 12.30 pm; Industrial Relations from 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm; Employment and Small Business from 2 pm to 3.30 pm; and Training and Skills Development from 3.45 pm to 5 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2018 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations. The committee has agreed to first examine the minister's portfolio area of Education, including the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, until 12.30 followed by the portfolio area of Industrial Relations from 12.30 to 1.30. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 10.30 to 10.45 am. The visiting members present are Mr Jarrod Bleijie, member for Kawana, and Ms Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa. Welcome.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues may be explored in a respectful and fulsome way and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental and statutory officers and members of the public to the hearing. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Education and Industrial Relations open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you can now make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, everyone. I welcome the opportunity to address the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. I am joined at the table by Tony Cook, the Director-General of the Department of Education; Jeff Hunt, Deputy Director-General; and my Chief of Staff, Sharon Durham.

I have been education minister for a little over seven months, and I can say it has been a pleasure and a privilege to see firsthand the difference that a first-class education brings to all. From Kirwan State High to Currumbin State School and from Caravonica State School to Marburg State School, I have spoken with many of our passionate and dedicated principals, teachers, teacher aides and staff as well as parents and students, and what I have seen while travelling the state is the outstanding work happening each and every day in our schools. I also know that there are few things more important to everyone than a great education.

In 2018-19 the Palaszczuk government will deliver a combined \$14.1 billion in funding for education and training, \$13 billion in the Department of Education and industrial relations sector alone. We have over 550,000 students enrolled in our state schools—at 1,240 schools—taught and assisted by over 50,000 teachers and over 19,000 teacher aides. With figures like this, we know that we need to continue to plan for Queensland's future by delivering the schools and infrastructure needed to support our growing communities.

Four new primary schools were opened for business this year—Yarrabilba in Logan, Baringa in Caloundra, Picnic Creek on the Gold Coast and North Shore in Townsville. We will continue to deliver new state schools in growth areas across the state such as Mango Hill and Ripley Valley, where new secondary schools will open in both centres in 2020. In fact, across this term of government we will build 10 new schools and master plan for our network of inner-city schools. Our two new inner-city secondary schools will open in Fortitude Valley in 2020 and South Brisbane in 2021 to cater for 3,500 additional students expected in the inner city over the next five years. We will also plan for new schools in many fast-growing areas including the Sunshine Coast, the northern end of the Gold Coast and Logan.

Important student focus initiatives like the Instrumental Music Program and the centres for wellbeing will continue across the state and of course our important infrastructure program will continue to roll out. State school infrastructure projects will see a record of over \$923 million invested in our education facilities in 2018-19. We are committed to providing high-quality state educational facilities so that all students can participate in and gain positive outcomes from schools. We will provide new and additional classrooms to accommodate for student growth as well as substantially refurbish and upgrade some of our existing older schools to provide improved learning facilities.

The Palaszczuk government also recognises the importance of working with the non-state school sector by providing \$676.4 million in general recurrent funding and \$98 million in capital assistance funding for 508 accredited non-state schools with 268,000 students. In the 2018-19 state budget we also provide funding for an additional 1,000 teachers as part of our four-year commitment to employ more than 3,700 extra teachers.

I also continue to advocate for a national comprehensive review of NAPLAN, especially following the over 8,000 responses received to our recent online parent survey—a strong indication of how important this issue is for Queensland parents. During term 3 our school leaders, school communities and key stakeholders will have an opportunity to share their views on the NAPLAN testing program.

Meanwhile, the evaluation of the independent public schools initiative is also underway. There is no hidden agenda with this review. I honestly want to know what is working, what could work better and, more importantly, what opportunities the model has presented to IPS schools and how we can spread these learnings across all state schools.

In the early childhood space, my department is leading the development of a whole-of-government early years plan to give every child in Queensland the best start. The plan will cover key elements in the early years of a child's life including their education, safety, health and wellbeing as well as family and community supports. Also, the government's \$24.3 million investment in early years places in 2018-19 is supporting the operation of early years places in more than 50 locations across the state which are accessed by more than 19,000 children and 13,000 families each year.

We also want to take our schools into the future by investing \$97 million in the installation of solar and energy efficient measures in state schools under our Advancing Clean Energy Schools program. Tenders have now opened and phase 1 will commence during the 2018-19 summer holidays involving up to 210 schools from each of the department's seven regions.

Unfortunately, amongst all the positive news is the fact that Queensland state schools are worse off under a Turnbull government. For example, in 2018 alone, Queensland schools will receive \$84 million less than we would have received if the National Education Reform Agreement was still in force. Over 10 years this represents a \$2.1 billion loss in funding to Queensland state schools. Queensland students deserve better than this. They deserve the very best education. The Palaszczuk government is doing its time. I call on the Turnbull government to give us our fair share of education funding and to provide long-term funding certainty for early childhood education and care.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will open now with non-government questions. I call the deputy chair, who is handing to the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning, Minister and Director-General. My first question is to the director-general. Director-General, I refer to the recent controversy around the Queensland Council of Unions program dubbed the Young Workers Hub. Can you advise the committee if the QCU or any other trade union has made representation to you or the department, either in writing or in face-to-face meetings, about this program?

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question. Personally, no. The answer is no. There has been no representation to me. In relation to the department, I am happy to get those details. I am not aware of letters that have been written to the department, but I am certainly happy to be corrected and I will ask my staff to follow up on that particular issue.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, are you happy for the DG to take that on notice?

Ms GRACE: I am happy to take it on notice but I am happy also—

Mr BLEIJIE: No, it is okay.

Ms GRACE:—if the member for Kawana is happy for the minister to actually respond to the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, it is okay. I have questions for the DG here. Thank you, Minister. I note your eagerness to answer that. Director-General, has the minister spoken to you about this program since it was announced by the QCU?

Mr Cook: About the program?

Mr BLEIJIE: About the workers hub program.

Mr Cook: The minister and I have had conversations around a range of things. With regard to the details of the program, my answer to that would be no.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, the story broke just over a week ago with the Queensland Council of Unions State Secretary, Ros McLennan, announcing that they are going to introduce this into Queensland schools. She confirmed that parts of the program were designed to build union memberships, which she did confirm at a press conference, and to teach kids how to be activists and how to protest like unions. God help us! Director-General, with respect to conversations about this particular program and the minister, once that news broke had the minister given any direction to the department or to you that this program would be a good initiative in our schools across Queensland?

Mr Cook: No.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Director-General, how many third parties in Queensland are currently given access to our school students to recruit to a particular movement or to teach them how to be activists?

Mr Cook: I am not aware of any program about recruitment. There are thousands of programs operating in our schools across Queensland, as the member would be aware. Principals make decisions in relation to those programs. Principals make decisions about which programs they believe would be best for the student outcomes of the students in their schools, so those decisions are made predominantly at the school level. Every day principals would get letters from a range of different organisations with programs around student outcomes and they will make those decisions every day.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, does the education department have policies around politics in schools?

Mr Cook: Yes, as we always have.

Mr BLEIJIE: What is the general gist of the policy in terms of politics in schools?

Mr Cook: All schools everywhere in Australia, no matter what side the government might be, would know their role in relation to politics in that they are apolitical and they will continue to be.

Mr BLEIJIE: If a movement is actively engaging students to join their movement or to teach them how to be activists, would that be a breach of the policy?

Ms GRACE: Chair, I raise a point of order. I think the member is misleading the committee here. There is no suggestion that there is any recruitment or for them—

Mr BLEIJIE: We do not need the answer, Minister. I am asking the director-general.

Ms GRACE:—to be made to join a union. I think that the imputation there is suggesting something that is actually misleading and not correct and I ask that you rule that that be corrected as the statement is clearly misleading.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, I am quoting Ros McLennan from the union movement, who said that absolutely categorically it is designed—

Ms GRACE: But that is not what the Department of Education is doing, and you know that.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana—

Mr BLEIJIE:—to recruit—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana and minister!

Ms GRACE: Ros McLennan is not a part of the department.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana and minister!

Ms GRACE: She is not part of the department.

CHAIR: Minister! The minister raised a point of order. She is entitled to raise a point of order and I wish to hear that without interruption. Thank you, Minister. The minister has raised an issue and feels that—while I appreciate you are arguing that you are reading from a media release—stating that as fact as departmental policy is going too far.

Ms GRACE: And you know it.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, do you have an ongoing question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes; thank you. Minister, I have a question to you. In the *Courier-Mail* article published on 19 July about this program you said, 'I think this is a great initiative of the QCU.' On Channel 9 and Seven News on the same day you said—

I've not been asked to endorse it. I've not been asked to support this. It is not necessarily an initiative that is going to be delivered in schools.

The journalist then said—

Can you guarantee it won't be in schools?

You said—

I'm not guaranteeing anything.

Then you stormed out of your press conference. By 6 pm—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I do not think we need the additional comments.

Mr BLEIJIE: By 6 pm, you had ruled out implementing certain elements of the program. Minister, why did you change your mind about the program between your midafternoon press conference and the 6 pm news? Was it because the Premier's office needed you to clean up another bungle and another mess?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, if you have a question, I ask that you state that question respectfully—

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect, Madam chair—

Ms GRACE: I am happy to answer the question.

CHAIR: I am still ruling. I am not saying that your question is out of order; I am saying that we do not need the additional comments, opinions, arguments and imputations on the minister's behaviour. Minister, you said that you were happy to answer.

Ms GRACE: I am happy to answer. I thank the member for the question. Can I start by saying that the question is full of preamble that is grossly false, inaccurate, misleading and the member for Kawana knows it.

Mr BLEIJIE: Just answer.

Mr SAUNDERS: Point of order. We started today with a little bit of respect. I am asking the member for Kawana to have a bit of respect and let the minister finish her answer to his longwinded question.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maryborough.

Ms GRACE: The reality is—

Mrs STUCKEY: Point of order.

CHAIR: Sorry, Minister, we have a number of points of order.

Mrs STUCKEY: Point of order.

CHAIR: I am ruling on the first point of order. That is a fair point of order and consistent with the issue that I raised earlier. Deputy chair, your point of order?

Mrs STUCKEY: The member for Kawana has simply asked the minister a question about something that was publicly televised and is documented. I believe that the way the minister is answering is not showing any respect to the questioner.

CHAIR: Thank you, deputy chair. The minister has barely answered because there was an interjection, which is why we have these points of order. There is no point of order. I ask the minister to answer the question without interruption.

Ms GRACE: Thank you very much. The reality is that many students have casual and part-time jobs while they are still at school. Young people are our most vulnerable workers and no parent who I speak to wants to see their child exploited, harassed, or injured at work.

However, as I stated publicly, the appropriate place for unions to recruit members is in their workplace. The government will not allow union recruitment of students at school and it never has and never will. Claims that a Young Workers Hub service is already operating in schools on a trial basis are

false and misleading. There is no trial. I understand that the Young Workers Hub is an initiative of the Queensland Council of Unions and that it has been developing a draft program to help inform students about their rights at work in line with the Australian Curriculum of Work Studies and Civics and Citizenship.

This proposed program has not been endorsed by the Department of Education. This has been a model developed along the IREC model, which was an industrial relations education committee model, which informed students about their rights at work. I participated in IREC, which was under the auspices of the department of industrial relations. Under the Australian Curriculum of Work Studies, schools would often invite unions, employers and government to come in and talk about the world of work, because we want students to be prepared for the world of work. That is what education is partly there for.

It is important to note that any outside organisation that wants to talk to students must have the permission of the school principal and that, generally, it is not compulsory for students to attend, depending on the program. Since I have been minister, many of those programs have come to me. Almost every week the department of education and my office receive correspondence from outside organisations seeking support for their services or initiatives to be run in Queensland state schools. At times, representatives from my department or from my office may meet with these organisations to assist them to align their programs in Queensland's context. For example, a senior officer of my office recently received direct correspondence from the RSL regarding their new education website, which has been developed to help Queensland students under war history. This correspondence was referred to the department for feedback on the website and how it might align to our existing curriculum. We are happy to meet with the RSL, as the minister's office, to talk about a program in schools.

Similarly, my office recently received correspondence from the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia, which has developed resources to encourage more students to pursue an agricultural career. A staff member from my office is soon meeting with that group to assist with program resources just like we do with any organisation seeking access to the department of education, including union and employer organisations.

Mrs STUCKEY: Point of order.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs STUCKEY: If the minister is going to simply read tracts and tracts as an answer, would it not be better if she tables it so that we could have more questions?

CHAIR: There is no point of order. The minister's answer was totally relevant. She can read from—or not—whatever she has in front of her.

Ms GRACE: The member for Kawana has also written seeking financial support for one of his constituents who provides tutoring services to adolescents and adults who have dyslexia and learning disabilities.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, tutoring services for dyslexia, not the Queensland Council of Unions.

Ms GRACE: Rob Molhoek in Southport wrote in March—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, your commentary is not needed.

Ms GRACE:—on behalf of global—

Mr SAUNDERS: Point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order.

CHAIR: Minister, sorry, we have points of order. There is a point of order from the member for Maryborough.

Mr SAUNDERS: I am trying to listen to the minister. It is very important to me and my constituents that we listen to the minister talk about education. I cannot hear the minister because of the member for Kawana. I ask that, if he cannot be quiet, he leave the table. I am trying to listen to the minister.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maryborough. Was there a further point of order?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes. Point of order. That is coming from the gentleman who has said publicly that he is a happy union thug.

CHAIR: No, member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: My point of order is the minister used my name—

Ms GRACE: That is uncalled for. You need to withdraw that. That is disgraceful.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister used my name in her answer. If she is going to use committee members' names, she ought to expect a little bit in return.

CHAIR: I uphold the member for Maryborough's point of order, because I was also at the time ruling on the fact that you were interjecting on the minister. I do not think that it is a fair point of order that you have merely been mentioned. I think the minister was mentioning an approach that you made on behalf of a constituent. I do not think that constitutes you having to interrupt her. I do not think she even finished her statement that—

Ms GRACE: You do not like it, do you?

CHAIR:—You were doing your job as a local member, but—

Mr BLEIJIE: Autism.

CHAIR: Minister, had you finished your statement before the interruption?

Ms GRACE: No, I had not.

CHAIR: Can you please continue?

Ms GRACE: They may not like the answer, but they will get the answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: My son has dyslexia. I point that out to the minister.

Ms GRACE: My only reference is to the member for Kawana writing to me in relation to a program and many organisations come to us with programs.

Mr BLEIJIE: I just point out to the minister—

CHAIR: Order! Do not interrupt the minister unless you have a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order. I guide the minister that my son has dyslexia and I caution her against using the letter that I wrote in relation to people with dyslexia for political points.

Ms GRACE: I am not.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, that is not a point of order and it is unreasonable. The minister was referring to a representation that you made on behalf of your constituent. She has made absolutely no derogatory or negative comments about this topic. Can we please allow the minister to finish her answer? It is entirely relevant and respectful.

Ms GRACE: Thank you. There is no intent in me using anything in relation to students with dyslexia. I understand the situation. We will do what we can to assist those students. For the member for Kawana to suggest that, I take offence and ask that he withdraw, because I was not using that for political purposes. I take offence and I ask that you withdraw.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, the minister has taken offence.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw.

Ms GRACE: Thank you. The point I am making is that organisations come to us daily—weekly—with programs that they want to deliver in schools. The director-general and, I am sure, Mr Hunt are well aware of organisations, as are the staff behind me. Recently, I have received many approaches about programs from Camp Quality; the Brisbane Broncos with their girls academy; the Smith Family; Bravehearts seeking funding for their program; Deaf Services seek funding for their program; QCOSS; Girls Academy; the Stars Foundation; Act for Kids; PFLAG; Tennis Queensland; and Bruce and Denise Morcombe, who we assisted in developing the Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum and we are funding them to continue to deliver their wonderful program in schools.

The point that I am making is that there are a number of programs under the Australian Curriculum where schools invite these organisations. In fact, last Friday I was invited to a year 6 class as a member of parliament where I was questioned for an hour—and can I say they were probably better questions than I have received today—by the year 6 students on my role as a politician. I am sure many of you have also been invited to schools under that curriculum. To suggest that somehow a particular program or an hour-long subject is going to indoctrinate children in a certain way of thinking—I am sure the federal member would have liked to think that, when he was at that school, he had indoctrinated them to vote Liberal. I am sure the councillor would have liked to think that she had indoctrinated them to vote Liberal. I am sure I would like to think that I had indoctrinated them to vote for the Labor Party. These days, schoolchildren are much more intelligent than that. They do not take these uncritically. They make their own decisions. To use words like 'indoctrinating' and 'union thugs'

when, quite clearly, it is simply rights at work and a world of work, when I was part of IREC I went into many schools and we did it in a very respectful manner. We explained the world of work, their rights and the government's role, the union's role and the employer's role. It was an excellent program. I think that it is great to be able to develop that because, as I said, no parent wants to see their child harassed, injured or exploited at work and that these students deserve to know their rights at work.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, you have ruled out the recruiting of members in classrooms, as you have just indicated, but not the teaching of protests and union activism, as the QCU said. Members of the CFMEU have allegedly threatened to rape the kids of non-striking workers. Will you advise this committee who will police the Queensland Council of Unions?

Mr SAUNDERS: Point of order. That was in the newspapers. I ask the member for Kawana to withdraw that comment about the CFMEU, because there is still conjecture about that. I would ask him to withdraw, because it is unfair to the many good men and women who are members of that union who work in the coalfields.

Mrs STUCKEY: Point of order. I agree with the honourable member that, yes, it was in the newspaper. It has had a very big effect and I think it should be heard.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is right. Thank you.

CHAIR: I say to both points of order that there is no point of order. We need to move forward. Do you have a relevant question?

Mr BLEIJIE: I do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Could you put that question without a preamble?

Mr BLEIJIE: Will you advise this committee who will police the Queensland Council of Unions program to ensure that this type of sickening behaviour is not taught under how to protest? Are teachers going to have to police this program?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. There is no program at this point. My understanding is that there has been some preliminary work around their rights at work. There is no suggestion about protesting and all the extreme, hysterical, anti-union, union-bashing statements made constantly by the member for Kawana. It is beginning to sound like a broken record. Let me tell you that it did not help you in Longman. It is not going to help you today.

Just like I have received information from the Primary Industries Education Foundation—and I know that sector used, it was reported, some very choice words in relation to the agricultural area in relation to some protests that they undertook—am I now going to use that yardstick to refuse them to develop a program for schools? It is preposterous and it is ridiculous. The member for Kawana knows it. It is just continual anti-union bashing.

There are rights in our Constitution about freedom of association and in our laws. Students have a right to know their rights at work. At this point, there is nothing that I am aware of, or my officers are aware of, of any indication of thuggery, protesting, political—whatever the member wants to use in his wording. There is no program currently. Nothing has come to the education department. I refute his allegations. He is misleading. We will ensure—as I did and I am sure all of you do when you go into schools and other union officials—that they will be respectful should ever this program reach the light of day.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, within the space of one day, you have had three different positions on this program. Will you finally guarantee to the people and students of Queensland and this committee that this program will never ever be found in Queensland schools and that you do not support any form of bullying in the school environment?

Ms GRACE: No.

Mr BLEIJIE: You will not guarantee it?

Ms GRACE: No.

Mr BLEIJIE: You are not going to guarantee that this program—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you have put this question three different ways, but every one of them consistently with argument and opinion. Minister, if you are happy to answer the question, go ahead.

Ms GRACE: I am happy to answer the question.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I put you on notice that every question has contravened or very closely contravened standing order 112 in regard to adding your opinion and argument. Can we please keep it respectful and factual?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. I take your point.

CHAIR: The minister was answering your question. We are not up to your question. You put it. Minister, can you please answer it.

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The language used by the member for Kawana is alarmist, union bashing, extremist and borders on the verge of hysteria. There is no intention to do what he is saying. The answer to his question is simply no.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Cook: Just to close off my question on notice—

CHAIR: Minister, are you inviting the director-general to make comment?

Ms GRACE: Yes.

Mr Cook: To close off the question on notice that was asked in relation to any correspondence, I have been advised that we are unable to locate any correspondence from the QCU to the department regarding the Youth Workers Hub.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms GRACE: It is all in your mind. It is all in your head.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, with reference to page 6 of the Department of Education SDS, I note the Building Future Schools Fund has been boosted by \$308 million. Can you advise how this investment will deliver the state schools we need for Queensland's future?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. Our government is planning for Queensland's future by delivering the schools and infrastructure we need to support our growing communities. Our Building Future Schools Fund is about delivering new state schools in growth areas across the state, master planning for our network of inner-city schools, investing in existing schools and making strategic land acquisitions for the future.

In 2018-19 we boosted the Building Future Schools Fund by \$308 million, taking our total investment in this game-changing program to \$808 million. Our showpiece projects in this program are our two new inner-city secondary schools, to be opened in Fortitude Valley in my electorate of McConnel in 2020 and South Brisbane in 2021. These will be cutting-edge, flagship state education facilities built within a dynamic urban landscape right in the heart of the city. These are the first high schools to be built in the inner city within the past 50 years and they will be our first vertical state schools.

Recently I was pleased to announce important project milestones for the new school at Fortitude Valley with the appointment of our foundation principal, Mrs Sharon Barker, and the commencement of the tender phase for design and construction. Today it is my great pleasure to make an important announcement regarding the new inner-city south state secondary school. I am thrilled to announce that Dutton Park will be the home to Queensland's next vertical school. This decision follows 11 weeks of extensive consultation with the local community, championed by the member for South Brisbane and Deputy Premier and Treasurer, Jackie Trad. The department received almost 300 submissions about the proposed location, with Dutton Park emerging as a preferred location over Davies Park or Kurilpa Point. This decision was based on the precinct's proximity to the city and connections with existing transport infrastructure and our nearby tertiary education partner, the University of Queensland.

We know that Cross River Rail will generate significant social and urban renewal in the area and this location also offers opportunity for future growth and expansion. Importantly, this precinct also boasts significant connections with existing health and science hubs. I would like to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to provide their valuable feedback during consultation. There will be a further round of consultation in the coming weeks to seek community feedback about the catchment area and enrolment policy for this new school which I am sure the Deputy Premier and Treasurer will involve herself in.

The Building Future Schools Fund will also deliver five new secondary schools, at Ripley, Calliope, Mango Hill, Yarrabilba and Coomera; two new primary schools, at Springfield West and Ripley; a new special school at Caboolture; expansion of West End State School; expansion of the Queensland Academy of Science, Mathematics and Technology; and delivery of a very exciting new \$10 million classical dance facility with Queensland Ballet at the Kelvin Grove State College. Master planning of 35 schools within a five-kilometre inner-city ring is also underway. This is very exciting news.

Mr SAUNDERS: Thank you, Minister.

CHAIR: In relation to Commonwealth revenue, as referenced on SDS page 17, how much funding is being cut by the federal government to Queensland schools compared to what would have been received under the continuation of the National Education Reform Agreement?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is one issue that I really do want to put firmly on the record. It has become very clear that Queenslanders have worked out that this federal government is ripping millions of dollars from schools right across the state. Based on the data provided by the federal Department of Education and Training dated 2 March 2018, Queensland state schools will receive \$84 million less in 2018 from the federal government compared to what they would have received if the National Education Reform Agreement was still in force. Chair, these are not my figures; these are figures that were tabled at Senate estimates hearings. They are in *Hansard* of 2 March 2018. I would be more than happy, if required, to table the document that I am referring to. I seek leave to do so.

CHAIR: The minister has sought to table. Is leave granted? Leave is granted, thank you, Minister.

Ms GRACE: In addition to this, Queensland Catholic schools will receive \$19 million less this year. The federal government data also confirms that Queensland state schools will receive \$182 million less funding in 2019 compared to what they would have been provided through the National Education Reform Agreement—an additional \$182 million in 2020 and an additional \$179 million in 2021. Queensland Catholic schools will receive \$39 million less in 2019—this is on top of the \$19 million this year—\$57 million in 2020 and \$78 million in 2021. In fact, over the next 10 years, 2018 to 2027, the federal department has confirmed that Queensland state schools will be over \$2.1 billion worse off under this federal agreement than they would have been if the National Education Reform Agreement had not been terminated last year. Queensland Catholic schools over the same 10-year period will be \$962 million worse off. No wonder the Catholic education system is up in arms about what the Turnbull government is doing in continually changing the rules and the formula model under which funding is given. I believe that recently in the paper it was announced that it was found that Catholic schools under the new proposed funding of Senator Birmingham would receive \$1.8 billion less. This is on top of the \$962 million they are worse off had the program still been enacted.

People have woken up. They want better schools, not bigger banks. They want better funded schools, not better funded multinationals. They want a world-class education system funded properly by the federal government. They sent a very large and loud message during the recent by-elections. We support that the federal government should look at itself. I welcome the Prime Minister stepping in due to the ineptness of the current minister in sorting anything out. I now see that the independent schools are coming out and saying that they too are suffering under the possible changed model. What we know is that we are missing out on billions of dollars that could be spent for the benefit of Queensland's state and non-state schools. We are being denied this money by the federal government and I urge the leader to come forth and make sure that they adequately fund Queensland state schools going into the future and to not continually take money out of education to give to the big end of town.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Can I take you now to page 4 of the SDS. I know that you know I am very passionate about kindy. My Ollie is in kindy and I see the tremendous difference that it makes to children. Can you please explain the measures the government has in place to ensure that all children have access to a quality kindergarten program regardless of where they live in Queensland?

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Chair. I know that you are passionate with your two beautiful young boys. I thank you for the question. The Queensland government is committed to giving all children a great start, and this includes providing access to a quality kindergarten program regardless of where they live in Queensland. As we know, the sheer size of Queensland does present challenges in achieving this aim, particularly in remote parts of the state. We have tackled this issue head-on with specific targeted initiatives and a total investment of \$14.5 million over three years to better support kindergarten access solely in remote communities.

For example, in 2016 we established a Remote Kindergarten Pilot in schools. Since that time this initiative has enabled nearly 240 children to access face-to-face kindy in areas where the market was simply not delivering. There are currently 38 state schools prescribed to deliver the pilot, including schools in Camooweal, Dingo, Laura, Muttaborra, Thargomindah and Urandangi. The criteria for inclusion in the program included that the school was located more than 50 kilometres from the nearest approved kindergarten program, the community has a higher-than-the-Queensland-average proportion of Indigenous four-year-olds and the school is located in a lower socio-economic area.

Under the pilot the kindy program is delivered in a composite class setting by the existing classroom teacher with support from a teacher aide funded under the pilot. It really is bringing them into an area that they would never have been able to experience. It is a great outcome. Enrolments at each school may vary throughout the year based on whether there are eligible kindergarten aged children living in the community, but currently, in term 3 2018, 30 schools are delivering a program with 101 children in attendance of which 18 identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

This pilot has been a great success, and today I can announce that the Queensland government will be continuing the Remote Kindergarten Pilot in 2019. I am delighted to make this announcement and provide certainty for those families and communities who rely on remote kindergarten at their local school and allow them to plan for 2019. In addition to approving the continuation of the pilot in 2019, I have also instructed my department to investigate other options for improving access to kindergarten, including the development of a broader rural and remote kindergarten strategy and engaging with local communities to develop place based solutions to remote and rural areas experiencing continued viability issues.

Of course, we know that even with remote kindergarten in schools there are kids who have to travel large distances to get to kindy. That is why we have also given the option of an e-kindy program. With an investment of nearly \$2 million per annum, this program has provided access to kindergarten through distance education for almost 200 children this year. Furthermore, the government has invested in the establishment of e-kindy pods in 15 remote communities. E-kindy pods provide fantastic opportunities for children enrolled in e-kindy to socialise and interact with other e-kindy kids at a local school or community venue through facilitated group learning. The Royal Queensland Bush Children's Health Scheme has been engaged to facilitate the e-kindy program to smaller groups of children across 15 remote communities from the start of this school term. Sixty children in the Darling Downs and Central Queensland are already enrolled and the trial will continue into 2019. My department has allocated a total of \$3.8 million in 2018-19 for the continuation of the remote kindergarten and e-kindy program and e-kindy pods in 2019. These are great initiatives. They are providing kids in remote and rural areas access to a quality kindergarten program and, one of our priorities, a great start in life.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and they are wonderful initiatives. Can I invite the member for Cairns to ask some questions.

Mr HEALY: Thank you very much, Chair. Good morning, Minister and everybody. Lovely day. In relation to page 17 of the SDS, could you advise how much the Queensland government will invest in the independent public schools program in 2018-19? In addition to that, could you provide an evaluation or an update on that process which is currently underway, please?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. I know his interest in this topic. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that state schools provide high-quality educational options for all Queensland students. Under the Palaszczuk government, the number of schools in the IPS initiative grew from 130 to 250. In fact, the last cohort that signed up in 2017 was the biggest cohort—70 schools.

The federal government's funding for IPS dried up in 2017, just when we had the biggest cohort. In order to give schools funding certainty, the Palaszczuk government has continued funding the initiative in 2018 at \$12.5 million. An independent consultant was appointed to evaluate the existing IPS model following a competitive merit process. There are no smoke and mirrors and no hidden agendas with this evaluation. It was built into the IPS framework which has always been available on the website, so any suggestion that the evaluation will lead to the end of the IPS program is just simply incorrect. There is no suggestion that that is the case. Unlike the LNP, the Palaszczuk government consults with Queenslanders. This is about talking to all stakeholders to see what is working, whether there are any issues that we need to address and what are the benefits that we can extend into other areas.

On 17 July, I met with the Independent Public Schools alliance. I took the opportunity to assure them that I do not have a predetermined outcome of the IPS. They received that very well. We talked about what they have been able to do under an IPS system. I honestly want to know what is working, what is not and what the future looks like. I want to know what the future of the IPS is and their views. I want to work with them and I want to work with the department. We want to receive the evaluation. More importantly, I want to know what opportunities the model has presented to IPS schools and how we can spread those learnings across all states.

My department has received the final report from the independent consultant, Potential Plus, which was due on 31 July. I understand it is a comprehensive report, which the department is currently working through in detail. I have seen some of the recommendations. We had a brief chat with the director-general yesterday. I intend to look at it over the next few days, so that I can really read it

thoroughly and find out what some of the suggestions are. I have had an opportunity to briefly discuss where I want to go with the director-general and what we think we can do. There are some good things in those recommendations, but we have only just received it. I want to give it a lot more thought.

Obviously, in due course, we will meet and we will land on what we want to do. I have committed to the alliance that I will include them in discussions on where we go in the future. They have welcomed that. I look forward to working with my department on where we proceed with the IPS. As I said, the biggest cohort of 70 just started in 2017, so we really want to bed those down. Some have been in for quite a while, so what are their next steps? I want to discuss that fully and openly, so that we can get the benefits not only for the IPS but for all schools in Queensland.

Mr HEALY: Minister, with reference to NAPLAN and page 8 of the SDS, would you be able to provide an update on how Queensland's evaluation on those tests is tracking at the moment?

Ms GRACE: I do not know about other members of the House, but as education minister I know NAPLAN is one of the issues that is raised with me nearly everywhere I go: around the barbecue, at dinner tables, when I go to parties, in schools, out of schools. It is one of the issues that is raised with me constantly. It is raised in coffee shops when I am having a coffee.

Since its inception in 2008, as we know, Queensland has been participating in NAPLAN as a means of determining just how effective investment has been. I am pleased to say that our schools have shown the greatest improvement of any state or territory. When you look at Gonski 2.0 and other reports, they talk about growth and that it is the most important thing. When you look at schools that are struggling and you can grow those students and improve their learning outcomes, that really is where the pat on the back should be; not just the good schools—and we pat them on the back, as well—that continually do the right thing. However, growth in students is such an important part of anything that we do.

In 2017, results have confirmed our government's long-term objectives of lifting numeracy and literacy outcomes across the state. As I said, I cannot go anywhere without having conversations in relation to this. I often recite a story about having a coffee in Mackay. A mother was there with her two children, one in year 1 and one in year 3 for whom it was a NAPLAN year. I asked how the student had gone. Obviously, she recognised me. She said that she did not send her child. She thought about the stress of what was supposed to be a low-stakes kind of test but had now become an extremely high-stakes test and she had decided, as is her right, not to send her daughter. She got my attention in a coffee shop I was in. That view was offered to me by a parent. That is just one example of many.

The effect of NAPLAN on the ability of teachers to teach is one of the things that we want to look at. The evaluation is investigating the role that NAPLAN plays in driving student outcomes, and school and system improvements in the state. I believe that after 10 years it is timely that we look at NAPLAN to see if it is delivering, pure and simple, what it was set out to do and if it is meeting the intent of the objectives it was originally set up to do. We had almost 8,000 responses online from parents in relation to this. The survey period ran for a very short period. During that time, we also had four community focus groups held across Queensland. I can also advise that a second stage of the evaluation will take place this term, seeking feedback from teachers, school leaders and key education stakeholders.

I also note that support for my continual calls for a broader and more comprehensive national review has gained momentum in some other states and territories. Unfortunately, that push has been completely ignored by the Turnbull government. We are looking at one section, which is reporting or can I say the misuse of reporting in NAPLAN. That has been agreed at the education council. In spite of many states raising concerns about NAPLAN, the federal government would not move to broaden that out; to have a broader look at whether after 10 years we are achieving what we set out to achieve.

We will continue with the second phase. I urge teachers, teacher aides and principals to input. We look forward to the outcome of that. I think they are due to report at the end of October. We want to make sure that NAPLAN is right and that, if there are any concerns, we address them.

CHAIR: We will move back to non-government questions. I invite the member for Kawana to ask a question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, notwithstanding the announcement from the minister this morning with respect to a new school at Dutton Park, when was the site for the new state high school in South Brisbane actually determined?

Mr Cook: I will pass to Mr Hunt to respond to that.

Mr Hunt: The preferred site for the location of the Inner City South State Secondary College was discussed at length during the course of 2017. I think the member for South Brisbane identified that the government's position was for the preferred site to be in South Brisbane prior to or around the time of

the 2017 election. The department has been looking at relieving pressure on inner-city schools for some time. The discussion with regard to the siting of individual schools is obviously something that we continue to look at as we go through each school year, looking at enrolment patterns and trends, and looking at what land opportunities and other opportunities might exist to either augment existing state schools or to introduce new state schools into the state schooling network.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, what is the cost of the site? Does the state own the Dutton Park site or are there acquisitions? What is the total cost?

Mr Cook: I understand those issues are still commercial-in-confidence at this point in time.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to page 43 of budget paper No. 3, there is actually no mention of this new school in the entirety of the budget papers. This is budget estimates. The minister has announced this morning a new school, which the department will be funding. Can you confirm whether the capital statement in the budget papers, specifically page 43 of budget paper No. 3, puts even one dollar aside for this new school?

Mr Cook: My understanding is, yes, that is the case. Mr Hunt might want to add further to that.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am sorry, just to confirm: yes, it is the case that there is not any money set aside?

Mr Cook: No, there is funding certainly available for the school.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can you explain what the funding is, please?

Mr Cook: Mr Hunt will answer that for us.

Mr Hunt: As the minister has indicated, the original \$500 million allocation to support the inner-city strategy as part of the Building Future Schools Fund has allocated funding to support the development of the Inner City South State Secondary College. We will continue to invest those funds to deliver that outcome. We believe that that school will provide significant pressure to the inner ring. I think we can all see that the apartment blocks and the subdivisions of land in the inner ring have been contributing to both population and student enrolment growth across the state schooling network. It is appropriate, just as we do for greenfield sites, that we invest in brownfield communities whereby we need to have additional state schooling placements for students in those communities.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Hunt, does the state own the land?

Mr Hunt: The state government owns significant parcels of land in and around the Dutton Park precinct. Those land assets will be forming part of our consideration as to the exact siting of the particular school in that precinct. We think that the precinct offers, as the minister indicated, the very best connections with the University of Queensland, the Ecosciences Precinct, the health precinct on the other side of the railway line at the PA, the Translational Research Institute and will form part of that new and emerging community as the Cross River Rail pops up at the Park Road station.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Hunt, with the land that you have just mentioned, has that always been state Education Queensland land or are there recent purchases in the Dutton Park area that will go towards this school layout?

Mr Hunt: We will look at all land options. Yes, the government has owned a number of parcels of land. As you may be aware, we own the Reading and Autism Hub land on the western side of the railway line, I think it is. The Department of Housing and Public Works owns some land in the area. We have the Dutton Park State Primary School in that precinct. There is an additional parcel of land—I think it is referred to as lot 4—in that precinct. The government owns land adjacent to the Ecosciences building, as well.

Mr BLEIJIE: Has any land been purchased recently for this new school at Dutton Park?

Mr Hunt: As the director-general has indicated, those matters may or may not be in commercial-in-confidence discussions. We are interested in land assets right across the state where it makes sense to do so. The member for Kawana may remember a few years ago that we have acquired land adjacent to the likes of Woolloowin State School, where the Warilda centre, formerly a health facility, was adjacent to one of our schools with the smallest land footprint in the state. We have taken the opportunity to acquire that and that will form part of the master planning for that school. Similarly at Windsor State School, Minimbah State School and a whole range of schools across the state, we will look to augment and make sound and sensible land acquisitions to ensure that the schooling options available in each community can meet the needs of those individual schools.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Hunt. Is it the case that the minister, with her announcement this morning of the new school at Dutton Park—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, are you referring this question to the director-general?

Mr BLEIJIE: To the director-general and if he wishes Mr Hunt to answer it. Director-General, with respect to the minister's announcement this morning of the new school at Dutton Park and confirmation that it appears that there is land that needs to be purchased, if those land purchases have not occurred then what guarantee do we have that there will be a new school at Dutton Park—if the land acquisitions have not yet occurred, yet the minister has announced this morning that a new school will be due to open in the next couple of years?

Mr Cook: As I indicated, issues in relation to this continue to be commercial-in-confidence.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, the taxpayers are paying for this new school. I am trying to ascertain if the government does not own the land and has to acquire the land. We have an announcement this morning of a new school being developed and confusion with respect to whether the state owns all the land yet or is in the process of making offers. One would think that an announcement would happen after all the ducks are lined up with all the land. Can you confirm that the state owns all the land and settlements have happened for the new school at Dutton Park?

CHAIR: With respect, member for Kawana, it would appear to me that you have asked the question and received an answer that the government has significant landholdings and that further information cannot be provided by the director-general because of commercial-in-confidence. It appears to me that you are putting the same question a number of different ways. Director-General, is that a correct reflection and the question has been answered, in which case I would like to move on?

Mr Cook: As Mr Hunt indicated, there are a range of parcels of land that we own in the area. As the minister indicated through her announcement, decisions have been made in relation to Dutton Park. The details of purchases that might be additional beyond land that we may currently own continue to be a matter of commercial-in-confidence. However, as the minister indicated, the decision has been made by government that the school will be built in the Dutton Park area.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Chair, and I take your point. I do want it on the record that I am concerned that this is a budget estimates, the taxpayers are forking out the money and we do not have any answers—

CHAIR: No, member for Kawana, it will not be on the record. It will be on the Hansard record—

Mr BLEIJIE: That was my point.

CHAIR: Excuse me, I am speaking. I allow you to speak. There is no point of order. The question has been asked and answered. Do you have a new line of questioning that you would like to pursue?

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely; all day, Madam Chair. Director-General, what involvement did the Deputy Premier have in relation to the selection of the site at Dutton Park?

CHAIR: I do not think that has any relevance to this hearing. Do you have a question for the DG?

Mr BLEIJIE: It was referenced before that the Deputy Premier had made some announcements—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect, Minister, I am not asking you; I am asking the director-general. What approaches did the Deputy Premier make to the department—

CHAIR: That is not relevant to the appropriation. Do you have a question that is relevant to the appropriation?

Mr BLEIJIE: On that note, I seek leave to table a document. I have copies for everybody.

CHAIR: Wonderful. We will get copies to the minister. Leave has been sought to table a document that has been publicly released on the government website. It is a matter of public record. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: What I have tabled is a press release issued by the Deputy Premier in February of this year headed 'Preferred location identified for new inner-south high school'. Looking at the press release I see that it actually has the education minister's comments on that. Minister, you made a great announcement this morning about a new school the government is investing in like it is news to everybody this morning. Did you not know that the Deputy Premier already announced this in February—five or six months ago? This is nothing new.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, ask a question without all the opinions and arguments.

Mr BLEIJIE: Did you know or were you aware that the Deputy Premier already announced this school five or six months ago?

Ms GRACE: It would be lovely to have a question sometime from the member for Kawana that actually makes sense and is on a serious issue of education and on a fantastic new school that will be built on the south side. He well and truly knows that we went out with a preferred site for this school. There was extensive community consultation in relation to that site so that the community could give us feedback.

As I said in my opening statement, 300 submissions were received. They were looked at by the department. We wanted to hear about the site that we preferred. We wanted to hear other options and have a look at those. The Deputy Premier did not announce that that was going to be the site. I have confirmed that today after we received all of the information and, unlike the LNP, heard what the community had to say. We have been extensively communicating with the community. I have even had representations from members of the community on both sides around where they believe the preferred site should be.

I am very pleased to say today that this is a fantastic announcement under our Building Better Schools funding. That is clearly in the budget. It will be the second new high school built. We are on target to build it by 2021. The member for Kawana may want to wax lyrical about his concerns, but at the end of the day we will deliver this school by 2021. It will be a fantastic addition for the students of south Brisbane.

The Deputy Premier will be involved, as any local member would be, in the building of the new school and consulted about enrolment and catchment areas. I look forward to her input. It has been wonderful working with her on this project. I am sure the department valued all the input. I thank everyone who made submissions and came and saw me. This is what we would do under normal circumstances. It is so alien to members of the LNP that you actually consult, talk and take into consideration community input.

The Deputy Premier did not announce this school six months ago. That was always the preferred precinct. We have now confirmed that that is the site. The member for Kawana knows it. I am thrilled to be able to announce it today.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, the press release that I tabled says that it will be opened at the start of 2021. It talks about exactly the things we have been talking about. When was the business case completed on this school?

Mr Cook: I will ask Mr Hunt to answer that.

Mr Hunt: The business case for this school was put to the government. I would need the minister's assistance in this regard. The standing orders in relation to cabinet consideration of documentation are probably invoked here.

The department took a proposal to address inner-city schooling growth pressures to government during the early part of 2017. I think members of the committee would understand that growth in our schools across South-East Queensland needs to continually be addressed. The department looks at that and works with the Schools Planning Reference Committee—that is made up of Catholic, independent and government schooling representatives, representatives of councils et cetera—to ensure that we can plan successfully together the need for new schools in communities across the state. The proposal around inner-city schooling was one that was central to the department's proposal to ensure that we could see a future for the emerging city and understand how student enrolment patterns were changing, how Queenslanders were living was changing and how we could address that through an educational service delivery perspective.

Mr BLEIJIE: What is the total cost of this project?

Mr Cook: I think I indicated before in relation to commercial-in-confidence in terms of land purchase et cetera that I do not have a definitive cost for you. Do we have an approximate cost?

Mr Hunt: The Building Future Schools Fund is \$500 million to do a whole range of activities. The two signature pieces of activity under the Building Future Schools Fund are the Inner City North State Secondary College, in partnership with QUT, and the Inner City South State Secondary College, with the support of the University of Queensland. There are other expansions planned for the Toowong academy, the Kelvin Grove site and the West End State School that are under enrolment pressure as well and a range of other initiatives, as the minister indicated earlier, with regard to the master planning of 35 inner-city sites across the inner ring.

The budget allocations within that fund are there. The estimate was \$100 million to \$110 million for the Inner City South State Secondary College. There is also an allocation within the Building Future Schools Fund to support land acquisition as we require strategic land into the future.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, my understanding is that there are schools in the area, like Coorparoo Secondary College and Yeronga State High School, that are not at capacity and that have plenty of spare spots for students in these catchment areas. Why would the Department of Education be investing in a new school when, in my understanding, there are three existing schools in the catchment that are not at capacity and can actually take additional students?

Mr Cook: It is a government decision in relation to investment. The government made a decision in relation to two inner-city schools, as Mr Hunt said, as part of the Building Future Schools program. We also know that the growth in the inner city has been extensive over the last few years and continues to be so. I think there are something like 5,000 additional students in and around the CBD. Another 3,000 additional students are expected to move into inner Brisbane, particularly around the West End area. Having walked around there after having come back to Queensland after being away for 15 years, I found that the West End area has exploded in that regard. Our expectation, based on the data available to us, is that there will be significant growth around that area. The government has responded to that significant growth for the first time in 50 years by making a decision to actually invest in two inner-city schools to meet the needs of the communities and the families moving into those areas.

Mr BLEIJIE: What is the department's response to the Brisbane State High School's fraudulent enrolment issues that they have publicly raised concerns about? What is the solution to that?

Mr Cook: We have been working with Brisbane State High School. I have spoken to the principal. The principal has invited me out to the school as well. In relation to the issues that they have raised, Brisbane State High School is a government school and it has an enrolment management plan. We have an expectation that all government schools commit to enrolling the students and the families in their local area.

We are aware of some of the issues they have raised and the claims they have made about some of the activities, whether they be fraudulent or whatever, that may be happening. We have committed to work with Brisbane State High School in relation to their issues. They have raised some ideas with us. We will continue to work with them in relation to that to assist them with the program.

We have provided some funding to enable Brisbane State High School to have a resource to actually look at enrolment patterns and look at the enrolments that are occurring in their school to examine whether in fact there are any families who are fraudulently claiming that they are living in the area or taking out short-term leases and the range of things that may happen. I think we have allocated an AO6 position to the school to assist them with that matter.

Mr BLEIJIE: Brisbane State High School have said that they have put solutions to the Department of Education with no success. Minister, can you guarantee to this committee that the proposed new high school at Dutton Park will alleviate overcrowding issues at Brisbane State High School and address all of Brisbane State High School's issues with respect to the fraudulent enrolments?

Ms GRACE: This is a very good question. I do not think we have done nothing with Brisbane State High School. I think the director-general just mentioned that we have added resources and given them additional staff. Isn't it fantastic that people want to go to our wonderful state schools? We have a situation where a state school, run by this government, is so popular that it has to put in very strict enrolment practices. It is wonderful to see. It is a great pat on the back for the wonderful, world-class education that we have in Queensland.

This wonderful new school was part of our election commitments when we went to the people of Queensland. We said that we were developing Building Future Schools funding of \$808 million. Some \$500 million was announced in June 2017. We committed to building a wonderful school in my electorate of Fortitude Valley, on a school site that was up for sale. It is interesting that the member is concerned about the purchase of land, but they were very keen to sell school land. The Fortitude Valley site in my electorate had a 'for sale' sign on it when we went to the election in 2015. It is interesting that they are concerned about the purchase of land on one hand but were very willing to stand—

Mr BLEIJIE: Maybe when it is in the Deputy Premier's electorate and the minister's electorate.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana!

Ms GRACE: Our commitment was that we would build two secondary schools. One of those is in South Brisbane. We believe that this wonderful new school at this location will ease pressure on Brisbane State High School. The department, the DG and I as minister will continue to work on this. I meet with the principal. Wade does an excellent job for this school that is so popular. It is a pat on the back for Wade Haynes.

We believe that this will release the pressure. In the second phase we will be looking at catchment areas. These are growth areas. They were selling a school site in my electorate in a growth area. Students were coming in by the hundreds and they had a 'for sale' sign on a block of land that I would never have been able to get again in Fortitude Valley had they been successful in selling that site. The stress that campaign put on parents, thinking they would have lost a wonderful asset, was unbelievable.

The Palaszczuk government plans for the future. Our Building Future Schools Fund is about planning for the future. We believe that this new school will be a wonderful asset for the south side. We believe that it will relieve pressure on Brisbane State High School. I cannot wait to deliver it in 2021, alongside the Deputy Premier and Treasurer.

CHAIR: I call the member for Maryborough.

Mr SAUNDERS: With reference to page 6 of the SDS, can the minister please advise how the government is supporting state schools to improve their energy efficiency through the Advancing Clean Energy Schools program?

Ms GRACE: This is a great program. We know that Queensland state schools are one of the government's largest energy users, collectively spending more than \$67 million each year on their power bills. That is why the Palaszczuk government is taking steps to make energy costs more affordable for our schools.

Our \$97 million Advancing Clean Energy Schools, ACES, program will hopefully help reduce energy costs in more than 800 Queensland state schools through solar and energy efficiency measures. I know that the 800 schools are in many electorates. It has been a big hit with parents and students who want to see a greener environment at the same time.

ACES will save our schools around \$10 million a year on energy costs. Not only is that a great cost saving; it is also a significant contribution to Queensland's 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. The program includes \$40 million for new solar systems and \$57 million to install energy efficiency measures, such as LED lighting and timers on hot-water systems and assistance with air conditioners.

I remember speaking to someone who delivers these kinds of services. They were saying we have to educate teachers that they do not have to leave air conditioners on during school lunch breaks. If they come in and put them on it will not take long for the classroom to cool down. Simple measures like that can save a school thousands of dollars in electricity costs.

The ACES program will be rolled out in three phases over three years, with phase 1 to start in the 2018-19 summer holidays. In phase 1 up to 210 schools from each of the department's seven education regions will benefit from the program. These schools will be named in term 4 of 2018. I am looking forward to naming those schools. Phases 2 and 3 will roll out during 2019 and 2020. We will have three years to complete the program.

On 20 July I was pleased to announce that tenders had opened to select lead partners to design, install, supply, operate and maintain the ACES program. Before any measures are installed schools, successful contractors will conduct site assessments to determine what is required at each school, because each school is going to be different, particularly some of the older schools. We know that the Advancing Clean Energy in Schools program will bring many benefits, and it will be welcomed by school communities across the state. I know that you have had excellent feedback. Even the opposition leader has previously said that she would support a state rollout of solar panels, and I welcome that.

The program will have great benefits for schools. We think that we will see reductions in electricity costs. This is a program to demonstrate to young students the benefits of a green, cleaner environment. We look forward to installing solar panels in all schools around the state—the whole 800 of them over three years—because we think that this will have great benefits in reducing electricity costs and providing energy efficient measures for schools. Hopefully, we can then look at other measures to make further savings. It is a great program. I am looking forward to it being rolled out.

The program is so good that I have had the independent non-state schools come and see me because they want to be part of it. We are looking at ways—I know that Mr Hunt is looking at ways—when the contractors come on board, to make this program available to schools in the non-state sector as well, if they want to be part of it. Every time I meet with them both the independent sector and the Catholic sector want to be part of this fantastic program. We are hoping to link with them so that they can take advantage of the cost and economic efficiencies that we gain from doing this on a big scale. We are looking forward to working with them on this program as well.

Mr SAUNDERS: Thanks, Minister, for that great answer. With reference to page 6 of the SDS, can the minister advise how Queensland schools are preparing for the introduction of the new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems?

Ms GRACE: Firstly, I would like to thank all of those who have been involved with the ministerial senior assessment and tertiary entrance task force this year and in previous years. The work of the task force has been instrumental in implementing the new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems which will take effect from 2020. The task force endorsed the new QCE and ATAR systems in May 2016. The Palaszczuk government has invested \$72.9 million over five years for the initial development and implementation of SATE—a very important change for Queensland. I am very pleased to report that Queensland schools are on track to implement the changes from 2020.

In the past couple of months opposition members have been casting aspersions about some parts of the ATAR system. I want to put some matters on the record. To be eligible for an ATAR, students must achieve at least a sound achievement, or pass, in English. That is unlike New South Wales and Victoria, where there is no minimum standard required for them to receive an ATAR score. Under our system—and thank you to the task force who landed on this, and we have been working on this—it is now strengthened to include the requirement of a sound achievement in English.

For decades under the OP system, students' five best subjects have been taken into account when calculating their ATAR. That is currently the case today. There has been no change. That is the way that it has been in Queensland for decades. To suggest that that is not a good system, where the full potential of the student is harnessed, where you take their five best subjects, be it science or mathematics, into account—if that is the career they pursue, it has held them in very good stead for decades in this state. That will be continued as part of our ATAR system.

The only change is that at the moment there is no requirement for a sound pass in English. In relation to an ATAR score, it is now a requirement. It is actually stronger than New South Wales and Victoria. For once I ask the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP members to follow Queensland's lead. Let's not do whatever New South Wales or Victoria do without understanding what we are doing here.

We extensively consulted with the members of the task force right across the spectrum. The people involved in that were from the independent sectors, the Catholic sectors and experts. It was a wonderful task force. I believe that we have landed on a great outcome. Effectively, this makes our system now more rigorous than the current OP system. As I said, these are the same arrangements that have always been in place. English must be a subject where they have to get a sound achievement, but students know that if they want to go to uni most of the university subjects, if not all, require English. They know that. They are not silly. They do not need the Leader of the Opposition or the member for Kawana to inform parents or students of that. This is a very rigorous process that we went through.

I have Chris Rider from the QCAA at the table with me. I would like him to add a little more detail in relation to this. I think we have landed in a wonderful space. I think the LNP's position on this is grossly misplaced. I think this is a wonderful, rigorous system. It aligns with the current system. It improves it. I ask Mr Rider to add any additional comments he would like to make.

Mr Rider: The question in relation to the preparation is a really important one. We have built 98 new syllabuses for Queensland—46 of those 98 are what we call general subjects. Those general subjects have been designed with the best of school based assessment and the best of external assessment. What we are doing in Queensland for the year 11s at the beginning of 2019 is providing a world-class curriculum that brings together the best of what we have been doing in Queensland for the last four decades and complementing that with the introduction of some external assessment. It is a program that is designed to take care of young people really well.

In the future in terms of assessment there will be four pieces of assessment that count towards a student's final result at the end of year 12. There will be three internal assessments and one external assessment that they complete towards the end of their year 12 year. That means in each of their six subjects they will complete four pieces of assessment. That is really good news for young people. It is about making sure that we focus on the deepening of assessment, the quality of assessment, and not on quantity. There is no need to continue to over assess young people. It is very important that we recognise that four pieces of assessment is enough to make a judgement about how a young person is going in their studies.

The other thing I would like to highlight to you in addition to the new syllabuses is the professional development that has gone on in Queensland over the last 12 months. For the first time in the 35 years that I have been a teacher in this state, we have seen an investment in professional learning of our

workforce that is unprecedented. Every one of the teachers who teach year 11 and 12 general subjects has come out of class and learnt how to use their new syllabuses well in advance of when they have to implement it at the start of next year. We have had 21,700 teachers who have attended one of the 670 workshops that we have run in the last 12 months. It is an amazing implementation strategy about preparing our teachers well in advance of the work they have to do.

What I would really like to highlight to you is that when people come to professional development we ask them if it has prepared them well and if they are satisfied with that professional development. I can report to you today that for the 21,700 teachers who participated in this professional learning their satisfaction ratings are better than 95 per cent. We have a workforce who feel like they are ready to implement a new system.

Complementing that face-to-face learning, we have also introduced a lot of online learning for teachers, so teachers have willingly engaged in online learning in their own time as well as the face-to-face professional development that we provided to them. We indeed have a workforce who is very professional and who is ready for the implementation of a new system next year.

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Mr Rider. That is an extraordinary effort. This has been funded fully by the Palaszczuk government. Not one government dollar was put in by the previous LNP government to prepare students for this. This is going to be ready to be rolled out by 2020. It is an outstanding effort. It will be a system that will take our students into the next stage of their world-class education where they will be receiving a global education, to have them ready for a multicultural and diverse society in a global market. It is very good news. I thank Mr Rider and the QCAA for their efforts.

There is more work to be done. The task force has been reconvened. We have met. We want to make sure that we get all of the promotion, information and communication out there. You can never do enough of that. I can say one thing to the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP: parents are supporting this. Parents are 100 per cent behind this. Their policy is ill-conceived. They do not know what they are talking about. This has been supported by teachers, principals, parents and academics right across Queensland. We are proud of it and we look forward to implementing it in 2020.

Mr HEALY: Thank you, Mr Rider. That is outstanding. Congratulations to all, Minister. Minister, with reference to page 6 of the SDS, could you give us an update of the government's \$250 million infrastructure funding boost and how it will prepare Queensland state high schools to be 2020 ready?

Ms GRACE: The Palaszczuk government will invest a record \$923 million in Queensland state school infrastructure. As part of this year's budget announcement, I was pleased to announce an infrastructure funding boost of \$250 million for new classrooms in state secondary schools. In making this announcement, I visited Ferny Grove State High School with the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, Jackie Trad, and the member for Ferny Grove and minister, Mark Furner.

This \$250 million funding boost over two years is helping us prepare for a significant new era of education in Queensland from 2020. Our 2020 Ready program will deliver additional classrooms in more than 60 Queensland high schools. I know that many members are welcoming the additional classrooms, buildings, science facilities and outdoor learning spaces that are being delivered over the next two years ready for 2020.

In 2020, for the very first time in Queensland's history, our high schools will have a full complement of students across years 7 to 12. This funding boost is about making sure that we are 2020 ready. It brings a total funding commitment to increase the capacity of state secondary schools to more than \$470 million between 2017-18 and 2019-20.

The 2020 Ready program signals the next phase of Queensland's major education reforms which started under Labor more than a decade ago. In 2007, state Labor gave Queensland children a flying start with the introduction of prep. I do not know any parent who does not love prep. They find it to be a wonderful, early flying start for their children and they have very much relished it. Our next education reform came in in 2015, when we moved year 7 into high school and established six years of secondary education which was also supported with significant infrastructure investment.

With the original prep students set to graduate from high school at the end of 2019, we will have for the very first time six full year levels of students in Queensland secondary schools from 2020. I know all members are aware of this jump in students who will be in secondary schools by 2020. The 2020 Ready program will deliver 70 projects at 61 schools across the state—some of which are located in committee members' electorates. I know that they are all welcoming the additional classrooms that were announced. We are on target—that is my understanding; I am sure we will be, Mr Hunt—to deliver these schools by 2020. We look forward to working with the school communities on their needs, as we

always do. Whatever we build we build it with the cooperation of the school community, with them on board so that they know exactly what they are getting and so that we can deliver the facilities for the world-class education that we want to provide every student in Queensland. This is a very exciting project, Chair.

CHAIR: Minister, we have two minutes left before lunch, so I appreciate that your next answer will be short. With reference to page 6 of the SDS, can you please provide an update on the implementation of the Ready Reading program in supporting engagement with literacy in Queensland schools? I note that you very kindly came out with the Premier to my local school, Nundah State School, and read with the gorgeous little students there, and we loved having you.

Ms GRACE: It was wonderful to launch that program at Nundah State School with you and the Premier—\$1.5 million over three years; 3,000 volunteers to help with reading. We are on target at the moment. I am pleased to report that, as at 15 May, 323 Ready Reading volunteers have been recruited which is about 10 per cent of the numbers we need over three years. That means that we are on track to achieving our goal. These volunteers will be located right across the state from South-East Queensland to Far North Queensland.

Between the Ready Reading program and the Premier's Reading Challenge, I feel confident that our students' reading ability will be boosted every single day. We know that reading to students is such an important part of their learning. That is why I believe that the Ready Reading program strengthens students' reading confidence by enlisting the help of volunteers. Nothing is better. I know that kids love it. They loved it the day we were at the Nundah State School when we read to those young students. I love it when I am with the director-general in schools and we read to them because he joins them on the floor and sits with them and enjoys being read to as well.

This is a program we have reintroduced. The program, like everything else, was cut under the former LNP government but the Palaszczuk government has revived it, in partnership with Volunteering Queensland. As we know, when it comes to education and funding all the LNP at a federal and state level do is cut real numbers of teachers, cut funding to states and cut programs like this which give kids the best start when it comes to reading. Labor has reintroduced this program. This is \$1.5 million over three years which will be invested in this program for the benefit of children to improve their reading. I thank those 323 volunteers as at May—I think we have more since then—who have volunteered their time to come in and be part of this fantastic program.

CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn for a short break. The hearing will resume at 10.45 am and continue with the examination of the estimates for the Education portfolio area.

Proceedings suspended from 10.30 am to 10.45 am.



CHAIR: The hearing is resumed. Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will continue with its examination of the proposed expenditure for the Education portfolio area. I invite the member for Hinchinbrook to ask a question.

Mr DAMETTO: Minister, I would like to ask a question referring to the SDS. What budgetary plans have been made to resolve the issue of the growing number of acting principals, particularly in small rural and regional schools, rather than principals being placed in permanent positions in our Queensland school system?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. I will start by attempting to address it, but these are operational issues so I will also direct this to the director-general and the deputy director-general. Quite clearly, our aim is to get as many permanent principals in position as possible. As we know, this is not always able to be done for a variety of reasons—principals taking professional development leave or other forms of leave such as maternity leave, family leave or study leave. There is a variety of reasons why principals move from school to school.

Our clear aim is to try to get a permanent workforce because we know that that delivers a great education for schools. We know that regional and remote areas have their challenges as well. We have a number of strategies in place in relation to this. I regularly meet with the principals associations at a secondary level and a primary level. I meet with them very regularly to discuss their issues, to support them and to ensure the wellbeing of principals. We are establishing wellbeing centres now in rural areas. I would love to talk more about that. There is one at Roma and one at Mount Isa that we are establishing which I will go into more detail about later.

There are a number of arrangements. I have some briefings here which I can go through, but it is an operational matter so I might ask whether the director-general and possibly Mr Hunt want to talk about all the initiatives we have to bring this about. It is one of the roles that they perform very well, but we know that there are obviously acting principals in schools as well.

Mr Cook: We have made 128 permanent principal appointments in the first six months of this year. Twenty-four principals have been relocated to other schools and there have been 104 new appointments over the last six months. We are aware of the issues around supply and demand more generally. It is not Queensland-specific; it is also national. Having just come from the Commonwealth, I know there are many states and territories that are faced with the issue of teacher supply and demand generally but also the pipeline into principalship.

In Queensland we have undertaken a number of initiatives to support that. The assistant regional directors and regional directors in each of our regions have a very strong link and a very strong role working with principals. Since I started I have been out to a number of regions, particularly some of our more remote regions, to spend time with principals to find out about the things they value in terms of professional growth and the professional companionship they have, particularly with assistant regional directors.

About three per cent of all schools have true vacancies. While it is a percentage, it is not a large percentage. It is a percentage we continue to do significant work on to reduce. We are looking at incentives. We are looking at rural and remote incentives to have principals and teachers take up positions across our many small schools. I started in a small school. I started in a three-teacher school in Queensland so I recognise the diversity of those schools and the particular challenges those schools bring. There is work we are doing with our regions in supporting and, in particular, identifying high-potential teachers to have those high-potential teachers move into principalships, to have other principals as mentors and to look at the value of the role of being a principal in our government schools.

In terms of the data, we continue to review and monitor vacancies. We have a significant and very responsive HR process at each of our regions. As I said, the data itself would indicate that, while three per cent or 3½ per cent is still significant, we have done significant work to reduce that number over the last three or four years and we will continue to do so.

Ms GRACE: Can I add—because I think it is a great question—that I think the trend is going in the right way. We have discussed this and there is a view by the government that we would like to see these percentages reduce. Relieving principal arrangements are currently in place for about 20 per cent of the 1,240 schools that we have. This has reduced from 23 per cent the year before and 27.3 per cent the year before that. The trend is going down because we are putting a lot of effort into ensuring we get them into a permanent location, we mentor and support them, and we establish their wellbeing so we can get the principals of the future. There is a lot of funding and a lot of good work by the department going into those arrangements because we know how important it is.

Mr DAMETTO: As we are talking about incentives, especially to bring teachers to rural areas, my question relates to independent schools. The creation of autonomous public schools, giving them the ability to manage themselves better, in the south-east corner has been quite prominent. This effectively, though, took about 150 schools out of the rotation for teachers to be able to go to rural areas and get extra credit points to give them a better choice of where they go to in terms of career progression. For example, they could go to Mount Isa or Doomadgee and they would be able to earn extra credit points, and in five years time they might be able to get into the school of their choice in the south-east corner. The introduction of the independent public schools system is taking a lot of schools out of the program. The minister said earlier that she would not be looking to scrap the program completely. What are we doing to make sure that teachers have an incentive to go out to rural areas? In the past their peers have told them that if they go out and spend time in these areas they will have a chance to progress later in their career in the cities.

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. It is a really good question. We have 250 independent public schools but we have 1,240 schools spread right throughout Queensland. I know that you, as a regional member, want to get the best teachers and principals in your region, just like everybody else in their electorates wants to as well. That is why we did the review. One concern often raised with me when discussing independent public schools was that of available teachers and their movements—in effect, all the issues around human resources. That seems to be one of the biggest areas.

At the moment, in response to your question, we are not finding any barriers. What we are finding is that in the regions—and I would like Mr Hunt or the director-general to add to this—IPS schools are participating in the annual transfer system. It is being done in a very collaborative way. They understand that they are part of a broader system and that they have to be part of that as well.

One of the recommendations that have come through which I talked briefly about with the director-general yesterday—that was my first opportunity; I think the report was due on the 31st, so yesterday was the first opportunity—was to have a look at those policies and systems including teacher

and classified officer relocation processes. I know that Mr Hunt would probably say, 'Minister, I have looked at this many, many times in the past,' but one of the recommendations is that we have a look at this. When I spoke to the IPS alliance, they spoke about this as well. They had some pretty good ideas. I want to go into the detail of this review to find out some of the things the reviewer found that we might be able to use. It is a great question. We do not want any area of the state to suffer because of this.

I think there are things that we can do. We had a roundtable discussion with the DG, Mr Hunt and other officers from my department before we even got the report, because I know this is one of the issues that keeps coming forward. How do we select our teachers? How do we incentivise them to go into rural and remote areas? How do we reward them for doing that? How do we get the best teachers where we need them? It is a constant push-pull to get that balance right.

One of the recommendations in the report is in regard to IPS and we are really looking forward to discussing that. We have invested quite a bit of money to look at this area. We will continue to do that through the Remote Area Incentive Scheme and the rural incentive trials. We have \$64 million that we are investing over five years to look at this and to develop it, which is why I am talking policy with my officers and why we are reducing the percentage of those principals in non-permanent positions.

Can I go to the director-general—and, if he chooses, maybe Mr Hunt—to add some of the more specific things they are doing on the ground, because I think it is a very good question.

Mr Cook: As the minister indicated, the view that IPS schools are not participating in the transfer process is not correct. The data that we have would indicate that the participation of IPS schools in the transfer process is pretty much the same as it was before they became an IPS school. They are part of the process. They also work in a state system. There is an expectation and a requirement that they participate in state processes and state policies. Both IPS and non-IPS principals take into account accumulated teacher transfer points as part of the process in terms of the staffing and transfer process as well.

As the minister said, we have a range of things in terms of rural and remote incentive schemes. We are doing some work at the moment with teachers who are involved in rural and remote schools and who were transferred to rural and remote schools. We are asking them questions such as, 'What are the best incentives?' While we have done some work in making assumptions on things like cash payments, discretionary leave or particular additional induction programs, I think it is very useful for the department to go to the people who are involved in this. We have a trial over the next year or so with a number of participants who are working with us about whether it is a tailored menu of things that would be attractive for them to enable them to choose from. Are there certain incentives—for example, internet access, flights back to the south-east corner or flights back to their home—that are more attractive? What would it look like? That is a very useful piece of work that will inform our policy, particularly in attracting teachers to rural and remote locations over the next 12 months.

Ms GRACE: Chair, can I add: member for Hinchinbrook, if you gather any information when you visit schools—for example, on what brought them out here or what will keep them here—they are things we are exploring all the time. We know with the new millennium that teachers may think differently from me.

Mr DAMETTO: The first question I had was directly from a school principal in my area who is in a non-permanent position.

Ms GRACE: Yes, because they are concerned that if the IPS system is drawing the best teachers—and I am hearing this from the regions as well when I go out there—what does that mean for those rural schools? There are 250 of them, and if they are not part of the process—which they are, so we are not finding that at this stage—and if they eventually settle and become the responders of first choice, what does that then leave for rural schools?

Mr DAMETTO: It is a deep concern.

Ms GRACE: I thought the question would have come from a principal because when I talk to them they are concerned about that as well. They are saying that they do not want to be left with people who do not want to be there because they have developed this two tier. That is why we have done the review. There is a recommendation in that to have a look at that. As I said, we have already started the conversation. It is a really interesting area we need to work with, and I look forward to working with those regional members about what will be best.

Your fears are right, and this is not new to me. They are exactly the same fears that are raised from some very good principals out in those rural areas right across-the-board. At the moment, it has not happened and we are not seeing evidence of that. That is why we have done the review so we can

look at the recommendation and assess it. The member for Cairns is nodding because there are certain parts there, as there is in Maryborough and all of those kinds of areas. The Sunshine Coast does not have the problem because it is one of the most desired places to go, which the members for Kawana and Noosa would be happy to know. However, there are areas that could possibly struggle so we want to work through this so we land in a really good spot. I welcome the input of the director-general and Mr Hunt and his team in relation to how we address that recommendation. I am happy to supply you with any information when we land.

Mr DAMETTO: That would be appreciated, Minister.

CHAIR: Before we move to the member for Noosa for a question, I will just issue a reminder to keep preambles as short as necessary to explain and provide context to the question.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, I refer to page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements. Are there any plans to provide funding over longer secure periods than currently available for prevention initiatives, such as Life Education? What new initiatives are being developed in schools in response to the increasing concerns over the mental and physical health of our children and youth?

Ms GRACE: That is a great question. Can I say that as a government and as a minister I do not prefer the short-term funding arrangements. If we have a program that is working, I prefer to put that program out of its misery if we are going to fund it and we secure it at least for a period of three years. In that way, they can get on with the job and get on doing what they do best, rather than writing applications and programs and meeting with my staff and departmental staff about rejigging their programs or whatever that might be. I do prefer that.

The difficulty is sometimes that, when you are looking at children in an education prospect—and I will refer to the director-general about this as well—you want to be sure that the program is meeting the outcomes. We often get a lot of feedback on a new program that we might be trialling. A school might say, 'We'd love to have the Life Education people,' or it might be Bruce and Denise Morcombe to talk about child safety, or Bravehearts, PFLAG or whoever they invite into the school. If we fund them, we generally do it on a trial to see how it works. For example, I recently had Camp Quality come to me. They have been operating on invitation a number of programs around children or their families suffering from cancer. They go in and run a great program of education about that—what the child is going to look like when they come back et cetera. They use puppets for that and it is fantastic, just as Life Education does a good job.

We want to be sure that schools are free to introduce what they believe through a school community will give their children the best through that health and physical education curriculum. This involves life skills and all of those issues that come under that curriculum. Recently, we have re-funded Bruce and Denise Morcombe for a couple of years to provide the program. Maybe it is three-year funding, I cannot remember, so please do not quote me on that but I know it is for at least two years. They were very grateful that that would continue. Some are short term because they are a trial, but I do prefer from a government perspective that we do it on a broader scale.

The director-general or Mr Hunt might like to add more about those rounded life skills. I know a lot of communities do some great work around this. Nothing is mandated or prescribed. It is not compulsory often for students to attend. Parents can decide if they want to or not, but generally the attendance is pretty good. I will refer to the director-general for any other specific operational matters as well.

Mr Cook: As the member would be aware, the Australian curriculum actually covers this area in a number of places. Schools use a variety of resources but also providers, like Life Education, around that in Queensland. The federal government also provides significant funding to Life Education itself, and it renewed its contract maybe 12 months ago for another three or four years. My understanding is that the Queensland Department of Health also provides funding to Life Education.

In terms of the curriculum itself, as you would be aware, the department has also developed a number of resources, such as the Respectful relationships education program, which is actually curriculum resources in schools to assist teachers with interpreting I guess and supporting them around the Australian curriculum. That covers off a number of areas around personal relationships, general capabilities, mental health, alcohol and drug use and the dangers of that, and domestic violence. There are a range of programs that we have in Queensland schools to support this.

In regions, we also have a range of support staff, principal lead coaches, around a whole range of areas they can cover off, particularly issues around mental health but also respectful relationships. We have in each region mental health coaches as well to enable support for teachers and schools and

to assist them with some of the issues we are facing in our schools these days around mental health issues of young adults. That is a significant issue obviously in our schools. There is a lot of work and support that we do with our teachers and our students. We have significant guidance officers, and we have enhanced the number of guidance officers by 45. The government has allocated an additional 45 guidance officers over the last three years as well.

There are a number of resources available. There are a number of organisations which seek support and we provide support through guidance of curriculum materials. Schools do provide some level of financial support by actually purchasing the service of those organisations as well.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Ms GRACE: Can I add that they actually received funding through the health department of \$1.3 million for this year so they can take their program around the state to where they are required to do it. There is funding through that department for them but I do not think Education funds them directly at this point.

Mr Cook: The schools purchase the service.

Ms GRACE: But they are funded \$1.3 million through the Department of Health.

CHAIR: It was remiss of me not to formally welcome Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa, and Mr Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar, who have joined us for the hearing. Member for Maiwar, do you have a question for the minister?

Mr BERKMAN: I do. I am sure the minister is well aware of election commitments made by Labor during the last election campaign in relation to schools in Maiwar. I can table the document but I doubt it is necessary. Minister, I refer to pages 43, 47 and 49 of the capital statement which indicates that the total spending at each of Bardon State School, Milton State School and Toowong State School is 20 per cent lower than the amount Labor promised during the election campaign. Minister, why does the budget not meet Labor's commitments to Maiwar's primary schools? Will you now commit to provide the full amount promised to these schools during the election?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. It might be that those figures are shown without GST. We will commit to spend the funds that we have determined we need to spend to build those schools. Mr Hunt can go through those papers in more detail for you. You will find that our election commitments will be honoured. The schools know exactly the amount of funding we will be giving to them. We will be building facilities that will be fantastic for those schools. You are getting some great funds. We know that there is some growth in your area. It is another inner city seat that is experiencing growth. We went to the election committing for those schools and we will deliver on those commitments for you.

You will probably find it is the different ways that funds are put in the budget, as opposed to the total design phase. Some of them are just the building, some are the designs and the further details. Mr Hunt is an expert at that and I will let him give you the figures. I can tell you, wholeheartedly, that we will commit to spend the funds required under our election commitment. We will build those additional facilities for you on time and on budget. I have full faith in Mr Hunt and his team delivering that. Through the director-general, I will refer to Mr Hunt to give you specific details about those figures but I will commit that those funds will be spent in your electorate.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks.

Mr Hunt: I can confirm what the minister has said. The capital statement is just the capital component of those projects so there will be operational expenses that will be associated. The dark art of accounting treatments is the explanation for the difference between what is in the capital statement and the total project cost. Some items are obviously operational expenses in the design and development work that cannot be capitalised, but the total project cost is allocated in our budget for those projects. I am happy to take that offline and meet with you personally outside of the hearing to work through those details if you would like to do so.

Mr BERKMAN: That would be great, thank you. If I can seek the chair's indulgence for one more brief question.

CHAIR: One more and then we will move on.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Chair. Both of the major parties committed to actioning the 17 Deloitte disability review recommendations at the last election. Minister, what tangible commitments of resources have been included in this budget to improve the educational experience of students with a disability?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. This sector is very dear to my heart. I meet with the association, and Roselynn does a wonderful job representing the teachers in this sector. As you are well aware, we are investing a significant amount of money in this sector. We are looking forward to introducing the best disability services teaching that we can give to those students. Over a billion dollars is allocated to provide the resources in relation to this through two funding models—\$726 million for students with a disability and \$316 million for the whole school support. Resources are obviously allocated to the school so we can provide the best teaching methods in relation to that.

As I said, I meet regularly with the association representing the schools, which is QASEL. I could not think of the acronym for a moment. There are so many acronyms in the education department, it is not funny. I have restricted my staff and departmental staff from writing any of them when they give me any briefing. QASEL is the association and we meet regularly about their needs and their demands. The Queensland disability review recommended that we review allocated resources and we consider aligning resources to the NCCD. We are doing that. We are working with states and territories and the Australian government to improve that. We will consider the review resource allocations to schools for students with disabilities over the coming years. We are doing it comprehensively. We are working with QASEL and we are working with the teachers in that area about how we do that.

We are building an additional special school at Caboolture. We opened a fantastic facility at Ipswich at Clermont which I visited. The model of the building there is fantastic. The way that school has been done and the way it has opened up the green space is fantastic. We are also looking at the infrastructure for these schools. I have discussions happening in some others where they have a bit of tied facilities. We were in Gladstone recently where I opened some wonderful new facilities. It has completely changed that school and the way they operate. The facilities are absolutely fantastic for the students who are at that school.

We are working and we are allocating funds. We have accepted and we are implementing all of the 17 recommendations. There has been \$1.5 million invested in looking at all of this. Seven recommendations are completed and embedded into practice, seven recommendations have had significant process, and three recommendations are in the planning phase so we are working through these. We have renewed our inclusive education policy—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Madam Chair. It was decided by the committee we would have 15- to 20-minute blocks. The official Queensland opposition has not had a question in this block. Madam Chair, you have allowed the crossbench members—the Green, the Independent and the Katter party—27 minutes for the minister to answer questions. I do hope that is taken out of the government's section in the next section because there is no equity in the time.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, that is not a point of order. As for what the committee has decided, there is no formal decision of the committee about blocks of time. I gave an indication as chair in a private meeting before this hearing about how we would run this hearing. Those members you are referring to are elected to this parliament and they have a right to attend, to seek leave, which they have like you—

Mr BLEIJIE: Indeed.

CHAIR: I am not finished—

Mr BLEIJIE: Two of whom were late to the committee.

CHAIR: No, to ask questions. One of those members, I respectfully remind you, is a continuing and sitting member of this committee and does a lot of work on this committee. The member for Maiwar indicated he had a supplementary. He has asked it. The minister is, in my opinion, answering it fully and then we will move to the next question. I can assure you that you will get significant time, as you got all of the time for non-government members in the first block.

Mr BLEIJIE: We had 18 minutes.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, point of order.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am raising a new point of order.

CHAIR: What is your new point of order?

Mr BLEIJIE: The official opposition had 18 to 19 minutes in the first block. You have now given 27 minutes to the crossbench members in this block.

CHAIR: No. Member for Kawana, there—

Mr BLEIJIE: What is the process for the rest of the committee hearing, Madam Chair?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, there is no point of order. I will just remind you. You did not get 18 minutes; you got 40 minutes—

Mr BLEIJIE: There were two blocks.

CHAIR:—because I am keeping track of that time—

Mr BLEIJIE: There were two blocks, Madam Chair.

CHAIR:—so do not tell me how to chair this hearing.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am not telling you; I am asking you—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, this is not my first rodeo; this is my fourth estimates—

Mr BLEIJIE:—and my 10th.

CHAIR: That is great. I am telling you that you will have adequate time.

Mr BLEIJIE: What is the process—

CHAIR: I have ruled—

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, what is the process for the rest of the estimates hearing today in terms of timing?

CHAIR: I would remind you, member for Kawana, that you are here, just as those members are, with the leave of this committee, which we have granted. I have given you an indication. The member has asked his last question. The minister will answer that question and then we will move to the next member that I call. It will be equitable, I can assure you, and I have a plan for that. Thank you, Minister. Please continue.

Ms GRACE: I think we wasted about five minutes arguing that. That is a good start, member for Kawana. Some of the other highlights are: we have released a functional behavioural assessment tool to help and we have also revised the Parent and Community Engagement Framework. There is a lot of good work happening in this area. I know that this subject is close to all of our hearts and we want to provide the best for students in this sector. I thank the member for the question.

Mr HEALY: Minister, with reference to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements, could you explain how the Regulating for Quality initiative is driving continual improvement in early childhood education and care? Just as importantly, are there any developments at the national level which may impact on these improvements?

Ms GRACE: We know that investing in high-quality education and care is one of the best things we can do for our children's future, but a quality childcare and education sector just does not happen by accident. One of the fundamental underpinnings of a quality early childhood system is a robust and effective regulatory framework that sets and enforces quality standards that have to be met by childcare and education providers. This is critical for confidence in the system.

That is why when the national system was established a decade ago all states and territories signed up to a National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care. Under the NQA, the national quality agenda, the education and care services national law, Queensland is responsible for regulating almost 3,000 ECEC services. Approved providers are responsible for children's health, safety and wellbeing. They have to ensure that they are in safe environments and that they have policies and procedures in place for their safety, so when the member for Nudgee takes her kids to those institutions—or anybody else—she is well aware that they are providing a safe environment for them. It is the role of the department as a regulatory authority to ensure these providers meet their legislative obligations. In effect, we play a regulatory role.

Queensland has always had a strong, proactive focus on our regulatory responsibility. As of December 2017 we had met all targets under the NQA national partnership. Ninety-five per cent of Queensland services have been assessed and rated, and 81 per cent of those are meeting or exceeding the national quality standard compared to 78 per cent nationally, so we are really doing an excellent job.

We have also developed a risk based framework, Regulating for Quality, to maximise our regulatory efforts by targeting risk and using tailored interventions. More than 7,500 visits to services were conducted in 2017-18—an average of 2.6 visits per service. Where noncompliance is identified, the department takes appropriate action, ranging from providing guidance to providers to cancelling services or prohibiting individuals from working in the sector. In 2017-18, 586 compliance actions were taken by the department.

Unfortunately, Queensland children in the early childhood sector have been let down once again by the Australian government. Since 2009 the Australian government has contributed to the funding for regulating services under a national partnership agreement. For example, the most recent NPNQA provided Queensland with an allocation of \$9.6 million over three years. This recognises that the Australian government benefits from the NQA and relies heavily on the state and territory regulators to ensure the quality of education and care services under the Child Care Subsidy scheme. However, there was no notice, no discussion, no forewarning, no raising of this issue with me and no telephone call saying, 'Minister, Senator Birmingham here. I want to let you know we are stopping your funding.' There was nothing.

In the 2018-19 federal budget, without any forewarning, they have walked away from any funding, so the \$9.6 million has been stopped from this financial year. This was an act that defies bargaining in good faith or showing the bona fides of the great work that Queensland has done with the Commonwealth in the previous 12 months to develop the long-term agreement. I know that many in the sector are astounded by the decision of the Commonwealth. They could not even believe it when I told them, because they were not told. They did not even know that the federal government was walking away from the funding. It is a straight cost-shift from the Commonwealth to the state and an abdication, we believe, of its national responsibilities in this area.

The funding under this agreement supported 23 authorised officers to assess, rate and regulate Queensland's nearly 3,000 services and deliver the great results that I mentioned earlier. The only way the national quality system can continue to be successful is through an enduring commitment, with adequate ongoing investment from the Commonwealth. I ask them to come again to the bargaining table, show some respect, discuss with us our needs for regulating this industry and not just walk away without any discussion. I did not even get a phone call or an email—or even a text, for that matter. There was nothing at all. We read about it when the decision was made and the budget was announced.

With the Commonwealth having withdrawn, we are now in the position of looking at all options to ensure our regulatory effort is maintained, but I will not stop advocating for that funding. We will continue to fulfil the requirements necessary to regulate a very important industry. Of course, the government will continue to fund those services that are very much required.

Mr HEALY: Minister, I refer again to the same page, page 4, of the Service Delivery Statements. My question is in relation to what you were just talking about there. Could you outline for us how the Queensland government is supporting low-income families facing the prospect of higher out-of-pocket costs under the federal government's new Child Care Subsidy arrangements?

Ms GRACE: This is actually a better outcome than the one I talked about previously, thank goodness. We wanted to ensure that all Queensland children have access to quality kindergarten programs in the year before school, regardless of the financial situation of the family, and often that is a barrier. We all know the benefits of kindergarten and we do not want to see out-of-pocket expenses acting as a barrier to vulnerable and disadvantaged families accessing kindergarten programs for their children. One of the ways we have addressed this issue is through the government's Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme—the QKFS Plus Kindy Support subsidy, which falls under this particular scheme. Under QKFS Plus, a targeted state subsidy is paid to services for eligible families to help reduce out-of-pocket expenses. This can be worth up to \$1,283 per eligible child per annum and it supports more than 13,500 families in long day care and community kindy. It really is a great program.

I met recently with one of the associations—I think it might have been the Lady Gowrie group—and other groups. In some of these remote areas, services such as C&K—it is astounding what we are doing and how many families we are supporting, and they really welcome this. However, we have had a longstanding concern. I know that, back in the days when the Commonwealth was talking about the changes to this funding, the previous education minister, Mr Langbroek, wrote and said, 'Look, the way you're going to implement this could disadvantage these families if you do it in the way you are intending.' Our pleas were totally ignored.

I then wrote to the federal minister a number of times because, due to the way this was going to be calculated, some of these families would have faced quite substantial out-of-pocket expenses and that could then have become a barrier to them partaking in this wonderful program. We wanted to

ensure that the full value of our funding under this new funding model was going to benefit the family and not the Commonwealth. In that letter I reminded him that the Commonwealth's approach was in direct opposition to the intent of our shared national partnership agreement under which the Commonwealth, the states and the territories have committed to ensuring universal access to kindergarten with a focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged families.

I am glad to report to the committee that Minister Birmingham replied to me on 29 June conceding that valid concerns had been raised and indicating that the Commonwealth would consider reversing that approach. I met with Senator Birmingham in my office on 23 July and we talked about this. He assured me that the current custom and practice would apply. I really welcome that and I want to thank Senator Birmingham for committing that those families will not be out of pocket but they will continue with the custom and practice that has been going on.

This is a win for low-income Queensland families. It is a great outcome. It would be great to tie that up now with some long-term funding for early childhood education and care. I will not stop until we secure that from the feds. This is a much better outcome. The custom and practice now will continue. That was good news in the letter I received from Senator Birmingham and in the meeting I had with him on 23 July.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, I wish to go back to the Dutton Park issue that we talked about previously. I refer to *Building future schools: Inner City South State Secondary College*, the precinct selection report dated January 2018. On page 9 of that report it mentions that located within the Dutton Park precinct, which has been chosen by the government, is the current Dutton Park State School oval, the Dutton Park Police Station and the Park Road Autism Hub. Director-General, what will happen with the police station, the autism hub and the school oval when this school is built?

Mr Cook: I will ask Mr Hunt to answer.

Mr Hunt: As we discussed earlier in this hearing, I think the minister indicated that the Dutton Park precinct has been selected and the next stage of this project is to identify the placement and design work to go with the construction of the new Inner City South State Secondary College. As I indicated previously, there are a number of land assets, as you have just outlined as well. We will work with design consultants to maximise the benefit and the footprint of the school, as we have done at the Inner City North State Secondary College—looking at the design work and having a design workshop. The department's approach to this is that we engage community and other partners in the process to develop a design for the school. We go through from conceptual design to detailed design to construction and, therefore, opening of the school in 2021.

I think it is important to remember that this school is opening in 2021 and we are in very early days in terms of the design considerations. We have been working assiduously to ensure that the development of the Inner City North is ready because it is opening one year earlier, in 2020. The design work for that is progressing well and has progressed well. We are out with tender documents at the moment for the construction of Inner City North.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, based on Mr Hunt's response, it is possible, then, that the police station, autism hub and school oval will be gone?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you are asking a hypothetical question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, is it reasonable to say that if this school is built in three years, as has been indicated, relocating a police station, an autism hub and a school oval—what I am getting at is that you have confirmed the department did a business case, yet it has been announced only today that Dutton Park will be the site, so I am not sure how the department did a business case without a site that had been chosen. Secondly, we do not know how much money it is costing with respect to commercial-in-confidence. I suspect there has been some consultation—and I note the Deputy Premier has just tweeted that consultation is now occurring. Director-General, how does the department select a site when it has done a business case on a site that has not been announced yet and no consultation has been undertaken, although it is now being undertaken? Is this how the department usually operates? It sort of seems back-to-front.

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question. I do not agree with anything that has been proposed in terms of your statement. There has been extensive consultation. What was announced by the Deputy Premier earlier this year was a preferred precinct. Since that time there has been 11 weeks of consultation with community looking at a range of different precincts. That consultation has been listened to. The government has made a decision today in relation to the site.

As Mr Hunt said, as we would always do with any school planning, the consultation begins around the design of that site, the design of the school, a range of things: the surroundings, the impact around the community, the neighbourhood, the businesses in relation to those things—those will occur. The consultation will occur. Consultation has occurred. For me to make assumptions about what that may look like over the next few weeks, few months or few years I think would be totally inappropriate.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, who conducted the review into independent public schools?

Mr Cook: That was a process that we undertook in terms of tender. It was advertised and the successful tenderer was PotentialPlus.

Mr BLEIJIE: As far as the individual involved in PotentialPlus, I cannot find a website about this company. It is a family trust. Is it true that the individual who operates that family trust previously worked in the department?

Mr Cook: I would have to get that information. It would not exclude them from putting in a tender if they had worked previously. My understanding is—yes, it has been confirmed—that that person did work in the department previously; that is right.

Mr Hunt: Some time ago. I understand that they have subsequently worked in TAFE, and they have worked as an independent education consultant for some time further to that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, how much was PotentialPlus paid for this review of independent public schools?

Mr Cook: My understanding is \$66,000.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, who did the review for former minister Kate Jones in 2015 into independent public schools? Which company conducted that review?

Mr Cook: In 2015? I will have to get the information. Obviously I was not here at the time.

CHAIR: I think it is questionable how relevant that is, member for Kawana.

Ms GRACE: The report was tabled in parliament on 17 May 2018.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. It is important because it goes to the heart of how another review was undertaken and \$66,000 was paid when we already had a review which was not actioned by the department, because in your department you would have had this review from 2015.

Mr Cook: The review at the time was an internal review. The commitment, I think, was for an external review. That was something that was held in 2016, and so this external review has been undertaken.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, how much money has been expended on consultants for the previous financial year and how much is budgeted for consultants for the education department in the coming year, please?

Mr Cook: I think it is just over \$1 million. I will just get my note in relation to that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Was that \$1 million?

Mr Cook: I am just seeking confirmation. As I indicated, it was \$1.3 million for consultancy over 2017-18.

Mr BLEIJIE: What are the budgeted consultancy fees for the current financial year?

Mr Cook: We do not have a specific budget line for consultancies. Consultancies usually, particularly if they are over a particular level, would come to me for approval. I will approve or otherwise based on my concept of the value for money of the consultancy I am being asked to approve.

Mr BLEIJIE: Has PotentialPlus received any other Department of Education Queensland consultancy work?

Mr Cook: Yes. They got \$66,000 for—

Mr BLEIJIE: Have they had other contracts with the education department?

Mr Cook: Not that I am aware of, but I would have to seek advice on that. I can look at the consultancy register, but my view at this point would be no.

Mrs STUCKEY: My question is to the director-general. I understand that the principal classification and review is being done for the first time in around 20 years. Principals at schools with under 1,000 students receive the same pay as those at schools with over 2,000 students. Has the government planned for a quantum increment increase to principals' wages, and if so would any salary increase come from other projects?

CHAIR: I think it is more a question of government policy to ask the minister.

Ms GRACE: Maybe the director-general would like the last part of the question repeated.

CHAIR: Can you repeat the last part of your question, member for Currumbin?

Mrs STUCKEY: Certainly. Has the government planned for a quantum increment increase to principals' wages, and if so will any salary increases come from other projects?

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question. As the member would be aware, a review is currently happening. There is a review into the classification structure of promotional positions. That was outlined or heralded as part of the 2016 certified agreement. It is underway. The purpose of that is for a review to be undertaken, and then the review will provide its recommendations or its views to the department and also to government. There is no guarantee of implementation, as there would not be with any review, in relation to undertaking the first piece of work. The first piece of work is happening up there. We are working with principals, we are working with our stakeholders, we are working with our partners, and that review will come back by 31 December this year.

We are currently providing opportunities for key stakeholders such as principal associations and principals themselves to look at the classification structure of our school leaders, particularly our school principals, recognising the variety of factors that they manage and work with and deal with on a day-to-day basis in their schools, particularly in relation to issues such as school complexity itself. The work is well underway. Over the next several months that work will start to finalise. The review will examine things such as the work value assessment methodology that underpins and informs the classifications of school leadership positions, which is very important; the progression of school leaders through the various classification levels and pay points; and leadership role descriptions.

When I have been out visiting schools over the last several weeks the range of leaders in schools—not just principals—talk to me about importance and recognition. We all know the increasing work and the increasing contribution that school principals and school leaders have made. The review is looking to unpack that and provide advice back to the department and the government over the next several months.

Mrs STUCKEY: My second question is to the minister. Minister, you said that it was wonderful to see public schools like Brisbane State High School being so popular, and I share that view. We have catchment areas in place at some of our schools in my local area. Parents frequently contact me because they are frustrated that they live closer to one school but they are out of the catchment, and yet there are 162 students from New South Wales attending Palm Beach Currumbin High School. My parents want to know why this is the case and if it is fair that Queensland students miss out at the expense of New South Wales students.

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. I know that this was part of a qualm that you had earlier when you asked me for numbers in relation to that. My understanding is that they are very popular schools, there is no doubt about it. There are management plans. It is actually in the Australian Constitution. I thought it was. That is what I was looking to confirm. The Australian Constitution prohibits the withholding of services on the basis that a person resides in another state of Australia, but the member for Currumbin would like to do that and I know that we will not break constitutional rules. The department responds to the issues regarding—

Mrs STUCKEY: Point of order, Madam Chair. I find the minister's words offensive and I ask her to withdraw.

Ms GRACE: There was no personal indictment.

Mrs STUCKEY: There was a sarcastic comment.

Ms GRACE: I withdraw. New South Wales clearly must love Queensland. We will always work with school communities to provide for local children. That is part of our modus operandi. That is part of the reason why we build additional classrooms and we continually look at enrolment management plans. Can I say with all due respect, member for Currumbin, that under the Australian Constitution we are prohibited from denying services just because of an imaginary line on a map. The department responds to issues regarding the education of cross-border students through the *Queensland and New South Wales Statement of Principles and Priorities for Cross-border Collaboration* and annual work lists. The Department of Education is represented on the New South Wales cross-border working group.

The estimated costs of doing all of that falls under our commitment to do that. As I am sure the member for Currumbin is well aware, there are additional classrooms being built at the Palm Beach Currumbin High School. I visited that school recently. It is a fantastic school. I enjoyed myself when they gave me a rendition of the musical *Grease* that they were undertaking, and it was wonderful to see. We will continually work with our school communities. We will deliver classrooms into those

schools of the future. We will meet our constitutional obligations as a sovereign state government. I look forward to dealing with any issues that you may have in relation to requirements for students. You have not raised anything with me outside of asking me how many New South Wales students are in Queensland. If there are any specific requirements, I would be more than happy to meet with you and the director-general with Mr Hunt at my side to meet any demands or requests you may have.

Mrs STUCKEY: With respect, Minister, that is what I need to take back to my parents. They are Queensland parents—

Ms GRACE: You have not raised it with me.

Mrs STUCKEY: I have asked you a question on notice which you actually recognised and I have asked you today, so there is no need to be so rude.

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, do you have another question or are we moving to another member?

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, on 24 January 2018 you met with members of the Queensland Teachers' Union without any departmental officials in the room. On 29 January, some four days later, you received a letter. Minister, why have you not disclosed to the Queensland public that you received a letter from the Queensland Teachers' Union advocating for the full termination of independent public schools in Queensland, despite the fact that the union are out on Twitter saying they want good elements of IPS? The reality is they wrote to you on 29 January advocating for the full termination of IPS—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, put your question without opinion and argument.

Ms GRACE: It is hardly a secret if they are on Twitter. It is hardly a secret if it is on websites and it is hardly a secret—

Mr BLEIJIE: I did not say that. I said that what they are saying on Twitter—

Ms GRACE:—about their position in relation to IPS.

Mr BLEIJIE:—is different to what they are writing to you about. They have two different positions, Minister.

Ms GRACE: I have made my position very clear about IPS. This is a very rewarding review that we are doing. I have made my position very clear. The unions have had their position, can I say, for many years. I think when the LNP was in government in 2013 they established their position. A union has the right to write to me about any issues they want, just like any other organisation that I meet regularly can write to me on any situation they have. I am well aware of their views. I think they made submissions to the inquiry. They are on Twitter. I am sure they might be on Facebook even. They may even be on the website. There is no secret about the position of the QTU. It has not influenced me in going through a proper and thought-out process. That report has now been received. We will work through the recommendations. The member for Kawana can raise any accusations he wants; they are false and misleading. The Queensland Teachers' Union has always made their position very clear. Maybe he wants to read the tweet again to make sure he is clear on their position as well.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, the Minister for Education has had 25 meetings this year with union officials, being the CFMEU, the Australian Workers' Union and the Queensland Teachers' Union. I cannot see that in any of those meetings the department has been represented. Is it the ordinary course of events that the department should be represented at those meetings with the minister?

Mr SAUNDERS: Point of order, Madam Chair. What does this have to do with the budget? I would like to ask, Chair, can we get back on course and talk about the budget instead of talking about meetings that did or did not happen? I want to find out more about the education spend for my constituents.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, do you have a question relevant to the budget—

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you—

CHAIR:—and if so, can you explain how it—

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Madam Chair—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I will finish my ruling, then I will hand over to you and you get to speak, and I will not interrupt you unless you contravene the standing order. Can you please put your next question and explain its relevance to the appropriation?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is definitely relevant when departmental officials meet with the minister about ministerial responsibilities in education. It is probably relevant to every page of the SDS document.

Director-General, is it normal for the minister to meet the likes of the Queensland Teachers' Union without having departmental representatives there to take notes of things like, as the minister said before, advocating for the abolition of independent public schools?

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question. Having worked in the Commonwealth Government, Victorian government and Queensland government twice, it is standard practice in many cases where ministers meet with a range of stakeholders without departmental people present.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, I will defer to the member for Pumicestone.

Mrs WILSON: Director-General, as you would be aware, there has been an audit undertaken in relation to the age of prep students attending schools in 2018. The minister has confirmed that this audit found that four students were incorrectly enrolled in prep this year. Why were these errors made, and has this ever happened before to our preppies?

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question. As you would be aware, compulsory enrolment in prep only started last year. Up until that point it was a staggered intake in relation to that. You are correct: I think it was a question on notice that we answered or the minister answered. There were four identified this year. In cases such as this, it is error at the school level. We work with the school. We support the school in relation to that. It is actually about data entry onto the OneSchool website.

Mrs WILSON: So what you are saying is that it is a prep bungle?

CHAIR: No. Member for Pumicestone, you asked a question. Allow the director-general to answer.

Mr Cook: And I certainly will not accept being verballed, I guess, in that regard. I have indicated that we provide support and training to our staff in relation to data entry in relation to OneSchool. This is the process that happens when enrolments are actually made. However, every year we review data and that is how we identify these particular issues. As you have indicated, there were four this year. There were also five last year. The department works with the families in relation to these particular issues. In some of these cases we continue to provide assistance to the families in relation to the educational outcomes for those children, and we will continue to do that for these particular students as well.

Mrs WILSON: So, Director-General—

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Pumicestone, but we are moving now to government members. I invite the member for Maryborough to ask a question.

Mr SAUNDERS: Thank you, Chair. Minister, in relation to the Commonwealth funding detailed on page 17 of the SDS, can you provide an update on chaplaincy in Queensland state schools?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question because it is a good question. We recognise the important contribution chaplains and student welfare officers who work within the schools make to the wellbeing of Queensland schools. We were left in the dark for quite some time about what was going to happen with funding with chaplaincy, and I guess it was the worst kept secret that the government would probably continue to fund it. You know when federal members start to bring about petitions and make certain calls that it is probably one of the worst kept secrets out there.

I do welcome the funding of the Turnbull government announcing the contribution to the program, but we are just a little bit light on details at the moment, member for Maryborough. We have only just received indicative funding details from the federal government in the past week, so we know there is money allocated to continue it but the detail is a bit light on so we only just met last week. While we now know that Queensland will receive about \$18.3 million over four years from this financial year, it is still unclear about what conditions will be attached to the funding, so we are trying to work through all of that.

In 2017-18 we invested \$1.129 million at 147 state schools—this is the Queensland government's funding—for the government's chaplaincy and student welfare funding program because, unlike the Queensland program, the Commonwealth National School Chaplaincy Programme does not extend to the student welfare workers, and I think they do an excellent job in schools. In some schools and in some communities they do a wonderful job, particularly in connection with the question asked earlier by the member for Noosa about student wellbeing and that type of thing. Queensland's continued top-up ensures that schools that elected for a student welfare worker under the original program were not disadvantaged. It was the Abbott government, unfortunately, that moved the goalposts and changed the program to exclusively fund chaplains.

We really do not know the detail at this particular point in time. Disappointingly, the negotiation of the detail means that the agreement may not be finalised until closer to the end of the year. I feel for those people who are waiting to see if there are going to be any strings attached or any changes in the way that it is going to be funded or what is going to happen. We are aiming to get these negotiations done as soon as possible so we can let schools know so they can make staffing decisions with regard to the certainty of funding as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the time lines to finalise an agreement are determined by the Commonwealth. I take this opportunity to urge them to try to get this done as soon as possible. When we have governed from the regions I have had student welfare officers come up to me to speak about their work. They do not work a lot of hours. They do not get paid a terrible lot of money because of the hours that they work, but they love the work. They want to know about the security of their employment. In June I wrote expressing our strong position that we would like to see that flexibility extended now to student welfare officers so that we can get back to the pre-Abbott changes.

We do not know at this stage what the early indications are—the director-general might like to add whether or not that is going to happen—but we will keep pushing for that because we think it is important that it is a broader one, like the Queensland one. We have money in the budget again for this year for our Queensland project of nearly \$1.2 million to top that up and to continue those services, so the schools in your area can rest assured that we will at least continue our funding. It is good to see that we have some money, even though we do not know the strings that are attached and we do not know when we are going to finalise the agreement. I know that we want to try to finalise this as quickly as possible. Through his immense experience in this area, the director-general may know whether this can be sped up or not, because we want to nail it as soon as we can.

Mr Cook: Thank you, Minister. My understanding is that the Australian government has announced this funding for chaplains only, not for student welfare workers, so Queensland will continue to top it up in relation to that so that we have choice for our schools, because a number of our schools do prefer student welfare workers over chaplains. In terms of the process, unfortunately I believe the process probably will not go much faster than it currently is, which means that we probably will not be able to give assurance to schools until much later, potentially the end of term 3 or even term 4, which does put pressure on schools and also those people who are employed in schools who are relying on this funding to enable their employment to continue.

Ms GRACE: Our funding is secured. We just need to land on the Commonwealth one so we can give these people some surety as soon as possible.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, with reference to page 6 of the Department of Education SDS, can you advise how a four-year, \$31.1 million investment will support the wellbeing of teachers and students in Queensland's regional and remote communities?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. Coming as he does from one of the beautiful regional areas, Maryborough, I am sure he understands the challenges that the regions often face. We are committed to ensuring a world-class education for children and students no matter where they live in our great state. We will be establishing four centres of learning and wellbeing at a cost of \$31 million over four years. The first two will be set up in Mount Isa and Roma and there will be two more to follow. My understanding is that Mount Isa and Roma are now operational, so both of these centres of wellbeing and learning are set up.

The centres have five key functions: developing leadership capabilities, so working with our principals; mentoring and coaching beginning teachers; coaching midcareer and experienced teachers with a focus on reading, inclusion and multiage teaching; building resilience of staff new to rural and remote settings, so this is a really great learning and wellbeing hub; and facilitating interagency wellbeing support for staff and students. Importantly, the centres of learning and wellbeing will have qualified teachers on staff who can fill in as relief teachers to take up the challenges of relieving school staff who attend professional development. We will hopefully have a pool of relieving teachers so that when professional development is required they are not missing out and they will have some teachers on staff to assist them in managing that.

We know that half of all Queensland state schools are located in rural and remote areas. Our government is doing all it can to support these school communities. Fortunately, unlike the school closures that were earmarked—I think there were about 50 of them—under the previous LNP government's plans across the state in some of these rural and remote areas, one of the ways we are supporting schools in regional and remote areas is by attracting and retaining those quality teachers, and I refer to the member for Hinchinbrook's earlier question. These centres are all about building a

program of assisting those people in those regional areas and incentivising them to go there, and I am really looking forward to officially opening and visiting these hubs very soon in Mount Isa and Roma. Tim Moes has commenced as a lead principal at Mount Isa and Dale Magner will run the centre in Roma. As I said, I look forward to visiting both in the near future.

The remaining two centres—one in Central Queensland and one in Far North Queensland—will open in 2019. Locations will be confirmed later this year. Each of the centres will provide services and support to more than 20 schools in their respective regions. The centres will also have satellite facilities to broaden their reach. The Roma centre will have satellite service in Kingaroy and the Mount Isa centre will have satellite in Normanton, so it really is a good spread.

Our centres of learning and wellbeing will go a long way to providing students in rural and remote areas with the same opportunities as students in the cities and towns along the Queensland coast. It is a great investment in our rural and remote areas and we hope that teachers, principals and students will benefit greatly from these centres. As I said, I cannot wait to get to Mount Isa and Roma to have a look at them.

Mr HEALY: Minister, with reference to page 6 of the SDS, I ask you to explain how the government is supporting Indigenous students in particular in Queensland state schools.

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. I know that he has a high percentage of Indigenous student population in his seat and I know that it is one of vital importance for Indigenous families throughout Queensland. In the 2018-19 financial year the government is investing over \$29 million in funding for Closing the Gap initiatives. The Palaszczuk government recognises the need to improve educational outcomes for the 56,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently enrolled in Queensland state schools and those who will attend in the years to come.

I am really proud to report that we have the best results in the nation for year 12 QCE completion for students from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. When the director-general, Tony Cook, started in the department and saw these figures he said that they were truly wonderful figures. There was less than a percentage difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other year 12s obtaining a QCE.

I ask Chris Rider from QCAA to come to the table, because I know that he works towards the QCE certificates and he might like to add to some of the great outcomes. Last year 97.2 per cent of Indigenous state school students across Queensland achieved either a Queensland Certificate of Education or a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement compared to 98.1 per cent of non-Indigenous students. That is closing the gap. It is a fantastic achievement and one that we here in Queensland should be very proud of.

As part of these initiatives, the department is also working with organisations to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. Some \$6.1 million is being invested towards partnerships, and I visited a few of these. Netball Queensland does a partnership program, as does the Stars Foundation, which I visited in Thuringowa. That is a great program. Those young women in that program were absolutely loving it. It was terrific. I met with the Brisbane Broncos recently in relation to their program. They have a great mentoring program encouraging students with their involvement in sport and their involvement in learning. It is a great program, as is the girls' academy. I also met with the Clontarf Foundation. I think the director-general visited them in Townsville recently.

I will never forget a young student who was so proud of his attendance and so proud that he was about to complete year 12. He said to me, 'Minister, at one stage I was about to walk out the gate and one of the workers in the Clontarf Foundation said, "Where are you going?"' He said, 'There's nothing for me in here. I can't handle it. I'm going out the gate, walking up the road and I'm leaving.' Apparently that Aboriginal worker said to him, 'You're saying there's nothing in here. Let me assure you there is nothing for you out there if you don't stay in here to get the education you need to help you with what's outside that gate.' He listened to what he had to say. It turned him around. There was pride and a tear in his eye when he was telling me that he was about to finish year 12 this year—and doing very well—and how he turned his life around. They are things that really warm your heart and make it an honour to be the Minister for Education. We visited both of those areas and saw the programs in place, as did the director-general.

There are other great improvements about participation and improvements about NAPLAN. We are really doing some very good work in this space and I am proud to be the education minister delivering this. I would like Mr Rider to add to that, because that is an outstanding achievement. He may have some figures about what they were in the past and what we have reached now, although I do not want to put him in a difficult position in case he does not. I will defer to him.

Mr Rider: I endorse the minister's comments that the improvement has been remarkable. The achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in attaining a Queensland Certificate of Education has been nothing short of miraculous over the last five to eight years, and that is because of the great work that is going on in schools.

People are paying attention to making sure that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do well at school and that they offer subjects that meet their needs, abilities and interests. The result is that we now see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in year 12 attaining very similar levels to non-Indigenous young Queenslanders. That is an outstanding achievement. The other thing that I would like to point out is that, in the 98 new syllabuses that we have developed, we have developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subject. That will be offered at the commencement of 2019 to year 11 students.

Ms GRACE: One of our outstanding assistant deputy directors-general Patrea Walton took this issue to heart. She did an outstanding job. I remember the elder at her farewell spoke so fondly about the work that she had done at the schools and the commitment that she put into this area. I want to wish Patrea Walton a very healthy, happy and long retirement and to thank her wholeheartedly for all her efforts in this area. She did an outstanding job.

I have some figures. They have increased under all governments. As Queenslanders, we all should be proud of this and take a bipartisan approach to this. I am happy to do that and acknowledge that, in 2013, Indigenous students were completing at 75 per cent and that has gone up to now 97.2 per cent. It has increased per year through the years of the previous non-Labor government and through our government. We should all be very proud of that achievement. Once again, I want to thank Patrea Walton for all of her efforts in this area.

Mr HEALY: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr Rider, for those outstanding results. I refer to page 4 of the SDS and its reference to providing children with access to quality early childhood education and care. Can the minister update the committee on relevant developments in the Weipa and Napranum communities, please?

Ms GRACE: Yes. Thank you very much for the question. As both the Minister for Education and the ministerial champion for Napranum, I am very pleased to update the committee on recent developments that will ensure that there will be suitable and sustainable childcare options for parents and young children in both the Weipa and Napranum communities. Unfortunately, earlier this year, the Napranum council announced that it would be closing its long day care centre in Napranum, leaving the future uncertain for more than 30 families across Weipa and Napranum who used the service and for the community generally.

The long day centre in Napranum had originally been due to close on 31 May but, as a first step in allowing time for a longer-term solution to be found, the Napranum council agreed, with the support of Rio Tinto, to keep the service open for another two months—until 3 August, which was tomorrow. In the meantime, Rio Tinto lodged an application to establish a second long day care service in Weipa to accommodate the affected families. My department, as a regulator, worked through the application from Rio as a matter of priority to ensure that a new service could be up and running as soon as possible to allow the continuity in services for the local community. I also met personally with Rio Tinto general manager, Daniel van der Westhuizen, to ensure that we are doing all we can to assist their application. They were very keen to meet with me. They understood the time frames and wanted us to assist them where we could to get this going.

Therefore, it was great news that, last week, Rio's service approval application received the final tick from the regulator, allowing it to open a new long day care centre on Monday, 30 July, in newly renovated premises in Weipa. The timing of the approval really could not have been better. There is now a smooth transition for those children. Clearly, the council was finding that it was unable to continue the service. The costs were becoming prohibitive. I spoke with them and my staff spoke with them about this. There was nothing that we could do but, to its credit, Rio has come to the table and we now have this centre.

It is important to note that it is the only long day operation that was closing. The Napranum kindergarten, run by the council, remains unaffected and continues to operate with 52 children enrolled. I visited that kindergarten in Napranum. It is a beautiful little centre. It has 52 children. That will continue to operate. The long day care centre will close and it will move to Weipa with Rio Tinto. I know that the potential loss of these childcare services would have a very concerning effect on local parents and community members, but the good news is that families currently accessing long day care in Napranum will now be able to attend Rio Tinto's new service in Weipa.

This is a great example of everyone working together to find a solution. I am very proud to be the ministerial champion for the most wonderful community of Napranum. The local member, Cynthia Lui, and her staff advocated very strongly to find a solution. We involved her the whole time. Mayor Rex Burke and his team at Napranum council also played a significant role. I thank Rio Tinto, the department of education and community members in both Weipa and Napranum very much for all their efforts. We have had a good solution and it is good news for the people of Weipa and Napranum. Well done to all.

Mr HEALY: An outstanding outcome. Minister, congratulations and to the department.

Ms GRACE: Yes, it really is.

Mrs WILSON: Director-General, what assistance has the department provided for the parents of these prep students who have been caught up in the enrolment bungle? Has any assessment been done on the impact on these young children?

CHAIR: Member for Pumicestone, could you please ask your questions without the addition of emotive and opinionated words.

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question. We are in contact with parents where schools have incorrectly enrolled based on legislation. The response to that is really dependent on the parents. Some parents have indicated that they do not require further assistance from the department. Some parents have asked for some level of support in relation to meeting the fees of kindergartens going forward, but also some continuing contact with the school. I do not have a particular answer short of that it depends on the parents and the parental situation.

We certainly work closely with the parents but also with schools to ensure that we can continue with those parents in relation to the support that their students need going into the future. Sorry, what is the second part of your question? I missed it.

Mrs WILSON: Will there be any assessment of these children to make sure that, when they start school next year, they are not in any way set back? We are looking at young kids. I know of two who potentially have done a full semester. That has to psychologically impact a child. They have their friendship group and now they are going back to kindy. As the minister said earlier, parents love prep. What steps are going to be put in place to ensure that, when these children transition back into prep next year, they are not going to be disadvantaged?

Mr Cook: I cannot comment on the impact in terms of psychological issues. That would be something that an expert would have to provide in relation to that for individual students. As we would always do for all of the students entering prep, we have a range of programs. We look at initial assessments for those students. We have an Early Start program where we look at students' literacy and numeracy levels. I would imagine that, in most cases, these children would continue to operate in a kindergarten program, so they continue to have a friendship group as part of that. For any student who is enrolling in prep, we would always look at what support that student may need, whether they have been to kindergarten or any form of child care previously, and that is standard practice in the work that we would do in our classrooms.

Mrs WILSON: I go back to the assistance that you are going to be offering to parents. You just mentioned that some parents have not required any assistance. Would it be fair to say that, if you are going to offer some parents who have asked for it, you will do it across-the-board for all of them?

Mr Cook: We seek advice from parents—'What is it you would like in relation to support?' We continue to do that. In relation to the future, we are now putting in place the inability for students who do not meet the age limit in relation to prep to be enrolled. If information is entered that indicates that these students should not be enrolled—and, as you know, you have 30 June but there is also the one-month extension if the principal makes the decision in relation to that young child being ready for school and that is able to be done—the step that we are now putting in place is that that enrolment itself will cease. From a technological perspective, principals will no longer be able to enrol their students. Assuming that all the information in terms of their date of birth continue to be correct, the enrolment will cease and the enrolment will not be able to occur and entered into the system.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have a question of the director-general. The Queensland Teachers' Union, P&Cs Queensland and the LNP have called on the state government to air-condition every state school classroom in Queensland. Can you advise the committee how much money has the department set aside to air-condition every state school classroom in Queensland?

Mr Cook: I am not aware of that government decision. I am sorry, is there a government decision that you are referring to about air-conditioning every classroom?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am confirming, is there anything in the budget papers that puts money into air-conditioning every state school? Aside from the Cooler Schools program, is there any money in the budget to air-condition every state school classroom in Queensland?

Mr Cook: As I said, I was not aware that that was a government decision. I am just asking: is there a government decision that you are referring to in relation to that?

Mr BLEIJIE: No. I appreciate that.

CHAIR: Director-General, you are absolutely on the right track. You can provide factual information about what is contained in the budget. The member for Kawana knows that any questions to do with government policy must go to the minister.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Director-General, the reason you are not able to answer is that it is not in the budget, because the government—

Mr Cook: In relation to funding, I can talk about the fact that there is \$62 million over the last three years that we have put in terms of air conditioning in relation to capital and also maintenance on state school air conditioning. You mentioned the Cooler Schools zones. There is a Cooler Schools program. There is a budget of \$21 million for 2018-19 for air conditioning and \$16 million for upgrades and replacements. As you know, all air-conditioning units eventually will have to be upgraded and replaced as well. It is not just the initial capital spend; it is the ongoing. There is maintenance and also upgrade and replacements in the budget for 2018-19 and that amount is \$21 million.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Director-General, how many new schools in Queensland have been opened this year?

Mr Cook: My understanding is that there are four.

Mr BLEIJIE: Did the Premier or the minister attend any of those openings?

Mr Cook: I would have to take that on notice. I was not here.

Ms GRACE: The member can ask me. I can let him know. I am here.

Mr BLEIJIE: At each school opening, there is a plaque. What is the budget estimate for the plaques when they open these schools?

Mr Cook: I would have to seek advice on that question. I would imagine that it would be a small amount. Mr Hunt, do you have a rough approximation of what it would be?

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, the reason and the seriousness of the question is that we understand that, on a couple of occasions, the Premier and the minister have changed their diaries and the schools have been required to throw out the old plaques and have new plaques and have them printed. In one particular situation it might be three plaques—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, thank you for the additional clarification. I understand that Mr Hunt was going to provide you with a figure about how much a plaque costs.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Director-General, you are happy to take that on notice?

Mr Cook: We have the information.

CHAIR: The director-general indicated that he was referring to Mr Hunt. That is my understanding. We will allow him to answer.

Mr Cook: That is correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Hunt.

Mr Hunt: I understand that it is a very small amount. As the director-general said, there are four schools that have opened this year. I think it is sub-\$1,000 for a plaque, depending on the nature and size of the plaque. We work with the building contractors normally to identify the appropriate placement and the sizing of the plaque, given the pillars and the columns or the placement of the plaque within the new school building.

Mr BLEIJIE: Did you say \$1,000 a plaque?

Mr Hunt: Below \$1,000. I do not know the exact pricing.

Mr BLEIJIE: Are you aware of plaques that, because the Premier or the minister have changed the dates that they can attend the opening, have had to be changed or thrown out?

Mr Hunt: Personally, I am not aware of that, no.

Mr BLEIJIE: Could you find out for the committee, please?

CHAIR: Is that question to the director-general?

Mr BLEIJIE: To Mr Hunt through the director-general.

Mr Cook: I am also not aware of that as well.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is that something that you could find out for this committee?

Mr Hunt: I am sure we could undertake to see whether that information exists. I would think that the engraving of the plaque is very late. We typically have a very lengthy and planned process for the opening of a new school to ensure that the preparation for that event goes smoothly.

Mr BLEIJIE: The obvious reason I am asking the question—

CHAIR: Just to come back as a matter of process, you have asked through the director-general to Mr Hunt whether that can be taken on notice, which needs to go from the director-general to the minister. Minister, did you wish to take that on notice or seek to find more information during the hearing?

Ms GRACE: The plaques are important. We ensure that the plaques are an important part in relation to—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order.

CHAIR: I have asked the minister whether she is going to take it on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: And she said yes.

CHAIR: The minister has not said anything.

Ms GRACE: I am explaining my response. I am happy for them to take this on notice. Plaques come in all shapes and sizes. I have opened big ones and small ones and tiny little ones as well.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order.

CHAIR: Minister, thank you. You can address the details in your answer. I look forward to hearing it.

Ms GRACE: It is very important to the education of our children.

Mr BLEIJIE: I note members of the government were laughing at the fact that this is taxpayers' money. Whether it is \$500 or \$1,000, that is what this committee is about. If we are wasting money, it should be interrogated.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, do you have a question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you.

Mr SAUNDERS: Point of order. I make the point that I was not laughing about the waste of money; I was laughing at the quality of the question. I just want to clarify that.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: My question is to the director-general. Are you aware of an investigation that the department of education undertook into fraud allegations regarding the member for Mansfield at the time she was the principal of Cavendish Road State High School?

Mr Cook: I was not here at the time, but I am aware of it because of the public information and the information that, I think, was tabled in the House.

Mr BLEIJIE: The chair of the CCC, Mr MacSporran, said at estimates last Tuesday that the CCC handed back the investigation to the department. Has that investigation concluded in its entirety?

Mr Cook: My understanding is the answer to that is yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: What was the outcome of that investigation?

Mr Cook: I think that was tabled and is a public document, I think, in relation to that, which is that there was no capability of substantiation of the accusations against the particular individual.

Mr BLEIJIE: Did the former principal of Cavendish Road State High School pay money back to Education Queensland or the school?

Mr Cook: My understanding is she has indicated that on record.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, is it the case that the investigation—you said it has concluded—was forcibly concluded when the former principal resigned her position? Did the department finish the investigation at that point because she was no longer employed by the Department of Education?

Mr Cook: My understanding is the answer to that is no, and I think the latest information or the latest correspondence in relation to the investigation was 8 May this year.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Director-General, the minister's answer to question on notice 695, asked on 12 June 2018, stated that, for the 2017-18 period, as at 18 June 2018, 842 teachers had resigned, 830 teachers had retired and 14 staff had been terminated. Eight hundred and forty-two teachers resigning in one year seems a substantial figure of teachers fleeing the employment of—

CHAIR: No, member for Kawana. Ask a question and please do not provide your opinion.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Fourteen staff have been terminated in that period of time—that is, sacked by the department.

CHAIR: No, member for Kawana. Again, please put your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, without disclosing the personal details of staff, what is the reason for the 14 teachers being sacked in Queensland?

CHAIR: No, member for Kawana. Can you just put your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: The answer says 'terminated'.

CHAIR: Then use the terminology. You are deliberating not doing so to be inflammatory. We do not need to be inflammatory. He is here and willing to answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, 14 staff have been terminated in the last 12 months. What are the reasons for the staff terminations?

Mr Cook: I am happy to take the question, but I do not have the details of 14 individual staff out of a staff of 70,000 people or so in relation to that question. The reasons could be varied and we would not be going into the details of individual cases.

Mr BLEIJIE: Fourteen teachers have been terminated in the last 12 months from the Department of Education?

Mr Cook: That is the information that is available to me as well, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, 842 teachers have resigned from the department. Is that higher than previous years or is that a standard yearly practice for teachers to resign from the Department of Education?

Mr Cook: I would not think it is, but I do not have that information available to hand. Resignations are for a whole range of reasons, whether it be taking up other jobs or moving countries. I had to resign from my last job to come to Queensland.

Ms GRACE: And I am so glad you did.

Mr Cook: And I had to resign from Queensland to go to Victoria. I have now resigned my job about four times. While I understand the question, the notion that resignation may mean that they are fleeing a particular department I think is not accurate and not based on data. It is about one per cent of our workforce. I have no reason to believe that that would be any different to what it might have been in the past. In fact, what we have found is that retention is increasing because people are concerned about living longer and they want to work longer to have the money they need for their retirement.

Mr BLEIJIE: I understand that occupational therapists who are employed by the Department of Education and work in our schools are paid less than if they were employed in the public allied health system. Is that correct, Director-General?

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think that is outrageous.

Mr Cook: That is the case in relation to their role position. That is in relation to the different levels of work that happens in terms of occupational therapists in relation to their leave arrangements, their holiday arrangements. I am aware that is an issue that is being raised through enterprise bargaining at the moment.

Mr BLEIJIE: Earlier in relation to Indigenous students and QCEs there were comments made by public servants in relation to outstanding, wonderful, miraculous achievements. I refer to page 8 of the SDS and the NAPLAN results. In the year 9 test, the proportion of students at or above the national minimum standard—the actual 2017-18 for all students—was writing 69.3 per cent and Indigenous students for writing 45.7 per cent. That is, less than half of Indigenous students are achieving the national minimum standard. I am concerned that we have had commentary here today about outstanding, wonderful, miraculous achievements in the Indigenous space and yet in year 9 Indigenous writing is at 45 per cent. To take you further, below that it sets out the proportion of Overall Position students who received an OP 1 to 15. The actual in 2017-18 is 78.6 per cent and the department's target is 76 per cent. Is it standard to target less in the next year—to have fewer people achieving an OP of 1 to 15 than the previous year, Director-General?

Mr Cook: Thank you for the question. There are a few comments to make in relation to the issues you have raised. As the minister said, Queensland is one of the most improved states in relation to NAPLAN, since NAPLAN was introduced in 2008. In terms of last year's result, we find that on average nine out of 10 students achieved at or above the national minimum standard in all year levels in reading and numeracy. Last year we got some of the highest scores we ever received in relation to NAPLAN. We outperformed the country in 10 out of 20 test areas across the national minimum standard as well. We were the only jurisdiction last year with improvement that was substantially above 2008 baseline data. We achieved this in year 3 reading, year 3 spelling, year 3 grammar and punctuation, and year 5 numeracy. As the minister indicated, Queensland Indigenous students saw some of the best results ever, where Queensland Indigenous students lead the country in all 20 areas in mean scale score and national minimum standard and in 15 out of 20 test areas the proportion of the upper two bands. In fact, it is true to say that Queensland Indigenous students are performing much better than many other Indigenous students across Australia. As the minister indicated, the gap in the proportion—

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, if that is the case—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you asked a question with quite some detail—

Mr BLEIJIE: I am asking for clarification—45.7 per cent of Indigenous students. That is less than half in terms of writing.

CHAIR: No. Thank you. I understood your question. It was excellent. The director-general is answering the question fulsomely. Director-General, are you still answering that question?

Mr Cook: I am.

CHAIR: Would you like to continue?

Mr Cook: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is a terrible result for Indigenous students.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you are being rude while I am trying to speak and to the director-general, who was still—

Mr BLEIJIE: Because I am offended by the fact that the department say how wonderful the results are.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, order! You are out of line. The director-general was being totally relevant. Please allow him to answer your question. Director-General?

Mr Cook: Thank you, Chair. The gap in the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at or above the national minimum standard has narrowed since testing began in reading and numeracy for all year levels in Queensland and for Queensland state schools.

I acknowledge the point you have made, which does not mean, of course, that we do not want to address it and continue to improve. There is significant work happening. As the minister indicated, our previous deputy director-general of state schools, Patrea Walton, had particularly done significant work in relation to these particular areas. The gap is decreasing and we are very proud of the fact that the gap is actually decreasing. In fact, not just that; we have a number of states and territories coming to us and seeking advice from the Queensland department as to what we are doing to support Indigenous students in Queensland schools. The Northern Territory department has come to us and recently we had Tasmania come to us to look at the range of work that we are undertaking in Queensland schools to continue to ensure that our data improves and that our teachers have the skills and the techniques they need to continue to support all of our students as well as our Indigenous students.

We will not rest on our laurels. We will certainly do everything in our power to work with communities. I have been to some great Indigenous communities. In fact, I was at Yarrabah on Friday and we are going up to Weipa in the next week or so. Those communities are doing amazing work. Yarrabah sat with me and showed me the work they are doing around embracing and maintaining Indigenous languages in their school. A very strong and important part of the work that we do is to include communities in the work we are doing in our schools as well.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Minister, STEM is very popular across my schools. The kids absolutely love it. They get very, very excited. Could you please outline how the government is supporting more Queensland state students to be able to explore STEM?

Ms GRACE: It is an exciting area. It is great what schools are doing. When I visit them and I see these children engaged in their STEM subject and they are working on various projects on their laptops or iPads, they hardly raise their heads because they are so engaged in the various programs. I am sure all members will witness that when they visit schools.

Our government is determined to ensure every Queensland student can participate in the STEM revolution. We are investing \$81.3 million in this budget over four years to develop high-impact strategies to improve student achievement and make STEM learning more exciting—even more exciting than it already is. These funds will flow straight to primary schools as grants. This direct funding to schools will enhance the work of our STEM champions located in each region. STEM champions support clusters of schools to plan for curriculum implementation, collaborate with universities, businesses and industry to enhance STEM teaching and learning programs, and promote participation in STEM learning pathways. We are also investing in STEM programs to get students excited and engaged, with over \$14 million in 2018-19.

Our Schools of the Future STEM strategy is preparing students to participate in a global economy by developing their STEM skills to solve problems and drive innovations, and we are getting results. Queensland year 12 STEM enrolments show a measurable improvement, unlike other states and territories. Senior STEM enrolments have increased by 2.3 per cent from 2015 to 2017. Queensland is also improving in years 3 to 9, with more students receiving a C level or higher in science or mathematics, up to 3.1 per cent from 2015 to 2017. We have established the Robotics for the Future lending library with 10 NAOs and six Pepper robots for loan to state schools, giving Queensland students hands-on access to cutting-edge technology.

We opened a school at Baringa near Caloundra. There was a lovely plaque, I might add. It is now the first STEM school of excellence. It is equipped with coding and robotics work areas, flexible learning spaces and an innovation hub. This is a \$36 million investment. When the Premier and I opened it, they actually had Pepper on stage, programmed by the STEM students, having an interaction with the principal welcoming the Premier and me. It was amazing to see. What is even more amazing is that this comes from Japan and they are amazed—the Premier has spoken to me about this—that we are using Pepper in our schools. The innovation comes from Japan in relation to Pepper, but none of their schools are using Pepper in their schools. They were astounded that we had this library of Peppers that are being programmed by students to interact with principals to welcome us in the opening of the first STEM school of excellence at Baringa State School—as I said, a \$36 million investment. It really is quite amazing to see this when you go around the state.

We are also encouraging girls to get into STEM through the STEM Girl Power Camp. This year I met 56 year 10 girls and 10 teachers who participated in that camp. They loved it. You can tell that that camp changed their view on what they want to do in life and it turned them around. They absolutely enjoyed it so much. Let me assure you that when I see the excitement and enthusiasm that they have for it, it is very infectious, especially when you see how much they have gained from that camp.

The Premier's Creating Queensland's Future Coding Competition encourages students' creativity and engagement in coding and provides an opportunity to showcase and celebrate their innovation. The Peter Doherty STEM awards, in their 15th year, celebrates the achievements of 16 of our brightest Queensland students.

We are also continuing to build the capability of STEM teachers. Since 2016 our teachers have completed more than 3,000 online professional development modules. Schools continue to fast-track the implementation of digital technologies, with over 350 state schools having access to specific professional development.

Schools continue to provide more opportunities and support for students in STEM. This is just a snapshot of the great work that teachers and school leaders do every day in delivering STEM education in Queensland schools. I know that students enjoy it. I know the parents love it when their children come home and talk about coding and robotics. I know that they will benefit from this, because not only will they have the STEM skills; they will also have the thinking skills that our system instils in students and that the world so much treasures from our students. It is great news and I thank the member for the question.

CHAIR: Minister, I think you are absolutely right: I know that this project is inciting kids' imaginations, because my sons and many other kids actually ask to do coding camps in school holidays. It is a big thing when kids do not want school holidays, they want more school. The committee is scheduled to conclude its examination of the Education portfolio area at 12.30. We have now reached that time. We will now commence our examination of the Industrial Relations portfolio area.

Ms GRACE: Before we leave Education, we have an answer on plaques. The costs are between \$300 and \$500. It depends on the size. Sometimes they are larger, sometimes they are smaller. The school decides where they want it. They make them up. It is determined on space, member for Kawana,

as to where it goes. The costs are about \$300 to \$500. Some of them can be easily changed. I have seen the plaques. Often they can be altered. Sometimes they may need to be redone. The cost, on average, is between \$300 and \$500.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order. The question was whether plaques had been prepared and then thrown out or dumped and then changed. I appreciate the cost of the plaques. The point of the question was how many plaques were produced and were any thrown out and redone. That was the question that was taken on notice.

CHAIR: I recollect the minister took on notice how much they cost.

Ms GRACE: We are happy to ask the four schools if they had to expend for any additional ones. I think the workload—I do not know how far back the member for Kawana wants to go.

Mr BLEIJIE: I said 'this year'. My question was about this year.

Ms GRACE: We will ask the four schools and get back to him in relation to that. That is no problem. The member for Kawana is well aware that our diaries are extremely busy. We do all we can to meet our diary requirements. It is often that the Premier cannot make it. In fact, she was ill on Monday when we went to open the Cochlear plant.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is fine. You have taken it on notice.

Ms GRACE: There was a plaque there. The Premier could not make it at the last minute.

Mr BLEIJIE: Let us move on.

Ms GRACE: They left her name on the plaque as if she had been there to open it. Sometimes they do not alter them, but for those four schools I am more than happy to find out. I think we have officially opened only three or maybe four—I am not even sure. I am happy to get back to the member about whether they had to spend any additional funds because of unforeseen circumstances, for which I take the opportunity to apologise to those schools, but this happens all the time.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. We will now commence our examination of the Industrial Relations portfolio area. I appreciate that there may be a change of the team. Minister, we have a few minutes if there are any 'thank yous' that you want to make or any opening comments that you want to make in regard to the Industrial Relations portfolio.

Ms GRACE: I was going to save the 'thank yous' for my closing remarks for the end of the session. I have some opening remarks in relation to the Industrial Relations portfolio.

CHAIR: I invite you to do that.

Ms GRACE: In the Industrial Relations portfolio, we will continue our positive agenda in support of fair, safe and productive workplaces in Queensland. Our labour hire licensing scheme, the first of its kind in the country, is up and running to help ensure that workers do not experience exploitation and to promote the integrity of the labour hire industry. We will not stand by and continue to see blatant wage theft via the systemic underpayment of wages, unpaid superannuation, unpaid penalty rates, unpaid work trials, sham contracting and the list goes on.

We have moved to establish a parliamentary inquiry into the scourge of wage theft. I know that the committee is looking into that and we await your report in November. The implementations of recommendations from our best practice review into workplace health and safety in Queensland will continue to ensure Queensland has a robust work health and safety legislative and regulatory framework. Regardless of the jurisdiction, we will also continue to advocate on behalf of all workers and employers in Queensland. If the federal government or the federal fair work system is not operating in the best interests of Queenslanders, we will continue making that case loud and clear in every available forum, such as the cutting of penalty rates. I thank you for the opportunity to make this Industrial Relations opening statement. As always, I am happy to take questions.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. I warmly welcome the officers of the department who have joined us for the next hour. Welcome to you all. Thank you for joining your hearing.

Ms GRACE: Chair, I have been joined by Deputy Director-General Simon Blackwood.

CHAIR: I move to the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: I seek leave to table documents. I have copies for everybody.

CHAIR: Thank you, we will look at those and make sure that everyone, including the minister, has a copy. Should we be concerned about the tabling of these documents?

Mr BLEIJIE: No, it is an RTI public document.

CHAIR: There is some unparliamentary language on the front of this document.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, it is a document that has been published on what I understand is the department's website.

CHAIR: As is?

Mr BLEIJIE: As is, because that is the document that we received through RTI.

CHAIR: We will have to further redact that unparliamentary language, as you would expect. Otherwise, you have advised the committee there is no reason why this should not be appropriate to table. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, I refer to the document that I have tabled, which was released under the RTI to the opposition office. It records each occasion when a departmental official inspector was abused by a trade union official, organiser or delegate. Director-General, in the last year how many complaints have you received from staff within your department in relation to claims of bullying or intimidation from trade union officials?

Mr Cook: My understanding—and I will ask Dr Blackwood to support me, if need be—is that there have been no workers compensation claims lodged by inspectors in relation to abuse by union officials or other union representatives.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am sorry: I did not ask about workers compensation claims. I asked: in the last year how many complaints has the department received from staff in relation to claims of bullying or intimidation from trade union officials—not WorkCover claims; complaints?

Mr Cook: I will ask Dr Blackwood to follow up that question.

Dr Blackwood: I can assist. We have had some complaints from inspectors about interactions in workplaces. As a consequence of that, recently we have our health and wellbeing committee and at the moment we are finalising a work-related violence policy, guidelines and fact sheet. This has been an ongoing issue for us for many years. We do get the odd complaint where inspectors, in their interactions in workplaces, whether they are interacting with employers and other industrial organisations, will receive some abuse from time to time. On a number of occasions, I have written to organisations advising that we need to ensure that there is respect for our inspectors.

As a consequence of that, as I say, we have just developed some policies. At the moment, we are also undertaking to ensure that we have a logging of any incidents where inspectors may have received some aggression towards them. We did have a system previously. We get complaints from our inspectors from time to time, but we have recognised, as a result of discussions with our workforce, that we need to put in place a formal process, so if people are making complaints within our organisation that they are acted on by our management. We did not have a formal process, which is what we have moved to as a consequence of discussions through our health and safety committee.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, how many complaints have been received?

Mr Cook: I do not have that information available.

Mr BLEIJIE: These are senior inspectorate officers in the department. I am asking: how many have complained about union intimidation or bullying on sites that your inspectors go out to? I am sure that somewhere the department knows how many complaints have been received.

Mr Cook: As I indicated, I do not have the information available to me at the moment.

Mr BLEIJIE: How long will it take for the department to find out?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, under normal processes if you want it taken on notice you need to ask the minister, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is that something, through the minister, that you can take on notice, Director-General, and come back to this committee?

CHAIR: You ask the minister, not the director-general.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am asking the director-general whether the information will be able to be ascertained—

CHAIR: No, you are asking how long it would take to ascertain, so you are asking them to take it on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, will you take it on notice for the director-general to come back to this committee with the number of complaints lodged from inspectors?

Ms GRACE: I think that the deputy director-general outlined that they are working towards a formal process of complaint. Sometimes these issues can be raised when they come back in a general conversation about what may or may not have been said on a site. It may not be a formal complaint. I am not sure exactly what the—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: I am listening to her explanation as to whether she is—

Ms GRACE: With all due respect—

Mr BLEIJIE: I have a point of order.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair?

CHAIR: Yes, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: The Speaker has ruled with respect to the minister wanting to answer questions. The point the minister can take on notice is, 'Yes, I will take it on notice' or 'No, I will not'. It does not afford the minister an opportunity to debate the point.

CHAIR: Thank you for your clarification and assistance, member for Kawana, but the minister was providing information that I, as chair, am interested in and that is relevant to whether or not she will take it on notice. I can hear from whomever I need to hear from. It is not your question; I get that. However, I am trying to ascertain whether it is being taken on notice and if it is I need to make a note of that. Minister?

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Chair. I think it is important that we clarify what I am taking on notice. It is a little unclear exactly what I am taking on notice. Is it formal complaints in writing? Are these complaints in general? Over what period? If the member for Kawana has not stipulated that, no—

Mr BLEIJIE: I have.

Ms GRACE:—I will not take the question on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, for the third time—

CHAIR: It is okay; it is all calm. Thank you, Minister. Member for Kawana, is it the number of complaints?

Mr BLEIJIE: This is the question, asked for the third time: in the last year how many complaints have been received from staff in the inspectorate in relation to claims of bullying or intimidation from trade union officials with staff in your department? It is pretty straightforward.

CHAIR: No commentary, thank you. Minister?

Ms GRACE: No, I do not know whether he is talking formal, written, whatever. I believe that that is a workload that—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, for the purposes of clarification, is it all complaints?

Mr BLEIJIE: Any complaints.

Ms GRACE: The deputy director-general responded to this, in as much as they are working through this now and they are putting a process in place. No, I will not take that on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will move on, but I note for the record that the minister will refuse. These are her staff in the public service.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, she is—

Mr BLEIJIE: You are protecting the unions ahead of your staff.

Ms Grace interjected.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana and minister, there was a question put to the minister as to whether she will take it on notice; she has answered that question. Do you have further questions?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I do.

Ms GRACE: Ask me a question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, have any of your inspectors been phoned by union officials and asked to attend job sites?

Mr Cook: I am sorry, can you ask the question again?

Mr BLEIJIE: Have any of your inspectors been phoned by union officials and asked to attend job sites in Queensland?

Mr Cook: Again, I am not aware of that situation, but I will ask Dr Blackwood if he wants to respond.

Dr Blackwood: We get phoned by industry, unions, workers. We receive about 8,000 to 9,000 complaints a year. Some of them are in terms of our complaints policy for workers who might have a complaint about health and safety. You can make an anonymous complaint. We receive a wide range of complaints. We do receive calls from union organisers. They are one of the groups that we would expect to receive complaints from about a particular workplace. We respond to those, as we respond to all complaints that we receive from the public, employers or anybody else. Yes, to answer your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, are unions referred to as priority clients in your department?

Mr Cook: Again, not that I am aware of.

Dr Blackwood: I am not aware of that. In terms of us dealing with the key organisations, we have a tripartite system where obviously union organisations and employer organisations are key representatives on a number of the industry sector standing committees that are established under the Workplace Health and Safety Act. There might be some consideration that those sorts of industrial organisations have significant representation but there is no discussion of them being a priority organisation.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, what processes has your department put in place? In terms of the RTI document I tabled before, these are public servants in your department who have put in complaints. They are being called 'effing useless' by union officials. There are more complaints: '... the following day after A/Lead Inspector ... was verbally abused by a ... Organiser...'; '... swearing and abusing ... in front of approximately eight staff'

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, can you please put your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: It then says—

He turned to Inspector ... pointing his finger at ... and said words to the effect of I am putting you on notice for letting this happen. This was a threatening and intimidating experience.

How is it that the department is not able—and yet we are able through the opposition office—to get RTI documents of public servants complaining about union bullying and threatening behaviour? How is it that the department is not able to clarify today the number of complaints received from your very own hardworking public servants in the inspectorate?

Mr Cook: I am not aware of us saying that we were not able to clarify it. I do not have the information available to me right now. In relation to the issues that you are raising, I know that we are working on particular guidelines in relation to aggression and violence. We are working with a range of different groups—employer groups and union groups—in relation to that. Dr Blackwood might want to provide some information in relation to that.

Dr Blackwood: As I advised before, we established a health and safety occupational violence committee recently to look at these issues. We have been developing a prevention and management guideline in relation to work related violence and aggression. As a result of our interactions over many years we have recognised that there has been an increase in concern expressed by some of our inspectors in the last few years. I think that is not just related to our inspectors. Many Public Service workers who are on the front line are experiencing this.

We have had discussions with other agencies about the sorts of policies we would want to have in place. As I said before, one of those will be ensuring that our officers are able to report incidents of work related violence to a manager or supervisor. People had been doing that previously, but we acknowledged that it had not been in a systematic way. They would raise incidents where they might have had a difficulty in a workplace. If they felt they needed more assistance we undertook action to ensure they got that. For instance, if there were a need for them to have support from the police, which we did with one organisation employed a few months ago, we would get that support for them.

We recognise that we need to provide a lot of different support to our people. That is why we are setting out these sorts of policies. We have talked to the Together Queensland union. Their representatives are involved in that work. At the moment we are going through final consultation with our workforce and Together Queensland around the statement of principles and the policies that will be put in place.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to health and safety representatives at workplaces throughout Queensland, I understand that there is a five-day training period and that RTOs and unions provide the mandated training. Has the department recently changed or is the department about to change who can provide training to the now mandatory health and safety representatives at workplaces throughout Queensland? As I said before, RTOs could provide that. I understand that now unions will be providing that. I am very concerned about a monopoly of unions providing training to health and safety representatives. What is the policy and has it changed?

Mr Cook: I do not think there is a notion of a monopoly that I am aware of, that is for sure. I will ask Dr Blackwood to provide some additional information.

Dr Blackwood: The best practice review that came down last year had a number recommendations in relation to health and safety representatives. Those were recommendations 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 and 56. The government committed to those recommendations. In particular, one significant one was that there be mandatory health and safety training within six months of being elected to the role. That commenced in legislation on 1 July this year.

As a consequence of that, we recognised that there was a need to ensure there was sufficient health and safety representative support and training. The delivery of that health and safety representative training has not been finalised to date. It has been a voluntary process for employers. As a consequence of the legislative changes on 1 July, we recognise that there will have to be a lot more training for health and safety representatives. It has not occurred to that extent over the last several years. We are looking at modes of delivery for health and safety representative training.

Mr BLEIJIE: Will they still be able to do it as they do now?

Dr Blackwood: We are looking at how best it can be done. That has not been finalised. Up until 2012 unions did more of that. It is recognised that the health and safety representative training is very different to the training of health and safety officers and other people who are accredited. As the best practice report recognised, health and safety representatives have a special place as representatives of workers. That is why there has been a recognition that unions should play a role in that training. That has not been finalised as yet.

Mr Cook: I can clarify a question that was asked earlier about whether we get calls from unions in relation to workplace incidents. The information that has just been provided to me is that, out of 25,611 proactive and reactive Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspector visits over the past 12 months, 210 were from unions or union calls.

CHAIR: With reference to page 10 of the SDS in relation to providing advice and standards to keep Queenslanders safe, can you please update the committee on the introduction of new regulations to improve safety in the amusement ride and theme park industries?

Ms GRACE: This is a very important issue. Public safety is paramount. That is why we are taking decisive action to further improve safety of theme parks and amusement rides and to make sure maintenance, inspections, training and incident reporting are world's best practice.

Who could ever forget the images from the tragic events at Dreamworld in 2016 which shocked the world? We are committed to providing the highest safety standards and public confidence in rides at carnivals and school fairs and in our major theme parks. I am pleased to announce that the Palaszczuk government is moving forward with improving safety in the amusement ride and theme park industry with the Work Health and Safety (Amusement Devices Public Safety) Amendment Regulation 2018.

The proposed regulations will set world-class best practice safety standards for the theme park and amusement ride industry. The proposed regulatory changes relate to four key areas: the mandatory requirement for ride operators to be fully trained and competent; mandatory major inspections of all amusement rides; major theme parks to develop and implement a comprehensive and integrated public safety system; and additional record keeping through detailed logbooks. Every major ride will have that available and the extent of that will depend on their complexity.

A draft of the proposed regulatory changes has been released today to the industry stakeholders working group as part of the ongoing consultation. The changes are expected to be in place by the end of the year or as soon as practically possible. Some components of it we have been discussing with the industry since the tragedy occurred. These are some of the major changes that have been agreed on.

We understand that there is a coroner's inquest happening at the moment. That has not been finalised. We will be ensuring that the coroner is involved in the consultation around these regulatory changes as one of the stakeholders. If there are any further recommendations that come from the inquest we will ensure that we incorporate those into the regulations. These regulatory changes are seen as must-haves to be implemented as soon as possible. We will be doing that.

We want to see mandatory training and competency requirements. That means that every amusement and theme park ride will be operated by a person who has been properly trained and assessed. Structured training will include a core set of competencies for rides. Due to the unique nature of each ride, training will also need to be based on the manufacturer's specifications. For example, the requirements for operating a merry-go-round might be different to the requirements for operating a much more complex ride. There may be different safety requirements as part of the manufacturer's specifications.

We would like to see the development of a code that sets out the details as to how that training is to come about. Trained operators may be identified so that when a parent puts their child on a ride they know that the person operating the ride is a trained operator. There could be something hanging from their necks or something they are wearing that could identify them. They are the kinds of things that we will be talking to the industry about. We want to restore public confidence.

The mandatory major inspection will be a comprehensive inspection. It might involve stripping down the ride or looking at what new technologies have come in. My understanding from the briefing is that, rather than a ride staying in situ for 30 years, the regulations will require a thorough inspection. The industry is quite happy to see that happen. They understand that technologies can change in 10 years. There may be technologies that they can implement, or it may be that it needs a good old grease and oil change or whatever.

The proposed regulations will also require Queensland theme parks to identify in their safety plans all hazards and potential incidents that may occur. They will need to outline safety assessments for each ride, have detailed risk assessments for each ride, outline the training and competency required for each ride and so on. The ride logbooks will be one of the features. They will name the trained ride operators and have details of the training they have completed. There will be details about the major inspections of the ride. Any statutory notices issued by the department will all be contained there. We will know the history of the ride.

I also discussed with my officers recently whether the department should issue them with a certificate of currency or something like you see in lifts. That could be something that is displayed so that when patrons are boarding a ride they know that the ride has been thoroughly inspected and has a certificate of currency. We want to discuss this with the industry to see what they say. This may be in a code. As people are lining up they might see, as you do when you go into a lift, a certificate a currency that the ride has been audited. It will give people additional confidence. This could possibly be in a code of practice that could hang off the regulations. As you know, regulations are generally very prescriptive. Codes of practice are more about telling you how to do something. You can do better than what is contained in a code. You can identify other ways to improve on what is contained in the code. That is the minimum standard that is to be adhered to.

What is the most effective way to deliver this training? You do not want someone to do a five-day training course to operate a merry-go-round, for example. You may want someone to do very comprehensive training if they are operating a much more detailed ride that has various mechanisms that people can activate depending on what occurs with the ride.

These considerations may result in the development of a very comprehensive code of practice which complements the new regulations. Importantly, the coroner will be fully consulted. They are keen to have a look at some of the industry consultation we have had and some of the ideas that we have come up with. If there are recommendations that come through when the inquest is finalised, we will look at incorporating those in the very near future if they are not incorporated into this regulation.

I would like to thank the working group, including the Australian Amusement, Leisure and Recreation Association, the Australian Workers' Union and Engineers Australia, that has worked closely with the Office of Industrial Relations on the initiative to make the industry safer, including the development of the proposed regulation. I look forward to hearing about the results so we can get these regulations up and running as soon as possible with very good consultation not only with the coroner but also with stakeholders.

Mr SAUNDERS: In relation to page 2 of the Department of Education's SDS and its reference to creating safe, fair and productive workplaces and communities, can the minister update the committee on the government's new labour hire licensing scheme in place?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member and I know that this is very dear to his heart. The Palaszczuk government is proud to be the first jurisdiction in Australia to have introduced mandatory labour hire licensing laws. With these new laws we are finally regulating a sector that has been left unregulated for far too long. Until now you have needed a licence to sell a car, you have needed a licence to sell a house but you have not needed a licence to sell labour.

The new laws—as I said, the first of their kind in the country—respond to years of evidence of serious exploitation of workers in the labour hire industry, ranging from cases of systemic wage theft to sexual harassment and systemic tax and entitlements avoidance. We have received this evidence and we have acted on it. The laws and the new scheme commenced on 16 April 2018 with existing labour hire providers having a 60-day period to apply for a licence.

I can advise the committee that, as at 25 July 2018, a total of 2,889 labour hire provider licence applications have been received which is way above expectations. I think we were anticipating around 2,000. I know Mr Blackwood is nodding. We have received 889 more than expected, of which 1,912 have been fully vetted and approved. As you know, if they applied before the closing date they are able to operate until we work through those licences. As I said, there are nearly 2,900 applications received. It shows that the application process has been smooth and simple for labour hire providers who are doing the right thing. One provider who recently lodged an application said in their feedback to the Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit—as you know, we have established a separate unit—'The application process is straightforward and user-friendly with all the information available online.'

At the same time, we are taking a very thorough approach to ensure that any issues are being picked up and any providers not doing the right thing are weeded out. We have a 14-person strong Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit who have been working very assiduously. Inspectors from the unit have so far conducted over 150 audits of applications identified as high risk and another 50 coming up. The unit was in Bundaberg last week and has been on the ground again this week in the Bowen region.

Multiple compliance issues have been identified during the audits including poor records about employee, tax and super obligations and applicants with a record of multiple failed businesses, raising concerns about potential phoenix activity. Complaints about more than 50 labour hire providers have also been received by the unit. These include very serious allegations of mistreatment including systemic underpayment of wages, substandard accommodation, intimidation and assault. All complaints issues are referred to responsible agencies where appropriate and the compliance unit conducts follow-up audits. The scheme is supported by tough penalties, and we make no apologies for taking a tough stance against dodgy operators or unlicensed operators who do not do the right thing by the workers.

These are good laws. They are good for labour hire providers and other employers who are doing the right thing. We want to lift the standard and integrity of the industry. These laws are good for workers. As Michael Sippel, President of the Lockyer Valley Growers, said in the *Queensland Times* on 15 June, 'The new laws are long overdue for farmers who can now have the confidence that they are using a reputable licensed labour hire company.'

I welcome the commitment of the federal opposition who have committed to introducing a national system. I believe that it should be a national system. I look forward to working with them in relation to the details of that. We are working very proactively and very cooperatively with other federal jurisdictions such as Border Force and the Fair Work Ombudsman, who are very supportive of these laws. It is assisting them greatly in uncovering areas of exploitation, harassment and many of the complaints that they are receiving. We are working very complementary with them. I think an important part of this is that the two levels of government are working cooperatively. I would not mind Mr Blackwood adding a little bit on that cooperation and how that has been working.

Dr Blackwood: We have been working with the Commonwealth and other state agencies—as the minister said, with the Australian Border Force, the Fair Work Ombudsman, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and our labour hire, WorkCover Queensland and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. There has been extensive sharing of information. A number of those agencies have been thankful for the information that has come through the registration of labour hire, particularly where there are concerns about workers being exploited in particular industries. It has been a very valuable exercise for both ourselves and other agencies at a Commonwealth and state level.

Ms GRACE: I take this opportunity to thank the department and all of the workers and organisations who are working together on this. It has been a really great effort. I think it has been rolled out very well. I am continually getting very positive feedback on how it is working. Those who are doing the right thing are very supportive of the government's position in relation to the licensing of labour hire operators.

Mr SAUNDERS: In relation to page 2 of the Department of Education's SDS and its reference to supporting fair and productive workplaces and communities, can the minister advise the committee on how the government is responding to the scourge of wage theft?

Ms GRACE: When workers head off to work each day they expect to receive a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and to return safely home to their loved ones. For too many workers, unfortunately, this is not the reality, whether it be systemic underpayment; unpaid super; unpaid penalty rates, as I mentioned before; unauthorised deductions—

Mrs STUCKEY: I raise a point of order, Chair. I understand that this is an inquiry before this committee. Should we be discussing it here?

CHAIR: Sorry, I was just seeking some clarification. It is an inquiry before the committee but there are also funds indicated in the budget papers for this. As long as the minister does not stray into the topic of the inquiry—which she could not because she is not privy to what we have been talking about or looking at to this day—

Ms GRACE: No, I have no idea.

CHAIR:—I think it is safe that she will not cause an issue with the anticipation rule.

Ms GRACE: Not at all. We are concerned about the impact on workers in Queensland in relation to this. We have seen some terrible, high-profile cases often with big multinationals—7-Eleven, Domino's, Pizza Hut, Caltex—where almost their business case is about systemic underpayment of wages. This is sadly probably only the tip of the iceberg. A recent audit, for example, of hospitality businesses in my own electorate in Fortitude Valley in Queensland found that 60 per cent—I say that again: 60 per cent—have breached workplace laws, and the most common breach was systemic underpayment of wages.

We are not going to stand by and let this happen. That is why we moved to establish the parliamentary committee. I thank the work of the committee, chaired by you, member for Nudgee. We know that we cannot expect action from the federal government in this area, but we want to know why, with their absence in this space, they were able to find additional money for the Registered Organisations Commission under the new registered organisations act to provide them with additional resources. Interestingly, the Fair Work Ombudsman received no additional funds whatsoever, yet they could find \$70 million to conduct a trade union royal commission, which ended up with the conviction of one accountant, which was a known case, over two years. There was no additional funding for the FWO to undertake the work that they need to do from the complaints that are coming.

We want to get to the bottom of this. As we know, there are many parts to this. It is often in unpaid entitlements such as super, WorkCover—all of those types of things. It is also in relation to the arrangements under which people are employed where they are identified under a sham arrangement when really they are a worker—a rose is a rose by any other name.

We look forward to the work of the committee. We look forward to the findings. As I said, we will not stand by. We want to know exactly what the impact is so that we can raise these issues with the federal government to ensure that the business case is done around this, that some of the findings can be addressed and that the scourge of systemic underpayments can be eliminated as far as reasonably possible.

CHAIR: We move now to the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr DAMETTO: My question is to the minister. I have been approached by a number of small business owners concerned about the current WorkCover claims policy. I believe in principle that the claims policy has good intentions and delivers help to injured workers when they most need it. Unfortunately, this process leaves WorkCover open to fraudulent claims. Can the minister please advise what budget allocation has been made available to investigate fraudulent claims made by employees that cost employees and WorkCover unnecessarily?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. I say at the outset that we have one of the best workers compensation systems in Australia.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thanks to the LNP.

Ms GRACE: No thanks to the member for Kawana. It is a great scheme which provides employers the lowest premiums in the country. There is also a discount in place at the moment which has provided them millions of dollars in savings. We are always making sure that it is very efficient and very effective and that it is not at the cost of injured workers such as putting in thresholds for common law activities. Under the previous LNP government, workers who suffer from coal workers' pneumoconiosis would not have been able to get common law benefits. That was a change that was brought in by the LNP that we removed.

The Office of Industrial Relations investigates and manages the prosecution of certain offences. They include defrauding of the WorkCover insurer. That is providing false information to an insurer or a medical provider, employer failure to insure or under insure and inappropriate use of workers compensation information by employers. In the previous year, 11 prosecutions had commenced. Nine prosecutions have been successfully finalised. We recovered \$104,000 in restitution for insurers—that means that these might have been fraudulent claims that were able to get back—\$68,000 was awarded to the regulator in legal costs and \$7,000 was ordered to be paid by defendants in fines.

We have a Q-Comp regulatory budget and maybe Mr Blackwood would like to find out exactly what that amount is. The issue of fraud is embedded in the regulator's requirements of the job that they do. Under that budget, depending on the numbers that come in, they will undertake whatever work is required in relation to fraudulent claims, reviewing claims, looking at those issues. If matters are referred to them, as the regulator, they will do that. Mr Blackwood may have figures on what that funding is. We do not know how big the job is going to be. It could be this big in 2017 and it could be something else in 2018. They are well funded to take on the roles that they are required to undertake.

Dr Blackwood: The minister has indicated the numbers of matters where we have prosecuted. People can make complaints, both the insurers and also workers. We have four legal officers who work on that. We find that we are able to deal with the case load that we are receiving. As the minister said, in relation to any of those matters, we as the regulator under the act take action in the courts in relation to the defrauding of workers compensation insurers or providing false information or employer failure to insure or under insure.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, you will be aware of the federal royal commission into union corruption. It was noted in that report—

The very existence of a Royal Commission tends to cause a temporary reduction in misconduct. But it is clear that in many parts of the world constituted by Australian trade union officials, there is room for louts, thugs, bullies, thieves, perjurers, those who threaten violence, errant fiduciaries and organisers of boycotts.

Ms GRACE: Sorry, we do not know what you are saying. Can you slow down?

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, how many recommendations from the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption have been implemented by the state government given that around eight recommendations mention state government amendments?

CHAIR: What relevance has that question got to our Appropriation Bill that we are currently talking about?

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, we are talking about the Industrial Relations portfolio and this department. We have a royal commission recommending this department undertake—

CHAIR: That is perfect, but I want to know exactly in the SDS where the direct relevance is to the Queensland budget that we are currently discussing today.

Mr BLEIJIE: Page 10 of the SDS in relation to participation in the national workplace relations system.

CHAIR: Which does not mention the royal commission. It has nothing to do with us.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect, this very department investigates and passes on complaints of union corruption in Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. My ruling is that it is not directly relevant to the Queensland Appropriation Bill before us.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, it is a protection racket for the union movement in Queensland.

CHAIR: No, no. Member for Kawana—

Ms GRACE: If you have any evidence, go to the CCC.

CHAIR: Minister—

Mr BLEIJIE: You are providing union protection—

Ms GRACE: If you have any evidence, go to the CCC.

CHAIR: Order! Member for Kawana, that is out of line. I do not appreciate your comment.

Ms GRACE: That is your challenge.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will take it as a no.

Ms GRACE: Take the challenge.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will take it as a no.

CHAIR: Minister and member for Kawana!

Ms GRACE: If you have any evidence, go to the CCC.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I do not appreciate your reflection, which is a reflection of me as chair and how I am chairing this hearing. I ask that you withdraw your comment in regard to any protection occurring here, because it is not.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mrs STUCKEY: I raise a point of order. I understand on Tuesday the Clerk clarified that timetables do not prevent members from asking questions to ministers about their entire portfolio.

CHAIR: That is a fair point of order, but it is not relevant to what we are talking about here. My issue with that question was not whether it was Education or Industrial Relations; it was whether it was relevant to the Queensland Appropriation Bill before us. That point of order is not relevant.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, do you have a point of order?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes.

CHAIR: If it is a comment, I do not want to hear it.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, it is a point of order. Unions are industrial registered organisations—

CHAIR: No, I—

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Chair, you are asking where in the SDS—

CHAIR: Sorry, you are right: I will hear your point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Unions are industrial registered organisations in Queensland. As such, they come under the auspice of the Minister for Industrial Relations.

CHAIR: I understand but it is still not relevant to your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: When there is a trade union royal commission into corruption I am entitled to ask questions—

CHAIR: That was carried out by what level of government, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: I get where we are going, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Could you please ask a question relevant to the state government?

Mr BLEIJIE: I asked the question and it was not answered so I will move on.

CHAIR: No, because it was out of order. Do you have a question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, we have companies that are self-insured in Queensland that pay annual levies to the regulator. Can you confirm that the levy payable between 2013 and 2017 was 2.29 per cent?

Mr Cook: I thank the member for the question. I will get the information. Dr Blackwood, would you like to answer that one?

Dr Blackwood: Yes, we can confirm that that is the case.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, is it the case now, in 2017-18, that that levy is now 3.245 per cent? That is a 41.5 per cent increase in the levy in the short space of two years. Why is that?

Mr Cook: Thank you for the question. I think the issue that we are talking about is something that various companies and organisations were aware of, where we used funds to support a limited increase over the last several years. About \$7.5 million in reserves existed at the time when the former Workers' Compensation Regulator was merged with the Office of Industrial Relations. A strategy was put in place in consultation with self-insurers and WorkCover—it is important to be clear that this was done in consultation with self-insurers—to apportion these funds between the insurers. Approximately

\$2.5 million was returned to WorkCover in 2016-17 as a lump sum. No growth was applied to their 2014-15 levy contribution which was maintained at the 2013-14 amount—again in consultation with self-insurers.

Self-insurers were advised that the apportionment of the reserves allocated to them could not be returned as a lump sum; however, they would be used to reduce any increase in the levy rate until such time as the reserves were depleted. The approach of smoothing the levy rate by exhausting the reserves was outlined in consultation with the Association of Self Insured Employers of Queensland, ASIEQ. Approximately \$5 million in discounts has been applied to the self-insurer levy over the past three years. The discount amount applied each year was \$880,000, \$2.37 million and \$1.74 million for 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 respectively. I will also ask Dr Blackwood to provide some additional information.

Dr Blackwood: That was as part of the increased cost. The reserves have been exhausted over the last three years. That was a consequence of a decision by government in 2013 to merge Q-Comp into the Office of Industrial Relations. At that time they did have a large retained earnings so the decision was made, in discussions over the last three years with the self-insurers, to run down those reserves and effectively give them a discount.

The only other increase that we have seen as a consequence which is ongoing is the increase in the Queensland Ambulance Service grant. The Ambulance Service is run on the basis of the number of people they transport to hospitals from workplaces. Those are the two elements that have fed into the increase in the self-insurer grant this year.

We also recognise that, in terms of the self-insurer grant increases, the levy paid by individual self-insurers will vary. There are two self-insurers who have had a decrease in their levy for 2018-19. Whilst there is a general increase in the levy, it is also based on the performance of individual self-insurers. If they are performing well in terms of their claims management as well as their health and safety performance, they can go against the trend and have a reduction in their levy rate.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we will now move to the member for Cairns for a question.

Mr HEALY: I refer to page 10 of the Department of Education's SDS and the delivery of workers compensation services. Can the minister outline the WorkCover premium set for 2018-19 and the money saved by employers last financial year in relation to discounts on premiums?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a good question. The Palaszczuk government is committed to providing a fair workers compensation system for all Queensland workers and employers. WorkCover continues to be Australia's leading scheme. This has been achieved without making cuts or reducing benefits to injured workers. Let us not forget that the former LNP government made cuts to the workers compensation system including taking away the rights to access common law through imposing a threshold. This left around 60 per cent of claimants without access to legal rights and was even against the recommendation of their own parliamentary committee.

This would have meant that all of the claims for common law benefits by those workers currently suffering from coal workers' pneumoconiosis under their threshold would have not been approved. They would have been unable to access those benefits with the level agreed to by the member for Kawana. I am hearing him under his breath use language that I believe is not parliamentary and I ask that the member refrain from doing that.

I am pleased to advise that the WorkCover premium remains at the same low rate as last year, at \$1.20 per \$100 of wages paid. This is the lowest average premium rate of any state or territory. I am also pleased to advise that Queensland employers saved a total of \$61.62 million from discounts on premiums which have increased from three per cent to five per cent. That represents a figure of \$46.5 million through the early payment discount which has increased by that amount. The benefit directly has been \$46.5 million. As you know, last year we froze premiums on apprentices and this has saved that industry \$15.12 million. Altogether around \$62 million has benefited employers.

It is expected that, with the continuation of that in place, similar savings will be achieved for Queensland employers in this financial year. This gives Queensland businesses a competitive edge over their interstate rival. The apprentice premium discount provides a significant incentive for Queensland businesses to take on apprentices. Importantly, any claims made by an apprentice will still be included in the employer's claims experience, which maintains the incentive to provide a safe workplace.

WorkCover has also increased the early payments for those discounts, and they will continue until 16 September. Employers also have the option of paying their annual premiums by monthly instalments without incurring any additional costs. This is good news for more than 159,000 Queensland employers, and it makes WorkCover Queensland the best workers compensation provider in Australia.

I am pleased to advise that WorkCover Queensland is in a sound financial position. Although audited end-of-year figures are not yet available, I am assured that WorkCover will maintain full funding with a strong equity position and funding ratio. I believe they will record a healthy surplus for 2017-18. An operating surplus means WorkCover has the ability to pay for injured workers and to ensure that some of those benefits flow on to employers.

We have now had a five-year review of WorkCover, and we will be talking to them about how we implement some of those recommendations. We are discussing with stakeholders when the government is preparing its response. It is in a very good state and it has not been at the cost of injured workers being denied entitlements and benefits, which is what occurred under an LNP government.

CHAIR: Member for Cairns, we have time for one more question before allowing the minister an opportunity to provide some closing remarks.

Mr HEALY: Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS and its reference to supporting fair and productive workplaces and communities. Can the minister advise the committee of the government's position on domestic and family violence leave and any alternative approaches?

Ms GRACE: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is an important one because, even though the Queensland government acted as one of the first employers to include paid domestic violence leave for our workforce, unfortunately, other workers do not have this. Some decisions have been made in relation to unpaid leave, but clearly the recommendation in the *Not now, not ever* report by Dame Quentin Bryce advocated for paid leave for people in very traumatic domestic violence situations. I understand the federal government wants to implement changes in relation to unpaid leave of five days. We will not stop advocating that it should be paid leave for these workers.

Domestic violence is an industrial issue. You cannot work when you are faced with terrible traumatic situations—when your children are threatened; when you are threatened. They are in a very difficult position. We want to strongly advocate to the federal government that they go further and implement paid leave for domestic violence as per Dame Quentin Bryce's wonderful report into this area which is making huge strides in protecting women from domestic violence and anyone who faces the scourge of domestic violence.

I have written to my counterpart, Minister Laundy, ahead of that consultation. They are consulting with my department about changes to the act today to propose that the federal government instead amend the act to provide for a paid leave entitlement of 10 days. I think that is something that should be done. With leave of the committee, can I table the letter that I have sent to the federal minister? I understand that the Commonwealth is trying to argue that this is not needed. This is a national issue. I urge them to do it. Take Queensland's lead once again, do the right thing and implement the recommendations from the experts. I look forward to paid leave.

CHAIR: Is leave granted to table this letter? There being no objection, leave is so granted. Minister, there are about two to three minutes remaining. Did you want to provide any additional information or make a closing statement?

Ms GRACE: Not at this stage. All I can say at this stage is that we have opened two schools and two of them are still to be opened. One opened with no change, and one was opened and they needed to change the plaque. We are confirming exactly what the cost was, if any, in changing that plaque. We are not sure about whether the cost was for the whole plaque or whether it was the change to the plaque. I can let the member for Kawana know there was one plaque that was changed. We will give him the cost of any additional charges incurred in doing that due to unforeseen circumstances.

CHAIR: The committee will now conclude its questioning in relation to the industrial portfolio area. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of the Minister for Industrial Relations has expired. I would like to provide the minister with an opportunity to thank anyone or make any final comments.

Ms GRACE: There are sometimes very strong allegations made by the opposition. Once again, if they have any information in regard to the outrageous claims that they make, the appropriate place is to put that in front of the CCC. My closing remark is that that should be done without hesitation.

Could I please place on record my sincere thanks to staff within the Department of Education and the Office of Industrial Relations for their assistance in preparing for today. I know it has been a tremendous amount of work. Education is an enormous portfolio, to say the very least, with a very

healthy \$13 billion budget. We look forward to delivering the best education for all of our students. Industrial relations of course are part of that now under the machinery-of-government changes. I am really grateful for the hard work they have done, and I thank them for that.

I would also like to thank my ministerial staff for their constant and loyal support—my chief of staff, Sharon, in particular, and all my officers. I want to thank the chair and members of the committee and the parliamentary staff who do such a great job. It is always a privilege to take part in the estimates process, and I honestly thank the members for their questions today and the manner in which this estimates process was conducted. Thank you all very much and thank you for all your hard work. I look forward to seeing you very soon.

CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank you and your departmental and statutory officers for your attendance today. I also thank the visiting members—the members for Kawana, Noosa and Maiwar—who contributed to this hearing. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 2 pm with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development.

Proceedings suspended from 1.30 pm to 2.00 pm.

**ESTIMATES—EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS
COMMITTEE—EMPLOYMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND TRAINING AND SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT****In Attendance**

Hon. SM Fentiman, Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development

Ms C Kennedy, Chief of Staff


Department of Employment , Small Business and Training

Ms M Curtis, Director-General

Mr B Lang, Head of Corporate and Chief Financial Officer

TAFE Queensland

Ms M Campbell, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2018 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio area of Employment and Small Business until 3.30 pm and the portfolio area of Training and Skills Development, including TAFE Queensland, from 3.45 pm to 5 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm. The visiting members present are Ms Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochy, and Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa. I again welcome the deputy chair and the standing committee members.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide this afternoon's proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored in a respectful and fulsome way, and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental and statutory officers, and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental and statutory officers 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 portfolio area of Employment and Small Business and the portfolio area of Training and Skills Development open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. It is an honour to be the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development in a government so focused on jobs growth and equipping Queenslanders with the skills we need to be part of a vibrant and expanding economy. Since the 2015 election, the Palaszczuk government has overseen the creation of more than 162,000 jobs. I cannot tell you how proud that makes me to sit here and say that—162,000 jobs for Queenslanders. We continue to punch well above our weight, with the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data confirming that the state's jobs growth is tracking at three per cent, above our budget forecast of 2.75 per cent.

The Palaszczuk government has a clear plan to support and underpin this growth, a plan backed by record investment in initiatives that are encouraging businesses to employ more Queenslanders and help more people discover or rediscover the dignity and financial stability of being in work. Significant components of our plan are our Back to Work and Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs—both slated for the dustbin by the LNP before the last election. Scrapping the Skilling Queenslanders for

Work program alone would have wiped out an initiative with a proven track record of outstanding success—an initiative that had provided thousands of Queenslanders with the opportunity to gain the skills and experience they needed to find work. These are skills that employers are crying out to have access to through trained employees.

I am proud to say that Skilling Queenslanders for Work was reinstated by the Palaszczuk government when we came back into government in 2015, and it is once again having a very positive impact across the state. Since June 2015, more than 16,600 people have found jobs through this program. That equates to about 10 per cent of the jobs created in Queensland in the same period. As a direct result of additional funding announced in the 2018-19 budget, a further 7,248 Queensland job seekers will be supported. This is the largest funding round since reinstatement of the program in 2015.

We are doing this for one very good reason—it works. Skilling Queenslanders is just part of our \$770 million investment in vocational education and training. Our programs will support more than 60,000 of our young people into apprenticeships and traineeships in 2018-19. Providing job seekers with the skills and training they need to find work means that our small businesses have access to a new generation of workers equipped to help them prosper. That is why we have a clear plan to continue to rebuild TAFE as our premier provider of vocational education and training. Recently, I announced a \$15 million boost to TAFE Queensland to train and provide pathways for graduates into industries experiencing high demand for skilled workers across the state. This funding will enable subsidised courses for careers in construction, tourism and hospitality—high-growth sectors where new workers are in demand.

There are many more ways in which my department is helping our businesses to thrive and grow and create more jobs. To that end, this year for the first time the Queensland budget had its first budget paper dedicated to small business. This year we have also celebrated one of our most successful Small Business Weeks, with more than 170 opportunities across the state to network and showcase our incredible small businesses.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. I would like to invite the member for Maroochydore to ask a question.

Ms SIMPSON: Good afternoon, Minister, ministerial staff and the director-general. Director-General, I refer to page 3 of the Service Delivery Statements and the machinery of government changes effective on 12 December 2017, under which the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training was created. Director-General, after the machinery of government changes, exactly on what date did the minister sign the necessary direction on the Right to Information Act 2009?

Ms Curtis: I thank the member for the question. As you flagged, the department was formed in mid-December 2017. Since that time, we have been working to establish the department, bringing together all of the service areas that came together. With the establishment of the new department from three separate departments, we needed to establish our RTI function within the department. Through the MoG, we did not have the relevant staff who came to us, and we outsourced our RTI work to the business and corporate partnership who provides RTI services across a number of departments in the Queensland government. There was a delay in delegating our RTI function, but it has now been delegated to the Department of Environment and Science which does manage that business and corporate partnership RTI function across government.

Ms SIMPSON: Director-General, when did the department issue that delegation? Could you clarify between the department's delegation and the ministerial direction and when that was?

Ms Curtis: I do not have those dates with me at the moment, but we should be able to get them for you.

CHAIR: Minister, are you happy to take that on notice if you cannot come back at the moment?

Ms FENTIMAN: Absolutely. I might just add that, under the Palaszczuk government, unlike previous LNP governments—

Ms SIMPSON: With respect, Minister, you have not answered the question. Could you confirm it was up to six months before there was a delegation or direction by you as minister to enable the RTI direction to take place in your office? Would the minister please confirm when she signed that direction?

Ms FENTIMAN: We are getting you that, but what I was saying is that this government has a rule that right to information is delegated away from ministerial offices to independent public servants. As a result of machinery of government changes, as the director-general has said, there was a delay in that happening, but it has been signed and we will get you the date, but it—

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, do you remember when you signed your direction?

Ms FENTIMAN: It was within days of the department providing the brief to me to sign it.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, do you remember when you signed that?

Ms FENTIMAN: No. That is the information we are taking—

Ms SIMPSON: Was it in the last month, Minister?

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, please ask one question and then allow for the answer.

Ms FENTIMAN: We are getting you that information, but as I said it was signed by me within days of that brief arriving in my office. We will provide you the dates as soon as we can get them.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, you as the responsible person to issue that direction would be aware that there were right to information requests waiting on you to sign that direction. The minister cannot be unaware that there was a significant delay in your department being functional in respect of this basic accountability measure. Minister, I ask again: when did you sign this direction—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, the question has been asked three times and answered. The minister has taken it on notice and will come back with the date. Do you have a further question?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes. I will follow up, as I note that the minister is not answering with respect to the direction—

CHAIR: No, that is unfair. Did you wish to put a question other than the one you have put, which is on what date it was signed?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes, I certainly do. Nearly six months after this department was created and the minister was appointed to this role, the RTI functions of this department were not functional. Minister, I ask you: wasn't this about the department and you avoiding full accountability?

CHAIR: No. That is not a fair question at all, member for Maroochydore, and I believe you know that. That is an unfair and unreasonable inference upon the minister. Would you like to rephrase? Would you like to ask another question?

Ms SIMPSON: I certainly would. Minister, because you delayed authorising your ministerial RTI function, we have only just uncovered this week your use of a private email account in March for work purposes. Why were you using a private email account for ministerial business only one day after the Premier's ban on using private email accounts?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question, and I want to make it very clear to the committee that I do not use my personal email for work purposes. As reported in the *Australian* today, I inadvertently used the wrong email account to email my staff. I made a mistake. I do not know anyone who has not hit 'reply all' accidentally when using email. I realised within 14 minutes that I was using the wrong email account and I forwarded the emails to the ministerial email in accordance with the Premier's guidelines. I want to say that I fully comply with the guidelines set by the Premier. I think they are incredibly important and I am fully committed to those guidelines.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, how could this legitimately be a mistake if you had taken the measure to install your private, non-secure email account on to your government provided work iPad?

Ms FENTIMAN: I have a personal email. I think most of us do. The use of personal email is completely within the ministerial handbook and guidelines. I use my personal email to communicate with my family and friends. I use it to pay my bills or to book my dog into the vet. I have a personal email account. I do not use it for work purposes. I made a mistake and I fixed it pretty quickly, within 14 minutes.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, there is a saying in politics that it is not the mistake that will always catch you, it will be a cover-up.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, do you have a question?

Ms SIMPSON: I put it to you that the fact that you had used your private email account only became apparent and open and transparent through an RTI application after months of delays and subsequent pushing out of those deadlines—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, can you put your question?

Ms SIMPSON: How could it be a mistake that you kept blocking the RTI process, by failing after six months of being a minister—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore!

Ms SIMPSON: by blocking the process of RTIs and transparency in this government?

Ms FENTIMAN: Chair, I might just say, once again, that the delegation of RTI was something that the department was responsible for. After machinery of government changes, there was a delay. As soon as I received the brief to delegate the Department of Environment and Science to handle right to information requests, that happened. As I said, it is not a cover-up by forwarding the emails directly to the ministerial account within 14 minutes of realising the error. The fact that you have the emails shows it was promptly added as a ministerial record, which is available then for right to information requests so there is absolutely no cover-up here.

Ms SIMPSON: Taking six months to enact the RTI provisions and blocking that process coming about is the issue here, and it only became apparent this week about you using your private email because the RTI process had not been put in place. Minister, I hear that you claim you do not have any recollection when you signed that particular direction—

Ms FENTIMAN: I recollect that I signed the brief promptly after it arrived in my office.

Ms SIMPSON: Can the minister rule out any other work related emails from your private account?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes.

Ms SIMPSON: Can the minister advise what the normal time scheme would be with machinery of government for RTI functions in a department to become available?

Ms FENTIMAN: I have no knowledge of what the usual time frame would be. This is the first time I have been a minister in a department that has been stood up. I understand there were three extensions sought. They were granted promptly. The RTI request was granted and you received the emails because they had been part of the public record.

Ms SIMPSON: You believe this was a prompt process in terms of how the RTIs functioned, despite the fact there was a six-month delay in enacting the RTI process?

Ms FENTIMAN: I promptly signed off on the delegation once the department had sourced another department which could provide those functions.

Ms SIMPSON: Five or six months is an acceptable time frame for a department to have a functioning RTI process?

Ms FENTIMAN: I think we all would like to have had that in place earlier. Certainly it was the RTI request that prompted the department to then source services that could provide right-to-information requests. That happened. I signed the delegation. The documents were released, and the documents were able to be released because I promptly forwarded them once I had realised my error.

Ms SIMPSON: There were three extensions asking for more time since that RTI application went in. Minister, in the RTI email you acknowledged that you used your private account. How was this an accident?

Ms FENTIMAN: Because I inadvertently selected the wrong email account from which to send the emails. As soon as I realised I forwarded them to the correct account.

Ms SIMPSON: Then it took until this week for that information to be available under RTI, despite the application being in for months and extension after extension?

Ms FENTIMAN: There were three extensions granted whilst we sourced services to provide RTI functions. I have to say again that I do not have anything to do with the RTI process; that is separate to ministerial officers. That is how the Palaszczuk government has set up its right-to-information system. It is not something that ministerial officers should be in control of.

Ms SIMPSON: With respect, Minister, you have to actually write a direction—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore—

Ms SIMPSON: The minister is misleading the committee, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: No. Member for Maroochydore, the minister was responding to your question.

Ms SIMPSON: With respect, she is misleading the committee.

CHAIR: No, not with respect.

Ms SIMPSON: The minister has to sign a direction.

CHAIR: Excuse me, the minister is answering the question. Let us allow her to answer the question fully and then you can put another question.

Ms FENTIMAN: I have to sign a delegation to delegate the functions of RTI away from the ministerial office so that it is handled by independent public servants, and that has happened.

Ms SIMPSON: That is where the delay has been in the minister issuing a direction—I understand the department calls it a delegation with respect to their own provisions. However, the minister's paperwork in this regard had a significant delay in that being enacted. Minister, is this an acceptable time frame under your watch as minister in ensuring that your functions, which are required to issue that delegation, or direction—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, I actually think this is the third time you have put the same question.

Ms FENTIMAN: I might say that right-to-information requests, before we stood up the Department of Environment and Science to perform the RTI functions, were still being performed by the previous department. There was always an RTI team in place, but there was a delay in processing this first request for the new department because we were looking for a department to provide those services. As soon as the brief arrived in my office I signed the brief, and I will get you the date.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, I note your sentiments with respect to the six-month delay in the RTI functions being set up, and I ask: Director-General, in terms of machinery of government, is it typical for a department to have a six-month delay in the appropriate delegations or directions being issued?

Ms Curtis: I thank the member for the question. Like the minister mentioned earlier, this is my first time being a director-general of a department that has been stood up from scratch, so I cannot comment on whether that is a typical time frame. However, as the minister also stated, during that time period while we were identifying a suitable RTI service provider, the existing departments where our functions came from were continuing to be supported by RTI services from those departments.

Ms SIMPSON: But not RTIs directed to the minister's office?

Ms Curtis: The application that came into the minister's office I understand was being supported by the new arrangements.

Ms SIMPSON: Sorry, could you say that again?

Ms Curtis: I understand the application that came to the minister's office was being handled by the Department of Environment and Science service provider.

Ms SIMPSON: Moving on, with respect to the machinery of government and what appears to be a nearly six-month delay, which is still to be confirmed, I ask: Minister, what steps have you taken to ensure that you will not use your private email on a work iPad in future?

Ms FENTIMAN: As I have said, I do not use my personal email account for work. I am fully committed to the guidelines issued by the Premier.

Ms SIMPSON: Could I have advice as to whether you have formally taken that on notice in respect of the time frames that the minister was first asked for in which she provided that direction?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice. I can advise the committee that the brief to delegate came into the office on 19 July. I signed it the same day.

Ms SIMPSON: Was the minister aware that there were RTIs in her office awaiting her direction, given that those pieces of paper—those letters—had already been written? They would have been known by her staff?

CHAIR: Who are you directing your question to?

Ms SIMPSON: The minister.

Ms FENTIMAN: The documents had already been provided to the RTI team, so I signed the delegation after the documents had been provided to formally stand up the Department of Environment and Science.

Ms SIMPSON: Did the minister issue any concern that there had been such a delay with respect to RTI functions in her office and her delegation being issued?

Ms FENTIMAN: We did discuss that there had been a delay, but I signed it as quickly as I could. I signed it the same day that it came into my office.

Ms SIMPSON: Director-General, have you ever received any work emails from the minister's private account?

Ms Curtis: No, I have not.

Ms SIMPSON: I do want to emphasise that in that time frame you are going to bring forward—is there any acknowledgement from the government that taking nearly six months to set up an RTI function is unacceptable?

CHAIR: No. Member for Maroochydore, is that a question or a statement?

Ms SIMPSON: It is about transparency.

CHAIR: No. It is actually not. It is about the standing orders and the fact that we are here to have a respectful estimates hearing. Do you have a question? The minister is very happy to answer all your questions, but I ask that they remain relevant to the appropriation—

Ms SIMPSON: Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: No, I am not finished. Also I ask that you please do not put opinion or additional statements. Please put your question.

Ms SIMPSON: Thanks, Madam Chair. My question is to the director-general. I refer to page 43 of Budget Paper No. 4 and the Back to Work employment service area highlighted on page 3 of the SDS. A second alleged Back to Work fraud case concerning more than \$1 million in taxpayer funds was revealed yesterday. How many more suspect instances are being investigated by the department?

Ms Curtis: Since the Back to Work scheme began, two referrals have been made to the Queensland Police Service and they are being fully investigated. The department has a very strong client services and compliance team which investigates Back to Work claims to ensure that eligible businesses do receive Back to Work grants. We continually have processes in place to mitigate fraud risk and those are being continually updated when new tools become available. We are continuing to improve our processes to make sure those checks are in place.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to the director-general again. I refer to the Back to Work employment service highlighted on page 3 of the SDS. Can you please advise how many applications were received between 2 June 2018 and 30 June 2018?

Ms Curtis: I will have to see if I can get that information. Can we clarify the dates, sorry?

Ms SIMPSON: From 2 June 2018 to 30 June 2018, so that is four weeks prior to the end of the financial year.

Ms Curtis: The applications that were received; is that correct?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes. How many applications were received between those dates?

Ms Curtis: We will have someone get that information and we can provide it.

Ms SIMPSON: Director-General, I also have another question with regard to Back to Work SEQ in this case. I refer to page 43 of Budget Paper No. 4. Back to Work SEQ will receive increased funding only for areas deemed to have significant labour market challenges. Director-General, can you please define what exactly is meant by 'significant labour market challenges'?

Ms Curtis: In identifying those areas that had significant labour market challenges the government looked at a range of factors, not just limited to the monthly unemployment rate. We also considered matters such as broader economic conditions and connections to employment opportunities including the ability of people to access transport and go to work.

Ms SIMPSON: Could the government actually outline that criteria and how exactly you have determined that criteria between the areas that have been included and those that have been excluded?

CHAIR: Can you clarify 'could the government'? Do you mean the DG?

Ms SIMPSON: Sorry, the director-general. Could you provide clear detail as to how that criteria has been applied in choosing which areas are in and which areas are out?

Ms Curtis: That was a decision of the government. That is not something I can comment on.

CHAIR: Would you like to direct that to the minister?

Ms SIMPSON: I will ask another question of the director-general. How is it that Back to Work SEQ is maintained for the region of Ipswich, which has a lower youth unemployment rate, yet the program is cut for the Sunshine Coast, which currently has a youth unemployment rate of 14.3 per cent?

Ms Curtis: As I flagged earlier, the continuation of the SEQ program in the specified areas was a result of those significant labour market challenges within the area. As you mentioned, the Sunshine Coast has an unemployment rate of 5.7 per cent, which is below the state average and—

Ms SIMPSON: I actually said that youth unemployment is 14.3 per cent.

Ms Curtis: Youth unemployment? I beg your pardon. I referred to unemployment. The decisions regarding the South-East Queensland program were in relation to those factors that were considered the labour market challenges for those regions.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, the director-general mentioned that it was a decision for the government with regard to which areas were in and which areas were out. Ipswich actually has a youth unemployment figure that is lower than the Sunshine Coast and yet Ipswich is in the Back to Work SEQ, the Youth Boost, but the Sunshine Coast is out. Can the minister explain why she chose to include some areas with lower youth unemployment in this and exclude others?

Ms FENTIMAN: As the director-general said, it was looking at unemployment rates but also broader labour market challenge indications such as economic conditions, connections to employment opportunities and the ability of unemployed people to access transport in a particular area. In relation to the Sunshine Coast, clearly we have more work to do in terms of youth unemployment. However, I would say that the overall unemployment rate is 5.7 per cent on the Sunshine Coast, which is below the state average. The region in the last 12 months has created 11,900 jobs, with an employment growth of over seven per cent. That is three percentage points above the state average. We think the Sunshine Coast is going pretty well.

The other factor to consider is that we already have fantastic Youth Boost programs under Skilling Queenslanders for Work. Where youth unemployment is high we are encouraging small businesses to access the payments under the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. It is a fantastic Youth Boost program for Skilling Queenslanders for Work. Under that program, the Work Start incentives program rewards businesses that are now ineligible for Back to Work with a one-off \$10,000 payment under Youth Boost. For those areas where youth unemployment may be still high, there are fantastic programs similar to the Youth Boost under Back to Work, but we really did look to see where there were significant labour market challenges, where there have been significant challenges for many years and where it is difficult for locals to get around and access public transport to be able to get to jobs. That is why, even though the Back to Work program was always due to finish—the South-East Queensland plan was only ever going to be for 12 months—we made the decision with a \$20 million investment in the budget to extend it into parts of South-East Queensland. I am very proud of the program and I know that our employers in other parts of South-East Queensland still have fantastic access to the Skilling Queenslanders for Work Youth Boost to address youth unemployment.

Mr SAUNDERS: With reference to the Back to Work program on page 3 of the SDS, can the minister detail the funding being committed to Back to Work in Queensland, the outcomes being achieved and what other approaches have been advocated for?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I know that he is a huge supporter of Back to Work. I have seen many great social media posts by the member for Maryborough with Back to Work recipients. It is an outstanding program. It has helped more than 15,000 Queenslanders into jobs. When the program first commenced in July 2017 the goal was 8,000 jobs over two years in regional Queensland. Through expanding into South-East Queensland and introducing the Youth Boost component, the Palaszczuk government has far and away exceeded the target. In regional Queensland alone, more than 12,200 people have been assisted into jobs. Even though we have met our targets, we have not taken our foot off the pedal.

This year's budget details the additional investment we are making to continue the program until 30 June 2020: \$155 million over three years for regional Queensland, \$5 million for the six-month Mature Aged Worker Boost program, an extra \$11 million in the first half of this year to keep the full SEQ program open until 30 June and \$20.5 million to continue and expand the program in South-East Queensland in areas where it is most needed. In total, that is more than \$190 million.

Surprisingly, I have to say, this successful program was slated for a cut of \$13.49 million in the LNP's election costings. I seek leave to table the relevant pages of that document. This cut would have shut down the Back to Work program completely. The member for Maroochydore is here today talking about the Back to Work program, but the LNP's election commitment was to cut it altogether.

Ms SIMPSON: With respect, Minister, do you want me to reply and correct the record?

CHAIR: No. The minister is answering—

Ms SIMPSON: If the minister is not going to give me a chance to reply—

CHAIR: The minister is replying to a question from the member for Maryborough.

Ms SIMPSON: Because the opposition actually maintained—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, we sat quietly while you asked your questions. Now allow the minister to respond to the member for Maryborough's question. Minister, you have the call.

Ms FENTIMAN: Regrettably, the member for Maroochydore either is not aware of what was contained in the LNP's costings or she simply forgot, because on ABC Sunshine Coast radio on 27 June this year the member for Maroochydore said, 'We were not scrapping Back to Work.' I am happy to table a transcript of the radio interview. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. As soon as the Palaszczuk government introduced Back to Work in 2016, the LNP had plans to cut it. The member for Clayfield's budget reply speech in 2016 made it clear that the LNP did not support the Back to Work program and they would scrap it. It was reported as early as 16 June 2016 that the member for Clayfield said Back to Work's program funding would be reallocated if the LNP was elected.

However, the member for Maroochydore has been caught out again attempting to rewrite history. In a press release on 26 June 2018, the member for Maroochydore claimed, 'The LNP successfully fought to have the Back to Work program extended across South-East Queensland.' I table a copy of that media release. Wrong again! The LNP have been caught out campaigning against this wonderful program from day 1. The member for Maroochydore really should apologise to Queenslanders for misrepresenting the LNP's intentions with regard to Back to Work.

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Chair, can I correct the minister seeing that she is making personal references?

CHAIR: No. Member for Maroochydore, the minister is responding to a question from the member for Maryborough.

Ms SIMPSON: With respect, Madam Chair, I take offence to the misleading and untrue statements and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Ms FENTIMAN: I withdraw.

CHAIR: Minister, please continuing answering the member for Maryborough's question.

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Chair, I take offence and I ask that that be withdrawn.

CHAIR: The minister just withdrew, member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you.

Ms FENTIMAN: I finished the answer, Chair.

CHAIR: The minister sought leave to table three documents. Leave is granted. I call the member for Maryborough for a second question.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, with reference to the Back to Work program, a lot of focus is placed on the incentive payments provided under this great program, but what other services are being provided in addition to these payments?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. As at 30 June 2018, jobseeker officers received and processed a total of 6,793 referrals since the commencement of the program. Many of these jobseekers have been supported to get the skills and training to make them more 'job ready' through our Certificate 3 Guarantee Boost. Back to Work jobseeker officers help jobseekers or those at risk of losing their jobs to navigate the training system and get career advice that helps them find a job. They can help jobseekers to determine their individual skills as well as services and supports which may assist them; provide independent advice on career and training opportunities; help jobseekers navigate the training system and link them with training connected with jobs in the region; and work with new employees through the first year of employment.

Since September 2017 our South-East Queensland jobseeker officers, Bonnie Davidson and Kylie Forest, have built a strong relationship with the Women Behind the Wheel program run by Strategix, one of our RTOs. The initiative targets female jobseekers for training in a certificate 3 in driving operations as a pathway to employment in the bus and truck driving industries, where women have traditionally been under-represented. The program has been a great success and boasts an employment rate of 72 per cent after just four intakes. A total of 47 women have completed training, with 34 of them gaining employment. Thirty of those individuals can be identified as Back to Work participants, all having accessed Certificate 3 Guarantee Boost funding to complete the training. Twenty of those Certificate 3 Guarantee Boost participants have since secured employment with one of the 17 transport companies engaged in interviewing and placing candidates as part of the program. The work that Bonnie and Kylie are doing is a fantastic example of how Back to Work is more than just a financial incentive. The good news is that this support continues in all areas of Queensland, including across the entire south-east. To ensure jobseeker officers can help link people with training, many of them are situated at our TAFE campuses.

CHAIR: I invite the member for Cairns to ask a question.

Mr HEALY: Can the minister please outline the support to apprentices and trainees provided through the Back to Work program? Just as importantly, what other alternatives are also available and have been suggested?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. It was wonderful to be in Cairns recently to visit some of our Back to Work employees. Over 3,600 apprentices and trainees have been directly assisted through the Palaszczuk government's Back to Work program, representing over a quarter of all the applications. Many of these apprentices and trainees have been supported by the Back to Work Youth Boost. These are Queensland apprentices like those I visited when governing from Mackay earlier this year. Master Butchers Whitsunday have had five employees complete the 12-month Back to Work program. Of those, Ricky and Whelan have completed their apprenticeships and Dane is currently undertaking his.

Sadly, the alternative offered by the LNP at the last election simply does not compare. In shutting Back to Work down, the LNP wanted to replace it with a \$5,000 grant—one quarter of the Back to Work Youth Boost payment and half the basic payment under Back to Work. It does not compare with the Palaszczuk government's investment or commitment to jobs. Importantly for young Queenslanders looking to start an apprenticeship or traineeship, the changes to the South-East Queensland Back to Work program are occurring at the same time as we are expanding Skilling Queenslanders for Work. From 1 July this year a new \$20,000 Youth Boost will be available to all employers providing a traineeship or apprenticeship to a young person who has participated in a Skilling Queenslanders for Work project. The new payment is already making a difference.

The member for Maroochydore recently wrote to me about concerns for a young constituent, Charlotte, and that the new focus of Back to Work in South-East Queensland might prevent her from taking up an apprentice hairdressing job. I am pleased to inform the committee, as I have informed the member for Maroochydore, that senior training officers were already in contact with Charlotte to discuss her career goals. As Charlotte had participated in a Ready for Work program under Skilling Queenslanders for Work, she was eligible for one of our first Youth Boost work start incentives. Armed with this new support, I understand that she has already commenced her hairdressing apprenticeship with a local salon on the Sunshine Coast. This is a fantastic outcome.

CHAIR: Member for Cairns, do you have another question?

Mr HEALY: A lot of programs outlined in the SDS are geared towards job creation, which is terrific. Can the minister outline Queensland's job growth, how this compares to the nation and what views have been expressed about the Queensland labour market?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data for June 2018 continues to show strength in the Queensland jobs market. The employment data for June marked the 21st consecutive month of trend jobs growth in Queensland. The June figures show that we have created more than 62,000 jobs over the year. This shows that we are well on track for our Advancing Queensland commitment of sustaining jobs growth and growing our labour market by supporting 60,000 jobs a year. This is a continuing trend under the Palaszczuk government because, as I said earlier, we have seen over 162,000 jobs created since 2015. Over the course of 2017 Queensland's job growth consistently led the nation. Queensland continues to perform well compared to other states, with the second-highest jobs growth rate of 2.6 per cent for the 12 months to June 2018.

Of course, not everyone was celebrating this nation-leading position. When faced with this unprecedented growth the member for Nanango, the Leader of the Opposition, was quick to make a political point as the then new leader of the LNP. Unfortunately, the member got the figures very, very wrong. Looking to put the worst spin on our nation-leading jobs growth, the member for Nanango claimed that it was taking far too long for people in Toowoomba to find a job. Embarrassingly, the Australian Bureau of Statistics red flagged her comments as 'fake news'. The ABS pointed out in the Toowoomba *Chronicle* that the average is not only half of what the member had claimed but it had been relatively steady for about two to three years and is one of the lowest in Queensland. I seek leave to table a copy of that news article. Sadly, the member for Nanango could not help herself and is intent on running Queensland down. Labor is determined to build Queensland up.

The member for Maroochydore has taken a different approach, saying absolutely nothing at all. A search of media releases and social media posts by the shadow spokesperson reveals that the member seems to be completely disinterested in monthly labour force figures or Queensland's outstanding jobs growth record.

Ms SIMPSON: Point of order. I take offence to those comments. You cannot even tell me when you set up your RTI function, but you are reading my social media—

CHAIR: No, member for Maroochydore, raise a point of order without commentary. What is your point of order?

Ms SIMPSON: I take offence to the minister's untrue and offensive allegation and I ask that it be withdrawn.

CHAIR: Minister, offence has been taken to your comments. Do you withdraw?

Ms SIMPSON: I suggest she spends more time doing her job than reading my social media.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, put your point of order and then I will rule on it. You have taken offence. Minister, do you withdraw?

Ms FENTIMAN: I withdraw. While Queensland's nation-leading jobs growth has been a significant achievement there is more to be done, particularly in those areas where unemployment remains a challenge. The government's top priority remains creating jobs for Queenslanders and driving strong economic growth across the state. That is why this year's budget provides additional funding to the programs that have been helping power our jobs growth. That has included continuing funding for Back to Work in regional Queensland; targeting new funding to continue Back to Work in the south-east corner in parts where it is most needed; and, of course, expanding our Skilling Queenslanders for Work program.

CHAIR: Leave has been sought to table the document, which is a matter of public record already. Leave is granted. Minister, with regard to social enterprises, I have not made any secret of the fact that I am a very big fan of CLA and Espresso Train, social enterprises promoting social good in my own electorate of Nudgee, and I am very proud of what they do and why they do it. Could you please outline for the committee how your department is supporting and promoting social enterprises in Queensland?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I know that, like myself, she is incredibly passionate about our wonderful social enterprises in Queensland. Since becoming the minister it has been fantastic to engage with Queensland's social enterprise sector and see firsthand some of the incredible work they do. Queensland's social enterprises play an important role in delivering services, fostering economic participation and contributing to social innovation. I know that in the member's own electorate the Community Living Association is doing fantastic work through social enterprise to create employment and training opportunities for people with mental illness or intellectual disability. Because of their incredible experience in the sector, it was great to have CLA join our first social enterprise round table, which brought together key industry stakeholders. The round table was an opportunity to listen and understand how the government can assist the sector to deliver for Queensland through social outcomes and job creation.

We understand the important contribution of social enterprises. In June 2018 our government's updated procurement policy included a commitment to increase our procurement spend with genuine, quality social enterprises. Our government is making it easier for social enterprises to compete for government contracts like the wonderful Hope Street Cafe in West End. The Hope Street Cafe provides hospitality experience and training to people who have previously been excluded from the workforce: people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, mature age people and women. Early this month I visited the Hope Street Cafe to announce the latest round of recipients for Skilling Queenslanders for Work. Since the Palaszczuk government reinstated the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, Micah Projects, which runs the Hope Street Cafe, has been awarded over \$400,000 in SQW funding to assist in delivering training to up to 68 disadvantaged jobseekers. Their fantastic work is just one example of social enterprise changing lives for the better by providing opportunities.

Almost three-quarters of all social enterprises are classified as small businesses, and many social enterprises have also accessed our small business mentoring and grants. Social enterprises like Share the Dignity have benefited from our small business digital grants to improve their digital presence. These are examples of some of the support that the government is providing to social enterprise. It is disappointing, I have to add, that the LNP government has not acknowledged the important contribution of Queensland's social enterprises, but thankfully social enterprise have fantastic advocates such as the member for Nudgee, who value their work.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The feedback from CLA at the roundtable meeting was very, very positive. They were very excited by the conversation, so thank you for organising that. Minister, again unashamedly focused on Nudgee—I do have over 4,000 small to medium sized enterprises in my

electorate—I note that this year was the first year that a small business budget paper was part of the official budget paper list. Can you please provide information regarding what response there has been from the Queensland small business community with regard to this year's budget?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. It was a tremendous honour to deliver Queensland's first ever small business paper in this year's state budget. The Palaszczuk government recognises that small businesses are a key driver of Queensland's economy, and that is something that is underscored by this dedicated budget paper. We are providing an environment where small business owners and operators can start, thrive and take on new employees. To that end, our budget paper was warmly welcomed by industry stakeholders. The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland said that the paper acknowledged that it is small businesses that grow Queensland's economy and we say this is reflected in the priority given to small business in the budget papers.

Jane Ward from BDO declared business as a winner with the payroll tax rebates for apprenticeships and trainees kept at 50 per cent for another year, at a cost of \$26 million. This was not the only good news outlined in Queensland's first small business budget paper. It outlines support from across all government agencies—\$40 million for a Business Development Fund to help turn ideas into a commercial reality and \$3.9 million in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce & Industry to extend their ecoBiz program. This budget paper also detailed the Advance Queensland program, which dedicates \$650 million to build a stronger Queensland economy.

By fostering innovation and start-ups we are helping to create the knowledge-based jobs of the future. We are growing. More than 50,000 small businesses were launched in Queensland in 2016-17. Queensland's small businesses ranked top on the small business Innovation Index published by CommBank Business. I am very pleased that we continue to promote the wonderful work of small businesses and I want to acknowledge the Office of Small Business, which does tremendous work supporting small businesses right across Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. Member for Hinchinbrook?

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is to the minister. Whenever government funding is made available, we always see a rush of businesses setting in to capitalise on the opportunity. Unfortunately, training in Queensland is not immune to this problem. With reference to the SDS, would the minister please advise what funding is being made available or allocated and what mechanisms have been implemented to measure the quality of student outcomes in relation to government funded training, in particular certificate III and high-risk tickets funded through SQW? I believe this is necessary to protect students from poor training provided by RTOs that seem to be more focused on completion numbers than on quality training outcomes.

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I am aware that the member for Hinchinbrook has raised this issue with my office following concerns by local registered training organisations about the quality of training provided for the certificate III and surface extraction operations under Skilling Queenslanders for Work and I want to thank you for your advocacy in making sure that we are providing quality training. I understand that the acting regional director, Ms Beverley Lister, has also been in contact with you to arrange a time to brief you. I know that the member was advised by my office that the acting regional director is working to ensure the monitoring of all government funded training related to surface extraction, noting the concerns raised by you. It is so important that members raise these concerns so that we can follow them up.

The department is more than willing to engage with local members or RTOs regarding concerns they may have about training quality and delivery. We also have our Training Ombudsman, who is also happy to look at any issues of quality. We are seeing strong jobs growth in the resources sector, so I think it is a good time for us to be ensuring the quality of this particular certificate III. I am really happy to continue to follow that up but please know that, as a result of your advocacy, not only will you be getting a briefing about it but also we are continuing to work with industry to make sure that quality training is provided.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you very much, Minister.

CHAIR: I invite the member for Noosa to ask a question.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, Minister. I refer to page 2 of the SDS and also acknowledge that there has already been much discussion around Back to Work, so we do not have to revisit that. However, I do voice my concerns and Noosa's concerns, together with the member for Maroochydore, as Noosa was also excluded from both the regional and the SEQ programs. I want to point out that, in the assessment of the analysis of who really needs assistance here, the

statistics do not reflect the reality on the ground of what is happening. It is well known that Noosa has youth and mature underemployment, but it is impossible to get statistics. You only have to work one hour a week to be classified as employed. To back that up, our socio-economic data is lower than South-East Queensland and we also have an enormous transport issue, especially in our hinterland. It is areas such as these that can provide the statistical analysis to show that we really are very much in need of those programs, and I acknowledge the other programs. Skilling Queenslanders for Work is fantastic and we have had amazing projects.

CHAIR: Member for Noosa, could you put your question? It is a very long preamble.

Ms BOLTON: Yes. Would you reconsider looking at the criteria for areas that are currently excluded from the return-to-work program to be included?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Again, I know what an advocate she is for her local community, particularly disadvantaged members of her community seeking work. The Noosa state electorate is part of the Sunshine Coast SA4 according to the labour force statistics. I know we have talked about the unemployment rate, but it is 5.7 per cent currently, which is below the state average. The 12-month Back to Work program in Noosa provided support to 32 employers to help 43 people into work. They will continue to receive support from our Back to Work wonderful jobseeker assistance workers.

As we have talked about, the Skilling Queenslanders for Work new \$20,000 Youth Boost will be the program that I would direct your small businesses to think about applying for. I know that the Noosa Community Training Centre was recently awarded \$53,000 under the Get Set for Work program aimed to deliver the Learning for Earning 2 project, and that was to assist 30 disadvantaged youth aged 15 to 19 years. There are programs available. We will continue to monitor the program and evaluate the program, but I am really confident that, particularly for young disadvantaged members of your community, the Skilling Queenslanders for Work Youth Boost is still available. I am happy to help you promote that amongst the business community.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is to the director-general. I refer to page 2 of the SDS and the department's strategic objective to empower small business to be able to take full advantage of economic prospects. As part of the department's consultative process with small business, does it formally or informally track small business sentiment in Queensland?

Ms Curtis: I thank the member for the question. There is obviously a range of external measures. Sorry, but were you talking about within the department or outside of the department?

Ms SIMPSON: Does the department formally or informally track small business sentiment in Queensland?

Ms Curtis: The Queensland government is committed to creating a positive environment for small business, with a focus on helping those businesses to start, to grow and to employ. There are a number of recent business surveys, and we do monitor those results and are aware of those programs. That obviously helps inform our policy development and thinking. In the measures that are outlined in our SDS we do obviously track the percentage of businesses the government has assisted and the use of our websites in terms of the percentage of the businesses we have assisted.

Ms SIMPSON: Director-General, I refer to page 2 of the SDS and the Better Regulation Taskforce highlight. According to the Sensis Business Index, the Queensland government is the least popular in Australia among small to medium sized businesses, with excessive bureaucracy being a leading criticism. What is the Better Regulation Taskforce's quantitative key performance indicators for this year?

Ms Curtis: Just to clarify your question, you asked about quantitative performance indicators?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes, the quantitative key performance indicators that the Better Regulation Taskforce has in place, given that there is the Sensis Business Index indicating excessive bureaucracy as a leading criticism.

Ms Curtis: I would have to take some advice around indicators for the Better Regulation Taskforce.

Ms SIMPSON: Is that something you could come back to us on?

Ms Curtis: We will come back to you this afternoon on that.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you very much. Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS and the Better Regulation Taskforce highlight. The other leading criticism from small and medium sized businesses that contributed to the Queensland Labor government being the least popular in Australia was union influence. Will you introduce a similar task force to address the ever-increasing union stranglehold over this government?

Ms FENTIMAN: No.

Mrs WILSON: Director-General, I refer to page 14 of Budget Paper No. 2 and the government's development of the business impact statement tool. In the lead-up to this year's state budget, did the department analyse the impact on small businesses from any of the five new taxes introduced by the Palaszczuk Labor government?

Ms Curtis: I thank the member for the question. The taxes that were outlined in the budget this year were taken to the election and were obviously dealt with in that way. We engage with small businesses all of the time around a range of issues. The Queensland Small Business Advisory Council, which the minister chairs, is another forum for small businesses to engage with government. Obviously as part of that we engage with small businesses around a whole range of matters during that time.

Mrs WILSON: But did you conduct any analysis of how those five new taxes were going to affect our small businesses?

Ms Curtis: I thank the member for the question. The government received advice regarding those new taxes and the introduction of those, and we are continuing to engage with small businesses to understand the issues and how those taxes are being implemented.

Mrs WILSON: So I can say that at this point in time there was not any analysis conducted to see the impact those new taxes were going to have on small businesses?

Ms Curtis: As I said, we engage with small businesses all of the time, and the advice we receive through them and those discussions on a regular basis help inform government program decisions.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, we have just heard that there has been no evidence presented that there was any advocacy or any analysis done of the impact of these new taxes on small business.

CHAIR: Just to be fair, member for Maroochydore, I do not think that is what the director-general said and we should not reflect and reword someone's answers, but I ask you to put your question.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you. Minister, do you know what the actual impact was of those new taxes on small business in Queensland and did you ask that question before you agreed to them?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. The four new taxes that the member is referring to, I assume, are the land tax, the additional foreign acquirer duty, luxury vehicle duty and point-of-consumption tax. They were all taken—

Ms SIMPSON: And the waste tax.

Ms FENTIMAN: Let me deal with the ones that were taken to the Queensland people at the election. Our new revenue measures were taken to the people of Queensland for individuals, families and small businesses to consider at the election. I think as the Under Treasurer said in the estimates last week, that sort of modelling happens under Treasury. I was not the small business minister at the time, but clearly those taxes were taken to the election and we have been returned with a majority government—very good news. We are talking about a land tax for aggregated holdings over \$10 million.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister—

CHAIR: No, member for Maroochydore. The minister is answering the question as it relates to—

Ms FENTIMAN: We are talking about an additional foreign acquirer—

CHAIR:—her portfolio.

Ms SIMPSON: I would like the minister to answer—

Ms FENTIMAN:—duty. We are talking about a luxury vehicle tax—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore—

Ms SIMPSON:—about the waste tax that she signed off on and the impact on small business.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, please stop interjecting.

Ms FENTIMAN: And I will get to the waste tax, the waste levy.

Ms SIMPSON: And what the impact is on small business.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, please stop interjecting. The minister did not interject while you asked the question.

Ms FENTIMAN: We have a luxury vehicle tax for vehicles over \$100,000 which exempts heavy work vehicles and we have a point-of-consumption tax for which the threshold is \$300,000, so it is unlikely to really affect any small businesses. In terms of the waste levy, let me be really clear: there was a comprehensive review by the Hon. Peter Lyons. He made two recommendations. The first one was that we needed a waste levy if we were going to stop the 900,000 tonnes of interstate waste—

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Chair, the minister is not answering the question about the impact on small business.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore—

Ms SIMPSON: She is filibustering. She has been asked about the impact on small business.

CHAIR: The minister is not. I am speaking, please. You have asked a question. Neither the question nor the answer should stray from the appropriation as it relates to this department. However, you mentioned four elements plus this and the minister is addressing those. I say to the minister to please talk to these items as they relate to your portfolio. You do not have to stray from your portfolio. Member for Maroochydore, we will then come back to you for another question that relates to this Appropriation Bill. Minister, have you finished?

Ms FENTIMAN: No. The first recommendation was that, to stop the interstate dumping, we needed to introduce a waste levy. That is what we did. I was part of that process that went to cabinet. The member has not sat around the cabinet table, but the issues go to cabinet. There was a discussion about the waste levy. That was then announced.

I want to say—and the Under Treasurer said this as well—that the waste levy will generate jobs in Queensland. Queensland is a major underperformer in resource recovery by both national and international standards. We have the second-lowest recovery rates. If we want to grow jobs and grow an industry that will involve small businesses, this waste levy will get results.

Advice from the waste industry indicates that the largest waste stream sector, which is construction and demolition, of which there are many small businesses, is expected to be able to respond to this levy very quickly. This was the case in 2011 when Queensland last had a levy. A recent survey of small businesses for the New South Wales government—

Ms SIMPSON: Are you saying that this tax is good for business? Is that your take?

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, please stop interjecting. The minister's answer is relevant.

Ms FENTIMAN: If you let me finish, you will hear what my answer is.

Ms SIMPSON: What is the—

CHAIR: Order! Member for Maroochydore!

Ms FENTIMAN: A recent survey of small businesses in New South Wales, where the levy is significantly higher than in Queensland, found that some 70 per cent of respondents stated that waste and recycling costs were negligible to their overall business costs. In answer to your question, we took our new revenue measures to the election. We had become the dumping ground for the rest of Australia's waste. We have acted to fix it and it will create jobs. We know that better waste management translates into new jobs in an industry that already employs over 6,000 Queenslanders. For every 10,000 tonnes of waste, recycling directly employs 9.2 full-time equivalents. These are jobs in small businesses.

Having said all of that, we are co-designing this levy with small business. We have a stakeholder advisory council that comprises the QQIC, the Housing Industry Association, the Australian Industry Group and the Master Builders. We are working with them to design the levy so that it has the least impact on them.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to page 14 of Budget Paper No. 2 and the government's development of a business impact statement tool. Will the minister guarantee this committee that these assessments produced by the tool will be made publicly available for all new relevant government regulation?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. This was a fantastic policy of ours to develop these consultation panels. It was an election commitment. These panels will see experienced small-business owners and operators provide advice to government policy officers on the practical impacts of certain policy proposals, including regulation change proposals. We have called for expressions of interest for our small business owners and operators to nominate or be members of our small business consultation panel pool.

In addition to the consultation panels, as you have noted, the online impact assessment tool is being developed. The role of that tool is to assist government policy officers to consider the potential impacts of policy and regulatory proposals on small businesses as to how they are being developed. The role of the tool is to help bureaucrats and public servants take into account the needs of small business when developing policy and making regulation. It has been welcomed overwhelmingly by the small business community.

Ms SIMPSON: Why is your government the least popular in Australia among small to medium sized businesses?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I assume the member is referring to the recent Sensis Business Index that came out earlier this week. This latest survey shows Queensland's regional small to medium businesses have gained the most confidence across the nation. Brisbane is the nation's second-most confident capital city. The net confidence for small to medium businesses rose seven points in Queensland to 48 points—one point under the national average but 13 points higher than it was 12 months ago. More small to medium businesses across the state believe that the economy is growing. I want to also add that this is the best score for Queensland since December 2013. Things are improving.

We are listening to small business. We have put out the first ever small business budget paper that contains exceptional grants that have been recognised by the federal parliament as needing to be rolled out across the country. We have had the most successful Small Business Week we have ever had. We are putting out a small business procurement commitment paper because we know that doing business with government is the No. 1 issue for small to medium businesses. Given that we have had the best score for Queensland since December 2013, I think that things are looking up for small business in Queensland.

Mr HEALY: Those were outstanding responses, Minister. I refer to page 5 of the SDS and the \$1.1 million over four years committed to establishing small business consultation panels. Can you outline how the small business consultation panels will support engagement with regional small business about government? This is an area that Cairns in particular is very interested in.

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I know how engaged he is in his local government business community, having been in business for his entire career. This is a really great election commitment by the Palaszczuk government. As I said, we are investing \$1.1 million in the Business Impact Statement initiative to enable us to establish regional small business consultation panels. Those consultation panels will be made up of local small business leaders. Together, they will consider issues from government agencies and give direct feedback.

As I said, this has been welcomed by small businesses. On budget day, CCIQ said that they had—

... advocated very strongly for the introduction of a Business Impact Statement as a regulatory reform project, and we are very pleased to see \$1.1 million allocated to assess the impact of government policy and regulation.

It is another example of this government listening and delivering. These small business consultation panels will assist the Queensland government to achieve its objective to ensure a regulatory environment that is fair and balanced to support our small businesses. As I have said, we have recently opened expressions of interest. I encourage all members here today to go back and talk to their small businesses about nominating to be on these consultation panels.

With the input of experience from local small businesses, we will continue to work with them to reduce red tape. Let us be clear: red tape went up under the LNP. In April 2015, in relation to the red tape survey report, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the burden of red tape had intensified over the past two years and continues to adversely impact the performance of Queensland businesses. At that time, the report found that 58 per cent of businesses felt that the amount of regulation had increased in the past two years.

By 2017—so after two years of the Palaszczuk government—the reported figure had dropped by eight per cent. Queensland's small businesses remember what it was like under the LNP and have voted overwhelmingly to support the Palaszczuk government's agenda for small business. This is a fantastic election commitment. I think involving regional small businesses to provide feedback directly to government agencies is a win-win.

Mr HEALY: I refer once again to page 5 of the SDS and the Small Business Entrepreneur Grants Program and note that the first round of Business Growth Fund recipients has just been released. Can you detail the response of this new grant? Just as importantly, what alternative approaches are there?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. It is very exciting that a number of small businesses received funding through the Business Growth Fund. One of them is in the Nudgee electorate. CBM Air is a great example of a Queensland business success story. CBM Air, based in Brisbane, specialises in commercial air conditioning and mechanical services delivering heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration for medium and large projects. The founder, Scott, employs a team of over 20, including several apprentices, which is great to see. By receiving \$50,000 through the Business Growth Fund, CBM Air can now purchase specialised equipment that will allow the business to expand into medical, laboratory and industrial markets and take on refurbishment and service projects at hospitals, aged care facilities, laboratories and universities across the country. They expect that this investment will grow their business by 30 per cent and allow them to take on additional employees.

The new Business Growth Fund provides grants of up to \$50,000 of matched funding for businesses that demonstrate high growth and want to take their business to the next stage. We expanded the reach of support with this new grant by not only increasing the amount funding available but also expanding the eligibility to include both small and medium businesses, which is part of our government's commitment to support businesses to not only grow in the early stages but also grow and create more jobs for Queenslanders as they become more successful.

In talking to the small business community, we know the difficulties and risks associated with expanding. Businesses spoke to us about the challenges associated with purchasing new technology and sourcing the necessary funding for expert advice. We want small businesses to expand sustainably with expert advice and support to provide Queenslanders with strong, stable jobs. The application for the Business Growth Fund involves pitching business ideas to a panel of business experts—sort of *Shark Tank* style, if you like. The panel comprises representatives of the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland and our Mentoring for Growth program. The Palaszczuk government continues to deliver for business at all stages. We are a government making it easier for Queensland businesses to start, grow and employ.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, following the announced transition of the economy of North Stradbroke Island away from sand mining, a workers transition support scheme was established. Can you provide an update on how workers have been assisted through this scheme?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. As the Minister for Employment, I am pleased to have responsibility for implementing the North Stradbroke Island workers assistance scheme. The \$5 million scheme was established to support workers affected by the closure of sand mining on the island to find alternative employment and is available over five years from May 2016. More broadly, the scheme supports the ongoing economic viability of the North Stradbroke Island community, maximising the potential for these workers to stay on the island, or in the region, and continue to participate in the local economy.

The package provides a range of supports to help affected workers find alternative employment and training opportunities. These are coordinated by an employment services manager based on the island and includes job search support; training and skills development; housing and commuting assistance; incentive payments for employers to take on displaced workers; income supplementation; and dislocation assistance. As at 30 June, 59 former and current Sibelco employees and one employer for one employer wage subsidy have received payments under the scheme. Of the workers made redundant, nine have gained employment across a range of industries—five of them on Stradbroke; five have retired; one is at university; one is undertaking an apprenticeship; and five have started their own businesses.

The Palaszczuk government made the decision to protect the long-term future of North Stradbroke Island by legislating an end to sand mining in 2019. We know that the people employed by Sibelco need jobs or pathways to a new career, which is why we have committed more than \$28 million as part of a transition package to assist North Stradbroke Island to become an ecotourism hub with a revitalised diverse economy, including funding for workers' transition.

Recently, I travelled to North Stradbroke Island and met with the Quandamooka people and QYAC—the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation—about their aspirations for future tourism opportunities and with Sibelco about their planning on the closure of the mine. I can assure the committee that this beautiful piece of paradise right on our doorstep has a very strong and vibrant future.

Mr SAUNDERS: Following the recent machinery-of-government changes, this is the first time the Office of Small Business has been with Training in a portfolio. What synergies are there in this new department?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I am excited to be the first Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development. There have been great benefits in bringing these portfolios together. As the minister, throughout my travels the No. 1 issue that small businesses and chambers of commerce members bring to my attention is the importance of training for skilled employees for their small businesses. Small businesses are acutely aware of the need to have the latest skills to be competitive in their workforce and to take advantage of new and emerging technologies. Whether that be upgrading their computer and accounting skills to tradies needing to upskill to learn how to operate state-of-the-art machinery, they are eager to pursue vocational training opportunities.

With the rapid changes in technology, it is important for small businesses to upskill their workforce to stay competitive and to have their experience recognised by formal qualifications. When I became Minister for Small Business, the CEO of CCIQ, Stephen Tait, said I needed to come with him to meet one of the Queensland small businesses that has gone large, Patriot Campers. Patriot Campers on the Gold Coast is a leader in innovation and design in the off-road camping and four-wheel drive industry—who knew it was a really big thing? They have been supporting through the Small Business' Mentoring for Growth Program and Stephen Tait was a big fan of what they were doing and their success. Stephen and I met the owner, Justin and his team. He is a passionate employer. He is very passionate about the business he has created from scratch and today they employ over 100 people.

Justin stressed to me the growth in recreational campers and the need for specialised training. This training was not currently offered anywhere in Queensland when I met with Justin and he had to look interstate for recognised qualifications. After that meeting I asked TAFE Queensland to look into what opportunities there were to fill this need. TAFE was able to confirm that there was a gap in the market for recreational vehicle training and requested that the department include it on the 2018 priority skills list, and we did.

I am pleased to say, as of 30 June this year, TAFE Queensland is offering a certificate III in recreational vehicle service and repairs and a certificate III in recreational vehicle manufacturing. This will directly benefit small, medium and large businesses like Patriot Campers working in Queensland to access trained and skilled Queensland workers. This is just one of many examples of how wonderful it is to have these portfolios in the one department.

TAFE Queensland provides a suite of subsidised training through their small business solutions program, including workshops and short business courses, and through the synergies offered by the new department we can react quickly to fill gaps in training for businesses big and small. I look forward to taking on further opportunities with business.

CHAIR: I note in your SDS there is a particular focus on supporting opportunities for mature age jobseekers. Like many members, I often have mature age jobseekers raise their concerns. I think they feel particularly vulnerable sometimes if they are having a job change et cetera and, of course, we all know they make a significant contribution. Could you please outline the outcomes being achieved?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. You are exactly right. Mature age workers bring fantastic skills, knowledge and experience to a workplace but can sometimes find it difficult. Sometimes it is hard to find anyone in a workplace willing to be called mature, I have to say. The experience of seasoned employees brings a wealth of opportunity for any employer and fellow worker that is often shared through informal mentoring and training. For workplaces, having employees of different ages promotes a sense of diversity and inclusiveness and results in improved productivity, performance and innovation.

As Australia's population ages, it will be important for employers to harness the benefits of older people in their workforce to foster business growth. To showcase those benefits we ran a \$5 million Mature Aged Worker Boost in the first half of this year. Some 287 mature age unemployed jobseekers 55 years and older were able to be employed through the program. One of these workers was David Larkin, who has found a rewarding job at Sirius Optics, a small business within my electorate in Logan that specialises in telescopes and microscopes. Store owner Cheryl-Ann Tan could not be happier. David, 64, has been interested in astronomy since he was a boy, when his dad got him involved. He was always a regular visitor to the store and was already well known to the customers, keen to talk about the latest news in astronomy business. Cheryl-Ann says David has become a bit of a local specialist in astrophotography. With the help of Back to Work he has found his dream job.

The Mature Aged Worker Boost has been popular across Queensland, as highlighted in question on notice No. 17. Mature age workers have been supported from the Torres Strait to the Southern Downs. Almost twice as many mature age workers have been supported in regional Queensland compared to South-East Queensland—regional workers like Henry from Nanango Taxi Delivery.

Nanango Taxi Delivery is a limousine and taxi service in the South Burnett region. Owner Geoffrey Gee said the business was struggling to keep up the maintenance of the property and the Back to Work program lightened the load. Mr Gee said of his employee Henry that he was returning to work after four years and the opportunity to work with the company has built Henry's self-esteem and given him that dignity that comes from work that our government so understands. I hope local stories like these inspire the member for Nanango to have a change of heart and decide to provide support for Queensland's Back to Work program.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Cairns, final question.

Mr HEALY: I note from page 3 of the SDS that my community in Cairns is part of the continuing \$900,000 Sticking Together pilot. Can you give us some details on the early feedback on that program, please?

Ms FENTIMAN: I can. I thank the member for the question. It is a fantastic program and I am really proud that we are investing \$900,000 in this pilot project. We know that the longer young people can stay in employment the higher the chances are of them continuing in employment. The Sticking Together pilot aims to reduce youth unemployment by working one-on-one with young people to provide coaching and mentoring to build their skills, confidence and resilience. Over 60 weeks the coach works with the employer and the employee to address issues which may otherwise cause the employment to cease. When you are working with people who may never have had a job before, you can imagine the sorts of things that come up between an employee and employer. Having someone to be the intermediary between them often diffuses situations and the employment relationship goes on to flourish.

Through the pilot programs in Townsville, Cairns and Logan we are supporting up to 90 young people as they move into the workforce, ensuring they receive encouragement and coaching to stay employed. The program is running from late 2017 to early 2019 but, as I say, the early indications are that the program is working. In Cairns we have seen some really positive signs. In the last four weeks the young people in work are achieving average work hours of 32.8 hours a week, which is a rise from 20.9 hours a week at the commencement of the coaching. In January 2015 youth unemployment in Cairns was 21.5 per cent when the statewide average was 14.1 per cent. The rate is now at 14.8 per cent, just above the state average of 13.1 per cent. It is programs like Sticking Together, Back to Work and Skilling Queenslanders for Work that are having that positive outcome on jobs growth.

When I was in Townsville recently I met with one of our fantastic coaches, Charis, and a program participant, Genosha. By working with Charis, Genosha has been able to find and keep a great job—her first job—with a local fish-and-chips store, Rock Paper Scissors. Meeting Genosha I saw firsthand how important this program is and the impact it is having on the young people involved. By building Genosha's confidence, she was able to motivate herself and cold-canvass businesses before finding a job with Rock Paper Scissors. Finding and starting a new job is incredibly daunting, particularly for young people. Programs like Sticking Together are seeing real benefits and, of course, it continues this government's commitment to jobs creation, in particular jobs for our young people.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore?

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, in respect to the North Stradbroke Island workers who have lost their job as a result of the premature closure of the North Stradbroke sand mine, can you advise how many of these workers have been able to secure alternative employment on the island and whether they are at similar staffing levels to what they had been when they were employed at the mine?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I did just cover some of that in the question from the member for Maryborough about the workers transition scheme. We are seeing great results. I think I said that, out of the 59 participants, we have had great records on training and on helping people to set up new businesses. Of the workers made redundant, as I said previously, nine have gained employment, five have retired, one is at university, one is undertaking an apprenticeship and five have started their own business.

Ms SIMPSON: Do we know how many people have left the island as a result of the mine being closed and the fact that workers and small businesses on the island have been impacted?

Ms FENTIMAN: As I said, as at 30 June, \$317,000 has been paid under the NSI Workers Assistance Scheme to 59 former and current Sibelco employees and one employer for an employer wage subsidy. Of those made redundant, nine have gained employment, some are in further study, one is at university, one is in an apprenticeship and there are new businesses. We are working hard to support the community. My department and the employment services manager on North Stradbroke Island will continue to work together to deliver that assistance for affected workers.

Ms SIMPSON: There is a real concern, in addition to individual impacts, about the corporate impact on the whole economy of Stradbroke Island. How many have actually been able to stay on the island with employment? Can the minister take on notice the question in regard to the numbers of people who have stayed employed on the island.

Ms FENTIMAN: Of the nine who are in employment, I can advise that five are on North Stradbroke Island and four on are on the mainland.

Ms SIMPSON: In respect to SDS page 2, empowering small business, under the late payment policy to small business, how common are late payments and what has been the average interest expense paid for by taxpayers?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I can advise that as at 30 June 2018 my agency has received no penalty claims under the late payment policy.

Ms SIMPSON: I would like to follow up an answer the director-general gave in respect of the government's criteria for Back to Work SEQ and why the criteria is not only the unemployment figures. Will the minister release the criteria that have been used for the areas to be included in and those to be excluded from that program for SEQ so that there can be transparency about the measures that have been used, particularly given that there are areas with higher youth unemployment excluded? Will you publish that criteria?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I will speak slowly and it will be published by Hansard so it will be absolutely transparent. The identification of areas facing significant labour market challenges is not just the latest monthly unemployment rate. The assessment included consideration of matters such as broader economic conditions in those local communities and connections to employment opportunities including the ability of unemployed people to access transport.

Ms SIMPSON: Will you provide the weighting of factors so that those criteria and how they are applied is transparent?

Ms FENTIMAN: No. That is the modelling that was undertaken and we have been very transparent around the factors that were considered in making that decision.

Ms SIMPSON: Without seeing the weighting of factors, the criteria are not transparent. I ask again: will you please give a commitment for transparency and release the weighting of those factors that have been used in you choosing some areas to receive additional funding and other areas not?

Ms FENTIMAN: No. I have answered your question about modelling and what factors were taken into account, as has the director-general.

Ms SIMPSON: I put it to you that a Labor seat, Ipswich, has a lower youth unemployment figure than seats on the Sunshine Coast, including that of the member for Noosa. Other LNP seats have higher youth unemployment figures than Ipswich. Why will you not release the weightage of the criteria?

CHAIR: With respect, the question was asked twice and answered twice.

Ms SIMPSON: The minister has not answered what the weighting of factors is. There has been no transparency.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, you asked the question twice but the minister did answer it.

Ms SIMPSON: She has not answered what the weighting of factors has been.

CHAIR: I appreciate that you may not like that answer, but the minister has answered.

Ms SIMPSON: It is a cover-up, Madam Chairman, as to why she has put money into Labor seats but is denying young people who are disadvantaged in other parts of the state.

CHAIR: Do you have a point of order or a speech?

Ms FENTIMAN: Sorry, isn't the Scenic Rim represented by one of your members?

CHAIR: Order! Member for Maroochydore and Minister. As I said, you put the question twice. The minister has answered it. I appreciate that you may not like that answer, but do you have a further question or a different line of questioning?

Ms FENTIMAN: Also I think the member for Pumicestone is in the Moreton Bay region, which currently is still getting Back to Work South-East Queensland. You may have forgotten about a couple of your members, including the one sitting next to you.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Maroochydore, do you have a question for the minister?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes, I had a question that I was starting to ask. With respect, I do not know what the minister was verballing about, but she has not explained about the weightage in different areas.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, move on.

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the director-general. How many of the applicants in the month of June were refused due to not having met the four weeks of paid employment eligibility criteria?

Ms Curtis: I thank the member for the question. All applications that have been submitted up to and including 30 June have been assessed and, if eligible, have received their funding.

Ms SIMPSON: Director-General, was an awareness campaign undertaken for prospective employers to ensure that they could meet the four-week funding criteria before the minister announced that the Back to Work program for South-East Queensland was being redefined to only a few parts of South-East Queensland?

CHAIR: Director-General, I draw your attention to the time. You have one minute to answer before we break.

Ms Curtis: Thank you for the question. The information about the initial Back to Work program was published on the Back to Work website when it was announced. The criteria and the eligibility criteria which I just mentioned earlier were very clear. On budget day, the Back to Work website was updated with information about the Back to Work South-East Queensland program.


Ms SIMPSON: The website is not very clear. Departmental staff who were advising small business people were very upset because the criteria was not clear.

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

Ms Curtis: As I said, the website very clearly on the front page had a prominent message around changes to the program once they were announced. The initial information regarding the Back to Work program, that it was initially for 12 months and the eligibility criteria, were clearly displayed on the website when the initial program was announced.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time allocated for questioning on the Employment and Small Business portfolio area has now expired. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 3.45 pm with the examination of the estimates for the Training and Skills Development portfolio. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the Training and Skills Development portfolio. We are again joined by the member for Maroochydore. I call the member for Maroochydore to start the questioning.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My question is to the CEO of TAFE. I refer to the total expenses on page 31 of the SDS and answer to question on notice No. 15. Ms Campbell, why have TAFE Queensland's hospitality expenses doubled in three years?

Ms Campbell: Question on notice No. 15 requested the total value of TAFE Queensland's business development and hospitality expenses. TAFE Queensland recognises that there are circumstances where the provision of hospitality is appropriate and can result in business benefits to the organisation. TAFE Queensland ensures that the public sector standards of accountability for hospitality are maintained and that expenditure on hospitality must be for official purposes, must not be excessive and should be able to withstand public scrutiny. All expenditure on hospitality must be incurred for a specific outcome that can be demonstrated to be to the benefit of TAFE Queensland. Therefore, if you look to those business development hospitality expenses, 2015-16 was \$38,000, 2016-17 was \$37,000 and for 2017-18 there was an increase to \$83,000, but we were the tier 1 providers for the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games during that time.

Mrs STUCKEY: My question is also to the CEO of TAFE Queensland. I refer to the income statement on page 31 of the SDS and assorted Commonwealth Games sponsorship footnotes. As one of only seven tier 1 games sponsors, how many tickets were provided to TAFE as part of the sponsorship agreement?

Ms Campbell: TAFE Queensland's partnership agreement with Goldoc included provisions for the purchase and use of tickets for commercial business outcomes. TAFE Queensland provided a report and acquittal of tickets purchased to the Office of the Commonwealth Games. Our total purchased ticket allocation was 2,148.

Mrs STUCKEY: Are you able to provide any sort of breakdown as to whether they were for ceremonies or events?

Ms Campbell: How the tickets were used?

Mrs STUCKEY: Yes.

Ms Campbell: TAFE Queensland purchased those tickets as part of our key strategy to activate our role as official training partner of the Commonwealth Games. Our purchase and use of tickets was conservative and appropriate. We used the tickets to promote our official role, to acquire new students and to build new and existing relationships for commercial clients. Following the games, we submitted a registry of tickets purchased and the department has used this to publish information on the Embracing 2018 site. We used tickets for student and client acquisition, recognising student and volunteer achievements, as well as for a business development program focused on new business. Ticket sessions were selected on the basis of achieving value for money and selection of tickets occurred via the Goldoc managed process for tier 1 partners.

Mrs STUCKEY: I thank you for that, but really I was looking for the number allocated specifically for ceremonies and specifically for sporting events. It sounds like they were spread over a number of things.

Ms Campbell: They certainly were. I can give you some examples of the tickets purchased. Some examples of our staff tickets purchased were for 54 staff who were game shapers who took leave from TAFE Queensland to support the games. We had 41 staff who volunteered their time to support TAFE Queensland. Sixty-eight of our staff worked at the games supervising our students on work experience, promoting TAFE Queensland's role as an official training partner and our commercial offerings.

Ms SIMPSON: My question, again, is to the CEO of TAFE. I refer to TAFE's income statement on page 31 of the SDS and assorted Commonwealth Games sponsorship footnotes. In total, how much did the tier 1 Commonwealth Games sponsorship cost TAFE Queensland?

Ms Campbell: TAFE Queensland's partnership with the 2018 games was a unique investment, providing an impact on our financial statements across a number of categories, including other expenses, other revenue, and supplies and services. Our other expenses category also includes insurance premiums, impairment losses, loss on disposal of PPE, audit fees and scholarships. Scholarships were reclassified from grants and subsidies during 2017-18 to other expenses. Going forward, they are budgeted under other expenses. When the sponsorship agreement was signed in 2016, the financial projections for TAFE were positive. In accordance with the confidentiality obligations contained within that agreement when it was signed, TAFE Queensland is unable to disclose the total value of its sponsorship agreement.

Ms SIMPSON: I will ask another question to the CEO of TAFE. Noting your advice that the cost of sponsorship is not being released, could you advise the cost of the tickets provided to TAFE employees?

Ms Campbell: No free tickets were provided to TAFE Queensland. All tickets were purchased by TAFE Queensland for our use as a sponsor and official training partner. The number of those tickets was 2,148.

Ms SIMPSON: What was the cost of those tickets?

Ms Campbell: The cost of the tickets that TAFE Queensland purchased was \$230,641.

Ms SIMPSON: My next question is again to the CEO of TAFE. I refer to page 31 of the SDS and answer to question on notice No. 14. As directed by question on notice No 14, I see that in the last reported period of 2016-17 both the chair and CEO of TAFE each took one trip to the UK, costing a combined total of \$29,255.96. Ms Campbell, can you provide a cost breakdown of that expense measure, including hospitality costs?

Ms Campbell: Are you asking for a breakdown from the previous CEO's and board chair's travel expenses? Could you clarify that for me, please? Would you like some information about the trip?

Ms SIMPSON: Question on notice No. 14 asked about travel costs and breakdowns. What was provided was the last reported period in the link, which is 2016-17. In that link it says that both the chair and CEO of TAFE each took one trip to the UK, costing a combined total of \$29,255.96. I am after the cost breakdown of that expense measure, including hospitality costs.

Ms Campbell: I would like to add some further information for you. In the four years of operation, one international trip has been undertaken by a board member. That was the board chair's travel to the UK in March 2017 to further develop TAFE Queensland's business opportunities, including meetings with UK based international agents. The board chair was accompanied by the former chief executive officer of TAFE Queensland. The travel coincided with the official launch of the Queen's Baton Relay and enabled the chair and former CEO to represent TAFE Queensland as the official training partner for the Commonwealth Games. The total cost of that travel for the board chair was \$14,514.

Some of the business outcome related activities that that travel has enabled have resulted in onshore training partnerships from students as far away as Sweden who train at our east-coast campus and TAFE Queensland's partnership with the Le Cordon Bleu's Culinary Arts Programs, which commenced in Brisbane in July this year. I do not have any further breakdown of the hospitality or the trip expenses with me to hand.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to travel for the last financial year, which is not publicly available yet. Can you answer: how many trips were taken by the CEO and the chair last year and what was the cost of each?

Ms Campbell: I do not have that information to hand, but I am more than happy to get that for you as it relates to the CEO and the chair. Are you looking for international travel or are you talking about domestic travel?

Ms SIMPSON: Could I have a breakdown between domestic and international travel, thank you?

Ms Campbell: I would like to add that the current chair of the board is a regional chair from Mackay, so there will be travel expenses as she supports TAFE Queensland in her role as chair of the board.

Ms SIMPSON: Will that be taken on notice?

Ms Campbell: Yes, I will get that information to you as soon as I can.

Ms SIMPSON: I have a follow-up question to the CEO of TAFE. I refer to page 31 of the SDS and the answer to question on notice No. 14, which outlines that over the past three financial years TAFE has spent over \$2 million on overseas travel. I ask: why is travel expenditure forecast to be up by 40 per cent since the 2014-15 financial year?

Ms Campbell: I would like to quickly give you an overview to explain our travel expenses. We have students from 90 countries who choose to come and stay with TAFE Queensland due to its international reputation, our world-class standard of training and our state-of-the-art facilities. South Korea, China, Columbia, Brazil and Thailand are TAFE Queensland's main source countries of international students. We have a range of very popular programs. Data from the federal Department of Education and Training recorded that there were 21,360 international vocational education and training students enrolling in Queensland from 114 countries. This is represented as 17.3 per cent growth in the last year.

Our overseas travel expenses for the last financial year were \$632,649. The revenue that we brought into the organisation from our international travel and training our students onshore and offshore was in the vicinity of \$32 million. We travel overseas to various agents' shows and to explain how well TAFE Queensland does its training onshore. We also have offshore engagement where we deliver offshore for a range of clients that contact TAFE Queensland looking for specific workplace training and skills development.

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the minister. I refer to page 31 of the SDS and to your answer to question on notice No. 11. According to your answer, Minister, since the Palaszczuk government took office, less Queenslanders across the board are completing courses at TAFE; less apprenticeships, less traineeships and less school based apprenticeships. I ask: why has the government allowed TAFE bosses to go on a wining, dining and flying spree while student completions are in freefall?

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, in future, please put your questions directly without all of the additional commentary. Minister?

Ms FENTIMAN: TAFE Queensland's sponsorship of the Commonwealth Games and the travel associated with that has brought significant benefits to TAFE, including a number of new contracts. There are a number of opportunities being explored by TAFE. A total of 128 business opportunities have arisen for TAFE Queensland as a result of their involvement as a sponsor and the travel that they do. I absolutely take offence at your notion of hardworking TAFE Queensland staff wining and dining. They do a terrific job training students across Queensland—our future tradies, our future nurses, our future chefs. They do an amazing job. They work incredibly hard to bring contracts from overseas to TAFE. They do an incredible job.

I want to address your point about apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland. Firstly, Queensland is leading the way when it comes to commencements for apprenticeships and traineeships. We are bucking the national trend. Nationally there was a decrease in commencements. In Queensland we have had an increase of 8.5 per cent. We are getting things right in Queensland. In terms of

completions, I am the first to admit that we have more to do, but we had the second highest result of all jurisdictions. With high commencements and the work we are doing to support our apprentices, I am confident that we will start to turn this around.

What really impacts upon completion rates is the enormous cuts that we have seen from the Commonwealth government around training and skills. If you have listened to me speak in the House you will know that really all I do is talk about how the Commonwealth government has absolutely walked away from apprentices and trainees in this state. Last financial year we had a \$70 million cut to our training budget from the federal government. That is 7,000 apprenticeships and traineeships put at risk by the federal government. I have not heard the member for Maroochydore or the member for Nanango or anyone from the LNP talk about how they have raised this issue with their federal counterparts.

The cuts from the federal government are extraordinary. They cut the Tools for Your Trade program, which helped apprentices and trainees get the tools they needed. They have cut the National Partnership on Productivity Places Program. They have cut the Joint Group Training Program. They have cut the TAFE fee waiver for childcare qualifications. As I said, they also ripped \$70 million out of the training budget last financial year and \$10 million each year going forward.

We are doing the hard work to get better commencement rates and support our apprentices with our Advancing Apprentices \$1 million fund, which highlights the wonderful careers people can have as apprentices, but it is hard to go it alone. So much of the funding comes from the Commonwealth government—

Ms SIMPSON: You have increased your hospitality and travel costs. You have bumped up your expenses.

CHAIR: Order! Member for Maroochydore. I allowed you latitude with your question and I am allowing the minister latitude with her answer. Minister, were you still answering the question?

Ms FENTIMAN: I was. The silence from the member for Maroochydore has been deafening, but I am not—

Ms SIMPSON: I take offence and I ask that that be withdrawn.

CHAIR: Minister.

Ms FENTIMAN: I withdraw. I would also like to add to my answer about what makes things tough in terms of completion rates for apprentices and trainees. The LNP in its election costings—in the document that I tabled earlier—had a \$20 million cut to User Choice funding. That is the funding that is used to fund apprentices and trainees in Queensland. You wanted to rip \$20 million out of the User Choice program. That is in those election costing documents.

We are doing the heavy lifting in Queensland. We have the best performing commencement rates and the second best completion rates. When you see every state struggling with completions, you know there is a common factor. That is the Turnbull government walking away from training our future tradies in this state.

Ms SIMPSON: I have a question for the CEO of TAFE. I refer to page 31 of the SDS and TAFE's income statement. I refer to the emerging practice whereby employers are requiring training providers to pay for work placements and also requiring some students to pay for work placements. Over the past financial year, how much has TAFE paid for student placements and how much have you put aside to pay for TAFE placements in the workforce in year ahead?

Ms Campbell: Mandatory vocational placement is included in qualifications in response to industry requirements and an acknowledgement that industry has a role in providing genuine workplace experiences for our students and future workers. Under the VET investment plan a number of qualifications have a mandatory vocational placement component—for example, the certificate III in individual support and some of our nursing qualifications.

Industry strongly supports the use of vocational placements. In our nursing program we have a range of vocational placements that are very competitive. That is built into the student cost. It is usually between \$100 and \$400. I do not have with me now the exact amount of vocational placements wrapped up for you, but I am happy to provide that information as soon as I can.

Ms SIMPSON: Will it be taken on notice how much TAFE is paying towards student placements?

Ms Campbell: I will get back to you with that information as soon as I can.

CHAIR: If you are unable to get back to us by the end of the session then the question will have to be put to the minister as to whether she wishes to take it on notice. I invite the member for Cairns to ask a question.

Mr HEALY: I refer to page 7 of SDS and note that an area highlight is developing strategies that work for Queensland training providers and students. I note that Queensland has not yet signed up to the national partnership on the Skilling Australians Fund. Can you please outline the reasons Queensland has not signed yet?

Ms FENTIMAN: I am really pleased to see that we are the only state with an increase in commencements—with commencements up 8.5 per cent, bucking the national trend. It really is thanks to our investment. We are continuing with \$777.9 million in funding to support Queenslanders undertake a vocational education. As I outlined, this really is in stark contrast to the Turnbull government and their cuts to training. Malcolm Turnbull is simply not interested in engaging with Queensland and coming to the table on the national partnership on the Skilling Australians Fund. It is a terrible deal for Queenslanders.

Under the new national partnership agreement Queensland is losing \$70 million in the first year—7,000 apprenticeships and traineeships are at risk. Furthermore, under the Skilling Australians Fund the Turnbull government previously committed in the 2017 budget \$1.5 billion over four years, but in this year's budget that dropped to \$1.2 billion over four years. That is another cut to training.

It is unacceptable that Queensland and other states and territories are being asked to increase the numbers of apprentices and trainees without an increase in their funding. In fact, ministers from other states and territories have expressed their concern with the national partnership. In the *Australian* on 15 March 2018, New South Wales Deputy Premier and skills minister John Barilaro said that students would suffer if Canberra failed to renew the \$1.7 billion national partnership agreement. He said—

It is estimated that up to 66,000 students could be adversely impacted if a new agreement is not put in place. The NPA is vital to ensure training providers continue to deliver the highest quality training to apprentices taking up a trade in New South Wales. In May 2017 we had ministers from Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and South Australia jointly express disappointment with the agreement that was being put on the table.

It seems that other members of the Liberal National Party are standing up against the Turnbull government. We have seen no such action from the LNP in Queensland.

The Turnbull government should come to Queensland with a fair deal—a deal that addresses Queensland's concerns and one that acknowledges the work that the Palaszczuk government is doing in this sector. Recently the Queensland government submitted a project for 2017-18 worth \$49 million based on projected growth of 9,850 additional apprenticeship and traineeship commencements in Queensland. That was based on the Commonwealth's own calculations of \$10,000 per place. What did Queensland get? Another cut.

Assistant minister Karen Andrews short-changed her own state of Queensland, approving only \$39.4 million in Commonwealth funds. Last week I wrote to assistant minister Karen Andrews to clarify why the Turnbull government is yet again cutting funding to training in Queensland and I am looking forward to her response.

The Palaszczuk government is doing all of the heavy lifting when it comes to training in Queensland. I remain committed to fighting for what is best for Queensland and I urge LNP MPs to do the same.

Mr HEALY: I note the SDS highlights support for apprentices. How does Queensland fare in comparison to other states when it comes to people commencing an apprenticeship, and what are you doing to encourage more people to employ apprentices and trainees?

Ms FENTIMAN: As I have said a couple of times now, we are bucking the trend nationally with our commencements which means we are doing something right. We believe that encouraging, supporting and assisting our employers to take on apprentices and trainees is absolutely fundamental to making sure we have a skilled workforce for the future. I am really looking forward to partnering with industry and employers with an up to \$1 million commitment to promote and highlight the benefits of apprenticeships. The commitment will encourage industries to interact, engage and work with school leavers, parents, schools and communities to promote apprenticeships as a valuable education and training choice.

The recent round tables I have held with industry have demonstrated to me that businesses have great ideas about how to encourage young people to consider an apprenticeships or traineeships. I heard, for example, from the Motor Trades Association, which in July ran a three-day course for high

school students to give them a taste of what working in the automotive sector might mean and to help young people consider the endless work and training possibilities that might be open to them. That is why we are working with industry, with our \$1 million commitment of matched funding to promote and highlight apprenticeships and traineeships.

We have also boosted the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, increasing traineeships through the Work Start incentive, the First Start and Works Skills Traineeships program. This includes a new \$20,000 youth boost payment for businesses that employ a trainee or apprentice who worked under a Skilling Queenslanders for Work project.

We have doubled the payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees to make it more affordable for employers to hire an apprentice or trainee. The incentive will deliver up to \$45 million in payroll tax rebates for employers of apprentices or trainees. We know that as at 30 June 2,747 businesses have already saved more than \$16 million.

To further encourage employers to hire apprentices, we are driving down the cost of doing business through WorkCover Queensland's premium and benefits package. Businesses that hire apprentices benefit greatly because they do not pay a cent for WorkCover premiums on the apprentices they hire.

We are also investing in group training organisations. We have committed over \$3.25 million in funding under the 2018-19 Queensland Joint Group Training Program to create additional apprenticeship opportunities for apprentices employed through group training organisations. Further, as of 1 September last year the Queensland Building and Construction Training Policy requires 15 per cent of total labour hours on major building and construction projects to be undertaken by apprentices and trainees.

We are working hard to increase the opportunities for young Queenslanders to commence apprenticeships and traineeships, and we know that industry are hugely supportive of the policies and initiatives we have already commenced. We are going to continue to make it even easier to hire an apprentice or trainee.

CHAIR: I note the SDS at page 7 highlights the importance of supporting Queenslanders' career development. In supporting Queenslanders to gain the skills they need to fulfil career goals, how many VET courses are provided fee-free to year 12 graduates?

Ms FENTIMAN: I am sure all members will be incredibly pleased to hear that free training for year 12 graduates targets apprenticeships and traineeships and other vocational education and training pathways that are in demand. These are the jobs that industry need. We know that this training will produce wonderful employment outcomes.

Last financial year we invested more than \$26 million in the free training for year 12 graduates initiative, and it is growing. From 3,282 year 12 graduates in 2014-15 and 9,000 young Queenslanders in the last financial year, it is an exciting investment. For the young Queenslanders who know that vocational education and training is for them, this will help them get ahead.

It is for year 12 students like Tia Bree. Tia Bree was at a bit of loss when she finished year 12, but did know that further study would help her find a career that worked for her. The questions were, however, what to study and how to make it happen. Tia Bree found out about our government's fee-free training for year 12 graduates. She did some more research and signed up for a certificate III in individual support, which gave her entry into the aged-care worker sector—a growing sector.

Paying no fees whatsoever for her training, Tia Bree was able to focus on her studies without worrying about her finances. Tia Bree now works at CapellaBay nursing home in Capalaba and, just quietly, she is thinking about furthering her health studies in medicine. The fee-free training is presently available to Queenslanders who graduated from high school last year. With up to 160 qualifications available, I say: get in there and see what sparks your interest.

Fee-free training gives year 12 graduates a head start on their careers by allowing them to complete a high-priority qualification through an apprenticeship, traineeship or selected VET course without the financial burden of student fees. To be eligible, prospective participants must permanently reside in Queensland, have completed year 12 and hold a senior statement issued by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority or an equivalent certification. They must also enrol and start their apprenticeship, traineeship or training with the approved provider in a high-priority qualification by the end of the calendar year following their completion of year 12. They have a full 12 months to work out what is right for them.

The second half of 2018 signals an important milestone for this initiative as the class of 2017—so last year's graduates—are nearing the end of their eligibility to take advantage of fee-free training. I hope that members here today will go back to their communities and get the message out that anyone who graduated high school last year is still eligible for fee-free training. As I said, there are so many courses available, why wouldn't you see what is out there?

CHAIR: Minister, could you please outline for the committee what industry collaborations TAFE Queensland is undertaking and how does that collaboration support workforce development?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question and I know that she is a huge supporter of TAFE Queensland. As Queensland's largest VET provider, TAFE Queensland plays a critical role in the delivery of industry relevant training, assisting businesses throughout the state in building a robust and, importantly, an adaptable workforce. From start-ups to multinationals and from apprentices to sole traders, TAFE Queensland provides the training advice and partnerships required across a diverse range of industries. Further, it maintains strong relationships with all major industry regulators and bodies which represent employers. TAFE Queensland is uniquely positioned to meet future industry training needs with its size, statewide presence, high-quality teachers and a range of training products and industry linkages.

Earlier this year I announced a first for TAFE Queensland—something that was mentioned by the CEO already today—a fantastic partnership between TAFE and Le Cordon Bleu to deliver at the South Bank TAFE campus world-class culinary and patisserie training over the next 10 years. As part of this fantastic collaboration, the Palaszczuk government committed \$3.7 million towards a kitchen upgrade on the campus. Through this investment, TAFE South Bank campus will have the best culinary training facilities in the state. It will put Brisbane on the map as one of the key destinations to get this vital training. We know we are going to see a skills shortage in the area of chefs and in hospitality and tourism, so what better time to bring this wonderful partnership to Brisbane.

TAFE Queensland has also successfully retained the ongoing management of the Australia-Pacific Technical College for stage 3 of the contract which commenced in April this year, concluding in 2022. This program delivers a wide range of qualifications to Pacific islanders. The contract value is \$128.750 million, with a further four-year extension of stage 3 likely which will be funded at a similar rate, with an overall contract value of \$257 million. To date, more than 12,800 students have completed Australian qualifications through this initiative. Travelling overseas to the Pacific brings in lots of money for TAFE and builds a successful organisation.

Aviation Australia, now part of TAFE Queensland through a partnership with Shamal Commercial Investments, has an aviation college in Saudi Arabia, offering world-class aviation maintenance training at a brand-new, purpose designed training and maintenance facility at King Khalid International Airport on the outskirts of the capital of Saudi Arabia.

These are some of the many examples of how TAFE Queensland is partnering up with local and multinational organisations, delivering world-class training here and abroad. Staff from TAFE Queensland are travelling all over the globe—Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea, South America and Europe—exporting the skills and providing revenue back to TAFE Queensland. That is what international travel does.

In recognition of TAFE Queensland's hard work, it has won a number of state, national and international awards and successfully established several key partnerships and projects which will further enhance the organisation's training services. TAFE Queensland is uniquely positioned to meet future industry training needs with its size, statewide presence, high-quality teachers and our industry linkages. All of this is possible because of the investment in TAFE Queensland from our government.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and I thank you for your kind opening comments. I do indeed love TAFE and the doors that it opens for people. Thank you so much for your hard work.

Mr HEALY: Minister, what can the residents of the beautiful and tropical city of Cairns expect to see from the Advancing our Training Infrastructure investment outlined in the SDS?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I know the member for Cairns values the vital role that TAFE plays in training people for jobs in his local region. The people of Cairns recognise that value too when they backed our election commitment to invest \$85 million over three years into priority TAFEs under the Advancing our Training Infrastructure initiative. This initiative is all about making sure we have state-of-the-art facilities and that they are fit for purpose to deliver the skills needed in our communities and support training for jobs of the future. This is an important investment in the skills and productivity required to continue the growth of the Queensland economy. It is unashamedly about making TAFE the premier training provider in Queensland.

We will see improvements made at Pimlico in Townsville, where I recently visited to see their plans for the first major revamp of the campus in over 40 years; Toowoomba; Mount Gravatt, where I also recently announced additional funding for a fashion centre of excellence; the Gold Coast; Redlands; and, of course, Cairns. In Cairns up to \$15 million will be spent upgrading and refurbishing facilities, and planning will soon begin to design this work. Cairns TAFE is doing a great job, but there is no doubt that a refurbishment of the facilities will give them a much needed boost. What a welcome boost it is across all six sites after TAFE assets were neglected and sold off under the disastrous QTAMA arrangement under the previous government.

The Advancing our Training Infrastructure sites are central to our development of regional infrastructure plans. I look forward to working with Cairns MPs as we develop a plan for this vital region to ensure that training facilities keep pace and remain relevant to the kinds of jobs growing in the far north.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, what scholarship does TAFE Queensland provide and how do they assist Queenslanders undertake a VET qualification?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question and I know what a big supporter he is of the Maryborough TAFE campus. TAFE Queensland does provide a variety of scholarships to eligible Queenslanders to achieve their goals. The scholarships are available to support study of a wide range of qualifications with TAFE Queensland by providing up to \$5,000 to help cover the costs such as course fees, textbooks and living expenses. The scholarships provide an opportunity for Queenslanders everywhere to develop their skills and gain a qualification to secure jobs in some of the largest and fastest growing industries.

TAFE Queensland has partnered with the world-renowned designer Jimmy Choo to offer a scholarship in fashion. This merit scholarship awards students \$5,000 to study a Diploma of Applied Fashion Design and Merchandising or Advanced Diploma of Applied Fashion Design and Merchandising. The Professor Jimmy Choo Fashion Scholarship came about after his visit to Queensland last year where he showcased TAFE Queensland as a leader of fashion and design training.

The Advance Queensland—TAFE Queensland Pathways Scholarships provide more Queenslanders with the opportunity to study science, technology, engineering and maths at TAFE. The scholarship is designed to encourage students to complete both a TAFE Queensland qualification and university study in STEM related careers including nursing, engineering, science and technology. This is done through financial support of \$5,000 in the first year and a potential further top-up of \$5,000 if they continue on to university.

Previous winners of the Advance Queensland—TAFE Queensland Pathways Scholarship include Nicola Degui, who completed a Diploma of Nursing at the Mooloolaba campus. Nicola volunteered for Mercy Ships when she was 19 and worked in their medical team to provide free health care to remote island communities who are unable to access hospitals. Nicola knew that health was something she was passion about, and now that her kids are older she decided it was the time to pursue her dream again. Nicola applied for and was successful in receiving an Advance Queensland—TAFE Queensland Pathways Scholarship. Through the scholarship, Nicola recently graduated with a Diploma of Nursing and intends to continue her studies at university to become a registered nurse. She would one day love to return to the islands—this time as a qualified healthcare professional.

To highlight the recent International Nurses Day on 12 May, TAFE Queensland nursing student Jodie Gregg was recognised for her years of hard work at Kalwun Health in Oxenford and her dedication to her Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and family. Jody is the successful recipient of the TAFE Queensland Indigenous Scholarship for 2018.

Applications for scholarships to support study at TAFE Queensland in semester 1 of 2019 close on 31 August. The Palaszczuk government's ongoing commitment to TAFE Queensland means that people like Nicola and Jody are able to pursue their dreams.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, with reference to the training budget and the Vocational Education and Training Investment Plan, how is this investment supporting children with an out-of-home care experience?

Ms FENTIMAN: We know that young people in out-of-home care often face multiple barriers. Unfortunately, statistics show that young people in out-of-home care are significantly less likely to participate in further education or training and attain a qualification. This program, the What's Next Out-of-Home Care Fund, is the first of its kind in Australia, and it is designed to support young people

who have been in out-of-home care to take the next step into training and employment. The key to the What's Next Out-of-Home Care Fund program is that it enables young people to make good decisions about enrolling in vocational education and training of their choice and, where needed, provides young people with additional financial support for expenses such as uniforms or equipment.

This program provides the support that many young people in out-of-home care have not been able to receive from their families. Since commencement, a total of 78 young people have made contact with the program. Nine young people are currently enrolled in training or have completed their qualification. Others are waiting to commence the program or have determined that a vocational education and training pathway for the time being is not for them, but I am advised that a further 57 young people are currently being offered appointments with the What's Next pathways officer to receive advice on their pathways into vocational education and training.

For the young people who are currently enrolled in training, the industry areas are broad and qualifications being studied by students include a Certificate III in Hospitality, Certificate III in Business Administration, Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate III in Travel. Providing young people who have been in out-of-home care with assistance and support to access education and training is just one of the many ways that a government can play a role in the future of these young people.

I have been told about one young woman who wants to work in the retail and personal services industry, possibly in the longer term working as a hairdresser or in beauty services. After consultation with the What's Next pathway officer, it was decided that a Certificate III in Nail Technology would give this young woman an important start in the industry she wants to work in and a pathway to her dream of working in this industry. The What's Next Out-of-Home Care Fund paid her co-contribution fee and provided essential equipment. That is just one example of what we can do to support our most vulnerable children to realise their dreams. We remain committed to supporting every young Queenslander to succeed and to support those young people who have experienced disruption in their lives.

CHAIR: I invite the member for Hinchinbrook to ask a question.

Mr DAMETTO: My question is to the minister. Small business owners are the backbone of regional employment, but we see small businesses continuing to hurt with the continuing rise of energy, wages and insurance. We have heard all about new taxes bestowed on small business. Perhaps the minister could advise what budgetary allocations or schemes will be made available in the budget to help reduce the burden of costs of training to upskill employees who work within their small businesses.

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. It is a great question. As we experience an ageing population, more and more the challenge for us to continue to grow our economy by lifting productivity is to upskill existing workers. That is why we have a fantastic \$5 million program for funding training for gap skills.

I was at the Acacia Ridge SkillsTech site recently where I met a gentleman who had worked in the mechanics industry for most of his career but had never had a formal qualification. Employers can apply through the department to obtain funding through a prequalified supplier, like TAFE, to fill in the gap between his industry experience and what it would take to get him a qualification. He was thrilled with the program. His employer was thrilled with the program. Once he had attained his qualification, he was then willing to work with his boss to take on further apprentices and trainees because, as someone who then had the qualification, he would be able to supervise young people coming into his place of employment.

It is a fantastic program. It would be good if you could to get out there and encourage more businesses in your regional electorate to apply for that gap skills funding, because it absolutely makes a difference, particularly where people have worked in an industry but need to do a little bit of upskilling or re-skilling to get a qualification. Also, in the Hinchinbrook electorate in the last 12 months there was \$1.1 million in User Choice funding, which is the funding program used to fund apprentices and trainees. That was provided to employers in your region. The Certificate 3 Guarantee funding was of the order of \$5.8 million for employers in your electorate. We absolutely want to work with industry to make sure that we can bring down some of the costs of training and skills because making sure that we have a skilled workforce for the future is essential to continuing to grow our economy. I would be really happy to send you some more information on these programs so you can encourage more local small businesses to apply.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you very much for your answer, Minister.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, I refer to page 7 of the SDS. Will the collaboration with Jobs Queensland for strategic industry advice provide each of our electorates with a needs analysis of skills demand so they can ensure the provision of relevant and customised industry training?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Jobs Queensland does a fantastic job providing industry advice to government. It has undertaken a few statewide projects recently—tourism, manufacturing and anticipating future skills as well as a number of place based projects. They have been doing some great work in the Fraser Coast, at Ipswich with advanced manufacturing and in Townsville.

Activities are undertaken or advice is developed by Jobs Queensland on a regional basis. It is not done at an electorate level but on a regional level. Jobs Queensland is happy to discuss and provide advice on workforce planning in Queensland's regions. They do a lot of community consultation. They meet with a number of industry representatives. I would be more than happy to see if we can get you a briefing on Jobs Queensland, particularly the future skills project and what they might be looking for in the Sunshine Coast-Noosa region.

Ms BOLTON: Fantastic, thank you.

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the CEO of TAFE Queensland. I refer to page 34 of the SDS and the explanation of variances in the financial statement No. 2, and I ask: how much was the one-off contribution from the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training?

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for the question. So note 2 on page 34?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes.

Ms Campbell: The Queensland government provided TAFE Queensland additional funding for replacement of outdated educational equipment, investment in contemporary equipment, furniture and fittings, front-line service delivery and investment in our teaching and training resources. This note, and this line in the budget, was also reimbursement and funds received under the Regional Skills Adjustment Strategy.

Ms SIMPSON: Could we get a breakdown of those different items that you mentioned?

Ms Campbell: In the full financial year the state contribution grant is \$170.6 million for TAFE Queensland. You would like a breakdown into—

Ms SIMPSON: Of that increase in grants and other contributions. It says that it mainly relates to a one-off contribution from the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training. What I am asking for is a breakdown of how much there is for the items under that one-off contribution mentioned in the variances.

Ms Campbell: I do not have that at hand, but I will get you that information as soon as I can.

Ms SIMPSON: Will the minister take that on notice if it is not available today?

Ms FENTIMAN: Sure.

Ms SIMPSON: I have a question for the CEO of TAFE in regard to the assets of TAFE on page 32. I refer to the Strategic Training Asset Management Plan, which I understand the department has undertaken but which has not been released. How much did this plan cost and why has it not been released?

Ms FENTIMAN: With respect, TAFE assets are held by the state government, not TAFE, so that would be more appropriately addressed to me or the director-general.

Ms SIMPSON: I will ask the director-general then. With respect to the Strategic Training Asset Management Plan, which we were advised in previous estimates the department had undertaken, how much did this plan cost and why has it not been released?

Ms Curtis: I thank the member for the question. I understand there has been a question on notice tabled which has previously provided the information that you are looking for.

Ms SIMPSON: In regard to how much the plan cost and why it has not been released?

Ms Curtis: Question on notice No. 740 on 13 June.

Ms SIMPSON: I will check that and if I have made a mistake I will apologise. What question on notice did you say it was?

Ms Curtis: Question on notice No. 740.

Ms SIMPSON: This is in the House?

Ms Curtis: Yes.

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, it was asked by Mr Janetzki.

Ms SIMPSON: Has that plan been released publicly? That is to the CEO of the department.

Ms FENTIMAN: Would you like her to read the answer that was provided to the question on notice?

Ms SIMPSON: There is the opportunity of just confirming that plan has been released publicly.

Ms Curtis: The outcomes from the strategic training management planning exercise were announced in November 2017, when the government released its Advancing our Training Infrastructure election commitment.

Ms SIMPSON: So the plan has been released?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes. You may have missed it, but during the election we released an \$85 million TAFE asset plan.

Ms SIMPSON: So the Strategic Training Asset Management Plan specifically?

Ms FENTIMAN: It was referred to as the Advancing our Training Infrastructure plan and it was released in the election. I have already addressed—

Ms SIMPSON: I was clarifying that, because it has previously been called the Strategic Training Asset Management Plan in previous estimates.

Ms FENTIMAN: And the question on notice deals with that.

Ms SIMPSON: You are saying that it is the same plan. I thank you for your explanation. My question is to the CEO of TAFE. I refer to page 31 of the Service Delivery Statements and the 2018-19 estimated actual operating loss of \$11.198 million. Next year's operating loss is forecast to be more than double this year's. Ms Campbell, over the forward estimates period to 2021-22, how much in total is TAFE Queensland set to lose?

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for her question. Next year's budget for 2018-19 has been set with limited growth in mind. As detailed, we have had a year where the vocational education sector nationally has been impacted by changes from VET FEE-HELP to VET student loans. That will continue next year. We have also been impacted by cuts to our Commonwealth contracts in AMEP and SEE. Next year's budget takes these things into consideration in terms of what is happening at the Commonwealth level, and the fact is that will impact on us going forward.

Ms SIMPSON: My follow-up question is to the CEO of TAFE Queensland in regard to the financial statement at No. 22 on page 32. In total, how much is the increase in levels of training subsidies between the 2017-18 budget and the 2018-19 budget?

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for her question. For clarification, training subsidies out of what fund source?

Ms SIMPSON: It was variances in the financial statement at No. 22. That is the reference.

Ms Campbell: Thank you.

Ms SIMPSON: It is page 35 of the SDS. Variation No. 22 refers to page 32. The variation is on page 35 but the number where it appears in the statement is page 32 in the table, and the question is the increase in levels of training subsidies between the 2017-18 budget and the 2018-19 budget.

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for her question. I am just clarifying that it is a variation between the 2017-18 budget and the 2018-19 budget. It is an increase in receivables due to higher levels of training subsidies. I will need to get you the specific information on that and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, could we take that on notice if it is not available by the end of estimates?

Ms FENTIMAN: Yes, they are getting it now but I am happy to take it on notice.

Ms SIMPSON: I have another question to the CEO of TAFE Queensland. I refer to page 30 of the SDS and TAFE Queensland staffing. How many of the 3,937 full-time-equivalent employees as at 30 June are teaching staff?

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for her question. I have the rolled-up information in front of me, and again I will get that to you in specific FTEs as to how many teaching staff across our state before the session ends today.

CHAIR: Ms Campbell, you are entitled to take a moment to look in your folder and find the information if you need to. I know the questions can roll quickly, but you are entitled to take a moment if you need one.

Ms Campbell: If I could take a moment with that one, I know that the information is in the chamber and I can certainly get what our front-line teaching staff numbers are for the member.

Ms SIMPSON: To clarify, if it is not available—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, you do not need to clarify because Ms Campbell is saying that she wants to seek advice to answer your question. That is my understanding, or am I incorrect?

Ms Campbell: Yes, I would like to. I know that the numbers can be easily provided.

CHAIR: Ms Campbell, we will give you a moment if you need to confer.

Ms SIMPSON: I am happy to move on, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: No, member for Maroochydore. Ms Campbell indicated that she wanted to look for the figure.

Ms Campbell: We have that breakdown by FTE across each region, but I will need to ask for a little more time to get that by actual teaching staff as compared to support staff. I will endeavour to get back to you as soon as I can this afternoon.

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Chair, there are only five more minutes of non-government time—

CHAIR: There are about 17 minutes before the end of the hearing.

Ms SIMPSON:—and probably 15 minutes of government time. If that is not available by the end of business—

Ms FENTIMAN: If answers are not available by the end of session, I will take them on notice.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you very much, Minister. I do appreciate that. I have a question for the CEO of TAFE Queensland. I refer to page 28 of the SDS where it mentions TAFE Queensland's vision to be the leading provider of VET. When is the next scheduled Australian Skills Quality Authority audit of TAFE Queensland?

Ms Campbell: That audit is scheduled before June 2019.

Ms SIMPSON: In regard to the preparation that TAFE Queensland undertakes, have there been any internal audits initiated by TAFE Queensland? If so, what have been the results of those internal audits?

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for her question. We have an extensive plan for re-registration from 2017 to 2019. We have indicated in that plan six key areas of focus, and one of those is internal auditing, which we do whether there is a re-registration audit on or not. It is good business practice and every RTO, whether public or private, would be undertaking them.

We commenced auditing across 53 qualifications earlier in the year, and we have four major audits going on internally between all of our staff and across all of our regions as the year progresses. That is business as usual for us. We have moved from six RTOs to one RTO. We are ensuring that across the depth and breadth of what we do, with over 120,000 students a year, everything we have will meet minimum requirements and ASQA rules and regulations. It is only part of a broader part of what we do as being the quality provider of training in Queensland.

Ms SIMPSON: To follow on from that, what is the compliance rate of internal audits that you have undertaken so far in regard to the courses?

Ms Campbell: We do not measure it in terms of an outcome of a compliance rate. We have a continuous improvement process. We look at a qualification, we audit it across the state and we have a range of standards that we audit that against. As with any audit, there are 20 days to look at those rectifications and to put improvements in place.

Ms SIMPSON: I have another question for Ms Campbell. I refer to page 31 of the Service Delivery Statements and the 2017-18 estimated actual operating loss of \$4.42 million. Did TAFE receive a one-off contribution to avoid having to record an operating loss four times larger than the \$4.24 million outlined?

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for her question. We are in a demand driven training environment. We have a contribution grant supplied each year by the government of \$170-odd million. We did have a contribution this year, as you indicated earlier, and it was around the training that we are

doing in the RSAS program and the replacement of some aged expenses in terms of training and quality resources. I will get you the information, as I said, before the session ends on exactly how much that money was.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Campbell. Minister, in reference to page 7 of the SDS and the note that Skilling Queenslanders for Work is receiving \$80 million in 2018-19, what likely benefits will Skilling Queenslanders for work deliver in 2018-19 and what other approaches have been advocated for?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I am sure she, like many MPs, love going along to the Skilling Queenslanders for Work graduations. At some of the ones I attend, there are often not a lot of graduates there because they are already working in jobs, which is what we like to see. As previously mentioned, we reintroduced this fantastic program in 2015. It supports Queenslanders on a pathway to employment, providing assistance through nationally recognised training and job support. There is a significant investment of \$420 million over six years. As of 30 June this year, more than 30,000 people have been assisted through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, with more than 16,600 now working, thanks to this fantastic job-creating program. That is 600 more jobs in one month alone.

On 18 July I was pleased to announce as part of round 1 in 2018-19, \$45.2 million to support a further 7,247 job seekers through 227 community projects across Queensland. It is the largest funding round since we reintroduced the program. As part of our election commitment, I was incredibly pleased to see a \$20 million boost for this wonderful program. Round 2 is now open for applications, and I look forward to announcing the second round early next year.

I was pleased to meet some of those Queenslanders commencing their training journey at Ipswich's Challenge Employment & Training while governing from the regions there in March. It was fantastic, I have to say, to hear that 100 per cent of the participants in their last round of pathways to engineering had already secured employment—all with the one manufacturer, Austral Monsoon. While at the site, Michael Krafft, the general manager, and Richard Lindner, the CEO, explained to me the devastating impact the LNP's decision to scrap this program had in the Ipswich community. They could not understand why any government would walk away from a program that was delivering jobs. After the program was cut, they had up to 20 phone calls a day from job seekers needing assistance to complete vocational education to get back into the workforce. The damage this did contributed to unemployment hitting a peak of 9.6 per cent in Ipswich, as locals had no pathways in which to find work.

Despite members of the LNP saying that they had learnt their lessons from the Newman years, at the last election they were proud yet again to say that they were going to cut \$42 million from the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. This program was evaluated by Deloitte Access Economics and they said that the program contributed \$8 for every \$1 invested. Unlike the LNP, the Palaszczuk government is committed to creating jobs through successful programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work.

CHAIR: Minister, in regard to Skilling Queenslanders for Work, can you please advise how not-for-profit organisations will benefit from longer contracts under the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. Now in its fourth year, the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, as I have said, is a huge success. With the success of the program in its maturity, it is fantastic to see longer-term contracts being offered to some of our not-for-profit partners to deliver the program. Under the program, most funding is approved for up to 12 months. Some organisations that have a proven track record with strong outcomes were invited by the department recently to have an additional 12 months to deliver the program without having to reapply. This allows for organisations to forward plan, maximising the potential to get people in the local community into work.

This was something that was raised with me when I was out at Challenge Employment at Ipswich. They apply every 12 months and they get it, and they have been delivering this program for years and they have great success rates, so we thought it would be good if we could get them a longer contract. This gives them certainty, and it is much easier for staff knowing they have that longer certainty of funding. Again, it is a great example of listening and delivering.

In the latest round of Skilling Queenslanders for Work, 11 organisations were approved to deliver long-term contracts valued at more than \$2.7 million. Organisations include the Kingston East Neighbourhood Group and their Build a Secure Future project which assists groups, including women

fleeing domestic violence and mature age workers. I am proud to be the local member of that wonderful organisation. Allowing for local contracts for the program will hopefully provide longer-term benefits for both the organisations and the participants.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, how has the \$10 million over two years for the Regional Skills Adjustment Strategy supported Queenslanders and their training needs?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. As I previously mentioned, the Regional Skills Adjustment Strategy is a \$10 million two-year initiative by the Palaszczuk government which provides a regional response to workers who are retrenched following significant company closures. It focuses on the individual skill development needs of workers who are at risk of being displaced from traditional industries. The program also provides proactive support to employers in the resources, manufacturing, infrastructure, food processing and agricultural sectors to build workforce resilience and address skills or labour shortages.

The Palaszczuk government has provided \$5 million to TAFE Queensland to deliver under this program. There are a number of projects currently in progress. TAFE Queensland is continuing to work with employees who were impacted by the closures of Churchill Abattoir and Baiada Poultry, providing training and assistance to assist them in finding alternative employment, including through job pathway planning and training. TAFE Queensland is also working with Rheinmetall Defence Australia to assist them to meet local workforce needs by training an estimated 135 experienced and transitional welders over a two-year period to meet the new minimum welding standard. Employees impacted by redundancies at Aurizon's Rockhampton operations are receiving training to enable them to source alternative employment in the region. Training delivered included first aid training and the standard 11 induction and units of competency related to working in confined spaces, as well as jobs pathway planning to direct further training for an alternate career.

Further, TAFE Queensland—there are so many great TAFE Queensland stories—are supporting up to 170 Queensland Rail employees to undertake recognition of prior learning and gap training related to the Certificate III in Civil Construction and Certificate III in Timber Bridge Construction and Maintenance qualifications, due to the emerging need to upgrade, repair and replace numerous timber rail bridges right across Queensland. Under the LNP's election costings in 2017, we would have seen a \$5 million cut to this vital program, the Regional Skills Adjustment Strategy. Such a cut would have meant that workers in Ipswich whose employment came to an end, or those who were made redundant in Rockhampton, would not have been able to receive assistance and guidance for their future training needs and careers. We are committed to regional skills. Our commitment to this program demonstrates how important it is that we invest in developing the training and skills of Queenslanders for the jobs of the future.

Mr SAUNDERS: What benefits will Queenslanders receive from our user choice policy mentioned in the SDS? What other approaches have been advocated?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. We have talked a bit today about the user choice program. It is our subsidy program which provides a contribution of public funding towards the cost of training and assessment for eligible apprentices and trainees. By subsidising these courses, the Palaszczuk government is encouraging employers to take on apprentices and trainees by making the training element of their investment more affordable. These include apprenticeships in carpentry or food processing, and traineeships in retail or sport and recreation. By providing a public funding contribution towards these apprenticeships and traineeships, we are making it easier for Queenslanders to access affordable vocational education and training. Again, I want to point out that this program was slated for a \$20 million cut under the LNP's election costings. That is another example of the LNP being completely out of touch with the vocational education and training needs we have here in Queensland.

There is still other funding available in education and training in the Certificate 3 Guarantee, which we have mentioned today, which assists in transitioning Queenslanders to employment by providing entry level qualifications that might be needed to access employment in particular industries. The Higher Level Skills program provides support to eligible Queenslanders who need to access specific training in certificate IV or above qualifications and also priority skill sets. This funding is particularly helpful to individuals to assist career advancement and to secure employment. This is also accessible to eligible employers who need to access training to address the development needs of their workforce. Skilling Queenslanders for Work and our other regional strategies provide opportunities for subsidised training. We are committed to supporting Queenslanders to undertake training that leads to real jobs, that assists in career advancement or which starts them on a pathway to a brighter future.

CHAIR: I am conscious of the time. We have about five minutes left. Minister, there were a number of matters that you took on notice—about two—but there were other matters that the director-general and Ms Campbell said they were going to come back with further information on that were not formally taken on notice. I want to provide you with an opportunity to provide further information before we return to the minister.

Ms Curtis: There are a couple of matters that I can provide an update on. One of the questions related to the Back to Work applications we received between 2 June and 30 June 2018. In total, we received 1,076 applications during that period. I just wanted to clarify also the answer I gave at the end of the last session. For all applications submitted up to and including 30 June 2018 that are eligible, the applicant has received the funding.

In relation to the Better Regulation Taskforce question, the Better Regulation Taskforce is currently undertaking a review of the impact and influence of digital disruption on small business with a focus on new business models and new tools and technologies. They are continuing to oversee implementation of the government response to the former Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council's industry review report 2016 on red tape in the agricultural, fruit growing, manufacturing, light metals and hospitality sectors.

Ms Campbell: For the vocational placement question, the expenditure in the 2017-18 financial year was \$3.7 million. The answer to the question in relation to the funding for 2017-18 was \$14.088 million. In relation to the question on travel for the board chair and the CEO, was that for the 2016-17 year and the 2017-18 year? Could I clarify with the member what was required?

Ms SIMPSON: The 2017-18 has not been published. There is 2016-17, so it was 2017-18.

Ms Campbell: For the 2016-17 year, for the chair, domestic travel was \$17,847 and international travel was \$14,762. For the CEO, domestic travel was \$10,392 and international travel was \$14,493.

Ms SIMPSON: And for the 2017-18?

Ms Campbell: For the 2017-18 year, there has been no international travel recorded for either the CEO or the board chair.

CHAIR: Ms Campbell, you mentioned you may also be able to provide the information about how many of the FTEs are teaching staff.

Ms Campbell: I am just getting that information. There was also a question on accounts receivable in the statements, note 22. The answer to this one as to why receivables are up into the 2017-18 projected budget is that, as a result of lower VSL caps and eligibility, TAFE Queensland is allowing students to pay with flexi pay plans and expects receivables to be higher than ordinary business.

Ms SIMPSON: I am sorry. I missed the preamble to that.

Ms Campbell: This was in the note that you asked for. It says as a result of the lower VSL caps and eligibility issues with VET student loans, TAFE Queensland is allowing students to pay with flexi pay and with plans. Therefore, we expect receivables to go up in terms of ordinary business.

Ms SIMPSON: Was this with respect to the one-off contribution for the department?

Ms Campbell: No, I have already answered that question.

Ms SIMPSON: We were after a breakdown of the one-off contribution to the department as described on page 34 of the SDS at point 2. What was the breakdown of that one-off contribution?

Ms Campbell: I thank the member for her question. My understanding was that you were asking for what the payment was, the \$14.08 million. I can tell you across a range of categories what it was used for, but my understanding was we needed to get the actual rolled up figure for you.

Ms SIMPSON: In relation to that \$14.08 million, I actually wanted a breakdown of what that one-off contribution was for. It is mentioned in global terms but not the breakdown.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore.

Ms Campbell: I already answered what the contribution was for in that question.

CHAIR: Ms Campbell has already answered the question. Ms Campbell, my recollection is that what was remaining was just whether you could or could not provide how many of the FTEs are teaching staff. If you cannot, we can ask the minister if she wants to take that on notice for clarity's sake. I just wanted to give you that opportunity. Then we will move on to the minister's two-minute closing statement, please.

Ms Campbell: Excuse me, Madam Chair, we are just getting that information.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr HEALY: Well done. Good work.

Ms Campbell: We have a lot of great educators across the whole state of Queensland. It is my privilege to tell you that the number of FTEs for 2017-18 is 1,833 across the state of Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. Minister, I invite you to make a closing statement now.

Ms FENTIMAN: I just want to thank each and every one of the committee members here today for your questions and interest in my portfolio areas. Thank you to the chair for the work that you do with the committee behind the scenes and also the committee staff. Thank you very much to my Director-General, Mary-Anne Curtis, and her entire team, including the deputy directors-general who are here today and also Melinda Rabbitt. I thank them for their very hard work and long hours throughout the estimates process. I also want to thank Jamie Merrick, the Director-General of Environment and Science, who was here earlier today.

I would like to thank Mary Campbell and again congratulate her on her appointment as the CEO of TAFE Queensland. I also want to acknowledge Peter Henneken, the acting chair of Jobs Queensland, who was here today as well, and, of course, all my ministerial staff for their hard work and support. In particular, I thank my Chief of Staff, Cynthia Kennedy, and my senior advisers Shane Bevis and Laura Fraser Hardy.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio of Training and Skills Development has expired. The committee thanks you, Minister, and your departmental staff who have attended today. We thank you very much for your time. As chair of this committee, I thank my fellow committee members who have been present throughout the day and visiting members who have attended and participated in our hearing. I also thank Hansard, all the parliamentary staff who assisted here today and our secretariat, who have supported us today and every day. Thank you very much. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 5.01 pm.