

TUESDAY, 23 JULY 2019

ESTIMATES—ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

Estimate Committee Members

Mr LP Power (Chair)
Mr RA Stevens
Ms NA Boyd
Mr ST O'Connor
Mr DG Prudie
Ms KE Richards

Members in Attendance

Mr JP Bleijie
Ms SL Bolton
Mr MC Berkman
Mrs DK Frecklington
Mr TL Mander
Dr CAC Rowan
Ms A Leahy
Mr J-P H Langbroek

In Attendance

Hon. CW Pitt, Speaker
Mr G Hasanakos, Executive Officer
Mr N Laurie, Clerk of the Parliament
Mr M Ries, Deputy Clerk of the Parliament
Mr C Atkinson, Director Corporate Services and Electorate Office Liaison
Ms S Johnson, Director Property and Facility Services
Ms J Prowse, Director Information Services and Parliamentary Librarian

The committee met at 8.59 am.



CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open the hearing of the estimates for the Economics and Governance Committee. Firstly I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to the elders of the Jagera people. I also acknowledge those of the area that I represent, the Yugambeh and Jagera people.

My name is Linus Power. I am the member for Logan and the chair of the committee. With me here today is Ray Stevens, the member for Mermaid Beach and deputy chair. The other committee members are Nikki Boyd, the member for Pine Rivers; Dan Purdie, the member for Ninderry; Kim Richards, the member for Redlands; and Sam O'Connor, the member for Bonney. The committee has

granted leave for non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today. Therefore, other members may be present in the course of the proceedings. Today the committee will consider the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2019, the Appropriation Bill 2019 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 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 broadcasting procedures are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones and other electronic devices be switched off or switched to silent mode. I also remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: the Queensland Legislative Assembly from 9 am to 9.45 am; Premier and Cabinet and Trade from 10 am to 1.30 pm; Treasury and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships from 2 pm to 6 pm; and Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs from 6.45 pm to 9 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2019 for the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The committee will examine this portfolio area until 9.45 am. For this session the visiting members present are Jarrod Bleijie, the member for Kawana; Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; and Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar. I welcome you all.

I remind all present today that the hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is 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 apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief, relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that the relevant issues can be fully explored and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from both government and non-government members.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the Speaker, the Clerk and parliamentary officers and, of course, members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask that all officials and advisers identify themselves by name the first time they answer a question being referred to them by the Speaker or the Clerk.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area administered by the Speaker open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Mr Speaker, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. I thank all members of the Economics and Governance Committee for being here today and participating in what is our very important estimates process, as well as those members who are guests of the committee. I too acknowledge that today we are gathered on the land of Aboriginal people and pay my respects to elders past and present.

I am very pleased to appear at this estimates hearing for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service in my capacity as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. I welcome Mr Neil Laurie, our Clerk, and other officers of the Parliamentary Service who will assist me in answering your questions today regarding the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill, as well as George Hasanakos from the Speaker's office.

Since my election as Speaker 17 months ago, it has been my goal to open up the parliamentary precinct and parliament as an institution to the people more than ever before. As I said in my first speech after being elected Speaker, our public institutions, including governments and parliaments—not just here but also around the world—face new and rapidly changing demands and expectations. To this end I have overseen opportunities for the parliament to reach out to the Queensland community, whether it be through the Parliament House 150th anniversary open day, our expanded public dining opportunities at the Stranger's Dining Room or the innovative youth parliaments that we are taking across the state.

Last year when I appeared before the committee I emphasised the importance of technology in supporting the work of members here at Parliament House and also throughout the state in terms of the constituencies that we all serve. I am very pleased to report that much progress has been made in that regard over the past 12 months. 2019-20 will see the delivery of a range of technology initiatives to support the needs of members engaging with Queenslanders and for Queenslanders to engage with their parliament. The greater use of technology offers undoubted benefits to a state the size of

Queensland. Unfortunately, it does not come without risks in a modern digital world. To address those risks, in 2018 I approved the parliament's first cybersecurity strategy and recently I approved the creation of the dedicated role of cybersecurity officer within the Parliamentary Service.

Over the next 12 months, the Parliamentary Service will also support a number of initiatives to improve the way that parliament engages with the people whom we all serve. This will include the hosting of a regional sitting of parliament in Townsville in two months time. It will be the first regional parliament for nearly a decade.

I am also proud to continue the strong tradition of the Queensland parliament engaging with Indigenous Queenslanders and promoting connections with their parliament. Recently I approved a program to rename three parliamentary committee rooms on level 6 of the Annexe, including two in honour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which feature artworks from those communities.

I now turn briefly to the 2019-20 estimates for the parliament. The Appropriation (Parliament) Bill provides the funding for the salaries and allowances of members of the Legislative Assembly as well as funding for the Parliamentary Service, which provides administrative and support services to the Legislative Assembly. The total appropriation sought for the parliament in 2019-20 is \$100.009 million, which is an increase of \$2.831 million from the 2018-19 budget. The increase is due primarily to additional costs associated with the delivery of a new technology model for members' electorate offices and the establishment of a new relief staffing allocation to assist in managing electorate office workloads.

Major capital works to be undertaken include the commencement of a three-year program to upgrade critical infrastructure supporting the Parliamentary Annexe, including fire and sprinkler services, and the commencement of a program to upgrade and restore the Parliament House heritage perimeter fence. In 2019-20 work will also continue on a number of information technology improvements underpinned by the current ICT strategic plan. This includes an upgrade of the parliament's website to improve accessibility and new ways to automate manual business processes across the Parliamentary Service.

In closing this opening statement, I would like to say that I am very pleased and honoured to appear before this committee today to speak to the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill. I thank the committee for its work in scrutinising the budget in the portfolios over the course of the day. Thank you very much, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yesterday the Economics and Governance Committee may have been the first committee to hold a hearing in the newly named Torres Strait Islander Peoples Room. We really appreciated the artwork that has been added to the room. We now turn to questioning. Deputy Chair, do you have any questions?

Mr STEVENS: The deputy chair defers to the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you and good morning, Mr Speaker and Mr Clerk. Mr Clerk, with respect to standing order 233, sub judice, can you advise the committee whether the Crime and Corruption Commission assessing a complaint or indeed investigating a complaint would prevent the Premier or ministers from answering questions during these proceedings today?

Mr Laurie: No. Standing order 233 only applies to criminal proceedings once they have been commenced and until such time as a verdict is given.

Mr BLEIJIE: We have had situations before where the Premier or ministers have said that a matter being asked about was currently before the CCC, which was either assessing or investigating a complaint. They said that they were not able to speak about the matter. If I am right in what you have just said, Mr Clerk, standing order 233 would not prevent the Premier or ministers from answering such questions if the CCC is investigating or assessing a matter?

Mr Laurie: Standing order 233 deals with the application of sub judice to the House and committees. That would not be applicable unless there were criminal proceedings pending. At the end of the day, questions can be put to members about issues that might be before a body like the CCC. How those ministers respond to those questions if there is a referral is a matter for them, but they are not prevented from answering by standing order 233.

CHAIR: For the benefit of the member for Kawana, as the chair of this committee that was my understanding around those types of issues.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. I was just confirming that. Mr Clerk, the opposition has referred the Deputy Premier to the Crime and Corruption Commission and the Deputy Premier has referred herself to the Crime and Corruption Commission over the purchase of an investment property in the heart of her electorate and near Cross River Rail. Obviously, we have raised that conflict of interest issues have arisen because of that purchase. Real estate agents have said that the Deputy Premier could potentially benefit in the hundreds of thousands of dollars with the uplift in the value of the property.

To ensure that this committee has the appropriate opportunity today, my question is: because these matters are now before the CCC, can this committee compel the Premier or the Deputy Premier to answer the serious allegations that have been raised and not simply accept the view that these matters are before the CCC and they are not going to be answering those questions?

Mr Laurie: Members of the committee can ask ministers questions. Ministers are obligated to answer those questions in the same way as they are asked questions in the House in question time. However, the manner in which ministers answer those questions is a matter for the ministers.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Clerk, when were you first advised that the member for South Brisbane had not updated her pecuniary interest register in relation to the purchase of an investment property in Woolloongabba?

Mr Laurie: It is normally not my practice to talk about conversations that I have with members in my role as registrar unless I am released to that extent by the member and/or I am talking to the Ethics Committee. However, what I can say is that the Deputy Premier has made public statements to the effect that she came and sought my advice about various transactions and advice was given. At some subsequent point there were draft declarations made which were checked by me and returned to the member. All of that I can confirm as being correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Deputy Premier, in responding to the allegations in the last few days, has said that she had discussions with you since May and advised you that changes were coming. It now turns out that the Deputy Premier failed to update her pecuniary interest or sign the official pecuniary interest or what was required within the 30 days. My understanding is that members have 30 days to update their pecuniary interest.

I understand we are all human and administrative errors can take place. I do not accept the fact that someone buys a \$700,000 house and they forget that they bought it and forget to update the register. I am trying to ascertain the issue—and whether it is an issue we have in parliament—that a member buys a house and it takes 60 days to update the register, but the minute the media find out about it the register was signed. My understanding is that the completed pecuniary interest was signed on the afternoon that this first appeared in the *Courier-Mail*, is that correct?

Mr Laurie: That is correct. I think it was 17 July from memory. It was signed that afternoon. There had been media inquiries earlier that day, I think. It is correct that members have 30 days from a transaction. In the case of the purchase of real estate, the generally accepted rule that we have advised from when the register of interest was established in the late 1980s is that we want that registration to be within 30 days of settlement. In other words, we do not necessarily need it when the contract is entered into, but certainly from the date of settlement has been the advice that is regularly given in respect of those matters.

I would make the point, however, that whilst members are obligated to make declarations within 30 days, as you yourself stated, members tend to be human, they tend to be very busy people and my experience certainly has been that, with no malfeasance intended, members oftentimes take longer than that to actually update their register. One of the reasons that at this time of year—in June and July every year—we have more transactions than we do throughout the year is that we send out a reminder about the register prior to the publication of the report. That is all I would put on the record. The matters that the Deputy Premier has stated publicly about the circumstances leading to that declaration I have no truck with.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Clerk, in terms of the time line over a period of 60 days—I understand the contract was signed in March and the settlement was in May and then we had a period of 60 days where the Deputy Premier said that she was liaising with the Clerk, but essentially then it was signed the day it appeared in the media—what were the issues that prevented the register being updated for 60 days that all of a sudden happened as soon as this hit the front page of the *Courier-Mail*?

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Chair. I would like your guidance around how this is related to the budget. We have had a number of questions along these lines. I am really keen to explore the SDS and the budget at hand. I ask for your guidance.

CHAIR: Thank you member for Pine Rivers. This process is something that is administered by the Speaker and the Clerk. It is broadly within this area. It is labouring this obviously. I can understand your frustration, but I think it is something administered by the Clerk and has a line item in the budget.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member for Pine Rivers set the precedent last year when asking about website updates.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I have ruled on this. There is no need to enter into arguments with the member for Pine Rivers. You just need to put the questions in a reasonable fashion.

Mr BLEIJIE: Indeed, Mr Chair. Mr Clerk, with respect to electorate offices and relocations, there has been press that the member for Cook is relocating her electorate office. Ordinarily members relocate their offices to their electorates from redistributions. The press has indicated the member for Cook wants to move her electorate office out of her electorate into another electorate. In the answers to the questions on notice there is no reference to the member for Cook with respect to: has that request been made, has it been approved and how much money is it going to cost?

Mr Laurie: The answer to the question on notice relating to relocations were those that were linked to the redistribution. In addition to the relocations that occurred as a result of the redistribution, there is our normal relocation program. The member for Cook's relocation is as a result of the normal program rather than the redistribution program. That is why it was not in the answer to the question on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Has the member for Cook put a request in to relocate her office out of her electorate?

Mr Laurie: Yes, there was a request and Mr Speaker considered that request and approved that request. I do not wish to speak for Mr Speaker, but I understand that the basis for that approval was because of the unusual nature of the electorate of Cook in the sense that many people from the wider Cook electorate tend to gravitate more to Cairns than to Mareeba where the current office is located. Mr Speaker can speak to that in more detail.

Mr SPEAKER: Would you mind if I add a few remarks to that, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: Sure.

Mr SPEAKER: It has long been the practice that the main electorate office for the electorate of Cook has been in Cairns. That was changed subsequent to the 2012 election where it was relocated to Mareeba. I think what is important in this regard is, and the Clerk has touched on this, that it is a natural centre for a range of people travelling to Cairns for health, education and a range of things, including sporting commitments. That is why they go through Cairns.

I would also say that, when you look at a number of different local government authorities within the electorate of Cook, most of them have their offices or at least an additional office in Cairns. They include Hope Vale council, the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and Aurukun council. In terms of being able to service the local government authorities within that electorate, I think that is very justifiable which is why I have given that approval.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Clerk, when was the approval granted for the relocation?

Mr Laurie: It was about three months prior to the 2018-19 budget process. It would have been around March 2018, roughly.

Mr BLEIJIE: Has the move happened, Mr Clerk?

Mr Laurie: There is a financial commitment signed and relocation works are scheduled for tender later this month. It is underway.

Mr BLEIJIE: What is the total cost of the relocation of the member for Cook's electorate office to outside of her electorate, Mr Clerk?

Mr Laurie: I have just been advised that the estimated fit-out cost is between \$60,000 and \$70,000.

Mr BLEIJIE: Was the lease completed at the Mareeba office? How is the process being undertaken?

Mr Laurie: I will just check on that. My recollection is that we had finished the main lease but we did not exercise the option, but I will confirm that. We had finished the lease and then basically we have gone on to a periodic month-to-month tenancy until the relocation occurs.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can you advise the committee what the leasing costs are for the member for Cook's current electorate office and the new electorate office? Do we have the difference?

Mr Laurie: With Mr Speaker's permission, I will take that on notice.

CHAIR: I note that we will place that question on notice. It might be that you can answer that within the time frame of this hearing, in which case you can answer it by way of that process. If not, we will place that question on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Clerk, with respect to the regional sitting in Townsville, through a question on notice I understand that you are not required to source the funding for the regional sitting of parliament in Townsville that we have recently been made aware of. Can you advise the committee when you were first made aware of the regional sitting in Townsville?

Mr Laurie: I was made aware on the morning of 19 June.

Mr BLEIJIE: If my memory serves me correctly, 19 June is the day it appeared in the paper.

Mr Laurie: I think it appeared in the *Townsville Bulletin* that morning, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: Were you given any advice from the government with respect to the September sitting prior to that? You have just indicated that you were not made of it before 19 June.

Mr Laurie: There had been discussions with government about the fact that we would be holding a regional sitting and there had been some preliminary matters discussed, but I only became aware of it being in Townsville on 19 June.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Clerk, we have had regional sittings before which you and your staff have been involved in. Generally, what advice would you give to government in terms of the time line or the amount of time that you require to prepare for a regional sitting of parliament?

Mr Laurie: Obviously the longer lead time we have the better in order to organise a regional sitting. Ideally we would like to have 12 months, but six months would be adequate.

Mr BLEIJIE: So you would like 12 months, a year, to plan a regional parliament. I am not disputing the fact that the government announced that they were going to have a regional sitting, but no-one was made aware, as I understand, that they had picked Townsville for the regional sitting. I am concerned that the time line is short to prepare for a regional sitting for 93 members of parliament and to have all of the staff up there. I am more particularly concerned with security, Mr Clerk, in that Townsville has been the epicentre of the Carmichael mine debate. We are seeing in Brisbane lots of debate and the city shut down. Can you advise the committee how you intend to deal with the security arrangements for staff, for people travelling to the parliament and for the public visiting the parliament? I can imagine, based on what we are seeing in inner-city Brisbane with the anti-Adani protestors, that we may see a lot of that in Townsville.

Mr Laurie: I obviously do not wish to delve into too great a level of detail in relation to security for security reasons. What I would say is that in every previous regional sitting we have held we have always worked very closely with the Queensland Police Service, and we have always acted upon their advice and with their assistance for the regional sitting. They have much more expertise in relation to those broader security issues that you talked about. We have already commenced our discussions with the Queensland Police Service about security for the Townsville sitting. I am sure that the Queensland Police Service's planning for that will take into account all of the sorts of factors that you have discussed.

Mr STEVENS: My question is to the Clerk, if I may. Can you give the committee an estimate of the differential in the cost of this sitting in Townsville as opposed to having a longer term planning process? If you had been given the six months or the 12 months that you mentioned earlier, would you have been able to achieve the sitting in Townsville at a cheaper cost than calling a regional sitting in Townsville at this late stage?

Mr Laurie: I would be speculating. I do not know what the cost differentials would be, if anything, so I would be speculating there. Common sense does say to a degree that the longer you have to plan the better you can source some deals and you might end up making some savings, but I would be speculating.

Mr STEVENS: What about airfares, accommodation and those types of things?

Mr Laurie: I would be speculating. There may be some savings there. Common sense would dictate that there would be, but I would be speculating.

Mr STEVENS: Previously we have had some members requesting that there be reference to the SDS in terms of questioning. For further witnesses at the estimates hearing today, could you reiterate your view on the matter as to the requirement to mention a page of the SDS et cetera?

Mr Laurie: My procedural advice in relation to questions at estimates is the same, and that is that each and every question has to be relevant to the estimates before the committee. The relevance is determined by the content of the question, not a page reference in the SDS. A page reference in the SDS can be given but a completely irrelevant question asked. At the end of the day, the question of relevance is always: is the content of the question relevant to the estimates and expenditures before the House?

Mr STEVENS: The main question is that there is no requirement to mention a page of the SDS.

Mr Laurie: Correct.

CHAIR: Mr Stevens, we have had a variety of questions without reference to the SDS so far.

Mr STEVENS: This is for further witnesses, Mr Chair—for clarification.

CHAIR: I think the time period for non-government questions has expired. Mr Clerk, I wish to ask you some further questions on declarations. Have there been instances of late declarations in the past and, if so, how many? Is that something that has ever happened before?

Mr Laurie: Yes, of course. I could not even speculate on how many that would be. Depending upon the year we can get anywhere from 250 to 500 declarations per year. Obviously we often get a higher number of declarations in the first year because everyone has to start out in the first year with a declaration. I know from my experience as registrar now for 17 years or more that oftentimes when we send out the midyear reminder to members—members are required by standing orders to update their register midyear every year with a form that says it is correct or they need to update. I know that there are updates that are made then that have probably occurred some time before, but their memory is only jogged by our correspondence to them.

CHAIR: When do you send that generally?

Mr Laurie: We send that out at the end of June or the beginning of July.

CHAIR: Are there any other questions from members? Member for Pine Rivers, do you have a question?

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 2 of the SDS, which refers to 'safeguarding, promoting and strengthening the important institution of parliament'. I am aware that the Queensland parliament recently hosted a major parliamentary event for representatives from various other jurisdictions. Could the Speaker please outline the purpose of this event and other associated activities?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Pine Rivers, and can I take this opportunity to say welcome back. It is great to see you back in action at the parliament.

This year we hosted the 50th Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference from 8 to 13 July. The theme of the conference was 'Practicalities of Presiding and Administering Parliaments'. We attracted 74 official delegates and observers from parliaments in Australia, New Zealand and Pasifika nations. His Excellency the Hon. Paul de Jersey, the Governor of Queensland, hosted a reception to welcome conference attendees to officially open the conference. In keeping with the significance of the 50th anniversary milestone, the conference included a keynote address from the Right Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons who, I must say, is not only a good bloke but he loves Rugby League as much as I do. The conference also received a guest presentation from Dr Matthew Laban, who has written extensively on the history of postwar British speakership and the development of the Westminster model across the Commonwealth. During the luncheon breaks the conference was also treated to addresses by the Leader of the House, the Hon. Yvette D'Ath MP, and one of the guests on your committee today, the Manager of Opposition Business, Mr Jarrod Bleijie. I want to thank them both for participating in the conference.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was a great speech.

Mr SPEAKER: I will say that people were listening to the member for Kawana. The conference also involved the official relaunch of the three committee rooms on level 6 which I alluded to in my opening statement. These three rooms are now known as the Aboriginal Peoples Room, the Torres Strait Islander Peoples Room and the Parliamentary Twinning Room. People on the committee may be aware that we have had a twinning relationship with the national parliaments of Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu for a number of years. It is fitting that we were not only able to open this room during the POCC but also ensure that we resign our further parliamentary agreement with the parliament of Papua New Guinea for a further six years. We previously resigned the partnership with Vanuatu during our recent visit there, and that was important because that agreement lapsed in 2015. These relationships are important because we do a number of things to support those parliaments; equally, we gain a lot by having staff exchanges.

At the POCC the broader topics discussed included: balancing security measures with access to Parliament House, which I think that is a vexed question for all assemblies; the use of speech recognition technology in parliaments; and the administration of parliamentary precincts themselves. The conference was also the venue for a number of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meetings for the Australian and Pacific regions, workshops for Australian and Pasifika officials in relation to parliamentary strengthening of the Pacific and a workshop for Pasifika presiding officers.

I would suggest that, all in all, the Queensland parliament was not only showcased in terms of the efficiency and professionalism of our staff but the program that was put together, which had significantly good content. I think we may have received one or two minor complaints over the entire week, which is really unheard of. It was a very successful event. Not only was the professionalism of staff showcased but I think the parliament itself left a lasting impression on all those who visited. We were very grateful to host the milestone conference. I am very, very pleased to say that it received an enormously large amount of support from all those who attended. We look forward to next year's hosts trying to outdo Queensland.

CHAIR: The committee secretary recommended that I check out all three rooms yesterday, so I checked out the Parliamentary Twinning Room especially. The artwork there is really dramatic.

Page 2 of the SDS refers to a number of key environmental factors, including the increasing maintenance that is required on these ageing precinct buildings. Mr Speaker, what strategies has the Parliamentary Service adopted or planned to adopt in the future to manage energy consumption and associated costs?

Mr SPEAKER: As all members of parliament would appreciate, the maintenance and management of this parliamentary precinct—the physical environment—presents a number of challenges. That has been alluded to with respect to the ageing precinct building itself. We know that there are large fluctuations in the number of people who make use of facilities during sitting weeks compared to non-sitting weeks, so activity in the place can be hot and cold. Physical limitations are imposed by the heritage-listed operational building. More than 150 years ago it was certainly not designed to be energy efficient. It is not easy to retrofit some of those measures, and the broader ageing infrastructure of the precinct does not necessarily reflect modern day advancements in technology in terms of energy efficiency either. Despite that, there have been some very good outcomes in terms of managing energy consumption both from a financial perspective and an environmental perspective.

Over the past 12 months the Parliamentary Service has achieved a 16.7 per cent reduction in electricity consumption compared to the 2017-18 financial year. These specific initiatives have included reductions where we have identified opportunities to reduce the running time of plant and equipment. I think that should be core business, and there has been some excellent work done there. There has been an ongoing installation of energy-efficient lighting throughout the precinct; minor adjustments to temperature settings on hot water systems; changes to air-conditioning systems during low load periods to reduce the energy required to chill water using cool air; adding variable speed drive controls to chill water and condenser pumps; and scheduling function room air-conditioning services around bookings as opposed to daily running when they may not be in use. That is quite a matter-of-fact thing which needed close attention.

We have changed exhaust systems and fans in the car parks on levels 1 and 2 to operate on gas-monitoring levels rather than 24-hour continuous operation. As I said earlier, there are peaks and troughs when it comes to activity, and that includes those levels for car parking. We have seen upgrades to the high-rise and low-rise lifts to new, smarter technology, eliminating older lift equipment with a forecast 20 to 30 per cent energy reduction each year. We are progressively installing light sensors in bathrooms to control lights which would otherwise have been left on for over 12 hours a day and smart metering and the installation of submeters to provide a better understanding of energy consumption where opportunities for energy efficiency exist. It is also about providing information to promote better behaviour of members and staff to ensure that we can first of all benchmark the performance of the precincts but, importantly, try to get them to conserve energy wherever possible.

Moving ahead, a major program of upgrading critical infrastructure at The Annexe is to commence. That is about replacing and upgrading major infrastructure, again with a focus on having more energy-efficient alternatives. Some of these include: over 100 in-room air-conditioning units in members' offices and bedroom floors; upgrading air-conditioning connecting pipes, which impacts air-conditioning efficiency; the upgrading of air-conditioning pump services for smarter operation in low- and high-demand periods; and the upgrade of various electrical switchboards and systems

throughout the precinct. We take energy efficiently seriously, as most households and businesses do these days, but in a building like this we have to think a bit more outside the box because it was not built with any of these things in mind.

CHAIR: There are no promises about the chamber not getting hot and cold on strange occasions?

Mr SPEAKER: Mr Chair, the chamber gets hot enough without any of those other energy efficiency measures being put in place.

CHAIR: Unlike this committee, which is calm and collected. Member for Redlands, do you have a question?

Ms RICHARDS: Mr Speaker, I commend you on the artwork selection in the committee rooms. They are absolutely spectacular and something that we can all be proud to share with visitors to the precinct.

Page 4 of the SDS talks about the delivery of a range of support services within the parliamentary precinct. Can you please outline the technology that is being used to improve and support the operations of parliamentary committees?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you for the question. The effectiveness of parliamentary committees—and I think the estimates process puts that out for all to see in the starkest of terms each year—is really important in a functioning parliamentary democracy all year round, particularly in a unicameral parliament with one house of assembly. The services and tools that we provide for the operation of parliamentary committees are also important. The Parliamentary Service recognises this importance and we are continuing to use technology to assist in providing ways for the committee to operate and engage in a more effective way with the broader public.

Electronic meeting papers systems are now a feature of most modern organisations with committees or boards, if you will. At the commencement of the 56th Parliament in February 2018, portfolio committees commenced a trial of an electronic meeting papers system called Convene. Through Convene, meeting papers are published by committee office staff for members to access and navigate before, during and after committee meetings through an app on their electronic device. These meeting papers have provided a much greater level of security to members—which I think was concerning to some in the past—than if they were received via hard copy. Of course, if members still wish to receive a hard copy they are able to do that, but it is not the default.

Ms RICHARDS: Some members still struggle.

Mr SPEAKER: It is not the default. Some members have been better than others at adopting the technology. Importantly, these meeting papers can be accessed at any place and at any time. Once downloaded via the internet, they can also be accessed while offline.

A number of other initiatives have been introduced as well, including the installation of new videoconferencing equipment in committee room 3, which is now known as the Aboriginal Peoples Room. The current system was installed in 2011 and is out of date, posing significant cybersecurity risks. Requiring significant administration and involvement of multiple third parties to use has, we believe, impacted on committee use of videoconferencing to date. The new capacity will be straightforward to use. The new system will use a virtual meeting room, which will allow multiple invited witnesses from regional locations to participate in proceedings held in Brisbane, including those broadcast live, as long as they have an internet connection and an internet enabled device.

Importantly, as a general rule—and this is something that has been discussed, not speaking out of turn, about the Committee of the Legislative Assembly—when it comes to committee work, we need to start looking at how we engage with as many Queenslanders as possible and how we make sure that we minimise the costs associated with that. As we are a very large state, sometimes it is impractical to have public hearings everywhere. Sometimes it may be a matter of considering whether we bring witnesses to Brisbane as opposed to going out to witnesses if there are only a limited number of people who may wish to be involved in those hearings or the examination of portfolio legislation.

CHAIR: I note that this committee took advantage of the new systems to do a hearing with mayors in Townsville. We used the technology. It worked very well and was very much appreciated. Speaking of Townsville, I notice the member for Kawana is really keen to have the institution of parliament come to our regions, being the parliament for the whole of Queensland. Can the Speaker outline the status of planning and the proposed parliamentary activities for the recently announced regional parliamentary sitting in Townsville?

Mr SPEAKER: When it comes to the regional sitting in Townsville, I should make a couple of points. First of all, I am a regional MP so it often bemoans me to see that we do not have schoolchildren from right around the state being able to come and watch question time. Some could argue that that is the worst time for them to be watching the parliament.

It is going to be very interesting, because we will be seeing the first regional parliamentary sitting in almost a decade. For a number of regional people, particularly those in Townsville and the surrounding catchments, they will be able to access an opportunity to see parliament live. Importantly also for the members, there are a number of members in the parliament—in fact I think the majority of members—who may not have experienced a regional parliament sitting, so I think that will be very interesting in itself.

Since the intention was announced to host this in Townsville, some of the matters that the Manager of Opposition Business has asked of the Clerk have come to the fore, including those things of security. I will say that there is a very productive working group that is happening right now to ensure that we deliver a very positive impression of what the parliament does and to make sure that we leave as big a footprint as possible in the Townsville region.

Those things will include but are not limited to the week prior, when I will be hosting a regional Indigenous youth parliament. The focus in the youth parliaments for Indigenous students in Brisbane has been at the older end of the spectrum. Last year I did the first of a primary school age which was held in Cairns, with the intention of rotating those between Cairns and Townsville each year going forward. That will be held the week prior. We are expecting to have a youth parliament on the Monday of that regional sitting week.

Throughout the week there will be a number of different engagement activities, some of which are still being finalised. They will allow people to come and meet their local MPs, MPs from further afield, cabinet ministers and members of the opposition. Importantly, this should be seen for what it is—that is, a regional sitting of parliament and not an initiative of the government. It is certainly for all members of parliament, so we hope that all members, including Independents and representatives of the crossbench, will really engage because it will be a great opportunity for people to see our parliamentary democracy in action.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The time allocated for consideration of the proposed expenditure area for the responsibility administered by the Speaker has expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Mr Chair, I think the Clerk wants to respond to a question that was asked.

CHAIR: I am just getting to that, Mr Speaker. I did note that there was a question taken on notice. If there is a further answer that you wish to expand on, I invite you to do that now.

Mr Laurie: I can answer that question now. The question was regarding the Mareeba office relocation. The current size of that office is 132 square metres. We pay about \$275 a square metre. The total rent is about \$36,306.48. I am advised that the new office is 197 square metres at a cost of around \$364 a square metre, totalling about \$71,708.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. It is my understanding that there were no further questions taken on notice. I thank Mr Speaker, the Clerk and the parliamentary officers for their attendance.

Proceedings suspended from 9.46 am to 10.01 am.

ESTIMATES—ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE—PREMIER AND CABINET AND TRADE

In Attendance

Hon. A Palaszczuk, Premier and Minister for Trade

Mr D Barbagallo AM, Chief of Staff

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Ms R Hunter, Acting Director-General

Mr M Cridland, Deputy Director-General (Policy)

Public Service Commission


Mr R Setter, Commission Chief Executive

Office of the Integrity Commissioner

Dr N Stepanov, Integrity Commissioner

Trade and Investment Queensland

Mr P Martyn, Acting Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2019 for the portfolio areas of the Premier and Minister for Trade. The committee will examine the Premier's portfolio areas until 1.30 pm, and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 11.45 am to 12 noon. The visiting members present are: Deb Frecklington, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Nanango; Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; and Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar, who is not present currently.

I remind those present today that the hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is 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 apply to this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief, relate to only one issue and should not contain lengthy or especially subjective preambles, argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be fully explored and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Premier, the director-general, officials and departmental officers, and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisors to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Premier or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Premier and Cabinet, and Trade open for examination. The question before the committee is:

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Premier, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of around five minutes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Chair, and members of the committee. This is my government's fifth budget and the second of our term. Like the budgets that have preceded it, its focus is clear: to invest in Queenslanders by backing Queensland jobs. In Queensland services, especially health, education and transport; in Queensland jobs; and in Queensland infrastructure—we have made strong progress in all of these key priorities.

Through this budget we are spending a record \$19.2 billion on health, we are hiring nearly 800 more nurses, 200 more doctors, 250 more health professionals and 200 more ambulance officers. We are building more bed capacity right across Queensland as far away as Mer Island in the Torres Strait. These additional beds represent the equivalent of the entire RBWH in terms of capacity. We are investing in expanding hospitals in Logan, Caboolture, Ipswich, Roma and Gladstone—over \$770 million.

This budget also invests a record \$14.9 billion in education and training. Since 2015 my government has delivered 13 new schools and now we are on track to deliver another 13 schools over the next two years. We are providing an additional \$100 million over four years for priority state school air conditioning projects.

That focus on health and education is reflected in the latest Public Service Commission report for the March 2019 quarter. I might just add that those March 2019 quarter figures were actually taken into account in our budget that was handed down. It found that more than 78 per cent of the additional 3,154 public servants employed across Queensland were teachers, teacher aides, doctors, nurses and other health practitioners.

When I sat here a year ago I told this hearing that more than 162,000 jobs had been created in Queensland since my government came to office. Today that figure has risen to 203,400. I have said it before and I will say it again: this is a budget focused on delivering for regional Queensland. It delivers \$1.2 billion for health in Far-North Queensland, \$110 million for the North West Minerals Province, and \$193 million for the Townsville port expansion and the Mackay ring road, a project worth almost \$500 million, to name a few. In the Year of Outback Tourism it delivers a \$10 million Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund for projects across the west of our state and \$3 million for outback events.

I can announce today a crucial step in our journey towards deciding whether Queensland will launch a bid for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I will chair a cross-government task force preparing a detailed study of exactly what a 2032 Olympics and Paralympics would look like. The benefits of hosting the Olympics are well recognised, but it is important to be sure we are also aware of the full costs. The study will assess the venue and village master plan and transport infrastructure required; assess what infrastructure will be prioritised, funded and delivered irrespective of an Olympic Games; assess the economic viability and the cost benefits through detailed economic assessment; determine the funding sources, including contributions from federal, state and local government as well as the private sector; and determine the overarching value proposition. The AOC's announcement that the Olympics can be hosted by a region rather than just a city changes the game in Queensland's favour. Just as Townsville and Cairns shared in venue hosting for last year's 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, so, too, would a Queensland Olympic bid be inclusive of other parts of our state. Finally, Chair, I will hand over to you. I commend the estimates process.

CHAIR: Does the deputy chair have any questions?

Mr STEVENS: Thank you, Chair. I defer to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Good morning, Premier, and good morning, officials. I refer to page 13 of the SDS and the Premier's portfolio responsibility for ministerial staff and the ministerial handbook. Is the Premier aware that Fortress Capstone, a company owned by the Premier's chief of staff, received a business development grant of \$267,000 from the Palaszczuk government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to take that on notice. I do not have that information on hand.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You are unaware of that situation involving your chief of staff?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have to check the pecuniary interest register.

CHAIR: We have that taken on notice. Also, if there is any information that you can get back to us with during the hearing, you are more than welcome to do that at the end.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Has your chief of staff declared his interest in Fortress Capstone, as he is required to do as per the ministerial handbook?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As I said, I will check and get back to you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, do you think it passes the pub test that your chief of staff—

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, when we ask about things like the pub test, we are clearly seeking an opinion, and the standing orders—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am advised by the chief of staff that, yes, it has been declared.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, do you think it is acceptable that your chief of staff's company has received a Palaszczuk government business development grant of around \$267,000?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have to go and check the details. I will get back to you. I am more than happy to take that on notice.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So you are unwilling to answer—

Ms BOYD: Point of order.

CHAIR: The member for Pine Rivers has a point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am more than happy to answer. I am just going to get the details in front of me, thank you.

CHAIR: I think I understand the member for Pine Rivers' point of order. It is quite clear that the Premier has—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, I will move on.

CHAIR:—told the committee that she will get back to the committee with the answers required and does not have the information to hand at the time. This type of argumentative questioning is actually not part of the standing orders.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My next question is to the Premier. How many other companies owned by Palaszczuk government ministerial staff have received a business grant from your government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have to check that. I do not have that information to hand.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Given that you are unable to answer any of those questions—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, with all due respect, you are asking for information that is not readily available to me right at this very moment. I am more than happy to get that information for you and to comply.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Premier, with reference to SDS page 3 and the Ministerial Code of Conduct, how many ministers and assistant ministers have met with the Integrity Commissioner to discuss their compliance with the code in the past year?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have just received a letter from the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner undertook an audit of the interests of a sample of ministers and assistant ministers during October 2018. No anomalies were discovered at that time. She can also confirm that she has met with or provided advice to each minister and assistant minister.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Premier, I have looked at the published ministerial diaries. According to the published diaries, you and nine cabinet ministers have not met with the Integrity Commissioner in the last 12 months, even though the Ministerial Code of Conduct requires ministers to meet with the Integrity Commissioner every year. Premier, why is complying with the integrity framework such a problem for your ministers?

Ms PALASZCZUK: If you want, we can go back and do a check of the Newman government as well.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Sure.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to this, as I said, we initiated that the Integrity Commissioner does a random audit, and that random audit has been undertaken. In fact, I ask the Integrity Commissioner to come forward to talk about the audit that she conducted.

Dr Stepanov: Each year I conduct an audit of a random sampling of the interests of ministers and assistant ministers. I am required to report to the Premier if I find any anomalies. I undertook that audit in October last year and did not have any anomalies to report. In terms of meeting with and providing advice to all of the categories of persons who fall within Premier, minister and assistant minister, I can confirm that I have met with, including via telephone, or provided advice to all of those.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. To be clear, Premier, those in the reported diaries who have not met with the Integrity Commissioner in this entire term are you and ministers Dick, Grace, Bailey, Lynham and Furner, and those—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I clarify that. With all due respect, Leader of the Opposition, you can also seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner. That may be a phone call; it may be a letter as well.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is acceptable under the Ministerial Code of Conduct not to declare that in the ministerial diaries?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Phone calls are not in the diary.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, I refer to the recent integrity scandal involving the Deputy Premier failing to declare her ownership—

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, the standing orders require that we do not have argumentative questions. This could be phrased in a way that is not argumentative or subjective.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I apologise. If I can seek your guidance, is the term 'integrity scandal' what you take issue with?

CHAIR: I think there are some issues. One way it could be phrased—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will rephrase.

CHAIR: If you were seeking my advice, one way is to say 'recent issues to do with integrity'. That might be a way that I could help you to rephrase it.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. I refer to the recent integrity issue surrounding the Deputy Premier failing to declare ownership of a property that would benefit from Cross River Rail. The Deputy Premier's published diary shows that she has not met with the Integrity Commissioner in the last 12 months. Can the Premier now guarantee that there are no other—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I just clarify that ministers and assistant ministers can make phone contact with the Integrity Commissioner.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, have you—

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, Dr Stepanov has given an answer that does not align with the statement you just made. Given that answers that are now on the record are different to what you are asserting, I ask that you not continue to make those assertions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, have you sought advice from the Deputy Premier? Has she made a phone call to the Integrity Commissioner in the last 12 months?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that she has been in contact with the Integrity Commissioner over the issue you raise, yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Have you met formally with the Integrity Commissioner in the last 12 months?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, but I have sought advice on another matter.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: By phone?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. Can I clarify that? I have sought advice via my director-general.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So not yourself personally?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You got your director-general to ask a question on your behalf?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My next question is to the Integrity Commissioner. The Deputy Premier has said that you have advised her not to release your advice about the Woollongabba house scandal. Can you please explain why you have advised the Deputy Premier against being transparent about this important matter?

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, I will not ask you to rephrase the question, but the rules are quite clear that questions are not to be argumentative or contain inferences or imputation. I ask you to scan ahead in your prepared questions and to look, seeing as I have given you suggestions, for ways to phrase questions that are not in contravention of standing orders. Dr Stepanov?

Dr Stepanov: Before I do that, I might just clarify in regard to meetings. I do allow telephone meetings in terms of ensuring that there is an ability to access our office irrespective of where you might be located in Queensland.

With regard to the question that you just asked, the Integrity Act has necessarily strict provisions in regard to secrecy. Under the act, I am not able to disclose who may or may not have sought advice or what that advice might have been. Under the act as well, an unauthorised disclosure is subject to imprisonment for a term of one year. I generally do not make any comments in terms of who may or may not have sought advice and what that advice may have been.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Obviously the Deputy Premier said in media statements that she would release the Integrity Commissioner's advice in relation to the purchase of the Woollongabba house. Was the timeline that, after reviewing the information before you, you determined that this was of such a nature that it would be best that that information not become public? Am I correct in that assumption?

Dr Stepanov: I refer to my previous comment in that the secrecy provisions of the act are very strict, so I am unable to provide any comment.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was simply the case that maybe the Deputy Premier should not have suggested that she was going to—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: I think I can anticipate. We are now having repetitive and argumentative questions when Dr Stepanov has made clear the legislative guidelines under which she operates. I let the question be asked again with different phrasing, but for a third time making an assertion through argument is not

within the boundaries of the conduct of this estimates hearing. I ask you to scan ahead and anticipate the standing orders. Otherwise, I know that the member for Noosa has further questions that she would like to put on the record.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chair. Commissioner, your last annual report says that the minutes of the integrity committee are available on your website; however, the last set of minutes is dated 8 May 2018. Who made the decision not to publish these minutes and why?

Dr Stepanov: I will take that comment on notice, but it is my understanding that the most recent notes—so the April or May meeting—are already on the website. Our website was completely redeveloped so perhaps they are now in a different section of the resources, but they should all be available already.

CHAIR: Dr Stepanov, my understanding is that you have taken that question on notice, but it might be something about which you can get back to us before the end of the committee hearing.

Dr Stepanov: Yes.

CHAIR: We might ask at the end.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Just so I am clear, that will be taken on notice. If it is the case that the minutes are not on the website, the commissioner will be taking on notice as to who made that decision not to put them up and why, but your understanding is that they are up?

Dr Stepanov: Absolutely.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. My next question is to the Premier. I refer to page 7 of the SDS about DPC's role in event delivery. What is the status of negotiations with IndyCar bosses to secure IndyCar for the Gold Coast by March 2020?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that there is a report that has, I think, been completed. I have not seen the final report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, I understand there was an announcement—

CHAIR: Premier, had you finished your answer on that one? Do you have something to add?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No.

CHAIR: Okay. Sorry, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Premier. I understand that there was an announcement some time ago in relation to announcing the IndyCars. My question remains: what is the status or where are you up to with negotiations to achieve that headline—that announcement—that you have made?

CHAIR: Is that the same question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: In relation to IndyCars on the Gold Coast.

Ms PALASZCZUK: All I can say is that there is a report that has been finalised but has not come to government yet. It has not been considered by government yet.

CHAIR: Apologies, Premier, but Dr Stepanov agreed to get some further information on a particular question, but under the standing orders the minister or Premier are—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you. Sorry about that. Sorry about that, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No, thank you. My question is to the director-general. Good morning, Director-General. I refer to page 7 of the SDS about DPC's role in event delivery. How much was spent on trying to get IndyCars back on the Gold Coast, including the feasibility study?

Ms Hunter: Thank you for your question. Obviously supporting major events in the state is a key component of the government's tourism agenda. Major events, as you know, drive visitation, expenditure and enhance the profile of Queensland. In October the government announced that there would be an exploration of the potential for renegotiating opportunities to establish IndyCar racing on the Gold Coast. A budget of \$200,000 was set aside by the Department of Housing and Public Works. The initial advice and scoping work has been concluded but, as the Premier said, the final report has not been provided for consideration.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My follow-up question then is to the Premier. Is the Premier still expecting to be able to deliver, as per your announcement, the IndyCars for the Gold Coast for March 2020?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The government will consider that report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The announcement has been made that IndyCars are coming to the Gold Coast but—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course it is going to depend on cost, so we have to see that report and see what the costs are.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: When will the Premier be expecting that report?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not have a time line on that at the moment, but hopefully by the end of the year.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. Thank you.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In terms of events, as we announced today—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: In relation to IndyCars, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, in relation to the Olympics, which would be a great benefit to the Gold Coast, to Brisbane, to the south-east and to other regional communities up and down the coast. I also want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for supporting that and the next stage of course is the task force across government to look at that value proposition. When we are talking about events, I think the biggest event that Queensland is likely to see in terms of whether or not we go down that path would be the hosting of the Olympics.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Sure, Premier, but with the greatest respect your announcement last year was all about IndyCars for the Gold Coast—

Ms BOYD: I raise a point of order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—and now it appears that you have forgotten about it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: At the end of the day we have to make sure—

CHAIR: Hold on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to respond.

CHAIR: Sorry, Premier, but I just might take the point of order, if that is okay.

Ms BOYD: In terms of standing order 115, the Leader of the Opposition is not in fact posing a question to the Premier. She is having a dialogue with her and making a remark. I ask for your guidance, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Pine Rivers. That is certainly true. There was an interjectory remark that was not part of a question, but I turn back to the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: If I could just say this: as with any significant event, whether it is Indy or whether it is the Olympic Games, it has to be a value proposition for taxpayer funds. I think that Queenslanders expect nothing less from a government to make sure that any cost-benefit analysis is done to ensure that it is meeting their expectations. In terms of delivery for tourism events and everything, Baz Luhrmann's production is going to be staged on the coast. I think they are bumping in just next month, which is going to be great news. That is going to be huge for the Gold Coast. We have also just recently had the Logies, which has been wonderful. Of course, a legacy item from the Commonwealth Games was the big sound stage at Village Roadshow—it is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere—which is used for movies. There are a lot of events happening right across Queensland, but we have to make sure that it stacks up financially.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Premier, it appears quite notable that your government has moved on very quickly from IndyCars without delivering—

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, if you have a question, put the question. This is not about making a statement or an observation. I have asked you to scan ahead through the questions that you have clearly prepared to ensure that they fit within the standing orders. Do you have a question for the Premier or any of the other officers?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I do. My question then—thank you, Mr Chair—would be to the Premier. How can Queenslanders trust you to deliver an Olympic Games when you have so notably failed on delivering on IndyCars for the Gold Coast for March 2020?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for that question and I think that Queenslanders know that under my government we have delivered the most successful Commonwealth Games ever seen in the history of the Commonwealth Games. In fact, it was very much noticed by the International Olympic Committee, which is why they now have their eye on Queensland. I am glad you asked that question because it gives me a—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: About the IndyCars, Premier.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms PALASZCZUK: The biggest event for Queensland after the Commonwealth Games will be the Olympics, so it would be great to see a bit more enthusiasm from the Leader of the Opposition for the value proposition that we are now doing for the Olympics. There is a great opportunity for everyone to reap the benefits of that and to have a lasting legacy from the Olympics. What I said very clearly is that we set out some really strict criteria about what that task force will look at. The great thing about the Olympics is that it will be inclusive of Queensland.

We saw when for the first time ever the Commonwealth Games torch relay went through Queensland how much people loved that. Every town was able to participate. Think of that going all through Queensland with the Olympic torch and what that would mean to communities and what pride it would give Queenslanders in being able to showcase their state. Not only that, in the lead-up to an Olympics there is about two or four years when you have the training camps that would come here from the different countries and nearly every major regional city in Queensland would be able to benefit from hosting an Olympic team in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. There are a lot of things to do and there is a lot of work to be done in relation to the Olympics, but that work starts today.

CHAIR: The time for opposition questions has expired. Premier, what is the government doing to support continued investment and growth in the Queensland economy, and I make reference to the SDS at page 3?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Chair. As I said in my opening statement, we are absolutely focused on jobs and backing Queensland jobs. It is a big state and a decentralised state and I think you would know in your own electorate the investment that is happening down there in Yarrabilba and other parts of Logan. It means that jobs are fundamental, but it also means that people are able to put food on the table and be able to pay the bills. As I said in my opening statement, we have created more than 200,000 jobs and I think that that is something that as a state we should be incredibly proud of. That is 200,000 people who have gained employment.

In fact, the 2019 budget is all about backing jobs, which will support more than 80,000 jobs as well in the private sector over the next year. Some of the examples include 6,000 jobseekers supported through Skilling Queenslanders for Work. I know that the LNP is familiar with that particular program, because it axed it. It did not see any merit in making sure people had an opportunity to get a job.

We have created thousands of jobs through our Back to Work program, over 2,000 jobs through the industry attraction programs and 2,800 jobs from our Advance Queensland programs to diversify the economy, and we are also building on the \$38 billion of infrastructure that we have delivered with another \$49.5 billion investment over the next four years. In fact, I think I said to the Treasurer at the time that it is a pity we did not get to that \$50 billion mark, but I am quite sure that that will be the case—hopefully—next year. It includes economic infrastructure, with upgrades to the Mount Isa line, the Townsville port and the Cairns Shipping Development Project. Of this funding, \$12.9 billion is committed over the next year, supporting 40,500 jobs including 25,500 jobs in regional Queensland.

We are also cutting payroll tax for businesses with 85 per cent of their workforce in regional Queensland and lifting the payroll tax threshold to \$1.3 million for small business as part of our \$885 million backing Queensland jobs payroll tax package. Under this package, more than 13,000 small and medium businesses will benefit. I know that Minister Fentiman has been travelling across Queensland meeting with small businesses. I know that she has been inclusive of the local members and letting people know how good this payroll tax package is for their business.

In relation to our 50 per cent renewable energy target, we have supported new renewable industries with \$3.5 billion of recently completed projects. We have overseen \$20 billion—and this is very significant—of resource projects being invested in or committed to, supporting over 7,000 jobs.

We also know how important tourism and our agricultural sectors are. In fact, it is great to see the strength of the Queensland economy and the great diversification that we have. Of course, our trade exports are also booming.

Ms RICHARDS: My question is to the Premier. Hydrogen has an exciting future. Page 5 of the SDS talks of the role of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in supporting the government's hydrogen strategy. Could you explain what the government is doing to encourage the growth in hydrogen exports from Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Redlands very much. Hydrogen is exciting, and I know how much the member is interested in this, because we have a bit of a preliminary trial happening in her electorate with Sumitomo.

Ms RICHARDS: It is very exciting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are very excited. The fact is that Japan sees a great opportunity for Queensland to produce renewable, green hydrogen. If we think about how important our resources sector has been to the Japanese economy over the years—over the decades—if we can facilitate the hydrogen industry we will see many of the countries in Asia being able to enjoy the benefits.

Recently, on a trade mission to Germany I also had the opportunity speak with proponents there. They now have the fuel capacity for cars to be fuelled up, but they are also doing a trial of hydrogen in trains and trucks. It is not just Queensland and Australia; it is worldwide that this phenomenon is starting to happen. Our great advantage is our proximity to Asia. We can continue to work with the Japanese government and the university. I also signed an agreement with Jogmec, which is the Japanese investment arm, to pursue hydrogen with a statement of cooperation. We know that this is going to be of great benefit to Queensland.

With this budget we have included \$19 million, including \$15 million in contestable funds for business, for further research and the commercial provision of large volumes of hydrogen for domestic and export use. I was pleased to be able to announce our hydrogen strategy in May at the Gladstone operations of Northern Oil, which is working on a hydrogen pilot plant at its biorefinery. Of course, I know that the mayor of Gladstone, Matt Burnett, and the assistant minister, Glenn Butcher, are also very excited about the opportunities that it brings for Gladstone.

I do not think other regional cities should discount the valuable role they will play. For example, we are in preliminary talks with investment companies in South Korea about opportunities for Townsville. There are also great opportunities for Mackay, Cairns and right up and down the coast.

We have the strategy in place. We have the funds available to drive it to the next level. The reason we are perfectly placed to undertake this renewable hydrogen production is our existing gas pipeline infrastructure, our access to export ports, our longstanding trade relationships with major emerging hydrogen markets such as Japan and South Korea, our high number of days of sunshine, our ready availability of land and our potential for large numbers of domestic industrial customers.

Ms RICHARDS: Perfectly positioned, Premier.

Ms BOYD: Will the Premier outline the details of Queensland's recent trade performance and provide some examples of export and investment successes, please?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Pine Rivers. Once again, congratulations on the birth of your baby and welcome back. It is lovely to see you back. In relation to exports and trade, we have a great result. The results that were just released for the year ending in May show that \$85.8 billion worth of exports has gone from Queensland. That is absolutely phenomenal. It is more than New South Wales and Victoria combined. It is a record 12-month result—up more than 16 per cent on the same time last year. It is \$41 billion higher than the calendar year 2014. It is just a phenomenal success story.

I think what you can see very clearly is that, with our Advancing Trade and Investment strategy, we are driving the opportunities that businesses have to pursue their export markets. I will give some recent examples. In April this year, in London I had the opportunity to meet Shannon and Geoff from Grahams Natural Alternatives on the Gold Coast. Some of our Gold Coast MPs might be familiar with them. They have created a product for the treatment of skin conditions such as eczema. With the help of TIQ in London, they now have their product in Lloyds pharmacies across the UK. That is an incredible market for them to have and a great example of a naturally produced product. I remember speaking to them at the time. It was because one of their children had one of these skin conditions that they got into this business.

Last year in South Korea I met with the CEO of Korea Zinc, Yun Choi, and the former head of its Sun Metals zinc refinery in Townsville. Subsequently, through the efforts of our Trade and Investment Queensland office in Seoul, Korea Zinc announced a \$377 million investment to expand the Sun Metals refinery which will support the creation of 800 additional jobs in Townsville, which is wonderful.

In Dubai this year I had the opportunity to meet with Liam Proberts from a Brisbane based architecture firm. Together with a creative studio and workshop, they will take centre stage at Expo 2020 in Dubai as the designers of the Australian Pavilion. Once again, the Middle East is a great market for Queensland. Dubai is also interested to learn about our experience hosting major events following the success of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Our network of 16 TIQ offices in 12 markets has an absolute priority to position Queensland businesses on the global stage. Trade means jobs. The Queensland government is working hard to build and strengthen trade and investment for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Speaking of Korea, I was at the Greenbank RSL for Korean Veterans' Day and I met with not only Korean War veterans but also other younger veterans. Can the Premier outline how the Queensland government is supporting veterans in Queensland, particularly those younger veterans, to obtain employment within the Queensland public sector?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. It is a really important question and it is one that I am particularly personally invested in. My mother's stepfather was an Australian veteran. I know how important his service was to him. He always had his certificate in the hallway. I know how important our veterans are. I think as a government we have to recognise them all. I think everyone would agree that our veterans have served our state and nation well and that anything we can do to enhance what they get not only in terms of government services but also jobs is also important.

We believe fundamentally in the dignity and respect of our veterans. We honour their service to our country. To help commemorate the Anzac Centenary, between 2014 and 2018 we committed \$49.3 million for a range of programs, including a permanent exhibition, the Anzac Legacy Gallery, at the Queensland Museum and I think everyone is absolutely delighted about the \$14 million towards the restoration and enhancement of Anzac Square. It was wonderful to be there for Anzac Day to see that square open.

My government has also committed to provide practical support. That is why we promised to increase support to veterans on our public transport network and we have kept that promise. From 2018, in addition to 35,000 holders of a DVA gold card, 19,000 holders of a Department of Veterans' Affairs white card receive a 50 per cent discount on public transport across Queensland.

Building on these initiatives, in July last year we launched a program to identify at least 100 public sector jobs suitable for veterans. I am delighted to inform the committee that as of 30 June this year the number is almost two and a half times that: 241 veterans have gained employment under the veterans' employment pathway program. I think that is terrific news. It is right across Queensland. I have also met some of these former soldiers who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some have stayed in uniform, becoming firefighters and police, but there are also teachers, builders, youth workers, some are beginning careers in Transport and Main Roads and Queensland Health. They are not only in Brisbane but Townsville, Cairns, Far North Queensland, the Gold Coast, Ipswich, South-West Queensland, the Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba.

They say the most valuable thing you can give an ex-service person is a job and I am proud that this is absolutely succeeding. Now private companies, including in Mackay, who have seen the success of our program have asked for our help to source more ex-service people. It is not just the state now, it is actually the private sector coming on board.

I am also pleased to tell the committee about our Veterans' Grants Memorial Program. Recently the successful applicants were announced for round 1 of the \$1.5 million program honouring the services of people from rural and regional Queensland. Memorials are being restored, replaced or created in Roma, Boonah, Paroo, Mareeba and Broadwater. The second round of the program is open and will close in October this year.

We have committed \$2.7 million in new funding to establish a dedicated Office of Veterans within my department. The new office will provide policy advice, support the employment of veterans, work with the private sector to also give employment opportunities, continue the delivery of the Veterans' Memorial Program, lead whole-of-government coordination of veterans and expand the opportunity for the veterans community to communicate with the government. I might also mention that on Sunday night was the opening of *Danger Close*. Minister Bailey represented me at that event. A number of veterans were there. It is wonderful to see that that movie was produced in Queensland and also utilised veterans on the set and in production.

Ms RICHARDS: How fantastic is our film industry? I draw the Premier's attention to page 84 of Budget Paper No. 4, which refers to increased funding of \$45.2 million over five years to support Screen Queensland. Premier, can you outline how this will help create jobs in the Queensland screen industry?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I know your commitment to this industry. The screen industry is once again going from strength to strength and is one of the shining lights of job generation in Queensland. I am extremely pleased to announce increased funding of \$45.2 million over five years for Screen

Queensland in this year's budget. The funding will enhance the capacity of Screen Queensland to support the screen industry in Queensland which injects new money into the state and helps cement Queensland as the screen capital of Australia.

The positive economic outcomes are not just in the screen industry. Local productions support local accommodation, tourism, catering, building, design and other businesses. I think that is the key thing. It takes a lot to put on a production. It is not just the people who are involved in the movie, it is everyone behind the scenes, from the catering to the building of the sets, to locally sourcing the timber that is needed. There is a huge supply chain.

In relation to our Production Attraction Strategy, \$35.7 million has been allocated, which takes the total funding to \$85.7 million since 2015-16. Since 2015 that funding has secured 23 projects in Queensland that are estimated to have created more than 7,500 jobs and injected more than \$679 million into the economy. We have also provided a further \$5.8 million over four years to establish a new Screen Investment Fund. This will deliver economic returns to Screen Queensland and open new industry opportunities.

Importantly, the commercial focus of this fund will generate income for Screen Queensland which can in turn be re-invested into the local industry. The fund will help fund projects in physical production and filming, post, digital and visual effects, games development and more. Another key aspect of the Screen Queensland funding is \$2.7 million over two years to continue to support the post, digital and visual effects incentive.

As I said, one of the legacies of the Commonwealth Games is the largest sound studio stage in the Southern Hemisphere. We hope to see more productions in Queensland. Since we have come into office we have seen a continuous stream of big blockbusters but what we are now seeing is this great capacity for smaller productions to happen and even animation. *Bluey* is another huge success. It has now gone world wide. I think Disney has just picked it up.

Ms RICHARDS: It has gone viral.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. It shows a little bit of Queensland.

Ms BOYD: Will the Premier please outline how her government is supporting regional economies and jobs through infrastructure investment?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for that question. When it comes to our spend in regional infrastructure, one only has to go to any of the major regional centres to see the infrastructure happening. With our Works for Queensland, the councils continue to say what a great investment it is in their local area. It does not matter whether it is a small or a medium sized town I visit across Queensland, the mayors cannot wait to drive me around their region and tell me about all the investment that is happening. This spread of investment is not just in the capital and regional centres, it is right across Queensland which is where we want it to be.

In relation to our \$12.9 billion infrastructure program this year, as I said previously it will support some 25,000 jobs in regional Queensland. One of our signature programs, Building our Regions, a \$515 million investment has supported 2,419 jobs to date. As I mentioned, \$600 million under Works for Queensland has supported 16,400 jobs to date. The \$175 million Jobs and Regional Growth Fund has supported over 900 jobs. Some examples include: delivering the \$152 million Smithfield bypass in Far North Queensland supporting 115 jobs—we all hear the member for Barron River talk at length about the Smithfield bypass; the \$127 million Cairns Shipping Development Project; the \$41.4 million Wangetti Trail project which will create 150 jobs; in North Queensland I had the opportunity to go and inspect the progress of the \$290 million North Queensland Stadium and it was great to see the statue of Johnathan Thurston is about to get underway which will be at the front of the stadium. We have Elton John set to play there for the opening of it next year. In our very first election that was the biggest capital infrastructure project that we committed to. After we made the commitment eventually the federal government came on board. Having had a tour of that structure, it is wonderful to see it coming out of the ground. There will not be a bad seat in that North Queensland Stadium when it opens.

We have committed \$193 million for the Port of Townsville Channel Upgrade; \$225 million to the pipeline project which is supporting up to 1,000 jobs. Coming down to the Mackay Whitsunday region, we have the Mackay Ring Road; money towards the Walkerston bypass; and we have \$14 million towards securing international investment in Mackay Sugar to protect the industry. These are just to name a few. As you go down the coast, right across our state, there is a massive amount of infrastructure.

I also mention the outback. We are delivering \$17.9 million for the Blackall Hospital redevelopment and \$3.1 million to replace the Longreach fire and rescue station. We are supporting new infrastructure at the Winton Australian Age of Dinosaurs museum. I am looking forward to taking my nephew out there during the next school holidays. There is also \$1 million to support an outback rail adventure between Emerald and Winton. There is \$510,000 for five-star ecolodges near Longreach, \$366,000 for the Qantas museum and \$120,000 to promote tourism in Birdsville near their courthouse. I might leave it there, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. Leader of the Opposition, do you have any questions?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, thank you, Mr Chair. My question is to the Premier in relation to the questions around Fortress Capstone, the company owned by your chief of staff that received a quarter of a million dollar business development grant. I understand that you may need to take this on notice. I would like to know the date on which that quarter of a million dollar grant was awarded to your chief of staff.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to take that on notice.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Now that you are aware of that possible conflict of interest within your office, how will you be managing that conflict of interest?

Ms PALASZCZUK: First of all, it was declared. The chief of staff has confirmed to me that it was declared.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: But with respect, Premier—

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, the Premier was virtually a sentence into the answer. It is reasonable that we let the Premier continue to answer the question. She announced that it has been declared and then she was interrupted.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It was declared. The step was taken. I am advised that the funding decisions made by the Business Development Fund are independent of ministers and cabinet. I am happy to get the date for you. I will take that on notice.

CHAIR: We have placed that on notice, thank you. Leader of the Opposition?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, so that I am very clear, you only realised today during the estimates process of that transaction and that it was only declared today?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The chief of staff provides the pecuniary interest register to me. I have just been given a copy of that. It has been given to me previously, but as you raised the question I have now confirmed that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, has an audit been done of that business grant of a quarter of a million dollars, which was granted to your chief of staff's company—

CHAIR: With respect, the question has been taken on notice and the Premier has let us know—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Chair, my question is around whether an audit has been done in relation to the performance of the grant. That has not been taken on notice.

CHAIR: The suggestion is that this might be another question to take on notice, given the Premier's clear indication on this answer.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Chair, you have not even given the Premier an opportunity to take it on notice. My question is: has an audit been done of the business grant of a quarter of a million dollars to a company opened by the Premier's chief of staff to ensure the stated purpose of that grant had been fulfilled and, very importantly, that taxpayers actually receive value for money from that grant?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to look into that matter.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Premier, have you then discussed the Advance Queensland grants with your chief of staff?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In terms of?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The Advance Queensland grants. Have they been discussed with your chief of staff, given that it appears that you were unaware of your chief of staff's extensive interests in a company that financially benefited to the tune of—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Hang on. You are putting words there.

Ms RICHARDS: Point of order.

CHAIR: You may be advancing argument there. I am happy for the Premier to answer. It is important that we do not advance arguments as part of our questions and simply put the questions. Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The chief of staff is indicating that he is happy for an audit to occur.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: An audit—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to have a look at it and I am happy to do an audit of it. However, the chief of staff has advised me on his pecuniary interest register. No decision was taken by a minister in relation to it. It has been at arm's length. I am happy, for clarity, to do an audit to ensure that all processes were followed. I know that the chief of staff is absolutely rigorous in making sure that processes are followed.

Mr STEVENS: Premier, how regularly would you talk to your chief of staff in relation to matters financial, all these policies and processes and those sorts of things? Would it be weekly, hourly, daily?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to the budget? This is the budget estimates.

Mr STEVENS: In relation to the budget—everything. What is your regular correspondence with your chief of staff?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Correspondence?

Mr STEVENS: Not written correspondence but verbal correspondence. How regularly do you talk to your chief of staff?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I speak to my chief of staff daily.

Mr STEVENS: Thank you. That is the answer that I wanted. Premier, in those daily conversations has the chief of staff ever advised you personally that his company has received in excess of a quarter of a million dollars in grant from the government—personally?

CHAIR: I just—

Mr STEVENS: The question, Mr Chair, is to the Premier about her recollection that he has advised her personally of this matter.

CHAIR: Member for Mermaid Beach, there is no point in repeating the question. This is a question that has been put and answered.

Mr STEVENS: I am sorry; it has not been put and answered.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Everybody needs to abide by the rules. If there is a matter that is disclosed, you need to disclose it, as the chief of staff has disclosed it. There has been no ministerial decision around it. It is done independently. I am assured that the chief of staff took every step to ensure that all matters were aboveboard. Now that you are raising an issue, I am happy to do an audit to ensure that all processes were followed, but I know that my chief of staff is rigorous when it comes to ensuring that processes are followed.

Mr STEVENS: Personally, you have no recollection—

CHAIR: Premier, had you finished?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have said that we will do the audit. We will do the audit.

Mr STEVENS: Personally, the Premier has no recollection of any discussion between herself and her chief of staff about a quarter of a million dollar—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have—

CHAIR: I am sorry, Premier. This is now the third time this exact question—

Mr STEVENS: Because it has not been answered, Chair.

CHAIR: It has been answered.

Mr STEVENS: Not 'personally'.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It has. I said that I would do an audit.

CHAIR: With respect, Deputy Chair, I am making a ruling here. It has been answered absolutely and with clarity.

Mr STEVENS: We will move on.

CHAIR: Emphasising the word ‘personally’ does not somehow make it a new question. I understand it might be rhetorical, but standing order 115 says that questioning should not be repetitive, because it becomes badgering and inappropriate. I ask that members not repeat, as in this case, exactly the same question that was put and answered quite clearly. Leader of the Opposition, do you have a question for the Premier?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I do. Premier, are you able to table your chief of staff’s pecuniary interests for the committee meeting as part of your previous answers when you have referred to it?

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are provided directly to me. I will find out if we can do that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, has your chief of staff excluded himself from any policy discussions in and around Advance Queensland business grants granted by your government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Excuse me for a moment. It is independent of government. Secondly, I am advised that on 2 July 2018 there was a question to the Deputy Premier and all of those Business Development Fund grants were actually published, including that one. It is on the public record. It is on the public record and the pecuniary interest register was declared to me, as the chief of staff has to and as previous chiefs of staff had to do to previous premiers.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Do you want me to repeat the question that I just asked, Premier?

CHAIR: My understanding is—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question was in relation to: has—

CHAIR: I need to bring the Leader of the Opposition back to the following—and the Clerk spoke about this this morning. The question will be put and the answer given. It is not an opportunity to continue to badger the minister and ask exactly the same question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I had moved on.

CHAIR: I am sorry. I thought you wished to rephrase the question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I had moved on.

CHAIR: If you are moving on I am happy for a new question to be asked.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The Premier was referring to her director-general.

CHAIR: She answered the question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That is right.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The director-general will do the audit.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My final question in this line of questioning is: has the Premier’s chief of staff excluded himself from any Palaszczuk Labor government policy discussions around Advance Queensland business grants?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The chief of staff does not discuss with me issues around business grants under Advance Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: He has excluded himself from those discussions?

CHAIR: My understanding, Premier, is that the Business Development Fund is part of Treasury and not part of Trade and Investment Queensland.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Correct.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the director-general. I refer to page 3 of the SDS where it says that a priority of the government is to be responsive and the Premier’s statement in parliament on 14 May 2019 that the director-general of DPC would undertake a full investigation about media reports of a young girl who was placed in a maximum security holding cell with two alleged sex offenders. What are the findings of that investigation?

Ms Hunter: Clearly when matters of significance concerning vulnerable people are raised it is important that those matters be properly investigated. As you said, the Premier asked me to investigate the allegation in relation to an incident involving the placement of a young girl in a cell in the Brisbane city watch house near two male adult sex offenders who were placed in a separate cell.

On 14 May 2019 I wrote to the director-general of the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women and the Commissioner of Police and asked that they investigate that allegation of an incident which was alleged to have occurred on 10 November 2018. On 29 May 2019 the commissioner advised that the investigation had been undertaken by the police Ethical Standards Command and that they

found no reasonable suspicion of any misconduct or breach of discipline by any Queensland Police Service member about the issues raised in the ABC *Four Corners* program and that staff had been reminded of requirements for segregation of prisoners, understanding that the young girl was in her own cell. The commissioner also advised that the Crime and Corruption Commission had been engaged and had advised it would not investigate matters raised in the *Four Corners* program in relation to the conduct of Queensland Police Service members.

On 3 June 2019 media reported the suspension of two civilian assistant Brisbane city watch house officers over alleged excessive force used on a 16-year-old male detainee on 20 May 2019. Again, the Queensland Police Service confirmed in a public statement following the media report that the boy did not sustain physical injuries or require medical treatment as a result of the incident. That matter is the subject of ongoing investigation.

A further matter relating to the experiences of a young person with a disability in the Brisbane city watch house was also covered by the ABC on 18 June 2019. The Queensland Police Service advised in a public statement that the young person remained clothed throughout and was provided with a suicide protection garment, as is standard Queensland Police Service custodial practice, and was also provided with access to support services. On 18 June 2019 I wrote to the Police Service commissioner and asked that there be a formal investigation of this incident.

On a number of occasions I have requested that the Police Service commissioner conduct an investigation in relation to matters raised or allegations raised in relation to children in watch houses. On 28 June the commissioner advised that the Ethical Standards Command had reviewed the three issues arising from the *Four Corners* program and no misconduct or breach of discipline had been identified. The commissioner also advised that the review process included consideration of policies and procedures and did not identify any need for amendment to policy or procedures, stating that any necessary actions had been taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people in police custody. On 12 July 2019 I again asked the commissioner for a detailed briefing on those issues. On 19 July the commissioner responded in detail about the matters considered in the review process.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the Premier. On what date did you first learn that children as young as 10 were being held in Queensland's watch houses?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will have to go back and check. We do not want to have young people long-term in watch houses. That is what we as a government have said. That is why we have put in place investment of over \$500 million—the biggest investment in youth justice that has ever occurred in this state.

I just want to update the committee if I can about the situation today. There are no children on remand in the Brisbane watch house. Eight were arrested across the state overnight and are appearing in court today. There are two children in remand in other watch houses—one in Toowoomba is being extradited interstate and another is on remand in Maryborough watch house and is appearing in court today.

I thank the director-general for undertaking that inquiry and for the response that was provided. I made the decision to bring in Bob Gee as the director-general of the new standalone Department of Youth Justice. He has worked so cooperatively with the minister. I brought into the room a number of directors-general and I told them that they all had to work together to fix this problem. That is exactly what they have done.

It is a complex issue. I am quite sure the Leader of the Opposition and all members of parliament know what a complex situation it is in relation to youth justice issues. We are building more infrastructure. Extra beds are also coming online. My recollection is that the beds at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre come on line at the end of August. Planning is already underway for the new beds at Wacol. It also means that everyone needs to cooperate. It means all agencies need to work together. Twelve beds at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre were delivered in April. The new Brisbane Youth Detention Centre will have 32 beds. There was funding allocated for that. In relation to the \$500 million—if we can just have a breakdown—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question was just the date.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is pretty important. If you want to ask a question about youth justice it is a big issue. The \$550 million includes our record investment of \$332.5 million as part of the 2019-20 state budget to reduce the number of young people in watch houses. As I said, we are going to be building that 32-bed youth detention centre at Wacol and the 16 beds as well.

We know that the issues surrounding young people coming into detention centres are very complex. Sometimes these people do not have families to look after them while awaiting trial. Sometimes there are issues around drugs or alcohol abuse. Unfortunately, there are sometimes children from care coming into the youth justice system who have had horrific backgrounds. What we need to do very clearly is work with all the agencies and really focus on family capacity as well—

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order, Chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—to ensure that these young people do not reoffend. It is all about breaking the cycle.

Mr STEVENS: The Premier said that she would take the question on notice and get back to the committee. We do not need a ministerial statement in relation to other matters.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a very important issue.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is very important.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, very important.

CHAIR: I do understand that it was part of a series of questions on youth justice. Although the question was phrased around the date on which the Premier became involved, the Premier has also talked about actions that she has taken on the issues from that date—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Exactly.

CHAIR:—which I think is relatively reasonable.

Mr STEVENS: It certainly was not the question that was asked, Chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are talking about youth justice and it is a big issue.

CHAIR: With respect, Deputy Chair, it is my role to judge whether the answer is relevant to the question. I thought it was directly relevant to the question. Premier, have you concluded?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The best way to stop a young person from reoffending is for them to get a job, so training is really important. I think everyone would agree with me that young people in work helps to break that cycle of committing crimes in the first place.

CHAIR: Premier, I remember when, post Cyclone Debbie, you came down to meet with residents who had been flooded at North Maclean. I know that you had the responsibility of coordinating the disaster management activities. In the context of the risk of a warming climate and the increasing risk of disasters, will you outline to the committee what your government is doing to keep Queenslanders safe with these increasing risks?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As committee members know, both of those reports were handed down last week. Cabinet considered those and we released those reports in full. In relation to the bushfires, what we do know is that we are experiencing categories the likes of which we have never seen before. When I was advised that we had a fire that was reaching what is deemed to be 'catastrophic', it was the first time I had heard that phrase used in Queensland. It is first time that the fire commissioner had heard that phrase used in Queensland as well.

During that period of time there were some 1,250 bushfires that burned throughout Queensland. There were 3,500 Queensland firefighters—that is an incredible effort—who undertook to help to save people's property and also to fight those fires. We had a huge number of personnel who came from interstate—1,200—along with 500 Queensland Parks and Wildlife officers. We had 59 aircraft in use including 47 on one day. When you look at the scale of this event, the total area that ended up being burnt was some 1.4 million hectares.

Our job is to ensure that people can recover and get back to their homes safely. Emergency centres were set up for people to go to. We can always learn from every experience. In terms of what we saw with the period of natural disasters across Queensland—where we went from a cyclone to bushfires to a monsoon trough—we have never had such an extended period of time in Queensland's history where so many natural disaster events happened over such a prolonged period.

Can I say a big thank you to all of our amazing personnel out there who worked together. I also want to thank all of the mayors and all of the members of the Queensland Disaster Management group. We do know that climate change is real. It is having an impact. We know that farmers out west who understand drought know about climate change. We are seeing conditions the likes of which we have not seen before.

When you add all of that together, including the monsoon trough, it cost in excess of \$1.3 billion. It is a phenomenal cost, but we go back and rebuild bigger and better than before. I remember going to see some of the bridges in Townsville that were completely cut off. I remember going out to Julia Creek and meeting with people one on one and seeing the impact that the cattle crisis had and seeing the heartache that people were going through. I know that the Leader of the Opposition also visited there. We have a job to do in helping them rebuild their lives.

We got the Townsville railway line back on track. From memory it was rebuilt in less than three months. We had so many people up there helping and now that vital freight line is restored. It is very important for the Queensland economy to get things like that restored as quickly as possible. We will continue to work with the mayors. We will continue to work with agencies.

The final thing is that we also know the personal cost and the personal toll that it takes on not just adults but children as well. It is a conversation that the Prime Minister and I had at our recent meeting. We will continue to work with families and communities to ensure they get the help they need. You are not going to just recover from a natural disaster like this overnight or in a week; sometimes it takes years. We will be with people every step of the way.

Ms RICHARDS: I thank the Premier and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services for the support they gave us with the bushfires on Straddie. All of the volunteers and the frontline personnel were incredible. With regard to having a regional focus on health, could the Premier outline the infrastructure program for hospitals in rural and remote locations in Queensland and the jobs that are created for locals through that work?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Member for Redlands, it was remiss of me not to mention earlier the great work that you and your community did in relation to the fires. I remember when we thought the fires were going to come over to some of those island communities that you represent and the great information that went out, making sure that everyone was aware. Thank you to your community.

Ms RICHARDS: It was such a fantastic team effort by everybody coming together.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. It was wonderful. Hospitals in rural and remote areas are very important. I am sure that everyone is aware that we will continue to build on the great investment that has been made over the years in our hospitals in rural and regional Queensland. I am sure that the member for Nanango is aware that the Forgan Smith Labor government opened the first brick hospital in Kingaroy in 1949. The modernised design, approved by the then Labor secretary for health, Ned Hanlon, was subsequently used to build similar hospitals in Townsville, Ayr, Barcaldine, Roma and Clermont and for the maternity wings at Goondiwindi and Warwick.

While little was done for these hospitals beyond basic maintenance, my government has taken up the challenge of revitalising these country hospitals. The \$73.9 million comprehensive redevelopment of the Kingaroy Hospital is underway. Minister Miles will attend a local sod-turning ceremony before the end of this month. It is great to see the Palaszczuk government building on the great legacy of the Forgan Smith government. Construction of the new \$98.1 million Roma Hospital is well underway, with an additional \$5.95 million investment for the first permanent student nurse accommodation announced in June this year.

We are planning for the future health needs of our regions. A new major hospital in Toowoomba North is being considered for the Baillie Henderson site, with \$9 million already committed for the detailed business case. The benefits from a new regional hospital will be to reduce the need for people on the Darling Downs and from all of South-West Queensland to travel to Brisbane for advanced health care.

In the west of the state we are providing \$17.9 million to construct a new community hospital in Blackall and \$7.2 million to construct a new primary healthcare centre in Boulia. In Central Queensland there is \$16.5 million for the redevelopment of the Sarina Hospital. In the Wide Bay region, beyond the \$42.5 million expansion of the emergency department at Hervey Bay Hospital, which I recently visited, and the hospital upgrades at Gayndah and Maryborough, we have commenced the detailed business case development for Bundaberg. I know that the mayor of Bundaberg in particular, Mr Jack Dempsey, is very excited because he wrote to me saying that he would love to be involved in helping to support that business case for Bundaberg.

As you can see, we are continuing to invest. I am also pleased that, following my visit to the Torres Strait, we are replacing the Mer Island primary healthcare centre and redeveloping the Thursday Island centre. We are a government for all of Queensland.

CHAIR: Member for Pine Rivers, do you have a question for the Premier?

Ms BOYD: Yes, I do indeed. Will the Premier please outline the infrastructure program for schools in rural and remote locations in Queensland and the jobs that will be created for locals through this work?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question, because I know how importantly she values education not just in her community but right across Queensland. We are investing a record \$1.4 billion in Queensland's state schools to deliver education infrastructure for our growing state. We are building new state schools and refurbishing, maintaining and expanding existing state schools. State schools in rural and regional Queensland are in line for an infrastructure boost. From the tip of Cape York and west out to Mount Isa, we are determined that all Queensland children get a great start to life with a world-class education. Part of that is having world-class facilities in our state schools. I am passionate about building strong communities and people, and it starts with access to good quality education.

When I visited the Torres Strait last year with the member for Cook, I was impressed with the hard work and dedication of teachers and staff in some of our most remote schools. On Yam Island I had a delightful time meeting young students and seeing firsthand how we support early education. It was one of the loveliest visits I have had. When I travel it gives me great joy to visit and meet with teachers and students. We are providing a world-class education whether you are on Yam Island or in Kingaroy, Logan, Pine Rivers, Redlands, Noosa or Maiwar. Right across the state our state schools are exceptional.

I would like to share this with the committee. I recently met the mother of a child who goes to the new Baringa school that we opened on the Sunshine Coast. She said to me, 'I'm just so proud of the school that my son is attending. It looks like a private school.' It is a state school, and we should be incredibly proud of the schools we are refurbishing and the new schools we are building. I opened a new school—

CHAIR: The Yarrabilba State School.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—with the member for Logan. We know that our schools are the best schools. We will continue to foster education to ensure that our children get the best start in life, which is one of our Advancing Queensland priorities, so we will continue to invest. The added benefit of all of these new schools and refurbishments is that it creates jobs as well, so you see jobs being created right across Queensland. When I recently visited the site of the new Baringa high school in Caloundra with Minister Grace, a couple of the students were very interested in pointing out to me where the detention centre and the tuckshop were—not that they are going to be going to detention at all during their school year. I said, 'You have to stay out of detention.' Honestly, with our massive investment we are revitalising schools, building schools and creating jobs.

CHAIR: Premier, coming from a sheep-farming family I am passionate about the wool industry. Will the Premier outline the progress on wild dog cluster fencing and the benefits it continues to bring to regional Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is a good question, because the wild dog cluster fencing is a great achievement of this government for regional Queensland. It came out of discussions that I had around kitchen tables out west. People said to me that what they need is cluster fencing, as wild dogs were encroaching on their homes and putting their children's lives at risk. To date we have allocated a total of \$47.8 million for wild dog fencing—a mixture of grant and loan funding—for farmers and producers. Last year I had the opportunity to visit Blackall, where we caught up with Vaughan Johnson and the local mayor. Despite the drought which has made life harder for our rural communities, the hashtag 'Better in Blackall' was proudly proclaimed everywhere. I was struck by the resilience and positive spirit of people.

We announced round 3, which will provide another 2,000 kilometres of cluster fencing. This will bring the total length of cluster fencing being built to almost 9,000 kilometres. That is the equivalent of driving from Brisbane to Perth and back again. This investment has reinvigorated one of rural Queensland's industries: the sheep and wool sectors. I have been in these communities and spoken personally to some of the graziers who have benefitted from our investment. It means that they have confidence to invest in their flocks and it means support for jobs. The impacts of rounds 1 and 2 funding have been profound, with 4.2 million hectares protected. On some properties the proportion of lambs surviving the vulnerable period after birth has increased from 30 per cent to 80 per cent, more than doubling the number of lambs surviving through to maturity. Barcaldine Regional Council mayor Rob Chandler said, 'We've got comfortable, happy sheep that aren't being chased around the flat by wild dogs.' I can actually hear Robbie Chandler saying that.

I think that we should also talk about drought. To address the drought, this year's budget also committed \$74.6 million over four years for the continuation of our drought assistance package. We are always conscious of the pressures on our rural and regional communities across the north and west, which had mixed blessings from last summer's rain events. While some areas recorded extreme rainfall figures and suffered subsequent flooding, other areas recorded usual rainfall amounts with limited damage. Some areas did not receive any useful rain. Currently, 65 per cent of Queensland is drought-declared. Many producers have suffered badly from long-term drought, enduring eight consecutive failed or below average wet seasons. The budget for 2019-20 is \$49.4 million. The package is delivered by a number of government agencies and in 2019-20 includes \$25 million for drought relief assistance. I might leave it there.

CHAIR: Member Redlands, do you have a question of the Premier?

Ms RICHARDS: Technology has continued to change the way we do things and the way we communicate. Cyberbullying is one of the nasty fallouts of that. Can you please outline what is happening in our schools and communities to help families and parents combat cyberbullying?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think everyone knows that cyberbullying is a big issue. It is an issue that a lot of parents talk to me about and a lot of students raise it as well. I was very pleased to stand beside Tick and Kate Everett—who as we know sadly lost their daughter Dolly—to talk about what Queensland is doing. In fact, I believe that we were the first state to undertake a task force and bring about results. I announced that we accepted all of the recommendations of the Anti-Cyberbully Taskforce Report and that we pledged \$3.5 million on a range of initiatives to stamp out the harm being done to our children. Of the \$3.5 million, \$2 million over two years is going towards awareness and education campaigns to assist communities, parents, careers and young people to understand and address cyberbullying. There is \$1 million for schools, including \$450,000 to Dolly's Dream Foundation to partner with the Alannah & Madeline Foundation to implement eSmart Schools programs in Queensland schools, starting with remote and regional schools first. There are \$500,000 in grants for initiatives to address cyberbullying, which are aimed at young people and youth and community organisations. Grants opened 23 May and were due to close 23 June 2019.

We have been working hard to implement the recommendations of the Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce Report. In February we established the Anti-Cyberbullying Advisory Committee, chaired by well-known QUT legal academic Mr Peter Black, to guide state agencies on actions to address cyberbullying. In April my government tabled its first biannual progress report in parliament highlighting what we have achieved so far and what more we have to do. For example, schools now have access to online resources through the Bullying. No way! Website; there is a new students' code of conduct; guidance on the use of mobile phones in schools; and the continuing operation of the Cyber Safety and Reputation Management Team. The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women has implemented initiatives to engage young people, parents and the community in the fight against cyberbullying, including releasing the first round of youth grants programs and commencing the design of statewide public awareness and education campaigns.

I have also written to the CEOs of major social media companies to reinforce their obligations to put in place measures to protect children and young people using social media and television networks, broadcasters and streaming services to formally request them to include bullying in programs' consumer advice. The ABC and SBS have already replied, advising that they will consider any changes or additions they can make to their standards in this area.

The Prime Minister is also seeking action on this issue and other task force recommendations which require national attention. I am proud that we are taking a leading role in the anti-cyberbullying agenda. At a national level, at the December 2018 COAG we obtained an agreement for the federal government to bring a proposal on introducing right to be forgotten legislation.

CHAIR: I now turn to questions from members of the opposition. Does the member for Nanango have one question? Then we will move to the members for Maiwar and Noosa.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, are you aware of whether your chief of staff has received advice from the Integrity Commissioner? Was that advice then provided to you and when?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am advised that the chief of staff did get Integrity Commissioner advice.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Were you—

CHAIR: We might move to the member for Maiwar. Are you ready to ask a question?

Mr BERKMAN: I certainly am. Premier, people in my electorate on the west side of Brisbane have lost something like \$400,000 every year to the 80 pokies in the electorate. In February this year you said you would actually like to see in the future that we have fewer pokies in Queensland. Is that still your view?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I certainly do not want to see an increase. If we can have a decrease, that would be wonderful.

Mr BERKMAN: That is encouraging, I suppose. When I asked the Attorney-General in March this year what the government's plan is to reduce the number of pokies in Queensland, which is currently around 40,000, she could not name any plan. Does the government have a plan to reduce the number of pokies in Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have to get advice on that. I can advise the member that there is a statewide cap on the number of gaming machines approved for hotels and clubs in Queensland. Any change can only occur within a statewide cap. I think the Attorney-General would have more advice, but if there is anything specific I am happy to get back to you.

Ms BOLTON: Premier, in the interest of whole-of-government approaches and better outcomes for Queensland, would you give an undertaking to initiate an audit of surplus or underutilised state land or facilities throughout all departments to identify affordable housing or facilities for not-for-profit programs and initiatives including Containers for Change? This is to meet the urgent needs of Queenslanders. They are just a couple of examples. We really need a much better way of identifying and accessing these sites.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that the Department of Housing and Public Works does keep a register of land. I also know from my local community that sometimes they will sell an older house and use that money to reinvest in a new block of land to build units, for example. There is a growing ageing population. There is now a higher demand for one-bedroom and two-bedroom units as opposed to three-bedroom and four-bedroom houses, especially in areas where those demographics are increasing.

I know that the department of housing is working with other agencies as well to identify other areas. It is something that we are committed to, especially with our massive investment into our Housing Strategy. That is a 10-year framework that is driving key reforms and targeted investment across housing.

I think the member for Noosa might be aware that we have also hit a big roadblock with the federal government. In the past we have been able to work with the federal government when it came to remote Indigenous housing. However, because of the roadblock they put in place, where basically it is now ending, we will not be able to build that extra housing. My understanding is that the Minister for Housing and Public Works has brought forward some funding to make sure there will not be an end to that happening in the remote parts of our state. Of course, it is a bit more expensive to build in more remote regions of our state.

We will continue to work. I am quite sure that the Minister for Public Works will be able to elaborate more on the processes that they go through in terms of identifying land to build additional housing.

Ms BOLTON: I will go back to my original question about an audit. The reason I ask is that for 18 months we have been in between departments trying to search for land, yet we then find parts identified in one department. There is supposed to be a collaboration between departments but neither knows what is going on and who has the land. That is why I asked for an audit, so it can be brought together so that every department, including the department of housing, actually knows where that land is.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think from memory the Minister for State Development through Economic Development Queensland has the authority to talk to different agencies that may need requirements, whether that is to build a sporting structure or to build housing.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr BERKMAN: Chair, if I might ask a further question?

CHAIR: Also, just as a general note, relatively technical questions about specific things are probably best saved for other portfolios. Member for Bonney, do you have a question for the Premier or one of the officers?

Mr O'CONNOR: Yes, to the Premier. A stated priority of the government is to be responsive, and that is formally set out on page 3 of the SDS. How is the Palaszczuk government's failure to consult the Gold Coast community on the 11 secret sites for the proposed second casino being responsive?

CHAIR: I know that the member for Bonney has a great interest in imputation. I would ask him to rephrase that question. We have had discussions about this, so he is no doubt aware of his ability to rephrase that question. I offer him this opportunity to rephrase it within standing order 115.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you, Mr Chair. How is the Palaszczuk government's failure to consult the Gold Coast community on the 11 sites for the second casino being responsive?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As, from memory, Minister Jones said, there is no preferred site for the global tourism hub on the Gold Coast, but what we have done is set up a committee. I think from memory—

Mr O'CONNOR: There was a list of 11 sites prepared by the government, if it might help.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. Cabinet took a decision that there would be no preferred site for a global tourism hub and that it was up to proponents to come forward to recommend a preferred site and then they would talk to that committee.

Mr O'CONNOR: There was the KPMG report of the 11 sites prepared by the state government.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well, cabinet has made a decision.

CHAIR: Firstly, member for Bonney, when you rephrased the question you did not remove the argumentative points, and the answer the Premier gave talked about the consultation so it was both non-factual and argumentative. You have just made another assertion that is not a question. Let us respect standing order 115 and put a question. If you have a follow-up question, it can be phrased as a question and be within the standing orders on these issues. The member for Maiwar has indicated that he has another question. Member for Maiwar, do you want to ask your question?

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. I would jump at the opportunity.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, can I just finish on that. The Gold Coast Tourism Advisory Panel membership comprises representatives from Destination Gold Coast, the Gold Coast City Council, local business and community. The role of the panel is to advise the government on community views and key considerations throughout the market process. I might leave it there. It is John Witheriff who is the chair.

CHAIR: Just to indicate, the question would be whether there had there been consultation, of which clearly there are local Gold Coast entities involved in that consultation. I move to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: Premier, for two years in a row now I have written to you asking for basic improvements to this estimates process that has been described in recent years as a protection racket for ministers and where nearly half the time is taken by Dorothy Dixers. Will you consider those changes, starting at the very least with a doubling of the amount of time for questions?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I know that the member is new to parliament, but the estimates process has been in place for many years—in fact, I think my chief of staff might have been the architect of it back in the Goss government—and it is one that I think should be open to scrutiny. It is up to the committees to determine the times of which the estimates process runs. Let me also make it very clear that after the Newman government's experiment of running concurrent estimates on the one day—from memory, it was over two days; and I think one of the architects is sitting across from me—

Mr Purdie interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry, what was that? Was it 'Good on you, Ray'? Well, it was not a very good process at the time and the member for—who are you the member for?

CHAIR: Ninderry.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Dan Purdie.

Mr O'CONNOR: That is on the Sunshine Coast.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I know where it is. I just have not seen you around much. That is all. The member was not here back then and would not have been aware that the opposition found it very difficult to get to estimates hearings that were all running at the same time, which is why the Newman government put that program in place at that time. As a result, in the interests of transparency my government made a commitment to return it to the way it has been run for decades, which is spread over a couple of weeks so that ministers and directors-general are able to answer questions.

Mr BERKMAN: Premier, what I have proposed, and what the question asked, is a doubling of the amount of time so that there is more opportunity for scrutiny and more time available for questions.

CHAIR: We did recognise that and, Premier, we heard this from the Clerk this morning. You have put the question. It is not an opportunity to put the question again.

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is always estimates and there is question time. Parliament is a great opportunity to ask questions as well.

CHAIR: With respect, this is not a question about the budget per se; it is about process and it could have been left for other opportunities. Thank you for skating close to a reflection on the chair but not going that far. I urge you to be careful—

Mr BERKMAN: You are welcome for any reflections on the chair.

CHAIR: I note that the Leader of the Opposition has indicated she has a question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the Public Service Commissioner, Robert Setter. I refer to page 1 of the SDS and the portfolio summary that lists Ms Rachel Hunter as the acting director-general. I ask the commissioner: is Dave Stewart on leave during his six-month sabbatical and is this leave being deducted from his leave entitlements?

Mr Setter: Dave Stewart is, indeed, on special leave that has been approved by the Premier for the duration of his absence. During that time Rachel Hunter has agreed to be the acting director-general.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is Dave Stewart still receiving taxpayer funded remuneration whilst he is on that approved sabbatical?

Mr Setter: The only paid leave that he would be entitled to would be that which he ought to have accrued. My understanding is that he is on leave with no pay.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I might add that he is very much looking forward to coming back. I got a text from him today.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Premier. I am quite sure you are looking forward to having him back. My question is for the director-general. I refer to question on notice No. 13. How many times did the now disbanded Working Queensland Cabinet Committee meet during this term of government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am the chair of cabinet. I am happy to answer that question. I am the chair of cabinet, so that question should be directed to me, Chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Premier, if you would like to answer the question, which is: how many times did the now disbanded Working Queensland Cabinet Committee meet during this term of government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Because we have Advancing Queensland priorities and we have a number of cabinet committees that meet in accordance with that, it has superseded the Working Queensland Cabinet Committee.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, Queensland has the highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia. Did you disband the Working Queensland Cabinet Committee because it was failing to address Queensland's unacceptably high unemployment rate?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Leader of the Opposition, our unemployment rate is not as high as when you were in government.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Would the Premier like to—

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are working every single day to bring that rate down and grow jobs. We do not sack public servants like you sacked 14,000. If you want to talk about jobs and records, we did not axe the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, and you were an assistant minister when that program was scrapped. I am also told that you—

Ms BOYD: Shame!

Ms RICHARDS: Shame!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Seriously! You practised that. You practised it?

Ms BOYD: It just comes naturally.

CHAIR: Order! Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are about creating jobs. I will stand on my record of working with mayors—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—in comparison to the national employment rate.

CHAIR: Order! Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will stand on my record—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Do not stand on that one.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—as opposed to the record—and you were part of the Newman government; you were an assistant minister. In fact, I remember at some stage you were an assistant minister to either—

CHAIR: Titles, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—the Treasurer or the Premier.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That is correct.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You sat around that cabinet table. You did not sit around the cabinet table?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I do not recall sitting—

Ms BOYD: Not quite. She will not get the opportunity to do that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: All right. Sorry.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It appears the Premier is more interested in my record than hers, given that Queensland has the highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, when I looked at the record last time I think there were 14 or 15 instances where you interjected on answers from the Premier. I ask that the question be put—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Today?

Ms PALASZCZUK: These are the facts—

CHAIR: No, when I went through the record from last time.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The trend unemployment rate is—

CHAIR: Premier, just—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Chair, with greatest respect—

CHAIR: When I went through the record last time—I know that my good order of the committee is to not allow continual interjections and I notice that you are creeping down this pattern. So far today has been really good.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: No worries, but I want you not to stray into that area again because you recognise that the good order is to not make interjections. The question has been put to the Premier, but I ask the Premier to put the answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. As I was stating, the unemployment rate in Queensland is lower than the 6.6 per cent rate we inherited from the LNP in January 2015—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: And the national rate?

Ms PALASZCZUK: When the LNP's budget came down when they sacked 14,000 workers, this is how the Leader of the Opposition described the budget and those sacked workers. She stated—

This is a budget that delivers a brighter future for Queensland and encourages confidence.

The member for Nanango said—

I am proud to have worked with the Treasurer in some parts of delivering this budget.

...

I am also proud to be part of a government that is prepared to make the tough decisions in the best interests of all Queenslanders.

The Leader of the Opposition stood by—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is on record, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—the Treasurer, backed in that budget—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: When we are talking about—

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—in which 14,000 people were sacked. The Leader of the Opposition would know—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The highest unemployment rate in the nation, Premier, and you are the Premier of this state—

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And you cut 14,000 jobs.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—this financial year.

CHAIR: Order. Order, order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is the highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, you may be aware that we are going to a break soon—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It was 14,000 people—shocking.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The highest unemployment—

CHAIR:—and you see advantage in continually interjecting. Let's let the Premier finish.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Excuse me, Mr Chair, the Premier is as well.

CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question. We will let the Premier finish answering the question without interjections. Thank you very much.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me say this, Chair, and members of the committee. I still travel extensively across Queensland and I am still stopped by people who were sacked by the Newman government. They come up to me and they talk about what that meant to their family, what that meant to them. It meant they could not put food on the table. It meant sometimes they had to pack up and leave a regional town. I was out at Longreach. Over a dozen people lost their jobs in Longreach. Do you know what that does to a town like Longreach when you take 12 people out? You attacked your heartland. You attacked everyone across this state and people are still feeling the pain—

Mr STEVENS: Point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—of 14,000 people losing their jobs—families.

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, do you have a point of order? We are just about to go to a break, so—

Mr STEVENS: Standing order 118, which applies today—the relevance of the answer to the question.


Ms PALASZCZUK: There were 14,000 sacked.

CHAIR: That was directly related to unemployment in this state; the answer was relevant. Premier, we are just about to go to a break. Do you have anything to conclude the answer?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am fine, thank you.

CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 12 noon. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 11.48 am to 12.03 pm.

 **CHAIR:** I welcome back the Premier and officials from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the other officials joining us for this session. The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolios areas of Premier and cabinet and trade. I now call the member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 3 of the SDS. Premier, will you please outline what steps have been implemented to enhance the representation of women on boards in Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for that question. It is really important that we try to do everything possible to empower women across the state. Of course, we lead by example, with 50 per cent of our cabinet being women—we were the first state in Australia to achieve this—and we have a women's policy. However, the gender pay gap in Queensland is unacceptably high, at about 16.7 per cent. Women are vastly under-represented in leadership positions, particularly on boards of management. Women are more likely to work in a narrow range of low-paying occupations and continue to be under-represented within traditionally male dominated industries.

As part of our Women's Strategy, I launched the Women on Boards initiative to get more women into Queensland boardrooms. We have held three Women on Boards events, and they have been a great success. The first was in Brisbane in August 2018. We thought we would be lucky if we got 100 people. I think we got about 700. It was huge. Our first regional event was in Toowoomba in September 2018 during our Governing from the Regions program. It booked out. Our second regional event was held on the Sunshine Coast in March this year, also during Governing from the Regions. I can confirm to the committee that we will host a Women on Boards event in Townsville when we take the parliament to Townsville in September.

We have gone from 31 per cent representation of women on government boards. A few days ago Minister Farmer advised me that as of 30 June this year we are at 49 per cent. Our target is 50 per cent by 2020, and today we are at 49 per cent. I think we are setting a great benchmark and giving women the confidence to put their hands up to be a part of government decision-making.

CHAIR: Premier, with reference to the role of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in supporting the government's aim of supporting the advancement of renewable energy, will you provide an update on the jobs being supported and generated in regional Queensland in all forms of energy generation?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We want to make sure that we are delivering the right mix to provide stable and affordable energy for Queenslanders. This includes \$354 million of ongoing works at the Tarong Power Station. We know how important that is. This is in addition to \$86 million of overhauls at Callide Power Station and \$85 million of works at Kogan Creek. We also are delivering record investment in renewable energy. The number of jobs in the renewable energy industry has nearly doubled, to more than 5,000.

We are supporting the policy. We are definitely committed to our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. Recently completed projects have provided over 1,700 megawatts of generation capacity and supported over 3,600 jobs during construction, with nearly \$3.5 billion invested. This includes the 15-megawatt Longreach Solar Farm, the 150-megawatt Daydream Solar Farm, the 110-megawatt Darling Downs Solar Farm, the 20-megawatt Barcaldine Solar Farm, the 100-megawatt Mount Emerald Wind Farm and the 125-megawatt Sun Metals Solar Farm near Townsville which recently I had the pleasure of inspecting and jointly opening with the company.

We have another \$1.8 billion of projects underway, supporting another 1,080 construction jobs. These projects will support more than 890 megawatts of additional renewable generation capacity. Projects underway include \$850 million for the 453-megawatt Coopers Gap Wind Farm, the \$180 million Clermont Solar Farm that is supporting 150 jobs, and the \$104 million Kennedy Energy Park wind farm, which will support 87 jobs during construction. This is in addition to more than \$20 billion of renewable projects in the pipeline planned for Queensland.

Ms BOYD: Premier, with reference to page 3 of the SDS, what is the government doing to promote a fairer Queensland, especially with working Queenslanders?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Pine Rivers. We know that there is dignity in work. There is respect and reward in being properly paid for the work that you do. This is one of the cornerstones of personal and family stability, financial independence and an engaged, active life. When workers are denied their rights, the result is disrespect, desperation and disempowerment. That is why I am proud that my government introduced Australia's first labour hire licensing scheme, to protect vulnerable workers and raise standards in the labour hire industry. The new laws finally regulated a sector that was left unregulated for too long. This deregulation and its resulting disrespect was propped up by dodgy operators. We were told that it would not work, that it was not necessary and that industry would not accept it, but we back responsible Queensland businesses, many of which told the parliamentary inquiry that they welcomed the laws. They welcomed the laws because they aimed to weed out those dodgy operators.

Right now there are more than 3,100 licensed labour hire providers in Queensland. This number far exceeds our original expectations and shows that labour hire providers are fully aware of their legal obligations to be licensed and are ready to get on with business. We have also taken strong action where necessary to protect vulnerable workers since the scheme commenced on 16 April. Some 113 licence applications have been withdrawn where the provider has failed to provide adequate information about their business operations; 13 applications have been refused for reasons including serious noncompliance with employment, taxation, superannuation and workers compensation laws; 140 providers have had their licence suspended for reasons including not meeting their reporting obligations and contravening relevant laws; 14 licences have been cancelled; 13 licences have been issued with conditions; and 361 audits of applications have been identified as high risk.

The Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit has worked closely with other local, state and federal agencies to disrupt dodgy labour hire providers. A rogue labour hire business was successfully prosecuted and fined \$60,000 in Stanthorpe in June for unlicensed providing. There are other positive flow-on effects because of the new laws. The new laws are also leading to great results in other areas. For example, WorkCover has collected almost half a million dollars in extra premiums from labour hire providers who know that they now must comply with their WorkCover obligations and all other relevant laws in order to get a labour hire licence. This is all because labour hire providers know that they must comply with their WorkCover obligations.

Of course, that is not the only action that we are taking. We established a parliamentary inquiry into wage theft that heard terrible stories of exploitation. We received a detailed report with recommendations on what action we can take to tackle this. We support in principle the making of wage theft a criminal offence. A strong case was made that if an employee steals from their boss it is a criminal offence, but when an employer systematically takes their workers' money it is dealt with differently. The inquiry heard that wage theft is affecting around 437,000 or 17 per cent of Queensland workers and costing about \$1.2 billion every year. Some 580,000 Queensland workers, or close to one in four, are likely to have unpaid super to the tune of \$1.1 billion. That is \$2.3 billion taken from families. That also does not flow to local businesses and the wider economy. We are going to continue to make sure that our workers get the fair wages that they deserve.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier.

Ms RICHARDS: One of Trade and Investment Queensland's responsibilities is to attract foreign investment in our state. Premier, can you outline the work TIQ has done in collaboration with the department of state development and other agencies to secure investment in our growing Defence and other industries?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, member for Redlands. As I always say, trade equals jobs. The more trade that we can do with our state, the more jobs that we can put in place. In 2017-18 the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and TIQ, together with my ministers, collaborated to bring about one of the biggest investments yet. At Redbank near Ipswich a new advanced manufacturing facility is rising from the ground. It will be home to the largest procurement project ever undertaken by the Australian Army, the \$5.2 billion Land 400 phase 2. Rheinmetall Defence Australia will build a new fleet of combat reconnaissance vehicles, 225 Boxers. These are designed to make sure that our fighting men and women are out of harm's way and then safely back home again. Once complete, it will support 450 highly skilled, long-term jobs as well as myriad small and medium businesses in the supply chain across Queensland. In fact, in good news, these small and medium businesses are being set up now because of this big investment. The whole corridor—from Redlands to Ipswich, taking in Logan, and all the way up to Toowoomba and down to the Gold Coast—will benefit from the supply chain for Rheinmetall. I can also confirm that when I was in Berlin I had the opportunity to meet with the CEO of Rheinmetall, Mr Papperger, and I invited him to Queensland. I can confirm that he will be travelling here next month and will be doing a site inspection of how the project is going.

In March my government announced its support for a joint venture between another division of Rheinmetall to also partner to see a \$60 million plant in Maryborough to make ammunition for the Australian Army. We will see 100 new advanced manufacturing, high-technology jobs in Wide Bay when the plant is fully operational in 2022. Some \$50 million over seven years will be invested by Defence in the new Defence cooperative research centre for autonomous systems after our winning bid earlier this year. Given the potential for Queensland to become Australia's Defence hub, my government has established Defence Jobs Queensland to help industry here in Queensland tap into the potential for further Defence work and Minister Dick will be leading this work for the government. Australia will see \$200 billion in Defence spending in the decade to 2028-29. We intend to do all we can to see as much of that money spent in Queensland as possible. We are delivering in Defence, we are delivering in manufacturing and once again Queensland is exporting to the world.

CHAIR: Premier, page 31 of the SDS refers to the government's priority to 'be a responsive government by delivering integrated, responsive and quality export and investment services to Queensland's business community and international buyers'. Can the Premier outline how Trade and Investment Queensland is contributing to this objective through its offshore network?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the chair for that question. As I was saying earlier, we have a very diverse economy and we have great businesses here in Queensland that sometimes just need the cooperation of TIQ, especially our commissioners who are based internationally, to get their foot in the door and to understand the legal and political situation in the countries that they will be operating in. That is the biggest issue that companies talk to me about—that is, navigating their way in a brand-new area. We have a network of 16 officers in 12 markets. One example very clearly is that we have perhaps the most experienced trade commissioner in Japan, Mr Tak Adachi, and we have been in Japan for decades as a result of the strong resource industry investment of Japanese resource companies into Queensland and we are highly valued not just at an industry level but also by the government.

One other example that I wanted to share with the committee was that in April this year I had the opportunity to inspect a fish farm that was being built by Buderim based Radaqua. That fish farm is in the desert half an hour east of Abu Dhabi near the camel racing track. We ventured there and all you could see were sand dunes and the camel racing track and then you saw this shed in the middle of the

desert. I joined with the minister from Abu Dhabi and we were able to speak to the owners of Radaqua who have set up this amazing fish farm in the middle of the desert. What this says very clearly, once we also spoke to some other investors, is that there is a huge opportunity to expand Radaqua into other areas of the Middle East because of their production. They will produce 120 tonnes a year of hamour, which is a local species of fish similar to a grouper. I am told by locals that they are very impressed by the Radaqua fish because it tastes like it was caught in the sea and the company is now looking to expand to 750 tonnes a year. I think that is just one key example. Of course, we will continue to work with companies to explore how they can get the very best out of our trade commissioners who operate in all of those 12 markets.

Ms RICHARDS: Page 103 of Budget Paper No. 4 refers to additional funding of \$34.5 million towards an expansion of the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct. Premier, can you outline how many jobs this will generate for Queenslanders in both the construction and operational phases of the project?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. We needed to make sure that we built the capacity that is needed by our growing population. We have tackled this head-on and announced an investment of \$620 million towards the expansion of the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct. Stage 2 of the correctional facility, a brand-new standalone facility at the existing precinct, will deliver about 1,000 beds for male prisoners by 2023. The planning has already commenced for this prison to be a modern, evidence based correctional facility. The mental health, drug and alcohol rehabilitation that will also be offered will enhance community safety by focusing on addressing the ice epidemic and its link to violence and property crime.

This project means on the ground 445 construction jobs over the three-year build as well as the opportunity for Lockyer Valley businesses to supply the goods and services during the construction phase. It also means at least 500 permanent jobs once the facility is operational. We are committed to investing and making sure that we cater for this growth.

In relation to our Capricornia correctional facility—I might just update the committee—the expansion is going well. We have seen the allocation of \$241 million that will create 348 new cells and 396 beds. This budget delivers \$142.9 million over four years to fund the extra 232 jobs needed to operate the expanded Capricornia centre, with \$43.7 million in ongoing funding for the positions.

I can update the committee that in the Rockhampton area to date 37 trade packages have been let, 49 per cent of tenders have been awarded to local businesses, there has been \$140 million in total value of works ordered to date, \$65 million in works has been let to local industry and 235 hours of work has been done on the expansion project.

Ms RICHARDS: I note that domestic violence prevention has been a big part of our government. It is something that I am really passionate about. Premier, could you please advise the actions that the government is taking to continue to tackle domestic and family violence?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. I think this is an issue for everyone. We know that, tragically, domestic and family violence claims on average one Australian life every week. Every year as part of Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month, a candlelight vigil is held for every woman and child who has lost their life through domestic and family violence in our state. This year was no different. I was joined by some incredibly strong women, resolute in their will to talk about their stories and how they have strong voices for change. It is because of these stories and the action that we are taking as a government and a community that we have been able to bring the issue of domestic and family violence out from behind closed doors.

We have started along a very challenging path to stop behaviours and attitudes that excuse or perpetuate domestic and family violence, with significant reforms leading to everlasting change. We have said 'not now, not ever'. We have allocated a record \$328.9 million over six years, from 2016-17 to 2021-22, to drive these significant reforms. The Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council continues to have an important role in our Not Now, Not Ever reform program. I am grateful to the council for their commitment to eliminating domestic and family violence in Queensland and especially to its chair, Kay McGrath, who became a Queensland Great this year—and very well deserved. The most recent report from the council commends my government on the progress of our domestic and family violence reforms and concludes that momentum for change in our community remains strong.

We have completed 104 government directed recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report and have commenced the remaining 17. Among the key initiatives is that Respectful Relationships education is available in schools. We have dedicated special domestic and family violence courts in

Southport, Beenleigh, Townsville, with a circuit court to Mount Isa and Palm Island. We launched a Bystander campaign, urging bystanders to speak up, as well as a campaign to raise awareness of domestic and family violence with our LGBTIQ communities. We have renewed contracts for more than 50 domestic violence shelters and support services. We have also recommended the importance of integrated service responses and have commenced trials of these innovative approaches in Logan, Beenleigh, Mount Isa and Cherbourg. These trials are supported with cross-agency teams focusing on high-risk situations and are now operating in three trial locations as well as in Brisbane, Ipswich, Cairns, Moreton and Mackay.

CHAIR: Thank you. We will now turn to opposition questions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the acting CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland. I refer to TIQ's service area objective to provide advice on trade and investment policy. This is on page 34 of the SDS. On 26 February this year the Deputy Premier stated that markets are moving away from thermal coal and Queensland coal communities needed to reskill. Does TIQ share this view and will Queensland's thermal coal resources no longer be marketed by TIQ for trade or investment?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. In terms of Trade and Investment Queensland's approach, we are very much driven by the market and by what overseas buyers are seeking. We have strong interest for coal from Queensland, both metallurgical and thermal. My understanding is, very much in accordance with government policy, that we are keen to see the continued growth of our coal industry.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Just to be clear, that includes thermal coal?

Mr Martyn: Yes. I think it is fair to say that we have much stronger interest in metallurgical coal, but there is some interest in thermal.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My next question is also to Mr Martyn. I refer to TIQ's service area objective to provide advice on trade and investment policy which, again, is on page 34 of the SDS. Before Queensland's former resources investment commissioner's contract was not renewed, she described the approval process of the Adani Carmichael mine project as an absolute mess for its Indian investors. Have any similar concerns been shared with TIQ by potential or existing investors? How has the government's handling of this project affected Queensland's perceived investment risk?

Mr Martyn: Queensland is highly regarded internationally as a place to invest in resources and energy. That continues to be the case. Our officers around the world continue to receive significant interest in investing in Queensland resources. In recent times we have had interest from China, Vietnam and India in investing in Queensland resources. We do not see any reduction in the state's position around the world. Our resource endowment, our infrastructure, the skills of our people and the knowledge of our mining equipment technology and services sector all combine for an extremely powerful global offering.

CHAIR: I note that the question seemed to be seeking Mr Martyn's opinion. Mr Martyn then stated a series of facts and not, obviously, an opinion. Questions should not seek opinion. 'Are there indicators?' might be a way phrase that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Chair, thank you very much for clarifying. I think it is important to note that we need to ensure that Queensland is not a perceived investment risk, which is where I was heading with that question in relation to the—

CHAIR: Thank you for taking my point of order, guiding me back to it and then making an argument that was not phrased in the question—completely out of the standing orders. I ask you to get back to questions and not to seek opinions of witnesses.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. My next question is also to the CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland. I refer to question on notice No. 19 about hospitality expenses for 2018-19. Mr Martyn, how much of this expenditure was on alcohol? I am happy for you to take this on notice, if the Premier agrees.

Mr Martyn: I can advise that the sum total of \$19,912 was expended on alcohol.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Mr Martyn, I again refer to that answer on notice about hospitality expenses in that year. How many government representatives, being employed by either the Queensland government and/or the Australian government, enjoyed that taxpayer funded hospitality?

Mr Martyn: I do not have that exact figure to hand. The purpose of our hospitality is to connect Queensland sellers with overseas buyers or to connect potential overseas investors with Queensland project opportunities. Hospitality is deployed as part of projects or activities that are seeking to create

these opportunities. The presence of TIQ and government staff at those networking opportunities is actually essential in order to make those introductions. At every single one of TIQ's events that involve hospitality there will be, by necessity, TIQ staff there or other government staff in order to make those introductions in order to facilitate the networking that is so critical to the business that we do.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy get that answer on notice if you are able to provide me with that information.

CHAIR: I heard that there was an answer to that. It was every event. If it is something that needs to be taken on notice, I did not hear that it was. Does it need anything further?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not think so. I think what the answer to the question on notice clearly says is that there are a number of events that are held, it is mainly TIQ officers, as Mr Martyn mentioned, and it is about investment and funding attraction and I think it would be extremely difficult to break that down. I will give you an example. When we go to the bioconference there is a reception there, a Queensland government reception, that other interested investors come along to that you talk to and deal with and, yes, there is occasionally alcohol served, but it is not largely consumed because there is usually a dinner afterwards and people go off to their own different thing, but it is a Queensland government hosted reception. It is no different to what would have happened in the Newman days.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, member for Nanango, do you have any further questions?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I do. My next question is to the Premier. I refer to the answer to question on notice 19 which you have just been referring to about those hospitality expenses in the 2018-19 budgeted year which shows a 43 per cent increase in hospitality expenses compared to the financial year before. How does the Premier justify spending more than \$400,000 on hospitality and how has the massive increase of 43 per cent in hospitality costs benefited Queenslanders?

Ms PALASZCZUK: It has benefited Queensland because we have \$85 billion worth of exports.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: A hospitality-led recovery.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango!

Ms PALASZCZUK: \$85 billion in exports. Trade equals jobs and tens of thousands of Queenslanders getting employed. Trade figures have doubled since we came to office. The role of TIQ in having these officers across the world is actually engaging with markets. I hope you are not saying that Queensland should not be front and centre. We are actually leading the nation when it comes to our global presence. We have excellent trade commissioners, as I was talking about previously. Every single one that I have met is absolutely outstanding, has a great background, and is doing their best for Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Premier, I refer to TIQ's objective to position Queensland globally for success as outlined in the SDS.

Ms PALASZCZUK: \$85 billion worth of trade.

CHAIR: Premier! Leader of the Opposition, do you have a question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I was asking the question. During the parliamentary committee hearing on 11 April 2019, TIQ board member and Central Queensland grazier Josie Angus stated that a potential free trade agreement with Europe had been jeopardised because of the Palaszczuk government's proposed reef laws. Why is the Premier's legislative agenda risking Queensland's agricultural market access?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is not correct. I will answer that in two parts. The first part is that is legislation that is currently before the House in relation to the reef laws. I will not comment on that any further. Secondly, I will give you a great example of how we are working with companies to expand. As I said, with the cattle crisis we have recently seen our beef exports into Japan, and I think from recollection, to China of JBS and they are promoting their Queensland beef and that has been the direct result of recovery following on from the monsoonal trough that impacted on the north-west cattle crisis.

We are seeing strong exports when it comes to agriculture: a 20 per cent increase. The beef trade figures are very clearly that we have actually increased some 20 per cent. We will continue to work with our producers to explore new markets. Our most recent free trade agreements in force are with Korea, Japan and China. These countries are amongst Queensland's major trading partners, collectively comprising about 60 per cent of the state's goods exports and are major source markets for international students and tourists and are significant investors in the state.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the acting CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland. When did former TIQ board member Josie Angus's term end, was it the government's decision to end her board term and when will a replacement for Josie Angus be appointed?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. I understand that Josie Angus's term as a board member expired on 1 October 2018 and that she decided against reappointment. She had been a member of the board since its inception. A process is currently underway to identify possible nominees to be considered for this vacancy and obviously the decision is a matter for government.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland. Will you be suggesting to the Premier to put someone on the board with agricultural experience?

Mr Martyn: As is standard practice, a range of options will be presented to government for its consideration with skills and experience that would enhance the current mix of the board.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My next question is again to Mr Martyn. I refer to TIQ's income statement on page 36 of the SDS. What is the value of all termination benefits paid to ex-TIQ CEO Ms Virginia Greville?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. I can advise that Ms Greville received an ex gratia amount of \$187,000, being the sum of six months gross value of remuneration.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: \$187,000 equalling six months work?

Mr Martyn: Yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My next question is also to Mr Martyn. I again refer to the same income statement. What was Trade and Investment Queensland's total expenditure on consultants in the last financial year?

Mr Martyn: I can advise that in 2018-19 Trade and Investment Queensland expended \$379,327 on consultants.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: In that financial year, just to clarify?

Mr Martyn: That is right.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How does that compare to the financial year before?

Mr Martyn: In the financial year before, there was zero expenditure on consultants.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Martyn, what was the outcome of those consultants? Was it reviews into TIQ's performance? What was the purpose of the consultants?

Mr Martyn: The consultants were for a range of purposes. To give you an example, as members would be aware the government has launched an India trade investment strategy. Part of that strategy is providing mentoring in India for firms seeking to enter that market. One of the consultancies was Ernst & Young. The nature of the consultancy was to provide access to mentors in India for companies seeking to access that market.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Expertise that is found outside of TIQ?

Mr Martyn: That is right, yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Martyn, I refer to the response to question on notice No. 20 about TIQ staff misappropriation of Queensland taxpayer funds in Korea. How much was allegedly misappropriated? How much of that Queensland taxpayer money has been recovered?

Mr Martyn: The matter is currently under criminal investigation in Korea. As such, I cannot provide specific information pertaining to the offence, as I do not wish to prejudice that investigation in any way.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Queensland has no jurisdiction in Korea. My question is in relation to Queensland—

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: In Korea, Premier, yes, but not in Queensland.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, I might have to make a ruling that, even though it is not within the jurisdiction of Queensland or indeed Australia, it is still a criminal investigation. I do not know that the standing orders make reference to what jurisdiction it is. We should take some care with these issues. Obviously, it might be a further strain to say how much influence we have over the Korean judicial system, but we do wish to proceed with that without influence regardless. Can you phrase the question so that it does not put Mr Martyn in the position of pushing or influencing a foreign judicial system?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will move on. My next question is to the Public Service Commission.

CHAIR: In reference to that, standing order 233(1) says 'could jeopardise court proceedings'. Therefore, I do think we should take some care, even with respect—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have moved on.

CHAIR: I wanted to confirm that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Commissioner, I refer to page 50 of the SDS and the role of the Public Service Commission to report workforce data. On what dates were the quarterly workforce statistics provided to the Premier's office for the last financial year? On what dates were those statistics then published?

Mr Setter: I will go to the March report. That is currently with the government for consideration. I signed that off on 7 June.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The latest workforce data was signed off—

Ms PALASZCZUK: If I could add, I actually announced that the March quarter was taken into account, into the budget. I mentioned that in my opening statement.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Commissioner, in relation to reporting on workforce data, on what date were the 2018 Working for Queensland survey results finalised? Have they been provided to the Premier? If so, on what date?

Mr Setter: The Working for Queensland data for last year I signed off on 21 May.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This year?

Mr Setter: Correct.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Have they then been provided to the Premier?

Mr Setter: They are with the government for consideration.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is then to the Premier. I refer to page 50 of the SDS and the role of the Public Service Commission to report workforce data. Why has the publication of the Working for Queensland survey been delayed, obviously until after this estimates hearing?

CHAIR: I will let the Premier answer, but I think that could have been phrased in a way that was not in breach of standing order 115.

Ms PALASZCZUK: As the Public Service Commissioner says, it has been forwarded to the office. It has not yet come to my desk. Once it comes to my desk, I will release it.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: When it comes to your desk—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will release it.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Therefore, it will not be released—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It will be released this year.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So like last year, after the estimates process, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, once again, you have asked a question and the Premier has clearly answered that question. You are now making a statement to advance an argument. You just need to phrase future questions, so if you wish to put that into a question where the answer—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It will be released as soon as I—

CHAIR: Excuse me, Premier. Leader of the Opposition, let us put a question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question to the Premier is: are you trying to avoid scrutiny over the survey data?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, not at all. You can question me the next time parliament sits, if you want to.

CHAIR: The time for opposition questions—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The results—

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, the time for opposition questions, according to the program agreed between the deputy chair and myself, has now expired. Premier, I turn to something that I am really passionate about as a former schoolteacher. With reference to school infrastructure, will you outline the government's commitment to world-class facilities in our schools and the jobs that that commitment generates? Could you reference the Yarrabilba State School and the Yarrabilba state high school that is coming online?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, it is. I thank the chair for that question. I know of his commitment. I could see his enthusiasm when we went to Yarrabilba earlier this year. We are continuing to build the schools of the future and, of course, creating jobs for Queenslanders. The 2019-20 budget includes a record \$1.46 billion for state school infrastructure and a further \$100 million in capital grant assistance for non-state school infrastructure. The \$1.46 billion investment will fund \$225.7 million in state school maintenance. It will fund four new state schools and provide for the refurbishment and expansion of existing schools from Cape York to Coolangatta. It represents a 58.5 per cent increase on last year's budget to build, maintain, improve and update our schools. It will create approximately 4,200 jobs.

We know that Yarrabilba is one of the new schools. We have the new high school coming on board at Baringa, which I spoke about earlier. With the maintenance that has been happening across Queensland, I do not think there would be an electorate—I hope I am right here—that does not have something happening in one of its schools. That infrastructure funding is so important. Recently I had the opportunity to open a performing arts complex on the north side of Brisbane and saw the world-class facilities that students now have. I remember that the Catholic school that I went to did not have a performing arts complex like that. That school has one, which is wonderful. It is giving more children the opportunity to participate in what they love the most.

We are going to build a new primary school at Pimpama on the Gold Coast. New state schools will enrol students for the first day of term 1 in 2021, along with the new Inner City South State Secondary College that we are delivering in Dutton Park for Brisbane's inner-southern suburbs. Of course, there is the Fortitude Valley State Secondary College to be built in the electorate of McConnel. We know all too well about that school site, because that site had a big 'for sale' sign up under the LNP. It is a very clear example of selling an area of land that was an existing school. We have been able to save that land and are now building the first inner-city high-rise college. From recollection, it is the first high school to be built in the inner city in more than 50 years.

Following master planning of 35 inner-city schools over the past 12 months, I am pleased that this year's budget includes funding to start bringing master plans to fruition at eight schools: Toowong, Newmarket, Brisbane Central, New Farm, Morningside, Ithaca Creek, Windsor and Petrie Terrace. They will see new and enhanced classrooms, libraries, canteens and administration areas built at the schools, making those great schools even better.

The 2019-20 budget also included increased funding of \$100 million over four years for priority state school air conditioning. Our commitment is to employ an additional 3,700 teachers over four years, and we are delivering on that commitment. We included additional funding to employ a thousand additional teachers and 200 extra teacher aides to cater for the increased enrolments in our Queensland state schools.

Included in this investment is a boost of least 240 teachers and teacher aides to ensure students with a disability get the support they need. I know how important this initiative is. It has been very well received. I remember going with the education minister to Red Hill Special School and seeing the great work that our teachers do with children with a disability. I am absolutely committed, as I know every member is, to making sure our children get the best start in life. It is great to see the progress that our young students with a disability are making.

One teacher told us that one young student could not communicate before they came to that school. Through the great work that they are doing with modern technology that young student can now communicate. These are success stories that are happening everywhere. This investment in 240 teachers and teacher aides which will provide additional disability support is something that I know parents will be happy about. More importantly, it is fundamentally about the students.

Ms BOYD: Will the Premier outline for the committee what her government is doing to address cost-of-living pressures for Queenslanders, particularly seniors?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We know that our seniors are some of our most vulnerable. We need to make sure that they get a helping hand. We have across the board committed over \$5.6 billion in the state budget to help Queenslanders with their household budgets. When I spoke to my seniors group one of the biggest issues was that they do not know where to get this information.

Through the hard work of Minister O'Rourke we are looking to roll out a series of information sessions in our shopping malls and shopping centres, which is where our seniors frequent, to get the information out to our seniors about what they are entitled to. Our seniors have contributed so much to our state. It is only fair that they get what they are entitled to in terms of our extensive range of concessions. When you think about it, \$5.6 billion is a lot of money. It is there for people to access. We want them to access it.

The budget allocation is more than a \$75 million increase from the previous year. The assistance includes \$192.3 million to deliver the electricity rebate to eligible seniors, pensioners, veterans and low-income families. The electricity rebate alone provides assistance of up to \$341 per year towards electricity costs. My concern is that there are pensioners, veterans and low-income families who do not know how to access this assistance. We are going to do everything we can to raise awareness of this assistance.

To help pensioners live in their own homes, the Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme offers a 20 per cent subsidy, up to a maximum of \$200 per year, to lessen the impact of local government rates and charges. The state government is stepping in and helping with rate relief. The Pensioner Water Subsidy Scheme provides up to \$120 a year for them to reduce water bills. These two schemes alone are expected to save Queensland pensioners \$74.1 million over the next 12 months and are in addition to pensioner and senior concessions for vehicle and boat registrations.

There are a range of concessions for younger Queenslanders with textbook and resource allowances for secondary students and travel and accommodation subsidies for apprentices. In 2017 we extended the eligibility for the electricity rebate to the Commonwealth health care card holders and asylum seeker. While about 50,000 have signed up, it is estimated that there are still 100,000 people who are still eligible and not claiming. As members of parliament we need to raise awareness in our communities. I will make sure that Minister O'Rourke gets packs out to MPs. We know that there are pressures across Queensland and we will continue to promote the information through shopping centres and help locals sign up for this service.

Ms RICHARDS: Premier, could you outline how the government is supporting jobs in the tourism industry? I know how important it is out in the Redlands region.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Tourism and major events are really important to Queensland. We know that nearly one in 10 jobs in Queensland are in the tourism industry and that more than half of those are in the regions. I know how important the tourism industry is in the Redlands. Of those jobs, the vast majority are in small businesses.

We are investing over \$180 million through our Growing Tourism, Growing Tourism Jobs initiative to attract more tourists to Queensland, partner with industry to build new tourism infrastructure, rejuvenate Great Barrier Reef islands and secure major new events for Queensland. Our investment strategy is working. International and domestic tourists are spending more money in Queensland than ever before.

For the year ending March 2019, Queensland's share of international visitor expenditure grew to \$6 billion, increasing by 8.6 per cent. We know that more Australians than ever before are choosing a holiday in Queensland with visitor numbers and spending reaching record highs. For the year ending March 2019, Australian travellers spent a record \$18.5 billion, with a record 24.6 million overnight visitors, increasing by 12 per cent.

We have also have the Attracting Tourism Fund. It is great news in terms of Qantas that we will have the Dreamliners here and the maintenance facilities here. There will be the opportunity for Queenslanders to go to Chicago and San Francisco. It is great news to get that incoming US market into Queensland. Those direct flights will open up a new band of investment for Queensland.

In terms of major events, I mentioned the Logie Awards earlier. The NRL Magic Round is something that other states are wanting to grab off us, but we have that. As I mentioned earlier, we have tourism investment. We have had Daydream Island recently reopen. Hayman Island is about to reopen. What is wonderful about those projects is that these are places that were devastated by Tropical Cyclone Debbie. To see them back on their feet in a short time as premier Queensland tourism destinations is a real tribute to everyone involved. Hamilton Island is also back on its feet. Our Great Barrier Reef continues to attract people. We will continue to boost our tourism industry as much as we possibly can.

Ms RICHARDS: I will give a shameless plug to the whale watching experience tour out in the Redlands which has just kicked off.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will have to give that a go.

Ms RICHARDS: Everybody should get out there and give it go. Page 29 of the SDS refers to the establishment of the Screen Investment Fund. I know that I keep referring back to the Redlands, but that investment in job opportunities is really important. Can the Premier outline the nature of this fund and the benefits it will bring to Queensland's screen industry?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think that undoubtedly Queensland is now recognised as the screen capital of Australia. This is as a result of our climate, our attractive and diverse physical locations, our talented filmmakers, actors, costume designers, set makers and technicians. It is also a result of the government having a deliberate strategy to grow this industry and to make sure that we have ongoing jobs for people. What a lot of people would say to me is that at the end of a production they would have to pack up and move to Sydney, Melbourne or overseas and they did not have long-term, secure employment. The screen industry has been able to deliver that.

As I mentioned, earlier this year we were able to secure Baz Luhrmann's story of Elvis Presley which is due to kick in tomorrow and Tom Hanks will be coming to Queensland. The Gold Coast has a number of great selling points that are attractive to producers and international studios. The city has some of the most diverse locations within Australia, all within 30 minutes of studios. I know that they go out to the Redlands, up to Tamborine Mountain and utilise the beaches.

Mr STEVENS: Kurrawa Park.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, Kurrawa Park. There are so many opportunities. I do not think Gold Coast businesses mind having an international Hollywood star dropping by as well.

Ms RICHARDS: One or two.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Have you seen any, Ray?

Mr STEVENS: That is me.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You wish!

CHAIR: He is certainly the star of the Economics and Governance Committee.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Maybe it is a post-parliamentary career, member for Mermaid Beach. There has been the addition of the new stage 9, as I said, and the water tanks. The water tanks, of course, were used in *Aquaman*, which was such a blockbuster—which was great for *Aquaman*. We have already mentioned to Warner Bros that we would love to do any sequel for *Aquaman*, which I think reached the billion dollar mark from memory.

Last year I launched the Queensland government screen industry 10-year roadmap and action plan. It is a vision to double the value of the state's screen industry over the next 10 years. Recently we had two new studios. I think I spoke about those at the last estimates hearing. They are now built and production has already kicked in. Everyone is aware of the streaming services with Netflix, Stan and SBS. We have a lot of opportunities to capitalise on that. Hopefully we will see some news shortly about expansion into Far North Queensland.

I take this opportunity to publicly thank Tracey Vieira for her outstanding leadership as the CEO of Screen Queensland. It is going to be a huge loss. Tracey has mentored a lot of people. She has big shoes to fill and glamorous shoes to fill. I know that Tracey leaves the screen industry here in Queensland in a much brighter state. It is in the best condition that it has ever been in.

CHAIR: On a slightly less glamorous note but important nonetheless, with reference to page 5 of the Capital Statement, will the Premier explain the benefits to Queenslanders of government investment in upgrading roads around South-East Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is a lot of construction work happening across Queensland at the moment. I know that yesterday Minister Bailey joined the member for Mount Ommaney in relation to the Sumners Road interchange upgrade, which has started. That is \$80 million in construction. Planning has been completed, the first sod has been turned and the works are now underway. There is a great flythrough video, if anyone gets the chance to have a look at it. It is going to benefit a lot of people. I know that the chair is particularly interested in the upgrades to the Mount Lindesay Highway.

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: He has been in my ear and the ear of everyone else around government lobbying for improvements. We have invested more than \$100 million in the Mount Lindesay Highway since 2015 and we have developed a 10-year plan. A \$20 million jointly funded upgrade in North Maclean is being constructed now.

CHAIR: Right now.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am quite sure that the local commuters will be very happy, because it means that at the end of the day they will be able to get home to their families faster, which is what it is all about.

CHAIR: They are little frustrated now, but they know exactly what is going on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right. Upgrades worth \$40 million are also expected to start this year and will expand the highway to four lanes from Camp Cable Road into Jimboomba and then to Stoney Camp Road.

We know how important the M1 is. The Underwood Road bridge over the Pacific Highway is now open to traffic. The new bridge is a critical part of our investment in the M1. The \$190 million upgrade is supporting 130 jobs in one of two major M1 upgrades currently under construction. We also invested in the \$197.5 million Mudgeeraba-Varsity Lakes project, which supports 321 jobs. These projects are expected to be completed next year, but we will not stop there. We have plans to build a better M1, with a minimum of six lanes from Brisbane to the border.

Around the Ipswich Motorway there are roadworks happening at the moment from Oxley to Rocklea. It used to flood there, so what is good about that is that the road is being raised. I know that it is causing motorists some inconvenience. It is a bit like what the member for Logan said earlier.

CHAIR: It is a good inconvenience.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is inconvenience that at the end of the day will mean faster travel times and the road not being closed by any future flooding because the road has been raised. That is a \$400 million upgrade.

Gateway upgrades are also really important. This year we finished—and I was there—the jointly funded \$1.1 billion Gateway upgrade to build more lanes between Nudgee and Deagon. It created more than 1,000 jobs. Once again, it is great to see this progress happening, because transport delivers jobs but transport means that families get from point A to point B faster, they get home faster and they spend less time in traffic.

Ms BOYD: With reference to page 3 of the SDS, will the Premier update the committee on how the government is building confidence and restoring fairness in the state's building and construction industry?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Earlier this year I had the opportunity to meet with some subbies in Caloundra to discuss our landmark building industry fairness reforms. Subbies are mums and dads and small business people who cannot afford to be unpaid, underpaid or paid late for the work that they perform in good faith. Every tradie deserves confidence that they will be paid in full, on time, every time for the work that they perform.

My government had to act to fix a system broken under the LNP government when they removed mandatory financial reporting. To address unacceptably high rates of business insolvency and a culture of non-payment in parts of the construction industry, my government has introduced a suite of legislative reforms to protect workers in Queensland's multibillion dollar construction industry including giving subbies quicker and simpler access to adjudication of disputed payments; reinstating mandatory financial reporting requirements; provision to ensure anyone engaging a builder or tradie must be paid in full and on time; new requirements for the handling of retention moneys; and project bank accounts for government projects between \$1 million and \$10 million to ensure subbies are paid on time and in full. Since they were introduced in March last year 128 have been awarded, and 15 are already at practical completion including new government housing and fire and rescue facilities. I think we can see that we are committed to our construction industry and making sure that people get paid.

CHAIR: The time for government questions, as agreed with the deputy chair, has now expired. Do any members of the opposition have a question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have some follow-up questions for the CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland. Mr Martyn, I refer to your previous answer where you informed the committee of the ex gratia payment to the former CEO of around \$187,000. Was this payment required under the ex-CEO's contract?

Mr Martyn: My understanding is that it was a deed of settlement reached between TIQ and the former CEO.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So it was not part of the employment contract. Was there a reason given as to why this ex gratia payment was made?

Mr Martyn: I am not privy to those negotiations, so I cannot advise you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Who approved that or who was aware of those negotiations?

Mr Martyn: The negotiations were taken between the chairman of the board and the former CEO.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You are unaware of those?

Mr Martyn: That was before I joined the organisation.

CHAIR: Mr Martyn had exactly expressed that. Putting the same question to which he has earlier expressed the exact same answer might be good for theatrical effect but it is not within the standing orders.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Just so that I am very clear, because obviously it is a very serious matter and involves taxpayer funds, you, Mr Martyn, the current acting CEO, are unaware of any bullying claims by the former CEO?

Mr Martyn: I am not aware of that.

Mr BERKMAN: Premier, if the world does act to prevent catastrophic global warming and cuts thermal coal to two per cent of the global energy mix, as the scientists and experts have warned is necessary, what is your government's plan for jobs and security for workers and communities currently relying on thermal coal jobs?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As we know, there will be a mix of metallurgical and thermal coal that will be needed for Queensland and the world for many years to come. As we have seen, our growth in exports shows a very strong continuation of demand for metallurgical coal and there is still demand for thermal coal. I think you and I have had discussions in the House about how important metallurgical coal is for the steel industry and the steel that is utilised—

Mr BERKMAN: The question targets thermal coal specifically.

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, the question has been put. The Premier's answer is 100 per cent relevant and connected to the answer. Let the Premier answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We know that we are a resource-rich state. We are very lucky to be such a resource-rich state. We have good coal deposits. We have an LNG industry that is booming and we are looking at overtaking Qatar. That is continuing to increase. We are looking at hydrogen, and we also have wind projects and those precious minerals that are needed for the making of things such as batteries. The North West Minerals Province contains 75 per cent of the state's base metal mineral endowment with copper, lead and zinc as well as silver, phosphate and rare earth potential. We are a resource-rich state. We will continue to be an export-rich state as well. We have the youngest fleet of coal-fired power stations in the nation and we will continue to use thermal coal. We have a 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030, so we are investing in renewable energy as well. Queensland has it all.

Mr BERKMAN: Chair, if I could follow that up very briefly?

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, I might move on to the member for Ninderry.

Mr PURDIE: I am Dan Purdie, the member for Ninderry, which is a state electorate on the Sunshine Coast. My question is to the director-general. I refer to page 9 of the SDS: DPC's role to support ministerial officers. I refer to the unfair dismissal action being taken by former Palaszczuk staffer Neil Doorley. Has the department investigated claims by Mr Doorley that Minister de Brenni humiliated and reduced ministerial staff to tears?

Ms Hunter: As you are aware, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is responsible for the Ministerial Services branch. Our responsibility is to report where necessary any instances where there are potential breaches of the code of conduct. What I can say is that the state is defending a general protections application in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission brought by former ministerial media adviser Mr Neil Doorley. Mr Doorley has also made a complaint to the Queensland Human Rights Commission. Ministerial Services, the branch that I referenced earlier in our Department of the Premier and Cabinet, has not received any complaints from Mr Doorley. As these matters are before the respective commissions it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Mr STEVENS: The Premier has employed many full-time media advisers, some taken from the Parliamentary Press Gallery. Given that the Premier has limited regular media appearances on live talkback radio, why does the Premier need to employ six full-time media advisers?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am more than happy to talk to Queenslanders in a whole range of circumstances. That may be a press conference, it may be on radio, it may be through social media or it may be via Twitter. As the member knows, our media landscape is changing dramatically. I am very fortunate to have such good media advisers working for me. I will continue to talk about key achievements of the government with the media on many occasions.

Mr PURDIE: I have a follow-up question further to my previous question, this time to the Premier. Has the Premier or the Premier's office received any complaints that Minister de Brenni bullied staff?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to Mr Doorley's matter, that is before the Industrial Relations Commission.

Mr PURDIE: Have you received any other complaints that Minister de Brenni has bullied staff?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have not received any personal complaints.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the Premier. I refer to page 5 of the SDS, which states that yet again your department has failed to meet its client satisfaction targets with ministers, their chiefs of staff and departmental officials. Last year client satisfaction on performance management and performance reporting was 77 per cent; the year before that it was 83 per cent; the year before that it was 87 per cent—

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, this is getting a little bit into a lengthy preamble. Is there a question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes. The year before that it was 94 per cent, and this year it has plummeted to 69 per cent. Why are ministers, their chiefs of staff and senior departmental officials so dissatisfied with your departmental policy advice?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I remind you that the question has to be brief and relate to one issue. It is not an opportunity to put forward arguments or—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will reword it.

CHAIR: You have had all day for your questions after being given a clear indication of section 115. The question has been put. I will not allow it to be restated without the preamble.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will refer to the director-general.

Ms Hunter: Thank you for the question. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet remains committed to continuous improvement through measuring and evaluating service delivery standards. We have set a very high benchmark in terms of an 85 per cent satisfaction target, so it is a high bar. While the target of 85 per cent was not reached by all areas across the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in 2018-19, we expect our results to be variable. They do fluctuate year to year due to the contestable nature of much of the work that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet does; however, customer satisfaction is very important to our department. That is why we have worked to develop our customer engagement plan to address the specific needs of each of our customer groups.

We have recently conducted a leadership session where we heard directly from key stakeholders about how the Department of the Premier and Cabinet can work to provide timely, relevant and consistent policy advice and services to deliver at the highest level for the government and the people of Queensland. In addition, we have added some specific pulse surveys to ensure that we monitor customer satisfaction throughout the year. We meet regularly with our key stakeholders and partners. Throughout 2019-20 our department will review and refine our customer engagement activities. We will continue to engage with customers with different and more regular client engagement activities so that we are able to deepen our understanding of what our customers want and respond accordingly.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My next question is to the Premier. Premier, has your office received any complaints about bullying by Minister de Brenni?

Ms BOYD: I have a point of order.

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

Ms BOYD: In terms of repetition, I believe that the question may have already been asked by another member.

CHAIR: I think that the question was expanding from the Premier's knowledge to others'. It is slightly different, but it does seem to be that—

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is no. I am happy to check that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Premier.

Mr PURDIE: My question is to the director-general. I again refer to page 9 of the SDS in relation to the DPC's role in supporting ministerial officers. I refer again to the unfair dismissal action that is being taken by former Palaszczuk staffer Neil Doorley. Has the department investigated claims by Mr Doorley that he was accused by Minister Enoch's staff of being a mole for the Premier's office?

Ms Hunter: As I said earlier, Ministerial Services in my department have not received any complaints from Mr Doorley. These matters are before the respective commissions, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and the Queensland Human Rights Commission, and on that basis, I am sorry, but it is not appropriate to comment further.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Chair, I have a follow-up question to the acting CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland. Mr Martyn, in relation to the income statement on page 36, what was Trade and Investment Queensland's total expenditure on contractors in the last financial year? I appreciate that your previous answer was in relation to contractors. I am now talking about external contractors.

Mr Martyn: The total estimated cost of contractors in 2018-19 for TIQ was \$5.703 million. TIQ requires a range of outsourced contractors to deliver a number of its corporate and specialist services. For example, TIQ has contracts for the management of information technology and payroll services. For a small agency like TIQ, this kind of arrangement for these services is less expensive and more agile. TIQ is also implementing two whole-of-government strategies, for trade and investment and international education. A significant amount of activity under these strategies is funded via contracts. Examples include specialist presenters at workshops and the preparation of market reports for overseas countries.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That is \$5 million out of a budget of \$48 million on contractors for external work to TIQ?

Mr Martyn: Yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Can you please inform the committee how this compares to the previous year? It just sounds like an extraordinarily high amount.

Mr Martyn: I am happy to compare to the previous year. As I say, it is important to understand the context. TIQ is an organisation of 210 people. It is very small. If we were to deliver a range of particularly corporate and back-office services in-house, that just simply would not be sustainable and we would have to use our positions that are currently client facing on back-office duties. By employing contractors to do things like IT and payroll services, it means we can have more staff on those front-facing services.

I can advise that in 2017-18 TIQ expended \$5.207 million in contractual expenses. The increase over the course of the last financial year is in relation particularly to the ramp-up of both the Queensland Trade and Investment Strategy and the international education strategy that we are delivering and leading on a whole-of-government basis. As those strategies have ramped up, obviously additional contractors have had to be brought on.

Mr BERKMAN: Premier, do you see any conflict between the globally agreed goal of limiting global warming to 1½ degrees Celsius and your government's ambition to dig up and burn all the thermal coal in the Galilee Basin?

Ms PALASZCZUK: For a start, you have a bill before the House about the Galilee Basin, member for Maiwar. That is point No. 1, so it is my understanding that you cannot ask a question about that.

CHAIR: I think with the budget appropriations there is a broader concept of that, but we will certainly have an opportunity to debate it at that stage.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The budget is about backing Queensland jobs and we will back Queensland jobs. As I said to you, we are an energy resource rich state. We have a combination. I do not believe there is any state as advanced as us in terms of pursuing hydrogen. It would be great to know your position on hydrogen and whether or not you support that. Secondly, I go to LNG. We get criticised by other states, but the other states are actually looking at building import terminals to import the LNG that we are exporting because they will not open up their domestic gas reserves.

If there was a national energy policy, we might be able to have some certainty and some funding certainty about what is needed for the future of our nation. We are getting on with the job in Queensland and we are making sure that we are committed to a whole range of projects and energy mix in Queensland, which is what Queenslanders would expect of us.

CHAIR: Premier, I refer to page 5 of the SDS, which refers to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's role in the advancement of renewable, reliable and low-cost energy supply to Queenslanders. This might be something that expands on the member for Maiwar's question. Would you explain further what your government is doing to place downward pressure on power prices at the same time?

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is actually quite a nice follow-up to the member for Maiwar's question, because what we are doing in Queensland is seeing an impact on prices. That is why we took an affordable energy plan to the last election—a plan to reinvest the dividends from government ownership of power businesses into downward pressure on prices. This plan included: a two-year cap on electricity price rises to average inflation; two annual \$50 asset ownership dividends for households; reinvesting dividends to cover the cost of a Solar Bonus Scheme; directing generators to place downward pressure

on prices and bring on generation capacity when needed; a \$75 EasyPay reward for regional households; and interest-free loans for solar and battery storage systems as well as our previous rebates to help consumers to buy energy-efficient appliances. We can see that they went really well because they were very well subscribed to. The committees might want to talk to Minister Lynham about that in a bit more detail.

The plan is delivering. We are exceeding what we promised, with the average household power price in regional Queensland set to fall by \$62 this financial year, following a decrease last financial year. These are the figures in the Queensland Competition Authority's final determination. In total, the average regional household is expected to see a reduction of \$82 on their power bill over two years. Small businesses in the regions are also benefiting from a price reduction of \$144 this financial year, with total reductions of \$230 over two years.

Queensland now has the lowest mainland electricity generation prices in the National Electricity Market. Our record contrasts with power price rises of \$440 on average for households under the previous LNP government. That was after they promised to cut bills by \$120 a year. That was clearly a broken promise from the LNP. We are going to continue to make sure that we put downward pressure on prices. As I said, we have that great energy mix which means that Queensland is leading the nation.

CHAIR: We have time for one more question before we follow up on any of the issues taken on notice.

Ms BOYD: Can the Premier please advise how jobs are being delivered by trade missions undertaken by ministers?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As I have said, trade equals jobs. The trade missions last financial year supported some 2,150 new jobs and \$450 million of investment outcomes, with the potential for another 500 jobs and \$1.4 billion in the pipeline, including that \$300 million expansion at Sun Metals Zinc I spoke about. Minister Jones opened our new Trade and Investment Queensland office in San Francisco and officially opened Queensland's start-up RedEye's Denver office. Following this, from an earlier trade mission we secured Qantas direct flights from Brisbane to Chicago. In July last year in Hong Kong and Japan the Deputy Premier met with investors who are providing financial support for our infrastructure program.

I mentioned Germany and Rheinmetall. In China we were able to talk about expanding the Alibaba platform into the Gold Coast and Cairns. In June Minister Dick met with JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy Corporation following the successful first export of hydrogen produced from Queensland to Japan. In May this year Minister Furner led a delegation of 18 Queensland food businesses to Hong Kong. I sent Minister Fentiman to South Korea. I thought that was really important, because South Korea has one of the largest uptakes of our TAFE training courses. That is a growing market. In fact, we have increased student enrolments by nearly 1,000, or 31 per cent, since 2015 to 4,050, so you can see how that market is growing.

I have had two meetings with the Governor of Tokyo, who is in charge of the Olympics, to talk about what is needed for staging an Olympic Games. I will continue to have further discussions with our mining companies. We are also in discussions with airlines about more direct flights into Queensland. They are just a few examples. I could keep going, but I think the time is running out.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier, for keeping it brief. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure areas of responsibility administered by the Premier and Minister for Trade has expired. Premier, there were a number of questions about which you endeavoured to get back to us with more information or to take on notice. Is there any more information that you would like to provide us now?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. The Office of the Integrity Commissioner has confirmed that the meeting notes for the meetings held on 29 August 2018, 23 November 2018 and 16 April 2019 have been published today, during the course of this hearing. The delay was due to an administrative oversight. Secondly, I was asked about 10-year-olds in watch houses. I was asked a question in the House I think, from memory, in May. I am advised that QPS operational data for the period 13 July 2018 to 12 July 2019 reports that one 10-year-old was held in a watch house for one day.

In relation to the Business Development Fund, in her statements to the committee earlier the Leader of the Opposition suggested that the Business Development Fund operated as a grant. I can advise that is not a grant; it is a co-investment fund. Further, I can advise that the Queensland government has appointed an independent investment panel consisting of experienced private investors who have a strong background in start-ups and early-stage investment, particularly in

innovative start-ups or growing technology businesses. The panel reviews the applications, and those that best meet the investment criteria are invited to pitch. Panel members make the final investment decision based on a majority vote. There are no government representatives on the investment panel. Members make an independent investment decision.

The chief of staff filled out his pecuniary interest register in accordance with guidelines. The chief of staff sought Integrity Commission advice. The chief of staff advised me last year that a company had been successful and all measures were in place. For completion, the DG will conduct an audit.

Can I just thank everyone. Chair, I acknowledge you, all of the committee members, the Leader of the Opposition and all of her team, my director-general, my chief of staff and all of the departments. A lot of work goes into putting estimates together behind the scenes. People have been working on this ever since the budget was handed down. I thank everybody who has been involved.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. I can see that a lot of departmental officials are keen to get back to work. We thank you very much for your attendance and also for the hard work that goes into preparing for many questions that perhaps are not asked. You get to reflect on the year. 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 Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

Proceedings suspended from 1.32 pm to 2.00 pm.

ESTIMATES—ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE—TREASURY AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTNERSHIPS

In Attendance

Hon. JA Trad, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

Mr M Bellaver, Chief of Staff

Queensland Treasury

Mr F Carroll, Under Treasurer

Ms A Rayner, Deputy Under Treasurer (Economics and Fiscal Coordination)


Cross River Rail Delivery Authority

Mr G Newton, Chief Executive Officer

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

Dr C Sarra, Director-General

Ms K Parton, Deputy Director-General (Policy—Corporate)

 **CHAIR:** It almost being time and everyone being present, I would like to recommence the committee hearing. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2019 for the portfolio areas of the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. The committee will examine the Deputy Premier's portfolio areas until 6 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 4 pm to 4.15 pm. We have indicated that the time for questions for that part of the minister's portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships be between 2 pm and 4 pm. We do hope there are questions regarding the important role of this part of the portfolio.

The visiting members today include Tim Mander, the member for Everton. At this stage none of the members who have indicated they might be present are present. I remind those present today that this hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is really important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply to 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, opinion or of course inference. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Deputy Premier, Under Treasurer, officials and departmental officers, and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisors to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Deputy Premier or the Under Treasurer. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Treasury and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I want to clarify that the session we have put aside for the Deputy Premier and Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships is from 4.15 to 6 pm. Deputy Premier, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of around five minutes.

Ms TRAD: Thank you very much, Chair. I thank you and committee members, both permanent and visiting members, for being here today and participating in this session. This year's state budget is about backing Queensland jobs and is unashamedly focused on our regions. Since handing down the budget earlier this month I have visited a number of regional communities and spoken to people in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Gladstone and Rockhampton. The message is very clear: there is nothing more important to Queenslanders than having a secure job that they can depend on for themselves and for their families. That is why jobs are front and centre in this year's budget. Our job-creating capital

program, for instance, will create 40,000 jobs this year alone and more than 60 per cent of those will be outside the greater Brisbane region. It will keep delivering important state-building projects like the Smithfield bypass, the Mackay Ring Road, the Wangetti trail, upgrades at the port of Townsville and RG Tanna Coal Terminal in Gladstone, Kingaroy and Roma hospitals redevelopments, M1 upgrades so workers can get home to their families faster, and so much more.

Our commitment to record health, education and transport investments to support our growing state is not only delivering better frontline services. We also know that to most effectively pursue our job-creation agenda, we need to support businesses to grow. That is why the initiatives in this year's budget, like our \$885 million payroll tax incentive package, are focused on encouraging small and medium Queensland businesses to grow. These businesses are the lifeblood of regional communities. If just one in five employed one extra person right across the state, then an additional 80,000 jobs would be created. I am pleased to say that in the communities I visited recently there was resounding support for this initiative and, in particular, the additional rebate for regional businesses who employ 85 per cent or more local staff.

Creating an economic environment where businesses can invest and grow is vital. So, too, is encouraging new industries to flourish. We saw what happened when we backed the LNG industry: now it is a \$15 billion industry that employs thousands of Queenslanders and helps to power the world. Our renewable energy resources of solar and wind combined with existing gas pipeline infrastructure and port facilities give us a competitive advantage and we are backing the creation of our world-class sustainable hydrogen industry in this budget in regional Queensland.

Whether it is our investment in hospitals, schools and roads or whether it is delivering front-line services or backing Queensland businesses and new industries, the measures outlined in this budget make very clear what the Palaszczuk government stands for and what we value most: jobs for Queenslanders. This year's budget builds on our track record: more than 200,000 jobs created since 2015. This is more than a number. It is about the father in Yarrabah who is almost finished his certificate III in construction because of a stream of projects under our Works for Queensland program and the young homeless woman in Cairns who has been able to find work and get her life back on track because of our Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. It is about the North Queensland I met at the Pimlico TAFE redevelopment who is reskilling after years of being a chef to become a construction worker through a local North Queensland company that accesses our apprenticeship and traineeship payroll tax rebate. It is about the university graduate who has secured a job locally in a high-tech Queensland innovation company scaling up because of our Advance Queensland program.

We also make clear in this budget that we back our regions, we back jobs in our regional economies and we back quality services in our regional communities. We build the schools, hospitals and roads that our regions need.

With the national economy slowing, we know that now is not the time to step away. Only 500 jobs were created across the country in June, with New South Wales recording the largest fall in employment. Wages growth is stagnant, interest rates are at record lows and national GDP growth is at a level not seen since the global financial crisis. This presents a challenge for us all. As RBA Governor Philip Lowe said recently, governments here and around the world should have their top drawers full of ready, good ideas that are shovel ready in case growth slows. Budgets are fundamentally about choices. In this budget we choose to stay the course and we are doing it in a way that manages our expenditure and our borrowings in a responsible and sustainable manner.

I would also like to acknowledge key developments within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander portfolio. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have been calling for change for a long time and that change must come from a new and just reframed relationship. Earlier this month I announced a significant program of reform to reframe the relationship between the Queensland government and First Nations Queenslanders. Local Thriving Communities is the Queensland government's commitment to structural reform to enhance local decision-making for First Nations communities in Queensland. The Queensland government has also committed to a path to treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Starting the conversation on treaty will help us acknowledge the past and move forward together on this land we now share. These reforms will be delivered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders because the Palaszczuk Labor government has heard, and we do respect, our First Nations Queenslanders' call of 'nothing about us without us'.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. Deputy Chair, does anyone from the opposition have any questions?

Mr STEVENS: Yes. I defer to the shadow Treasurer.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 39 of the SDS in relation to Cross River Rail and my first question is to the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, Mr Graeme Newton. Mr Newton, the Cross River Rail published business case says that property owners are often the greatest beneficiaries of transport projects. Has the delivery authority undertaken any research to ascertain the value uplift for properties in the Cross River Rail project precinct?

Mr Newton: Of recent times, the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority has not done any research in relation to property uplift. That was included in the public business case released in August 2017. It did talk about elements to do with the value of property in and around infrastructure, but it talked about it in the general sense that projects of this nature, which are large infrastructure projects, and rail projects do tend to have that as a general nature. It does vary in the nature of the project and the nature of the station and its location. There was a study referred to which made reference to I think 40 different locations across 36 different sites. The study was done in 2015 there was clear reference made to that in the public business case.

Mr MANDER: Mr Newton, can you advise whether the proposed new Boggo Road station will be part of a new priority development area similar to the Albert Street station site?

Mr Newton: Is the Boggo Road station, the new underground station, the one to which you are referring?

Mr MANDER: Yes.

Mr Newton: Currently, the Boggo Road station is not part of a priority development area. It is adjacent to the Ecosciences Precinct. No decision has been made in relation to whether or not that would be a PDA.

Mr MANDER: Can you advise whether the Deputy Premier received any briefings, verbal or written, about the impact of Cross River Rail on property values within the Cross River Rail precinct?

Mr Newton: We did not provide any briefings to that detail, as I understand it.

Mr MANDER: Was the Treasurer made aware of the uplift in property prices around the proposed Boggo Road station from briefings and updates provided by the Cross River Rail project?

Mr Newton: As I referred to before, the only reference in relation to that was in the public business case released in August 2017. We did not provide any additional information.

Mr MANDER: Did the delivery authority consider any alternative station options in the Dutton Park region to Boggo Road that may have been significantly cheaper and more technically compliant?

Mr Newton: The procurement process for Cross River Rail looked to provide bidders to go through a commercial bid process. That commercial bid process is one that went through an extensive, detailed analysis. I am really not in a position to talk to detail around that.

Mr MANDER: Because you are unable to commercially?

Mr Newton: Because it is confidential, yes.

Mr MANDER: Mr Newton, did the delivery authority in TMR support a railway station adjacent to the PA Hospital rather than the Boggo Road site?

Mr Newton: As I said, the processes under the bid environment are part of a confidential process in a bid that was done as part of the Cross River Rail process. I cannot go into any of the detail that may have been included in those.

Mr MANDER: Can you give information as to whether alternative sites were considered?

Mr Newton: I cannot do that, because it would relate to the confidential nature of the bid process—whether or not it was considered.

Mr MANDER: What date was the decision made to proceed with placing a station at Boggo Road?

Mr Newton: The station at Boggo Road was the reference design location. That reference design location continued to be the reference design during the procurement process. Ultimately, when the government made the decision to commit to the project, a commitment was made on all of the station locations.

Mr MANDER: What date was that?

Mr Newton: I think it was on 3 April.

Mr MANDER: At the CBRC meeting?

Mr Newton: It was part of the government decision on that day, yes.

Mr MANDER: Mr Newton, published diaries show that you met with the Deputy Premier on 26 March, just a day before she signed a contract to purchase her Woolloongabba property which falls within this footprint.

Ms TRAD: Point of order. For want of clarification, I have made very clear that I did not sign that contract. I find that offensive and it should be withdrawn. It is not true.

Mr MANDER: Fair enough; I withdraw. Can the CEO advise what was discussed in that meeting and provide meeting notes to this committee?

Mr Newton: As CEO for Cross River Rail, I have monthly meetings with the Deputy Premier. We provide updates on various aspects of the project. Some of those relate to matters that would be considered by cabinet so I am not in a position to discuss elements that were part of cabinet consideration. Other elements were not. I would have to take advice on whether I could release any of that information.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, I appreciate that with such an extensive property portfolio it would be difficult to keep count of the number of properties you own, but why did you take four months to declare interest in the Woolloongabba property on the register of members' interests given the contract was signed in March this year?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, questions do not need to make reference to people's ability to count or not. These questions can be put in a normal and respectful manner, in alignment with the standing orders. I will not have that question rephrased, because that may have been your intention. I put the question to the Deputy Premier.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Chair. I thank the member for Everton for the question. It appears that your eye condition is very painful, so I hope you get over it very quickly. Yesterday I made a public statement in relation to this matter. I made clear that I had referred this matter to the CCC. As I understand, the CCC is undertaking what it normally does through its process, which is an assessment of the information before it. As such, I do want to let it do that assessment without political interference. I have made very clear what happened in relation to this property. I have publicly apologised for it. I think it is incumbent on the CCC to conduct its assessment at this stage.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, did you fail to disclose this property in an attempt to cover up an obvious conflict of interest?

Ms TRAD: No. As I said, I have made abundantly clear what happened in relation to the disclosure. I had the benefit of listening to the Clerk of the Parliament provide responses to the member for Kawana in relation to this issue. I recall that the Clerk of the Parliament concurred with my statements in the media which were that we had had a number of discussions. I had provided to the Clerk of the Parliament the upgrades in draft form. He had reviewed them. He asked me to finalise the update by signing a form which I did not do, and I have apologised for that. In no way was there any motivation on my part to not disclose this. I had had conversations with the registrar. I have made that clear in the public arena. I think it is incumbent that the CCC do its job.

CHAIR: By way of commentary, I appreciate the Deputy Premier endeavouring to answer the question. The question also included a clear inference about the intent of the Deputy Premier. It may be the member's intent to frame these questions solely in breach of standing order 115 as an opportunity to grandstand and reframe the question. I ask the member to scan ahead through his questions, perhaps as the Deputy Premier is answering questions, to ensure they do not contain anything that is argument, has inference or imputation, or that may provide theatricality but is not in alignment with the standing orders. I call the member for Everton to put a question that does not breach the standing orders.

Mr MANDER: With reference to that, Mr Chair, if I may, page 3 of the SDS talks about the provision of 'trusted, impartial and influential advice'. That is what these questions relate to.

CHAIR: No, that is not what I made reference to and I will not have you making arguments with rulings that are absolutely clear. Inferring an improper intent in an action, as you know with your many years, is not—

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, that was a question. It was not an inference; it was a question.

Ms BOYD: The question had an inference.

Ms RICHARDS: Absolutely.

Mr MANDER: I will move on. I take your advice and I will move on.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, 115 is directly about questions containing inferences. That is the entire standing order.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

CHAIR: I can read it out for you if you wish.

Mr MANDER: Thank you for the advice. Treasurer, why did you not seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner prior to the purchase of the Woolloongabba property rather than after the omission was exposed?

Ms TRAD: I have made clear in a statement published yesterday that all matters in relation to this have been forwarded to the CCC. I spoke to Mr MacSporran from the CCC on Sunday before I forwarded the referral. I took an undertaking to him that I would not in any way jeopardise his assessment of the allegations. In fact, Mr Chair, if my recollection serves me correctly, this was a matter that was referred by the Leader of the Opposition. Given that the CCC is now conducting their assessment, I think it is incumbent that we do not politically interfere in that process and they be given the ability to do so.

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order. We have had clear advice this morning, Mr Chair, from the Clerk in relation to this matter. Just because there is a referral to the CCC does not mean any witness cannot answer questions to the committee. This committee has a right to have its questions answered and I do hope that the Treasurer provides answers as requested.

CHAIR: I want to expand on that. There is no point of order partially because we heard also in the explanation from the Clerk this morning—and certainly in the way I am going to rule—that, if the Deputy Premier answers the question to reflect that the chairman of the CCC needs to deal with the issues put in front of them in a manner that does not have other commentary until all of those issues have been dealt with, the Clerk made it absolutely clear that that was a reasonable way for the relevant minister to answer that question and to allow the CCC processes to occur. You may not be happy with the answer, but the Clerk made that absolutely clear in his answer. The Clerk also said that if the Deputy Premier wished to expand on information that may influence the CCC's case it would not be against the standing orders, but it is certainly within the role of the Deputy Premier to take this position and it is a reasonable one. It is not my job to direct the Deputy Premier to answer in a different way than the way that she feels is most appropriate. I hope that is clear and I think the Clerk was clear on that matter as well, so there is no point of order. Had you finished your answer, Deputy Premier?

Ms TRAD: Yes.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, when the CBRC considered this issue on 3 April about the Cross River Rail project, did you declare a conflict of interest and recuse yourself from any decision-making?

Ms TRAD: Matters that come before CBRC or cabinet are unable to be disclosed and I think the member for Everton would remember that from when he was a cabinet minister a little while ago. Additionally to that, Mr Chair, as I have said, these matters have all been forwarded to the CCC and I do encourage the member for Everton that if he does want to contribute more information or other allegations that the Liberal National Party might have in relation to this issue I would encourage him to forward them to the CCC.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, last Friday afternoon after receiving interim advice from the Integrity Commissioner you said that you would sell your Woolloongabba property at no profit. Will the Treasurer table the interim advice that she received from the Integrity Commissioner?

Ms TRAD: Mr Chair, I seek your guidance. I did include this in my public statement yesterday. I think this line of questioning is repetitive. I draw the member's attention back to the statement I made yesterday. I was very clear and I also had an opportunity to listen to the Integrity Commissioner as well this morning and her obligations under the Integrity Act, but I made very clear in my statement yesterday that under her advice, because the matter is being assessed by the CCC and being considered by the CCC, advice should not be released and I am following her advice, as I have always done.

CHAIR: I noted the Integrity Commissioner this morning too.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, you also stated that further advice would be sought from the Integrity Commissioner. Has that advice been received and will you commit to tabling all of the advice received from the Integrity Commissioner?

CHAIR: To be honest, given it was a general principle—and I do not know whether the Deputy Premier has something to add—and given her last answer in responding to it was generally on the principles involved in advice from the Integrity Commissioner, I think it is a bit repetitive, but I do not know whether you have anything to add, Deputy Premier?

Ms TRAD: I do not, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: I really do think it is repetitive. Do you have another question, member for Everton?

Mr MANDER: I do; thank you, Mr Chair. Treasurer, was your decision to stand down from the role as the head of the Cross River Rail project an admission that there was a clear conflict of interest in purchasing in a lucrative inner-city Brisbane suburb in that precinct?

Ms TRAD: As I have made clear in terms of this matter, I made a statement yesterday. It is currently before the CCC. I think that anyone who has a cursory understanding of law would understand that they do not prejudge or they do not prejudice any sort of assessment or potential investigation, so I would not be doing it in this forum or at all.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. You have made that really clear and, perhaps looking forward in terms of the questions, they might be reaching repetition given the answers being given, so we need to be responsive in our questions to noting the answers.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. Treasurer, did you have any involvement in the decision to place a station at Boggo Road, a location that would clearly give you a financial advantage from your property purchase, rather than a station near the PA Hospital?

Ms RICHARDS: I raise a point of order. This line of questioning is just repetitious and standing order 236 should apply.

CHAIR: I did note that the questions are being phrased in a different way, but there have been answers in principle which possibly do anticipate the answer. That being said, the member for Everton has indicated that it is his last question on this line and I think the Deputy Premier perhaps will give the same answer, but I invite the Deputy Premier to answer.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Chair, and I thank the member for Everton for the question. As I have said, I have made a statement publicly in relation to this. I would invite the member for Everton, anyone from the Liberal National Party opposition or anyone else to put forward additional information or additional allegations to the Crime and Corruption Commission. They are currently assessing this matter and it would be prudent and I think important if there is some concern for that—

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, you could clear this up right now for us by just answering the question.

CHAIR: I do not want to see this habit—we saw some in the last session—of people interrupting. The Deputy Premier has been consistent and clear in her answer and I just ask that the Deputy Premier finish her answer. In fact, we are at the end of time for opposition questions and we might move on.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Chair. As I was saying, again, honestly, if anyone has anything that they want to add to this, it is the Crime and Corruption Commission that is reviewing this matter and, if there are concerns from anyone, including members of the opposition, I would absolutely encourage them to take them forward to the CCC. That is the appropriate body.

CHAIR: According to the agreed timetable between the deputy chair and myself, it is now time for government questions. Deputy Premier, I have a question about jobs which, as you know, are important to the growing Logan area, and I refer to page 25 of the SDS. How is the government supporting and growing new industries in Queensland that will create new Queensland jobs?

Ms TRAD: Mr Chair, I thank you for your question. I note that Logan is one of the areas that has experienced particularly strong employment growth over the past four years, and I hope to see that continue. We are certainly doing what we can to make sure that continues. Primarily, we are doing it by investing in critical infrastructure. We are doing it by rolling out programs that are critical to our economy and to workers in the economy. We are also doing it by attracting new industries to Queensland.

It was a Labor government that saw the potential in developing our LNG industry, bringing it to fruition and generating thousands of jobs, helping to create the economic powerhouse that it is today. From exporting no LNG as recently as five years ago, LNG is now Queensland's second largest merchandise export after metallurgical coal. Over the past year, Queensland has exported around \$15 billion in LNG.

The Palaszczuk government has also identified enormous potential in the hydrogen industry as a growth industry. Global demand for hydrogen is increasing, with the market expected to reach an astonishing US\$155 billion in three years time. That is why this government commits \$19 million over

four years to support the Queensland Hydrogen Industry Strategy. At its core, our Hydrogen Industry Strategy is about driving job creation, regional growth and increased innovation and development in a world-class industry of the future. Hydrogen has the potential to be as successful as our LNG industry and makes compelling economic sense. Earlier this month, the International Energy Agency noted that Australian hydrogen exports to Japan could be cheaper than Japanese domestic production of hydrogen by 2030, which puts Queensland absolutely in the box seat for this emerging clean industry.

Our government also remains committed to growing opportunities within established industries. The North West Minerals Province is one of the world's richest mineral-producing regions. It contains approximately 75 per cent of Queensland's base metals and minerals. In this budget, the Palaszczuk government is investing a further \$110 million over four years to support and promote mining exploration and investment in this important mining region. This includes \$30 million towards a new common-user rail freight terminal at the Port of Townsville and \$20 million to reduce below-rail access charges in the Townsville-Mount Isa rail line. This initiative was absolutely welcomed by Townsville industry and the Port of Townsville.

The 2019-20 budget also includes a range of measures to support and grow Queensland's new and emerging industries, all of which will create secure and well-paid jobs for Queenslanders now and into the future. Our continued investment in the \$755 million Advance Queensland initiative, with additional funding of \$105 million from 2018-19, will continue to foster innovation and create jobs and build a strong Queensland economy. There is an allocation of \$25 million over four years to the Queensland government's Research Infrastructure Co-investment Fund for critical co-investment in facilities with partnerships and joint ventures designed to put our science facilities and researchers in a nation-leading position. There is an allocation of \$14 million to support the Defence Cooperative Research Centre to develop drone and robotic technologies for the Defence Force and \$9 million towards hosting the World Science Festival for a further two years, boosting Queensland's reputation as a world leader in science, technology and innovation.

Additionally, we have increased funding over \$5 million over four years to continue advancing Queensland's world-leading biofutures agenda and support the delivery of the Biofutures 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan. The Palaszczuk government has a strong track record of supporting new and emerging industries in this state and backing the Queensland jobs that go with them.

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 41 of Budget Paper No 2. Can the Deputy Premier please outline how job creation in Queensland since 2015 compares with job creation in Queensland between 2012 and 2014?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. We have been unashamed about the fact that jobs are our No. 1 priority. We have seen the fruits of that in the last four years, with more than 200,000 jobs created in our economy.

As highlighted in this year's budget, creating jobs across the regions is a particular focus for us and it builds on the investment that we have already made. We see in the last Australian Bureau of Statistics data that trend employment in Queensland increased by 40,400 persons over the year to June 2019. Importantly, full-time jobs over that period rose by 45,700 jobs. These are excellent results and follow the exceptional jobs growth that we saw of 4.1 per cent over 2017-18, which was the strongest growth in more than a decade and the largest rise—of up to 98,000 persons—in any year in the state's history. These results bring the total number of jobs created since the Palaszczuk government was first elected in January 2015 to 203,400. This equates to almost 4,000 jobs on average being created each and every month. That is 4,000 jobs each and every month.

In line with the government's focus on creating jobs for the future, youth employment has grown solidly as well since the government was elected. More than 17,000 additional youth jobs have been created, and the youth unemployment rate has fallen significantly from the rate that we inherited from the previous government. In regional Queensland, regions such as Cairns and Central Queensland have experienced very strong jobs growth over the year to May 2019. The gap between the South-East Queensland and regional Queensland unemployment rate has narrowed considerably. Sustained and broad employment growth clearly demonstrates that the government's economic plan is working to deliver growth and jobs across all the regions of our state.

Our economic management is even more impressive when compared to jobs growth under the previous LNP government. Under the Newman LNP government, 8,100 full-time jobs were lost—the equivalent of around 240 full-time jobs lost on average each month that the LNP was in power, or almost 10 jobs a day. As I said before, an average of almost 4,000 jobs per month have been created under this government.

It is clear that our plan to get jobs created within our economy is working and it is not just working in the south-east; it is working right across the state. We have brought down the unemployment rate after it peaked at 6.7 per cent under the previous government and we have seen unprecedented jobs growth in 2017-18, resulting in more than 203,000 jobs being created. Importantly, we know that the job is not done and we look forward to continuing to work with business, industry and all sectors of our economy to continue to create jobs.

Ms RICHARDS: Deputy Premier, 200,000 jobs created is a fantastic record. You touched on the gap between the regional and South-East Queensland unemployment rates. Could you give us a further update?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Redlands for the question. I think this is one of the most impressive statistics over the past little while. To see the differential between the unemployment rate in South-East Queensland and regional Queensland go from a significant gap of 2.5 per cent down to half a per cent is really fantastic. In fact, recently, in terms of the ABS, we have seen jobs growth in regional Queensland outpace jobs growth within the larger Brisbane area. Another statistic to keep in mind is that jobs growth is faster in regional Queensland than the population growth in regional Queensland. That really signifies economies that have a lot of energy in them and have a lot of confidence.

There are some really impressive examples. In Cairns the unemployment rate has fallen by 1.7 per cent, to 4.7 per cent. Currently, that is the lowest in the state. Mackay used to have a lower unemployment rate, but Mackay's unemployment rate is down to 4.8 per cent. Central Queensland has recorded a 1.7 per cent drop in unemployment, to 5.3 per cent, which equates to 7,000 new jobs in that area alone. Also, in Townsville unemployment has fallen by more than two per cent.

Obviously, we know that there is still more to do and we are completely focused on getting the right investments right through our economy to drive that jobs growth agenda. That is why we are particularly focused on a significant infrastructure spend, with a large part of that infrastructure spend being outside the Greater Brisbane area—60 per cent of it. In fact, 63 per cent of the jobs that will be created from that infrastructure spend of \$12.9 billion this year alone will be created outside the Greater Brisbane area.

Additionally, we have backed Queensland's small and medium businesses to make sure that they have got support from government. We have lifted the payroll tax threshold which has been so warmly received by industry and by regional communities, and I will go on a bit more about that later on, but what I do want to say is that the regional payroll tax discount of one per cent for those businesses, all businesses, small, medium and large, that have a workforce of local Queenslanders, so a local regional workforce of 85 per cent or more, will get that regional discount rate. That makes it incredibly competitive for regional companies, regional businesses, to expand, to take on more workers, to even potentially relocate from South-East Queensland if they can get a better deal in regional Queensland from a payroll tax discount of one per cent.

CHAIR: There are certainly some great workers in Logan so I wouldn't encourage them too much. You made reference to the payroll tax package that we have put forward. Would you further expand and advise on how the payroll tax package will back further Queensland jobs and small and medium sized businesses in Queensland? Can you give us some more information about that because I know a lot of businesses are talking about how good that is?

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Chair, for the question. I remember when I was first elected and I was the shadow minister for small business and I met with the CCIQ. Way back then they were raising the issue of payroll tax and how to make it more competitive and fairer for small businesses particularly. I know that they have been advocating for this for quite a long period of time and I welcomed their positive comments after the budget when we announced this package. Fundamentally what we have done in terms of our payroll tax package is delivered \$885 million worth of relief over the forward estimates. We have done that by lifting the payroll tax threshold from \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million. To put that into perspective, it means that a company or a business in Queensland would have to be twice the size and employ twice as many people as a company in Victoria before they would be slugged with any payroll tax. That gives you a sense of our desire to be competitive with other jurisdictions.

CHAIR: An advantage

Ms TRAD: An advantage, that is exactly right. In terms of those businesses that will now not have to pay one single dollar of payroll tax, it is 1,500 businesses across our state which will no longer have to pay any payroll tax as a result of this threshold increase. There are about 500 businesses in the Logan area I have just been advised. I think there is going to be—hopefully—a lot of happy small and medium sized businesses but also a lot more jobs being created because of it.

Additionally, I have mentioned the regional payroll tax discount of one per cent. This will bring the regional payroll tax rate down to 3.75 per cent for some businesses, which is incredibly competitive. We will continue our payroll tax discount for apprentices and trainees for those employers. Can I say that when I went to Toowoomba, when I went to Townsville, wherever I go in the state there is an employer, a company, that is putting on apprentices and trainees which they would not have been able to do unless we had this rebate in place. It makes it absolutely competitive and it makes good economic sense for them to get relief off their payroll tax liability and train up and skill up the next group of workers.

Additionally, we have also announced that over the next two years we will be providing a rebate at the end of the financial year for those businesses, any businesses, that can demonstrate that they have put on more workers. We do that unashamedly because we want businesses to employ. If they can receive a \$20,000 rebate at the end of the financial year because they have brought on more workers then we want to make sure that that happens.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. We might move across to the opposition for questions. Member for Everton? I also note that the member for Noosa is queuing in the wings with a question.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. Treasurer, can you advise when you referred yourself to the CCC on this property matter?

Ms TRAD: I disclosed that yesterday. I referred myself yesterday and made a statement.

Mr MANDER: You stated previously that you are aware that the opposition leader had also referred you to the CCC. When were you aware of that referral?

Ms TRAD: The Leader of the Opposition put out a statement yesterday.

Mr MANDER: That was the first time you knew of that referral?

Ms TRAD: I don't think it was the first time, but she certainly confirmed that she had.

Mr MANDER: Can you recall when you first knew that you had been referred to the CCC by the opposition leader?

Ms TRAD: I will have to go back and confirm media reports. It was in the media. I suspect—I will not guess.

Mr MANDER: It was in the media on Friday.

Ms TRAD: The Leader of the Opposition has referred this matter to the CCC.

Mr MANDER: Knowing that, that this matter had been referred to the CCC, do you think it is appropriate to ring the chair of the CCC on the weekend to seek advice?

Ms BOYD: Point of order. The deputy opposition leader, the member for Everton, is asking the Deputy Premier for an opinion.

CHAIR: In some ways. Is there a way you could rephrase that?

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, is there any other Queenslanders in this state who can pick up the phone and ring the head of the CCC after a matter that relates to them has been referred to him?

Ms BOYD: Point of order. I ask for your guidance, Chair, around relevance to the budget in relation to that question.

CHAIR: I think I will allow the question. These questions are beginning to be of a repetitive nature given the answers that the Deputy Premier has given. Keep that in mind, member for Everton. We might move on to the member for Noosa after this.

Mr MANDER: With respect, point of order, Mr Chairman. I am talking about an issue that is at the heart of integrity of government. The Treasurer said herself that she rang the CCC chair on the weekend—

CHAIR: Member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: After the matter had been referred to him.

Ms BOYD: Reflection on the chair.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, is there any point of order there?

Ms BOYD: No, it is a reflection on the chair.

Mr MANDER: There is.

CHAIR: I have said that the Deputy Premier will have the opportunity to answer again and I have given you guidance in the future that the Deputy Premier's answers have been consistent and that she will limit her comments at this stage and that after this, after the Deputy Premier has answered the question, we will move on, as I said before when I began this session, to allow the member for Noosa to have a question.

Mr STEVENS: The Treasurer is going to answer the question.

Mr MANDER: I apologise. I thought you were going straight to the member for Noosa.

CHAIR: No, I was not. I asked you in future to take into account the answers that have been given. You may have had a prepared set of questions, but given the Deputy Premier has an answer means that they are by that nature beginning to be repetitive. Deputy Premier?

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Chair. I am very happy to answer the question. Let me say from the outset that Mr MacSporran is a person of incredibly high integrity.

Mr MANDER: No-one is questioning that.

Ms TRAD: Any aspersions in relation to Mr MacSporran in some way, shape or form being amenable to somebody, whether it is a person—

Mr MANDER: So you think it was appropriate to ring the CCC chairman?

CHAIR: I know that you are not satisfied with processes and the answers to the questions, but that does not mean that it is an opportunity to interject. We had this conversation in the previous session with the Premier. The Deputy Premier is simply answering the question. We will return to the Deputy Premier. I wish the process to be we put the questions and get the answers.

Ms TRAD: Mr Chair, any suggestion that Mr MacSporran would be open to interference is, I think, highly—

Mr MANDER: Point of order, Mr Chair.

Ms TRAD: Can I finish?

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, we have a point of order from the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: I find that inference offensive and I ask the Treasurer to withdraw. There is no inference about the integrity of the CCC chair. That was not made. This question is about the Deputy Premier's appropriateness in contacting the head of the CCC.

CHAIR: The point of order is that you felt that the inference that you were putting—not that you were mentioned directly, but because you had asked the question. Deputy Premier, although you had not mentioned the member for Everton, he is indicating that he felt that he was being—

Ms TRAD: I withdraw.

CHAIR: I thank for doing that, because it makes it easier.

Ms TRAD: No problem. As I said, Mr Chair, I rang the head of the CCC to advise him that I would be providing information in relation to this matter and that I would be fully cooperating with whatever assessment or outcome of that assessment that the CCC would undertake. In no way, shape or form was I suggesting or implying a particular outcome. It was a matter of courtesy. I made a file note of it. I am pretty sure that Mr MacSporran would have made a file note of it. In terms of being transparent and advising this committee in this setting that I made that call, this stands in stark contrast to a former CEO of the CCC who had meetings in then premier Campbell Newman's office and took directions around media articles—

Mr MANDER: We are talking about you, Deputy Premier. We are talking about your appropriateness.

Ms TRAD: If I could finish—who took direction from the head of then premier Campbell Newman's media unit around op-ed pieces that they would write in support of the government—

Mr MANDER: The premier at the time was not under investigation.

CHAIR: Member for Everton.

Ms TRAD: I will conclude by saying that it has always been this side of politics that has supported the CCC. We will continue to staunchly support our standing royal commission. If the CCC determines, after its assessment, that there should be an investigation then that should happen and it should do it without political interference, whether from you or from me.

CHAIR: Correct titles, please, Deputy Premier. Member for Noosa, do you have a question?

Ms BOLTON: Treasurer, I refer to page 4 of the Queensland Treasury Service Delivery Statements regarding the monitoring, forecasting and measuring of the state's economic performance. Can the minister advise of the strategy and time frame to return Queensland to a AAA credit rating to save the state government, as well as councils across Queensland, the additional interest charges incurred under the current AA rating?

Ms TRAD: I think this is a very important question. Our credit rating standing is incredibly important and it is something that this government takes very seriously. Recently, what we have seen in commentary from all of the ratings agencies is reference to our wealthy economy and to the strong management of our finances, and also the view that our debt levels are manageable.

We do know that, in terms of all of the other jurisdictions in Australia, because there is such an absence of investment and leadership from the federal Liberal-National government in infrastructure right across the country, many of the state jurisdictions are actually carrying the burden of investment responsibility. We have seen Victoria's general government sector debt levels predicted to grow quite considerably. We have seen that in Western Australia and in New South Wales in their most recent budgets. It is the state jurisdictions that are doing the heavy lifting when it comes to using debt and borrowings to fund critical infrastructure projects. That is a particularly common feature right across the nation.

With many of the projects that the federal government have announced they will invest in in terms of their \$100 billion 10-year Infrastructure Investment Program, for Queensland much of it will not materialise for four to five years or even longer. That means that state jurisdictions have to step in and fill that gap and bear the burden of delivering critical projects, for example the M1. On the two key projects that we are pursuing we will not see the money from the federal government until 2023-24. That is a long way off. The Reserve Bank Governor suggested that the federal government should accelerate some of that money and should look at investing that money faster in order to stimulate the economy, because of, as we know, historically low interest rates. Our interest rates have never been this low. We have economic growth at GFC levels. The Reserve Bank Governor was saying that the federal government needed to step in and needed to accelerate their investment. Unfortunately, they have been pretty silent on that front.

However, it is very important to know that our debt levels are sustainable. They are stable. That has been reflected in the commentary from the ratings agencies. In fact, we have seen our relative debt burden decrease since the previous LNP government. The cost of our borrowings used to be 4.7 per cent of revenue. It is now down to 2.8 per cent as a proportion of our revenue. That means that we are servicing that debt very well and within our revenue at a reasonable level. However, it is allowing us to borrow to build the hospitals, the schools and the roads that we need going forward.

I note that in the member's own electorate we are doing quite a number of things such as the Sunshine Beach State High School, with a \$5.2 million allocation for 13 more learning spaces; the Lake McDonald dam safety upgrade; the Coolool replacement police facility; the Eumundi State School; and the Nambour Hospital, with \$10.2 million in this financial year out of more than \$86 million in total to meet the functional requirements of the hospital. Some of this has been funded from our operating surpluses, but some of it has been funded through borrowings. As I said at the beginning, this is not unique to Queensland. It is what other jurisdictions are doing. We are particularly doing it because we have seen the Commonwealth withdraw their investment.

Ms BOLTON: To clarify, we do not have a time frame or any plan to get back to that AAA credit rating?

Ms TRAD: We could do it really quickly and do it through significant austerity measures and through stopping our building program, but that is not what we are doing. A headlong rush back to a AAA credit rating would be a sledgehammer to our economy. We saw that under the Newman LNP government. We took a long time to rebuild frontline services to get the economy humming again. It took a long time. However, we are there now and it is important that we stay the course. As I said, budgets are about choices. Either we could have chosen our AAA credit rating or we could have chosen jobs for Queenslanders. It is absolutely about jobs for Queenslanders.

Mr MANDER: Deputy Premier, earlier you referred to the conversation you had with the CCC chair and you mentioned a file note. Would you table that file note for the committee, please?

Ms TRAD: I do not have it on me. I will take advice from the CCC.

Mr MANDER: Deputy Premier, going back to the Cross River Rail project, what was the advice that you received about an alternative station to be known as the new Dutton Park station, rather than the Boggo Road station? What were the pros and cons of the new Dutton Park station?

CHAIR: We made reference to commercial-in-confidence when this question was asked before.

Mr MANDER: I did not ask the Deputy Premier that.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, is there something you want to say?

Ms TRAD: The head of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority confirmed that this was all subject to the tender process which is confidential.

Mr MANDER: Can you explain why the Boggo Road station location was selected?

Ms RICHARDS: Point of order, Mr Chair. This is tedious and repetitious. He already knows the answer. It is commercial-in-confidence?

CHAIR: The member for Everton is saying that even though it is the same question that he put to the head of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, he is now putting it to the Deputy Premier. We might anticipate the answer given the answers of the head of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority—

Ms RICHARDS: Did he not understand the response?

CHAIR: No, I am making the ruling. The member for Everton has put the argument that he is asking a different person the same question. He is not disputing there is repetition. Given the head of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority said that this is commercial-in-confidence, we might anticipate the answer, but I think the question can be put. We will put the question, but it is repetitious.

Ms TRAD: My response to that question is the same as my response to the previous question.

Mr MANDER: My next question is the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. Does he have to reidentify himself?

CHAIR: No, the standing orders say that the first time an officer comes forward they are to identify themselves for the purposes of Hansard.

Mr MANDER: Mr Newton, can you confirm whether the project cost of Cross River Rail has now blown out from the original cost of \$5.4 billion?

Mr Newton: The state's capital contribution for the construction of Cross River Rail is \$5.409 billion as referenced in the budget.

Mr MANDER: The figure that is stated in today's infrastructure report of \$6.725 billion, what was does that include?

Mr Newton: I am sorry, I do not understand the origin of the number.

Mr MANDER: The project was originally \$5.4 billion, which you have just confirmed. A figure in the newspaper today in an article about the state infrastructure report says that the project is now \$6.725 billion. I am just trying to work out the discrepancy there?

Mr Newton: I am not aware of the basis of that number that you are referring to. What I can say is that the number represented in the budget papers—the \$5.409 billion—is the state's contribution to the capital works associated with the construction of Cross River Rail.

Mr MANDER: I might ask the Treasurer that question then. Treasurer, can you explain the difference between those two figures?

Ms TRAD: I refer the member to Budget Paper No. 3 which has been out for consideration for quite some time. As the CEO of Cross River Rail has detailed, the state's capital contribution is \$5.4 billion. There is a private finance contribution of \$1.479 billion. That is on page 104 of Budget Paper No. 3.

Mr MANDER: That explains the figure that was quoted by the state development minister?

Ms TRAD: They come under headings, including property, plant and equipment. I direct the honourable member to Budget Paper No. 3. It is clearly explained.

Mr MANDER: I will go back to the CEO. Can the CEO give the total value of the contracts signed as part of Cross River Rail for the tunnel, stations, development of public-private partnerships, the rail integration systems alliance and the European train control systems? Can you give the total cost?

Mr Newton: As represented in the budget, the state's contribution to the capital works is \$5.409 billion. The information in relation to the tunnel and station project includes a range of other elements. As the Deputy Premier referred to, it also includes a private sector contribution. That is part of commercial deliberations and also, I should point out, part of cabinet deliberations so I am not in a position to disclose the details around the elements of that. In addition, the rail integration systems contract that you refer to is still under negotiation as is the European train control systems contract.

CHAIR: In accordance with the agreement made by with the deputy chair, we will now move to government questions.

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 3 of Budget Paper No. 2. Can the Deputy Premier please explain how the \$49.5 billion capital works program over four years will support jobs in the private sector?

Ms TRAD: This is something that I think a lot of companies, particularly those companies through Infrastructure Australia Queensland, have lobbied the government about for a number of years. I note that the member for Everton referred to the State Infrastructure Plan which was released today by my colleague the Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning. This was something that had been part of the economic development framework for many years, but, of course, when the Newman LNP government came into power they completely abolished any sort of long-term infrastructure planning.

It has been a very big confidence boost to the industry to have a long-term infrastructure plan but also to have on an annual basis delivered after the budget the four-year breakdown of investment over the forward estimates. This is critical and important. It means that industry can actually gear up. They can assemble their workforces. They can do proper planning around their investments in the state. That has been a very big confidence boost to the industry.

Our \$49.5 billion investment in capital infrastructure outlined in this year's budget outlines our ongoing commitment to investing in job-generating infrastructure across this state. This is a \$3.7 billion increase on our capital works commitment in last year's budget. The Queensland government, the Palaszczuk Labor government, is actually listening to the Reserve Bank of Australia and we are expanding our infrastructure investment to support jobs and to stimulate economic growth. Following the RBA's recent decision to cut the cash rate to one per cent—the lowest level on record—Reserve Bank Governor, Phil Lowe, remarked—

There are options other than monetary easing for putting us on a better path. One option is fiscal support, including through spending on infrastructure. This spending adds to demand in the economy and provided the right projects are selected it also adds to the country's productive capacity.

Unlike the Morrison LNP government, which in recent days has sought to suppress the independent voice of the Reserve Bank, our government is taking the advice of the RBA governor seriously. Our capital program will directly support substantial private sector jobs and economic activity across all regions of the state with the \$12.9 billion capital program in this year's budget.

In this year's budget alone, some 40,500 jobs will be supported directly through this investment. As I have mentioned previously, more than 60 per cent are outside the greater Brisbane region. It is 25½ thousand jobs outside the greater Brisbane region. Investing in infrastructure provides the roads, the hospitals, the classrooms that Queenslanders deserve and protects our quality of life which we value so much. It also creates jobs in the construction industry and it also builds our economic capacity which continues to then attract new industry and private investment. All of this means more jobs for Queenslanders.

Some of the key infrastructure spends in this year's capital program include: a \$5.6 billion investment in transformative transport infrastructure; a \$2.7 billion investment in energy and water; more than \$770 million in health, including more than \$78.6 million as part of the Enhancing Regional Hospitals program—I understand that the Premier was talking about the Roma Hospital earlier today—and \$1.2 billion in education, including substantial additional funding for new schools and classrooms and air conditioning.

In the regions, in Central Queensland we are spending more than \$1.1 billion directly supporting 3,600 jobs; on the Darling Downs more than \$730 million supporting 2,300 jobs; in Far North Queensland \$967 million supporting 3,300 jobs—and the list goes on. We are absolutely unashamed about making the right investment in the right infrastructure in the right places at the right time to create jobs but also to put our economy on a strong footing for a bright future.

Ms RICHARDS: Deputy Premier, you touched on the Reserve Bank's recent decision to cut interest rates to one per cent—the lowest in history and on record. You have touched on some of the elements the government is looking at to stimulate the economy. Could you expand on that further?

Ms TRAD: We know that jobs can be created in a whole range of ways in our economy, but if there is a lack of confidence, if the cash rate is at historic lows and if growth is at the GFC level, then there is a very deep concern in the economy and we need to address that. When we talked about this year's budget and needing to make choices, there were some pretty difficult decisions to be made. We

saw GST writedowns of \$2.3 billion from the last federal budget to this year's federal budget. That is indicative of the \$11 billion writedown in GST receipts right across the nation because consumption growth has flatlined, wages are stagnant and there is a lot of concern in the labour market. As the Reserve Bank keeps referring to, there is slack in the labour market.

We made a choice. Our choice was to stay the course: to support businesses and business-led growth through our payroll tax relief package; to invest in critical infrastructure and services that our state needs; and to continue to diversify our economy, whether that is opening or making it more efficient for companies to invest in the North West Minerals Province or whether it is backing start-ups to scale up. We are investing absolutely in the skills, the new industries and the traditional industries that our economy needs.

As I mentioned before, there is quite a lot of concern right across the nation around the role that the federal government is playing in relation to infrastructure investment. I understand that the Premier met with the Prime Minister recently. She did make it clear to him that, in terms of a number of key projects—I think there were 18 in total last time I counted—if they wanted to heed the advice of the Reserve Bank—which I think they should—they should look at accelerating funding for these projects sooner rather than later.

For many projects, such as the M1 and the Eight Mile Plains to Daisy Hill merge, we are not going to see the bulk of the funding until 2023-24. In terms of Varsity Lakes to Tugun, again there is some money but we will not see the bulk of it for another three or four budgets.

CHAIR: Bring it forward.

Ms RICHARDS: We are doing the heavy lifting.

Ms TRAD: We are doing the heavy lifting. If you look at the regions, for the Rockhampton Ring Road, again the bulk of the federal government's commitment is in 2023-24. For the Cunningham Highway, again the bulk of the funding—\$268 million—is in 2023-24. The list goes on and on.

I was very pleased to be able to prepare this for the Premier for when she spoke to the Prime Minister because, quite frankly, it is not good enough. This money in 2023-24 or in their new category of 'onwards' is not good enough. Our economy needs the stimulus now. It needs a government that is prepared to make the decisions in the interests of Australians and Queenslanders, not in the interests of their own political future.

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 9 of Budget Paper No. 2. Can the Treasurer please provide a summary of the government's approach to managing the fiscal outlook?

Ms TRAD: As I have said, the fiscal outlook, as the Reserve Bank Governor has alluded to, is quite challenging. For Queensland it is about ensuring that we continue to deliver operating surpluses, that we continue to keep debt at a sustainable and stable level, that we continue to keep the cost of our borrowings below three per cent, which they are, and that we continue to make sure that our debt-to-revenue ratio is lower than it was under the previous LNP government—a high of 91 per cent. I think we are currently sitting at just over 60 per cent.

It is about managing the fiscal environment as soundly and as strongly as we can but always having our eyes on what we need to do to create jobs in our economy, to continue to grow the economy. As I have said previously, it is about making sure not only that our infrastructure spend is contributing the schools, the new learning spaces, the hospitals, the hospital redevelopments, the roads and the public transport that Queenslanders need but also that Queenslanders get significant jobs out of them and that businesses are profitable and successful because the government is spending and the government is choosing Queensland businesses.

One of the concerns I have not only about the federal LNP but also about what Queensland can expect in the future is that we heard in the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech a very long list of commitments—some \$7 billion worth of commitments—as well as opposition to a number of revenue measures. We have done a calculation of the cost of all of the commitments and the revenue lost from them turning their backs on our revenue measures. We see a \$10 billion black hole in terms of our fiscal operating environment.

I think it is important to note that before 2012 there were a lot of similar promises made—promising the world but not being transparent around plans to fund these commitments by cutting services, sacking some 14,000 public servants, selling assets and spending taxpayer funds to run a glossy marketing campaign around Strong Choices. We have been here before. You can promise the world, but if you are not going to tell Queenslanders how you are going to pay for it, who is going to get sacked, what is going to get sold and what is going to get cut then you cannot expect Queenslanders

to take you seriously. We have been here before. We have seen that experience. There is \$10 billion there that I think the opposition needs to explain. What are they going to cut, who are they going to sack and what are they going to sell?

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, with reference to pages 123 and 124 of Budget Paper No. 2, what is the impact of the federal government's interference in the distribution of the GST on the Queensland budget and our ability to deliver for Queenslanders?

Ms TRAD: One of the things that I have been very frustrated about—and I am not the only Treasurer in this position who has articulated a very deep frustration with the federal government and their management of the GST—is the federal government's interference in the independent arbiter of GST and GST distribution which is the Commonwealth Grants Commission.

There are a number of things that I think have been incredibly challenging for Queensland in the GST environment because of the federal government. Firstly, there have been a number of special payments made to jurisdictions right throughout Australia. Every single jurisdiction except Queensland has had a payment, whether that is New South Wales and Victoria for the Snowy hydro scheme or WA for a particular purpose. Every single state has had a special payment which has been exempt or quarantined from GST treatment by the federal government. If you do get a payment outside of the GST distribution, what happens is the Commonwealth Grants Commission tallies it all up at the end of the day and says, 'You got \$6 billion for Snowy hydro so you get less GST because you've had that payment.' As a result of the federal government writing to the Commonwealth Grants Commission and saying that these nine quarantine them from GST distribution and there isn't one for Queensland, it means that all of these states are getting these special payments and their GST distribution as well, and that distorts the pool for Queensland.

The other thing the Commonwealth has done is it has agreed to changes around the way they treat natural disaster payments from states to local councils. In relation to the point about quarantining payments from GST calculations, previously the money that we gave local councils to fix up their critical public infrastructure after a natural disaster was quarantined from GST treatment. We said, 'This is necessary expenditure. It is not discretionary expenditure.'

CHAIR: We did not choose to make it.

Ms TRAD: We did not choose to make it.

CHAIR: We did not choose to have a cyclone.

Ms TRAD: That is right. We have to do it, and we will never turn our backs on disaster-affected communities. The new reality now is that if natural disaster strikes and we hand over hundreds of millions of dollars to local councils to fix up their infrastructure—as we did in Townsville and as we did in the north-west—then that is seen as unnecessary and discretionary spending and it will be put in the GST pool and divvied up. I think that has been incredibly distasteful, I have to say.

Additionally, the Commonwealth Grants Commission announced late last year that they would be doing a methodology review into royalties to make sure that they could reduce the fluctuation in the bust and boom of royalty payments and GST treatments, and that would have seen Queensland better off. Unfortunately, the federal Treasurer, without consulting any of the state jurisdictions, directed the Commonwealth Grants Commission not to progress that review. That is a significant problem. Fundamentally, we see the federal government deciding to intervene when they want to and holding back when they want to, and I think it is all about protecting their position as opposed to doing what is in the best interests of Australia and Queensland.

CHAIR: We might turn to some opposition questions. I notice that the member for Maiwar is flagging it down, but does the member for Everton wish to ask a question?

Mr MANDER: Yes, I do. Thank you, Mr Chair. I refer to page 3 of the SDS in relation to the establishment of the new Service Priority Review Office. My first question is to the Under Treasurer. Under Treasurer, can you advise whether the targeted saving of \$1.7 billion over the next four years is because departments were failing to deliver on the one per cent reprioritisation targets that were set out in the 2017 state election?

Mr Carroll: In relation to the reprioritisation targets, the government has set out a target of \$1.7 billion over the forward estimates: \$200 million in 2019-20 and \$500 million each year thereafter to the end of the forward estimates. The savings targets that you mentioned have been achieved and removed from the budgets for each of the departments that were required.

Mr MANDER: That was the original targets from 2017—

Mr Carroll: The original targets, yes.

Mr MANDER:—were achieved and this is now in addition to that?

Mr Carroll: Yes.

Mr MANDER: With regard to the \$1.7 billion target, can you advise how many public servants will have to go in order to meet that target?

Mr Carroll: The government has made it clear that there will be no forced redundancies in relation to the reprioritisation targets. We will look at information to ensure that we are spending in the right areas. We will also look at whether there are efficiencies in areas of government that are not required any more.

Mr MANDER: I acknowledge that there will be no forced redundancies, but how many public servants will need to be moved on to reach this target, whether it is through voluntary redundancies or whatever?

Mr Carroll: The reprioritisation target of \$1.7 billion is looking at savings across the whole of the government. No forced redundancies are required in relation to this target at all.

Mr MANDER: But it will include a reduction in the number of public servants.

Mr Carroll: We will be looking at things like travel to see if we can save money in relation to that. We will be looking at various things across the public service to see if we have a duplication of processes and to ascertain whether we can streamline those processes.

Mr MANDER: You are ruling out a reduction in the number of public servants?

Ms BOYD: I have a point of order, Chair, in relation to repetitiveness. I do not think the member for Everton can get his head around the fact that public servants do not need to be sacked.

CHAIR: I do not want a point of order put in that manner. We will not have an argument. The point of order relates to badgering and repetitiveness, and I do think that is a reasonable point of order without the extraneous stuff. The member for Everton has put the question and the question has been answered. Does the member for Everton have a new question?

Mr MANDER: Yes, I do. Treasurer, on 5 July it was reported that the PWC has been appointed to oversee the new Service Priority Review Office. Does this appointment mean that you lack confidence in Queensland's most senior and highly paid public servants to achieve this task?

CHAIR: You could phrase the question in a way that does not seek an opinion about confidence or otherwise.

Mr MANDER: I will.

CHAIR: Or is it your intention to have a question that breaches standing order 115?

Mr MANDER: The intent of the question is: why is money being spent on consultants when we have 200,000 public servants, many of whom are highly paid senior people.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, I would remind you to scan through your questions and consider section 115 of the standing orders, which deals with questions that are argumentative or may contain inferences, imputations or hypothetical matters.

Mr MANDER: I will rephrase the question.

CHAIR: If you could do that in advance, because you know that these questions are in breach. It seems as though you have put the question in breach of the standing orders and then enjoyed the opportunity to rephrase it.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, why haven't you given this task to Queensland's most senior and highly paid public servants?

Ms TRAD: I can confirm that I have given this task to the state government's senior public servants. I can confirm that all agencies, including Queensland Treasury, do seek external expertise from time to time and this is no different.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, how many consultants have been engaged to determine how many consultants need to be removed from government?

Ms TRAD: What we do know is that in terms of all of the tasks we do there are times that we need to bring in external expertise, and this is no different. There is nothing more to add, Mr Chair. This is a very routine matter of government administration.

I do note that, in terms of the Service Priority Review Office, most other jurisdictions—certainly Victoria, New South Wales and WA—have announced that they are undergoing a similar process. It is an important process to make sure that the work that we are doing aligns with the government's

priorities and that we are spending taxpayers' dollars wisely. We do not make any excuse or apology for that. It is important that we continue to review the work of agencies and look at programs to see whether they continue to be fit for purpose. This is what any other business out there in the economy would do. Any other business would do it and government should do it. It will be led by senior Treasury officials and it will have external expertise supporting them in their job.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, the member for Maiwar at some point wanted to ask some questions. Would now be an appropriate time?

Mr MANDER: Would you mind if I followed on with this?

CHAIR: Are you continuing with this line of questioning?

Mr MANDER: Yes, if you do not mind. Treasurer, media reports reveal that Nicole Scurrah is one of the PwC advisers who is consulting on this project. The Treasurer's entry on the Register of Members' Interests shows that the Treasurer received free accommodation at a luxury apartment in Whistler, Canada owned by Nicole and Paul Scurrah. Treasurer, did you seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner about this appointment, considering your close personal relationship?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question. I can confirm that Ms Scurrah is a friend of mine and, as the member has pointed to, I have made a full disclosure in terms of hospitality that was provided at her home. I am not sure about the 'luxury apartment' reference, but anyway. I can confirm that I was not involved in the selection of consultants associated with SPRO. That would be highly inappropriate. It is not something that any minister should do from their desk.

CHAIR: I call the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Chair. I thank you all for being here. My question I think is for the Under Treasurer. The government recently asked big coal companies like BHP to make voluntary contributions in exchange for a freezing of the coal royalty rate. Before this announcement, did Treasury do any comparative modelling or calculate how much revenue could have been generated annually by just raising royalties to get industry to pay a fair share for regional infrastructure?

Mr Carroll: I thank the member for the question. Treasury does various modelling in relation to all budget cycles that are there. What is reflected in the budget is where the final government decision in relation to the modelling that was done is published in the budget papers at the moment.

Mr BERKMAN: I do not know that we necessarily got to the bottom of that question. How much has the government received in voluntary contributions since making this call to industry?

CHAIR: If it is okay, I might ask the Deputy Premier to answer. She seems to be indicating that she has an answer. Member for Maiwar, is it okay if I ask the Deputy Premier to add something to that?

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. If she is better placed to answer, I am more than happy for that to happen.

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Maiwar for the question. As the Under Treasurer has said, there are a whole range of various calculations, lots of analysis, lots of report-backs—a lot goes into the preparation of the budget. I think it is incumbent on me at this particular time to thank all of the people behind me who work incredibly hard to pull together the budget. I do want to acknowledge all of the work that they do.

I can confirm that both BHP and Peabody have committed in principle to supporting the community resource infrastructure fund. We are liaising with them around the guidelines to go forward. We do know that it is an important balance, to continue to see growth in these industries but also to get money back which is essentially owed to the Queensland purse, owed to Queenslanders, for the resources that they own in the ground.

Mr BERKMAN: No money has been received, though. You referred to an in-principle agreement to participate, but the state has received nothing.

Ms TRAD: That is right.

CHAIR: I do not want to pull up the member for Maiwar in the same way I pulled up the member for Everton, but the answer that the Deputy Premier gave was quite clear. To rhetorically state it again in the form of a question is not what we are doing here. If there is a new question that advances it, that is fine, but do not simply restate the question that the Deputy Premier had been quite clear in answering.

Mr BERKMAN: I appreciate your guidance, Chair. In relation to that voluntary contribution scheme, the Queensland Resources Council estimated that their members might have been saved something in the order of a billion dollars as compared with a raise to the royalty rates. Under Treasurer, can you advise whether that ballpark figure is correct, based on the sorts of modelling that you have suggested Treasury has done?

Ms TRAD: Through you, Mr Chair—

CHAIR: I might ask the Deputy Premier to answer that.

Ms TRAD: I think the member for Maiwar's question goes directly to pre-budget information that has been presented to cabinet and CBRC. The Under Treasurer is not at liberty to indicate in any way, shape or form what has gone to cabinet or CBRC. I am happy to have a conversation with the member for Maiwar about a whole range of general revenue measures that we have pursued—how we are growing the diversification of our economy, how we are investing in education, how we are backing the knowledge-based jobs of the future. I am very happy to have a conversation about the variety of revenue measures that we have pursued as our government policy, but I am not going to outline CBRC confidential deliberations.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. We will return to the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 79 of Budget Paper No. 2 in relation to motor vehicle registration revenue. Under Treasurer, would you please advise the CPI rate for Queensland for the last financial year—that is, the actual CPI rate?

Mr Carroll: I thank the member for the question. The CPI rate estimated for 2018-19 was 1¾ per cent with a forecast at two per cent for the 2019-20 year.

Mr MANDER: Do you know the actual CPI for the previous financial year?

Mr Carroll: It was 1.7 per cent.

Mr MANDER: Under Treasurer, would you advise of the percentage increase in car registration in this year's budget?

Mr Carroll: The government in this budget has increased the CPI for car registration to 2.25 per cent, down from a previous CPI of 3.5 per cent.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, at a press conference on 19 May the Premier was asked what the increase in car registration was going to be. She replied, 'It's just CPI,' and then she turned to you to confirm it, to which you replied, 'Yes, it's just CPI.' How can Queenslanders trust what this government says, given this is a clear breach of an election commitment?

CHAIR: Hold on. That is actually the definitional thing that has been put in there for standing order 115. Can we phrase a question in a way that is not in breach of standing order 115? The deputy chair could give you some advice. I am going to ask you to look through the questions and to phrase them in a way that does not have an imputation or does not present an argument in that way because it is a clear breach of standing order 115. I am happy to have you put the question.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. Why would Queenslanders believe this government, given that this is a clear breach of an election commitment, raising car registration above CPI?

CHAIR: Again, the actual example of inference is 'having broken an election promise'. That is actually the example that was put forward in the notes that were given to us by the Clerk.

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, I am just stating two points of fact. There is an actual CPI and there is an inferred CPI which the government uses, and the government said that car registration would not increase above CPI. That has obviously happened.

CHAIR: With respect, you are not making a point of order here.

Mr MANDER: I am clarifying and giving reason for my question.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, twice now you have breached standing order 115. You know that you can put this—I know this is about theatre in terms of being able to put a question in a certain way and to a certain extent I admire it. However, I hope you respect the job I have, which is to see that standing order 115 is adhered to. Can we put the question in a way that does not breach it?

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, I am sure the Treasurer would be happy to answer the question.

CHAIR: I am sure too. Can you actually process it in a way that is reasonable?

Mr MANDER: Can the Treasurer explain why the government promised that car registration would not increase by more than CPI when it obviously has?

Ms TRAD: I can confirm that in last year's budget the CPI forecast was 2½ per cent. That was reduced at MYFER to 2¼ per cent. It is maintained at that level in expectation that there will be growth in inflation, as has been commented on. This is a future forecast and it is something that we work on in terms of the increases in fees and charges. What I am enormously proud of is the fact that we took the decision to remove the Newman government indexation policy of 3.5 per cent—

Mr MANDER: Freezing car registration for three years?

CHAIR: Member for Everton.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Chair. The government indexation rate at 3.5 per cent is something that we removed. I recall when the Newman government was in power and a whole range of promises were made like freezing electricity prices, making sure that power was affordable, and then we saw hikes of up to 43 per cent. I can understand the member's line of questioning, but I think that given that we have already revised downwards our CPI rate, it is within the ballpark and there is future forecasting to suggest that there will be some upward movement. That is the case not just in Queensland but in other jurisdictions and federally.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, is your term of being 'within the ballpark' the standard that you use with regard to Treasury figures?

Ms TRAD: What I am very comfortable with is that we have taken off the Newman government's 3.5 per cent indexation charge.

Mr MANDER: Deputy Premier, how do you explain to Queenslanders that a promise was made that car registration would not increase above CPI when it obviously has?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, this is now repetitious and you are straying back into inference that is put in the definition. The Deputy Premier has given you an answer about future forecasting and when that was set. It is also repetitious. Do you have a question that is not exactly the same question that you have asked previously, unless the Deputy Premier—

Mr MANDER: I will move on. I will go back to consultants and ask my question of the Under Treasurer. Under Treasurer, can you advise if any external consultants were retained by Treasury to help in preparing the budget?

Mr Carroll: I thank the member for the question.

Ms TRAD: If I could follow up from the last question, I do want to confirm that the forecast in the 2019-20 federal budget for inflation is at 2¼ per cent, so it is consistent with Queensland.

Mr MANDER: I am not worried about the forecast; I am worried about the actual.

CHAIR: Mr Carroll?

Mr Carroll: Can I get the member to repeat the question if that is okay?

Mr MANDER: Can you advise whether any external consultants were retained by Treasury in helping to prepare the budget?

Mr Carroll: Yes, there were external consultants used by Treasury to prepare the budget as normal practice.

Mr MANDER: Can you advise the cost, and who were those consultants?

Mr Carroll: The cost was just over \$300,000. Consultants that were used were consultants with expertise in that area: PricewaterhouseCoopers, KPMG, Deloitte, Access Economics, Newgate Communications and Michael Cooney.

Mr MANDER: Did they include Bligh government former chiefs of staff Kaiser and Scurrah?

Mr Carroll: Yes.

Mr MANDER: They did? Treasurer—

CHAIR: I note that the time for opposition questions has expired in terms of the agreement reached with the deputy chair, so you might want to take this up in a different section. Member for Pine Rivers, do you have a question?

Ms BOYD: I do. I refer to page 15 of Budget Paper No. 2. Can the Deputy Premier please provide an update on the value and components of Queensland's merchandise exports?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question. Like all members throughout Queensland, the member for Pine Rivers knows that we are an export focused state. We are a state on the doorstep of the fastest-growing economic zone in the world and we have a lot to offer the countries of Asia and further afield. For Queensland, trade means jobs, and our trade and merchandise export figures have been record breaking. I know that the Premier spoke about this earlier on today, but it is worth repeating because it is such good news.

Under the Palaszczuk Labor government our exports have reached record levels, our exports are in high demand globally and this budget details what is one of the great economic success stories. Of course, we know that exports means jobs. The latest ABS data shows that the nominal value of

Queensland's overseas merchandise exports totalled \$85.8 billion in the 12 months to May 2019. That is \$85.8 billion. This was an increase of 16 per cent, or \$11.9 billion from the same period a year earlier, and a record 12-month total. In fact, the annual value of Queensland exports has now broken the record for 14 consecutive months.

The value of overseas merchandise exports from Queensland has grown so strongly that it is larger than the value of merchandise exports from New South Wales and Victoria combined. Exports of coal, LNG, minerals and beef all increased strongly over the year. Queensland exported over \$45 billion worth of coal to the 12 months to May 2019, up \$4.9 billion from the same period a year earlier. Importantly, metallurgical coal accounted for \$38 billion of Queensland's total coal exports, with thermal coal accounting for just over \$7 billion. Hard coking coal, used primarily in steel making, was the primary driver for this increase, rising \$3 billion to a total of \$29.5 billion in the year.

LNG exports also experienced strong growth over the year, rising by \$4.7 billion to be \$15.3 billion in the year ending May 2019. Importantly, Queensland did not have an LNG export industry in 2014, but it is now Queensland's second most valuable export. LNG producers have also benefited from high prices, which have driven continued growth in the value of LNG exports, with the major LNG exports now nearing production capacity.

Queensland's mineral exports also experienced solid growth in the year, up \$1.2 billion to \$10.6 billion. Higher alumina prices and increased bauxite production in the state's north drove a \$774 million increase in Queensland's aluminium exports. Zinc exports rose by \$245 million over the year, reflecting an increase in production from both restarting and new mines.

The value of beef exports was \$5.8 billion in the year ending May 2019, growing by just under \$1 billion over the year. Dry weather conditions at the end of 2018 encouraged graziers to destock, driving increased beef export volumes. However, herd rebuilding in the north of Queensland was further delayed and impacted by the North Queensland floods, which caused significant cattle losses for local farmers.

While most crops are still facing challenges due to the ongoing drought conditions across much of the state, the value of cotton exports increased by 15 per cent over the year, also benefitting from a surge in prices. Under our government we are continuing to see the value of Queensland goods exports from all over the state hit new record highs with the vast majority of these exports being shipped from our regional ports.

Ms RICHARDS: I refer to pages 80 and 81 of Budget Paper No. 2. How does Queensland's tax competitiveness compare to other jurisdictions?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Redlands for the question. One of our fiscal principles is to maintain our tax competitive advantage with other jurisdictions. We continue to deliver on that principle in this year's budget. Following the release of the 2019-20 budgets for New South Wales and South Australia, Queensland's tax per capita is now \$643 per person lower than the average of other jurisdictions in 2019-20. Under the former Liberal National Party government, Queensland's taxation per capita was not this competitive, coming in at only \$589 lower than the average of other jurisdictions.

It is estimated that in this financial year the average Queenslander will pay less tax than their counterparts in other jurisdictions. They will pay some \$936 less than New South Wales—I think that is a good State of Origin match to win!—\$684 less than Victoria and \$503 less than Western Australia. In Queensland, taxes as a proportion of the economy were higher under the LNP. Alternative measures of tax competitiveness, such as the Commonwealth Grants Commission tax efforts or tax as a share of GSP, also show that Queensland's tax rates are amongst the most competitive in Australia.

As I have mentioned before, the Palaszczuk government's 2019-20 budget delivers a \$885 million payroll tax cut for small and medium businesses, including a payroll tax free threshold of \$1.3 million—twice the size of Victoria's. Queensland's payroll tax rate will continue to be one of the lowest rates in Australia. I think Victoria beat us slightly but we have a much better threshold, which I think makes us far more attractive in terms of an investment destination.

Additionally, I have mentioned the one per cent regional payroll tax discount, which is terrific and has really been welcomed by regional small and medium sized businesses. We will continue to provide that 50 per cent payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees as well as a \$20,000 per year full-time employee boost for those companies that do have a payroll tax liability and put on more workers, which is exactly what we want them to do.

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 9 of Budget Paper No. 2. How has the retention in public hands of our income-generating assets benefited the people of Queensland?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. People think about the future a lot when they have children. Preserving our assets in public hands is all about securing our future economic prosperity. I am very proud of the fact that we made the commitment in 2015, when we came to power, to keep our income-producing assets in public hands. That has meant that we have been able to do important things such as establishing CleanCo. It is still in the establishment phase, but it means that we can ensure there is good renewable energy within the system—good renewable energy that the public owns. That is critical and important.

Our leadership around renewable energy in Queensland has had a direct impact on power prices, particularly in regional Queensland. We are able to ensure that continues into the future because, of course, we are getting more renewable energy in the mix. We know that it is not just solar but also wind and hydro. These are all part of the 1,000 megawatts of new renewable energy generated by CleanCo by 2025. It is a big ambition. It is one that we will pursue. We will ensure it is in public hands, because we know how important it is for the future.

Clearly, the other assets provide our budget with a stream of dividend payments. Our GOCs operate on a commercial basis. They are out in the market. They are providing incredibly important services to regional communities, not just by way of utilities but also in terms of jobs in communities like Townsville and Gladstone. That is critical to why we should continue to keep them in public hands.

That is probably one reason regional Queensland really did turn away from the Liberal National Party in 2015 after only one term in government. There was such a strong campaign to sell all of our assets—a campaign devised by the Liberal Party pollsters Crosby Textor, who I understand were contractors into government at the time. A lot of money—some \$70 million—was spent on this campaign and those contractors to tell Queenslanders that they should embrace selling their assets, I think we found out what happens in that circumstance. Of course, this was based on the ultimate consultant, former federal treasurer Peter Costello, who came in to deliver the audit report, which cost certainly more than \$2 million to say that we could outsource everything—health, education, the lot—that we should sell everything and that government should not provide any services.

Now more than ever, when we look at what is happening around the globe, it is critical and important that citizens know that they have governments that are on their side—governments that invest in the things they need in order to maintain a quality life. That is exactly what the Palaszczuk Labor government does. Central to that is keeping assets in public hands.

I have made mention of the \$10 billion of unfunded commitments and revenue cuts from those opposite. This is a significant amount of unfunded commitments. I think it is incumbent on those opposite, particularly the member for Everton, the shadow Treasurer, to outline to the people of Queensland how these commitments will be funded. We recall quite distinctly that last time it resulted in a massive fire sale of assets. I do not think Queenslanders want to us go there. I think it is incumbent on the opposition to detail exactly how they will meet those commitments.

Ms BOYD: I am really excited about the implementation of CleanCo. Are you able to update the committee on how that is impacting on power prices?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. I recall being in Pine Rivers about four years ago at the solar panel place and seeing how excited that business was about an incoming Labor government's commitment to renewable energy and tackling climate change. I know how passionate the member for Pine Rivers is on this matter.

On 17 December 2018 we officially established CleanCo Queensland as the government's very own public owned renewable energy government owned corporation. I was a bit confused to hear the Leader of the Opposition in her budget reply speech commit to a third government owned energy generator. CleanCo is exactly that. It is another government owned energy generator.


CleanCo will have a portfolio of low- and no-emission generation assets and is on track to be trading in the national energy market this year. The foundation portfolio includes Wivenhoe Power Station and pumped storage hydro, Swanbank E, and the Barron Gorge, Kareeya and Koombooloomba power stations, transferred from Stanwell and CS Energy. We have also made an initial funding injection of \$250 million for CleanCo to build, own and operate renewable energy assets, and over the past seven months CleanCo has been undertaking the extensive and complex tasks required to establish the trading and enterprise resources system and processes required to own and operate the state's renewable and low-emissions generation assets and trade in the National Electricity Market. It is quite an intensive process, I have been advised.

CleanCo will put further downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices by increasing competition and generation when prices are high. This is expected to save households an estimated \$70 per annum and CleanCo builds on the government's reforms to secure a more affordable energy supply for Queenslanders, and our plan is working. Queensland has had the lowest wholesale market spot price over the past two summers and, as I have said previously, this does really compare to what was experienced under the former Newman LNP government where we saw power prices surge by 43 per cent and we know that it was Queensland households that suffered the most in relation to this.

The Palaszczuk government continues to drive forward with significant energy reforms while working with its existing energy generation businesses—Stanwell and CS Energy—to ensure they also have opportunities to be part of Queensland's renewable energy future alongside CleanCo. This trend has continued, with the Queensland Competition Authority's final determination for regional power prices determining a 4.4 per cent decrease or a 62 per cent reduction for the typical household bill in 2019-20. The QCA also proposed a decrease of 5.8 per cent or a \$144 reduction for a typical regional small business. In making their determination, the QCA specifically called out the establishment of CleanCo as a third government owned generator as a key reason for the reduction in power prices.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. The time being four o'clock, the committee will now adjourn for a break and the hearing will resume at 4.15 to continue the examination of the estimates portfolio areas of the Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. I remind committee members that the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships will be present for questions after the break regarding those partnerships. Thank you. We will resume at 4.15.

Proceedings suspended from 4.01 pm to 4.15 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Deputy Premier and officials, and welcome to those officials joining us for this session. The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure of the portfolios of Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. To commence questioning, I call the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. I refer to page 11 of the SDS and specifically to the service area highlight with regard to finalising new digital services for clients, including a new SPER software solution. Treasurer, two years ago the Under Treasurer assured us with regard to the SPER ICT project that the contract was safe and sound in terms of cost. Last year we received a similar assurance from the Under Treasurer despite the budget moving out from \$47.2 million to \$62.2 million and eventually \$69.5 million. Treasurer, considering these assurances, can you explain why you scrapped this IT upgrade, wasting around \$24 million of taxpayers' money?

Ms TRAD: Thank you for the question. I can confirm that I am committed to getting our projects delivered on time and on budget but, more than that, I am committed to our projects delivering in the best interests of Queenslanders. Since the middle of 2018 I raised concerns with Treasury over the progress of the ICT program. On 5 March 2019 I was provided formal advice that the SPER ICT system had not met its scheduled completion date of 28 February 2019 for user acceptance testing and that it was anticipated that the system would not be ready for operation in June 2019. On 17 May 2019 the contract with the relevant ICT provider was terminated. As the audit by the Queensland Auditor-General and commercial discussions are underway, I will not be providing further comments about this ICT project.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the Under Treasurer. Given that at least \$24 million was reportedly already paid to the contractors of the SPER ICT project, what does Queensland have to show for the money spent?

Mr Carroll: I thank the member for the question. In relation to the ICT contract, on 17 May the contract for the provider was terminated. SPER had paid approximately \$23.8 million for this ICT and, as the Deputy Premier has announced, it is under investigation by the QAO in relation to the implementation and we are still under commercial negotiations, so I do not want to pre-empt the commercial negotiations that are ongoing at the moment.

Mr MANDER: Deputy Premier, just to clarify, you are saying that it is under investigation by the Queensland Audit Office. Is that what you said?

Ms TRAD: Yes.

Mr MANDER: You are not going to provide information with regard to the money spent already—the \$23 million of taxpayers' money?

Ms TRAD: As I explained in parliament at the time that this happened, the ICT provider had failed to reach milestones in terms of the contract that was in place. There are negotiations currently afoot in relation to that contract, but before that is finalised and in full transparency I advised the Queensland

parliament that the Under Treasurer had referred this matter to the Queensland Auditor-General. I think it is very important that, in terms of the procurement and the delivery of this project, we ascertain why difficulties emerged, why they could not be resolved and how we can take those lessons forward in the future.

Mr MANDER: I am totally nonplussed by that. What is the purpose of estimates hearings if we cannot ask questions about \$24 million of taxpayers' money that has been wasted?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, we are just talking about the same question again and again. You have put the question and it has been answered by both the Under Treasurer and the Treasurer. I call the Deputy Premier and Treasurer if there is anything to add to that.

Ms TRAD: Maybe I can elaborate. I think it has been well ventilated that the government's SPER debt pool is something that needs management and it is something that we have committed to doing. We have really progressed some innovations in this area, particularly through the work and development orders so that those Queenslanders who find that they have a SPER debt can elect, if they meet the criteria, to pay that SPER debt through community services or maybe through attending a rehabilitation or health based service.

The whole SPER transformation program was a lot more than just the ICT component; it was about doing business differently. Because there have been a number of really successful components to that, we have seen a decrease in the growth in the SPER debt pool from one that we inherited from the LNP when we came to power, which was about 8.7 per cent per annum, down to now about three per cent. We have stemmed the flow. We are doing business differently. The ICT part was an important part of the total transformation of SPER, but it is one that was not being delivered in a way that met the milestones in the time frames that we needed. We announced the cessation of that contract and there are negotiations around all of that still pending.

We have asked the Auditor-General to have a look at this. After the Auditor-General has made some determinations and has come back to us, we will make some decisions as a government about how we proceed in the future. It is important not only that we get the SPER pool debt down—we stem the growth in it—but also that we give options to Queenslanders to pay that down in a different way. There has been about \$7.6 million worth of fines paid down through work and development orders to date.

CHAIR: I remind members in this section that Dr Sarra, the director-general of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, is present if there are any questions to do with his department. Are there any questions?

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, last year the Under Treasurer said—

... if the government cannot recover fines we are really undermining the justice system. It is terribly important that we have an efficient way of collecting fines.

The SPER debt was \$1.21 billion at that time and it now stands at \$1.27 billion. Why are you undermining the justice system by allowing this debt to grow?

CHAIR: Member for Everton—

Mr MANDER: I am quoting from the Under Treasurer.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, you are making an inference that somebody is undermining the justice system. There is a way of phrasing the question without making an inference in that way. Do you want me to give you the imputation—

Mr MANDER: Why are you allowing this debt to grow?

CHAIR: Thank you. It was quite easy to put that question in a way that does not contain an inference. I put that question to the Deputy Premier.

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question. We have been able to really improve SPER's debt finalisation rate. It is now achieving a 90 per cent finalisation rate, which I think is very good. It is well above the target of 85 per cent, and I think the budget papers bear that out. The historical rate was 65 per cent.

We need to make sure that people understand that when they have a SPER debt it is a debt that they have to pay. Clearly, for the LNP that was a difficult concept to grasp. They shuffled responsibility for the SPER program from the former attorney-general, the member for Kawana, to the former treasurer to manage. We are getting on with the job. We are transforming the business. It is going to take a bit of time, but what we have clearly demonstrated through those finalisation rates is that people

are taking their SPER debt seriously, they are responding when SPER contacts them and they are given options. They are given payment plans, they are given work and development orders or they pay their fine. We know that there are more efficiencies that we can progress and we are looking at all of that.

The justice system is a very critical and important system in Queensland. It is what our citizens rely upon in terms of feeling safe in their community. We need to make sure that it operates effectively. That means that penalties need to come back in the door. I am reminded of the fact that when the LNP was in office and had responsibility for this program it automatically made toll fines go to SPER. I think we have seen the outcome of that. We had the tolling inquiry. The tolling companies I have spoken to have made it their business to be proactive around debt recovery because they have known that it is a problem if left unchecked. We are very happy with the work to date. We know that there is still more to do—we do not resile from that—but we are in a much better place now than we were in 2013-14.

Mr MANDER: How can Queenslanders have confidence in your ability to rein in almost \$1.3 billion of SPER debt when you cannot manage an ICT project that manages that system?

CHAIR: This seems to go over the same ground but, Deputy Premier—

Ms TRAD: I am happy to answer it. I want to say that there are a whole range of reasons people accumulate a SPER debt. There are very many instances where poverty is the main reason and we need to be acutely aware of that. In times when there are difficult or challenging economic conditions, we see that perhaps our SPER debt increases.

As I have said, we have made it our business to transform the program to make sure that we are not only collecting debts but also giving Queenslanders a true option in terms of reconciling their debt with the state by doing activities that are non-monetary in value—as I said, doing community service or undertaking a perpetrator program around domestic and family violence or an alcohol or drug rehabilitation program. We are very pleased that we have been able to develop this innovation.

I want to say in reference to my earlier answer that I think it is important that we do not forget that it was the LNP that allowed all outstanding toll fines to be automatically referred to SPER. In the first eight months of the 2014-15 financial year there was \$93.7 million in tolling debt registered with SPER. That was more than triple the levels in the previous year. In addition, the LNP also failed to implement an effective work and development order program and utilise any wheel clamping or vehicle immobilisation, which we do now. Additionally, it was the LNP that wrote off about \$120 million worth of debt during its time in government. I think it is important to recognise that this has been a challenge for a whole range of governments. For any member to suggest otherwise is disingenuous and it does not stack up in terms of the evidence.

Mr MANDER: I want to move to property taxes. I refer to page 153 of Budget Paper No. 4 in relation to Labor's new taxes. Treasurer, given that Australian citizens and permanent residents will now be exempt from the definition of absentee because you changed the definition, do you admit that it was a mistake to include them in the first place?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question, although I am not sure about the imputation. As I said during the debate on this in the House, this was a measure that was taken a couple of years ago. There have been a number of instances where members of the community have written to me. I might be mistaken, but I think that the member for Everton has, in fact, corresponded with me on this issue.

Mr MANDER: I have.

Ms TRAD: I take that from the member for Everton, but it is about responding to what the community says and we have responded. We have listened and we have acted.

Mr MANDER: Can you advise how much tax was raised by taxing these Australian citizens and residents last year prior to the definition change?

Ms TRAD: If I may have a moment, Mr Chair. I understand that this was answered in a question on notice from the committee in the lead-up to the hearing. I will just double-check. The figure of \$17 million comes to mind. It was question on notice from the committee No. 13.

CHAIR: So it was already in a question on notice?

Ms TRAD: That is right.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. Treasurer, do you admit that you have a moral obligation to repay this \$17 million?

CHAIR: When we have a question, can you—

Mr MANDER: Sorry?

CHAIR: Proceed with the question.

Mr MANDER: I will repeat it. Do you admit now that you have a moral obligation to pay this \$17 million tax rip off?

CHAIR: With respect, that is seeking an opinion from the deputy premier about her moral obligation. Is there a way you could phrase that without seeking an opinion?

Mr MANDER: How do I explain this injustice to my constituents who have been affected by this poor decision?

Ms BOYD: You are a slow learner.

CHAIR: Member for Pine Rivers, that was inappropriate. You are making an inference or making a statement about what it is instead of asking a question. We know the rules. They are really quite clear. Questions cannot contain argumentative statements, inferences or imputations. Because it seems that you have put two questions like this, I note that the member for Maiwar and possibly other members have an interest in questions so I might put this to the Deputy Premier and ask it more generally and remind you that we do not need these breaches of the standing orders.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Chair. I thank the member for the question. I do want to correct the record. I said \$17 million. For clarification, that was over two financial years not the one that was referred to in the member for Everton's question to me. Mr Chair, I made clear during the parliamentary debate that the impact of the removal of the absentee surcharge to those Queenslanders who spent more than six months abroad in any one year, or were absent from their property, would not be retrospective. I made that clear and let me explain why and why I think that suggestions of injustice or moral obligations should be tested out. I have made no secret of the fact that this year's budget was difficult, that there was \$2.3 billion worth of GST writedowns from the federal government. More than \$800 million of the writedown was because the federal Liberal National Party government directly intervened in decisions by the—

Mr MANDER: The re-elected federal government.

Ms TRAD: I take that point.

Ms RICHARDS: It doesn't make it any better.

CHAIR: Member for Everton!

Mr MANDER: I wanted to make sure it was the same government we were referring to.

Ms TRAD: Whatever makes you happy. The point here is that—

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, if I could interrupt. Member for Everton, cheap, pointscore interjections—

Mr MANDER: The Treasurer is being provocative, Mr Chairman.

Ms BOYD: She is stating a fact.

Mr MANDER: If we talk about what happens in parliament, there is normally some leeway given when provocative statements are made.

Ms RICHARDS: There is nothing provocative about that.

CHAIR: Order, members. What I want is for everyone to settle down. We have a question here about a tax issue about foreign residents and I would ask the Deputy Premier to answer the question.

Mr MANDER: And cease the imputations?

CHAIR: I would ask that the member for Everton cease interjections and I ask the Deputy Premier to continue. We all can settle down. It is a long day.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Chair. As I was saying, budgets are absolutely about choices and I have made it abundantly clear that this budget was difficult. It was difficult because of more than \$2.3 billion worth of writedowns from the Morrison Liberal National Party government and more than \$800 million of that was because of their direct interference in the Commonwealth Grants Commission. We are worse off. We are the only state in Australia where we have gone backwards on GST. Our GST revenue makes up around 24 per cent of our revenue. This was a difficult decision. Can I say, on top of that, because of the slowing national economic conditions, what we have seen in terms of the property market is a decline in investment and as a consequence of that a writedown in terms of stamp duty.

With revenue decreasing we had two choices: we could ask some people in our economy who were doing well to pay a bit more or we could tighten the belt and withdraw from our economy, stop creating jobs, stop providing services, stop building the infrastructure that our state needs. We decided to stay the course. We decided not to penalise the people of Queensland, Queensland workers, for decisions made by the Morrison Liberal National Party government. That is the decision we made. That is the choice we made. We understand that some in our economy are unhappy about that, but this is what making difficult choices is all about. We have made sure that in terms of the additional revenue measures that we have pursued, they do not impact Queensland households. It is about those parts of our community that can afford to pay a bit more to pay a bit more so that we can all move forward together in as strong a way as possible.

CHAIR: I thank the Deputy Premier. We will now move to the time assigned to government members. I call the member for Pine Rivers. Do you have any questions?

Ms BOYD: Can the Deputy Premier explain how the government is responding to the Queensland Productivity Commission's final report on the inquiry into service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, please?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for this question. The Palaszczuk government is absolutely committed to improving the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. In 2016 the Queensland government commissioned an inquiry through the Queensland Productivity Commission into service delivery in remote and discrete communities to respond to concerns raised on service delivery in communities.

In December 2017 the QPC delivered its comprehensive *Final report: Service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities* to the Queensland government. Based on input from more than 500 stakeholders, the QPC made 22 recommendations. Recommendations highlighted opportunities to improve how services are designed, how they are funded and delivered to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Recommendations centred on structural reform that transfers decision-making closer to communities and ensures that both government and governance systems support shared responsibility and accountability between governments and local communities.

They also went to service delivery reform that improves local service coordination and delivery by putting communities at the centre of service design and increased coordination of services across government and at the local level; economic development that facilitates economic participation and community development; capacity building within government service providers and community; and monitoring and evaluation for the timely and transparent transfer of data, measuring performance and outcomes.

In June last year we committed to work with the community, government agencies and key stakeholders to deliver on the QPC's recommendations. I was intent that we would not just do a government response to have it sit on the shelf but that this would be an active process where we were working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to respond together to the QPC's recommendations. This commitment has led to the development of the Palaszczuk government's Local Thriving Communities reform that I launched at the State Library of Queensland earlier this month. In the 2019-20 budget we made a long-term whole-of-government commitment to the Local Thriving Communities agenda, with an investment of more than \$7 million to implement the report's recommendations.

Local Thriving Communities embeds structural and cultural change that will fundamentally alter the way that the Queensland government does business with communities. The reform will enable coordinated government funding, delivered in close consultation with individual remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that better aligns accountability and decision-making with community priorities. The Queensland government will act as an enabler to support communities to ensure their priorities are delivered. The Local Thriving Communities program will not be a one-size-fits-all model. It will be a co-designed approach to the implementation of the Local Thriving Communities reform. It will bring decision-making closer to communities and allow communities to decide on funding priorities and the delivery of services needed for their communities, for their people, for their families.

DATSIP has been engaging in the 19 remote and discrete communities to look at how Local Thriving Communities will operate in each community. We will also be working with regional and urban communities to determine how service delivery is improved in those local contexts. A joint coordinating committee has been established, with representation from mayors and key government departments. It will oversee the implementation and monitoring of Local Thriving Communities.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to getting this right and to promoting self-determination and local community development. We are under no illusions about what is required to succeed and we expect that we will have to work through challenges along the way. If this was easy, it would have been done a long time ago. We are committed to changing the way that government does business; to working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, rather than doing things to them or for them; and to identifying and implementing workable solutions tailored to the priorities, goals and leadership structures in each and every one of our 19 discrete Indigenous communities.

Ms RICHARDS: I refer to page 25 of Budget Paper No. 4. How does the commitment to fund the Family Responsibilities Commission align with the government's agenda to reframe the relationship?

Ms TRAD: The Local Thriving Communities reform agenda will increase self-determination and local decision-making, and improve the economic, social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations Queenslanders. The Local Thriving Communities agenda is underpinned by key principles, including recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Queensland, self-determination, respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, locally-led decision-making, shared commitment, shared responsibility and shared accountability and empowerment.

As recommended by the Queensland Productivity Commission in its inquiry into service delivery in Queensland's remote and discrete Indigenous communities, the Local Thriving Communities reform will be available to all 19 remote and discrete Indigenous communities as well as regional and urban Indigenous communities across Queensland. We have started discussions with communities and key stakeholders, including Indigenous mayors, to co-design what the reforms will look like and how they will be delivered locally. We are working within government to ensure that we have the capacity to deliver timely, coordinated, relevant and culturally appropriate services to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

While there have been reports that the Queensland government is planning to abolish the FRC, the government has made no such decision. Rather, the Palaszczuk government has committed funding of \$2.26 million in the 2019-20 budget to support the operations of the FRC until 30 June next year. This is consistent with the Commonwealth government's Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Act 2019, which extends Cape York income management under the welfare reform program from 1 July this year to 30 June next year. This commitment will enable the work of local commissioners to continue as the government works with the Commonwealth government and the Cape York Institute as well as the five welfare reform communities of Aurukun, Hope Vale, Mossman Gorge, Coen and Doomadgee to evolve the FRC model. This is an important collaboration to recognise and build on locally-led decision-making by the Family Responsibilities Commission and the local commissioners that has enhanced local authority in those communities. Central to the welfare reform model is the FRC's 25 local commissioners who conference with community members and make decisions to help them and their families achieve better outcomes.

The government's Local Thriving Communities framework is a commitment to bring decision-making closer to community, to allow them to make decisions about funding and what services are delivered in their communities. Local Thriving Communities is not about replacing existing decision-making authorities but rather addressing the gaps in local decision-making by expanding and strengthening community voice and community control.

Ms RICHARDS: With reference to the DATSIP SDS, could you advise what initiatives are in place to increase participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in training, employment and business ownership under the Moving Ahead strategy?

Ms TRAD: I think some really inspirational changes have occurred through some key programs. One of them is the whole-of-government Moving Ahead strategy for 2016-2022. It is part of our plan to increase the economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders through training, skilling, work, business development and growth.

As a key action of Moving Ahead, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships leads the implementation of the Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy, QIPP. The policy provides a whole-of-government framework aimed at increasing government procurement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to three per cent of addressable spend by 2022. I have met a number of them, particularly in Townsville. They are impressive businesses and impressive Queenslanders who have big hopes and big vision for their businesses. Through the policy, we are seeing Queensland government agencies increasingly engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses on procurement opportunities.

Since the implementation of the policy in September 2017, there has been a year-on-year increase in terms of share of revenue to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and the number of suppliers. Data on total government spend in the first half of 2018-19 shows procurement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses at approximately \$148 million, representing a two per cent increase of total spend. These figures show that we are on track to reach the three per cent target by 2022. However, there is always more work that we can do.

DATSIP has led the Economic Participation Program to support key Queensland government strategies and focus on reducing barriers to employment, procurement, enterprise development and business partnerships. Work with government agencies and industries such as tourism, resources and construction continues to build on the capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to tender for and win contracts in government and industry supply chains.

DATSIP has brokered 17 selected Indigenous projects under the Queensland government's Building and Construction Training Policy and supported the placement of more than 230 employees, apprentices and trainees in selected Indigenous projects during the year as part of the Queensland government's Building and Construction Training Policy. During 2018-19 DATSIP assisted 1,183 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders into employment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It included 454 construction job outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders through the Remote Indigenous Land Infrastructure Program Office, of which 84 were apprentices or trainees. In addition, 729 young people found employment through DATSIP's youth empowerment program. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned companies are more likely to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The department will continue to build on its strong relationships with Queensland's peak industry bodies, buildings and sporting organisations to jointly focus on improving opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

Ms RICHARDS: We are certainly seeing those opportunities improve on our Quandamooka coast.

Ms TRAD: Absolutely.

CHAIR: My question is to the Deputy Premier but maybe the director-general might add something to this. Can the Deputy Premier elaborate on how the government will increase self-determination and economic participation to increase life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Ms TRAD: Fundamentally we know that in order to improve self-determination and in order to progress the principle of empowerment we need to get the relationship right. I think that is what NAIDOC Week's theme is all about—voice, treaty, truth. It is critical and important that First Nations Queenslanders make decisions that affect them at the decision-making table—that they have a voice. It is important that we recognise the truth and we work towards a new future, which is the treaty part of the theme. That is what we have embraced through our Local Thriving Communities agenda and through our Tracks to Treaty announcement which I made earlier in the year.

Economic participation in all parts of our state, not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders but everyone, is critical and important to the future of our state. It is incredibly important that First Nations Queenslanders are front and centre of that increased economic participation. That is certainly something that I know every state minister is focused on as well. We have seen some great outcomes through programs like Works for Queensland and Skilling Queenslanders for Work.

CHAIR: Yes, definitely in Logan.

Ms TRAD: Absolutely. Even with the Townsville stadium. As a result of the Buy Queensland policy and the apprenticeships and traineeship requirements as well as the local employment requirements, the percentage workforce—and I might have to be corrected on this—is something like 14 per cent Indigenous on that work site. That is pretty phenomenal when you think about how big the project is and how many jobs are associated with it. Due to us having dedicated policies and programs in place, First Nations Queenslanders are being supported into real jobs in the real economy and making a huge difference.

If we can continue to do that through our payroll tax relief program and if we can continue to do that through other mechanisms, like supporting Indigenous businesses which are critical and important and having an Indigenous procurement policy, then what it means is more jobs in the economy for First Nations Queenslanders. I might ask Chris if he wants to add anything else.

Dr Sarra: It is a great honour to serve in this role. I think the Deputy Premier and minister has given quite a comprehensive overview of many of the specifics. I will speak more generally about the notion of reframing the relationship. The Tracks to Treaty agenda is about reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all parts of Queensland. This is important.

The two key elements of this are the historic Path to Treaty and the Local Thriving Communities agenda, as already noted. Clearly for a long time there have been many challenges in the area of Indigenous policy. This agenda is about speaking to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in all communities. What I mean by that is that we have moved beyond dealing with just the complexities. We are not walking away from that, but we want to speak to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When we talk about the initiatives around investing in Indigenous businesses and when we talk about initiatives to embrace young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders who are finishing high school, it is a way of reaching out to them and saying, 'We recognise that you do have the capacity to be exceptional.' I am really delighted to be part of this agenda.

CHAIR: I have another question for the Deputy Premier. Referring to page 6 of the DATSIP SDS, can the Deputy Premier further explain how the government intends to achieve outcomes under the refreshed Closing the Gap targets?

Ms TRAD: This is a national ambition and one that should absolutely be embraced in a bipartisan and comprehensive way by every jurisdiction throughout our nation. When you have a look at the demographic chart around life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians it is something that we all must have a sense of urgency about because it is absolutely shameful that some of the key things that we enjoy—a long life, access to health services—do not exist in First Nations populations throughout our state.

As someone who has been very proud of Labor's track record on Indigenous rights and our response to Indigenous disadvantage, I was very proud of former prime minister Kevin Rudd's commitment to Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage 11 years ago. I really do not know where that time has gone. Like everyone, I am disappointed with the progress. I think we need to be really honest about that. That is part of the truth agenda that we all have to confront.

I welcome the road map outlined by the federal Indigenous Australians minister, Ken Wyatt. I had the pleasure of meeting Minister Wyatt recently. I do very much publicly celebrate the appointment of Australia's first Indigenous Australians minister as an Indigenous Australian. I think that needs to be recognised for the historical moment that it is. It was a pleasure to meet with him.

The minister outlines a positive agenda to help close the gap for Indigenous Australians through the development of refresh targets. I look forward to working constructively with him to create genuine and tangible outcomes for First Nations communities. With that said, we are not going to sit back and rely on national progress to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. We have made a commitment ourselves to publish our own Closing the Gap report card so that we are held accountable for the progress that we make or the lack thereof.

The 2018 report card showed that while two targets were on track, particularly early education and year 12 attainment, there was absolutely still more work to be done. We do not hide from that fact. This year's budget delivers on our commitment to close the gap by funding programs that lead to positive outcomes. That could be important enablers like housing. Providing housing in communities is critical for positive life outcomes. That is a \$40 million capital program in 2019. We also allocated more than \$270 million to improve housing outcomes, including funding the first year of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan and a path to home ownership.

I was in Mossman Gorge not too long ago with the director-general. It was terrific to see the improvements in a lot of the housing stock in Mossman Gorge. That was as a result of governments working collaboratively to deliver improved housing stocks in those communities. Fundamentally that is all the Queensland government wants. We want a collaborative working relationship with the Commonwealth, as our shared partners in responsibility for First Nations people, to deliver this important infrastructure and services.

There are a number of initiatives that we have delivered in education. We have established Queensland's First Children and Families Board and the Mental Health Commission. We have allocated a dedicated \$6.9 million to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention. We have funded, to the tune of \$120 million, critical infrastructure in Indigenous communities—namely, water and water management.

As I said before, all of those programs—whether it is Back to Work, Skilling Queenslanders for Work or Works for Queensland—are critical and important. As I said, when I first launched the Works for Queensland program a number of years ago—I think it was in either 2016 or 2017—Yarrabah was one of the first places I went to and I met a young man there who was a father of I think three children. He was just starting an apprenticeship with the council to deliver on the Works for Queensland program and the infrastructure projects in Yarrabah. I met him again recently. He is near completing his certificate and the pride in his face was just outstanding. I cannot help but think that that would not have happened if the LNP had won the last election because they promised to axe this important program. All of these things are absolutely geared towards closing the gap and giving economic opportunity for First Nation Queenslanders.

CHAIR: The time allotted to government members has expired. We turn now to opposition members for questions.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 66 of Budget Paper No. 2 in relation to the government's waste disposal levy. Treasurer, there have been many concerns raised by skip bin operators, builders and other local businesses about the impact of this waste tax. One skip bin company recently posted on their website that they expect that there will be an increase of around 25 per cent for a bin for a household doing their annual spring clean. How does this accord with the Treasurer's previous comments in the media on 1 June 2018 that there will be 'no flow-on effects' from the waste levy to householders?

Ms TRAD: In this job it is all about making the choices that you have to and it is all about making sure that you leave a legacy for future generations—something that I know you are acutely aware of, Chair. It is quite shameful that Queensland has the highest rate of waste going into landfill in Australia. We dump more in landfill than any other jurisdiction in our nation. If people think we should not do something about that then I think they are abandoning future generations.

We have taken the decision to do what every other jurisdiction in mainland Australia has done, and that is introduce a waste levy. In the first three years, over 70 per cent of revenue from the waste levy will go to payments to local councils—105 per cent compensation for the impact of the waste levy so that families putting out their wheelie bins do not have to pay any more. We want to make sure that we get a recovery and recycling industry up and running in Queensland as well as focus on other priorities. In last year's budget we made an allocation of over \$100 million to this industry alone and to ensuring that the waste levy introduction was a success.

Fundamentally, this is about changing behaviours. If we do not do that, if we continue to have the position that we inherited from the former Newman LNP government which saw dumping waste in Queensland free—which made it more economical for companies as far as away as Victoria to truck their waste up to Ipswich or the Gold Coast and dump it there rather than dispose of it in their own jurisdiction, paying the appropriate waste levy—that is not something that we should kick down the road for future generations. We have to absolutely deal with our waste, our landfill issues and—

Mr MANDER: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair, on relevance. The question was squarely about a commitment that the Treasurer made—

CHAIR: I understand, member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: It is a point of order on relevance. I am explaining the point of order on relevance.

CHAIR: No, member for Everton. I will take on the Speaker's role. It is not an opportunity to restate the question.

Mr MANDER: It may be, Mr Chairman, under standing order 118, if the Treasurer does not answer the question. She made a commitment and that commitment has not been met. How does she weigh that commitment up?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, I have made it clear that it is not an opportunity when you make a point of order, as we do in the House almost every day, to restate the question or to further advance the argument. The Deputy Premier is answering the question about the reason the waste levy was put in place and its operation.

Mr MANDER: That was not the question, with respect, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: No. It was the question—

Mr MANDER: No. Mr Chair, my question was about the flow-on effect to householders—something that the Deputy Premier said would not occur.

CHAIR: Indeed, the Deputy Premier is answering that question.

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question because I am very happy to continue to talk about why it is critical and important that we have a waste levy in Queensland. We have buffered households from attracting any more charge when putting out their wheelie bin.

Mr MANDER: What about skip bins when they are doing their annual spring clean?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, it has been a long day. I know that you are frustrated by a few things.

Mr MANDER: By a lot of things actually, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: We just need to keep calm and follow the standing orders.

Mr MANDER: I am calm. I am as cool as a cucumber.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, if you are calm, I ask that you respect the standing orders and do not interrupt me when I am speaking, if that is okay, and allow the Deputy Premier to answer the question. We can put the question and have the question answered. That is what today is about. Deputy Premier, do you have any more to say on this question?

Ms TRAD: Fundamentally, we all know that budgets are about choices. That is what we say. We know that the LNP has promised \$7 billion worth of unfunded commitments and that there are revenue measures like the waste levy that they have committed to repealing. What that means at the end of the day is a \$10 billion black hole in the finances of Queensland. Unless those opposite can detail exactly how they are going to pay for their commitments then we can only assume that we—

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. Under standing order 118, this has no relevance to the question whatsoever.

Mr MANDER: This is ridiculous.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, it does seem to be expanding on the question that was put. I ask you to wind up.

Ms TRAD: This goes to a revenue measure. Those opposite have committed to repealing this revenue measure, as they did in 2012. It goes to the very fundamental question about what we do and what choices we make in this state about what legacy we leave for future generations. A \$10 billion black hole—

Mr MANDER: You admit that residents will pay for this.

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. This estimates committee hearing is about this year's budget. We are not talking about an alternative government or an alternative position by any other party. Please get the member to remain relevant to the questions.

CHAIR: I thank the deputy chair. We did have discussions that alternative measures that could be put in place are obviously always implicitly being discussed. That is always on the cards—alternative ways that budgets could be structured—as part of the question. I do find that in order. I ask the Deputy Premier to continue. That being said, I am sure that the Deputy Premier is getting to her conclusion and wrapping up with other budget items and the general principles of the budget. We could resolve the question if we stopped having further points of order.

Ms TRAD: Fundamentally, this is an important revenue measure. It is an important revenue measure to reduce waste. It is an important revenue measure so that we can get an industry up and running with jobs in that industry—jobs around recycling and jobs around waste management. It is critical and important for the future, and we could not do it without a waste levy.

Mr STEVENS: I have a very simple question. It is in relation to the waste tax. As the HIA have previously said, 'There is no doubt that the cost will be passed on to new home owners, costing Queenslanders an extra \$2000 to build a new home.' Does the Treasurer disagree with the assessment of the HIA that this new tax will increase the cost of a new home and put more pressure on housing affordability for young Queenslanders and, if so, why?

CHAIR: There are a few parts to that question. Firstly, it was very similar, if not identical, in principle to the question put by the member for Everton, which may cause the Deputy Premier to expand her answer and go in directions you do not wish her to go. I ask that you do not raise points of order about it given that it is very similar to the question that the member for Everton put.

Ms TRAD: I can confirm that councils have been given \$143 million in advance payments to support households through the introduction of the levy. The levy is also avoidable. If businesses choose to recycle and not let it become landfill then they pay less. In fact, in terms of construction we are seeing the recycling of materials more and more. I think that is a fantastic thing to see.

I do want to make a point about renovations. While we have seen the number of new dwellings decrease in line with other jurisdictions in the nation, we have seen alterations and additions go through the roof. I would draw the honourable member's attention to page 36 of Budget Paper No. 2, which shows that whilst dwelling investment has gone down, alterations and additions have 'risen 76.6 per cent since its trough in March quarter 2013 to reach a record high in March quarter 2019, and to be the largest individual component of dwelling investment'. That really does show there is a strong level of confidence in the alteration and addition part of our economy, and I think that the scaremongering that we are seeing around the introduction of the waste levy is really disappointing. If you recycle it is avoidable, you are leaving a better legacy for future generations and it does not bear out in the level of confidence in the economy around renovations and alterations.

CHAIR: Is there a question from the member for Maiwar on this issue?

Mr BERKMAN: My question now is to the Treasurer. The government has promised that by 30 September this year it will sign a deal on royalties with Adani, which has variously been described as a royalty holiday or a deferral of royalties under what the government calls a transparent framework. Treasurer, can you commit here today to release in full all details of the final deal that was struck with Adani?

Ms TRAD: I think the outcome of making that commitment is to essentially say that Queensland is not open to investment. If companies and foreign investors everywhere—whether you are Adani, BHP, Rio Tinto, Peabody, Boeing or Rheinmetall; it does not matter who you are—have commercial negotiations with government and government releases all of their sensitive commercial information, I think the outcome of that would be to say that Queensland is not open for business. We have made it very clear. We have put the framework around the royalty arrangement with Adani in the public domain and, as we articulated more than two years ago, that will stand for any company that determines to be the first mover in a resource basin. That framework is out there. The government will abide by that framework, whether it is with Adani or anybody else. We made that commitment and we stand by that commitment.

What we will not do is publish commercial-in-confidence agreements and arrangements with investors in this state who only invest in this state because we are a stable government, we have strong financial management and we manage to keep important information that they do not want in the public domain confidential. I know that may not please the member for Maiwar. I know that people want to make this all about Adani, but from where I sit there is a whole economy here and what you do for one you need to do for all. I think it is really important. I know it is an issue that has been weaponised and it continues to be weaponised. Fundamentally, from where I sit I have a responsibility to the economic future of all Queenslanders and to compromise it in such a base political manoeuvre is irresponsible.

Mr BERKMAN: Deputy Premier—

CHAIR: I call the member for Everton.

Mr BERKMAN: Just very quickly, Chair. Turning to the framework itself—

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, I called the member for Everton. I think you have had a fair go today. The member for Everton thinks you have had too much of a fair go.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 153 of Budget Paper No. 4 and I refer in particular to the increase in petroleum royalty rates. I refer to a comment made by the Premier when she was in Townsville two weeks before the budget when she said, 'There will be no royalty increase in this year's budget.' Treasurer, why wasn't the Premier aware that the budget would have royalty increases?

Ms TRAD: The Premier was very clear that she was referring to coal royalties. The insinuation in that question is not something that is relevant to the committee's deliberations.

Mr MANDER: I will go to the next question. Treasurer, given that there will be a retrospective petroleum royalty increase for royalty payers paying on an annual basis ending 31 December 2019, how can businesses have confidence to invest in Queensland when you introduce retrospective royalty hikes?

Ms TRAD: It was something that we talked about at length during the second reading debate in relation to the budget. Let me go into the transitional arrangement which I think is important to explain what the member for Everton is getting at here.

The petroleum royalty rate of 12.5 per cent takes effect from 1 July this year and it is payable for quarterly and annual return periods starting from 1 July 2019; however, we have introduced a transitional petroleum royalty rate of 11.25 per cent for the 2019 calendar year. This is necessary because for a calendar year annual return period the annual royalty liability is determined based on the

wellhead value of all petroleum disposed of during the year. When making the annual assessment there is no scope to notionally apply the previous 10 per cent rate to the wellhead value of petroleum disposed of up to 30 June and the increased 12.5 per cent rate to the wellhead value of petroleum disposed of from 1 July 2019. From 1 January 2020 the petroleum royalty rate of 12.5 per cent will apply to all petroleum producers regardless whether they lodge on a calendar or financial year basis. If a petroleum operation ceases during the year there is potential for the transitional rate to produce anomalous results. In this exceptional circumstance the Office of State Revenue may consider ex gratia assistance.

Mr PURDIE: My question is to the Under Treasurer. I refer to page 7 of the SDS in relation to public policy development. Mr Carroll, on 13 July 2018 the CCC found that the processes to identify and nominate candidates for board appointments of government owned corporations lacks transparency and good governance. What changes have been made to the *Cabinet Handbook* and appointment process to address the CCC's concerns?

Ms TRAD: I will seek your guidance, Mr Chair. In terms of the appointment process, it is not the responsibility of the Under Treasurer. My understanding is that it is a DPC process, but I am happy to get some more information in relation to it. I note as well that it was the former Under Treasurer who progressed that particular issue. I will just address this.

In response to the CCC's recommendations, the *Guide for Board Appointments to Government Owned Corporations, Queensland Rail and Seqwater* was released on 18 March. Since September last year, the government has approved 57 board appointments to government owned businesses. All of these appointments have been made in accordance with the guidelines that were suggested by the CCC at the time. Just to be abundantly clear, all board members are appointed on merit. They are part of the QRoN process. The QRoN process is administered by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I guess it was a feature of the fact that there was concern about the board appointment at the time within the Treasury portfolio that the Under Treasurer at that time was dealing with it, but in actual fact the administrative responsibility is with DPC.

CHAIR: I did not follow the answer because I was distracted slightly. Member for Ninderry, the Deputy Premier has given an answer about who had responsibility for that. Is that satisfactory to you?

Mr PURDIE: Could the Treasurer just explain this to me: have the recommendations of the CCC to update the Cabinet Handbook been implemented?

Ms TRAD: I cannot tell you that. I am not the minister responsible. I am happy to take that on notice. It is the Premier's responsibility, but I will confirm for you that the guidelines that the CCC recommended last year—the new guidelines—are published. They are in the public domain and they have been implemented. Whether or not the handbook has been updated I think is a better question for the Premier.

CHAIR: I think it is clear that that would be under the Premier's office. I do not think taking on notice something that is not your responsibility is the correct process.

Mr PURDIE: I am happy with that answer, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: The time for opposition questions has expired.

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 26 of Budget Paper No. 4. Can the Deputy Premier provide an update on the action the government is taking to respond to Indigenous youth suicide?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. It is a significant issue in our community and I think it is something that we need to pay urgent attention to. We saw that there was an increase in the number of young people from a First Nations background who were taking their lives. Addressing suicide prevention is a very complex issue, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders experiencing higher rates of psychological distress, mental illness and suicide than other Queenslanders. Unfortunately, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost two times more likely to commit suicide, with 66 per cent under 35 years of age at the time of death.

I have spoken with some of the families impacted by suicide, and I have been saddened and extremely concerned with the tragic suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people both in Queensland and nationally. Earlier this year I held two social and emotional wellbeing workshops with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and service providers to discuss options to address suicide prevention. Unfortunately, I was very concerned to know that there was not a dedicated amount of funding for Indigenous youth mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention, so I am very pleased that in this year's budget we have allocated \$6.7 million over the forward estimates to work with communities around approaches that they know will work well with their young people.

We know that there are a lot of issues facing young people generally. We saw from some of the outcomes or commentary around cyberbullying that the Premier has spoken about that racism plays a very big part in the emotional health and wellbeing of young Indigenous Queenslanders. Being able to respond in a way that assists organisations and communities respond in a culturally appropriate way is a very important thing. I am very pleased that we are able to put that money aside and work with Queensland Health and the Queensland Mental Health Commission to develop, improve and implement youth mental health and suicide prevention initiatives.

As an example of this collaboration, my department is currently working with Queensland Health to support local Inala community leadership and decision-making in youth mental health, with a particular focus on youth suicide prevention. The Inala elders group facilitates bimonthly youth suicide prevention meetings for the whole community. These meetings are attended by local government and non-government service providers focused on using the collective knowledge of all parties to improve their connections and service offerings to young people in the region. Another medium-term initiative is to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide better communication approaches so families and community members can more easily navigate and find services they need.

The Suicide Prevention Health Taskforce phase 2 action plan is being led by Queensland Health. It makes a commitment to developing a suite of culturally appropriate suicide prevention resources designed with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and carers in partnership with key stakeholders. There is a bit that we are doing in this space, but I think to be able to do more—particularly with it being driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders, communities and service providers—is critical and important in trying to address this issue.

Ms BOYD: Can the Deputy Premier please outline what additional funding through the Former Origin Greats Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education program will deliver to state primary school students?

Ms TRAD: I am delighted to talk about the ARTIE Academy and its initiatives with making sure that young Indigenous people stay in school and stay engaged. It is the case that sometimes it is the small investments that actually reap the biggest rewards. We know how mad people are for League in Queensland, and that is very much the case amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. When we were approached by the Former Origin Greats, or FOGs, to continue our investment in the ARTIE program, we had a very good look at it. It was not just about continuing it; it was about expanding it as well. Some of the metrics that they talk about are just so inspiring.

Currently, the ARTIE Academy operates across 17 state high schools, supporting over 2,000 students. The additional funding of \$4.5 million will expand the program into 20 more state primary schools, so that is almost 40 primary schools. The advice I got at the time was that, while the 17 high schools were doing great things, if we could start even earlier with young kids in primary school then we know that we will be addressing the gap much earlier and we will be creating great habits much earlier. I was inspired by this. We love the fact that this is now being expanded into 20 more state primary schools and is expected to benefit 2,000 additional students. I suspect that the ARTIE program is working in Redlands, Pine Rivers and Logan. I think you will probably see quite a lot of activity. You should perhaps give FOGs a call and see where they are operating in your local communities to see the great work that they do.

They employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to deliver mentoring support for students. FOGs ARTIE Academy education coordinators visit local schools and meet with students one on one to work through barriers, which is critical and important. They provide students with a structured and appropriate incentivised rewards program aimed at improving school attendance and creating positive learning attitudes—and, believe me, that is something that every parent has to do with their child. It delivers a tutoring program to address the disparity in education outcomes and it is particularly focused on literacy. There is a reading support program, one-on-one tuition and group reading support. There are cultural activities so that young Indigenous kids can feel a connection to culture which is really important going forward. It is really focused on building pride, resilience, connection and reconciliation in the school environment, working in partnership with local communities, parents and elders.

It is also about mentoring and best practice programs to engage students and families in positive and cultural learning experiences. As I said before, it is a superb program for our sport-loving community to have their sporting hero come in. I had both Will and Dane standing with me at the time of the announcement with some young Indigenous kids, who were skipping school to be part of the announcement. I have to say they just loved it. They loved having their league heroes there and knowing that with a little bit of support they, too, could achieve.

CHAIR: I have seen Scotty Prince in action in Logan. He is fantastic.

Ms RICHARDS: I am sure they made up for that time. Last year our community got to travel to Mornington Island and meet with the community there over the turbo yeast legislation. I refer to page 26 of the budget paper. Deputy Premier, would you be able to outline how the government intends to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to reduce alcohol related harm?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question. This has been a long-running issue over a period of time. The review of alcohol management plans commenced with a 2012 pre-election commitment from the former premier, Campbell Newman. I am very pleased to be able to bring this to its conclusion. A number of reviews and analyses of the program and consultation has occurred. It is clear that members of the community feel very strongly that significant benefits have been delivered through alcohol management plans in their local community. Whilst there were some members of the community who wanted to see changes in terms of carriage limits or the type of alcohol that could be accessed in the community or takeaway alcohol in the community, it was really clear that the overwhelmingly majority of people wanted the communities to be safe.

What we have done is made an allocation of \$3.7 million over three years from this financial year to co-design and implement community specific alcohol management strategies, community safety plans, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and community awareness raising initiatives. We have also allocated \$2.4 million over four years from this year to co-design services that support communities to reduce supply, demand and alcohol related harm.

Of course, we also know that it is not just about alcohol—that is what many communities are saying—and it is not just about the grog you buy; it is the grog you can make, as you mentioned, member for Redlands. We want to continue to build on the work we have already done. Members opposite will know that we introduced a prohibition on turbo yeast. That was in response to my visit to Mornington Island at the beginning of last year. We want to build upon legislative amendments already progressed by the government to better target home brew, reduce illicit drugs and promote a healthy attitude to culture towards alcohol including through existing licensing operations.

At the end of the day the community has to be in the driver's seat. We saw in Aurukun the desire from the mayor to have a single event with alcohol. When the community came on board and got to have a say, what they said was no. Every community needs to be in the driving seat. We also know that it is not just about saying no; it is actually about supporting those members of the community who do have an addiction to drugs, home brew or other forms of substances. Having the framework is one thing, but having the services is another. That is why it is critical and important that we progress with the thriving communities reform agenda, because it is all about making sure that where communities want prioritisation around particular services and programs, we respond to that. They are in the driver's seat. If they are saying, 'What we want is a rehabilitation facility and perpetrator programs or A, B, C and D before we even look at changes to the AMP,' government needs to honour that and deliver that in partnership with communities.

Ms RICHARDS: I refer to page 4 of the DATSIP SDS. Deputy Premier, would you be able to explain the Youth Employment Program and how it is supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander year 12 graduates?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question. The Youth Employment Program has been put in place to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to help them navigate through this important transition. Our collaborative initiative is delivered by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and the Department of Education. The program has been running since 2015. YEP works directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers with a particular focus on young people graduating from year 12.

The program assists participants to identify and take advantage of job opportunities, maintain their employment, and undertake further education and training to improve their career prospects. YEP offers a range of support activities that include pre-employment support, training referrals, soft skills training such as communication skills or interview techniques, links to job vacancies, assistance in applying for jobs and post-placement support. Sometimes it is important to realise that in some communities the intergenerational unemployment really does leave a gap that government and services need to enter to help support young people with regard to job placement. It is not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is a tremendous number of successful First Nations people. In places where there is endemic poverty and intergenerational unemployment, the government has a very big responsibility to step in and fill that gap, which is what Skilling Queenslanders for Work was all about. The outcry in 2012 when that program was abolished and then the recommitment in 2017 to abolish the program again by the Liberal National Party was frightening.

Ms RICHARDS: It beggars belief.

Ms TRAD: It beggars belief—that is right—particularly when you consider that Deloitte found that for every dollar invested through Skilling Queenslanders for Work, there was a \$7 return to the economy through increased productivity, wages and consumption. All of these things are really critical and important.

CHAIR: The time allotted for government members has expired. I now call upon the non-government members. I notice the member for Moggill.

Dr ROWAN: Thank you, Deputy Premier and your staff for your attendance today. My first question is to the director-general of DATSIP. I refer to page 13 of the SDS and the term ‘employee expenses’. How much were the termination payments made to former director-general Tammy Williams and also to former deputy director-general Helena Wright?

Dr Sarra: I thank the member for your question. If you will give me a moment I will come to that. In response to the question, I can refer you to the department’s 2018-19 annual report. That figure will be released in September 2019.

Dr ROWAN: My next question is again to the director-general of DATSIP. I refer to page 13 of the SDS and the term ‘employee expenses’. Director-general, on what basis was Tammy Williams’ employment in the department terminated?

Dr Sarra: Again, I thank the member for your question. I note that in such leadership changes it is not unusual for additional changes to be made at that level. I had appointed some new people on my arrival. I felt that was necessary. Again, I make the point that it is not unusual. Both appointments that I made subsequent to my arrival are temporary. I note there is currently an open recruitment process underway as we speak. That process has been managed by an external recruitment agency and I expect that there will be a number of highly qualified applicants for the position. I do not feel that it is appropriate for me to comment further.

Dr ROWAN: Do you have a rough time line of when that process will be concluded?

Dr Sarra: That process is live as we speak. I expect that would be wrapped up within six weeks.

Dr ROWAN: My next question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. On 25 May 2018 in a joint press release statement you described Tammy Williams as a ‘woman of great vision and intellect’ and said, ‘I look forward to continuing to work with her going forward.’ Why was a suitable role not found for Tammy Williams, a woman you described as having great vision and intellect?

Ms BOYD: Point of order. Mr Chair, I seek your guidance in terms of how this relates to the budget process before us?

CHAIR: It is a reasonable question. Is there a way it could be rephrased? I think we could probably accept the question broadly and know that there might be some width in answering it.

Ms TRAD: I am happy to answer it. It is highly inappropriate for ministers to place public servants in Public Service roles. It is the responsibility of an independent selection process. I stand by my comments. I think Ms Williams is a very intelligent, highly capable individual. A selection process was removed from me to determine the director-general of DATSIP. That process took place. The DG’s right as a new CEO is the same as every CEO—that is, to make decisions about the best leadership team that they want going forward. I hope that this is a question asked of other DGs and not in isolation of the director-general of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

Dr ROWAN: I refer to page 10 of the SDS and the reference to the Family Responsibilities Commission. I listened carefully to the minister’s earlier response. My question is to the director-general. The decision to implement the so-called thriving communities reform agenda reportedly took Noel Pearson and other FRC commissioners by surprise. Why were these key people—

CHAIR: Member for Moggill, this seems to be more of a speech. It is quite an extensive preamble.

Dr ROWAN: I am just giving context.

CHAIR: Under the standing orders we do not give context in terms of extensive preambles. Under standing order 115(b) the member may ask a question, not make a speech. The member is really skating close to the edge. Given the context, do not repeat all of that. Let us get to the question, please.

Dr ROWAN: Why were these key people and, seemingly, the whole Family Responsibilities Commission not told about this change by the department before the Deputy Premier’s announcement?

Dr Sarra: Clearly, the thriving communities agenda is prominent as part of the government's agenda. In my role, I have an interest in all of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in all parts of Queensland. I note that the FRC exists in just five communities. We have a responsibility, in responding to the QPC report, to attend to the need for a structural shift and to reframe the relationship. Those are matters that I take quite seriously.

We have been in dialogue with local commissioners. I have visited all of the FRC communities and spoken directly with FRC commissioners—all except Coen, I should add. I was scheduled to visit there but because of sorry business in that community that visit was postponed. Local commissioners have been reappointed to 31 October, but I assure the member that we have been in dialogue with them. There is no decision at this stage to close the FRC. I close by saying that in my role I have to attend to the interests of all communities well beyond just the five FRC communities.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, do you want to add to that information?

Ms TRAD: I do.

Mr STEVENS: Point of order. The director-general has answered the member's question. The member was not seeking further advice from the Deputy Premier.

CHAIR: I understand. I put this question to the Clerk this morning. It is a question that I have put to the Clerk in previous years estimates. Any member can ask if the minister has something to add to that information, and I as the chair—

Mr STEVENS: In government time but not in non-government time.

CHAIR: I understand that. This is now a government time when I am asking a question. It is certainly government time.

Mr STEVENS: We are in non-government time.

CHAIR: I know that. The question I put to the Clerk this morning is exactly this circumstance, if I or any member felt that clarification was required. I asked the Deputy Premier if she had anything to add to the answer.

Ms TRAD: I will. I would like to table these two letters from former Indigenous affairs minister Nigel Scullion, who in 2015 wrote to the Queensland government to say that he wanted changes in the Cape York Welfare Reform program. He says—

While the initiative is a very important one and has shown signs of achieving many positive improvements especially in relation to community responsibility and school attendance, it does have limitations. It is an expensive model and one which has not to date shown any real inroads into improving employment outcomes. There are also questions about the extent to which it will be affected by our next steps in response to the Empowered Communities report.

I table these letters because it is important—

CHAIR: These documents are sought to be tabled. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Ms TRAD: It is important that there is a level of honesty in this discussion. In 2015 the federal government started this review process. Their legislation that underpins the welfare reform process expires in less than a year. Clearly, a decision was made four years ago, in 2015, to work in partnership to address some of the limitations, as Mr Scullion said at that time, and to find a better cost option. Any suggestion that this has been a surprise to anyone is simply not true.

Dr ROWAN: Director-General, did you brief former New South Wales magistrate Pat O'Shane on overhauling the Family Responsibilities Commission prior to her intended appointment?

Dr Sarra: No, I did not brief magistrate Pat O'Shane on overhauling the FRC.

Dr ROWAN: I refer to page 10 of the SDS and the reference to the Family Responsibilities Commission. Deputy Premier, in reference to your reverse decision not to appoint Pat O'Shane to the Family Responsibilities Commission, were you aware of Ms O'Shane's stance against income management, a critical function of the FRC, before her public radio interview that revealed her views?

Ms TRAD: As a point of clarification, when the member refers to 'my decision', that is actually incorrect. There was no decision; it is cabinet's decision. I have made it clear: there was no appointment and the process is still afoot.

CHAIR: This has been said many times before, but the question could reflect that.

Dr ROWAN: Did Ms O'Shane's sign-off by cabinet not proceed because of your incompetence?

CHAIR: Sorry? I just gave you the opportunity; I did not quite capture that.

Dr ROWAN: I can repeat it again for the benefit of the committee.

CHAIR: No, I want you to be aware of the standing orders when you frame your question. On my first hearing of it, the question seems in breach of that. I ask you to put the question in a way that does not breach standing order 115 and does not have any offensive words.

Dr ROWAN: Did Ms O'Shane's sign-off not proceed—it is in the public domain—because of a flawed process?

Ms TRAD: The process is still underway, which I have said repeatedly.

Dr ROWAN: Ms O'Shane's appointment did not proceed. Was that because of a flawed recruitment process?

Ms TRAD: I seek your guidance. I feel like I have—

Ms RICHARDS: I raise a point of order. This is repetitious—tedious and repetitious.

CHAIR: I am trying to be sympathetic with this, but it does seem like this is the fourth time this question has been put about this process. The question has been put and both Dr Sarra and the Deputy Premier have answered this. It is not the answer you are seeking, but—

Ms TRAD: Maybe a question about Closing the Gap?

CHAIR: Deputy Premier!

Dr ROWAN: We will move on, Mr Chair. Director-General, again with reference to the SDS at page 10 and the FRC, what parts did you ask of the Family Responsibilities Commission and Noel Pearson to edit in the FRC's most recent annual report and why?

Dr Sarra: I thank the member for the question. I just felt that the wording was inappropriate in the sense that it sought to articulate the government's agenda in a way that had not been finalised. We are in a process of implementing the Thriving Communities agenda which takes into account the FRC program which again operates in just five communities. As I stated earlier, Dr Rowan, we are obliged to consider the best interests of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I will note that one of the special features of the FRC is the investment in local leadership. It has been great to sit in communities and have discussions with local Indigenous leadership who obviously feel empowered. As we seek to rollout our local Thriving Communities agenda, I look forward to the opportunity to look for such leadership in other communities and for us to invest in them in similar ways as to how we have done in the five FRC communities.

Dr ROWAN: Thank you, Dr Sarra. I will come to Closing the Gap given Queensland is at the bottom of the league table. I refer to page 2 and page 6 of the SDS and I ask the director-general: why did the recent Queensland Closing the Gap report card indicate that two targets were on track while the most recent national report, which is used by every other state jurisdiction, shows Queensland not on track for a single target?

Dr Sarra: I thank the member for the question. If you will just give me a moment, I will—

Ms TRAD: While the director-general is finding the appropriate response, in relation to the inference by the member for Moggill, many other jurisdictions had problems with the way the federal government reported on Closing the Gap, so the inference that every other jurisdiction was pleased with the process is not correct. In fact, this is why there is a joint standing committee with respected elders and service providers who are working through what has been, I think, a very poor process from the federal government. As I said before, we have made marked improvements in two key areas—early education and year 12 completion—and they are based on data from the education department that has been verified and substantiated by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office.

Dr Sarra: Indeed, the Prime Minister's report indicated that other states and territories are on track to meet between one and three of their Closing the Gap targets while in Queensland the Commonwealth alleges that none of the targets were on track. Our calculations indicate that in fact two of the seven targets are on track in Queensland in line with the national average.

The information in the Queensland report has been prepared by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office. Data for the year 12 attainment target is sourced from the ABS census most recently taken in 2006, 2011 and 2016. The census reveals that the number of Indigenous Queenslanders who have completed year 12 has accelerated in the last five years from 2011 to 2016. The gap in educational attainment has narrowed from 26.2 per cent in 2006 to 23.2 per cent in 2011 to 18.2 per cent in 2016. If the improvement in completions observed since 2011 continues as we expect it to, then by 2020-21 Queensland will have more than halved the gap in year 12 attainment relative to what it was in 2006. The Commonwealth does not account for this recent uptick in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander completion since 2011, instead opting to simply draw a straight line from the 2006 data point.

In relation to the early childhood target, the variability of the data points for early childhood education means that drawing a straight line and projecting it forward as the Commonwealth does is too simplistic an approach to determine whether the gap will be closed. In addition, data for the early childhood education target is not from the census, which covers the whole population, but from surveys, which only cover a sample of the population. Once these confidence intervals are accounted for, Queensland is also on track to meet the target for early childhood education by 2025.

I note that Queensland, as the Deputy Premier stated earlier, is not the only jurisdiction whose Closing the Gap data differs from that in the Prime Minister's report. Again, as stated, Victoria's Aboriginal affairs report of 2018 released in October 2018 showed it is also on track to reach the year 12 attainment target by 2020, but this was also shown as not on track in the Prime Minister's report. Regardless, we remain committed to closing the gap and there continues to be much more work to be done.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, I refer to page 128 of Budget Paper No. 2. Can the Deputy Premier explain the impact expiring national partnerships, especially ones such as the National Partnership on Remote Housing, has on the Queensland state budget?

Ms TRAD: I thank you, Mr Chair, for the question and I think it is very important that it has followed on from the last question. There is not only the Commonwealth's abandonment of the 50-year tradition of co-funding housing in remote Indigenous communities, but I do not know how we are supposed to close the gap if people do not have a roof over their head. However, that is not the only national partnership agreement that the federal government has either not indicated a renewal for or has walked away from.

As the director-general said, the improvements we have seen since 2011 particularly are based on the fact that it has been successive Labor governments in this state that have taken on historic education reform, whether that is universal access to kindergarten, including in Indigenous communities, whether it is making sure that there is a teacher aide in every single prep school classroom in every single school in our state, giving teachers and kids the additional support they need, or the additional investment we are making in schools in line with the Gonski 2.0 legislation. We are making the investments not only in schools but in people, in teachers, in culture, in connection, and that is seeing an improvement in terms of the outcomes, particularly in relation to Indigenous students.

It is very important that we get stability and we get confidence in those national partnership agreements. The fact that the federal government has now rolled over for the sixth year in a row—sixth year in a row—the early childhood education program is shameful. It is shameful. This is one of the areas where with the right investment, with the right level of long-term planning, with the right level of confidence from the sector we can make some significant gains in terms of closing the gap but, instead, the Liberal National Party at a federal level essentially just keeps rolling over the same agreement and does not look for improvements. We are covering the shortfalls in funding and we are bearing the responsibility of the increased regulatory burden in this state. Let me say this: it is not going to be this Labor government or any other Labor government that walks away from the challenge and the obligation that we have to educate future Queenslanders, particularly first nations Queenslanders.

CHAIR: This might unfortunately be the final question of this session, but I refer to page 7 of the DATSIP SDS. Can the Deputy Premier explain what the government is doing to build cultural capability across government under the Queensland government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework?

Ms TRAD: Mr Chair, I thank you for the question. Fundamentally, the key mechanism for delivering cultural capability is in our Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2021. It is a terrific initiative. It is an extension of one that already exists. This is about all agencies working together in a framework of reconciliation and moving ahead. It has been widely congratulated and supported.

In terms of our cultural capability framework, each Queensland government department is required to have a cultural capability action plan in place. These plans are mandatory under the agency planning requirements—specific purpose planning requirements—by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Cultural capability action plans target five key areas for improvement: recognising, respecting and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; leadership and accountability; building cultural capability to improve economic participation; improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and strong partnerships; and culturally responsive systems and services. The most recent report on cultural capability action plans from July to December showed that more than 460 actions were delivered in relation to the five key areas, an increase of more than 40 actions over the previous six months.

DATSIP is focused on two types of cultural capability training: face to face and online. As a key opportunity under the Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy, Indigenous businesses have been engaged to deliver face-to-face training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainers benefit economically from this strategy. DATSIP has also developed an online foundational training program, which will be released shortly, for all Queensland government staff to access. This is a very important initiative and it is part of what we can do to recognise culture, to respect it and to create a common and normalised system within government services.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Deputy Premier has expired. I do not believe that there were any questions taken on notice. There was some discussion of the issues that were part of the DPC's area, so I will not take that as a question on notice. Is there anything else that needs clarification?

Ms TRAD: Clarification, yes, Mr Chair. I am sorry, I think I said in relation to the investment in Indigenous youth mental health funding \$6.7 million. It is actually \$6.9 million. I just clarify that for the benefit of the committee. It is on page 26 of BP4.

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, there was one other matter.

CHAIR: Mr Mander—

Mr MANDER: Just a clarification with regard to following up the note that the Deputy Premier made when she was talking to the CCC chair. She said that she was going to check with the CCC about the appropriateness of tabling that file note.

CHAIR: I did not take that as a question on notice, given the probity of those issues—

Mr MANDER: No, a follow-up.

CHAIR: It was mentioned and I note that the Deputy Premier has undertaken to seek advice. Thank you, Deputy Premier, officials and departmental officers for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a break and the hearing will resume.

Ms TRAD: Mr Chair, can I, firstly, thank you and all committee members, both permanent and visiting members, for their participation. It is a very important accountability process and I am very pleased to be here today. I thank all of the committee staff who worked tirelessly on pulling together the estimates process as well as Hansard and parliamentary staff, who will be working very hard over the next couple of weeks.

I want to also thank my Under Treasurer, Frankie Carroll, and all the people in Treasury who helped on the preparations for today. They have been working intensively since late January this year. This marks the culmination of a very busy and intense budget preparation and estimates process.

To my DG of DATSIP and his departmental officers—Chris, I think this was your first estimates hearing; I hope you will be back next year—to all of the CEOs, GOCs and statutory bodies here today and their teams, I note most of them got off pretty lightly. To my chief of staff, Mark Bellaver, Emily Brogan, who was managing this whole process, and my entire ministerial office, I thank them for their hard work. There were many moments on the weekend when I came in and they were working around the clock. It is a mammoth effort to pull together not only a budget but also dive straight into the work for estimates and I appreciate and value each and every single one of you for the work that you do. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. I know that the officials of both Treasury and DATSIP are invigorated and excited by their involvement in the democratic process and will be returning to work with new vigour in their steps. We will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 6.45 pm. Many officials who have nothing to do this evening could stay for that period of examination of the estimates portfolio of the areas of Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Proceedings suspended from 6.04 pm to 6.44 pm.

ESTIMATES—ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE—LOCAL GOVERNMENT, RACING AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

In Attendance

Hon. SJ Hinchliffe, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Ms K Adams, Chief of Staff

Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs

Mr W Agnew, Director-General

Ms N Wilde, Deputy Director-General (Local Government Division)

Ms R Atkinson, Deputy Director-General (Strategy, Governance and Engagement)

Office of the Independent Assessor


Ms K Florian, Independent Assessor

Racing Queensland

Mr B Parnell, Chief Executive Officer

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission

Mr R Barnett, AMP, Racing Integrity Commissioner

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2019 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio areas until 9 pm. Visiting members present are Ann Leahy, the member for Warrego, and Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa. My understanding is that John-Paul Langbroek, the member for Surfers Paradise, will drop in on this session at some point.

I remind those present that the hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and 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 apply to this hearing. In this regard I refer to standing orders 112 and 115. Questions should be brief and relate to only one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, arguments, opinion or inference. I intend to guide today's proceedings so that the relevant issues can be fully explored and ensure that there is an adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members.

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

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of local government, racing and multicultural affairs open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair, and thank you committee members and guests for this opportunity. Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs is a diverse and, as I like to say, stakeholder-rich portfolio that covers the breadth of Queensland communities. The challenges faced by the local government sector have been well documented in the media over the past 12 months. Despite that, I maintain that the vast majority of those in the sector work tirelessly each day to deliver quality local services and governance to communities right across this state.

The Palaszczuk government is dedicated to the highest levels of integrity and transparency in local government and restoring community confidence in local government, which is why we are committed to our rolling reform agenda. The second tranche of the Belcarra reforms is currently before the House and we have publicly committed to delivering a third tranche of reforms prior to the upcoming local government elections in March 2020. Part of this reform agenda leading into the March 2020

elections will be compulsory training for all sitting councillors and candidates about what is expected from candidates and councillors—from campaigning to elections and beyond to the day-to-day responsibilities of a councillor.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Palaszczuk government's \$600 million signature local government grants program, Works for Queensland, which will support, sustain or create more than 21,000 jobs in regional Queensland over its life. The third round of \$200 million in funding for 2019-2021 has approved more than 501 projects to 65 local governments, supporting more than 4,600 jobs. Similarly, the \$120 million Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program is supporting councils across Queensland to deliver priority infrastructure projects that contribute to sustainable and livable communities and support local jobs for Queenslanders. The \$120 million Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program is supporting 235 projects across 16 Indigenous councils focusing on water, wastewater and solid waste projects.

In the 2019-20 year, the Queensland government will provide a total of \$1.468 billion in grants to local governments. Let me repeat that number: \$1.468 billion—more than double the baseline funding of \$600 million that the Local Government Association of Queensland advocates for. This is an acknowledgement of the vital support that the Palaszczuk government provides to local government to not only enable service delivery but also provide essential maintenance and upgrades to water and sewerage infrastructure. It is also why the Palaszczuk government has been working to deliver a new grants to local government model. We have worked with councils and stakeholders to develop a more streamlined and outcome focused grants model for local governments to support state priorities and objectives and to respond to local government strategies and needs. The government is currently finalising the implementation of this model with stakeholders.

To deliver on an election commitment, tonight I am also pleased to be able to table the next three-year Multicultural Action Plan to implement the Multicultural Policy. The Queensland *Multicultural Action Plan 2019-20 to 2021-22* showcases new or extended initiatives to progress the achievement of outcomes under the policy. I seek leave to table the plan.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: We have copies here as well. In the multicultural affairs space, we have also been partnering with Welcoming Cities to support interested local governments to strengthen welcome and inclusion in their communities, supporting vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers through expanded community coordination of financial and material assistance, and mental health and wellbeing support.

While speaking of election commitments, I should also mention the Palaszczuk government's commitment to country racing. In 2017 the Palaszczuk government committed \$70.4 million over four years to support country racing prize money, clubs, jockey riding fees, club meeting payments, superannuation and WorkCover expenses.

The government's support recognises the importance of country racing to rural and regional Queensland and that country race meetings bring communities together and provide local and regional entry points into the racing industry.

I was also pleased to announce last year the injection of an initial \$18 million per year in prize money for the thoroughbred racing industry, with a further \$8 million that was subject to a broad agreement on industry reforms. With Racing Queensland also contributing extra prize money to the harness and greyhound industries, all three codes have seen the benefit of this investment.

Thank you, chair and committee members, for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak to my portfolio appropriation and I look forward to the questions that you and your guests have.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. I will start with opposition questions. Deputy Chair, are there any questions?

Mr STEVENS: I will defer to the shadow local government spokesperson, the member for Warrego.

CHAIR: I call the member for Warrego.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Mr Chair, and good evening, Minister and departmental staff. My first question relates to SDS page 9 and is to Kathleen Florian from the Office of the Independent Assessor.

Ms LEAHY: Given the current complaint workload, can the Office of the Independent Assessor assure the committee that complaints against mayors and councillors will be completed well prior to the 2020 election for those wishing to contest the election or will there be undecided complaints held over until after the 2020 local government elections?

Ms Florian: Thank you, member for Warrego, for your question. The staffing and the resources of the Office of the Independent Assessor were based on an estimated work volume of 160 complaints a year. As at 30 June, the OIA received 824 complaints in just over six months and had 152 investigations. Seventy-three of these matters are being actively investigated and a further 79 are on hold pending allocation to an available investigator. The OIA has a staffing resource of 10 FTE including the positions of Independent Assessor and Deputy Assessor. It includes four investigators, two lawyers and two administrative staff. Further to this, the OIA has some flexibility within its budget to continue to employ two temporary investigation and one administrative staff member brought on board to address complaint volumes. The Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs, as part of an ongoing commitment to manage resources across the portfolio, has also agreed to redeploy some temporary staffing resources already employed by the department to assist with complaint volumes.

In relation to the anticipated resourcing impact of certain proposed reforms in stage 2 of the Belcarra and other legislation amendment bill the government is considering staggering the introduction of these reforms. If this were to occur, this would delay resource impacts on the OIA. The OIA is confident of being able to continue to meet timely assessment time frames and we are currently assessing at a rate of 80 per cent of matters assessed within 21 working days, but we will be actively monitoring and, if necessary, proactively managing expectations around investigation time frames and time frames for progressing matters through to the Councillor Conduct Tribunal. In the interim, the department and the OIA will continue to work closely to monitor ongoing complaint investigation and prosecution volumes.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you. I again refer to page 9 of the SDS regarding the Office of the Independent Assessor complaint investigations.

CHAIR: You are addressing your question again to the Independent Assessor?

Ms LEAHY: Yes, to the Office of the Independent Assessor. Can the office advise of the declaration process applying to a mayor or a councillor who owns property whilst they are engaged in council decision-making that would directly benefit the value of that property? What is the appropriate declaration process that they should follow?

Ms Florian: Thank you, member for Warrego, for your question. I think you are referring to the rules of conflict of interest as they apply to councillors in Queensland. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act, all councillors are required at the moment to declare a personal interest or a conflict of interest that may exist or a material personal interest and that is required to be declared transparently before any decision-making occurs in relation to that matter.

Ms LEAHY: Is there a time frame in which they need to make those declarations?

Ms Florian: If you are referring to a declaration for a conflict of interest then it should be made, or it must be made before the decision-making occurs. If you are talking about registers of interest, then there is a requirement that registers of interest are updated on a regular basis and accurately reflect the interests of the councillor.

Ms LEAHY: I have a further question to the Office of the Independent Assessor. What penalties or sanctions are prescribed in legislation for a mayor or councillor who fails to declare their interest in such a property?

Ms BOYD: Couldn't you just look at the legislation?

CHAIR: Hold on, member for Pine Rivers. The question has been put and we will have the answer in the normal fashion. I know we have been here a long time.

Ms Florian: The penalties that apply I guess depend on whether a matter is dealt with as a statutory offence or as a misconduct matter. If it is a serious matter then it will be dealt with as a statutory offence or if it is a matter in relation to which there are relevant misconduct findings that have been unsuccessful in modifying behaviour then it will be dealt with as a statutory offence. On conviction I believe that it is one year or two years imprisonment, I am not sure. I can get back to you on notice to confirm that. If it is dealt with as misconduct then the penalties that may apply can be anything from a requirement that misconduct is admitted through to suspension of the councillor in the position.

Ms LEAHY: That question is taken on notice?

CHAIR: The process is that the minister has to take the question on notice. It might be something that we can follow up through this session and actually report back at the end of the session.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I am sure that is something we can clarify before the end of the session.

CHAIR: It is a fairly easily found technical fact that I am sure you know the answer to. I am sure it will be provided at the end of the session.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you very much, Ms Florian, for your answers. Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS in relation to Works for Queensland, 22 councils have a lower unemployment level than those councils currently excluded from Works for Queensland. Has the government considered expanding the Works for Queensland program to the councils of Scenic Rim, Toowoomba, Lockyer, Somerset and Noosa, given their higher unemployment rate than the other 22 councils?

CHAIR: It is a good program.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will start by taking that as a very interesting statement around a commitment to support the Works for Queensland program. It is something that I asked the member for Warrego about, this time last year. I still have not heard anything about whether the LNP supports Works for Queensland. One of the questions I get asked wherever I go in regional Queensland is, 'When is the LNP going to wake up to how important Works for Queensland is for regional councils right across the state?' I appreciate that clearly now, although not committing to it, the shadow minister is demonstrating some sort of appreciation for how important Works for Queensland is for the 65 councils that are eligible for the program. Through the work that they are doing in their communities, 21,000 jobs have now been created through the three Works for Queensland rounds and it is making a difference to those communities.

The member asked about the councils that are not in the South-East Queensland area that was defined when the program was established by the Palaszczuk government. I can say that a couple of members in this room have raised this matter with me proactively. The member for Redlands raised it very proactively in relation to the southern bay islands in the Redlands local government area. Indeed, Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa, raised it in relation to the Noosa Shire Council. These are matters that the government has considered and looked at. I will continue to work on the policy scope of how we improve and enhance Works for Queensland for the future.

The reality is that the current round, the 2019-2021 round, was recently announced and committed to with—off the top of my head—101 projects that I made mention of earlier being delivered with those 65 regional councils across the state. The breakup of the \$200 million was committed to ahead of the last election. Before anything else, as you know, as you can recall and as you can attest to, member for Warrego, the Palaszczuk government delivers on its election commitments. This is an election commitment that was made with detailed information to the 65 councils that are eligible under the program. Because we recognise how important this program is to addressing the difficulties and challenges of those communities that are facing higher levels of unemployment, it is something that we will continue to work on and look at to see how we can improve and see the benefits of this program delivered to more parts of the state.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, in answer to question on notice No. 12 and the 2017-2019 Works for Queensland projects, some councils have not reported jobs created or supported as at 30 June 2019; however, this is a requirement of accepting funding under the program. Are the taxpayers receiving value for money for these projects when there are no reported jobs?

Mr Agnew: In terms of the way that the funding for Works for Queensland operates, each of the councils provided with a funding allocation then provides through to the department a list of proposed eligible projects with nominated jobs that will be generated from each of those projects. On approval of those projects, funding is provided for those projects and the first 50 per cent payment is made. As we go through the process of the additional two funding allocations to each council for their projects, they need to demonstrate to the department that they have spent the funds against each of those projects as they go forward.

Ms LEAHY: If they have no reported jobs, can they still receive that funding? There is a total of about \$1.7 million where there are no reported jobs for various councils across the state.

Mr Agnew: I am happy to look at that list, but as part of its requirements each council is to nominate how many jobs will be supported under Works for Queensland.

Ms LEAHY: About seven councils have not reported any jobs, Director-General. If you could look at that, it would be greatly appreciated.

Mr Agnew: We will attempt to look at that during the session and provide you with further information.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, with reference to page 4 of the SDS and the service area relating to the Crime and Corruption Commission report *Operation Belcarra*, can the department advise this committee of any additional costs identified in progressing those reforms that are well beyond the corruption commission recommendations and even those from the Soorley review? Have any additional costs been identified?

Mr Agnew: In terms of progressing the reforms that have been put to us in turn to provide advice through to the government in terms of any reforms, we have been completing that work within the resources of the agency.

Ms LEAHY: Are there any additional costs identified at all?

Mr Agnew: In terms of processing those reforms, by and large they have been done within the resourcing of the agency.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, in relation to page 3, dot point 7, about building financial sustainability and with reference to councils that wish to borrow funds for infrastructure, in the last financial year how many councils had their financial borrowings refused by the department of local government? What were the reasons for those refusals?

Mr Agnew: While we are finding that information in terms of the number, the process that we engage in with agencies is that, each budget round, an agency's budget allocation for the year is on the basis of each council's individual budget policy from within their council. That is what we flag as part of our budget process going forward. Then if each council wishes to apply for a borrowing throughout that financial year they follow a form. That assessment is then undertaken on the basis of credit reviews by the QTC. The department then assesses that information from the QTC in making its ultimate determination on whether or not those borrowings go forward. In the last financial year, borrowings requested by Barcaldine, Barcoo, Longreach and North Burnett were not recommended for approval. That was on the basis of advice from the QTC.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, how many of those councils that you just mentioned, which have been refused borrowings by the department of local government, had significant reserves of cash on hand? Is it the case that the department is placing pressure on those councils to utilise their cash reserves before borrowings will be approved?

Mr Agnew: I may need to get back to you in terms of the cash positions of each of those councils. As a department, we do not have a general policy with councils that they need to use up their cash reserves. I am certainly aware, in the conversations and the services provided by QTC in engagement with councils, there is consideration of their cash reserves going forward in terms of their ability to support projects that are a priority for the councils. However, we do not have a policy to advise councils to use cash, by and large.

CHAIR: Member for Noosa, is there a question you would like to ask?

Ms BOLTON: Yes, thank you. My question is to the minister. I refer to page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements of the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs in relation to extending the Works for Queensland program. Further to the member for Warrego's questions, minister will you commit to looking at the methodology and criteria for determining eligibility? The Noosa council gets a double whammy. It is not eligible for Building our Regions either whereas the Somerset, Lockyer and Scenic Rim regional councils are. It would help these four councils to understand why they are being excluded from the Works for Queensland program.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Obviously when Works for Queensland was established by the Palaszczuk government as the signature program for delivering, supporting and working with regional councils across the state the commitment was made around those 65 councils that were eligible. It excluded the areas in the South East Queensland Regional Plan area, which, as you appreciate, includes Noosa and the other councils that you have made mention of.

That is the program that has existed and has delivered handsomely and fantastically for those communities. It is important that we celebrate that program. We need to acknowledge that it is a program, even in its current form, that would be on the chopping block if, heaven forbid, we saw an LNP government back here in Queensland. With the cut, sack and sell agenda this would be high on the cut agenda on the basis of their stated policies at the moment.

Let me come to your question. Your question relates to making commitments about the future of Works for Queensland. The commitment I can make to you is the one that I stated in response to the shadow minister's question. I commit to making sure that we make sure that that program works best for Queensland into the future and it works best for local government into the future.

Works for Queensland is a great example of the way in which the Palaszczuk government has worked closely with the local government sector—local governments right across Queensland and the Local Government Association of Queensland. It is a favourite program of those local governments that have access to it. Clearly, it is a program that other local governments would love to have access to as well.

What I commit to is making sure that we continue to ensure that this signature program that delivers so handsomely and fantastically for regional Queensland is considered, reconsidered and improved in as many ways as we can to ensure that it continues to support high-quality, sustainable and effective local government that delivers the needs of communities right across the state. Let me assure you that I make that commitment that we will continue to look at how we can improve it.

CHAIR: The Works for Queensland program certainly is popular. I have a further question about it. As you said, it is something worth celebrating. Minister, will you update the committee on how many jobs have been supported by the \$600 million Works for Queensland program and how many projects will be delivered across regional Queensland? The program certainly seems popular tonight.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As we have already established from all quarters, Works for Queensland is highly popular and has, I have to say, universal support amongst councils in rural and regional Queensland. I thank you for permitting me to do some further extolling of the virtues of the Palaszczuk government's signature program for local government grants and the \$600 million impact that it has had on regional Queensland.

It is a program that will support, sustain or create more than 21,000 jobs in regional Queensland. Works for Queensland supports local governments outside South-East Queensland, as I have acknowledged, undertake job-creating maintenance and minor infrastructure projects. Works for Queensland provides funding for a variety of maintenance and minor infrastructure works that are about creating local jobs, boosting local economies and increasing liveability in towns and cities right across regional Queensland.

Some examples of the projects that it has supported include the \$2.5 million Maryborough CBD works for the Fraser Coast Regional Council through to the \$3.4 million Heatley Park upgrade for the Townsville City Council or the \$1.2 million for the airport roadway realignment for the Townsville City Council or—and I understand this very popular—the \$125,000 Kingaroy Town Hall precinct refurbishment for the South Burnett Regional Council. It is little wonder that councils are enthusiastically supporting Works for Queensland throughout the areas where it is available. It is a great example of these two levels of government working together to deliver outcomes for local communities.

In the 2016-17 funding round 8,800 jobs were supported, sustained or created. In the second round—the 2017-19 round—a further 7,600 jobs were supported, sustained or created, bringing the total thus far to more than 16,400. I am happy to forecast that the numbers of jobs to be supported, sustained or created in the third round of the \$200 million program will be more than 4,600 jobs. These will be through the 501 approved projects in the 65 eligible local governments.

As I said earlier, everywhere I go mayors and councillors are asking me, 'Where is the LNP opposition on Works for Queensland? What is their position? What are they saying?' Unfortunately, I am in no position to give them any assurances. If the LNP ever came back to the government benches under their cut, sack and sell agenda cutting the Works for Queensland program would be right up there.

A year on from the last time I did it, I want to take the opportunity to encourage the LNP to put the flag in the ground on this matter, say where they stand and say whether they support Works for Queensland and the great opportunities and dividends it delivers for regional Queensland or whether they are against it. With the silence it is clear that they are against it. I am very pleased that this signature program for the Palaszczuk government has been such a success for local governments and for communities right across regional Queensland.

CHAIR: With reference to page 4 of the SDS of the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs and the service area relating to the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program for 2019-21, will the minister provide details on how this program is supporting councils' delivery of essential infrastructure and their services?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I was pleased to announce on 22 May the list of successful projects for the 2019-21 round of the Local Governments Grants and Subsidies Program. This round has provided more than \$58.5 million for 81 projects in 59 councils right across the state. There are a broad range of projects that have been funded, but they all have one common theme. That is that they support jobs and infrastructure, and they particularly do so in regional Queensland.

The Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program, LGGSP, allows councils to build or upgrade priority infrastructure and deliver essential services that are needed across their communities. The program is designed to support eligible projects that contribute to a connected and liveable community, contribute to economic growth and employment and encourage collaboration and resource sharing between local governments.

On 22 May when the successful projects were announced I was in Gladstone alongside the member for Gladstone. We announced the Gladstone Regional Council was successful in obtaining a grant of \$1.044 million for the planned CBD revitalisation project. This project will not only make the CBD a more liveable area for residents, but improve the visual appeal of the area for tourists. There will be a growing tourist market there with the projected growth in cruise ship stopovers in the harbour.

Some other examples of the projects that were successful include water and bore projects in Quilpie, Longreach and Winton, amongst others. Paroo shire received \$5 million for its new civic centre. Flinders shire received \$2.86 million for its new weir in Hughenden. The list of projects is long and the benefits to these local communities are immense.

These are projects that will support and create jobs while providing residents and visitors with improved infrastructure and facilities. Some of them will also drive more tourists to the regions, as I was alluding to earlier with Gladstone, and others support the ongoing operation of those regional towns. One thing is really clear: the Palaszczuk government will continue to support local councils on the ground right throughout Queensland—those in the bush, those in our regional centres and those in our cities as well.

Ms BOYD: Will the minister provide a time line on the rollout of mandatory training for incumbent and aspiring candidates for mayoralties and councillorships across Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I am really happy that my department is implementing the Labor government's agenda of comprehensive councillor and candidate training as part of the broader local government capacity-building program. I am sure that everyone on the committee would agree that it is important for potential candidates and for sitting councillors to understand their responsibilities.

A program of online and face-to-face training includes information on the local government code of conduct for councillors, councillor roles and responsibilities, local laws, social media for councillors, effective meeting procedures, councillor integrity, legislative amendments, annual financial reporting, financial sustainability and candidate training. More than 1,500 candidate training sessions were delivered in 2018-19. In the last financial year candidate training sessions were delivered before a by-election at the Hinchinbrook Shire Council in September 2018 and the appointment of a new councillor at the Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council in March 2019.

I am pleased to advise the committee that ongoing reforms, including those that are before the House that I have alluded to before, address issues raised by councillors about the complexity and effectiveness of the current conflict-of-interest system and address the existing gap in relation to conflicts of interest that arise outside of council meetings. These reforms will also apply the Local Government Act 2019 councillor complaints framework to the Brisbane City Council and will introduce new requirements relating to councillors' registers of interest to align with the requirements applying to state members of parliament in terms of statements of interests. We are bringing them into line with the state standards.

Other work being undertaken by the department includes, as the member indicated in her question, further training. This training will include mandatory—I repeat: mandatory—'So you want to be a councillor?' training sessions for all candidates including sitting councillors participating in the 2020 election. The large number of complaints received by the Office of the Independent Assessor, which we have heard about already this evening, highlights the importance of training not only for candidates but also for sitting councillors. The training will be mandatory for all candidates and sitting councillors as part of the process for registering for the 2020 local government elections and will be available online later in 2019.

Ms RICHARDS: Yes, indeed, councillor training should help alleviate some of the issues with the OIA in relation to workload. My question is in regard to the Independent Assessor. Will the minister provide an overview of the Office of the Independent Assessor and its functions over its first seven months?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Redlands. After what we have heard already from the Independent Assessor, it is important that we understand the context of it just being seven months of operation and of it being such a new entity. To put this into context, in 2016 an independent review of the councillor conduct process recommended the establishment of the Office of the Independent Assessor or, as we have all come to know it now, the OIA. The OIA was established under the Local Government (Councillor Complaints) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018 on 3 December 2018 as part of the Queensland government's commitment to local government reform. Its role is to effectively, efficiently and transparently deal with councillor conduct complaints.

When the OIA was established it was based, as we have heard from the Independent Assessor already this evening, on an estimated work volume of 160 complaints a year. This was the volume of complaints previously received by the department prior to the OIA's establishment. There were clear reasons why that was the assessment made. As at 30 June 2019, the OIA has received 824 complaints in just over six months and has had more than 152 misconduct investigations. Fifty-four matters are being considered for referral to the Councillor Conduct Tribunal, are with the tribunal or have been decided by the tribunal. This not only shows the huge amount of work that the OIA has undertaken in its first seven months but also shows the increased confidence the community has in reporting complaints to the new independent office.

The OIA receives and assesses councillor conduct complaints. Complaints that raise a reasonable suspicion of inappropriate conduct are referred by the OIA back to local government for investigation. Complaints that raise a reasonable suspicion of misconduct are investigated by the OIA. Complaints that raise a reasonable suspicion of corrupt conduct are referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission but will often be referred to the OIA for investigation.

The OIA was given new powers to compulsorily acquire information or evidence in proof of (a) misconduct or disciplinary matters which are referred to the newly established Councillor Conduct Tribunal or (b) statutory offences under the Local Government Act 2009 which may be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court. At the conclusion of an investigation by the OIA it may, if it is a statutory offence under the Local Government Act, elect to prosecute a matter in the Magistrates Court. Many of the statutory offences are also integrity offences, which on conviction automatically trigger a councillor's disqualification for four years and/or imprisonment. Alternatively, the OIA may elect to deal with a matter as a misconduct and prosecute the matter before the Councillor Conduct Tribunal. If a misconduct is substantiated, sanctions that may be applied range from admission of misconduct through to a recommendation to me that a councillor be suspended or dismissed.

The OIA has a prevention role as well, and I think that is very important. They have visited or spoken to representatives from 67 councils. They undertake a range of education and prevention activities. The OIA monitors complaint data and trends to identify recurring and high-risk categories of misconduct and to develop tailored responses. In response to early data and in collaboration with other key stakeholders, the OIA has produced a range of guides and aids on a range of topics to assist councillors to meet their statutory and code of conduct obligations.

The key thing to understand in terms of those resource questions we have heard about already in relation to the Office of the Independent Assessor is that we are, as you have said, member for Redlands, not yet 12 months into this office's role, so it is important that we assess its impact and its role in the network of managing local government integrity in a fulsome way when the time is right.

Ms RICHARDS: Referring to page 3 of the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs' SDS and the service area 'supports local governments to build their integrity, governance and financial sustainability'—and I note the recent Queensland Audit Office 2017-18 report into local government entities released on 15 May—can the minister outline what the government is doing to address the financial sustainability of councils?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Redlands for that question. It is certainly one of the key issues that exercises the minds of everyone in the local government sector. The reality is that in our decentralised state some of our remote councils with very low populations and many of our Indigenous councils have long-term financial sustainability risks associated with them. It is concerning that the Auditor-General's report found that 22 councils have a major risk in the 2017-18 results—up from 13 councils in 2016-17.

The report also notes that these higher risk councils have limited opportunities to raise revenue and are dependent on state government grant funding to maintain service delivery to their communities. This highlights the importance of our grants programs, particularly the very important examples like the \$600 million Works for Queensland program—you may have heard of it!

Ms RICHARDS: You know I have.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes—and the \$120 million Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program and the \$120 million Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program. Importantly, these programs are delivered over numerous financial years, providing more financial security and, very importantly, allowing councils to plan and budget.

As I said at the outset tonight, in 2019-20 the Queensland government will provide a total of \$1.468 billion in grants to local governments—more than double the baseline of \$600 million that the Local Government Association of Queensland advocates for. I think this really reiterates how important

local government is to us as a government and how government plays such a vital role in providing support to local governments to not only enable service delivery but also provide essential maintenance and upgrades to critical services like water and sewerage. The grants review process that the department has been conducting is an important part of the process. It has confirmed the fragmented nature of grants programs and provided options and opportunities for improvement.

In recent years the Auditor-General tabled several reports in parliament about Queensland's local governments, including: 11 October 2006, a report about forecasting long-term sustainability; 28 June 2018, a report on managing local government rates and charges; and 15 June 2019, the annual review of local government financial audits for the 2017-18 financial year. Across those reports there are a total of 26 recommendations: 12 of them are directed at the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs and 14 are directed at councils. All of the recommendations for the department are supported in principle and are subject to consultation with councils and other stakeholders as we go forward with proposed policy changes and legislative amendments.

In our local government sector there is always room for improvement, always room for making councils more financially sustainable and encouraging them to be more open and accountable. As a government we have already undertaken significant reform in the local government sector. We are obviously not shying away from making further changes to improve transparency and community confidence. Confidence around financial sustainability is important in that regard as well. We are also proactively helping councils to improve financial and asset management, implementing fair and equitable rating systems and maximising the opportunities associated with government grants programs, the likes of which we have gone on about at length tonight.

The government is committed to further encouraging the sustainability of councils across Queensland and continuing to work with stakeholders like the LGAQ and Queensland Treasury Corporation to achieve further positive outcomes. The core issue for local government going forward is making sure that we have a local government system that is sustainable for all parts of Queensland. It is a massive challenge, but it is one that we are up for. We are having that conversation with key stakeholders but, most importantly, with local government itself right across the state.

CHAIR: I call the member for Warrego for any further questions.

Ms LEAHY: My question is to the minister. In relation to the administrator at the Logan City Council, have the minister or the department had any discussions in relation to the unfair dismissal case currently before the Industrial Relations Commission? Have there been any discussions between the minister and the department in relation to the administrator at the Logan City Council?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: No.

CHAIR: I know you were talking about the QIRC, but I would caution members, the minister and any department officials about the rules relating to sub judice.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Mr Chair. I believe the minister has answered the question, so we will move on.

CHAIR: Yes, he did, but I just issued a general warning about those issues seeing as they cut across other issues.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Chair, I thank you for your guidance. I think my answer ensures we do not have any problems.

Ms LEAHY: My next question is to the minister. We noted last financial year and this financial year that the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program is heavily oversubscribed. We are all aware of the water and sewerage infrastructure cliff that is out there in Queensland. We have a situation where some councils are attempting to borrow for essential infrastructure. Can the government advise what other assistance measures are being provided to councils to assist them to manage this ageing water and sewerage infrastructure cliff they are facing?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: There is absolutely no doubt that the issues and concerns local governments have in relation to the maintenance of critical infrastructure—and potentially the upgrading of critical infrastructure, including ageing water and wastewater infrastructure—is a very significant issue. I am absolutely committed to continuing to work with local government right across Queensland and the sector on how we address this.

As it stands, the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs offers a range of financial assistance programs to Queensland local governments which support the delivery and maintenance of critical infrastructure. For example, in 2019-21 the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program will provide \$1.35 million to the Banana Shire Council to support the delivery of an

upgraded sewage treatment plant for Taroom, and \$1.26 million is being provided to the Douglas Shire Council to complete the Craiglie reservoir refurbishment project. These are some examples that I think were cited in response to the question on notice that was put to me by the committee in relation to a similar issue.

Similarly, the 2019-21 Works for Queensland program includes a range of critical infrastructure projects where councils have made the decision that they are using that program to help them address these critical issues. There is \$350,000 to support the Balonne Shire Council to replace some 293 kilometres of sewerage rising main in Dirranbandi and \$133,000 for the Murweh Shire Council to replace the cover of Charleville's main town reservoir. That does not include the funding that has been provided through previous funding rounds of these programs or programs like the Major Infrastructure Program or the \$120 million Indigenous Councils Infrastructure Program, which specifically targets the upgrade and remediation of existing water, wastewater and solid waste assets in Indigenous councils.

I am very committed to this. That is why, as I have said a couple of times tonight, in 2019-20 the Palaszczuk government is providing a total of \$1.468 billion in grants to local governments. It is an acknowledgment of how vital it is that we support these communities to address the infrastructure challenges they have. We want to see more and do more to work with them. There is a long, long list of where action is happening. I mentioned the ICCIP, the Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program. There are examples such as the Northern Peninsula Area's \$4 million to undertake a 10-year capital renewal and replacement works program for their water supply system, which will commence in 2020-21. There is a further \$2.7 million in one-off funding to repair the NPA's water supply reservoirs, with both initiatives delivering an important boost for the local economy. I saw that firsthand a couple of weeks ago when I was in the NPA inspecting those facilities with Mayor Eddie Newman.

Similarly, in an area that you know and understand well, we made the commitment in emergency out-of-round funding where we saw the need and we knew the council did not have the capacity. We will deliver \$9.1 million to the Paroo Shire Council to undertake work on their sewage treatment plant and sewerage network. The council's sewage treatment plant and pipe networks are over 60 years old with the potential to completely fail, so we have stepped in where that need was great and that need was important.

It is not just about the financial support. As I mentioned earlier in response to a question from the member for Redlands, helping build the capacity of councils as asset managers is vitally important in this space. That is one of the key ways in which we will help make sure that councils have the capacity to sustainably manage in the long term their critical infrastructure. That is a focus on what we do. That \$9.1 million in grant funding to the Paroo council is just a part of the \$46 million in grants funding going to local councils in the Warrego electorate alone.

Ms LEAHY: And so it should be.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I think there is evidence that we are working closely with councils. We are recognising that there is a challenge out there and we have the programs to help respond to the need. Most importantly, we will continue to work with councils on the ground and we will work with the Local Government Association and Local Government Managers Australia to work on how we have the right designs and the right systems to address these critical issues going forward.

Ms LEAHY: I am pleased to hear that you are looking to help councils. In the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program there are ineligible projects—for instance, sewerage infrastructure to the treatment plant. The household connections, the manholes, the pump stations and the sewer lines are ineligible projects under that Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program. Would the government give consideration to perhaps allowing those types of projects to be eligible under that program?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As I have made clear in answer to other questions tonight, I am always willing to talk and talk to councils about how we can improve programs to make them more responsive and respond to the issues that councils are facing. However, we equally need to have a focus on ensuring that councils have the capacity to manage their own infrastructure and can do so over the longer period. Getting these programs right sized and responsive to the needs of councils is equally a part of that process and that conversation. It is a robust conversation that is happening with councils right across Queensland. I am sure it will be part of the conversation I will have at the bush conference that the LGAQ is hosting in August—

Ms LEAHY: It is in Roma.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes, in Roma, in your part of the world, member for Warrego. It will be one of the conversations I will be having with a range of council leaders, mayors, councillors and CEOs there. It is something that the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs is very conscious of. We are working closely with stakeholders on how we continue to ensure that we address the needs of local governments right across the state, but that has to happen on this basis of understanding how we create and enhance sustainability. Just pouring out and putting in more grants programs is not building the sustainability necessarily. I know you appreciate that as well.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, in relation to page 4 of the SDS, which grants other than those administered by the department of local government are envisaged to be reformed in the grants to local government model? Are there any grants other than those in the local government department?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question. With respect to the local government grants review process—I believe your question is in relation to that; is that correct?

Ms LEAHY: Yes.

Mr Agnew: The process that the department has been engaged in over the past nine or 10 months has essentially been looking at those key grants that are directly available to local governments from the state government alone. There are other grants from the state which local councils are eligible to apply for, but it has been those grants that are directly available for local councils which have been the focus of our review.

Ms LEAHY: Can I just clarify that? It is those grants administered by the department of local government, not administered by other departments and agencies?

Mr Agnew: It does include grants available from other state governments that are there directly for local councils, so more than just the department.

Ms LEAHY: Would you be able to give us the names of those particular grants?

Mr Agnew: I could get back to you before the end of the session on that one.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you. That would be greatly appreciated.

CHAIR: I note that you will get back to us before the end of the session.

Ms LEAHY: My last question is to the minister with reference to page 4 of the SDS and the capacity building for local governments and the training for councillors and candidates at the forthcoming elections. Will this training be offered in any local Indigenous languages, given that there are a number of Indigenous councils in Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Warrego for the question. There is extensive consultation and planning going into the development of the training programs. The focus of the training programs is to make them available to as many people as possible. The emphasis in that regard has been focused on their accessibility so that they are not just necessarily around councillor training and candidate training, as I alluded to in my answer to the question from the member for Redlands. They also include online opportunities, and I should clarify that and I have been briefed about this. They will be things that can be downloadable. It is not reliant upon constant access, which I know is a problem for some people.

That will be the main focus. The main focus in that regard is making them as plain English as possible, but I take your point and understand the issue that you raise in terms of the accessibility of the training to as many members of the community as possible. Clearly, with our discrete Indigenous community councils, those matters will be something that is worth considering. I would be surprised if that has not been part of the consultation so far, but it will be part of further consideration.

Equally, I have to say that there are a range of community languages, not just Indigenous languages. I would love to see people from a range of diverse backgrounds be participants in our festival of democracy in March 2020. Certainly, I want to make sure, first and foremost, that the councillor training and candidate training is accessible to as many people as possible. I can assure you that I would be confident that the consultation process will take into consideration issues around languages other than English.

CHAIR: Minister, with reference to page 3 of the SDS in relation to the ongoing work of the interim administrator of the Ipswich City Council, will you advise of any progress that has been made over the last 12 months to improve transparency, accountability and integrity in the City of Ipswich?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As the committee is no doubt aware and can probably remember, on 21 August 2018 the Ipswich City Council was dissolved and Mr Greg Chemello was appointed as an interim administrator. This course of action was unavoidable. The Crime and Corruption Commission's Operation Windage resulted in 15 people being charged with 86 criminal offences, including councillors, the chief executive officers, contractors and council employees.

The issues at Ipswich City Council identified by the Crime and Corruption Commission showed long-term, systemic issues, and action had to be taken. I note in that context that unlike Logan City Council, the identified issues related to both councillors and the council administration. I am pleased to report that under the administration, priority issues for the council and the Ipswich community have been progressed including the Ipswich central business district redevelopment project. I have been informed that governance processes at Ipswich City Council have been thoroughly reviewed and improved ready for a new council to take over in 2020. In this regard a plan entitled Vision 2020 has been developed, which includes a program of change that focuses on operational reform to help the Ipswich City Council better serve the community and a business transformation program to ensure good governance, transparency and accountability on major city projects.

As the committee is also aware, the interim administrator is supported by an interim management committee. This committee is made up of five people with expertise in forensic investigation, governance, ethics, community engagement, business engagement and financial practices. Ipswich is a vibrant city with talented people and a bright future. I am confident that the city is now headed in the right direction.

The other important review undertaken by Mr Chemello is the work that he has done on the divisional boundary review. Ipswich City Council undertook community consultation to seek input on various options for change to the existing council divisions prior to the next local government election in March 2020. Under the Local Government Act 2009, I as the minister may propose a local government change for review, an assessment by the independent Local Government Change Commission. I am pleased residents were consulted about this important issue. I was provided with a report about the results of that consultation process. I reviewed the report and subsequently referred the issue of Ipswich divisional boundaries to the change commission for assessment.

The change commission has now undertaken this assessment and has released draft boundaries for consultation with the Ipswich community. The change commission has determined that Ipswich should be divided into four multimember divisions with two councillors representing each division. The change commission is inviting public comments on the proposal until 30 July. I urge interested parties to make a submission. The clock is ticking. I know there has been a huge amount of interest in that already, but I encourage anyone from that Ipswich community or beyond who is interested in that to put their comments to the change commission before they make their determinations.

Ms RICHARDS: Minister, I refer to page 62 of Budget Paper No. 3. Can you please provide an update on the Torres Strait Islands coastal inundation mitigation works?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, member for Redlands. In November 2018 the Palaszczuk government allocated an additional \$20 million over 2018-19 and 2019-20 to continue flood mitigation works on islands that are vulnerable to storm tides and rising sea levels. The Torres Strait Sea Walls Project was established to help mitigate coastal inundation impacts on infrastructure and housing in particular for six outer Torres Strait Islands: Saibai Island, Boigu Island, Poruma Island, Yam Island, Masig Island and Warraber Island. Stage 1 of the Torres Strait Sea Walls Project was jointly funded by the federal and state governments with \$26.2 million provided between 2014 and 2018. Under stage 1, all seawall works on Saibai Island reached practical completion in May 2017, and I congratulate all those involved in having achieved that. I am advised that more than 6,000 metres of seawalls was constructed on Saibai at a cost of less than \$5,000 per metre compared to the usual cost of similar work being between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per metre.

Works on Boigu, which included upgrades to drainage and bundwalls, reached practical completion in November 2017 at a cost of \$2.4 million. Some coastal mitigation work—basically large sandbags—has also been undertaken on Poruma Island. The additional \$20 million provided by the state in November 2018 will be used to complete works on Boigu and Poruma islands. We are still waiting for the matched funding from the federal government so that all mitigation work on all six islands can be completed. An independent evaluation of the project identified that the works so far have protected communities and over an estimated \$300 million of assets and infrastructure as well as, very significantly, historical and cultural sites on Saibai and Boigu. Another outcome is that it has provided some \$2.1 million to local businesses.

The Palaszczuk government is continuing to support these communities and support the Torres Strait Island Regional Council in managing the impacts of climate change and rising sea levels. This is one of the ways in which we are doing that. I think it is pretty important that we also take this opportunity to again call on the federal government to match our funding to see this work completed and help protect these communities, these very vulnerable communities—vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

CHAIR: Minister, as per the Service Delivery Statements I note the estimated actual cost of capacity building per local council is \$35,300. That exceeds the estimated original target of \$22,100. Will the minister advise why this target has been exceeded and can you give any detail that might be useful for the committee in its consideration?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thanks for the question. I can advise the committee that this target has been exceeded due to the additional training and support provided as part of the Palaszczuk government's local government rolling reform agenda and the implementation of recommendations from the Crime and Corruption Commission's report *Operation Belcarra: a blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government*. This additional support will continue in 2019-20.

As we have seen in the *Insight* quarterly reports prepared by the Office of the Independent Assessor, there is a large number of complaints—more than even the most conservative estimates—about the conduct of councillors in Queensland. It is incumbent on the state as the level of government that lays out the important accountability and transparency framework for local government to provide awareness to councillors and candidates about their roles and responsibilities. Like all elected representatives at all levels of government, councillors hold a position of trust in the community. They are held to a high standard of behaviour and accountability and I think that is right. As such, it is important that they operate within the frameworks. Good governance and good quality local democracy does cost; that is what we are experiencing here. It is important that we have a response that deals with making sure we support those councils and those councillors in meeting those high standards of integrity and accountability. That is what this represents.

While I have your attention, Chair, I can answer the questions that have been taken on notice in relation to—

CHAIR: I was going to ask that. These are some of the things that you have either taken on notice or said that you would get back to us on. Do you wish to do that now or at the end?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I can do this now. In relation to the question about the register of interests offences, under the current Local Government Act 2009 the maximum penalty for failing to update the register of interests within 30 days is 85 penalty units. If the offence is committed with intent, the maximum penalty is 100 penalty units. The offence is then defined as an integrity offence, which means that if convicted of the offence, the councillor automatically stops being a councillor and cannot be a councillor for four years. There are changes in relation to this before the House that are part of the second tranche of the Belcarra reforms. That replaces the two-tier offence and the maximum penalties of 85 penalty units and 100 penalty units for unintentionally or intentionally failing to correct the register of interests with a single offence and a maximum penalty of 100 penalty units.

It also omits the offence from the prescribed list of integrity offences under schedule 1 of the LGA and COBA so it will no longer be a disqualifying offence. That came up as a result of the development of the bill. Feedback from agencies, including the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, was that the current Local Government Act dealt with these provisions too harshly, particularly treating it as a disqualifying offence. We have determined, as I said earlier, that it is more appropriate to align these measures with state MPs.

In relation to the conflict-of-interest question about the penalty, the maximum penalty for failure to properly declare a conflict of interest is 100 penalty units or one year's imprisonment. The penalty for failure to properly deal with a material personal interest is—

- (a) if the councillor votes on the matter with an intention to gain a benefit, or avoid a loss, for the councillor or another person or entity—200 penalty units or two years imprisonment; or
- (b) otherwise—85 penalty units.

I trust that has answered those matters raised by the shadow minister. I think that covers all the matters that were outstanding.

CHAIR: Mr Agnew undertook to get some information on projects and the cash reserves.

Mr Agnew: We are yet to find that detail.

CHAIR: Do you want to come back to us before nine?

Mr Agnew: We are attempting to do so.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We still have those other issues on which you might get back to us before nine. I note that we have the great pleasure of having the member for Surfers Paradise, John-Paul Langbroek, as our guest for this next session. With that, we will conclude examination of the portfolio area of local government and move on to the examination of the estimates of the portfolio areas of racing and multicultural affairs. We note that the minister may get back to us on some of those outstanding issues to do with local government by 9 pm. Moving on to questions, I call the member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the committee for having me here today. I also thank the minister, staff, the director-general, the commissioner of QRIC and the CEO of Queensland Racing. Thank you all for being here this evening. I refer to the answer to question on notice No. 17. Will the minister explain the 2018-19 underspend of \$526,000 in Multicultural Affairs?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The underspend to which the member refers is the corrected one from the publication error. In terms of the underspend of \$526,000, I will get back to you before the end of the session with more information about that.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you very much. I refer to Budget Paper No. 2, table 4.2 on page 79, where it refers to wagering taxes, specifically the point-of-consumption tax. Why is Racing Queensland embroiled in a court case when there were public reassurances that neither the industry nor Tabcorp would be worse off after the point-of-consumption tax was introduced?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Any actions that Racing Queensland takes in relation to matters are matters for Racing Queensland. I call on the CEO of Racing Queensland to respond to that.

Mr Parnell: Thank you for the question. As the matter is subject to legal proceedings currently underway through the court system, we are not in a position to comment or explain further, other than to say that our responsibility is to the state and to our industry to represent its interests in the best possible way.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you very much. While you are here, I ask the minister about Racing Queensland abandoning plans to move offices from Deagon. Were any costs incurred by the abandoned move, including breaking any intention-to-lease agreement on Green Square, where I think the plan was to move?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Again, those are matters are for Racing Queensland to answer. I will defer to Mr Parnell to respond.

Mr Parnell: The relocation expenses incurred in total were just over \$51,000.

Mr LANGBROEK: With regard to matters such as cancelling Racing Queensland's plan to move and also the recent infrastructure upgrade at Ipswich, were such decisions via intervention from the ministerial office or from the board level at Racing Queensland? Where did they come from?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Ultimately, the member has raised two separate issues. That is not quite within the standing orders, but I understand that the member asks more generally about decision-making.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to separate them.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is okay. I will respond. In relation to the Ipswich Turf Club and its infrastructure projects, they were matters about which Racing Queensland ultimately made decisions—the nature of the project. In negotiations with the Ipswich Turf Club they came to a determination about that. In relation to the matter of the contemplation of a move, no final decision having been made, I certainly gave advice and counselled Racing Queensland and the board that that was a matter that would not meet with my approval unless it was undertaken having seen the result of two things—first, the master planning process for Deagon, and the timing of that is in line with the Brisbane City Council's neighbourhood planning process for Sandgate and districts. Second, I gave instruction that I believed they should be considering ensuring that, should there be any move, the result of any move was something that would put money back into the industry rather than having rent going to an outside body.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you for that clarification. I return to another issue that is covered by the answer to question on notice No. 17 with regard to the Racing Infrastructure Fund. Will the minister explain the \$30.2 million 2018-19 underspend when so many priority projects are identified in the annual report?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: There certainly is a significant range of projects in planning and in progression under the Racing Infrastructure Fund. It supports a broad array of priority racing infrastructure projects. The fund is drawn mainly from Tabcorp's payments for its exclusive wagering deal and its wagering licence. The fund pays for projects such as the redevelopment of Ipswich Turf Club's Bundamba

racecourse, as the member made mention of; the \$6 million country and regional capital works program; the \$3.7 million project that we saw completed for the Eagle Farm track rectification; and the \$3.5 million for critical capital works at the Brisbane Racing Club's Doomben and Eagle Farm racecourses that have drawn down upon it.

The situation is that there is a lot of significant planning, consultation and engagement that needs to be delivered to address the needs of infrastructure in racing across Queensland. These funds will be drawn down further as full business cases are presented to government by Racing Queensland for consideration, so we are keen to see that pipeline continuing and ramping up.

I have to say that I have increased confidence in that pipeline. Racing Queensland has published an infrastructure plan, including a list of the proposed infrastructure developments. As these are properly developed and assessed, the process will be activated to release the funds for these projects. However, it is vital that with a finite infrastructure fund projects are developed prudently and we ensure that they are delivered where they are most needed and they cater for all three codes most effectively in a sustainable manner. That is the work that has been going on and it probably has meant that we have not seen those dollars go out the door as quickly as I might like to have seen, but I have confidence that that pipeline is significantly improving. I want to make sure that we get this right, particularly because of the finite funds that we are talking about—the finite funds that result from the absolute dud deal that was done by the LNP in government with that stellar minister Steve Dickson that resulted in an absolute dud deal that we have to live with as an albatross around our neck until 2044.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thanks, Minister. I refer to the Racing Infrastructure Fund again at question on notice No. 17 and the answer. Will night racing be delivered at the Gold Coast by 2020 as promised at page 42 in the 2017-18 annual report of Racing Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In terms of what is coming down through the pipeline, I might refer that question to the CEO of Racing Queensland and allow him to talk about the pipeline and the range of very exciting projects that are in the infrastructure plan but, as I said, we have to make sure that these are prudently and effectively delivered and done.

Mr Parnell: Thanks for the question, member for Surfers Paradise. Night racing is a core part, as the member knows, for Racing Queensland strategies to leverage export opportunities and to create new visitation to Queensland, of which the Gold Coast is central to that night racing plan. The Gold Coast delivery of night racing will be subject to business case approval by the department and government and, because of the magnitude of the project, Governor in Council as well. That business case is in development at the moment. Already feasibility funding has been drawn down to complete assessment of different turf types. There are several varieties of couch and kikuyu which are currently to be tested around the Bundall racetrack. Feasibility assessment is underway for lighting and final specifications for width of course proper, for the synthetic racing surface and trialling surface and for the full specifications with the Gold Coast Turf Club. Once the business case has been entered and approved through government processes, then we will be in a position to confirm when lights will be available for racing under lights at the Gold Coast.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question follows on from the previous one about the answer to question on notice No. 17 and the Racing Infrastructure Fund. Minister, will at least one new or replacement harness racing venue be delivered by 2020 as promised in the annual report of Racing Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As I have said in relation to the rollout of the infrastructure fund and the infrastructure program of Racing Queensland, we have to get this right and deliver things effectively and efficiently, as we should be committed to, to the whole of industry across the three codes. Certainly the ambition is around delivering the quality infrastructure that is needed across those three codes in the state, but we have to do it carefully and right and do it in consultation with all of the stakeholders and get the programs right. We have to look at what happened with infrastructure when the LNP were in charge. Eagle Farm was bungled. That is the reality. We have to make sure that we get these things right and make them work right, particularly, as I have highlighted before, with the finite funds that are available under the program as a result of the dud deal that was done. I am happy again for the CEO of Racing Queensland to address the specific issue of the harness venue in response to the committee to provide more information to the committee, but my main emphasis is making sure we get these things right and do not bungle them by rushing them.

Mr Parnell: Referencing the question on new harness infrastructure, which applies equally to greyhound infrastructure, significant work has been done through the Deloitte work on participant location in the south-east and it has been outlined many times that there are significant pockets of participant locations to the south and west of Brisbane.

In my 14 months in this role it has been a clear focus to narrow down the potential sites and have a very thorough engagement with both the harness and the greyhound participants and particularly the clubs so that stakeholder engagement ensures full buy-in from the racing industry. With that in mind, a number of sites have various stages of commercial negotiation. Due to confidentiality and obviously not wanting to breach any of those potential outcomes for the racing industry, they will not be speculated on by Racing Queensland until those sites are secured and business cases are lodged with government and approved. However, a clear focus has been stakeholder engagement with clubs and participants and progress on doing these projects well, and I think the Eagle Farm delivery on 22 December is a testament of working more collaboratively with our industry partners.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. My next question is a follow-on question again. Minister, it is a question to you about the answer to question on notice No. 17. The annual report for 2017-18, which came out about this time a year ago, said that these things would be delivered by 2020, so that is why my question is—

CHAIR: Member for Surfers Paradise—

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes?

CHAIR: You are getting to the question?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes. Will two new or replacement greyhound racing venues be delivered by 2020 as promised in the 2017-18 annual report of Racing Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will refer the member for Surfers Paradise to the answer I gave in relation to his last question and I will refer him to the answer that the CEO of Racing Queensland gave to his last question. Investment in these new facilities will deliver a significant change for industry. It is important that that is done with the full confidence of the codes involved. Given that this question particularly relates to greyhound racing, it is all about delivering high-quality venues that enhance animal welfare, provide better training facilities, support the existing participants' needs and attract new participants by providing entry level opportunities. That is where all of the focus and work is going. There is significant progress. I have a great level of confidence in the progress of the pipeline in relation to these projects and I look forward to seeing those outcomes come to fruition. As the CEO has just said in relation to the answer to the last question, we have to be a little bit careful about how we talk about some of those things right at this particular point in time.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Surfers Paradise. Minister, further to your earlier tabling of the Multicultural Action Plan for 2019-20 to 2021-22, will the minister provide an update on the Palaszczuk government's implementation of the first Multicultural Action Plan 2016-17 to 2018-19 and what goals have been set for the Queensland government for the new action plan?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair, for the question. It was my pleasure to have tabled Queensland's second Multicultural Action Plan tonight which actively implements the Queensland government's multicultural policy, Our story, our future, and fulfils my obligations as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs as set out in the Queensland Multicultural Recognition Act 2016. The new action plan will build on the actions achieved through the first Multicultural Action Plan implemented in 2016 and is a significant commitment for the future of Queensland. The first Multicultural Action Plan included 104 actions, of which 86 actions were completed and 17 are partially completed.

These included the Department of Education's refugee and asylum seeker early childhood pilot, which resulted in 207 enrolments of people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in kindergarten programs—giving 207 kids a go—and two intakes of the Queensland Police Service's Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Recruit Preparation Program, providing a pathway for people from diverse backgrounds. The Department of Health partnered with several health groups, including the Refugee Health Partnerships Advisory Group and BreastScreen Queensland, to provide statewide refugee health services, including breast screens and mental health support.

This second action plan features 33 significant new or extended actions, including for the first time four whole-of-government actions. All 30 government agencies have committed to initiatives such as the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'Racism. It stops with me' campaign, increasing all forms of diversity on Queensland government boards and increasing cultural understanding and capability of staff by providing access to events, training and development opportunities.

Queensland's Multicultural Policy—Our Story, Our Future—recognises that Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds make an enormous contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of our state. It also makes a strong statement about the Queensland government's condemnation of racism and commitment to supporting refugees and asylum seekers in

our community. As Minister for Multicultural Affairs, a further responsibility under the act is to compile a report on the Multicultural Policy 2016-2019 and the outcomes that the Palaszczuk government has achieved. I look forward to presenting this to the parliament in the coming months.

Ms BOYD: With reference to page 2 of the SDS for the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs and the implementation of the country racing package, could you please outline how the country racing package is supporting racing in the bush?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. As I have highlighted, we took to the last election a strong commitment to continue to fund country racing in this state. This commitment was to recognise the community benefit that country racing brings to rural and regional Queensland. This not only gave participants in the bush reassurance about our commitment to those iconic events but also allows Racing Queensland to focus on the more commercial elements of racing, as it should.

This \$70.4 million commitment was welcomed with open arms by those involved in racing. We all know that most participants in the bush are not in it to make big dollars, but they genuinely appreciate the backing that the Palaszczuk government has given them. This extra funding also allowed Racing Queensland to inject extra prize money into the TAB circuit. I am sure the committee is aware how the government's investments on that front have been received as well. Wherever it is I travel, I try to visit a country club, either on a race day, which is my preference, or just to meet members of the committee, and to a person they all recognise that this investment has meant certainty for their industry and their passion.

One of the great initiatives that has come from listening to the participants in country racing has been the Battle of the Bush series, the final of which was held on Tatts day, 22 June, at Eagle Farm. It was great to be there and see Hanover Square, trained in Barcaldine by Bevan Johnson, take it out.

Mr LANGBROEK: Did you back it? It was long odds.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: No. It was very long odds. I think there were lots of long odds that day. If anyone wants to follow the form for the Battle of the Bush final—and I think the member for Mermaid Beach might want to take this advice, although it would be the first time he would get racing advice from me—they should look at whatever comes through the Barcaldine qualifier, because over the last couple of years that has tended to be the pick of the form. This concept, importantly, was devised by members of the country racing panel and funded through the Palaszczuk government's country racing package. Again this year it was the talk of bush racing.

I was fortunate enough to not only be at that final on 22 June but also attend the qualifier at Goondiwindi, and I saw the excitement of the heat winner there, Music Scene, and its connections knowing that they would be heading to Eagle Farm. That was really exciting for that group and the trainer. I can also advise the committee that this is something that participants in country racing throughout the state have been palpably excited about.

As any member of the committee who has attended country racing would know, it is more than just racing. I was discussing this with the member for Warrego before the session tonight. It is a place to meet and it is a place to relax, to socialise and to forget about the world for a few hours. We know that there are plenty of people in the bush who are doing it tough, whether it is through rain, lack of rain or all the other things that can drain a person and their resilience. I urge anyone on the committee or, indeed, any member of the House who has not been to a real, true country race meeting to do so and get that experience. It is part of something that I am very pleased that our country racing package has been doing so much to support. It is great evidence of the way in which we as a government back the bush.

Ms RICHARDS: I refer to page 7 of the SDS for the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs. Can the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government is supporting support services for refugees and asylum seekers in Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Redlands for her question. The Queensland Multicultural Policy—Our Story, Our Future—and the action plan I tabled earlier make a bunch of clear commitments by this government to support refugees and asylum seekers in Queensland, including targeted actions to support improved settlement outcomes and access to services.

While the federal government is responsible for the immigration policy, border control, visa grants and conditions, policy, funding and the delivery of settlement support programs, the Queensland government has stepped in to provide some \$4.3 million in support for refugees and asylum seekers who are slipping through the cracks of the federal government's changes to service eligibility. People

seeking asylum in Queensland, medical transferees and some refugees granted a safe haven enterprise visa or a temporary protection visa face significant levels of vulnerability and hardship as they may have access to only limited income support and are not entitled to settlement services funded by the federal government.

In early 2018 the federal government changed the Status Resolution Support Services eligibility criteria. Under the changes, of the 1,068 asylum seekers in Queensland at the time an unreported portion were exited from the program. These changes have left many people without access to income, casework support, vital medication and mental health counselling. The Palaszczuk government's Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance program will contribute towards addressing the issues facing these now very vulnerable community members.

The Queensland government has committed \$4.3 million over three years—from 2017-18 through to 2019-20—and has engaged Community Queensland to deliver support to alleviate the financial and mental stress of those most vulnerable. This funding goes to the delivery of employment assistance and personal and family counselling and addresses the basic needs of individual clients including, as I say, very basic things such as food supply, vouchers, clothing, medication, housing and allied health support. Sadly, where the federal government has failed to support these refugees we have had to step in and fill the gap.

The Palaszczuk government has also delivered further support for refugees and people seeking asylum in Queensland by delivering a 50 per cent transport concession fare to asylum seekers and also, more generally, to jobseekers through the Fairer Fares package, improving access to playgroups for children and families from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds, and providing asylum seekers with access to an electricity rebate.

We will continue to engage with community and government stakeholders about the future support of refugees and asylum seekers in Queensland so that they receive the support and welcome that we have committed to in the Multicultural Queensland Charter principles. That is important to asylum seekers and refugees wherever they are, and most significantly in communities such as Toowoomba, where we have one of the largest communities of refugees per head of population in the whole of the country.

Ms RICHARDS: I refer to page 5 of the SDS for the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs and the racing service area objective to support a viable, prosperous racing industry in Queensland. I ask the minister to outline any recent appointments to the Racing Queensland board.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, member for Redlands, for your question. On 5 July I announced the new thoroughbred industry representative for the Racing Queensland Board, the former Brisbane Lord Mayor Graham Quirk. As members would be aware, Mr Quirk was Lord Mayor of Brisbane for eight years and has served as a councillor at Brisbane City Council, or alderman for part of it, since 1985. Upon retiring earlier this year Mr Quirk was quoted as saying how he was looking forward to spending more time with his horses. Mr Quirk, whose appointment began immediately on 5 July, brings a strong set of skills and capabilities to the role. As a thoroughbred owner and breeder he lives and breathes racing. He is a regular visitor to races and is highly respected for his knowledge and understanding of the thoroughbred industry.

I have to say to you, Chair, that initial feedback from right across the thoroughbred industry has indicated strong support for his appointment. It was great to have a chat with my friend and long time trainer Pat Duff who said that he thought he was a very good appointment. Brisbane Racing Club chair Neville Bell and Thoroughbred Alliance executive Cameron Partington are all endorsing very strongly the appointment of Mr Quirk. He has a great ambition to support and enhance the team at Racing Queensland and I am going to be confident that he will make a very strong contribution not only to the representation of the thoroughbred racing fraternity but also to deliver the stronger commercial focus that is needed to grow and prosper Queensland's racing industry. I look forward to working with him, as I have in different roles in the past, and the leadership team at Racing Queensland to create a more resilient industry for owners, trainers, breeders and other participants who are the core and lifeblood of the industry.

I further want to note that Mr Quirk's appointment follows the announcement of a new Racing Queensland board with a broader range of new appointments that were made in April combining experience and continuity with some fresh talent. Five of the seven board members continued their roles, including chair Steve Wilson, who has shown strong leadership during his three years in the role. The board also includes fresh new talent, including corporate and commercial lawyer Jane Seawright

who joins Racing Queensland as a non-industry board member. Her strong skills in law, governance, strategy and strategic relationship management will be great assets for Racing Queensland and I am already hearing very strong support and feedback from across industry and from within the organisation itself of her great contribution, including her strong links with North Queensland as a Townsville resident.

The focus of the Racing Queensland board is to implement the Palaszczuk government's racing reform agenda to achieve a sustainable racing industry which enhances the industry's contribution to its participants and the broader community. I want to thank all the board members for the work that they have done so far and those former board members for their contribution to righting the ship of Racing Queensland after a turbulent period beforehand.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time for government questions as part of our agreement has expired. Member for Surfers Paradise, do you have any questions?

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Chair. If I could ask the QRIC Commissioner to come to the table. I refer to page 40 of the SDS for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries where it refers to stewarding matters. Welcome, Commissioner. What is QRIC doing to address the concerns of regional race clubs that their meetings are being compromised by having fewer stewards and some with less experience as this is affecting TAB turnover as well as issues of mix-ups with horses at race meetings such as in Rockhampton and Toowoomba?

Mr Barnett: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission employs over 36 permanent stewards who oversee race day activities across the three codes of racing. We also engage 41 casual stewards to support those permanent stewards. In the 2018-19 year, the commission provided stewarding services at 1,571 race meetings across the state across the three codes, overseeing approximately 12,000 individual races. Any errors relating to judging practices were performed by staff who are not engaged by the commission but I am aware that there have been reports in the media about some stewarding and judging issues in 2018-19, including at Toowoomba, Kilcoy and Rockhampton.

The commission is committed to upholding the highest possible standards of integrity for the Queensland racing industry and investigates all operational actions that result in negative community comment. Following these incidents, stewards have been reminded of their obligations to follow all procedures and policies at race meetings. It should be noted that while the commission stewards oversee in excess of 12,000 races per year, and whilst human error is regrettable, the error rate highlighted recently is not a regular occurrence. With five errors out of the amount of races that have occurred in 2018, the rate of error is 0.04 per cent. To further address the member's question, I am not aware of any deficit in the number or quality of stewards at any country race meeting, but I would be happy to answer a question if I can assist.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. I might actually have the chair of the race club seek a meeting with the minister about that particular matter. I will do that through different means. My next question is also to the Commissioner and it refers to enforcement measures at page 40 of the SDS. At last year's hearing, the Commissioner explained the separation between QRIC and the Queensland Police Service when it comes to recommending charges and prosecuting cases. Have there been any changes to media announcements of prospective charges by the commission which in the past have compromised the presumption of innocence legal principle?

Mr Barnett: I thank the honourable member for the question.

CHAIR: The question made an assertion that may be in dispute. That should have been phrased as a question rather than an assertion, but take that on board.

Mr Barnett: As you have rightly indicated, there is a clear separation of responsibility between the sworn police officers who comprise the Queensland Police Racing Crime Squad who are not members of staff of the commission. Whilst those members are co-located physically with the commission they at all times retain their operational independence and report back through their chain of command to the Queensland Police Service through the State Crime Command. Accordingly, any decisions that are made by the Queensland Police Racing Crime Squad to prosecute or not prosecute any person for any offence are matters for them to make independently and they do so.

Where necessary I make media announcements about issues impacting on the industry and industry participants so that the industry is kept informed about the work that is being done by the commission and to maintain industry and community confidence in the work that is being done to preserve integrity in racing.

Mr LANGBROEK: In that case, again referring to QRIC, is it the Labor government's intention with the review of the Racing Integrity Act to address the issue of naming and shaming licensees prior to their being charged or is it the view that the effect on some subsequently innocent licensees is collateral damage as QRIC does its job?

CHAIR: I may be getting tired but it seems there were some imputations there. Is there a way to rephrase that that does not suggest that the minister treats members of the public in that way but still gets to the issue?

Mr LANGBROEK: I will rephrase it but it was not a reflection on the minister, it is about the process that currently exists. Will the minister give the committee some advice about the upcoming review of the Racing Integrity Act with a view to how licensees who may be charged are sometimes referred to prior to being charged?

CHAIR: That is much better. Thank you.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I am certainly aware of the concerns of some people in the industry around the QRIC process. I certainly reiterate that we have committed to a review of the act to ensure that that process and all of the steps of the process are open to review, as I say, some three years on from its introduction with the Racing Integrity Act 2016. All aspects of the way in which the act operates are on the table. The thing that I have ruled out and have made clear to the industry is that we will not see what you have thrown out on the table as being an opportunity to get rid of QRIC.

Mr LANGBROEK: Not me, Minister. You must be quoting someone else.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: We will be sticking with the model of the separation to make sure that we have the highest levels of integrity. However, the review process provides an opportunity for a range of industry stakeholders and for everyone in the broader community to have their say and their input into how the processes and the management of racing integrity can be improved. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is running that review process as the relevant responsible department. It is doing so in a way that provides maximum engagement with stakeholders.

I have convened and had the pleasure of having the commissioner and his team brief a meeting of key stakeholders who have expressed an interest in these issues and areas from across the three codes. They were very appreciative of the information and the discussions that were had at that stage. They will contribute with submissions to the review process, which the government will consider and take into account in terms of any further reform.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question is a more specific question to do with QRIC. Minister, could you provide the committee with details of the number of matters currently before QCAT, the numbers heard at QCAT in the 2018-19 financial year, how many were successfully prosecuted and the average length of time for matters to be resolved? I am happy for that to be taken on notice, Minister.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Can you run through that again?

Mr LANGBROEK: The number of matters currently before QCAT, the numbers heard at QCAT in the 2018-19 financial year, how many were successfully prosecuted and the average length of time for matters to be resolved.

CHAIR: There are a number of questions but they are all on the same broad theme. We can puzzle through this.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I can advise that in 2018-19 there were 40 applications made to QCAT for an external review of a Queensland Racing Integrity Commission internal review decision. In 2018-19, 27 QCAT matters were finalised. Of the matters finalised, QCAT has found in favour of the applicant in six matters. QCAT amended the decision in two matters, resulting in both receiving a reduced penalty, and set aside the decision in four matters. QCAT has found in favour of the commission in six matters, resulting in four applications being dismissed and two internal review decisions being confirmed. The balance of finalised matters was settled with the applicant and the review application withdrawn. Ninety-six per cent of the 1,525 original decisions made in 2018-19 stand as originally made.

Mr LANGBROEK: The last element of the question was about the time from when charged to the completion of the case, if possible. You may not have that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I might ask the commissioner to answer the question on time.

Mr Barnett: On average, the minimum time it takes for a matter to be heard at QCAT following an original decision made by the stewards is approximately 11 months.

CHAIR: Member for Surfers Paradise, that seemed to deal with all the questions you put?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, that is fine. Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR: Did you have something to add, Minister?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I do not want to interrupt the shadow minister while he is still focused on racing, but I can get some information back on the question around the underspend in relation to multicultural affairs, whenever you are ready.

CHAIR: We might do that at the end, because we will have some time left.

Mr LANGBROEK: Again on QRIC, Minister, I note that at page 42 of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries SDS, under the heading 'Sampling and Analytical Services' there are a number of survey questions. Would you consider a survey question that asks industry members whether they are somewhat or very confident in the performance of the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: What I would be focused on is making sure that we see the system working, that we build confidence and encourage the building of confidence amongst industry in QRIC and our racing integrity and welfare systems. Safeguarding the welfare of racing animals and ensuring the integrity of racing activities critically contributes to public confidence, which in turn supports the industry's social licence. Anything that continues to work—any advocacy, any blowing of the trumpet—to undermine that confidence will further damage the industry as a total.

Each year the commission has partnered with a specialist social research company to conduct that survey of Queensland community members on their attitudes towards racing. Monitoring community confidence in the integrity of the racing industry provides a real snapshot of public sentiment and reported confidence levels. The most important thing that we need to be focused on is maintaining and supporting the social license of what is a very important industry to the whole of Queensland, not focusing on the small number of complaints when there is a way in which we can address that by fixing the system, not undermining the system.

CHAIR: Referring to page 7 of the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs Service Delivery Statements, will the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government is promoting the benefits of cultural and linguistic diversity in regional Queensland? I note you mentioned Toowoomba before.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The Queensland Multicultural Policy recognises our state's rich history of welcoming migrants and refugees who have come to help shape and build our local and broader state economies, particularly in regional communities. Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, working holiday-makers and international students continue to contribute to regional economies, bringing new perspectives and skills and expanding our links to overseas markets, which in turn supports trade and tourism. There has been some really significant interest in the benefits that regional communities, especially those with declining populations, may gain through attracting and retaining more of a share of these new arrivals.

As the minister responsible for local government and multicultural affairs, I see this as a really exciting chance to explore the opportunities to advance Queensland's regional areas from that point of view. I have heard from mayors from right across regional Queensland that they are keen to seize opportunities to boost and enhance their communities. Many Queensland councils already show great leadership in supporting and welcoming diverse and vibrant communities and are reaping the benefits. I think Toowoomba is one of those great examples. I acknowledge the leadership of the Toowoomba Regional Council. I pay particular tribute to Mayor Paul Antonio and his council for the work they do in that space, above and beyond what local governments might traditionally see as their role in dealing with what is, first and foremost, a federal responsibility. I think they have done a great job.

Only recently I was back in Toowoomba with Mayor Antonio to open the Toowoomba Multicultural Centre. With settlement service providers MDA and QPASTT it was a great joint project. Toowoomba Regional Council declared itself a refugee welcome zone in 2013. Since then their community has not only expanded with new families, but their economy has seen the benefit with more people in schools and training and people taking up those hard to fill positions in agriculture and processing factories in the city.

Many more regional councils in Queensland have heard of Toowoomba's success and they want to get involved. The Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs leads the actions and policy that will implement the principles of the Multicultural Queensland Charter and promote Queensland as a unified, harmonious and inclusive community. The department has allocated

\$180,000, excluding GST, from June 2018 to December 2019 to the organisation Welcoming Cities to explore leading practice and to work with regional councils to support their ambitions for inclusion of new arrivals and attracting, growing and retaining diversity.

The work of Welcoming Cities centres on assisting interested councils to consider, commit to, communicate with, plan for and build and sustain welcoming practices—the sort of practices that we have seen Toowoomba develop and achieve with great success in their community. This work recognises that all tiers of government play a role, but that councils are best placed to understand the complexity and diversity of their communities. That is what we want to support.

In May 2019 my department invited the small number of regional councils that had been involved in the deep dive research with Welcoming Cities in 2018 to submit funding proposals for up to \$300,000 over three years under the Regional Partnerships projects initiative. This funding is for demonstration projects that show how welcome and inclusion strategies can be implemented based on an informed picture of local community need and regional opportunity. I am really excited about the work we are doing with the local government and local communities in these regional areas to make them places of welcome.

CHAIR: It does sound exciting. With reference to page 5 of the Service Delivery Statements and the intent to support country racing, could the minister outline the infrastructure support being delivered to country clubs?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Part of the \$70.4 million country racing package, that I referred to earlier in the hearing, means that there is dedicated infrastructure funding for those country clubs to access to update, maintain and improve their facilities. It is important to recognise that even if clubs are only racing once a year, which many of these clubs in Queensland are doing, that there are solid safety standards in place to protect both the human and equine participants. These funds are accessed via an application process which is then scored across a number of fields and recommendations are made to the country racing panel for their input.

On Saturday, 1 June I was in Goondiwindi where I was able to announce funding for three of the clubs in that area. Talwood and Texas both received \$20,000 for barrier refurbishments and the Goondiwindi Race Club received \$115,000 for tie up stall refurbishments and running rail repairs. This is just a small example of the 55 clubs and the 88 projects that will be delivered right across the length and breadth of the state.

Some other examples of the projects being delivered include significant track remediation at Innisfail, Mount Isa and the Towers Jockey Club, new running rails at Chinchilla, Gladstone and Barcoo and the replacement of tie up stalls at Kumbia, Injune and Dawson jockey clubs. As we discussed earlier, country racing is more than just racing. It is the place to come together. I reiterate that this program is part of the way the Palaszczuk government demonstrates that we understand that these clubs would never be in a position to do some of these works themselves. However, what we are doing helps them to continue to operate safely for all participants. That is why these works are needed.

I can also advise the committee that a further round of this program will open later this year to provide clubs with another opportunity to make applications to Racing Queensland for infrastructure funding. I urge anyone on the committee, and indeed any member of the House, to get the word out to country clubs—the ones that members are involved in either through their electorates or when they get out and about and enjoy great racing in Queensland.

This payback to these clubs pays tribute to each and every one of the volunteers involved in country racing right across the state. They are the lifeblood of country racing and the ones who keep grassroots country racing alive. Country racing is fundamental to our industry here in Queensland, even at the highest commercial levels. People appreciate how important country racing is as the basis of the sport.

Ms BOYD: I refer to page 5 of the SDS for the Department of the Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs and the service area objective of supporting a viable and prosperous racing industry. Could the minister please outline how the increased prize money announced in late 2018 assists in meeting this objective?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Queensland does have, as I have just alluded to, a very long and proud history of racing. It has a bright future as well because of the commitments that we have made as a government. On 26 October last year, along with my colleague the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, I was very pleased to announce the injection of an initial \$18 million per year in prize money, with a further \$8 million subject to a broad agreement on industry reforms to thoroughbred racing.

Racing Queensland contributed extra prize money to ensure that harness and greyhounds receive prize money increases as well, proportionate to their split of the wagering revenue that they generate. While I am specifically forbidden by the Racing Act from instructing on how prize money is distributed across the state, I was very pleased to see that it was the industry itself that decided how the money would be allocated and made those recommendations to Racing Queensland. They did it in a way that was the best way to ensure the long-term viability of grassroots racing.

The feedback I heard was that trainers were looking at running horses interstate because even if a horse came 10th they were still entitled to some payment interstate. I can advise the committee that as part of the initial \$18 million some \$12.3 million was allocated to provincial and country TAB racing. Provincial SEQ meetings on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Ipswich received an increase of \$6.9 million while provincial meetings in Townsville, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Mackay and Cairns received the remaining \$5.4 million.

The best part of the package is that it is precisely what participants themselves indicated they needed to address viability and slow the flow of those participants over the border. Further, some nine months after this announcement the feedback from participants is that it has achieved the desired outcome. Owners and trainers are now more willing to keep their horses in Queensland. There is renewed optimism across the state through all three codes.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to a viable and sustainable racing industry in this state. There is a long-term millstone around the neck of racing. That is the shocking deal that the LNP signed up to while they were in power—a 30-year deal locking in massive inequities in the ability of racing to generate its own revenues. We all have to live with this until 2044. We will keep battling on. We will keep making the contributions and making the commitments that we can to ensure that racing continues to be a vital and important industry in the state.

CHAIR: The committee will now conclude its questioning of the portfolio. The time allocated for consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs has expired. I note that there were some issues which witnesses agreed to get back to us on.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I was going to refer those matters to the director-general, who has the information in relation to the underspend and the issue about borrowings as well.

Mr Agnew: I can confirm for the member for Surfers Paradise that the underspend for multicultural affairs is in the area of corporate overheads, not specifically within the division of multicultural affairs. We had an internal transfer of staff at the corporate level to the local government division essentially from that.

If I could respond to the member for Warrego with respect to her questions on borrowings and the borrowing process, I further confirm that four borrowing applications were not recommended by QTC. They were the four councils I referred to earlier in my response. North Burnett and Longreach actually withdrew their applications. Barcaldine and Barcoo were not approved by the department going forward.

With respect to the advice that we provide councils in relation to use of cash, we do encourage councils to consider both their need and their capacity to borrow for their applications for borrowing. In fact, the department's *Local Government Bulletin 09/18* states that, where a council has accumulated significant cash holdings, having considered externally restricted funds, minimum liquidity requirements and other planned expenditure, the department will take this into consideration when assessing those applications. For the 2018-19 year, the budgeted cash and cash equivalents published by each of those councils are: Barcaldine, \$21 million; Barcoo, \$4.7 million; Longreach \$14.3 million; and North Burnett, \$19.5 million.

Again, for the member for Warrego in relation to the question on notice on jobs with respect to those councils who had not reported jobs numbers, the aggregate number of jobs proposed was 101.05 jobs for each of those projects. The information provided in terms of the question on notice was based on the monthly reporting of actual jobs created by those councils. The way in which the department deals with that reporting on job numbers is through the final acquittal process for the final 10 per cent payment for the projects. That is how we actually ensure that the full reporting has been undertaken by each of those projects.

The final one was the grants with respect to the scope of the local government grants review and confirming my answer earlier that what is under consideration in that review is all grants from all government agencies that are specifically for local governments. Some examples of grants that are not from the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs that may well fall under that

are: the Department of Transport and Main Roads' Passenger Transport Accessible Infrastructure Program, DTMR's Rail Trail Local Government Grants program or the Department of State Development's Building our Regions program. Otherwise there is quite a long list, as you can imagine, for grants across government that would be available. Are you happy with those examples, or I could provide a very long list as well?

Ms LEAHY: I think that will be fine at this stage.

CHAIR: Member for Warrego, against our notes we have ticked off all of the issues that were agreed to be raised. Are there any outstanding issues?

Ms LEAHY: I think that concludes them, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: With that, we note that all of those issues are resolved, so we do not need to return to *Hansard* to look at any other questions. On that note, I wish to thank the minister, the officials and the departmental officers for your attendance. I know that you are all excited to be here at 9 pm. This connection with Queensland democracy will invigorate you in your work tomorrow. It certainly will do me.

This concludes the estimates hearing of the Economics and Governance Committee for 2019. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and visiting members, especially my fine deputy chair—seeing as we are talking about local government, the finest mayor of the Albert shire! It is always good to have someone who is combative about these things but does it with good humour. I thank him and all of the other participants.

I would also like to thank the *Hansard* reporters and all of the parliamentary staff who are here, especially the EGC secretariat staff—Lynda, James and Rhyll. They are a great aid to all of the members of the committee. I also want to note somebody who I think is doing a great job but who is a bit unsung, and that is the sound board controller. It is something that I have raised, but I know that they are above their game to make sure that they capture everything that is said and to make sure that the sound is good. I think it was excellent and I think it was worth noting. Thank you to all. Minister, would you like to make some closing remarks?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I know that we are pushing the envelope here. Can I join you by thanking the committee and the guests, the committee staff and the parliamentary staff who have supported this estimates hearing. Can I express my appreciation to my own staff for their support and perseverance with me in the lead-up to this hearing. I thank the director-general, and through him all of the departmental team who have worked on the estimates process, and all of the officers who have given evidence to the hearing this evening for all of their work as well. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to say thanks to them.

CHAIR: With that, I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 9.05 pm.