

MONDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2020

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

Estimate Committee Members

Mr LP Power (Chair)
Mr RA Stevens
Mr MJ Crandon
Mrs MF McMahon
Mr DG Purdie
Mr A Tantari

Members in Attendance

Mr JP Bleijie
Ms SL Bolton
Mr DF Crisafulli
Ms FS Simpson
Mr SSJ Andrew
Mr MC Berkman
Mr DC Janetzki
Dr A MacMahon
Mr TL Mander
Mr ST O'Connor

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 J Prowse, Director Information Services and Parliamentary Librarian
Mr S Johnson, Director Property and Facility Services

The committee met at 9.00 am.



CHAIR: I declare this hearing of the Economics and Governance Committee open. I would like to begin today's proceedings by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to eldest past and present.

My name is Linus Power, the member for Logan and chair of the committee. With me here are: Ray Stevens, the member for Mermaid Beach and deputy chair; Mr Michael Crandon, the member for Coomera; Ms Melissa McMahon, the member for Macalister; Mr Dan Purdie, the member for Ninderry;

and Mr Adrian Tantari, the member for Hervey Bay. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to attend and ask questions at its hearing today, so members may be present over the course of the proceedings. Today the committee will consider the Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-21) Bill 2020 and the Appropriation Bill (2020-21) 2020 and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility.

I remind everyone present today that they may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as the chair by order of the committee. The committee has authorised this hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for the broadcast of the proceedings are available from the secretariat. While mobile phones are not permitted in the public gallery, today and throughout estimates an exception has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses here today and who are being permitted to use their devices for this purpose. I do ask all those present to ensure that their phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode, if not turned off. I remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine portfolio areas in the following order: the Queensland Legislative Assembly from 9 to 9.45; Premier and Cabinet and Trade from 10 to 1.30; Treasury and Investment from 2 to 6; and Tourism Industry Development, Innovation and Sport from 6.30 to 9 pm. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure of the Appropriation (Parliament) 2020-21 Bill 2020 for the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The committee will examine this portfolio area until 9.45.

Visiting members are Mr Jarrod Bleijie, the member for Kawana and Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa. There may be other members who have previously contacted the committee who arrive.

I remind all those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules that apply to questions in parliament also apply to this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to a single issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preamble, 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 of the committee.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the Speaker, the Clerk, parliamentary officers and members of the public, especially those listening to the live web broadcast. 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 Speaker or the Clerk. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area administered by the Speaker open for examination. The question we are examining before this committee today 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, Chair, and members of the Economics and Governance Committee. I would also like to acknowledge that we meet today on the land of Aboriginal people and pay my respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate in this country to have two of the world's oldest continuing living cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whose lands, winds and waters we all now share.

I am pleased to appear before the committee today—which is, of course, focusing on the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service—in my capacity as Speaker. This is the first such opportunity I have had since being elected as Speaker for the 57th parliament. I also welcome the Clerk, Mr Neil Laurie, and other officials from the Parliamentary Service to assist me in answering your questions today as well as George Hasanakos from the Office of the Speaker.

When I last appeared at estimates in June 2019, I spoke of my desire to open up the parliamentary precinct and the parliament as an institution to the people more than ever before. It is with some irony that 18 months later the parliament is only now emerging from the impacts of COVID-19. As part of our COVID-19 response it was necessary to suspend a range of activities central to public engagement with the parliament. That included school tours, public tours, catered event bookings, educational programs, public access to committee hearings and the public parliamentary gallery. Working with the Clerk, I approved a range of measures to protect members, staff and visitors, both here on the parliamentary precinct and in electorate offices across Queensland, to ensure that the range of parliamentary services could continue to be delivered in a COVID-safe way.

With respect to the proceedings of the House itself, the pandemic required the development of a virtual chamber—a paradigm-changing step on how parliament can operate. The virtual chamber, which was never used, is ready to be deployed if we should ever require it again. Let's hope we do not under these circumstances. Over a five-week period from early April, in the Undumbi Room in the Parliamentary Annexe the Parliamentary Service established an alternate standby chamber for a virtual sitting. This would have allowed some members to potentially attend in person and others to participate remotely by the use of videoconferencing software. I do not want that work to go unrecognised because it was an extremely big effort to ensure that we had options as a parliament to continue our democracy in Queensland. While I am pleased to report that important public access to the parliament, the precinct and electorate offices has returned to a new normal, COVID-safe plans have been developed to assist our recovery and protect Queenslanders as they engage with the parliament.

As we look to the 2020-21 budget, a key focus over recent weeks has been the transition from the 56th to the 57th parliament, including: the delivery of a formal induction program for new members; coordination of the official opening of parliament; and assisting new members to establish staff and administrative systems to support their roles. As part of the ongoing ICT strategy approved in 2018 work has continued on delivering a range of ICT initiatives, including: the replacement of electorate office telephone systems; planning for the issue of new members' portable devices; and planning for enhancements to IT infrastructure and systems in the parliamentary precinct. Working alongside these planned IT enhancements—and equally as important—is delivering an ongoing cybersecurity strategy to ensure that we are deterring and responding to any cyber attacks.

I now turn briefly to the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill, which includes funding for the salaries and allowances of members of the Legislative Assembly as well as funding for the Parliamentary Service. The total appropriation sought for the parliament in 2020-21 is \$101.823 million, which is an increase of \$1.295 million over the final appropriation provided in the 2019-20 budget. The increase is due primarily to changes to members' allowances approved by the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal and deferral of appropriation funding for the 2019-20 budget due to delays in completing a small number of projects underway. Major capital works to be undertaken include the continuation of a major three-year program to upgrade critical infrastructure supporting the Parliamentary Annexe, including fire and sprinkler services, air conditioning upgrades and renewing mechanical and electrical systems.

In closing this opening statement I would like to say that I welcome the opportunity to appear before your committee today. I am happy to give you as much information as I can, and I give you notice now that I am happy to take questions on notice should it be required. I thank the committee in advance for its work today, and I look forward to watching the committee's deliberations across other portfolios throughout the course of today.

CHAIR: I now turn to the Deputy Chair for questions.

Mr STEVENS: Chair, if I could defer to the Manager of Opposition Business for our first question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, it is great to have you here. Congratulations on your re-election as Speaker of the House. We love this opportunity to put you in the other chair, Mr Speaker—the one time of year we get is estimates—so welcome.

Mr Clerk, if I can start with a question to you please. In 1998 there was a review of estimates processes, and I think it was the procedural review committee. That review committee led to the current estimates process we have now, where a budget is handed down and then you have estimates taking place. Since 1998, can you recall any other period where we have gone from a government handing down a budget to estimates committees being held immediately after in the following week?

Mr Laurie: No, I cannot recall it being the week after. In the period 1994 through to 1998—and 1994 was when we started the estimates process—estimates used to be conducted a little differently in the sense that the budget would be handed down in the House and referred to estimates committees but the House would actually then sit during the estimates process. The House would usually sit in the morning up until the end of question time and then adjourn and then estimates committees would meet that afternoon. My vague recollection is that during that time it was quite common for the estimates committees to be held very close after the budget. One of the recommendations, from memory, from the procedural review committee that you talked about was that there should be a break between the budget and the estimates to enable people to fully study the estimates.

Mr BLEIJIE: Just to confirm, since 1998, since that recommendation was made, this is the first time you can recall where we have had to—

Mr Laurie: Not offhand. I certainly cannot recall it being the week after.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Clerk, with respect to standing order 233 on sub judice, I want to confirm for the committee members going through the estimates process that, if there are any matters that may be subject to allegations before the Crime and Corruption Commission, it does not prevent ministers from answering committee questions with respect to those matters. Is that correct?

Mr Laurie: Standing order 233 only applies to matters where somebody has been charged with a criminal offence. It does not apply to CCC investigations. It only applies to matters where people have been charged with criminal offences, so there is no procedural impediment.

Mr BLEIJIE: To the Clerk again, further to that, can I confirm that when honourable committee members ask questions to yourself, the Speaker and other officers throughout the estimates process, reference does not necessarily have to be made to an SDS particular matter. We are scrutinising the budget as a whole and particular relevant departments. Is that correct?

Mr Laurie: That is correct. A practice has developed over the years for people to reference the pages of the SDS, but it is practice only. There is no requirement. The basic requirement of standing orders is that the questions be relevant to the appropriations.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Mr Speaker, we have just received the answers to questions on notice, and thank you for providing those to the committee. In answer to question on notice No. 3, you outline the steps taken to establish the virtual parliament to enable members to participate remotely. You stated that over a five-week period from 1 April to 8 May 2020 the Parliamentary Service established and tested the technical solution. Mr Speaker, can you please confirm to this committee that the solution was available to be used and operational from 8 May 2020?

Mr SPEAKER: In terms of those dates, that sounds correct. The ability was always, as mentioned in my opening statement, to ensure that we had a mix of participation by members. That of course meant that we would have some members in the chamber itself—and it was broadly agreed that that would need to be the leadership of both sides of the House—as well as having those members from regional Queensland particularly, or those who may have been suffering from some ill health or those who might have had a reason to not be able to attend in person to be able to do so virtually. In that regard, the parliament was ready to be done in a virtual way and the steps had been put in place to ensure that those standing orders would allow us to actually achieve that.

As I said, we have been very fortunate in the way that the COVID-19 pandemic response has occurred in Queensland. I think we have been the envy of not only the Australian states and territories but also the world. In that regard, we stood ready to be able to deliver a virtual parliament without any issues. Having gone through a fair degree of testing, we were confident that this was a solution that was going to be one where we could actually continue our democracy here in Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you for your efforts in getting that established fairly quickly through the Parliamentary Service, and to Mr Clerk as well. Mr Speaker, in light of that, can you offer any insight as to why, if the technical solution for the virtual parliament was available for members of parliament from 8 May, the Legislative Assembly only continued to meet monthly and only for five weeks more for the remainder of the last parliament?

Mr SPEAKER: Again, my recollection of looking at the sitting dates in the schedule that had been set out by the Leader of the House on behalf of the government was that due to COVID-19 we really only missed I think two to three days of sitting on the schedule calendar. I, unfortunately, myself had to miss a sitting, being from regional Queensland. The Deputy Speaker at the time, Scott Stewart, the member for Townsville, was also unable to attend, so the new Deputy Speaker in the 57th Parliament, the member for Greenslopes, Joe Kelly, stood in for me as Speaker.

My absence was certainly not going to contribute to us not sitting. The parliament did sit, under some very, very stringent arrangements that were put in place, including the seating of members in the chamber as well as of course the option of party voting and proxies, which is important and is I think something we have to consider for the future. Those things have been instrumental in ensuring we have been able to maintain our parliamentary sitting regime throughout the course of the year.

In reference to your question, I think the main part of the question would be whether the House was not able to sit as a result. We have only missed a very short period over that time and I would argue that we have certainly been able to make that up over the course of 2020.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 16 regarding the controlled income statement on page 6 of the SDS for the Legislative Assembly and the total quantum of budget savings imposed by the government on the Parliamentary Service for the 2017-18 period. You have given a total quantum for that period. Will you please advise the quantum per financial year?

CHAIR: While the Speaker is getting that, I just say to the member for Kawana that the member for Noosa at some point wants to ask a question. I do not know whether you want to indicate or I will just choose a time that is opportune. Maybe I should just choose.

Mr SPEAKER: For the 2017-18 budget year, the savings reprioritisations, the target was \$38,000; in 2018-19, it was \$79,000; in 2019-20, it was \$77,000; and in 2020-21, it is \$76,000. The cumulative budget reprioritisations are as follows: in 2017-18, \$226,000, and again in 2018-19; for the budget years 2019-20 and 2020-21, that stands at zero at this stage.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, with respect to the precinct, members from all sides of parliament will say that it is often difficult to get office space for meetings or to book meeting rooms. During a sitting week, they are often full. In the questions on notice and your answer, Mr Speaker, we also see that there are members who are not provided with accommodation in the precinct who are not even in the Brisbane city, yet 10 government members are provided accommodation.

Mr Speaker, I guess the question is this. With respect to the annexe, there has been debate over many years whether it is now fit for purpose and can actually fit everyone in and whether the Parliamentary Service is operating in office space and accommodation that you would expect for a modern public service. I would be keen to hear your thoughts with respect to the annexe and the water issues, the fire issues we have had in the air-conditioning units and the costs to upgrade it. What is the plan for the annexe in terms of making sure we can house members of parliament and the parliamentary staff and also so members of parliament can do their jobs effectively, because at the moment it is hard to even book a meeting room during a parliamentary sitting week?

Mr SPEAKER: I might just deal with the first part of your question. The allocation of rooms and offices is a role performed by the Leader of the House. Unless there is some important or challenging reason why we would not think that that was the appropriate course of action, that would be the way that those allocations are done. As you would be aware, member for Kawana, there is a quirk within our accommodation arrangements which means that, if you are a particular office holder, you get a room regardless of whether you are a regional member or a non-regional member. That sometimes does throw out the balance as well depending on what that entitlement is as a member or an office holder. Unfortunately that sometimes means that we do not have the opportunity to have those members housed here for accommodation purposes, but there are other arrangements that can be put in place, including utilising the family accommodation on level 3.

In terms of office space itself, that is a case of making sure that the management of bookings is done in a sensible and efficient way. I am not aware that that is not the case, but if there are times where there is not the availability of office space that is something we always will continue to be happy to look at.

In terms of the broader question about the precinct, it is no mystery to anyone that the Parliamentary Annexe was built in the 1970s. Many suggest that it would be at a half-building life at this point. Certainly there have been a series of maintenance issues and issues that must be addressed as part of that ongoing program, but issues have come up due to some of the age of the equipment and materials. We have been fortunate to have had some support from government over the last couple of years to address critical infrastructure pieces—as I said in my opening statement—such as the fire and sprinkler system, air conditioning and the like. There has been some work done in terms of looking at what future accommodation options could look like. Of course, that always would be subject to the appropriation of funding by the parliament to allow for it. I welcome the broader commitment by all members across the Committee of the Legislative Assembly to work together to ensure that the precinct is fit for purpose and to ensure that we have a building which meets our needs at the moment but to put thought into where we may go in the future.

As I said, we cannot change the age of the building; it is how old it is. Going forward, we need to have those conversations. Right now that has not been the priority of the parliament. The parliament's priority has been ensuring a continuation of sittings to make sure that we have a COVID-safe environment. Moving into 2021, those are the sorts of strategic discussions that we should be having.

CHAIR: I might turn now to the member for Noosa. Do you have a question for the Speaker or one of the officers?

Ms BOLTON: Good morning everyone. Mr Clerk, further to the member for Kawana's question regarding the estimates process, given it has been 22 years since that last review and change, when can we expect another review as part of seeking greater efficiencies?

Mr Laurie: I do not know if I can give an answer to that. I think the estimates process was part of the review that also occurred by the then Committee System Review Committee that occurred back in 2010-11. The estimates process, if you like, formed part of that larger review of committees that occurred at that time. One decision made at that time was that the portfolio committees would undertake the estimates process, whereas prior to that period the estimates process was conducted by select committees essentially established only for the budget, if you like. It is not that it has not been the subject of review in that 22 years since the Select Committee on Procedural Review; it has been the subject of a review in the 2010-11 period by the Committee System Review Committee. My recollection is that the review committee's recommendations were then also reviewed once again by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly in around 2015. It has been the subject of review since 22 years ago. As to when the next review occurs, that is not really in my hands.

Mr STEVENS: What cost has the Parliamentary Service absorbed because of the failed telephone system rollout?

Mr Laurie: In terms of the telephone system rollout, the Speaker in answer to a question on notice actually indicated the total costs that were involved. Approximately \$550,000 was paid to the supplier. There were additional costs because of the fact we had to extend the period with our previous supplier of \$92,000 and then another \$205,000. We also had some internal costs of around \$118,000. We are able to recoup \$353,000. There would be around about \$500,000 to \$600,000 of the cost that we would have absorbed.

Mr TANTARI: Mr Speaker, page 2 of the SDS identifies a key objective of the Parliamentary Service is to 'safeguard, promote and strengthen the institution of parliament'. With reference to parliamentary educational activities, can you outline any recent or planned activities to promote regional education and improve online education resources?

Mr SPEAKER: I thank the member for the question. When we start talking about education and making sure that we promote those approaches, it is one of the best parts of my job. I have said that very publicly in terms of where we can support reaching out to our young people and students across Queensland and to have them engaged in some capacity in our parliamentary democracy. Obviously being a regional member of parliament, I know firsthand there are a number of schools in my electorate and others in the regional parts of Queensland that simply cannot visit Parliament House. In that sense, having a strong ability to deliver online has become even more important with the COVID arrangements. We have been continually working on that and will not stop working on that, because Queensland is a big state.

During the 2019-20 year, the parliamentary education team and other Parliamentary Service officers visited Toowoomba, Townsville and the Sunshine Coast and conducted educational activities, including the opportunities for youth parliament as well as Public Service briefings. For example, in Toowoomba there were 32 attendees at the Public Service seminar, 18 attendees at the teachers workshop, and 98 students along with 64 teachers and supporters at the youth parliament. Between the Clerk and I, we addressed 22 people at the Rotary Club of Toowoomba South about engaging with parliamentary committees. The team also conducted activities in two schools and taught a total of 39 students about our Queensland parliament and our democracy.

On the Sunshine Coast, there were 45 attendees at the Public Service seminar and 12 attendees at the teachers workshop. The team conducted a youth parliament for year 6 students from the region. A total of 52 students from 10 schools and 28 of their teachers and supporting family members and others were also involved. In addition, there were two in-school programs for 75 students and their teachers. Of course, members of the 56th parliament would remember the regional sitting of parliament which also provided an opportunity for some 1,900 students and accompanying staff to participate in the regional educational activities we put on or witnessed the parliament sitting in Townsville itself.

I am very pleased also to have begun an initiative a couple of years ago dealing with a junior indigenous youth parliament. We have had the Eric Deeral youth parliament for Indigenous students for some time which commenced during Speaker Simpson's time, if I recall correctly. The idea of having primary school students both in Cairns and Townsville being able to participate in that on a rotational basis in areas close to home has been a really terrific opportunity.

Those are the sorts of activities we need to continue to work on. I am happy to advise, too, that, given the strong relationships that we as the Queensland parliament have with other jurisdictions, including the Australian parliament, it will be one of my key focuses to continue to ensure that students, no matter who they are or where they live, whether they visit the national parliament in Canberra or

whether they visit the Queensland parliament in Brisbane, are afforded an opportunity to learn about both the Federation and our state. To me, it is of critical importance to get that understanding. As we know, it provides the opportunity for a well-educated and well-informed future voting public.

Mrs McMAHON: Mr Speaker, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, which includes as an objective of the Parliamentary Service to support the Legislative Assembly in fulfilling its functions within the institution of parliament and facility management services. Could you outline the steps taken by the Parliamentary Service in 2020 to keep parliament operating despite the COVID-19 pandemic?

Mr SPEAKER: I am happy to answer that question. I am not telling any of you anything you do not know but, clearly, COVID-19 and the global pandemic have been the greatest global emergency since the Second World War. It has caused an enormous amount of disruption to our ordinary life. We have also needed continuity in workplaces right around Queensland and Australia and to ensure we could keep the parliament operating at this time.

There are three important facets to the response of the Queensland Parliamentary Service. The first is an enhanced cleaning procedure for the parliamentary precinct itself. In March, as the COVID threat materialised, cleaning of surfaces with hospital grade disinfectant increased on the precinct. Cleaning procedures were also revised to clean work spaces twice a day. Secondly, there was an upgraded cleaning procedure for the Legislative Assembly during sittings which allowed for a COVID seating plan, essentially one space between each member. Of course during sittings, under the COVID seating plan, two parliamentary attendants located at the rear of the chamber provided lecterns and sterilised seats between each new member speaking. I have made reference to this before. I want to thank those chamber attendant staff, who did a terrific job ensuring members had a safe workplace.

In addition to that, the supply of paper documents in the Assembly was reduced to curtail modes of potential transmission. We have asked members to continue to ensure they are not utilising paper based solutions wherever possible. That seems to have happened, including for the tabling of documents, amendments to bills and notices of motion. Obviously, these are easily enough done by email. These procedures, combined with pairing arrangements and modifications to the standing and sessional orders to ensure that things such as quorums and party voting were allowed in the Assembly, allowed us to have a COVID-safe chamber. That was a terrific opportunity.

Earlier I touched on the creation of a virtual parliament in the Undumbi room. Whilst it was not used, it was groundbreaking. It certainly creates an opportunity for us in the future to look at what was done in this case. Essentially, we were able to use Zoom as videoconferencing software and have a waiting room to ensure there was some security around that as well as password options to come in. It does make us ponder what will happen in the future regarding our committee arrangements and the committee work that is done. That is something we have already discussed, making sure we have greater opportunity for online presence. The world has clearly shown that working remotely is possible. If anything, the global pandemic, which has been a tragedy around the world, has fast-tracked things such as working from home and utilising videoconferencing technology in a greater capacity, in ways we would not have done if it was left to the normal course of time.

Those things mean that we have opportunities and challenges to ensure that people feel connected and can make their contributions to committees while ensuring they feel as though they can still appear in person wherever possible. I again put on the record my thanks to the Parliamentary Service for the hard work they have done over this period to ensure we have had a COVID-safe precinct and that we have had very minimal disruption in terms of the actual sitting days, ensuring we were able to get through the business of parliament—the government's agenda but, equally, the opportunity for the opposition and the crossbenchers to keep the government to account, ask the appropriate questions and debate the issues that matter to Queenslanders.

CHAIR: The deputy chair has alerted me to the fact that I am 26 seconds short of the halfway point for opposition questions. Do opposition members have any more questions?

Mr CRANDON: Mr Speaker, I refer to your response to question 16 where you talked about a total of \$2.126 million being the total quantum of CBRC approved savings adjustments. In answer to the question that was asked a short while ago you gave us a break-up that did not go anywhere near the \$2.126 million figure that you have quoted. In fact, it adds up to \$722,000. Perhaps you do not have the information there. You might like to take that on notice and give us the actual break-up.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, I am happy to do that. I have just been provided with some information which I think requires some additional attention to make sure we can give you an accurate answer to the question. The important point I would make is that there are some elements of it that have been cumulative. That is why you may have a challenge. Depending on the way the question is

asked, you may get somewhat of a different response. Now that we are very clear, based on the line of questioning we have had today, I endeavour to take that on notice and provide that response to the committee without any problems whatsoever.

CHAIR: Are you going to get back to us at the end of this period?

Mr SPEAKER: I will need to take some advice on that. I think we are dealing with something that is reasonably matter-of-fact. If we are able to provide that at the end of proceedings, we will.

CHAIR: We will follow that up at the end.

Mr SPEAKER: If not, it will certainly come back to the committee within the appropriate time frame.

Mr TANTARI: Mr Speaker, page 3 of the SDS refers to the implementation of a formal reconciliation action plan. Can you outline the process of the development of the plan and actions to occur in the remainder of the 2020-21 financial year?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you for the question. As members would know, the focus on our First Australians and ensuring there is greater participation in our parliament, our democracy and the parliamentary workforce is something I was very passionate about over the previous term. That certainly will not change. I was really proud that we were able to, despite the challenges of COVID-19, put in place a reconciliation action plan. As people would be aware, it is a strategic document which really outlines the organisation's business plan but, importantly, includes practical actions to ensure the organisation continues to drive change and provide opportunities across the communities in which it operates.

The Queensland Parliamentary Service has been among the leaders in focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reconciliation over many years. People would remember that we were one of the first jurisdictions to have an Indigenous liaison officer as part of our staffing here at Queensland parliament. When I was at the Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference in Wellington a couple of years ago, that was of great interest to so many jurisdictions from within Australia and even across to New Zealand. The reason is that it has provided us with an amount of advice and support on a number of those issues and has increased our engagement with Indigenous Queenslanders.

The reconciliation action plan itself is a process that started with speaking with Reconciliation Queensland to ensure we understood what was required. Pleasingly, we know that, whilst many organisations have adopted these types of plans, the Queensland parliament has been an absolute leader in this space.

I am really pleased to say that we have been able to implement this and I will give some considerable credit to George Hasanakos, who drove the process working with the reference group to ensure that we were able to get this program up and running and across the line. The result was after many months of consultation with Parliamentary Service staff and external First Nation peoples as stakeholders we were able to launch that Reconciliation Action Plan in the September sittings of this year. It is also important to recognise the hard work of Uncle Bill Buchanan from Reconciliation Queensland. The working group that he was part of, with George Hasanakos as well as others of the service, has delivered us a great Reconciliation Action Plan. It commenced last month and it will be over a two-year period initially and the first action of course related to the celebration of NAIDOC Week last month.

The service unveiled a new permanent display in the Reconciliation Gallery which, as members would be aware, showcases a painting presented to the Parliamentary Service by Aunty Deb Sandy as well as commemorative artwork to mark the launch of the Reconciliation Action Plan. In addition, the Parliamentary Service hosted a screening of *Wik vs Queensland*, the landmark feature documentary surrounding the historical court decision of 1996 by the High Court of Australia which granted native title to the Wik people of Cape York. Future actions under the Reconciliation Action Plan in the remainder of 2020-21 include marking National Reconciliation Week in May, engaging First Nation advisers and staff in developing anti-discrimination policies, consulting with First Nation advisers and staff on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy for the Parliamentary Service, and providing advice to committee secretariats about opportunities to engage and promote First Nation people participating with regard to committee business.

I am very proud of this work. It is great for us to be a leader in this space. What I am very excited about is that we have an opportunity with our future practices and opportunities for employment to see a greater participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the Queensland parliament. I should say that this chamber was where we screened the premiere of a wonderful docudrama series

called *Blue Water Empire*. At that time I remarked that this chamber would have been used by many over the years to make decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with very little opportunity for a contribution. By putting that history, which has been a challenging history, out there and screening that in that particular chamber, it was a very important opportunity to say how far we have come but also how far we still have to go. It is very pleasing for me to say that we are playing our role here at the parliament with a Reconciliation Action Plan and we look forward to being able to update your committee and all members generally about some of the future actions that we may want to contribute going forward.

CHAIR: I note that the SDS identifies the objectives of the parliament as facility management services, so I was interested that in September this year the Queensland parliament and the Local Government Association of Queensland entered into a mutual access agreement. Can the Speaker advise the committee about what the agreement actually entails and any benefits it provides for the facility management of the House?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Chair. I know we are nearly at the end of our period, so I will try to make this as brief as possible. The idea of this arrangement started in that I have the area of Innisfail in my electorate which is about an hour's drive from my electorate office and there were very few state government options in terms of being able to have meetings. I brokered a deal with the local council to be able to have my meetings in the former mayor's office at the council itself and from there it was an ability for me to utilise that space. Going forward it made perfect sense given the number of mayors and councillors who continually come to Brisbane with lobbying efforts of government to ensure that they had somewhere that they could base themselves to conduct these meetings.

With that in mind, we worked closely with the Local Government Association of Queensland to develop an MOU which was enabling councils to opt in for this mutual access agreement and essentially conduct their business. The benefit for members of parliament is that if they are able to, particularly members in western and rural Queensland who have limited options in terms of being able to base themselves somewhere, if a council has opted in they are able to utilise, in the same way I did, council offices to conduct that business. I think it is a terrific outcome that they are able to utilise that space. To me this is a win-win.

I am surprised that we had not thought of it earlier, but in that regard it is an outcome where we have seen 18 councils already opt in, with a really positive response from the LGAQ membership broadly. Over time we will see that number grow. On any base, it is terrific to see a good working relationship between two levels of government and a partnership which is going to be providing mutual benefit. Of course, as we know, the leveraging of each other's facilities to increase the reach of local government as well as members of parliament to represent their constituents could only be a good thing for people who need their representatives to be close to them, as they should be, providing that representation that they are elected to do.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The time allocated for the committee's examination of this portfolio has now expired. We did note that you were hoping to get back to us with some further information, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, and the Clerk has some updated information for the benefit of the committee.

Mr Laurie: Mr Chair, just in relation to the figures Mr Speaker gave before, some of the issues are that some of the budget savings are across the forward estimates and continue through the forward estimates. Some only went for two years or so of the forward estimates and some have been one-off. The totals for each year are as follows: 2017-18 was \$264,000; 2018-19 was \$305,000; 2019-20 was \$529,000; and 2020-21 was \$1,028,000. That should total \$2.126 million.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for that clarification. We note that there are therefore no questions taken on notice at this stage. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank Mr Speaker, the Clerk and the parliamentary officers for their attendance. Is there anything you would like to add briefly, Mr Speaker, before the closing of this session?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Chair. Briefly I just want to reiterate how it has been a challenging year for everyone and extend my heartfelt gratitude to the parliamentary staff for the work that they have done over the course of 2020 particularly. I want to thank the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the executive team as well as my Office of the Speaker, led by George Hasanakos. We have all worked hard to ensure that we have been able to get through this year and obviously we are looking forward to turning our attentions to hopefully a much safer and brighter 2021.

I again thank this committee for the opportunity to appear before you today but also want to extend my best wishes to all of the other committees over the period of estimates that play such an important role in ensuring that there is an opportunity for the government to talk about its successes and also the opportunity for the opposition and crossbenches to hold the government to account. The estimates process is one of the absolutely pivotal institutions of our democracy here in Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I wish to just extend that on behalf of the committee. Thanks to all of the officers for what has been a difficult year. We will now adjourn for a break and the hearing will resume at 10 with an examination of the areas of the portfolios of the Premier and Minister for Trade. Given that we only have a small amount of time before the start of the next session, I ask all witnesses to vacate the entire chamber quickly to facilitate a quick changeover to allow the committee to keep its hearing schedule determined by the House.

Proceedings suspended from 9.48 am to 10.00 am.

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

In Attendance

Hon. A Palaszczuk, Premier and Minister for Trade

Mr J Murphy, Chief of Staff

Mr T Linley, Principal Policy Advisor

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Mr D Stewart, Director-General


Mr M Cridland, Deputy Director-General (Policy)

Integrity Commissioner

Dr N Stepanov

Trade and Investment Queensland

Mr P Martyn, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Premier and Minister for Trade. My name is Linus Power, member for Logan, chair of the committee. Mr Ray Stevens, member for Mermaid Beach is the deputy chair. The other members are Mr Michael Crandon, member for Coomera; Mrs Melissa McMahon, member for Macalister; Mr Dan Purdie, member for Ninderry; and Mr Adrian Tantari, member for Hervey Bay. Visiting members here with us today are Mr David Crisafulli, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Broadwater; Ms Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore; Mr Stephen Andrew, the member for Mirani; and Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa.

The committee will examine the Premier's portfolio areas until 1.30. We will suspend proceedings during this time from 11.45 to 12 noon. I remind those present 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 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, of course, should be brief, relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion.

I intend to guide the proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored fully to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members. I remind you that officers are permitted to use their mobile phones and electronic devices but ensure that they are switched to silent mode. I also remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Premier, director-general, officials, department officers and, of course, members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard I ask officials and advisors to please 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 area of Premier and Minister for Trade open for examination. The question that the committee is examining before us today is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Chair, and members of the committee. This is my government's sixth budget and the first of our new term. Like most things in 2020 it is not like anything we are used to, but it is the right response at the right time aimed squarely at helping our state recover from the devastating impacts of COVID-19.

Today Queensland has little more than a dozen active cases. On Friday the United States recorded 200,000 new cases and 2,804 deaths in just a single day. It is reported that an American dies from COVID every 30 seconds. I have never been more grateful to live in this country. I think most

people accept that no-one can repair the economic costs of the pandemic if you do not control the health impacts first, and that is exactly what we have done. In other words, you cannot have an economic recovery if people are sick and unable to work.

Last week the news sites in Queensland quoted international studies of how communities globally have handled the virus. It concluded that 'limiting the economic damage caused by the pandemic starts and ends with controlling COVID-19. This has been Queensland's approach.' As the story said, we can be satisfied the approach of the Queensland government stands as world's best practice. At every stage I have credited our success to the hard work and sacrifice of every single Queenslander. The reward is having an economy that is open and trading. This was backed up by ratings agency Standard & Poor's, which maintained Queensland's AA-plus rating in the wake of the budget, saying—

Queensland has so far been successful in suppressing the spread of the virus, allowing its economy to open and budget to recover sooner than many of its domestic and international peers.

Our budget builds on the success of our health response and economic recovery plan, which the people of Queensland endorsed at the election. After any natural disaster, our approach is always to build back better. That is what the budget does for Queensland's economy: building in greater resilience by supporting the industries we have as well as the ones we will need in the future, backing more local manufacturing and more skills training and embarking on an ambitious agenda of building more infrastructure. All of this hits the same target—the creation of jobs. This budget builds and delivers seven new satellite hospitals, nine new schools, a new highway, a new freeway, 20 trains, \$6 billion worth of concessions lowering the cost of living, cheaper water for farmers, cheaper electricity, \$1 billion in small business loans and a savings and debt plan that will deliver \$3 billion over the next four years.

The budget also unashamedly delivers more teachers, doctors, nurses, police and firefighters to serve the needs of our vast state. These professionals not only deliver vital services to the most remote areas of our state, but also they are vital to the economic and social fabric of those rural and remote communities. More than two-thirds of Queensland's public servants live and work outside of Brisbane. They work in our TAFEs, care for our aged and work with people with disability. Today I can reveal the September Public Service numbers have grown since the March quarter. They have grown by 0.68 per cent—less than seven-tenths of one per cent. Nearly 95 per cent of the increased numbers were in the departments of health and education. Nine out of 10 are in the front line or in frontline support.

I advise the committee that a short time ago I met with the Australian Olympic Committee president, John Coates, and agreed to reform the all-party, all level of government committee in the new year. We will await the outcome of the Tokyo Olympics before making a formal commitment in relation to funding. However, I am very positive with the fact that all levels of government want to see this committee set up again next year. I have asked John Coates to address our cabinet in February. I cannot stress enough that to do this Queenslanders will need the support of every level of government. This will be something I will discuss with the Prime Minister when we meet next week at national cabinet. We only have to see what Queensland was able to achieve for sports this year; it was Queensland's health response that allowed professional sport to resume here before anywhere else in the world. Finally, I commend the estimates process that proceeds this year in full, as it should. Over to you.

CHAIR: Normally at this point I turn to my erstwhile Deputy Chair. Deputy Chair, do you or a member of the opposition have a question?

Mr STEVENS: Chair, may I pass through to the Leader of the Opposition for his first question.

CHAIR: I recognise the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Broadwater.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Firstly to the Premier, staff and officials, thank you for your time in getting estimates up and running in a very truncated period. Thank you for your efforts. Could I call the Integrity Commissioner to the front table as her answers will be very important in this section? The first question is to the Premier. Premier, have you complied with the ministerial code of conduct and signed and dated each of your staff member's register of interests?

CHAIR: I call the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to existing staff prior to the election, my understanding is that that has been complied with. As there is a changeover in staff, that will be done as soon as practical.

Mr CRISAFULLI: So not as yet?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We have just had an election.

CHAIR: Hold on, Premier.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I can move on.

CHAIR: I am not asking you to move on.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I am happy with that answer, Mr Chairman, thank you.

CHAIR: Hold on, member for Broadwater. I was actually just addressing it. The question and answer was absolutely clear. I do not want to have a commentary on questions. If you have a question, put the question. Premier, did you have anything to conclude on that?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As the final compilation of staff is being worked out, as soon as that final compilation is completed, yes, then every single member who joins the Office of the Premier has to fill out that form and I sign that form as per the requirements.

CHAIR: I recognise the Leader of the Opposition for a question.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Did any of the Premier's office staff members have a conflict of interest with their duties?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not have that on me at the moment, and nor would you expect me to have all of those details on me at the moment.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Chairman, can I ask when did Jon Persley join the Premier's office as a staff member?

CHAIR: Who are you addressing the question to?

Mr CRISAFULLI: To the Premier. The same line of questioning.

CHAIR: Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have to find that out.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Persley has until recently been the national assistant secretary of the Labor Party. How did the Premier manage the conflict of interest of a taxpayer funded staff member also having a very busy role in the Australian Labor Party?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding—and I will get this confirmed—is that he had to take leave from that role whilst he worked in my office, which he has done. He is now taking official leave whilst he completes the tenure of that role before returning to my office.

Mr CRISAFULLI: To be clear, when Mr Persley was in Canberra he had taken leave in that period, whilst he was undertaking those roles?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is what I am advised.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, have you familiarised yourself with any conflict of interest involving that staff member and his role in that office?

Mr Stewart: I have not been made aware of any conflict of interest in relation to Mr Persley. I have not sighted his management plan, but I am very aware of the obligations of conflicts of interest, as I am particularly with public servants. As you probably appreciate, my greatest focus is on conflicts of interest around public servants, those in my office and those in my department. As you are aware, my own conflicts of interest are published on the Public Service Commission website and I regularly get advice from the Integrity Commissioner in relation to my conflicts of interest. I am also aware of the conflicts of interest of my staff and my departmental staff.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, it is reported that Evan Moorhead and Cameron Milner were involved in the Premier's election strategy. How were they engaged to the Premier's office? Were they a contractor or a consultant? By what means were they engaged?

Mr Stewart: I am unaware of how they were engaged, but I can advise that, in relation to Mr Moorhead, the acting director-general last year wrote to Mr Moorhead reminding him very clearly of his obligations. I have done the same.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Were they given office space?

Mr Stewart: I do not manage the Office of the Premier.

Mr CRISAFULLI: What about in terms of accessing 1 William Street? Were they provided with cards to get in? Was that done through a company or as an individual?

Mr Stewart: I am not aware of the details around that. I am aware that both of those gentlemen were on our floor but I am not aware of how they were accessing the building.

Mr CRISAFULLI: If they were using the floor and there was a joint role, as both their role funded by the taxpayer and also as a consultant, were they using consumables, for example?

Mr Stewart: I am not aware—

CHAIR: If I might interrupt. We had a question earlier from the member for Kawana asking whether there needed to be reference to the SDS. It is not strictly relevant to ask for a section of the SDS, but we must see that it is relevant to the expenditure of the budget. This seems to be straying well outside—

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Chairman, with the greatest of respect, office accommodation is a key line item in the budget for both the opposition and the government. In the same way that we have to make a contribution to office space, so does the government.

CHAIR: I understand that—

Mr CRISAFULLI: My question, Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: I am sorry, member for Broadwater: when the chair speaks, have some decency.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR: This seems to be straying away from anything that could make a reference to whether or not someone accessed the building. When I do make a point, I do not wish to be talked over. That is a reasonable thing, which keeps the flow of this going.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Sure.

CHAIR: I recognise the member for Broadwater and Leader of the Opposition for a question.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Thank you, Mr Chairman. My question is around the expenditure of taxpayers' funds. Did those gentlemen who were operating there make a contribution towards consumables? Were they given a car park in the building? Did they incur expenses that the taxpayer paid for whilst they were making money as a third-party consultant?

Mr Stewart: I am unaware—

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is not right. Excuse me, Chair. That is an imputation.

Mr CRISAFULLI: It is a question, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is an imputation in the question and the question is deliberately misleading.

CHAIR: Premier, are you raising a point of order?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am.

CHAIR: The point of order is that the question contained an imputation. Imputations usually are of the person being questioned. In this case, though, it seems to be argumentative that we are asserting a fact and then making an argument upon it. It is not generally within the standing orders, but probably that is the intention of the Leader of the Opposition. Leader of the Opposition, I counsel you to keep within the standing orders broadly.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will briefly read from a section of an *Australian* article titled 'Top Labor lobbyists Cameron Milner, Evan Moorhead behind historic campaign'. It states—

Senior government sources are outraged, with one telling *The Australian*, "we wondered whether we were fighting for a Labor win or their clients' interests". "They just appeared (at 1 William Street) one day and were in charge," ...

Director-General, were lobbyists directing government employees?

Mr Stewart: I do not think that that is a question for me.

CHAIR: Did you have a point of order, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. The Leader of the Opposition is reading from an article. They were not in charge.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is an imputation in the article.

CHAIR: We do note that asserting an argument by reading from an article does not bring it any more credibility.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will ask the Premier a question, if that is okay, through you, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR: There was a question put.

Mr CRISAFULLI: The question was if lobbyists were directing government employees and the director-general said he was not aware.

Mr Stewart: I am happy to say very clearly in relation to Mr Moorhead that he was made very aware of his obligation and his post-separation obligations. I am sure both gentlemen understand their roles as lobbyists. They are registered lobbyists on the lobbyist list and they understand their obligations under the legislation.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And there is a code of conduct.

Mr Stewart: There is a code of conduct, Premier; I completely concur with that. In relation to employment by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, I cannot see their names or their company names anywhere on the contract disclosure that we made, so they were not employed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in relation to any contracting or consulting services.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Nor were they employed by the Office of the Premier, so there is no taxpayers' funds to my knowledge.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Chairman, with due respect, you asked me to comply with the authority of the chair—

CHAIR: Premier, if there is something that you wish to add, I will put the question to you: do you feel it useful to add to that question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Just to say that my understanding is that they were not paid by the taxpayers at any stage during the election campaign. I am making that very clear because the Leader of the Opposition is doing a lot of imputations here, trying to say that they were employed by either the Department of Premier and Cabinet or they were employed by my office, and they were not.

CHAIR: Similar to any other volunteers that perhaps visited the opposition?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Correct and under the code of conduct—

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Chairman, a lot of businesses would like free space in 1 William Street.

CHAIR: With respect, Leader of the Opposition, that was a question that I put in the government's time. I put the question: it is similar then to any other volunteer who visited the opposition leader's offices?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Correct.

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

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes I do, Mr Chairman. Premier, what conflict of interest checks were done?

Ms PALASZCZUK: They had to comply with the Lobbyists Code of Conduct, which they are both aware of.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Were they given access to government resources whilst in that building?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Not to my knowledge.

Mr CRISAFULLI: No car parks?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Not to my knowledge.

Mr CRISAFULLI: No computers? Staff were not reallocated to allow space at 1 William Street?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I was actually out on the road most of the time, but my understanding was that Cameron Milner was seated next to a couple of staff members.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will ask a question of the Integrity Commissioner. Integrity Commissioner, you are responsible for overseeing lobbying activities but you do not have investigative powers for that; is that correct?

Dr Stepanov: I am responsible for lobbying under the Integrity Act 2009. Whilst I do not have any investigative powers, it is open to me to refer any matters of concern to either the Queensland police or the Crime and Corruption Commission.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Do you support a review of lobbying in your role as overseeing lobbying in Queensland?

CHAIR: With respect, one of the standing orders is that we not seek the opinion of witnesses. Dr Stepanov would be aware of that. It might be within your understanding of how to answer that question within the role of the office that you hold.

Dr Stepanov: Of course and thank you for the question. In relation to the functions of the Integrity Commissioner, the next strategic review into the functions of the Integrity Commissioner is due next year, with the strategic reviewer to be appointed by February 2021. I think that provides an opportune time for all of the functions of the Integrity Commissioner to be considered deeply by the strategic reviewer and with recommendations made to you as a committee.

CHAIR: As a committee, we have made a variety of questions at times when you have appeared before us.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Premier, I certainly welcome the review into this matter. Does the Premier rule out the continuation of the practice of lobbyists consulting during an election campaign in the manner they were at this particular time?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I say very clearly to the Leader of the Opposition, under the *Lobbyists Code of Conduct*—and I draw his attention to No. 3, Standards of Conduct for Lobbyists, point (g), which states—

Lobbyists shall keep directly separate from their duties and activities as lobbyists any personal activity or involvement on behalf of a political party.

They have to comply with that code. Also the lobbyists' code of conduct has some of the strictest compliance in the country when compared with other states. It was introduced by a former Labor government. Everyone is aware of their roles. The code allows for the separation of lobbying activity from other activities. I also can advise the committee that Cameron Milner had car park access but no use of any other resources.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, have options for the terms of reference for a strategic review of the Integrity Commissioner been considered as yet?

Mr Stewart: No, we are in the process. As Dr Stepanov said, that review is happening early next year. We will be working on the terms of reference for consideration by the Premier and the committee.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, could you provide what the value of a car park would be at 1 William Street?

Mr Stewart: Can I take that on notice, please? I will have to find that information.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, would you consider asking that payment be made back to the taxpayer for the use of that car park?

Mr Stewart: I will find the details on the facts and report back to the Premier.

CHAIR: On that, the rules are that the minister or, in this case the Premier, undertakes to take a question on notice. It might be something that we come back to at the beginning of the next session of questions. Is it a regular occurrence, Premier, that—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Visitors can be allocated a car park to come to 1 William Street—that is not unusual—as I am quite sure that visitors to the opposition office can be allocated a car park.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Exactly. That conflicted with the earlier answer. It is a pretty good deal to get a car park at 1 William Street I would have thought.

CHAIR: Order! Leader of the Opposition, this is really disappointing. The rules that I read out clearly ask that we put questions directly and simply, not engage in argument. The Premier absolutely has made clear this point. I ask you to respect the standing orders of the parliament that apply to this—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Excuse me, Chair, to clarify, it was a visitor car park which is utilised by other visitors as well.

Mr CRISAFULLI: With the access log, are you prepared to table—

CHAIR: I have not made the call yet, Leader of the Opposition. Thank you, Premier. Leader of the Opposition, do you have a question?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes, Mr Chairman. Could those access logs be made available, please?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not think we have access logs.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Well, of course. It is all digitally done.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a visitor car park and my understanding is he was not there every single day.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Every time the pass is swiped—

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater! Sorry, Premier. Three times during the Premier's answer to the question you attempted to badger the witness. This is creating—

Mr CRISAFULLI: Asking if a log could be tabled, a computer log to a building, Mr Chairman? I think—

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater, I will take you through it simply. You put the question, wait for the answer, then put a second question. What you do not do—and I make it clear that this rule applies to everyone on all sides—is put a question and continue to badger through the answer of the witness. This is decent and reasonable respect. I ask you to follow the standing rules of the parliament. Premier, had you finished before you were interrupted?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, we might be able to get the vehicle logs of people who access the opposition office as well, if they would like to be fulsome and accountable as well.

CHAIR: I do not think that was the question being put, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think it is very relevant that—

Mr CRISAFULLI: We do not have any lobbyists working there.

Mr STEVENS: Point of order. That answer is not relevant to the question whatsoever, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Premier, please stay relevant to the question being put and not go into other areas. Member for Broadwater, I have made it absolutely clear that I do not wish to see you badger the witness or any witnesses before us after you have put a question. Put a question and then allow the answer to be put.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, back to the role of the Integrity Commissioner, is the review going to examine the investigative powers of the Integrity Commissioner and whether or not the commissioner is able to deal with issues like lobbyists?

CHAIR: I note that this question had already been put and the Director-General had said that they had not got the terms. However, you can ask a specific question on whether the terms have not been put. Director-General?

Mr Stewart: You are right, there are no investigative powers at the moment. The terms of reference of the strategic review have not been concluded, so those options are there for the Premier and the committee to consider. That is up to the committee and the Premier at the end of the day. We will look at all those aspects and we will look at all aspects of the Integrity Act and the Integrity Commissioner's role.

CHAIR: On the point of order, repetitive questions are out of order. In this case, when a question has already been answered, we are straying into the form of repetitiveness.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Premier, the charter letters, which are your expectations to your ministers, are the same as the last term when it comes to integrity. Why have you not updated the integrity standards of those charter letters?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The charter letters have been sent out.

Mr CRISAFULLI: That is right. There is a section in there that mirrors the one from last time in terms of the integrity standards. I note they have not been updated. Is there a reason behind that?

CHAIR: I can tell by the premise—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not understand the premise of your question.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will move on, but it is still along the line of the charter letters—

CHAIR: Sorry, no—

Mr CRISAFULLI: No, I am happy to move on, Mr Chairman. I have asked the question and I am happy to move on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We will actually get a copy of the charter letter so we can refer to what the Leader of the Opposition is—

Mr CRISAFULLI: It is the same section on integrity and accountability.

CHAIR: Both the Premier and I are uncertain of the meaning of—

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Chairman, we only have a very small time line, so I am happy to move on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. We would like to find this out first.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Does the Premier intend to maintain her edict that ministers should not use private email addresses when dealing with stakeholders?

CHAIR: I think the Premier might still be trying to puzzle through the question on ministerial letters.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to the section that was sent out to the ministers, as part of their charter letters, it says, 'All ministers and their staff demonstrate transparent, accountable and ethical behaviour and make all decisions and take all actions in the public interests'—

Mr CRISAFULLI: It is the same as 2017, word for word.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, 'without regard to personal, party political or other immaterial considerations'. In addition to that, my recollection is that the Integrity Commissioner also addressed cabinet. We are trying to make that a regular feature as well. I have also written to all ministers.

CHAIR: Premier, the member for Broadwater had gone onto a second question which—

Mr CRISAFULLI: Does the Premier intend to maintain her edict that ministers should not use private email addresses when dealing with stakeholders?

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to what?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Private email addresses, things like 'mangocube'?

CHAIR: Premier, please do not address questions in response. If you are seeking a clarification—

Ms PALASZCZUK: If the member for Broadwater could give an example, if he has an example.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will read the question again, Mr Chairman. Does the Premier intend to maintain her edict that ministers should not use private email addresses when dealing with stakeholders? Does that still stand?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. There were changes made to the *Ministerial Handbook*.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Does the Premier maintain she was not the recipient of any of the 'mangocube' emails?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have to go back and check. I do not have that information on me.

CHAIR: Member for Noosa, did you have a question?

Ms BOLTON: Yes, thank you, Chair. Good morning, everybody—

Ms PALASZCZUK: That has nothing to do with this budget.

CHAIR: You had not finished, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are doing the 2020-21 budget.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I am asking whether or not there are the same standards for private email usage.

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater, you do not have the call.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, it is in the handbook and the handbook was updated.

CHAIR: Premier, thank you. Member for Noosa, you had a question?

Ms BOLTON: Premier, I refer to page 11 of the SDS regarding the delivery of the legislative agenda and processes. When will an independent review of the sessional orders be undertaken to ensure that speaking allocations and other issues brought forward by members of the parliament can be assessed and addressed?

Ms PALASZCZUK: If this is in relation to parliament, member for Noosa, my understanding is that the Committee of Legislative Assembly would look at those specifics in detail.

CHAIR: Now we turn to the member for Hervey Bay. Do you have a question?

Mr TANTARI: Thank you, Chair. With reference to page 1-11 of the SDS and the role of DPC in supporting the COVID-19 response, how does the 2020 budget provide resourcing to ensure Queenslanders remain safe?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for that very important question. As we know, our health response is incredibly important when we are dealing with COVID. We have allocated \$1.2 billion in additional resources for Health. That included establishing fever clinics, expanding emergency department capacity and providing acute care services and regional aeromedical services for remote communities.

It was wonderful to be in Hervey Bay before you were elected, member for Hervey Bay, to open the brand new ED service at Hervey Bay which, I am quite sure, members of your community are dealing with at length. This has been a critical investment in protecting the health of Queenslanders, which has supported Queensland's economy to lead the nation out of recession. The 2020 budget delivers another \$360.5 million in investment to support the continued operation of fever clinics, contact tracing, 13HEALTH, aeromedical services, the facilitation of quarantine and government arranged accommodation and, of course, manufacturing our own PPE because that was one of the biggest issues we had. This funding will ensure that our frontline health staff and police are properly prepared and resourced to respond to future outbreaks. I make no apologies for hiring more health workers than population growth during the worst global pandemic we have ever seen.

In my opening statement today I updated the House on the public sector workforce September 2020 as embedded in the budget. The report shows that numbers have increased by 0.68 per cent. That is less than seven-tenths of one per cent. Of the 1,588 increase since March 2020, 94.8 per cent were in health or education. Some 1,100 were teachers, teacher aides, doctors, nurses or health practitioners. As of September 2020, there were 234,142 full-time equivalent employees and nine out of 10 work as frontline or frontline support staff.

At this stage, I want to recognise the efforts that have been made throughout the state by our doctors, nurses, health professionals and paramedics, especially in making sure we had everything ready in our hospitals. Also, I want to pay tribute to Dr Jeannette Young who worked very closely with former health minister, Steven Miles, and now works closely with the current health minister, Yvette D'Ath. I pay tribute to our police who were on the frontline and the large numbers of police and SES for their assistance at the borders. There were also health professionals and police assisting people coming in from other states and international arrivals in hotel quarantine.

We have to continue to be vigilant. What we are seeing as a daily occurrence now is more people coming in from overseas who are in hotel quarantine testing positive. That is because of the massive outbreaks we are seeing in the Northern Hemisphere. There was a report last night that in California ICUs in some areas are now stretched to capacity. Doctors are saying that they simply do not have enough staff to cope with what is happening in the US. We have to be vigilant and our hotel quarantine is absolutely paramount.

Mrs McMAHON: With reference to page 1-10 of the SDS and Queensland's economic recovery plan to Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs, how are jobs supported in the 2020 budget?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. This budget is all about jobs. It is all about creating jobs. It is about the economy and making sure that we can get people back into work. Queensland Treasury is now forecasting 160,000 jobs to be created over the year to the June quarter 2021. We want to do everything we can to help get Queenslanders back into work. It is wonderful to see that we have actually had the pre-COVID numbers of jobs restored. It is an amazing success story, when you think about it, to be in this position so quickly—that is, where we started the year to where we will end the year.

We also have our huge \$56 billion infrastructure program which will support 46,000 jobs over the next year, including 28,700 jobs outside greater Brisbane. That will build on our infrastructure investment of more than \$50 billion over the last five years. Our infrastructure program will include: productivity enhancing upgrades to the Bruce Highway; funding for a second Bruce, which I am excited about—the inland freight route; expansion to the Port of Townsville; and a second M1, the Coomera Connector. We are locking in future investments to support jobs, including: making trains in Maryborough as part of our \$1 billion manufacturing pipeline supporting 600 jobs; securing the future of the Mount Isa copper smelter and Townsville refinery supporting more than 1,000 job; and an allocation of \$600 million for our great Works for Queensland program which is now adopted in SEQ and called the SEQ community stimulus program that means more than 17,000 jobs will be created. We also have \$171 million to improve palliative care services. That will support more than 290 jobs. Programs such as the Bells Creek arterial will unlock private sector investment as well. There are a lot of job-generating programs contained as part of the budget.

CHAIR: Referring to 1-11 of the SDS and the work that Queensland has put in on Queensland's economic recovery plan, what skills initiatives are included to support Queensland's economic recovery?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Having skills is absolutely vital for the future. What we have been able to do over the course of this year is actually map the skills needed for the regions. That work in that detail has not happened before. I thank the departments for the hard work they have put into narrowing that.

We want to partner with schools and industry to look at the skills they need for the particular regions. For example, hydrogen will be studied at Gladstone State High School. There will be an upgrade to the trade training centre at Woodcrest State College to prepare students for jobs in aviation engineering which is near there. Aquaculture will be studied at Rockhampton State High School and Bowen State High School. The one at Bowen is really interesting because just south of Bowen there is the very large Tassal aquaculture farm. That means that students will be able to get long-term, secure jobs in an industry which is growing around them. There will be agricultural facilities at Kingaroy State High School, St George State High and Roma State College.

In addition, we are committing another \$100 million to invest in upgrades to TAFE across Queensland, including a new automatic training centre in Mackay for the resources sector, new agricultural centres of excellence in Bowen, Toowoomba and Bundaberg, a hydrogen and renewables training centre in Townsville and a metal trades manufacturing and robotics centre in Bundamba. The member for Hervey Bay will probably be very excited about the nursing and allied health upgrades at the Hervey Bay TAFE. I know that is going to be needed, especially now that we have upgraded the hospital there. There will be a robotics and advanced manufacturing centre at the Eagle Farm.

In addition, we are delivering another \$21 million in free TAFE and free apprenticeships for people under 25 across 165 priority qualifications, supporting 37,000 placements. These priority areas include emerging industry such as aeroskills, electrical and gasfitting, engineering, electrotechnology as well as health services, hospitality, disability support and early childhood education.

CHAIR: I call the member for Hervey Bay who is getting all that skills training.

Mr TANTARI: I refer to page 1-11 of the SDS which refers to strategic analysis of the state's economic recovery. You mentioned manufacturing in one of your replies earlier, which is interesting. How will manufacturing be supported to create jobs as part of Queensland's economic recovery strategy?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for the question. Queensland's manufacturing sector is one of the key objectives of our economic recovery plan. Manufacturing contributes around \$20 billion a year to our economy and supports 165,000 jobs. I think we will see that increasing over the years as we make a conscious effort to manufacture more in Queensland. I think that is what Queenslanders want to see. They want to see us supporting Queenslanders. That is exactly what we are going to do.

Importantly, over 80 per cent of manufacturing jobs are full-time. That is why it is important that we give young people the opportunity to get into manufacturing jobs because they are long-term, secure jobs. That is what people keep saying to me—they want long-term, secure jobs. That is why attracting additional investment to supply chains and manufacturing is central to our plan to diversify the economy.

When COVID-19 hit, everyone around the world realised that we were all essentially in the pandemic around the same time. In terms of the supply chains, I can remember those early meetings when not just in Queensland but nationally and around the world people needed things at the same time. That is why we have been partnering with businesses such as Logan business Evolve to make the N95 medical masks. We also have a manufacturer of masks on the north side of Brisbane.

Our Made in Queensland manufacturing grants have supported \$68 million in private investment to lift the competitiveness of our manufacturing, supporting almost 4,000 jobs. This includes Luina Bio in my electorate who are now making vaccines for meningococcal and influenza for human trials and have expanded to employ an extra 50 staff. Bundaberg Brewed Drinks is also a great success story. They have expanded their facility to scale up production to create 40 new jobs. They are looking at moving very shortly because they cannot expand quick enough to meet the demand. Their products are going into more and more markets around the world.

We have also secured Rheinmetall's Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence to build armoured vehicles in Queensland and Boeing to make the first military aircraft in over half a century in Queensland—the Boeing Loyal Wingman—that will support over 500 direct jobs.

I think this next one is very exciting: we are providing support to Vaxxas to locate in Queensland to manufacture a patch delivery system for vaccines globally, creating 139 new jobs over 10 years. I think the idea of having a patch rather than having a full-on injection is going to appeal to a lot of people, including a lot of people in this room.

Manufacturing trains is really important. The supply chain investment of a billion dollars to support Maryborough and Rockhampton will support over 600 jobs. I think you can see from those examples I have given that there is a lot of opportunity. There is the Cairns Marine Precinct plus other areas all around Queensland.

CHAIR: I now turn to the member for Macalister.

Mrs McMAHON: Premier, I refer to page 1-11 of the SDS which outlines the department's role on the COVID-19 response, including Health. What investments will be included in the budget to improve Queensland's health capacity?

Ms PALASZCZUK: This budget unashamedly invests in health. It is a record investment of \$21.8 billion in the budget to support the construction and upgrades to major hospitals. I am really excited about the new satellite hospitals—that was very, very well received, especially during our election campaign when we were out there talking about that with people—ambulance stations, as well as boosting resources on the front line.

Our commitment is to build the new satellite hospitals—Redlands, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Bribie Island, Pine Rivers, Brisbane South and Caboolture. It will mean that people do not have to travel long distances to go to the bigger hospitals. They will be able to get the care that they need closer to home. I think that is going to appeal to a lot of people. I met a couple on Bribie Island and they were talking about how they had to make the long trips. Being able to have that resource closer to home would mean so much to them, especially as our population is ageing, it means less trouble for them having to travel further away from home to get treatment.

In Rockhampton, we are delivering our commitment for a new Rockhampton Hospital cardiac theatre; in Townsville, a new hybrid theatre, pain management service, an outpatient department and \$40 million for the Kirwan Health Campus; and in Cairns, our \$67.9 million commitment towards transforming Cairns into a university hospital, including \$15 million to acquire land for a research, education and innovation precinct.

CHAIR: Premier, with reference to 1-22 of the SDS and TIQ's role to grow diversified exports, which we know are so vital, and to attract jobs creating international investment, what are some recent outcomes that have been achieved to support jobs in Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We have some very exciting news today. I think we have a pumpkin to table. I am excited to announce today that the first shipment of Orange Glow pumpkins from Queensland arrived in Japan on 23 November. There we are: there is the pumpkin.

The export deal for Orange Glow pumpkins follows an introduction made by the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities as part of Queensland's first ever virtual trade mission to Japan in September 2020. Minister Furner introduced Daintree Fresh Director, seed breeder and grower at Orange Glow, Shaun Jackson, and Brisbane based exporter Harrowsmiths International to Wismettac Foods. The Orange Glow pumpkin is a new variety grown at Lakeland in North Queensland and is known for its unique nutritional and dietary features.

Mr STEVENS: Is that for all committee members, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Just wait till I get to it. There is something for you, member for Mermaid Beach. You are going to love it!

The location of the farm is perfect for growing clean, green pumpkins. The Orange Glow pumpkin took 13 years to breed and is set to have four times the nutrition of traditional pumpkins. Earlier this year we also saw a shipment of squash exported to Japan as part of the department of agriculture's Growing Queensland's Food Exports Program. Today we have a very interesting development for everyone here. Today we have made both an Orange Glow pumpkin scone using Lady Flo's recipe and a kabocha squash scone made with Curtis Stone's recipe. The committee can decide which one they prefer. This will be a real test.

There are no better pumpkins than Queensland pumpkins and they do not need to be as big as Lawrence Springborg's pumpkins. My government will continue to support the growth of our fruit and vegetable growers with our commitment to cut water costs for horticulture by 50 per cent and 15 per cent for irrigated water farmers using Queensland's irrigation schemes. I look forward to these being the first of many new fruit and vegetable exports into Japan and other markets to our north.

On previous trade missions I promoted Kalfresh to export carrots into Tokyo and last year I helped launch JBS's Queensland beef brand in Japan. By growing our agricultural exports, we will continue to grow jobs all the way from Lakeland in the Far North down to the Darling Downs. Perhaps during the break the chair might be able to experience the scones.

CHAIR: I look forward to it, Premier. Of course, there are no props allowed in general.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We cannot table it.

CHAIR: If there had been a point of order we could have caught you out. It will not be tabled. If we could remove the food from the chamber as well, because there are rules about food in the chamber. We might welcome them to our room downstairs. We will have the scones during the break. They look delicious. I note that the Leader of the Opposition is indicating he has a question.

Mr CRISAFULLI: My question is to the Premier. The Premier denied knowing Mr Mike Kaiser during the election campaign. When did the Premier first learn who Mr Kaiser is?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is an imputation. For the committee, I am happy to go through this. Often the Brisbane press gallery send through questions up to local media journalists. The local media journalists could not pronounce the name and I made a joke. I reject the imputation of the question. Sometimes it is actually quite funny when that happens. It was all done in good taste and in good humour.

CHAIR: Premier, that is fine. I counsel the Leader of the Opposition. If you put forward a point, ensure that you are putting forward something that is commonly accepted rather than putting forward an argument because that is not within the standing orders.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, when did the Premier decide to appoint Mr Kaiser as acting director-general of the resource department?

Mr Stewart: The Premier and I had a discussion with the chief of staff soon after the result of the election was known. We were looking at staff who could act in that role, and of course Mr Kaiser came to mind as a person with exceptional experience in both the private sector and the public sector. He was put forward by the minister as the acting director-general for the department.

Mr CRISAFULLI: The approach was made to Mr Kaiser? Nobody advocated on his behalf?

Mr Stewart: I am not aware of anyone advocating on Mr Kaiser's behalf. I certainly was involved in a three-way discussion between the Premier, myself and Mr Murphy. As you know, under the Public Service Act that appointment is possible, and that has occurred for three months.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Was the Integrity Commissioner's advice sought before approaching him?

Mr Stewart: I understand the Premier sought the Integrity Commissioner's advice.

Mr CRISAFULLI: What did that advice say?

Mr Stewart: I am not at liberty to say what that advice is. That is a matter for the Premier. Certainly, in the appointment letter to Mr Kaiser it was made very clear that he go and receive the Integrity Commissioner's advice. As you appreciate, Mr Kaiser does not commence until early in 2021. My understanding is that he has approached the Integrity Commissioner, and he will seek that advice when he becomes appointed under that role as acting director-general. That was very clear in his appointment letter.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Director-General, how do you believe conflict of interest matters could be dealt with in that particular regard in his ongoing existing role?

Mr Stewart: I think that is a matter that he will discuss with the Integrity Commissioner. We have said very clearly that he must stand aside from his role or take leave from KPMG, but the specifics of that need to be managed by Mr Kaiser. He will get advice from the Integrity Commissioner. He has told me that he will get advice. We have certainly said that he has to. Our initial view was that that could happen. We believe that conflict of interest can be managed.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Did Mr Kaiser provide a declaration of interest before the decision to appoint him?

Mr Stewart: Mr Kaiser provided details of his CV and those sorts of things, and we certainly made it very clear to him in his letter of engagement that he would have to manage conflicts of interest.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Is Mr Kaiser being considered for the role on a permanent basis?

Mr Stewart: That will depend on what happens through the recruitment process. I imagine that Mr Kaiser will be a candidate for the position if he applies. The Public Service Commissioner at the moment is commencing the permanent recruitment process. We are going through the process of selecting the services to support us in advertising, and no doubt I believe that Mr Kaiser will probably. But at the end of the day, that is a matter for Mr Kaiser.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Does the Premier believe Mr Kaiser could maintain a high level of integrity in that role?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not see why not. Let me just say too that from time to time it is not unusual for governments to look outside the Public Service to look at people who have a good reputation in the private sector. My understanding is that Mr Kaiser has been a partner at KPMG for four to five years now. His temporary appointment has been welcomed by the resources sector. They are very happy that he is coming into that acting role.

Mr ANDREW: My question is to the Premier. The first dot point on page 24 of SDS No. 1 states, 'building and maintaining relationships with key international investors to create opportunities ...' My question is about Keswick Island and the relationship with locals and the investment that is happening on Keswick Island at the moment. Premier, what will we be doing as a government to ensure that that relationship does not break down with locals if that investor looks at taking over the lease for these islands and other islands in the Whitsunday group?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you for that question, member for Mirani. It is very important. The Minister for Resources came to speak to me about that just the other day. He mentioned there have been some issues raised by locals on the island. My understanding is, from memory, that he was sending out some departmental people to meet with those concerned residents to discuss their concerns. I think there were issues around access.

Mr ANDREW: It was environmental damage and access, yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are engaging with the Keswick Island Progress Association to work through the matters that have been raised. The issue regarding access to and from the island is a private and commercial matter between the head lessee and the sublessees. As I said, the departmental group is going out to meet with them. My understanding is that I thought it was going to be this week or next week. I will ask the Minister for Resources to liaise directly with you.

Mr ANDREW: Would there be other investment opportunities for these people, given the situation that has transpired?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not know exactly about that. I think it would be unwise for me to comment yet until that departmental group has gone out to meet with the progress association. Like I said, I can ask the minister to update you about how that meeting progresses.

Ms SIMPSON: Can the Premier advise if her former chief of staff, David Barbagallo, received a payout benefit following his departure and if so, how much was that?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have to find out.

Ms SIMPSON: Will the Premier take that on notice?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that he resigned, so we are happy to find out for you. We understand it is normal entitlements under the contract.

CHAIR: Premier, if there is any feedback can you give that to us at the end of the session?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. If it is different to that, I will come back to you.

CHAIR: You have that undertaking.

Ms SIMPSON: Further to that, can the Premier rule out appointing Mr Barbagallo to any government boards or committees or employing him in the Queensland government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that he is now working privately, so there are no plans.

Ms SIMPSON: No plans?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No.

Ms SIMPSON: Premier, did your current chief of staff, Jim Murphy, pay back his \$297,000 termination benefit following his departure as the former Under Treasurer once he commenced as your chief of staff in the 2019-20 financial year?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that he was paid out in accordance with the contract, and they are legal obligations and legal requirements.

Ms SIMPSON: The Premier will confirm that he does not pay back any of that payout—

Ms PALASZCZUK: He does not have to—

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, questions are not to be repetitive, nor are they meant to engage or badger the witness. We have been through this before. The Premier has answered the question. I note that the member for Noosa—the Leader of the Opposition is indicating he has a question.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I am happy to go to the member for Noosa next. I have a series of other questions as a block, if you are happy to stay on this theme.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You can keep going if you want to.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I turn the Premier's attention to the Fraser Island fire. When did the Premier first receive briefing material or any other correspondence from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services relating to the Fraser Island fire?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that it may not have been a briefing note, but my director-general advises me when there are issues around the state, and he would have been advised—I think we knew about the parks, from memory. I would have to go back and check, but we get normal updates about what is happening. Everyone needs to be very well aware that initially the parks service was very comfortable with managing that fire, and when they were uncomfortable with managing it it was moved immediately to the Fire Service, and the commissioner then takes over the lead of that. There were discussions that were happening, my understanding is, between the two, but when it was deemed to be becoming a fire of significance it is then transferred as per the protocols.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Premier. Leader of the Opposition, do you have another question?

Mr CRISAFULLI: So, Mr Chair, at no point during that period did the Premier seek a briefing on that matter?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I get regularly updated.

CHAIR: Also, there was nothing in the answer that indicated that statement, to be honest.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is an imputation.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, I want you to not make assertions. Again, it is not within the standing orders to put argumentative assertions—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have regular updates with the director-general—

CHAIR: Sorry, Premier, I just want to clarify this. The question has been put, and there was an assertion in there that was not based on what the Premier had previously answered. Premier, I ask you if you have any further additions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think it just shows that the Leader of the Opposition does not really know what happens. When there are matters of significance all around the state, the director-general will advise me. We have regular meetings. We catch up on most days and we get verbal updates. The director-general would also talk to the other leaders of the Public Service, and we would be advised. Of course, there are a lot of communications that go through to the director-general and then he verbally advises me.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, do you have another question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: So, yes, I was being kept abreast about the situations on Fraser Island on a regular basis.

CHAIR: Sorry, Premier, I thought you had finished. Leader of the Opposition, do you have a question?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes. Is the Premier satisfied with how that response is going?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think at the moment everybody is concerned about what is happening on Fraser. We have unusually high temperatures at the moment. I know the member for Hervey Bay has been very concerned about the situation of his constituents on the local island as well. We have got unusually high temperatures at the moment, and the winds have been changing dramatically. When it was a danger to the campers, the campers were told not to go. I was advised that that had to happen, when there are evacuations of Kingfisher Bay. We are very concerned. We have the use of Queensland aircraft, but we also today have the use of New South Wales aircraft so we can work in tandem together.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Is the Premier satisfied with the systems in place that would allow the fire to burn for that long before it was handed over from parks to the fire service?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The parks service have done more back-burning over this season than they did in the previous seasons, so more had been done. Of course, we have had unusually high temperatures in Queensland that are usually uncommon for this time of year, and the wind conditions changed. The parks service believed that they could handle it, and then when the wind conditions changed and the direction of the fire changed that is when the fire service became involved.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Noosa, do you have a question?

Ms BOLTON: Premier, I refer to page 11 again of the SDS and the leading innovative policy solutions that align with the governmental objectives and respond to emerging trends. Given the need for greater innovation in the operation and processes of government, can you please outline what is being done to address inefficiencies that are being experienced by communities and their MPs?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can you just give an example of what you are referring to?

Ms BOLTON: Sure. It is the search again for state land in order to address our housing needs. This has been going on for 2½ years now, and the processes, including the transferring from one department to the other, are extensive and very slow.

Ms PALASZCZUK: When you have machinery of government changes after an election, we have the new ministers that are coming in so we do have the transferring of different functions. Could you explain a bit more about what you mean by the housing?

Ms BOLTON: Yes, it is going back 2½ years in trying to identify surplus land in any department to be able to address needs. This is 2½ years now and trying to get land that may be in one department to be transferred to housing. It is an extremely slow process and I think we can do much better and we can do it much quicker.

CHAIR: Premier, is that something you would like to return to?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I think we might need to return to that, but we do have our 10-year Housing Strategy. I do know that the department does look at where there is surplus land and whether or not that can be used for social housing or a variety of other projects. They do have that register. It is something that I am happy to get some more information from the minister on. We can follow that up directly with the member if there is a specific issue in your electorate, if that would be helpful.

Ms BOLTON: There is, and I would appreciate that to happen on some others as well—the long process is causing great angst in our community.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to deal with you directly on that.

CHAIR: That was reasonably specific and it might be something also addressed to the relevant minister directly. I turn now to the Leader of the Opposition. Do you have further questions?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes. Back on the Fraser Island fires, is the Premier satisfied that parks dealt with it in an appropriately timely manner?

CHAIR: We have the rules about seeking an opinion, so it might be better to phrase it in a different manner.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will ask this. Will the Premier advise whether the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services first responders had advised her department that they were ready to respond to the Fraser Island fires over a month before the government directed them to do so?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me say this. That is why I have called for the IGEM report to examine that in detail. There is a terms of reference in relation to that. I think we should not be pre-empting that inquiry as well by speculating, so that is why I will not be giving an opinion. What I will say is that I believe the parks service worked hard. I will say that our department of Fire and Emergency Services is also working very hard to do everything possible, including police, to try to save property and life. That is exactly why the department of Fire and Emergency Services came on board to take over that fire.

There is a terms of reference that is here. My understanding is that Mark Ryan has written to the Inspector-General Emergency Management, that he has asked the office to work closely with stakeholders and the Queensland community, that it considers previous Queensland bushfire reviews and relevant matters from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and that it presents a final review report for the minister's consideration by 31 March 2021. There are terms of reference as well that are very comprehensive. I am happy that that review will be forwarded by the end of March, and as we do always, we make those reviews public.

CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, do you have a follow-up?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Chair, my question is why did the water bomber that the Premier was photographed with sit idly by for so many weeks when such a major fire was in a World Heritage area like that?

Ms PALASZCZUK: If the Leader of the Opposition had listened to question time, it was explained very clearly that the Fire and Emergency Services department make the decision on the operational use of the aircraft. The Premier does not make the operational decision on the use of the aircraft. Let me also say there is a whole range of equipment that is available to the Fire and Emergency Services, and that is why we employ professionals, so they can actually make those decisions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. Leader of the Opposition, did you have any follow-up questions?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes. No-one is disputing how hard both parks and Fire and Emergency Services work. My question is this: is the Premier satisfied with the systems that are in place? The preventative maintenance—are you satisfied with that? The response that took several weeks while Fraser Island burned—is the Premier satisfied with that? That is the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is an opinion.

Mr CRISAFULLI: That is leadership.

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well, you are showing a lack of it. You are showing a lack of understanding of how—

Mr CRISAFULLI: Standing up and making decisions, not sitting by while an island burns.

CHAIR: Order! Member for Broadwater, we have already been through the situation of whether someone was satisfied that something was within the standing orders or was seeking an opinion. Your question there was also going into more of a statement than a question. I guess the Premier could pull out a question from that, but do you have a clear question to put to the Premier? I ask you not to venture into statements.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I do. Will the Premier work on improving the preventative maintenance assessments on our national parks and on the response timelines? Is the Premier committed to both?

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is an IGEM review which is happening and which I asked for. If we go back to that ministerial statement I made in the House, I said that there would be an IGEM review of the situation. I will not have the Leader of the Opposition come in here and criticise staff. They are working incredibly hard.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I didn't, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well, that is what you are implying.

Mr CRISAFULLI: No, Premier; they work very hard.

CHAIR: Order! Member for Broadwater, the question has been put. The Premier will put it in her answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. The member did refer to the large air tanker. Let me put on the record that it was utilised from 17 November 2020 for a total of 31 operations, dropping over 300,000 litres from the LAT. Advice from the experts is that aerial appliances alone cannot put out fires. They are used as a part of a suite of responses and capabilities required to manage fires. The Leader of the Opposition might also recall that I actually argued with the federal government for some extra resources, and that I was denied those extra resources. We went out and commissioned our own. The experts will decide when to use those resources.

In relation to additional money for bushfire management in Queensland Parks and Wildlife, there was an extra \$16 million. My understanding is that the last time the Leader of the Opposition was in a government some cuts were made to the Parks and Wildlife Service. I can also advise that, with 383 planned burns over the state, more than 700,000 hectares of park and forest was taken care of between January and September this year, which I am advised is actually higher than previous years.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. Just as a general comment, we want to keep the conversation from all members down to a minimum. I now turn to the member for Macalister. Do you have a question?

Mrs McMAHON: I refer to page 1-11 of the SDS and support for delivery of federal funding arrangements for schools as well as Queensland's economic recovery plan. How does the economic recovery plan invest in schools to lift productivity?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Macalister will also be aware of how important is investing in our schools because not only does it give our children the great start in life that they need but a government needs to plan for the future and to plan for building new schools. We are opening five new schools in 2021. We will be opening the Gainsborough State School, the Baringa State Secondary

College, the Brisbane South State Secondary College, the Palmview State Primary School and the Palmview State Special School. In 2022 we will open another three schools: a primary school in Caloundra South, a primary school in North Maclean and a special school in Coomera. In 2023 we will open a new primary school in the inner west of Brisbane.

Our total investment in our Building Future Schools Fund is now \$1.7 billion. Having been to a number of the new schools that we opened at the beginning of this year, they are world-class and cater for the educational requirements that our students now need. They are very much more in the open plan mould. The libraries are not like we are used to when we went to school where there were all books; a lot of it now is computer technology. It is great to see that our schools are adapting to that. We should also be very proud of all the teachers, teacher aides and everybody involved; but also, too, building the schools actually created a large number of jobs as well. Most of those jobs involved locals who had been working locally, which is great for the local economy as well.

In addition to our \$1 billion Great Schools Great Future commitment, we will also be building 26 new multipurpose halls and 11 extensions and closures to existing halls at our state schools. This includes new multipurpose halls at Gladstone Central State School, Townsville Community Learning Centre, Noosa District State High School, Pittsworth state high, Warwick state high, Urangan Point State School and Nerang state high. Halls will be extended at Woree State School and Caloundra State School and refurbished at Sandgate District High School and Glenella State High School, about which I am particularly happy.

The funding provides a further \$110 million for refurbishment and renewal projects, including for learning support spaces, and \$50 million for local shovel-ready projects in schools, including upgrades to security fences. The budget also includes \$433 million to build 46 new classrooms and administration buildings. Investing in our young people is the best investment that we can make for our local community.

CHAIR: It is certainly exciting to see that school in Greenbank, North Maclean.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes.

Mr TANTARI: I want to acknowledge the Premier's considerable, ongoing support for regional communities. I refer to page 1-13 of the SDS that outlines enhancements to regional stakeholder engagement to build strong regional economies and communities. How does the 2020 budget invest in Queensland's regions?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course, regional communities right across Queensland mean a lot to us because we are a very decentralised state. Unlike New South Wales and Victoria, we have large numbers of big cities and a lot of rural and regional towns and communities right across our state where we need to make sure that we deliver for those communities in terms of access to good quality health care, schools and any advancements. But, like I said earlier, we need to link those schools with industry to look at what are the jobs needed for the future.

Our budget invests 58 per cent of our infrastructure program outside of greater Brisbane, supporting 28,000 jobs. I mentioned Works for Queensland earlier. In regional Queensland, there is \$400 million supporting 11,000 jobs. Our Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, TIDS, is at \$280 million over four years. The councils love having that program happening out their way. Of course, Works for Queensland provides the ability to kick-start local projects. It was wonderful to visit with the member for Hervey Bay when we went to the botanical gardens. That was just spectacular. I am quite sure there will be quite a few weddings.

Mr TANTARI: There will be.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is probably already booked out by now. It was great to see that that money was put towards that. This is very much use of community infrastructure. Of course, we have investments in the Bruce Highway and the inland freight route which I am really excited about, taking trucks off the Bruce. Major new investment in regional roads includes: \$60 million to the Cairns Western Arterial; \$46 million to the Stewart Drive Stage 2; \$90 million for Riverway Drive Stage 2; and our continuing investment in the Mackay Ring Road.

The Cairns Convention Centre is also underway. It was great to be able to inspect that project recently. Of course, with parliament during this term also going to Cairns, that will be a wonderful opportunity for us to showcase the expanded Cairns Convention Centre. Of course, there is the Far North Queensland film studio.

In Wide Bay, we have the \$600 million pipeline to make the new trains in Maryborough out of the \$1 billion in total work, but of course those jobs will be drawn from all around that Wide Bay region. Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg and all around the region will benefit from the manufacturing of

trains in that region. Of course, the Bundaberg flood levee, \$42.5 million, is very important—over 600 jobs. In Hervey Bay there is the upgrade to the Hervey Bay State High School, including a performing arts centre and additional classrooms of \$15.9 million.

Mrs McMAHON: I refer to page 1-14 of the SDS where it says that there will be a new \$10 million funding package to support Queensland's veterans. How will this funding be distributed?

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is really important for our veterans right across Queensland. I am very proud of the work we have been able to do. They are very important people. Anything the government can do to assist I think is absolutely worthy.

Our new funding to support veterans and their families is a special initiative to make sure a special group of Queenslanders are not left behind in our recovery. We know that some veterans are doing it tough, and we have a responsibility to do what we can to support them and give them the opportunities that we want every Queenslander to enjoy. I think Queenslanders would be surprised and saddened to learn that any veteran would be homeless, yet that is what the most recent research has found. The number of homeless veterans in Australia is much higher than previously thought. That is why we allocated \$1.8 million to tackle veteran homelessness across Queensland with a network of specialist services to reach out to homeless veterans and support them into more stable and secure accommodation.

We have a large defence family here in Queensland. Research conducted by RSL Queensland estimates there are over 20,000 in service and over 174,000 ex service. It is estimated that in any year around 1,300 serving members of the ADF in Queensland will begin their transition to civilian life, many with decades of employment ahead of them. Most veterans make a smooth transition, but for too many finding employment is a significant challenge. That is why we have allocated \$1.1 million for employment initiatives including providing up to 300 free TAFE and apprenticeship places as well as funding for enhancements to our successful veterans employment pathway. We are working with the private sector to develop employment opportunities for veterans in key industries such as defence logistics and resources. We also have a million dollars for Oasis in Townsville to support the delivery of services; \$2.6 million in capital works grants for ex-service organisations and other non-government organisations providing services to veterans; \$1 million for the Anzac Day Trust Fund to financially support veterans affected by COVID; \$600,000 for a pilot service to expand legal assistance and claims advocacy, based in Townsville; \$1.4 million for the Queensland Remembers grants program to support commemorative events and memorials; and \$500,000 for veterans health and wellbeing research grants.

We are also getting more ex-veterans employed across the Public Service. My recollection is that there are now over 600. That is absolutely fantastic. I have already met with my assistant minister, the member for Aspley, and he is looking at making sure this money for veterans rolls out.

CHAIR: The budget refers to the role of the Queensland Industry Recovery Alliance in supporting Queensland's economic recovery plan. Premier, how has the input of the Industry Recovery Alliance shaped the economic recovery plan?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank you for that question. The Industry Recovery Alliance has been critical to the policy development that has driven our economic recovery plan. It was an initiative of mine to bring together all of the peak bodies to work with us in terms of our road maps and rolling out the recovery plan that we now see has basically become our budget. I really want to thank all of those groups that were involved. I do not have everyone here, but I have some examples. We had Ai Group, AgForce, CCIQ, Queensland Farmers' Federation, Master Builders, Queensland Council of Unions, Queensland Tourism Industry Council, LGAQ, Queensland Hotels Association, Queensland Resources Council, Property Council, Infrastructure Association of Queensland and Queensland Conservation Council, to name a few. They were all saying that it was such a good initiative. People came together. When we could not have all of them in the room we had some of them on Zoom. We did that a couple of times, from memory. I think now we can have everyone in the room, which is great.

They all said to me, 'It was such a great initiative. Can it continue post COVID?' My commitment is that we will continue that group. I think it is wonderful to have all of those key stakeholders discuss areas of interest to them. Also, they talk about issues in front of each other so they get a huge realisation that there is a lot of demand out there and that we can only do so much but by working together we can narrow down to their specific goals and come out with some really good solutions. For example, with Master Builders we committed to the \$15,000 First Home Owners' Grant extension, a \$5,000 regional home building boost, a hundred million dollar social housing package and an \$11 million boost to the Household Resilience Program. Following input from the Property Council we established the Building

Acceleration Fund. After advocacy from CCIQ we committed to a second round of \$100 million of small grants of up to \$10,000. That was so successful in the first round—it was taken up so quickly—that we saw there was a huge need to expand that.

On hearing from the Queensland Conservation Council and the Smart Energy Council we committed \$145 million for the Queensland renewable energy zones, then another \$500 million for the Queensland Renewable Energy Fund and our Reef Assist program. Discussions with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council led to our commitments of \$25 million for the Queensland Tourism Icons Program, \$25 million for the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund and \$15 million for airline route support. After discussions with the LGAQ and RAPAD we committed \$200 million for Works for Queensland and \$50 million for the Unite and Recover Community Stimulus Program. Cluster fencing has been a huge success out west. With AgForce, RAPAD and the QFF we committed another \$5 million for cluster fencing, which I think has done a great job in helping to bring back the sheep industry in Queensland.

Mr TANTARI: I refer to page 1-1 of the SDS and the government's objective for the community to grow our tourism sector. How does the 2020 budget invest to support the tourism sector?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Hervey Bay. We know how important tourism is to his region. I can recall that during COVID, during one visit to Hervey Bay I think we had to try three different hotels before we could find somewhere to stay, such was the demand from Queenslanders getting out to support one another. Our Good to Go campaign was very well received. I reported that to parliament last week. We need to make sure our tourism sector is supported.

We have seen that because of our strong health response our economy has been able to recover faster than economies in other parts of Australia. With our strong health response continuing and the fact that people from New South Wales and Victoria are now able to holiday in Queensland, I think that will be the added boost that a lot of our tourism operators need in the lead-up to Christmas and the school holidays. That brings additional issues whereby we are seeing a huge demand for extra cleaners and a whole lot of other support staff in the hospitality, service and accommodation sectors. That is a good problem to have, I think, when you are looking at more jobs. Hopefully there will be a whole lot of university students and people who have finished year 12 who would love to do some summer work, helping our tourism sector. Fingers crossed, that will happen.

As part of our recovery plan we have \$74 million for the Rebuilding Queensland Tourism plan; \$20 million for the new Tourism Activation Fund, where we will work and partner with the tourism industry and councils to develop existing and new Queensland tourism experiences; \$20 million to refresh our events calendar to attract new festivals and events, especially to the regions, where they pump money into local economies and foster local pride; and \$15 million to Tourism and Events Queensland for a marketing blitz to encourage travellers to experience Queensland. Even when I was out west people were saying that tourism was going really well there. From memory, they were saying out in Longreach that by April next year they will need more accommodation.

We are seeing glamping tents and so on being established out there. We have new cabins that are coming up. A lot of people I ran into at Barcaldine and Longreach said that they had not been out there for 20 or 30 years. They were absolutely embracing what Queensland has to offer. We put some money into the new Qantas facility as well. The light show is incredible. There are also the attractions around Winton. The small infrastructure grant fund for outback Queensland that we put in place works extremely well. Those small grants of money enabled those communities to expand their facilities and now they are reaping the rewards of that, but unfortunately it is very hot out there at the moment with the heatwave.

CHAIR: The deputy chair was interjecting that Richmond was not being mentioned enough, but Richmond is a great place to visit.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry. Everywhere out there is good.

Mrs McMAHON: With reference to page 1-1 of the SDS and the Queensland government's objective to back small businesses, how does the 2020 budget support small businesses?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thanks, member for Macalister. Small businesses are the backbone of the Queensland economy and we will continue to support them. We had \$200 million of small business grants of up to \$10,000. It is surprising that, given the number of places I go to, people stop me and say, 'Thank you so much for that \$10,000. It meant so much for our business.' Especially when they had to shut down for that period of time, it gave people the opportunity to go through their books to work

out how they have to manage their business going forward to deal with the impacts of COVID. It gave them that breather to do that and the money assisted them to do many upgrades that they needed, whether it was for computers or the way in which they promote their business.

There is \$140 million for the Big Plans for Small Business policy; \$100 million for the backing Queensland investment fund; \$30 million to increase skills and capability, including \$25 million for grants to support priority industry skills; \$1 million in grants to support businesses to grow into international markets; developing a business ready website to support businesses to grow; \$10 million to support the ongoing role of the Small Business Commissioner to work with the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction; and setting a procurement target of 25 per cent of all government spending going to small and medium sized businesses. This also builds on our economic recovery plan of \$1 billion in payroll tax relief; \$196 million in grants, and I have mentioned that; \$1 billion in interest-free, low-interest loans, with 86 per cent of these loans going to small business; \$100 million in electricity rebates for SMEs; and land tax relief through rebates and deferrals.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. We will now turn to some opposition questions. The member for Maroochydhore is indicating that she has a question.

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the director-general. Director-General, you would be aware that the Premier's former chief of staff, Mr Barbagallo, was subject to a Crime and Corruption Commission investigation. Has the director-general been subject to any CCC investigation or assessment in the past two years?

Mr Stewart: The answer is, yes, I have.

Ms SIMPSON: What was the nature of the allegation?

Mr Stewart: There was a vexatious claim—an anonymous claim—made about me and that matter was independently investigated and none of the claims were substantiated, so it was an anonymous claim. There is an ongoing matter at the moment that I am unable to discuss.

Ms SIMPSON: Can I ask the director-general—

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Member for Maroochydhore, do you have a further follow-up?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes, I do. Did you advise the Premier of the CCC investigation and the subsequent investigation you have just alluded to?

Mr Stewart: I think the secondary one is quite public and people are well aware and, yes, I did talk about the first matter.

Ms SIMPSON: Director-General, why did you not stand down whilst under investigation?

Mr Stewart: It was my view that the matter was an anonymous claim. I did not have to stand down. It was an investigation. Basically, the investigation report confirmed that the claims were unsubstantiated.

Ms SIMPSON: And the subsequent investigation?

Mr Stewart: That is a matter I cannot comment on, I am sorry.

CHAIR: Any further questions, member for Maroochydhore? I know that the member for Mirani has a question. It appears that the member for Ninderry has a question.

Mr PURDIE: Thanks, Mr Chair. My question is to the Premier. Premier, earlier today you referred to the September Public Service data which was released today and highlighted an increase in teachers and nurses since the last report. You failed to mention that since the March report there has been a reduction of more than 40 doctors, 27 child safety workers, 71 disability support workers, 52 TAFE teachers and 32 youth workers.

CHAIR: Member for Ninderry, this question is getting to a speech length and that is against the standing orders. Just go directly to the question, if I might impose upon you.

Mr PURDIE: Thanks, Mr Chair. My question to the Premier is why has the Queensland government cut 40 doctors during a global pandemic?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to take that on notice, but my understanding is that that is not the case and that they were vacancies. I am happy to get more advice on that.

Mr PURDIE: Thank you, Premier. Similarly—

CHAIR: Hold on. Premier, so you are undertaking to get back to us at the end of the session on that?

Ms PALASZCZUK: What I can say is from September 2019 to September 2020, which is what I just alluded to at the start, we have invested in additional staff, so the totals are 1,502 nurses, 376 doctors, 272 health practitioners, 744 teachers, 101 teacher aides, 235 ambulance officers, 322 police, 43 firefighters, 842 correctional officers and 166 youth caseworkers.

CHAIR: Member for Ninderry, you had a follow-up question?

Mr PURDIE: Yes. Similarly, there has been a reduction in 27 child safety caseworkers. Why has the Queensland government cut those workers following the damning coronial report into the tragic death of Mason Jett Lee?

Ms PALASZCZUK: My advice is that they are vacancies and the new report today will be uploaded very shortly, but those numbers—the numbers that are in the budget—are the numbers that are part of that September quarter report and the new reporting under the Coaldrake review.

CHAIR: Also, we should always be careful with the assertions we make in our questions in that we should have done all of the due diligence to ensure that they are the correct figures.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Correct, but if I could just finish, Chair. Unlike the former government—I know there are some new members there who were not part of the former government—there were cuts to Child Safety officers. There was a huge debate and a huge—

Mr PURDIE: Is this three terms ago?

Ms PALASZCZUK:—broil with the doctors.

Mr PURDIE: I think, Mr Chair, we can probably move on.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is very relevant.

CHAIR: Sorry, Premier.

Mr CRISAFULLI: That is all you have got.

CHAIR: Order!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Very relevant.

CHAIR: Member for Ninderry, the Premier was answering the question. Earlier we heard the answer from the Clerk that we are allowed to have answers that compare budgets and there have been questions put from the opposition doing that and I have allowed them and deemed them in order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right.

Mr PURDIE: Mr Chair, my question was specifically about the September Public Service data—

Ms PALASZCZUK: And I am talking about public servants.

Mr PURDIE:—not about a government that was in power three terms ago.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, I can talk about this. Well, you have had—

CHAIR: Hold on, Premier. I want to make clear that any person who is appearing before the committee can make comparisons with previous budgets, just as someone can put a question that compares previous budgets, and it is within the standing orders and it is reasonable to do those comparisons. Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. I think it is very relevant because since my government has been in office our first job was to restore the savage cuts that were undertaken by the Newman government. There are some members of the opposition who were intimately involved in those decisions and there are some new members who are not aware, so it is actually very good to remind all committee members that there was a period of savage cuts.

Over 4,000 health workers were cut right across regional Queensland. Even today when I go out to regional and rural communities they still talk to me about how those cuts impacted on those communities. Why did they impact? Because if you lose your job in a small rural or regional town, you do not just leave that town; your whole family leaves that town. Regional communities were decimated under those decisions. In terms of what my government has been doing, the member referred to that being a few terms ago and it did take us a few terms to fix those savage cuts that were made, and I make no apologies for that.

I ask members to think for one moment about how our state would have been if we had not restored those health workers during the COVID pandemic. We had our nurses, doctors and allied health professionals ready and willing and working in our hospitals to deal with the pandemic and preparing Queenslanders for a worst-case scenario. My hat goes off to them, and that happened right

across the regions. Even today we have a whole team of people who are trained to do contact tracing. We have a whole team of people who are prepared. If we needed to take actions in our hospitals, they could drop things at a moment's notice and swing into swift action, but it appears that the opposition thinks that COVID has just disappeared.

You only have to look at what is happening around the world and the fact that we are now seeing on a daily basis more positives in our hotel quarantine because people are returning home to Australia. Many of them are returning Australians, which is fabulous that we are getting them home. The fact remains that they are coming from countries where there are high levels of COVID. That is why our quarantine has to be absolutely tight and rock solid, not just in Queensland because now the whole nation has opened up or is opening up. We actually need to maintain the hotel quarantine right across the nation because, as you can see, it only takes one or two people and then people are flying all around the country and that can have devastating consequences.

To the member for Ninderry, I think it is absolutely important to give that little history lesson because it is so memorable. I sat there for nearly a full three years and every single day watched an LNP government cut services in this state, cut staff in this state, cut funding to organisations like the Pyjama Foundation. At one stage cuts were going to be made at BreastScreen Queensland, which there was an outcry about and I think that one was stopped. Then, of course—we were talking about health—there were cuts to the treatment facility for the most traumatised young people in this state. I will never, ever forget to my last days meeting those young people who subsequently ended their life in the most tragic of circumstances because there was nowhere to turn for help. I do not want to see Queensland go back to those dark days.

Mr STEVENS: I have a point of order under 181(g). The Premier is now going into a history and a story. Can we move on to questions, please?

CHAIR: I have restrictions and the Premier is giving an answer that is relevant, but I do understand the opposition has made that call.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I was just finishing. The member for Mermaid Beach remembers all of these things very well. He was there for the nearly three years. It was a very traumatic time in Queensland's history—a very, very, very traumatic time—and one people are not going to forget.

Mr ANDREW: I refer the Premier to SDS 1 page 15 under 'pursuing excellence in legislative drafting ... legislation easy to find, easy to understand and easy to use'. People in my electorate at the moment are saying that the government resembles someone sitting under a blanket with a torch reading a book. We are finding it very difficult to keep up as crossbenchers in some of the legislative areas but we would also like to ask what would you be doing and what would the government be doing to make this exactly how we are reading it here—easy to understand and easy to use and maintaining open data arrangements?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Are you talking in relation to the legislation that comes before—

Mr ANDREW: Yes, legislative drafting and e-publishing.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—parliament?

Mr ANDREW: There are other things that do not come before parliament as well.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think the committee process is very good, where the committees go through the legislation and you can actually have different sector interests that can come in and put their cases. Members of the public can come in when they have open committee hearings and put their views. I think it is very important that members of parliament actually engage with the community if it is something that means a lot to them. At different times there are pieces of legislation that come before parliament that a whole range of stakeholders have varying views on. My understanding is a lot of those committees travel extensively across Queensland depending on the nature of that particular legislation. I think the committee process is a very robust way for people to engage, not just with their MPs but with the committee process.

Of course, from a government point of view, the ministers also engage with a whole range of stakeholders. The cabinet makes the decisions about what legislation will be introduced and then, of course, we work out the timing of that legislation. I think we are very fortunate that the committee process does do a thorough job of scrutinising that legislation before it comes back into the House.

CHAIR: Premier, we are about to adjourn for a break, are there any follow-up answers that you wish to give at this stage? There will be another opportunity at the end of the session. I do point out that the questions of the member for Mermaid Beach on Richmond are still outstanding and many are waiting on the attractions of Richmond to be reported back. Is there anything you wish to add?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No.


Mr PURDIE: Can I ask a procedural question? There were a number of answers that Mr Stewart or the Premier indicated that they would follow up. Is now a time to put them on the record?

CHAIR: I just put to the Premier that this was an opportunity but also pointed out that at the end of the session we have a secondary opportunity to do that. The Premier, upon me asking was this the time she wished to give any further answers, indicated this was not the time and she would do it later in the session or take it on notice. I just dealt with that issue.

Mr PURDIE: I was just asking for clarification. Thank you.

CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn for a break and the hearing will resume at 12 noon continuing with examination of the estimates of the portfolio areas of Premier and Cabinet and Trade.

Proceedings suspended from 11.45 am to 12.00 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Premier and officials. The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of the Premier and Cabinet and Trade. I refer to page 1-1 of the SDS and the government's objective to deliver the 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. What investments are made in the 2020 budget towards achieving the target?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Last week I announced Queensland has moved past 20 per cent energy generation from renewables and I am committed to delivering on 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. That is why we now have a dedicated assistant minister for our 50 per cent renewal energy target.

When we came to office, renewable energy was at around seven per cent of generation in Queensland, with no large-scale solar or wind farms and only rooftop solar. There are now 45 committed and operational solar and wind farms and renewable projects, with \$8.5 billion of investment secured. The good news here is that there is around 7,000 construction jobs—and the majority of those are in regional Queensland—and more than 4,600 megawatts of new generation capacity that will offset more than 11 million tonnes of carbon emissions a year. More power generation means lower prices. Queensland now has the lowest power prices on the east coast, making our manufacturing sector more competitive.

Budget Paper No. 2 sets out modelling by Queensland Treasury that a 10 per cent reduction in electricity prices can lead to annual growth in Queensland's gross domestic product of \$1.1 billion, 1,500 new jobs and \$730 million in additional exports. That is why we are investing another \$500 million in the Queensland Renewable Energy Fund, which I know you are particularly interested in, to fund our government owned corporations to build additional renewable energy generation. This builds on the \$250 million commitment already underway for CleanCo to build the Karara wind farm on the Darling Downs. Queensland has some of the best solar intensity locations for wind energy in the world. To support the development of new renewable energy zones, the budget commits a further \$145 million to support Powerlink to connect new renewable generation.

As you can see, there is a lot happening in that space. We are now seeing other states starting to follow suit. Queensland has been leading the way when it comes to our renewable energy target and setting that policy framework, which has meant that companies are looking to invest in Queensland.

Mr TANTARI: Premier, with reference to growing agriculture at page 1-1 of the SDS, how is the budget supporting the growth of the aquaculture of sector?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Our commitment to growing aquaculture is paying dividends with an increase in production and jobs for the sector. The Mackay-Whitsunday region is a step closer to becoming a major Australian aquaculture hub with \$257 million of investment by leading national seafood company Tassal Group set to create up to 1,000 jobs. I had the opportunity to visit their prawn farm north of Proserpine where there is an \$85 million expansion program already underway. It is phenomenal to see the work that they are doing there. I can report that the prawns are delicious. Tassal Group's \$172 million project at Exmoor Station north-west of Mackay has been declared a coordinated project, which means a full environmental impact assessment of the project can now begin. If approved, this project will follow the full development of the Proserpine expansion and create Queensland's largest land-based aquaculture facility.

These projects combined are expected to produce around 10,000 tonnes of prawns per annum—that is a lot of prawns—from 2026, doubling the existing prawn aquaculture industry in Queensland. That is a \$257 million investment in North Queensland prawn farming, which is set to create up to 1,000

jobs with a potential for significant flow-on effects right along the supply chain for businesses across Queensland. This also means more quality Queensland seafood—and the member for Hervey Bay knows how good the scallops are in Hervey Bay—for both here in Queensland and for our import/export markets. With my government's assistance, Queensland has the potential to become the capital of global aquaculture.

The Exmoor Station prawn farm is proposed within the Mackay Aquaculture Development Area, which is one of six ADAs designated by my government and announced in January 2019 to attract growth in aquaculture. We are investing in skills and training, as I mentioned earlier, to make sure that we have the schools linking up. We are also committing \$2 million for aquaculture training at the Whitsundays TAFE. Once again, it is not just the schools—and we have mentioned Bowen—it is the TAFEs as well, noting that that will be a massive growth area for the state in years to come.

CHAIR: Premier, you mentioned prawns and scallops. Your Chief of Staff, Mr Murphy, is not reaching under the desk at this stage for any props? No! We would welcome questions on exports of Wagyu, barramundi and rock lobster later, if I can give a hint.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Maybe that is for the Minister for Agriculture later on this week or next week.

CHAIR: That is not my committee, Premier.

Mr TANTARI: Premier, again I refer to page 1-1 of the SDS and the government's priority to grow jobs in agriculture. What support is provided in the budget for Queensland's agriculture sector?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We have mentioned aquaculture and now we move on to agriculture. We have stood absolutely united with our primary producers to overcome the challenges of drought, recover from the impacts of COVID and prepare for a brighter future. Our primary industries are also very important for our economy, contributing around \$17 billion. We have committed to supporting our farmers with drought assistance. In the past few months we have invested \$19 million to grow and diversify the agricultural sector. That is why, in this budget, we will invest to lower the cost of irrigated water for our farmers and irrigation schemes by 15 per cent and for the horticultural industry around 50 per cent. This commitment will see decreases in water costs for farmers who utilise the state's 35 irrigation schemes, supplying 6,400 farmers from around Mareeba to Cunnamulla. All it takes is well-priced water to see our horticultural industry expand in profitability and productivity, so we will continue to deliver for our farmers there.

Earlier we talked about the sheep moving back into the Western and Southern Downs. Of course, it is wonderful to see that the lambing rates have increased and, with our cluster fencing, the sheep numbers have almost doubled. In this budget there is extra money for cluster fencing and also \$1.4 million in biosecurity grants to boost our biosecurity readiness in responses across Queensland. The budget further supports new water projects to support the agricultural sector, with \$13.6 million for Emu Swamp Dam, \$30 million for Big Rocks Weir and \$176 million for Rookwood Weir.

Mrs McMAHON: I refer to page 1-5 and the \$10 million Hydrogen Industry Development Fund. What progress has been made towards establishing a hydrogen industry in Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course, the member for Macalister will be very happy with the money going into the training centre for hydrogen in her electorate, which is absolutely great news. I know that a lot of people in her local community will benefit in years to come as we are putting essentially the building blocks in place now for what can happen in the future.

There have been a couple of exciting developments in the past two weeks. The consortium between Iwatani, Japan's largest hydrogen company, and Stanwell will work on renewable hydrogen exports out of Gladstone. That project has the potential to support hundreds of millions of dollars in investment and future stages will support thousands of jobs and a new energy export industry for Queensland.

Iwatani, in their statement to markets in Japan, said—

In this study, Iwatani plans to produce hydrogen in the state of Queensland, Australia, using renewable energy such as solar and wind power. Iwatani is also examining ways to liquefy the green hydrogen—

That is really exciting. It goes on—

it will produce at a liquid hydrogen plant and export it to Japan using large liquid hydrogen carriers.

This follows an announcement by Origin, the day earlier, of the partnership between Kawasaki Heavy Industries to look at large-scale renewable hydrogen exports out of Townsville.

Just last week, we announced a three-year trial of five Hyundai hydrogen fuel cell vehicles in the Queensland government's vehicle fleet. That is very exciting. This follows on from my trade mission to South Korea where we met with representatives from Hyundai in 2018 and discussed the potential for Queensland's hydrogen industry. We saw that car firsthand, which was exciting. We went for a drive in it as well.

My government released our hydrogen industry strategy in May last year ahead of the National Hydrogen Roadmap. It is good to see the companies are now producing these cars. When we went on the trade mission to Germany, we noted that they have the cars as well and the hydrogen refuel areas are at the local service stations which makes it easier to refuel. There is some testing that is happening, from memory, on trains as well.

We have also committed our initial \$15 million Hydrogen Industry Development Fund and our Australian Gas Networks on a project to deliver up to 10 per cent blended hydrogen into Gladstone's gas network. That is exciting news. Sun Metals is working on a project to develop a renewable hydrogen plant to look at other options there. The University of Queensland is also looking at trialling hydrogen buses.

This is new technology. It is exciting because it is what the world is wanting to look at into the future. With our strong partnerships with Japan and South Korea, we become a logical place for them to look towards importing from us.

CHAIR: Premier, looking further at the SDS and the government's priority for Building Queensland, what major infrastructure projects are funded in the 2020 budget to build Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We know how important construction is because it means jobs, jobs and more jobs. The \$56 billion infrastructure program is investing in nine new schools, seven new satellite hospitals, the second M1, the Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3A—I know how much the member for Mermaid Beach likes the Gold Coast Light Rail.

Mr STEVENS: Some 85 per cent in my area.

CHAIR: I think he is enthusiastic about the federal contribution, which we welcome, too.

Mr STEVENS: And the council.

Ms PALASZCZUK: With all three levels working together, it is a wonderful partnership. It would be wonderful if there were more opportunities like that. The second Bruce Highway, the upgrades for the Bruce, the Rookwood Weir and the Karara Wind Farm that I mentioned earlier—these investments will grow Queensland's economy and position us to build back better. The infrastructure program builds on the \$50 billion delivered over the last five years. This financial year the infrastructure program is supporting 46,000 jobs including 28,700 jobs outside of Brisbane.

Earlier I mentioned the funding of the new schools. Our funding in Health and our transport infrastructure is important as are the ongoing works comprise the Cross River Rail, the Smithfield Bypass in Cairns, and the north coast railway line between Beerburrum and Nambour. The forward QTRIP investment will now total \$26.9 billion over four years, supporting 23,600 jobs over the life of the program. There is \$2.7 billion in water and energy infrastructure, including Rookwood Weir in Rockhampton and the second stage of the Haughton pipeline in Townsville; we have already funded the first stage. There is maintenance of power stations in the electricity grid to enable reliability of supply. There is \$594 million for sports and arts facilities including Browne Park in Rocky, the Sunshine Coast Stadium, the Ballymore precinct and the Gabba redevelopment. There is \$21 million out of \$150 million for a new performing arts centre at QPAC.

I know how excited they are at QPAC to have full houses again. Our arts industry has really borne the brunt of not being able to perform because of COVID. They have been innovating, but it is wonderful to see that they will be once again be able to have packed houses again.

Our funding also extends to the expansion of the Cairns Convention Centre and the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct Stage 2. So there is lots and lots of infrastructure right around the state.

Mr TANTARI: I refer to page 1-6 of the SDS and funding for the Wellbeing Workforce for Queensland state schools. How will this funding help young Queenslanders?

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is a very important \$100 million investment to improve the lives of young Queenslanders. We aim to employ an additional 464 health and wellbeing professionals, providing mental health and wellbeing support to every primary and secondary school in Queensland. This is

probably one of the largest injections that we have had in relation to this. It means that, for the first time, there will be specialised professional help for every student who needs it, whether it is a psychologist, a youth worker, a behavioural specialist or equivalent professional. We have to recognise that there are a lot of children that experience different types of trauma, that have different diagnoses and that have behavioural needs that need the help of specialists. We know how disruptive it can be to the classroom setting. This professional help and dedicated support will change the lives of so many young people, whether they be the victims or witness domestic and family violence or see one or other parent in different difficult situations. I think this will go a long way to improving the wellness of our young people.

The \$100 million investment includes a \$4 million pilot project to place general practitioners in 20 state secondary schools based on the area of highest need. That will also be incredibly important. These general practitioners will provide access to medical care and advice free of charge. Every mental health and health intervention can change the outcome of people's lives. They are critically important. These investments build on my government's record of having established the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce, chaired by Madonna King—and I want to thank Madonna for all of her work there—and providing \$3.5 million to implement all 29 recommendations from that task force. We should never underestimate the huge impact cyberbullying has on young children, especially whether a child is liked or not liked. It can cause trauma or tragic situations—worse results. We have also provided another \$450,000 to the Alannah & Madeline Foundation to partner with Dolly's Dream to implement the eSmart Schools program in schools.

Other investments in wellbeing include \$35 million for Link and Launch, FlexiSpaces and Regional Youth Engagement Hubs to support at-risk secondary students and early school leavers to engage back at school or in training and work. There is also my government's investment in Jacaranda Place, which is the new 12-bed Queensland adolescent extended treatment centre. I have to say that opening that centre has to be one of the highlights of the last term; it was a very emotional day.

By improving mental health outcomes, we improve health and educational outcomes. These are investments that will lift Queensland's productivity and create a stronger economy.

Mrs McMAHON: I refer to page 1-18 and additional support for Screen Queensland. What will this additional investment deliver to create jobs?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Macalister for her question. Because of our management of the COVID-19 pandemic we are now a top destination for screen productions. This means jobs. A lot of those jobs are on the Gold Coast. We are also now seeing an appetite for production facilities to be in Cairns as well as Brisbane where we set up the Hemmant studios. My understanding is that they are booked out for the next 12 to 18 months.

So far this year we have had a record 36 productions come to Queensland, pumping \$414 million into our economy. The screen industry is worth millions to our economy, with a ripple effect benefitting numerous industries such as hospitality, tourism, transport, logistics and construction. Backing our screen industry is yet another way we deliver on our goal to set our state firmly on the road to economic recovery.

The Queensland screen sector COVID safe work plan, developed by Screen Queensland together with my government, ensures these productions operate in a COVID safe environment so our highly skilled film workforce can get on with the job. These productions have strict workplace plans developed in consultation with Queensland Health. What attracts these productions to Queensland is our world-class studios, our facilities, our locations and our local expertise. Everyone will remember that the Village Roadshow Studios were used during the Commonwealth Games for squash and boxing. People commend to fact that it is the largest sound stage in the Southern Hemisphere. Over time I think there will be a need to expand those studios. I think what we are seeing with the shutdowns in LA and around the globe is that Queensland is now seen as a secure place to come and film.

Through our Production Attraction Strategy we have secured 36 high end television series and feature films, creating more than 13,000 jobs and a billion dollar investment. In order to attract even more screen work to Queensland, our grant budget for Screen Queensland is \$55.4 million for 2020-21. This includes an additional \$20 million for the Production Attraction Strategy, \$3 million for the Far North Queensland film studio and \$2.5 million for a reality TV hub on the Gold Coast.

Today in Queensland there are major productions currently filming. There is Baz Luhrmann's Elvis project being filmed at the Village Roadshow Studios. *Escape from Spiderhead* is being filmed on the Gold Coast. *Young Rock* is being filmed in Brisbane. That is to be followed by the *Joe Exotic*—that should be interesting. *Irreverent* will be filmed at the Screen Queensland Studios at Hemmant.

Recently announced is that the feature film, which I mentioned in parliament last week, *Thirteen Lives*, based on the 2018 story of the divers who came from around the world to rescue the Thai boy soccer team trapped for days with no supplies and decreasing oxygen levels, will be filmed here. It is wonderful that that film will be made here. That will be done by academy award-winning director Ron Howard. That will be filmed on the Gold Coast. That means jobs for the whole production team—anything from catering to the building of the sets, to painting, to costumes. It means local, secure jobs. If you have pipeline projects coming in people can keep working.

CHAIR: I note that I was remiss in not welcoming Mr David Janetzki, the opposition's Treasury spokesperson, and Mr Michael Berkman who have joined us for this session. My understanding is that there is a question from the member for Maroochydore.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr Chair. My question is to the Premier. Before the break the opposition leader asked whether the Premier had been the recipient of any of the mangocube emails from Minister Bailey, the current transport minister. I understand the Premier has not provided further information at this stage, but I have some follow-up questions. Does the Premier have or has she ever had a private BigPond account?

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, so that was just a speech to begin your questions, was it?

Ms SIMPSON: It is context, Mr Chair, and it is very important.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, how is this related to the 2020-21 budget?

CHAIR: Everything is tenuously related to the budget so usually they can find a connection. Member for Maroochydore, I counsel you against making speeches. Do you have a question?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes. My question to the Premier is: does the Premier have or has the Premier ever had a private BigPond account?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not recall having a BigPond account. I may have. I would have to check.

Ms SIMPSON: Have you ever had an email address stacia1 @ bigpond.com?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, I have.

Ms SIMPSON: During the break the opposition has been furnished with an email by an anonymous whistleblower allegedly between the minister who is currently the transport minister, Mark Bailey, at mangocube6 @ yahoo.co.uk and stacia1 @ bigpond.com. Clearly we are unable to verify the authenticity of this document and I will await the advice of the Premier in this regard, but I seek leave to table this document.

CHAIR: You seek the leave of the committee? We will consider the document. There is no question being put here.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have said previously that I have had a private email account. I have said that publicly.

Ms SIMPSON: I have a follow-up question to the Premier. I am happy for the Premier to look at the tabled document. We have copies of the tabled document.

CHAIR: To be honest, there was no question put that I could discern.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I cannot comment on something I cannot see.

CHAIR: Because there was no question being put and obviously the Premier needs to consider these things, I know that the member for Maiwar—

Ms SIMPSON: I have sought leave to table that document. Has leave been granted?

CHAIR: The general process, member for Maroochydore, is that we consider it and then move a motion to table it. I have not had a chance to have a look at it because I am chairing the meeting. Member for Maiwar, do you have a question?

Mr BERKMAN: Yes, I do. My question is for the Premier. Given that the Premier is distracted at the moment—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am trying to read it. It is very hard. It is blurry.

Mr BERKMAN: Despite increases in the number of hotel quarantine places in October and again in November there are still a lot of Queensland residents stranded overseas and waiting for flights home. Those flights ultimately depend on hotel quarantine places being available and on flight caps for Queensland airports that are decided at national cabinet level by the Premier and other leaders of government.

CHAIR: Is there a question, member for Maiwar?

Mr BERKMAN: There is indeed. Given that we have a very capable health department, plenty of people wanting work and plenty of empty hotels, will the Premier commit to expanding hotel quarantine to get those Queenslanders home for Christmas?

Ms PALASZCZUK: We have said very clearly that we have to watch very carefully how many people we can take into our hotels. I think the member would be aware that we cannot stretch our resources. We have written to the Prime Minister to increase our caps, but we have to keep our caps within what our resources can cope with.

This is a really important issue. I think you would be aware that any breach of hotel quarantine could be catastrophic. We have seen what happened with breaches in Victoria. In terms of international arrivals to Queensland, we wrote to the Prime Minister about that. It was 1,000 per week until 31 January 2021. Then we agreed to receive an additional 300 Australians per week above our international air passenger cap to assist the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade registered vulnerable people to return home. We are working with Health and the Queensland Police Service on this. From memory, today we had three cases in hotel quarantine. We are seeing that consistently over a number of days. You cannot stretch hotels to do quarantine if there are going to be issues arising. What we have said we can do we will do.

We noticed that the arrivals were not meeting the allocation. We are starting to see that now. Initially the planes were not coming in to furnish the cap that we had. Of course, there are other reasons. Sometimes the charter flights will go into Sydney and will not come into places like, for example, Cairns.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a further question if there is an opportunity, Chair.

CHAIR: Is there another question from the opposition?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes, Chair. Have you accepted that document as being tabled?

CHAIR: I have not had a chance to read it. It does refer to other people, so I might give it some consideration during the break. Do you have a question for the Premier?

Ms SIMPSON: I certainly do and it pertains to that document. I hope the clock does not get wound down in the meantime. Premier, you have had a chance to see the document. I have provided the Premier with a copy. Can you advise if this document is authentic?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not know. It is dark, so I have to check.

Ms SIMPSON: Would the Premier like me to read the document for her?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No.

CHAIR: Are there any other questions? The Premier has answered the question.

Ms SIMPSON: The document can be read. Quite clearly, this is a significant issue and I would like the Premier's advice—

Ms PALASZCZUK: The date is 2015.

Ms SIMPSON:—if this is an authentic example of the Premier using a private email address.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I said I had a private email address. The policy has since been changed for everybody.

Ms SIMPSON: Premier, why was this matter not picked up when the archivist investigated the issue of one of your ministers using a private email address for government business given that these matters fall within the archival act?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I want to check the document.

CHAIR: Hold on, Premier. Member for Maroochydore, the Premier has already given an answer. Because the document we have been given is quite dark and we have established that the document is from 2015, it is something that the Premier needs to check. We are given assurances that the document was received anonymously during the break between the two sessions, which would be the reason why unfortunately it had not been provided earlier or was not provided in a better condition so as to be more legible. Premier, having given a previous answer, is there anything you wish to add to that?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, there is nothing more to add. It is dated 2015. As I said, when the report came down we updated the ministerial handbook. I have been very upfront in saying that I have had a private email in the past.

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Chair, I have a supplementary question. My question to the Premier is: has the Premier used a private email account for work purposes that would otherwise be captured under the archival act and should be discoverable and also kept for the public record?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Not since the code has been updated.

CHAIR: With respect, member for Maroochydore, that is a question that has already been put and answered.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So—

CHAIR: No, Premier. Hold on. It had been put and answered, so we are not going to have repetitious questions—questions that have already been put and answered.

Ms SIMPSON: I have a question for the Premier. Premier, the state government used close to half a million dollars in taxpayers' money to pay for polling in the lead-up to the election under the heading of COVID-19 related advice. Can the Premier advise if information from taxpayer paid polling was shared with the Labor Party campaign or operatives who shared it with the Labor Party campaign?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I reject the premise of the question, Chair.

CHAIR: There is an inference in the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It was imputation.

Ms SIMPSON: It is in public open source data that there was polling paid for by the government in the lead-up to the election.

Ms PALASZCZUK: As a former Speaker, the member for Maroochydore would know that is an imputation.

CHAIR: Premier, I will chair this hearing. Member for Maroochydore, I will not have you arguing with the witness. I have ruled that there is an inference—taking something and suggesting something else—which is clearly outside standing order 115(b). I ask that you put a question that is within the standing orders.

Ms SIMPSON: I refer to information that is available in public open source data about funding providing polling for government.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I reject the premise.

CHAIR: With respect, I take it you mean the budget.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a sentiment survey.

Ms SIMPSON: Premier, can I ask if information from taxpayer paid polling was supplied to the Labor Party campaign or operatives who shared it with the Labor Party campaign?

CHAIR: Sorry, this is repetitious.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is—

CHAIR: Sorry, Premier. That is exactly the same question that you asked before.

Ms SIMPSON: There is not an imputation in that, respectfully, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: That is exactly the same question that you put before.

Ms SIMPSON: That is gagging the question, Mr Chair.

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, you of all people as a former Speaker should know how to show basic respect. I am going to ignore that comment but it was highly disrespectful to the chair. The deputy chair has a point of order.

Mr STEVENS: The point of order is that the question from the member is a legitimate question that requires an answer from the Premier. I think the Premier should get an opportunity to answer it.

CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, do you have a question that is within the standing orders?

Ms SIMPSON: Yes. This question is within the standing orders, Mr Chair. Has the government provided information from taxpayer paid polling to the Labor Party campaign or operatives who shared it with the Labor Party campaign?

CHAIR: I think the inference that community surveys were taken to show people's understanding of COVID-19 is the objection that the Premier took to that question and is the one that I ruled on. You have persisted in putting the same question. I am going to put the question to the Premier. Given that

an inference was objected to and ruled on—I will put the question. This is now the third time and I had ruled that that question contained an inference of what was done in the budget around community safety. I do ask that you respect it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I can confirm to the committee that Ipsos was engaged by the state government to look at public information and behavioural change around COVID-19. That is not unusual for other states and territories. My understanding is that perhaps New South Wales and the federal government also use Ipsos. Sentiment testing is nothing new. It is in relation to the easing of restrictions and how the public would see that, especially when you are dealing with cafes, restaurants and hotels. It guided us in relation to our roadmaps. I think the opposition, as well as other members of the committee, can see that the way in which our roadmaps were outlined to the people gave them greater confidence about what was happening and the way we came out of COVID-19 with our strong health response.

Mr CRANDON: Premier, it is interesting that you just mentioned the health response because it is a good segue to my question. Do you recall attending Gold Coast University Hospital on 19 October to make an announcement in relation to the headline from your press release 'Labor's \$160m Gold Coast health plan'? Do you recall that, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not have my diary in front of me. I am sorry.

Mr CRANDON: I refer to a post on your Facebook page—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not have my Facebook in front of me either. I am sorry.

Mr CRANDON:—which is dated 19 October. It is in your name. You are standing there with the then health minister.

CHAIR: Is there a question, member for Coomera, rather than describing the Facebook page?

Mr CRANDON: There will be. I am trying to bring the Premier's memory to a particular point because that then relates to the question.

CHAIR: The standing orders require us to come quickly to the point of the question.

Mr CRANDON: Premier, you are standing there with the health minister and the candidate for Coomera. The headline is 'Labor's \$160m Gold Coast health plan'. In the document that was released by you about one-third of it relates to building a hospital in Coomera. The \$160 million, all but \$3 million, in fact relates to everything on the Gold Coast other than Coomera—\$111.3 million had already been announced prior to that day. Premier—

CHAIR: We might move on if there is no question to be put. This is a large speech about a Facebook post.

Mr CRANDON: Chair—

CHAIR: Do we have a question?

Mr CRANDON: Yes, there is an integrity question involved here, Mr Chair. All of the noise was about a hospital being built on the northern Gold Coast. That is the context here. That is the context of the press release that had gone out. My question is this: Premier, the \$3 million that was represented in that \$160 million for planning of a hospital in the Coomera area—that even talked about locations et cetera—

CHAIR: This is getting ridiculous.

Mr CRANDON:—why is it not a line item in the budget?

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, you finally got to a question.

Mr CRANDON: Why is it not a line item in the budget?

CHAIR: I note that the question has a lot to do with all of the health initiatives on the Gold Coast.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We will double-check this, but my understanding is that there are business cases for projects, including: Coomera, Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Bowen, the Prince Charles and Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital announced as part of the budget. I am happy to have a look at that for you. I think that the member for Coomera should be really happy with the fact that the government is planning to build a hospital in Coomera. From memory, we have identified the site where that hospital is going to be.

Mr CRANDON: The koala corridor?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would have thought that you would have been ecstatic and that the people and residents who live in your electorate would need that hospital for future. Our plan—

Mr CRANDON: If that is a question, I am happy to take that question.

CHAIR: Order! Member for Coomera, seriously—

Ms PALASZCZUK: He does not like the idea of a hospital—

Mr CRANDON: Well, the Premier—

CHAIR: Hold on! Member for Coomera, I gave you extensive time to ask this question. I gave you extreme latitude. I ask that you listen to the Premier's answer in a respectful way according to the standing orders. Premier, do you have anything to add?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just think the member for Coomera should be happy that the government is getting on with the job of planning for the growth communities that are happening around Queensland, including his electorate of Coomera.

Mr CRANDON: Can you confirm there is no plan to build a hospital at Coomera in the forward estimates—

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is a plan.

CHAIR: With respect, that question has been answered comprehensively.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We have to do the business planning first.

CHAIR: We will not have that continual badgering. The question has been answered. Premier, I am going to move on to the member for Maiwar if there is nothing to add.

Mr CRANDON: I did have a follow-up question.

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, do you have a follow-up question that is not repetitive?

Mr CRANDON: No, it is not repetitive. Not at all. In fact, I would like to ask the Premier a question in relation to the Varsity Lakes Day Hospital. There is a line item in the budget referring to \$1 million being spent in the current budget period. Can the Premier advise at what time in the future we can expect to see the money for the planning of the Coomera hospital expended? Will that be in the period of the forward estimates?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to clarify this. I am advised that the planning money is aggregated as part of the budget, so the \$3 million is part of the Health budget and the planning will happen.

Mr CRANDON: In this—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is funded as part of the Health budget. It is over \$21 billion in the Health budget.

CHAIR: With respect, member for Coomera, that was actually the same question put again, noting a different piece of funding and then putting exactly the same question again. I ask you to be respectful of the process and to not ask the question three times.

Mr CRANDON: Chair, I object to your assessment of my question. My question was specifically about when the \$3 million for the planning of the Coomera hospital will be expended.

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, are you objecting to my ruling? Do we need to have a private meeting?

Mr CRANDON: By all means let's have a private meeting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I find it unbelievable that the member for Coomera is not happy about the fact that we are doing the planning for a brand-new hospital in his electorate.

Mr CRANDON: Yes. I would love to see it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It will be this government that delivers it.

Mr CRANDON: Chair, in the interests of time I am happy to leave things as they are.

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, you are extremely out of order here. It is very disappointing. The time for opposition questions has been exhausted. I now turn to government questions.

With reference to page 1-1 of the SDS and the role of the DPC to support the implementation of Queensland's economic recovery plan, how are local governments being supported to create jobs for Queenslanders in this budget?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The 2020 budget delivers on our Keeping Queensland Working election commitment to partner with local governments to provide: \$400 million over six years for Works for Queensland, supporting 11,800 jobs in regional Queensland building new footpaths, public spaces, playgrounds, road improvements and public lighting; and \$200 million over six years for the South East

Queensland Community Stimulus Package, supporting another 6,000 jobs. The Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme provides for a fifty-fifty partnership with councils and continues the funding restored from the LNP cuts.

The budget also confirms our previous commitment, including \$200 million under COVID-19 Works for Queensland program. We have committed to a new Bush Compact with the LGAQ to ensure remote and regional communities are heard. The budget further delivers \$3.5 million for localised mental health responses for rural councils, with grants of up to \$75,000 for 45 rural councils to work with their local communities. We know how important that is, especially after the year we have had. Over the last four years, \$850 million in funding has been delivered to local councils, supporting 27,500 jobs and more than 2,400 projects, including things such as: the renewed Gladstone Aquatic Centre, \$1.2 million; and \$6.57 million for Logan's Kingston Butter Factory cultural precinct, providing a stage, theatre and museum, creating 157 jobs. I will have to come down and visit that at some stage—

CHAIR: It is going to be excellent.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—and a new splash park for Wujal Wujal. We are also looking forward to working with local governments across Queensland to support more job-creating projects as we continue on the road to economic recovery.

Mrs McMAHON: I refer to page 1-1 of the SDS and the government's objective to back our frontline services in health, education and community safety. How does the 2020 budget back our front-line services?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Our 2020 budget delivers on our commitments to deliver frontline services with, really importantly: 2,025 additional police personnel—I think everybody is very much looking forward to the rollout of that initiative—1,450 new frontline police and a boost of 150 police per region across Queensland—and I know that as a former officer the member for Macalister would know how important that is for our local communities—50 positions assigned to the Child Protection Investigation Unit, 300 positions across communications centres, prosecutions and watch houses and 100 frontline support, including a QPS wellbeing centre. Our commitment includes—and this is another really exciting initiative by our government—25 mobile police vans to expand engagement with the community. I think the community is going to love that. In those areas where Police Beats in shopping centres are no longer viable, these mobile police vans will be able to go out and about into the communities at different events and at different times, which means that they are on the move and not necessarily stationary, so that is great to hear.

With regard to education, we have 6,190 new teachers and 1,139 teacher aides. It is the largest investment in teachers the state has ever seen. Of course, we could not do without the 5,800 nurses, 1,500 doctors, 1,700 allied health professionals, 475 paramedics, 464 student health and wellbeing professionals and 357 additional firefighters we are going to put on. This builds on the frontline positions already delivered since 2014-15 as set out in the budget papers, including 5,200 more teachers, over 7,800 more nurses and 2,400 more doctors.

Mr TANTARI: Referring to page 1-1 of the SDS and delivering an infrastructure project that supports our recovery, how does the 2020 budget invest in regional roads?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Once again, roads are incredibly important; it means jobs and keeping people in jobs. We have a strong track record investing in transport and roads, and we will deliver another record roads and transport budget for Queensland with \$26.9 billion to support 23,600 jobs over four years as part of the state's economic recovery plan.

The Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, or QTRIP, will fund roads, rail, marine, public transport and active transport infrastructure required to address the needs of a rapidly growing Queensland. This is a record investment in comparison with last year's QTRIP, which was valued at \$23 billion. \$17.8 billion, 66 per cent, is allocated outside the metropolitan region and is estimated to support 16,000 direct jobs over four years. This includes: the south coast, \$4.562 billion supporting 3,800 jobs; the north coast, \$3.612 billion supporting 3,200 jobs; southern Queensland, \$2.779 billion supporting 2,780 jobs; Central Queensland, \$3.106 billion supporting 2,950 jobs; and North Queensland, \$3.737 billion supporting 3,450 jobs.

I can advise the committee that over the next four years Queenslanders will see more of the state's largest ever jobs and infrastructure projects—like the billion dollar Gympie bypass, the \$480 million Bruce Highway upgrade between Edmonton and Gordonvale, and over a billion dollars for the Rockhampton Ring Road—undertaken. The Bruce Highway is a priority for my government, with 33 major projects currently underway, and continued delivery of the jointly funded \$12.6 billion 15-year upgrade program.

Key road projects include the Coomera Connector Stage 1 between Coomera and Nerang—and hopefully, the member for Coomera is happy about that initiative; he is not here now—the Rockhampton Ring Road; the Bruce Highway Cooroy to Curra Section D; the Bruce Highway between Caloundra Road and the Sunshine Motorway; the Haughton River floodplain upgrade on the Bruce Highway between Ayr and Townsville; the Bruce Highway Cairns Southern Access Corridor Stage 3 project to duplicate the highway between Edmonton and Gordonvale; and the Townsville Ring Road Stage 5 project. Key rail projects include on the north coast line the Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade and the Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3. There are a lot of projects that are happening across our state.

I remember when we were out and about in October during the campaign south of Townsville, we spoke to local workers there about the floodplain upgrade, which is incredible. They are lifting the road up higher to avoid flooding and that is absolutely phenomenal. Most of the people I met there were locals living locally, and this continuous pipeline of work keeps people living in their communities. Likewise, with the Smithfield bypass, I also stopped and met with the workers there and they said exactly the same thing.

These local projects are not just about connectivity for commuters; they are about that pipeline of work for people living in their community and being able to work in their community. I can advise the committee that that is really tough work, especially out there on a hot, humid summer's day like today where the temperatures soar.

CHAIR: Premier, referring to the government's priority in a number of sections of the SDS to protect the environment, how does the budget invest to protect Queensland's environment, including protection for the Great Barrier Reef?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the chair. We have a big obligation to make sure we do everything we possibly can to protect the Barrier Reef. Protecting Queensland's environment also remains one of our top priorities, as listed in our priorities for government which I tabled in the House last week.

The Great Barrier Reef supports over 60,000 jobs and injects over \$6 billion into the Australian economy annually. We have a proud record on the environment. Since 2015 we have allocated over \$400 million to protect the Great Barrier Reef. We have permanently banned the dumping of capital dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the World Heritage area under our Reef 2050 Plan. We stopped the LNP's plan to dump capital dredging from the Cairns port expansion on to the Great Barrier Reef. We delivered a new \$60 million Protected Area Strategy. We delivered a Koala Conservation Strategy for South-East Queensland, and we know how important that is for the conservation of our koalas. From memory, we also put some additional money into some of the wildlife hospitals that take care of koalas after they have been injured on the roads or subjected to impacts that have happened in relation to bushfires. We have invested \$53 million through our Revitalising National Parks Program, creating around 135 jobs for local tradespeople and better access for nature based experiences for visitors and tourism operators.

We are building on this record. We are investing \$40 million into the reef and hinterlands to accelerate water quality improvements, protect more areas and improve access to our Great Barrier Reef region on land and sea. We will deliver more action on plastic pollution. Our \$40 million investment will support more than 200 jobs and includes \$10 million for reef credits, working with farmers for water quality improvement. Reef credits use a science based approach to quantify or credit the amount of sediment and nutrients that are not lost onto the reef due to land management activities. The land manager is then paid for the credits that they deliver.

We also have a \$10 million Reef Assist program in partnership with local organisations, supporting almost 130 nature based tourism and land management jobs in reef catchments. We have \$6 million going into the Great Barrier Reef Island Arks project to acquire and protect some of the reef's most valuable areas for protection and ecotourism. We have \$3.9 million for two reef trails for sailing and glamping on reef islands. We also have \$10.1 million to upgrade World Heritage areas and national parks through Queensland, creating economic recovery benefits for our region, including over 40 jobs for builders, rangers and tourism operators.

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

Mrs McMAHON: With reference to page 1-2 of the SDS, what further trade outcomes have been secured over the last 12 months?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. In this year with COVID and the pandemic, we know that trade has had a big impact. Thankfully, in Queensland our major trading stocks have actually stood the test. Even though our trade has come down to around \$66 billion, it is still higher

than when the LNP left office at \$44 billion, but we need to do everything we can to support people who are working in this industry because trade means jobs. We also need to look at extra markets and continue to work with our trade commissioners, which I know that TIQ does on a regular basis.

TIQ also provides a great service so that people who have ideas and initiatives, like we mentioned today, can be put into contact with potential customers and markets overseas. A lot of people do not know how to navigate the international market, and that is why our trade commissioners are doing a fine job when it comes to linking people.

With COVID, we have had a lot of supply chains that have been cut in other countries. We had an interesting discussion with the ambassador for the United States, where I think everybody realised how important supply chains are. For those countries that have managed the health response well, the supply chains have actually stood the test. When we were hearing the potential worst-case scenario, that is something that my director-general and the heads of department sat down about. We were absolutely focused on the supply chains of Queensland that we would need to keep food going to supermarkets and getting where it needed to—transport, logistics. It was a huge job looking at the worst-case scenario. Not only do you hope for the best, but you also have to prepare for the worst, and that means making sure you have contingency plans if anything does go wrong.

I want to thank TIQ for the great work they do. The exporters do a terrific job. Forty per cent of TIQ's clients are in regional Queensland, which I thought the committee might like to be aware of. Under the Go Global grant program, Sunshine Coast firm Process Plants international was awarded \$25,000 to help facilitate a trial export of the ball valves used on mining equipment into Russia. The trial led to an immediate \$150,000 worth of export.

Before the campaign, I remember going up to Mackay. Some of our businesses have actually increased their exports during COVID. Where other manufacturers have been shut down, they have actually been able to increase their market share. Some of our exporters have increased the number of countries they are now exporting to. We always have a strong reputation for high-quality food products. There are big markets right across the globe, and we need to make sure we continue to work with them. Japan is also seen as a very key trading partner. I can advise the committee that we will be meeting with the Japanese ambassador in Canberra on Thursday before the national cabinet on Friday. Once again, we will be talking about our trade relations and how important our export markets are. I am looking forward to that meeting.

Ms SIMPSON: Is the Premier confirming that she conducted ministerial correspondence on a private email address—potentially for years—and did not make these emails available to the State Archivist?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I reject that question outright.

CHAIR: Alright, we reject the question. Are there any questions within the standing orders?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That was not within the standing orders and it is complete rubbish.

CHAIR: Premier, I have ruled that out of order. I do not need any commentary. Deputy Chair, do you have a question?

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Chair, I have a follow-up.

CHAIR: My apologies, I thought the Deputy Chair was indicating that he had a question.

Mr STEVENS: I do, but the member for Maroochydore has a follow-up question.

Ms SIMPSON: Premier, you suggested that you may have used a private email account for ministerial purposes from 2015 and only stopped using it when the code of conduct was changed several years later. Does the Premier accept that it is the law that requires these records to be kept well prior to the code of conduct changes?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me make it very clear that the amendments to the Queensland ministerial handbook took effect on 20 March 2018, making it clear that the use of private email accounts for ministerial portfolio-related business is strictly prohibited. It is very clear, chair.

Ms SIMPSON: So the Premier does not want to answer that question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have answered that question.

CHAIR: Seriously, member for Maroochydore, it is really disappointing that you so persistently flout the basic standing orders that we have here. Surely you can put this line of questioning in a way that respects the rules of the House. I am very disappointed at your interjection.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You used to be the Speaker!

CHAIR: No Premier, I will not have you interacting and lowering yourself to what the member for Maroochydore is doing. Deputy Chair, you have a question?

Mr STEVENS: My question is to the Premier. There is no line in the budget for a much-vaunted global tourism hub. Your government rejected \$100 million from the Star Casino for the extension of the important Gold Coast Convention Centre. Why is there no money in this budget for that extension that would have been otherwise done by the private sector?

CHAIR: There is an inference where you put an assertion which may be under contention. I think that rather than restating questions—which may be the intention—I might ask the Premier to answer those aspects that are within the standing orders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My recollection is that in relation to the global tourism hubs we went out for a market sounding, but because we went into COVID the demand for new global tourism hubs—the appetite just was not there. My understanding still is, in relation to the convention centre, that when we do see an uptake in growth back into the Gold Coast market, my government is not averse to looking at any further expansion which could happen there. We are very well aware that it was being utilised a lot prior to COVID, but we just have to see how events shape up in the post-COVID world and if and when there is an expansion needed. Just as we are doing the expansion at the Cairns Convention Centre, we would not rule out looking at the Gold Coast Convention Centre. It is a very good question that the member for Mermaid Beach asks.

CHAIR: Thank you for that very good question, member for Mermaid Beach. The member for Maroochydore, do you have a question?

Ms SIMPSON: Can the Premier advise whether she was aware of her responsibilities under the Public Records Act in relation to keeping ministerial correspondence, whether it is on a private email account or on a government email account?

CHAIR: With respect, this is a very long line of questioning that perhaps is not strictly relevant to the 2020 budget being about an email from—if I can make it out here—sometime in April 2015. Can we take it as a general question? We have also put this question in various formats and we can anticipate the answer of the Premier as being the same as the similar questions put beforehand. With that, I do not know whether to cut off the question and allow the member to once again state it, or does the Premier have anything to add to the previous answers that answered this question rather directly?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, but perhaps the opposition should talk to their federal counterparts about their communication happening on WhatsApp.

Mr STEVENS: Our discussion has been predicated on the document that has been put on notice for tabling. The committee now has had the chance to look at that particular document. Could we as a committee move that the document—

Ms PALASZCZUK: We are meant to be looking at the 2021 budget.

CHAIR: We will look at the document during the break. Premier, please do not bring in other areas of questioning. We are not dealing with that. Are there any other questions from the opposition? The member for Maiwar has a question.

Mr BERKMAN: In the 56th parliament, the predecessors to this committee and the health committee undertook inquiries into the government's economic and health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, but these inquiries dissolved with the committees at the end of the last parliament. Having opposed my attempt last week to establish a similar but more robust statutory committee to continue this important work of scrutinising the whole-of-government COVID-19 response, will the government establish any COVID-19 oversight inquiry or standing committee in this new term of parliament?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Maiwar. My understanding is that the economics committee can look at anything it desires; likewise, the health committee can look at anything in relation to COVID. We are definitely not out of the pandemic by any means, but in terms of the fact that the strong health response means we can move on to economic recovery—and the fact everyone here is sitting here today functioning almost as usual, except for the hand sanitiser and a bit of the social distancing—the government believes that with the parliamentary committee system currently in place there is adequate scope for those committees to look at anything in particular. Do not forget, too, that in September the committee had an opportunity to question both me and the Treasurer in relation to CEFA as well. We have done a couple of estimates this year.

Mr BERKMAN: Putting on these estimates hearings is a really expensive process that takes up the incredibly valuable time of countless of our most senior of public servants. Is there any reason that the Premier's answers to government questions, or Dorothy Dixers as we know them, could not simply be tabled or published online ahead of these hearings to avoid wasting all of these good people's time and unnecessarily using up time here in estimates for scrutiny?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I say to the member for Maiwar that the government members are just as important as the opposition and cross-bench members. Government members have a right to ask questions. The member for Hervey Bay has been asking questions relating to his area. The member for Macalister, likewise, has asked about what is happening in her electorate, and so has the member for Logan. This estimates process is not dissimilar to what is experienced in other states, even at the federal level. I think that it is actually a good system of democracy that we actually have this. It is an examination of the budget. There have been some very good questions about the budget today and some not so good questions where some people do not even want to talk about the budget. Is it any wonder they do not want to talk about the budget, because the people of Queensland backed in our strong health response and also backed in our strong economic recovery plan. That is what the people of Queensland voted for and that is why we have delivered this budget.

There was also a lot of talk before the election that there would not be a budget before the end of the year. I made a commitment that my government and the Treasurer, Cameron Dick, would deliver the budget and that we would have full estimates hearings before Christmas. I know this is a lot of hard work on people, but there was a time—and I know the opposition does not like hearing about it—when those opposite decided to condense the estimates hearings and have multiple hearings at once. This made it very difficult for nine members of the opposition to go to those hearings. As opposition leader, I endeavoured to get to as many of those hearings as I possibly could when we held multiple shadow portfolios. I know what hard work is all about.

I think that to have these estimates over and done with before Christmas allows people to get back to their communities, especially because I think we will see a wet season come and because we have been advised by the bureau that there is likely to be an increased number of cyclones and an increased monsoonal period. That is why my government has been getting briefings about the levels of dam storage at the moment right across the state, making sure that we have a good eye on that, making sure that our communities are prepared if there are cyclones. We need to be ready for that. I think people need to be back out in their communities from mid-December into January and February to make sure we are dealing with what will be a natural disaster period. This also allows people to spend some time with their families and friends.

Mr BERKMAN: I might ask a question about filibustering but I suspect my time has run out.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That was not very polite.

CHAIR: The member for Maroochydore sought leave to table the document that she assured the committee the opposition received during the break. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr JANETZKI: I call forward Mr Paul Martyn, CEO of Trade and Investment Queensland. Mr Martyn, last year in estimates there was a discussion about a \$350,000 misappropriation of Queensland taxpayer money in relation to a local office in Korea. Has that matter been finalised?

Mr Martyn: Yes. I can report to the committee that on 30 October 2020 a former employee of Trade and Investment Queensland in Korea was convicted and sentenced by the courts in South Korea to 2½ years in prison wholly suspended for three years. I am advised that the Korean prosecutor has indicated they will appeal that sentence, seeking a more severe sentence.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you. Have there been any efforts made by TIQ to recover some of those misappropriated funds?

Mr Martyn: These criminal proceedings proceeded over the last 18 months. As part of those proceedings the former employee has returned two-thirds of the funds that were embezzled. There is the option for TIQ to pursue civil proceedings for the remaining third. On balance, we have decided that is probably not a good use of taxpayers' funds.

Mr JANETZKI: I notice in one of the answers to questions on notice that have been returned this morning there was discussion of two matters that had been raised, investigated and appropriate disciplinary action applied. Was one matter that had been substantiated that Korean matter or is there in fact another matter that is currently under investigation?

Mr Martyn: It was not that Korean matter. The matter that was substantiated was in another location and related to the inappropriate use of a work credit card.

Mr JANETZKI: Which location would that have been?

Mr Martyn: Each of our offices is very small, with only a handful of staff. I am happy to tell you, but if I do it does rather narrow down which staff member it might be.

CHAIR: I do not know the best way to handle this with propriety. Is this something you could consider and give us an answer at the end or is it something that you have considered and think is best not to—

Mr Martyn: I am happy to provide the information in another way. It is just that these offices are so small. What I can say is that the officer has been subject to disciplinary proceedings and given a formal warning. There was some indication of some health issues which may have contributed to the matter and those are being dealt with with appropriate support.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba South, is that satisfactory?

Mr JANETZKI: Probably my concern is that there have now been a couple of matters that seem to indicate a bit of a trend with TIQ matters in various offices. My concern more is about what TIQ is doing to get on top of a couple of matters now. We have had one in Korea that is subject to criminal penalty. Now we have another one with disciplinary action. We have another unsubstantiated matter as well. This is Queensland taxpayer money. I want to make sure it is being used well.

Mr Martyn: Thank you for the question. We obviously took the circumstances in Korea very seriously. I will outline the steps we have taken. We had two independent forensic reports undertaken. The recommendations of those reports were formulated into a 28-point international reform road map which involved significant changes to governance, culture, systems, processes, policies and procedures across the organisation. That road map for reform has been implemented over the past 18 months. The implementation has actually been independently verified. As part of this process TIQ obtained the services of a forensic accountant to review every office around the world. I am pleased to advise that in no other office were there any indications of another fraud event having occurred.

What we have done is seek to implement new systems. We have centralised vendor management in Brisbane. We have centralised the processing of all international invoices in Brisbane. We have centralised the payment of international invoices in Brisbane. We have centralised the management of international payroll in Brisbane. We now have central oversight of all offshore bank accounts in Brisbane. We have a rolling independent audit program of our offshore offices to give us the certainty that we need. We have strengthened our policy and procedural documentation. We have employed a dedicated international office finance account manager to monitor transactions offshore. We have extended our Aurion human resources system to manage all time sheets centrally in Brisbane. We have also established a fraud and corruption prevention program with the slogan 'if you see it, say it', encouraging staff that if they see anything that is of concern they should indicate that.

Mr JANETZKI: In relation to the matter relating to the credit card misappropriation, what was the total amount spent in relation to that incident and what was it spent on, without giving away the location?

Mr Martyn: I can advise that the sum total, as I understand it, was around a thousand dollars.

Mr JANETZKI: And in relation to what it was spent on—

Mr Martyn: As I understand the case, the card was used by the employee by mistake, instead of their own personal card. It was used at a bar, a chicken restaurant, a bagel shop and a range of other elements. What I would say about that, though, is that this was picked up and actioned, so our systems and processes are robust. I want to assure the committee that when these things happen they are picked up and they are acted upon.

Mr JANETZKI: Mr Martyn, I just want to ask you again about TIQ's annual report, which revealed that an international investment attraction unit had been established during the last financial year. Can you explain for the committee the difference between that unit and Queensland Treasury's investment facilitation unit?

Mr Martyn: Obviously, the attraction of international investment is a core function of Trade and Investment Queensland. In February 2019 our board authorised us to significantly step up our work in attracting international investment to Queensland. Part of that was establishing that central unit in Brisbane to coordinate our global efforts on investment attraction. The position of Resources Investment Commissioner was transferred over to TIQ from the department of natural resources, mines and energy and a global investment commissioner was appointed to coordinate those efforts. We have also appointed five investment directors around the world to supplement our effort. They are in New York, Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore and London. Our focus is very much on international investment attraction.

We work very closely with Queensland Treasury and we have a strong partnership with the Investment Facilitation and Partnerships team. Our officers meet regularly and coordinate. When we identify potential investors internationally, we obviously seek to profile Queensland to identify investment opportunities in this state. If those investors want to travel to Queensland or if they need assistance in accessing government incentives, industrial land et cetera, then we will work closely with IFP and other bodies to ensure that that occurs. What is important is that the work is strongly coordinated and is very much on a whole-of-government basis.

Mr JANETZKI: It seems a little unusual in that an investment unit like this does not sit under the administrative responsibilities with the Treasurer himself and I was just trying to understand why that distinction has been made and that when we have a Minister for Investment this part does not even sit with the Minister for Investment.

Mr Martyn: We have certainly briefed the Minister for Investment on TIQ's international investment attraction activities. I think the important point here is that when you think about investment attraction you think about which particular sector is the investment coming into and there will be different government agencies that will need to be involved. If we are looking at an investment that is in relation to coal, we obviously have to talk to the Department of Resources. If it is in relation to an investment in a beef cattle property, we will get the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries involved. All of that effort has to come together and certainly the Investment Facilitation and Partnerships team does a great job of doing that. We are very much focused on the offshore piece, which is our speciality. We serve 12 markets with 16 officers offshore. Our international team obviously have the in-market knowledge, the language skills, the cultural skills et cetera to locate and deal with investors where they are and then that effort is brought back to Queensland and we partner with other agencies to deliver that, but certainly our relationship with Treasury and with IFP is very strong.

CHAIR: Thanks, member for Toowoomba South. The member for Hervey Bay has a question.

Mr TANTARI: My question is to the Premier. With reference to page 1-22 of the SDS, can the Premier advise how the Queensland government's dedicated global business agency Trade & Investment Queensland has used digital technology to expand trade outcomes?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for his question. Because of COVID, we have had to do things a little bit differently as well this year. By the end of June the agency had held more than 25 virtual events to targeted business groups on topics that they needed in a time of crisis, and topics included market intelligence and business matching. Another 25 webinars have been held by TIQ since June. For example, in August TIQ hosted a virtual business matching program connecting business to Queensland mining equipment and technology services.

As I was mentioning to you earlier, some of those mining services, especially out of Mackay, have expanded into markets because of our strong health response here. They have also developed and driven an integrated digital platform, the Queensland mining equipment, technology and services export cluster. This collaboration platform, which now has 144 members, enables potential international buyers to connect directly with Queensland companies that offer the innovative solutions international markets require.

Trade & Investment Queensland is also delivering e-commerce initiatives to support exporters by providing expert advice and assistance to companies on how to successfully enter international markets via an e-commerce channel and on two pilot e-commerce programs targeted at Korea and Taiwan to support Queensland exporters to enter those markets. They have been doing a great job in adapting to these post COVID times.

CHAIR: Thanks very much, Premier.

Mrs McMAHON: With reference to page 1-11 of the SDS, could the Premier update the committee on the status of Queensland's possible candidature for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games for Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. Of course, today is an exciting day because it is the first opportunity that we have had since the election to meet with John Coates. I was also joined by Minister Sterling Hinchliffe, who now replaces Kate Jones in that role of assisting me and the government. What is very exciting here is that early in the new year we will be in a position for that task force of local, state and federal to reconvene. Today I took the liberty of also asking Mr Coates if he could speak to our cabinet at the beginning of next year to let it know about the lay of the land and how everything is looking.

I think there is increased attention on Queensland because we have been able to have that strong health response and our economy is recovering. The fact is that we became a sporting superstate in terms of allowing, for example, the AFL hub to continue, the women's basketball league, the netball and the Supercars. It was also really good when we had the last State of Origin and we were able to have 100 per cent capacity back as well. We are the envy of the world when it comes to that, but it also shows what we can do when we manage a pandemic. The fact that Queensland hosted such a successful Commonwealth Games means that we are really in the box seat for the next stage.

I have also written to the Prime Minister and President Bach as well. The Prime Minister communicated with me when he was meeting with Thomas Bach and what we are asking for there is some certainty around the Tokyo Olympics in terms of what they will be doing in this post pandemic world. By the time the Tokyo Olympics comes around we just do not know as a world where we will be with a vaccine. It may be a much more different world than that we live in. It is very positive news today. Like I said, it was the first opportunity that I have had to meet with John Coates post COVID restrictions, post the election and post his meeting with the president of the IOC. It would be good to continue those discussions to see where it leads Queensland because, like I said, Queensland would be in that box seat, but it cannot happen without funding from all levels of government.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. Some of my colleagues have asked me to emphasise different areas in the state and I wanted to ask you about how the budget delivers for the Sunshine Coast and also for the Moreton Bay region. Colleagues have felt that we have not given enough deference to that and I ask you to expand on some of the investments in those areas.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure; thank you. In terms of the Sunshine Coast we are going to see a lot more investment happening, especially when it comes to the infrastructure that is needed around schools and transport. The highway is getting a lot of investment, as are the new schools that are opening up. The new high school at Baringa will be ready for next year.

There is \$1.6 billion in productivity-enhancing infrastructure creating 5,200 jobs. There is \$5.2 billion for the Sunshine Coast, Metro North and West Moreton hospital and health services; 1,262 employers on the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay received a total of \$39 million in payroll tax relief to help alleviate the impacts of COVID-19 and keep people in work; \$3.2 million over four years to extend the multipurpose hall at Caloundra State School; \$26.6 million to construct the new primary school in Caloundra South; and \$43.75 million will fast-track construction of three Sunshine Coast road infrastructure projects. There is heaps of support that is happening on the roads around that region as well. They are two very fast growing regions and they will continue to need the frontline services that are part of the budget whilst also ensuring that we are continuing to invest in health, education and roads and transport, because all of that means jobs and training and hope and a better outcome for people with jobs.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Premier. We have now reached the time allocated for consideration of the portfolios of expenditure within the responsibilities administered by the Premier and Minister for Trade. We will now turn to any questions that the Premier had endeavoured to get back to us with. Is there any further information to questions that you wanted to provide, or else the alternative is to take a question on notice?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I can advise the committee that Jon Persley has taken 25 days leave without pay. They were submitted in November and December. That was the process that the Chief of Staff put in place to ensure that there were no conflicts.

CHAIR: Were there any other questions?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not think so.

Mr PURDIE: Mr Chair, I have made some notes predominantly from the first session this morning in terms of questions that either Mr Stewart or the Premier indicated they would be happy to get the information for and pass it on. I just want to find out if they are being taken on notice as per standing order 183. The first one was the cost value of a car park at 1 William Street. Mr Stewart indicated it is something he would have to look up.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We can report that it was a temporary visitor car park and it was not even every single day, so it is just the normal temporary visitor car parks that happen for a whole range of visitors.

CHAIR: I am not sure that these were taken on notice. Member for Ninderry, the secretariat notes any questions that were agreed to be taken on notice and we offer the Premier the opportunity to get back to us with any further information. We have gone through that process and I do not know that there were any questions taken on notice, but the Premier is indicating that she has one more—

Mr PURDIE: Mr Chairman, these are questions that the Premier or Mr Stewart indicated that they would be happy to look up and get back to us on. I just want to clarify—

CHAIR: I appreciate that, member for Ninderry, but given that on the first hurdle that is not my memory and it is not the notes that have been taken by the secretariat, we might not actually go through your questions in that manner. Premier, you had some additional information?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just had the final one about the doctors. From September 2019 to September 2020 there was an increase of 376 FTE doctors across Queensland.

Mr STEVENS: Chair, just one other question.

CHAIR: Is there a point of order, member?

Mr STEVENS: No. In terms of the procedure, Chair, the Premier mentioned that she would come back to the committee in relation to the fire notification on Fraser Island.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, I clarified that and said that the director-general provides me with verbal updates. We meet regularly. He kept me apprised of the situation. There would have been a more detailed discussion we had when the fire services took over the managing of that fire, but I also said that all of those matters are now going to be examined by the IGEM inspector, so I think the IGEM inspector needs to do his job.

CHAIR: Thank you, Premier. We have a process of recording any questions that were taken on notice in that manner and we invite the Premier to give any supplementary answers at this stage, which we have done.

Mr PURDIE: So, Mr Chair, can we get a date as to when the Premier is going to report as to the authenticity of the email that was tabled during this last session?

CHAIR: Member, are you making a point of order?

Mr PURDIE: I am just trying to find out if we got a date as to when the Premier was going to reply under standing orders to the document that was tabled in the second session as to the authenticity of the email that she received from mangocube potentially, allegedly.

Ms PALASZCZUK: All of those matters were discussed by the CCC.

CHAIR: Hold on, Premier. This is extraordinarily out of order. If you have a point of order, put it. Premier, thank you very much for your attendance here today and thanks for taking the time to answer all of our questions. I thank all of the officials and departmental officers for your attendance. I particularly wanted to thank the Department of the Premier and Cabinet because this has been an extraordinary year. The people of Logan really value that you have had to adapt and to do things differently in this very difficult year. Thank you very much, officers, for making yourselves available and for all of the work that you have done throughout this time. The committee will now adjourn for a break and the hearing will resume at 2 pm with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Treasurer and Minister for Investment. Thank you very much.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 1.33 pm to 2.00 pm.

ESTIMATES—ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE—TREASURY AND INVESTMENT

In Attendance

Hon. C Dick, Treasurer and Minister for Investment

Mr B Kerdel, Chief of Staff

Mr D De Voss, Senior Policy Advisor

Queensland Treasury

Ms R Hunter, Under Treasurer

Mr W Cannon, State Actuary (State Actuary's Office)

Ms K Gould, Director (Cabinet Legislation Liaison Office)

QIC Limited

Mr D Frawley, Chief Executive Officer

Queensland Treasury Corporation

Mr P Noble, Chief Executive

Energy Queensland Limited

Mr R Duke, Chief Executive Officer

CleanCo Queensland Limited

Dr M Schweizer, Chief Executive Officer



CHAIR: The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolios of the Treasurer and Minister for Investment. My name is Linus Power, the member for Logan and chair of the committee. With me are Mr Ray Stevens, member for Mermaid Beach and the deputy chair. The other committee members are Mr Michael Crandon, the member for Coomera; Mrs Melissa McMahan, the member for Macalister; Mr Dan Purdie, the member for Ninderry; and Mr Adrian Tantari, the member for Hervey Bay. Today we have visiting with us Mr David Janetzki, the member for Toowoomba South; Mr Jarrod Bleijie, the member for Kawana; and Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa.

The committee will examine the Treasurer's portfolio until 6 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break between 4 and 4.15 pm. 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 the parliament apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. In respect of the government owned corporations and statutory authorities that are here with us today, standing order 180(2) provides that a member may ask a question that the committee determines will assist in its examination of the relevant appropriation bill or otherwise assist the committee in determining whether public funds are being efficiently spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

I intend to guide this afternoon's proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored fully and ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members. I remind those present that while mobile phones are not ordinarily permitted in the public gallery, an exemption has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses here today who have been permitted to use their devices for this purpose. I do ask, however, that all phones and electronic devices be switched to silent mode to avoid any interruptions in the proceedings. I also remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the Treasurer, Under Treasurer, officials and departmental officers 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 Treasurer or the Under Treasurer. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Treasury and Investment open for investigation. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Treasurer, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes. Treasurer, would you like to make a statement?

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. I thank the committee for the opportunity to provide an opening address. Firstly, I welcome back some of the members of the Economics and Governance Committee from the 56th Parliament, including you, Chair, and the Deputy Chair. Can I especially extend a welcome to the new member for Hervey Bay as a first-time member of a parliamentary committee. It is the election of the member for Hervey Bay and the other 51 members of the Palaszczuk Labor government that gives this budget its most important endorsement: the endorsement of the people of Queensland.

This is a budget that delivers on the commitments we took to the people of Queensland. In the electorate of Coomera it delivers \$755 million to make the Coomera Connector a reality. Through the electorate of Mermaid Beach this budget delivers \$50.4 million towards stage 3A of the Gold Coast Light Rail to run from Broadbeach to Burleigh Heads. In the electorate of Kawana this budget provides \$5 million towards the \$20 million commitment to the Sunshine Coast Stadium upgrade. Just outside the electorate of Toowoomba South the budget provides \$40 million for Wagner Corporation's proposed Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct subject to federal support. In the electorate of Ninderry the budget delivers \$4.8 million toward the construction of eight new classrooms at Eumundi State School.

Every one of those initiatives is part of our record \$56 billion infrastructure investment—Queensland's largest four-year capital spend in more than a decade. Our capital program includes funding that supports 11 major upgrades on the Bruce Highway, including the Rockhampton Ring Road; the Haughton River floodplain bridges; the Cairns southern access corridor; widenings from Caboolture to the Sunshine Coast motorway; the 76,000 megalitre Rookwood Weir, which will allow significant agricultural growth along the Fitzroy River and support 200 jobs during construction; the Cairns marine precinct; the Cairns Convention Centre; and the expansion of the Southern Queensland correctional precinct. Almost 60 per cent of the investment in that capital spend will be made outside Greater Brisbane because as a government we know how important it is to invest in regional Queensland, especially as we recover from COVID-19.

Given how stark some of the warnings were earlier in 2020 about the economic impacts of COVID-19, Queensland's strong health response means we have fared well compared to other states and especially other nations. The road back from COVID-19 will be a long one and our state faces four to five years of deficits as we rebuild. Revenues, including GST, tax and royalties, are forecast to be down more than \$12 billion over the forward estimates while our expenditure has risen through our \$7 billion worth of measures to protect Queenslanders' health, Queenslanders' jobs and Queensland businesses. Those deficits and our spending commitments to protect and reinvigorate the Queensland economy mean our borrowings will increase, but they will do so at a time when interest rates are lower than they have ever been in living memory and they will do so at a time when the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, the federal Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, the Governor of the Reserve Bank and economists around the world say that borrowing is the right thing to do.

There can be no doubt about the decision the people of Queensland made at the 31 October election around debt and deficit. As the election concluded on 31 October the people of Queensland gave the Palaszczuk Labor government a mandate not only to borrow \$4 billion but also to support further borrowings to the extent necessary to restore the economy.

Members of the committee do not need to take my word for it; they can ask our parliamentary colleague the member for Everton. When the member for Everton, then as the shadow treasurer and deputy leader of the opposition, finally released the LNP's costings on 29 October, the member for Everton referred to the necessary surge in Queensland's debt and said, 'It hasn't finished yet.' He then said, 'If Labor wins the election it means more debt for Queensland.' The member for Everton was fully aware that further borrowings were needed to cover the anticipated deficits. He said so publicly. It is now an admission the LNP seeks to deny.

The ultimate point is this: there was a clear contest in the election between the LNP's reckless drive to surplus against the need for deficits funded by borrowings. On 13 October 2020 I announced our clear position: four to five years of deficits which would have to be funded from borrowings. This was before Queenslanders started voting. Members will also remember the then LNP leader, the member for Nanango, making her promise to deliver a surplus within three years, which she quickly revised to four years. It was, in fact, a reckless promise. It was so reckless that the Labor Party made a television commercial about it and we promoted that across Queensland. We even had the Liberal Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, come into Queensland to say he supported the member for Nanango's

reckless surplus promise even though he was delivering a decade of deficits. No-one in Queensland could be in any doubt about the position of the two parties. The LNP said it would deliver a surplus within four years. The Labor Party were clear: there had to be deficits across four to five years which would be funded from additional borrowings. The people of Queensland made an informed choice and we are delivering in this budget what Queenslanders voted for.

CHAIR: I now commence questioning. Turning to the Deputy Chair, do you or a member of the opposition have a question?

Mr STEVENS: I will defer to the shadow Treasurer, the member for Toowoomba South.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you. My first question is to the Under Treasurer. Could Treasury have delivered a budget prior to the Queensland state election?

Ms Hunter: The Treasurer delivered a budget after the state election, after the government was returned. That was always the time frame if the government was returned.

Mr JANETZKI: Were there any factors that would have prevented Treasury from delivering a budget prior to the Queensland state election?

Ms Hunter: The reality is that the Treasurer, on Treasury advice, made it clear that until we saw the Commonwealth's or federal government's we were not in a position to be able to finalise any modelling or forecasting. The reality is that we were in caretaker mode, so the answer is no.

Mr JANETZKI: Under Treasurer, before last week's budget when did Treasury last provide forward estimates of those key fiscal aggregates to the Treasurer, the Treasurer's office or the Premier?

Ms Hunter: In the build-up to the 2020-21 budget, based on the information that we were able to analyse as a consequence of the federal government's budget. Once the government was returned and confirmed, we began the process of briefing on the budget strategy and it was in that process that the fiscal aggregates were developed.

Mr JANETZKI: Prior to that initial preparatory work leading up to last week's budget, when would have been the last time that Treasury had delivered those key fiscal aggregates to the Treasurer himself, or the Premier's office for that matter?

Ms Hunter: Typically the fiscal aggregates are provided at midyear review and in the build-up to the budget. Given neither the Treasurer nor I were in these roles during the midyear review process, I can only assume that was the point at which those fiscal aggregates were provided.

Mr JANETZKI: In relation to the COVID Fiscal and Economic Review, in preparation for that document or that review that had been undertaken and I think delivered on 7th September this year, had Treasury developed four-year forwards in preparation for that release in September?

Ms Hunter: I understand that this was a question posed prior to the delivery of the CFER, the COVID Fiscal and Economic Review. Just as was the case with other jurisdictions, the Queensland government did not publish a full set of forward estimates as the rapidly changing economic situation made revenue forecasts completely unreliable. To that end, the Prime Minister himself said, 'The idea that you can actually put together any sort of forecast around the economy at this time is simply not sensible.' I can confirm that Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia did not even publish fiscal aggregates for 2020-21, whereas Queensland did. I think I have been on record in relation to that issue.

Mr JANETZKI: I accept in some regards that it is a political response in comparison to other jurisdictions around Australia.

CHAIR: I am sorry, but it seems to be an inference to make that suggestion.

Mr JANETZKI: I withdraw. Under Treasurer, surely Treasury would have been undertaking analysis and preparing those forward figures, at least internally, given the circumstances that the Queensland economy is facing?

CHAIR: To be honest, this seems to be repetition. As far as preparing within the constraints that you had, that seems to be the way the question is framed and the new ground that is broken with this question. I will allow it on that ground, Under Treasurer.

Ms Hunter: As I said, the Queensland government did not publish a full set of forward estimates because the numbers were volatile and the experience of that is evidenced by the fact that other jurisdictions did not either.

Mr JANETZKI: I think you may have answered this already, Under Treasurer, but can you clarify when Treasury commenced preparing last week's budget?

Ms Hunter: Clearly, Treasury did not anticipate or forecast or assume the outcome of an election. We waited until a government was announced. It was a returning government. It was at that time that we commenced the formal process of briefing in relation to budget strategy. It was in that context that the 2020-21 budget build began.

Mr JANETZKI: Did Treasury ever prepare unpublished estimates of those forwards that could be relied on for internal purposes?

Ms Hunter: The fiscal aggregates built into the budget were developed in the context of the budget build.

Mr JANETZKI: Did Treasury advise the former Treasurer to cancel the budget in April?

CHAIR: That is difficult for the Under Treasurer to answer as she has already indicated that she was not in the role.

Mr JANETZKI: To the best of her knowledge?

Ms Hunter: I was appointed as Under Treasurer on 11 May, so I am sorry I am not in a position to answer.

Mr DICK: The national cabinet did, of course, make a decision—

CHAIR: I am sorry, but it might be worthwhile in that many of the questions seem to lead towards—and you have said it yourself—a policy aspect that is difficult for the Under Treasurer to answer. I might be taking the opposition's time to do this but, Treasurer, at what point did you feel confident about the ability to forecast figures given the rapidly changing economic circumstances?

Mr DICK: The Treasury produces four-years estimates of debt as part of the budget, as the Under Treasurer has quite properly said, and the midyear fiscal and economic review. Those are the two occasions where the Treasury formally briefs whoever holds the position of Treasurer on what the forward estimates position is of the government. Until the Treasury has the capacity and the ability to do that on the basis of all of the information available to it, it is not able to properly advise government. We made an election commitment to deliver a budget in the first week of 30 November, followed by a full estimates and that is precisely what the Treasury did and what we are participating in now.

CHAIR: That is very similar to the answer that you gave to this committee during the CFER hearing about the forward estimates that you could put forward at that stage.

Mr DICK: I think that is a very good point, Chair. The reality is that we have provided perhaps more information, fiscal and economic, in comparison to any other jurisdiction, particularly as a government that was in the lead-up to an election. We did the fiscal and economic review. The Premier and I made it plain, when we could not proceed with the budget given the decision of the federal cabinet, that we would that so that Queenslanders had a good view of our fiscal and economic position. We then went to a hearing, we answered questions on that process and, of course, I was very clear about that. I said at the hearing on 11th September that it was not possible to provide those forward estimates until we knew what the federal government's position was, which was handed down in their budget on 6 October.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you, Treasurer, for the explanation. Under Treasurer, was it Treasury's advice to only provide projections to the end of the financial year in respect of the COVID FER that was issued in September?

Ms Hunter: As the Treasurer has just said, the forecast to 2020-21 in the CFER was undertaken on the basis that we had some confidence in those numbers. The numbers otherwise were just too volatile. That was confirmed by the position taken by the federal government in the release of their fiscal update, as well.

Mr JANETZKI: Under Treasurer, had Treasury been developing any internal estimates in relation to the debt figure that we ultimately saw issued last week in the forwards? Was there any analysis that had been undertaken by Treasury in that regard?

Ms Hunter: As I said, the fiscal aggregates were developed in the context of the development of the 2020-21 budget.

Mr JANETZKI: Are you confirming, Under Treasurer, that none of those key fiscal aggregates were developed internally by Treasury, whether it be debt or otherwise, except for the work that was undertaken after the election?

CHAIR: This is getting repetitious. My feeling is that that question has been put and answered.

Mr JANETZKI: That one is a 'yes' or 'no' question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chair. How you view a question or an answer is, with respect, Mr Chair, not entirely within your purview. How the opposition or a member of this committee ask a question, or how they re-ask a question to elicit different information or further information is, with respect, not for you to continually interrupt the member.

CHAIR: With respect, thank you for your feedback. I did not intend to interrupt the member; I let his question be completed. It is clear that repetition in questions is not within the standing orders. I will allow the question, but I am observing that this seems to be the same question that has already been put and answered.

Ms Hunter: As I said previously, the federal budget came down, I believe, on 6 October. We needed to understand the assumptions and see the detail. We did not pre-empt the outcomes of an election. When a government was confirmed and it was a returned government, we commenced the process of briefing on the budget strategy. It was during that process then that the fiscal aggregates were developed.

CHAIR: To observe, that does seem very similar to answers given before as well.

Mr JANETZKI: Treasurer, did you have a reasonable belief prior to the election that the debt levels would ultimately reach where they have over the forwards—and to \$130 billion, in fact?

Mr DICK: In fact, when I handed down the Fiscal and Economic Review on 7 September, I set out what the proposed deficit would be for 2019-20, which was \$5.1 billion. I also set out very clearly, on the same basis as the federal government had done its two years of forward estimates before it handed down its budget, what the forecast deficit would be for this financial year, 2020-21—at that time, \$8.136 billion. Collectively, that is more than \$13 billion in deficits over two financial years. I think the most rudimentary examination of that and the most basic understanding of economics would tell you if you are running deficits over two financial years of at least \$13 billion—and, in fact, it is now higher than that; it is now \$8.366, I think, for this financial year—then you would have to borrow to fund. It seemed very clear to everyone, given the size of those deficits and the fact that we said we would not cut jobs or services for Queenslanders, that we would continue to invest to support small businesses—\$7 billion in support measures—it would take at least four years to get back to balance and you would have to borrow. We were always clear with Queenslanders from as early as 7 September. In fact, I think I announced it in July. It is \$8.663, this financial year—I correct the record there.

So, not only did we confirm that in the Fiscal and Economic Review, we handed down those deficit figures very shortly after the federal government did their fiscal and economic update in July. This has been apparent for a very long time. Of course you have to borrow to fund deficits, which I confirmed during the state election.

Mr JANETZKI: How did the Treasurer form the view that there would be four or five years worth of deficits if in fact there were no fiscal aggregates being provided by Treasury to him or his office?

Mr DICK: Unless you are going to cut \$8 billion in expenditure to get back into surplus, you will run deficits. It is, frankly, kindergarten economics that anyone would understand.

CHAIR: That is actually repetitious of your previous answer where you said there would be an \$8 billion deficit in the C19-FER. Let us advance new ground, member for Toowoomba South.

Mr JANETZKI: I struggle to understand how the Treasurer could have formed a view on deficits, or in fact any commentary given on debt levels, if, as the Under Treasurer has confirmed, there are no fiscal aggregates being given prior to the election or during the campaign. I am trying to understand, if the Treasurer can explain, how he formed his views, given so little information appeared to be coming from Treasury.

Mr DICK: Chair, I provided the committee with a long and detailed answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: Pie in the sky.

CHAIR: The question would be how someone could therefore also project a surplus, if that is the same logic being used.

Mr BLEIJIE: That was not the question.

Mr JANETZKI: Under Treasurer, in October the Treasurer announced a two per cent productivity dividend on Queensland Health. Will the Under Treasurer advise the total forecasted productivity dividend from Queensland Health in the 2020-21 financial year?

Ms Hunter: The savings and debt plan which was announced earlier certainly does require government agencies to contribute to overall savings to be achieved in the order of \$3 billion over the forwards. Queensland Health, as the largest agency in terms of budget, is also asked to contribute

towards that savings and debt plan. Agencies have been asked to look at a range of categories. They include such things as the transference of resources to the front line, so clearly Queensland Health has a major role and in fact has received significant additional funding to support frontline resources. We have also asked agencies to look at categories such as marketing, communications, travel, accommodation, ICT projects; it is very much in that arena that these savings will be achieved.

We are currently doing very well in terms of the savings and debt plan with \$367 million in savings and, of that, \$352.2 million in 2020-21 returning to the Consolidated Fund. That constitutes 47 per cent of the 2020-21 target, although we are only 42 per cent in terms of time through the year. The remaining savings of \$397.8 million in 2020-21, will be realised again by Treasury working with agencies to look at those savings across a range of measures, and I have talked about the areas of focus previously. Yes, Queensland Health will be contributing, but it will be contributing on the basis of additional resources to the front line for which they have been funded, and looking at those back-of-office, corporate services where those savings can be achieved. We certainly expect Queensland Health, like every agency, to contribute to the \$3 billion in savings.

Mr JANETZKI: Under Treasurer, I appreciate that that was whole-of-government savings. I note that the Treasurer was very specific about a two per cent productivity dividend. Can you be more specific in relation to that two per cent commitment made by the Treasurer and how that will be achieved, particularly in relation to this financial year?

Ms Hunter: In terms of the specific savings return from Queensland Health, I will endeavour to get that answer for you by the end of this session. I can say the way in which that saving is to be achieved is to look at those functions that are not front line, to ensure that the front line is well resourced, and to transfer any resources, wherever possible, to further augment the front line.

Mr JANETZKI: Under Treasurer, I note that the Treasurer was quite specific in relation to that Queensland Health productivity dividend in that it would save \$270 million or thereabouts. I am wanting to get a clear picture on what part of the Queensland Health budget those savings would be made and whether it would include employee expenses or the like?

Ms Hunter: Thank you for the question. Do you want an answer?

CHAIR: I note that only minor changes were made to the previous question. I am happy for the Under Treasurer to give the same answer again but really it is the same question. Possibly the Under Treasurer will give us, not surprisingly, the same answer. I will leave that to the Under Treasurer to decide.

Ms Hunter: Again, the savings and debt plan is targeting particular areas for savings and they include largely back of house services—is it possible to make savings through accommodation, through ICT, through communications and market?—and certainly understanding that, particularly now in the context of a global pandemic, any savings from Queensland Health will certainly not impact frontline services. I can very much give you that assurance.

CHAIR: And you have given it to us repeatedly. We now move to government questions. I have a question for the Under Treasurer. We have heard quite a lot of questions about the timings around when you briefed the Treasurer. Could you please advise whether any members of the opposition sought a briefing on this matter under the caretaker conventions where it was available to them?

Ms Hunter: As I understand it, you are asking whether during caretaker Treasury or I as Under Treasurer were asked to brief the Leader of the Opposition or shadow?

CHAIR: That is exactly right.

Ms Hunter: The answer is no. There was nothing direct to me. I will just confirm that with my team. No, we had no such request.

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

Mrs McMAHON: My question is to the Treasurer. Could you please advise the committee on Queensland's credit rating and how rating agencies consider Queensland's economic outlook?

Mr DICK: Thank you member for Macalister for your question. I might take a little time to address some of the issues raised previously very briefly. This is a very important question because I have some important breaking information for the committee.

I go back to this idea that you could forecast accurately and appropriately during the most significant pandemic the globe has faced for the century. On 20 March Liberal Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, said after national cabinet about budgets, preparing budgets and doing forecasting—

It was also agreed today that putting Budgets together at this time with the great uncertainty that exists is not something that any Commonwealth or State Government should be doing.

He did not say could be doing, he said they should not be doing that. The Prime Minister went on to say—

As a result, we've already decided that we will not be now handing down a Budget until the first Tuesday in October, on the 6th of October.

The Prime Minister flagged that on 20 March. He continued—

The Treasurer will be having a bit more to say about that.

Then the Prime Minister very importantly said—

All other states and territories will be working to similar timetables.

That is an October timetable. We did not pick the date of the federal budget. In fact, we did not pick the date of the state election because that is now prescribed by law in the Constitution. The Prime Minister continued—

The idea that you can actually put together any sort of forecasts around the economy at this time is simply not sensible.

We took a sensible approach. We waited for the federal budget. We made clear our position consistently during the election campaign—from the date we handed down those deficits in July, the fiscal and economic review, examination by this committee, budget commitments flagged up-front, how they would be costed, deficits to be funded by borrowings, costings, election, budget and here we are today.

I go back to the question—a very important question. To confirm for the committee, the Queensland government's most recent rating outcomes are: AA-plus stable affirmed by S&P Global on 21 October 2020; AA with a stable outlook affirmed by Fitch on 27 August 2020; and AA-one stable, the equivalent of AA-plus but they use different nomenclature, affirmed by Moody's on 22 April 2020. A stable outlook indicates that neither an upgrade nor downgrade are likely in the short term. Of course, we are blessed in Queensland to have a large and diverse economy and a well-advanced funding program which assists us in addressing current conditions. Consequently, the state's debt burden and interest expense coverage are expected to remain manageable over the medium term, I am advised by Treasury. Agencies also highlight the strong institutional framework between the states and Commonwealth as underpinning their ratings.

Confirmations of Queensland's stable outlook reflect a view that the impact of the pandemic on the state's financial metrics will be temporary. For S&P Global, the stable outlook reflects an expectation that Queensland will experience a significance COVID-19 induced hit to the budgetary performance in the short term, but this will improve as the local and national economy recovers and effective budget management continues. Moody's outlook reflects the substantial institutional framework and Moody's expectation that the state's economy will remain resilient in the face of COVID-19 disruptions and that the state's debt burden will remain manageable. The impact of COVID-19 will exacerbate revenue and expenditure pressures and cause deterioration in financial metrics, but Moody's view is that it will not damage them permanently. Moody's also considers that Queensland retains ample levels of internal liquidity and views positively the state's fully funded superannuation liabilities.

However, I advise the committee that in news this morning, ratings agency S&P Global has downgraded the credit rating of New South Wales from AAA-negative to AA-plus stable, meaning New South Wales now has the same credit rating as Queensland. I can advise that they have downgraded the credit rating of Victoria from AAA-watch negative to AAA-stable, which, of course, is a lower credit rate than Queensland.

S&P Global affirmed Queensland's credit rating at AA-plus stable on the day our government's budget was released. Not only has Standard & Poor's Global endorsed our government's position, today's action means that Queensland now has the highest credit rating of all Australian states. As I advised the parliament last week, by the end of the forward estimates, relative to New South Wales and Victoria, Queensland has lower net debt, lower gross debt, lower total debt, lower net debt as a share of revenue, lower gross debt as a share of revenue, lower net debt as a share of output, lower gross debt as a share of output, lower net debt per person and lower gross debt per person.

Even though our bonds were trading at similar rates to the AAA-rated states, we now officially reclaim our place at the top of the credit rating leaderboard. I think that is an insight. During this crisis when all governments in the country have been under enormous pressure that we have been able to maintain our position and sustain our position when other states have sustained a credit downgrade I think speaks to the strong health response we had, our strong approach on borders—not wanting them opened and calling on that 64 times—and our strong emergency response economically to the distress Queenslanders and Queensland businesses were facing. We are now seeing stability going forward.

That is the single biggest way we can rebuild our economy. Thank you, member for Macalister, for a very important question. It shows that we are heading in the right direction. There is a lot of work to do—four years to recover our strength—but we are headed in the right direction.

Mr TANTARI: My question is to the Treasurer. Could you please advise the committee on Queensland's job performance throughout COVID-19 and how this compares with other jurisdictions?

Mr DICK: Perhaps the most important challenge facing our state over the next four years is how we sustain employment growth over the next four years to recover the jobs that Queenslanders need, to deliver the jobs we need and to ensure the strength of the Queensland economy recovers. COVID-19 and the emergency health restrictions implemented in order to stop the spread of the virus had a substantial impact on Queensland's labour market.

I note for the committee that I heard last Friday on ABC Radio that 600 people a day are dying in the United Kingdom. That is an awful tragedy for that nation as they go through a second wave, particularly having suffered such loss earlier in the year. We had a total of six deaths of Queenslanders whom we mourn and recognise. It shows you the differences strong responses to COVID-19 can make.

Between March and May, Queensland's employment fell by 205,400 persons, or eight per cent, which was the largest two-month decline in Queensland's history. At the same time, the participation rate dropped from 65½ per cent in March to 61.6 per cent in May—that is 158,200 people equivalent leaving the labour force over that period. As a result, the increase in the unemployment rate was likely more subdued than it otherwise would have been, rising from 5.6 per cent in March to 7.8 per cent in May 2020 because of the number of people simply exiting the labour market.

Since May, there has been a rapid and strong recovery in the Queensland labour market. Employment increased by 205,900 persons between May and October 2020, to be 500 persons above the pre-COVID-19 level in March. Similarly, the monthly number of hours worked in Queensland rebounded between May and October, to be 0.4 per cent above pre-COVID-19 levels. I can inform the committee that Queensland is the only state where employment and hours worked have rebounded to above their pre-COVID levels, highlighting the extent of the recovery in the state's labour market following the easing of restrictions due to success in containing the virus.

In New South Wales, employment in October was 1.3 per cent below its pre-COVID level in March and hours worked were 3.3 per cent below. In Victoria, where the state has been dealing with a second wave of COVID-19 infections, employment in October was 4.1 per cent below its pre-COVID-19 levels and hours worked were nine per cent below. Even in Western Australia, which like Queensland has done an excellent job in containing the virus, employment in October was 0.4 per cent below its pre-COVID level and hours worked were 2.3 per cent below.

We have had a strong response. Is it enough? No, it is not. We need to get more people back into work, and that is what we are going to work on every day to ensure that happens. Thank you for your question, member for Hervey Bay.

CHAIR: Treasurer, could you please advise the committee on Queensland's household consumption growth throughout the crisis and how does our household consumption growth and its forecast compare with the other jurisdictions?

Mr DICK: I think it is important for us to look at the comparatives to see how we are travelling and what we need to do to continue our journey to strengthen the Queensland economy and create jobs for Queenslanders.

There was severe disruption to household spending patterns in Queensland and across the country as a result of COVID-19, particularly the restrictions that were placed on the community to keep them safe. Since the release of the budget, ABS estimates published as part of the September quarter 2020 state details—that is what it is called—show household consumption in Queensland fell 9.9 per cent in the June quarter. That is almost 10 per cent. On a comparable basis though, the respective declines in New South Wales were 13.7 per cent and 14 per cent in Victoria. Consumption nationally fell 12½ per cent in the June quarter. We are ahead of all of those numbers.

COVID-19 emergency health measures resulted in severe spending categories recording sharp declines in the June quarter in Queensland. The most notable declines were in hotels, cafes and restaurants, down 52 per cent; transport services, down 87.9 per cent; and health, down 15.9 per cent. Substantial government income support programs such as JobKeeper and JobSeeker and early access to superannuation have supported household incomes, although there is some argument about the nature and extent of that early access to superannuation and the ongoing impact of that particular issue. That is perhaps a question for another day.

However, with spending constrained by virus lockdowns and consumers exercising a greater degree of caution, saving rates have also increased. The revised national household savings ratio surged from 5.3 per cent in the March quarter in 2020 to 22.1 per cent in the June quarter and remained elevated at 18.9 per cent in the September quarter. Those factors, along with the success in containing the virus in Queensland which facilitated an earlier than expected unwinding of COVID containment measures, have driven a strong rebound in household spending in the September quarter.

The latest ABS data shows consumer spending in Queensland rose a record 11.6 per cent in September. It appears that what was somewhat saved is now being spent, and that is 0.8 per cent higher in annual terms. In comparison, New South Wales rebounded 10.8 per cent in the quarter, while the second wave related lockdowns in Victoria saw consumer spending fall 1.2 per cent in September to be 16 per cent lower over the year. As a result, the level of consumer spending in Queensland in the September quarter was around \$300 million above the pre-COVID level of the March quarter, but it was down \$4 billion in New South Wales and \$10.6 billion in Victoria. That of course will flow on to GST calculations as that expenditure and the lack of that expenditure washes its way through.

We are very hopeful that consumer spending patterns will normalise in the December quarter across a range of areas when it comes to household consumption, but it shows you the challenge and also the capacity of Queenslanders to respond strongly to what has happened.

Mrs McMAHON: My question is to the Treasurer. Could you please advise the committee on Queensland's recent economic performance throughout the crisis and how growth and its forecasts compare with other jurisdictions?

Mr DICK: Reflecting the impacts of COVID-19, domestic activity weakened across all states and territories in the June quarter—and I have just given you an insight into some of that. The latest ABS data available at the time the budget was published showed that Queensland's seasonally adjusted state final demand—a key indicator of domestic activity—fell a record 5.9 per cent in the June quarter, to be 5.2 per cent lower for the year. Queensland's 5.9 per cent decline, although severe, was well below the average decline of 7.4 per cent, which is the national average of decline. The decline was 8.6 per cent in New South Wales and 8.5 per cent in Victoria. Queensland's decline was 5.9 per cent; New South Wales, 8.6 per cent; and Victoria 8.5 per cent. Those results are a reflection I think of the state's success in controlling the spread of the virus which allowed domestic economic activity to be less impacted and start to recover more quickly and also the strong public investment decisions the government made to stimulate the economy which really washed through the March and the June quarters in particular.

The unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated measures to contain the spread of the virus we hope mean that the impact of Queensland's economic activity will be concentrated in that June quarter. As I said, substantial income support and stimulus measures across all levels of government combined with the progressive unwinding of virus restrictions in Queensland have underpinned a substantial rebound in activity in the September quarter and suggest a further improvement in the early parts in the December quarter. Chair, if we get close to time, will you let me know please?

CHAIR: Usually we will let you complete your answer. We have about five minutes left of our prescribed program, but we are not sticking to that in a hard fashion.

Mr DICK: Thank you. I think there is some important data I would like to provide to the committee, if I could, in response to this question. In particular, ABS national accounts data released after the budget showed Queensland state final demand rebounded 6.8 per cent in the September quarter—to be 0.7 higher over the year. Queensland recorded the strongest quarterly rise of the states in the September quarter and is the only state to record positive growth both since the March quarter 2020—the pre-COVID level—and over the year.

In terms of record low interest rates, the expectation is that they will stay low for an extended period and, along with generous government incentives for new construction, are supporting a strong rebound in dwelling finance commitments. The latest ABS labour force data for October show that seasonally adjusted employment—we have talked about that—rebounded 205,900 persons since its recent low in May. That is 500 persons above its pre-pandemic level in March.

In terms of the outlook going forward, which I think is important for all of us, Queensland's GSP is still forecast to return to growth—a quarter per cent—in 2021, as forecast in our fiscal and economic review. Economic growth is now expected to strengthen substantially to 3½ per cent in 2021-22, with

ongoing solid growth around 2¾ per cent in the later years. A quarter per cent this financial year, 3½ per cent in 2021-22 and in 2022-23 and 2023-24 at this stage anticipating 2¾ per cent growth—a solid path to growth again.

Australian Treasury forecasts national GDP—so the equivalent of our GSP—to decline 1½ per cent this year. GSP in Queensland will go up a quarter per cent, while nationally it will decline 1½ per cent but rebounding 4¾ per cent in 2020-21. That is particularly from what has happened in Victoria and the impact of that. There will be a larger growth nationally you would certainly hope.

In terms of the latest forecast from New South Wales and Victoria, economic activity is expected to fall three-quarters of a per cent in New South Wales in 2021—we are up a quarter per cent, with New South Wales expected to fall three-quarters of a per cent—and a four per cent decline in economic activity in Victoria in 2021 which is quite staggering really. I think that reflects our control of the virus. We very much hope the economic impact is concentrated in hopefully this calendar year but I think realistically this financial year. We will see how we travel as we get through the remainder of this financial year.

Mr STEVENS: Treasurer, earlier in your speech you said that the Prime Minister said economic conditions were such that you could not bring down a budget in March, yet the figure you quoted for the Moody's rating for Queensland was in April, obviously before the full economic impact on Queensland was available. When are you expecting an updated Moody's rating, and what rating has your department advised you it is anticipating?

Mr DICK: That is a matter for Moody's. We think it will be this calendar year, so we will get some update this calendar year from Moody's. Ultimately it is a matter for them, but we anticipate they will deliver something this calendar year. As I said, on what basis are we working? We are working on the basis of consistency, hopefully, and an affirmation of our current rating agency position. It is not beyond the realm of possibility, of course, that we may face a downgrade as well, and I said that when I released the budget.

Mr JANETZKI: May I please ask that Mr Frawley, QIC CO, come forward. Mr Frawley, last financial year the QIC paid a dividend of a little over \$44 million. Does QIC consult with the Treasurer as its shareholding minister in relation to dividend payouts?

Mr Frawley: We obviously do our accounts. Our financial accounts are signed off in September and October. We then deliver those financial statements and they are made public, and at that point we deliver the dividend and the tax equivalent number.

Mr JANETZKI: So they are not consulted on? That number would not have been known to the Treasurer prior to the preparation of the financials?

Mr Frawley: No.

Mr JANETZKI: I note the QIC also paid nearly \$58 million in staff bonuses for the performance and retention of employees. In this regard, does QIC consult with the Treasurer on annual bonuses that are paid out?

Mr Frawley: No, we do not.

Mr JANETZKI: What was the average performance and retention payment to individual staff across that nearly \$58 million in staff bonuses?

Mr Frawley: If you do the maths. At that point we had 1,200 people working for us. I do not have the number off the top of my head.

Mr JANETZKI: We will work it out. When was the last time that QIC would have made a greater payout in terms of staff bonuses than what they did in a dividend?

Mr Frawley: Our total remuneration number, our aggregate number, in the 2019-20 year was down 21 per cent year on year from the previous year. We anticipate that this year it will be probably down a similar number again in aggregate.

Mr JANETZKI: Treasurer, in the middle of a pandemic when Queenslanders have lost their jobs and had pay cuts and pay freezes, does the Treasurer think it is appropriate for a GOC to be giving more than \$58 million in bonuses to staff?

Mr DICK: That question asks for opinion. It is clearly contrary to the standing orders. What I will say is that I am not responsible for salary remuneration and payments to staff of QIC.

CHAIR: The Treasurer is correct: you did seek an opinion. That is not within the standing orders, and I should have picked it up directly. I apologise.

Mr DICK: I make it clear that I am not responsible for salary remuneration or payments to the staff of QIC, and that has been consistently the case for many, many years, including during the Newman LNP government.

Mr JANETZKI: Treasurer, how many other GOCs pay more in staff bonuses than shareholder dividends back to the Queensland government?

Mr DICK: Chair, I will take some advice on that, as I do and as you know, Chair, and I will do my best to return to the committee with the answer to that prior to the conclusion of this hearing today. If I cannot, then we will discuss how I might answer the question. I would like the opportunity to furnish that answer to the committee so they get the answer as quickly as possible.

I would also just observe that the nature of GOCs are quite different in Queensland. There is an enormous difference between a GOC like the Queensland Investment Corporation, and I will try and get the value of funds under management by them. The member for Toowoomba South will be well aware of that, having worked in a large finance organisation prior to his election to the parliament. There is a lot of difference between QIC and SunWater, Chair, so I hope the committee will put that in context.

There is \$79 billion under management by QIC—\$79,000 million—which puts that number that the member for Toowoomba South put to the CEO of the Queensland Investment Corporation in context.

Mr JANETZKI: The Treasurer may need to take this on notice too because I know it is not—

Mr DICK: By way of clarification, I have not taken the previous question on notice. What I have done is I will seek to ascertain the information and then we will discuss whether—

CHAIR: No, the member for Toowoomba South perhaps—

Mr DICK: I have an answer for the committee already. I am advised that no bonuses have been paid to staff of GOCs this year other than QIC.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba South, I think you meant it rhetorically, which was the way I took it. Possibly it does lead to a lack of clarity, so what is your question, member for Toowoomba South?

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you, Chair. Treasurer, in the last financial year can you please advise a total amount of performance and retention payments made to all public financial corporations and non-financial public sector corporations for the financial year ending previously?

Mr DICK: It strikes me as a question that would be perfect to have been asked on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: We will decide what we put on notice, not you.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we have been going so well. It was a complex question. The Treasurer was making a minor point. Let's just roll with this.

Mr DICK: I will take the interjection from the member for Kawana. My answer to the question from the member for Toowoomba South is that they are published in the annual reports, all of which have been tabled in this House prior to this hearing.

Mr JANETZKI: Mr Frawley, what is the expense breakdown for the \$126,258 worth of non-monetary benefits paid to QIC key management personnel over the last financial year—the breakdown of non-monetary benefits?

Mr Frawley: I would have to take that on notice and respond.

Mr JANETZKI: It could be gym memberships or the like.

Mr Frawley: I can assure you, Chair, they are not gym memberships.

CHAIR: Under the standing orders the minister responsible has the responsibility to take the question on notice. You can endeavour to find the figure and pass it back to the minister, or if someone could give you that information while you are still there that might be something that will give the minister an opportunity to be furnished with further information on that issue later in the question period. Again, it is a question taken on notice rhetorically rather than within the standing orders.

Mr JANETZKI: Can I call Mr Philip Noble, the CEO of QTC. Mr Noble, are you able to provide the expense breakdown for the \$85,075 of non-monetary benefits paid to QTC key management personnel over the last financial year?

Mr Noble: Not exactly, but I will give you my best guess without having notice. Thank you for the question. The \$85,000 would be accounted for by staff car parking and other short-term benefits which I will have to take on notice.

CHAIR: That would be something that the minister would take on notice, if he was intending to take it on notice for the purposes of the standing orders. I note you will endeavour to give any further information to the minister, who can answer at the end of the session if there is any other further information you can ascertain during the session.

Mr Noble: Yes, I will.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you, Mr Noble. My question is to the Under Treasurer. What is the total value of all contracts Queensland Treasury has for car parking?

Ms Hunter: Thank you for the question. Again, I will need to come back to you with that number before the end of this session.

Mr JANETZKI: To the Under Treasurer again, how many car parks are allocated at 1 William Street for Treasury officials?

Ms Hunter: Again, I will have that answer for you before the end of the session. Thank you for the question.

Mr JANETZKI: It was reported that 32 additional car parks needed to be provided to Treasury officials. Why was that necessary?

Ms Hunter: Thank you for the question. When you say 'it was reported', I am not sure what that reference is to.

Mr JANETZKI: There was a media report in the last couple of months in relation to those 32 additional car parks necessary for Treasury officials.

Mr DICK: On a point of order, Chair, it is difficult for the Under Treasurer to respond to a generic comment about a media report that may have been published. Could I ask for the specifics of that so we can have a look at the report and the context of what was reported please?

CHAIR: I think that is a reasonable enough point because it does make it difficult for the Under Treasurer to answer. On top of that, it is also a repetitive question, and the Under Treasurer has undertaken to get back to the Treasurer with the information for the end of the session. I notice that the crossbenches were also pushing me for questions. The member for Mirani indicated earlier that he had a question.

Mr ANDREW: Treasurer, I refer to page 1-79 of the SDS and 'working with stakeholders to progress energy' reforms. With the delivery of the new budget, are there any limits or restrictions placed on government providing financial support to projects tied to industries impacted by climate change risks, such as thermal coal, exports and agriculture?

Mr DICK: I am just thinking on that question. Are there any restrictions on funding projects tied to climate change, such as thermal coal? Not that I am aware of, member for Mirani. In fact, if I think about it, as you would probably be aware, we are making a strategic investment in the metallurgical coal port, the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal. We are looking to take a strategic share in that, which is obviously a port that exports a product, coal. There is not any formal policy from government around those sorts of matters you have discussed, no.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, do you have a quick follow-up?

Mr ANDREW: Yes, a quick one. The QIC was here earlier. Is there a list of companies that we actually invest in? Is there a public list of companies that we deal with and it breaks down the actual \$79 billion, or whatever it is, investment that is in the QIC?

Mr DICK: Thank you for your question. I think in the first instance it is probably best to read the annual reports of the Queensland Investment Corporation which set out in some detail how the QIC conduct themselves and operate. There will be some funds they will invest in, which will be a combination of a whole range of subsidiary investments—if you invest in a fund that may hold a whole range of assets or different asset classes. Some of the other major assets—real estate and so on—are set out in their report. I think in the first instance it is probably the most useful document for you to have a look at.

Ms BOLTON: Treasurer, regarding 1-74 of the SDS and the sustainability of Queensland's fiscal position, given the ongoing confusion regarding this \$4 billion versus \$28 billion, can you provide further clarity around that for Queenslanders? That is in the borrowings.

Mr DICK: Thank you for your question, member for Noosa. I have been fairly clear in my public commentary. I suppose the simplest way to describe it is we would normally invest in infrastructure using the revenue the state would earn, but when revenue collapses, as I have indicated, then you

have to borrow to continue to do the things you said you were going to do. We borrowed additionally. In the simplest terms, we are booking a number of deficits—2019-20 all the way through to 2023-24—but we are going to continue our investment. Certainly, in our infrastructure spend, we are increasing that. What you are seeing is the impact of the full four-year capital program, which is principally funded from borrowings. So revenues collapsed—\$12.3 billion over four years—but we are sustaining our expenditure investment, in fact growing it a little bit, so as well as funding the deficits it is funding infrastructure. That is the difference. Those deficits reflect that sort of ongoing investment

Ms BOLTON: I have a second quick question. What initiatives, legislation or policy change will be introduced to create a level playing field so that Queensland producers, manufacturers and other businesses can be more competitive with those cheaper imports?

Mr DICK: That is probably one of the most important questions of our time—how do we ensure that we continue to be self-reliant as a state and grow our self-reliance? I was the minister for state development and minister for manufacturing before I had the privilege of becoming the Treasurer, and that was the clarion call that we all got through COVID: how do we make more things in and for Queensland?

There are a number of investments we have made—and I might be able to put that together for you, member for Noosa; maybe not for the committee—and programs that we have to fund manufacturing, to support and sustain manufacturing. That includes big investments like the Rheinmetall Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence—our investment there to help them build that—all the way through to programs like Made in Queensland. Made in Queensland is providing basically capital support on a co-investment basis with a business to put in a new production line, to put in new equipment, to help them start up a new production assembly process. They come to government and say, 'We need to put in a new manufacturing process.' We provide co-funding. They do not have to borrow that money; it is a grant from the government. They know what they need because they have come to us and have designed it. There are all of those programs.

We made a very significant investment into personal protective equipment as well so we can manufacture more face masks and other products in Queensland. That is one of the six themes of our economic recovery strategy—making it for Queensland, how do we make more here? I am happy to put a little package together for you to explain those things.

Ms BOLTON: So there will be nothing like an increase in import tax that affects ongoing that competitiveness once they have kicked off, to create that level playing field going into the future—

Mr DICK: We cannot do that as a state. We would have to be dependent on the federal government to do that. Ours is more direct investment into projects and programs, rather than those levers like tariffs and levies that only the federal government under the Constitution can impose.

CHAIR: We are lucky you are so restrained about manufacturing! I know that you can talk about it for a long time.

Mr DICK: I am always happy to take questions on manufacturing.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba South.

Mr JANETZKI: Has the Treasurer had any discussions with Sunsuper representatives about the proposed merger between QSuper and Sunsuper?

Mr DICK: Very briefly. I have had one meeting, I think, but it has not been a priority for the government, frankly. Although announced, COVID overtook everything and it is not a priority at the moment. We will probably revisit it next year to see how it might be progressed, if at all, but it is not a priority for the government at all.

Mr JANETZKI: Just a follow-up question to the Treasurer. The former treasurer committed and guaranteed that a future merger of QSuper and Sunsuper would not impact the defined benefits scheme or result in any further withdrawals from the scheme. Is the Treasurer willing to make a similar commitment?

Mr DICK: There is no change to the government policy position. That remains the position of the government. I have certainly not changed it and I am not aware of any view in government that it should change. That is the position of the government.

Mr JANETZKI: In respect of that Treasurer, any changes to the defined benefits scheme—would the commitment to no job losses, should the proposed merger proceed, would that also be part of that commitment?

Mr DICK: Was that the commitment made by the previous treasurer?

CHAIR: Sorry, I was doing other things Treasurer. Do you want to clarify the question?

Mr JANETZKI: The former treasurer committed that a future merger would not result in any job losses.

Mr DICK: That is my position. That continues to be the government's policy position.

CHAIR: Thank you Treasurer. I now turn to the member for Hervey Bay. Do you have any questions for the Treasurer?

Mr TANTARI: My question is to the Treasurer. Could you please advise the committee on the delivery of the government's Small Business Adaptation Grants program?

Mr DICK: Thank you, member for Hervey Bay. I appreciate your interest in small business, one of the great drivers and employers of the Queensland people. I am very pleased to explain that to members of the committee. I know that the member for Hervey Bay is a strong advocate—as I think it is fair to say are all members of the committee—of small business and is a strong supporter in the community of Hervey Bay. Some 97 per cent of all businesses in Queensland are small and employ over 970,000 people, almost a million people, or 42 per cent of the state's private sector workforce. Collectively, those businesses contribute about \$117 billion a year to the Queensland economy, quite a significant number. Thankfully what we have seen though COVID—it has been a difficult time for small business, but Queensland's small businesses are strong, resilient and diverse. They have been doing it tough through the global pandemic which has impacted economies around the world.

It is why we announced our Small Business Adaptation Grants up to \$200 million to provide grants of up to \$10,000 to help small business owners and operators affected by COVID adapt and sustain their business operations. Those grants were aimed at supporting small and micro businesses which employed Queenslanders but which may not have been eligible for other Queensland government support measures such as payroll tax relief for businesses with wages over \$1.3 million. In recognition of COVID-19's impact on businesses, eligible small businesses including micro businesses could apply for those grants to help pay for financial, legal or other professional advice, marketing, communication activities and digital technology strategies. The grants could also be used to buy specialised digital equipment or business-specific software to help move businesses online and to maintain competitiveness—so that pivot piece in terms of, as we talked about briefly, the Made in Queensland grants.

We used that grant process to help businesses shift if they wanted to promote themselves online, if they had a vision of developing an app or just really refreshing their web page to make themselves more accessible online. I know a lot of companies did that and I think that was very helpful to them. We knew that a lot of those businesses, unlike in the manufacturing space, did not have the capacity to co-fund, so we did not require matching funding for those grants.

The first round was announced on 19 May. We then did a second round and we have also prioritised in the second round \$50 million for regional communities to provide targeted small business support. From my engagement with businesses in my community, but across Queensland—and I have spoken to many of them—those grants up to \$10,000 were very welcome. I think they really helped a lot of those businesses, because COVID made them think afresh about their business model, their business plan and what could they do. Not every business will survive the impact of COVID—we need to be honest about that—but it has allowed a lot of those businesses to do what they have been hoping to do or thinking about doing for some time to allow them to transition to a different operating platform or different business plan. I am very hopeful that that will set them up now going forward, as we hear the economy coming back, and that they will be able to benefit from that.

CHAIR: Could you please advise the committee on Queensland's operating position and when it will be targeting a surplus? How does that compare with other jurisdictions?

Mr DICK: That goes back to some of the questions that the committee asked earlier today in the hearing. The Mid-Year Fiscal and Economic Review handed down at the end of last calendar year confirmed that Queensland was on track to achieve a general government net operating surplus in 2019-20. That position prevailed despite revenue reductions since the 2019-20 budget, with the savings plan providing a buffer against revenue revisions. Queensland's operating balance was forecast to steadily increase over the forward estimates. The impact of the crisis on Queensland's operating position has been significant of course—and we talked about that earlier today—driven by the impact of the economic downturn on revenues as well as the cost of support and recovery measures.

Consistent with the COVID Fiscal and Economic Review which I handed down on 7 September, the operating deficit in 2019-20 was \$5.734 billion. The pandemic's impact on the operating balance will peak this financial year, 2020-21, at \$8.633 billion, which we discussed earlier. The operating deficit

progressively decreases over the forward estimates as the economy recovers and temporary support measures are wound back. The operating position is expected to continue to strengthen beyond the forward estimates to surplus; however, the government's current focus is to ensure the economy recovers and that we can keep people in employment.

Except for Western Australia, all states and territories as well as the Commonwealth government are forecasting net operating deficits across most, if not all, of the forward estimates. While Tasmania and South Australia are forecasting thin surpluses in their out years, they still anticipate a cumulative deficit over the four years to 2023-24. New South Wales is suggesting a return to surplus in 2024-25, so beyond the forwards. The Victorian budget does not include a timetable for a return to an operating surplus. The Morrison federal coalition government is expecting its net operating deficit to peak in 2020-21 at \$197.9 billion, reducing to \$58.5 billion at 2023-24 with a cumulative deficit of \$443 billion across the forward estimates.

I have another fact here that might be useful for the committee. The federal government projects deficits through to 2030-31, that is, 10 years of deficits. In 2030-31 the federal deficit—delivered by the federal coalition will be \$49.5 billion they project. That is six times larger than our largest projected deficit in Queensland in the current financial year—not 10 years time. If we think of the time value of money, that is a very significant pathway to deficits federally.

In 2020-21 New South Wales is forecasting a net operating deficit of almost \$16 billion—that is less than twice that of Queensland but it is up there—with a cumulative deficit of \$25.365 billion over four years to 2023-24. Victoria is forecasting a net operating deficit of \$23 billion in 2020-21—under three times, but around that, of Queensland's deficit—and \$49 billion in deficits over the four years to 2023-24.

At \$16.8 billion, Queensland's total operating deficit forecast over the forward estimates is significantly less—\$16.8 billion for Queensland, \$25.3 billion for New South Wales and \$49 billion for Victoria. Our figure of \$16.8 billion over the forward estimates is significantly less than Victoria's deficit and New South Wales' deficit estimate at \$16 billion this financial year. Queensland's deficit over the forward estimates is about the same as New South Wales's deficit in one year.

Mrs McMAHON: Treasurer, could you please advise the committee what the government is doing to support small business in Queensland?

Mr DICK: Member for Macalister, I might expand on the answer I provided earlier when I talked about the importance of small business. I know how active you are in your community, particularly at the trading centre in Beenleigh, where I know you engage very closely with business. The small business adaptation grants have been paid to more than 19,800 small businesses. That amounts to a billion dollars in interest-free or low-interest business loans to businesses big and small.

Very importantly, we are introducing a procurement target which our government will roll out. Some 25 per cent of all government spend is to go to small and medium sized businesses. That is equivalent to about \$4 billion a year in benefit for small businesses. There are 400 free online courses for businesses and their employees available through the Small Business Skills Hub. I know that terrific tech company Go1, based in Underwood, just a little way up the road from my electorate, is doing some world-leading work. The members for Macalister, Logan and I had the privilege of going there and meeting the Go1 team. They are world leaders in the delivery of skills online for business and for other organisations. The Netflix of training they have become. They now have contracts with companies and institutions around the world.

There is up to \$950 million in payroll tax relief including refunds, payment holidays and deferrals. There is \$100 million in electricity bill rebates for eligible small and medium sized businesses—again, a significant return to small and medium sized businesses. There is \$400 million in land tax relief through rebates and deferrals and \$1.2 million to establish a regional network of business support offices in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland.

We have also in the budget locked in \$140 million towards our Big Plans for Small Business strategy. Some \$100 million will come from our \$500 million Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund, which will be focused on investing in small to medium sized businesses that have significant growth potential and have the capacity to create jobs, and a further \$40 million will be focused on supporting small business to deliver growth in regional markets in particular and priority industry sectors to allow them to innovate, grow and access new markets. We are also going to lock in the permanent appointment of the Small Business Commissioner and establish the Office of the Small Business Commissioner to advocate for Queensland small business owners across the state.

We also want to continue our pathway to reducing red tape and better regulating. There are two aspects: the nature of regulation and how regulations are applied. Better regulation is very important, I think, to try to reduce the regulatory burden on Queensland businesses, families and consumers. We will also create the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction by folding the Queensland Productivity Commission into Treasury. We think that will be an important way to help business prosper and grow.

This is a pro-business, pro-growth budget. We need it to be that way. You have heard the numbers. The engine of growth in the Queensland economy is in the private sector. We really want to support them over the next four years as they recover, sustain and then can grow again. That is a real focus for all of us in government—all of the ministers.

CHAIR: Treasurer, could you please advise the committee on Queensland's job growth as well as the unemployment rate forecasts and how in this difficult time this compares with other jurisdictions going through similar difficulties?

Mr DICK: Thanks, Chair. We discussed that a little earlier—the fall in the number of jobs in Queensland, particularly from March to May. There was an enormous collapse in the number of people working as necessary restrictions came on. Then we have seen the recovery through to October. Those jobs have been recovered, but it is not the same people or the same jobs. That is the real struggle. There are a lot of people still looking for work, particularly in those industries impacted by international border controls.

CHAIR: Some are not getting the hours they want.

Mr DICK: No. Workers in the international tourism market and workers in international education are really finding it difficult at the moment. I think that is beyond the control of all of us here in Queensland. That is really going to be a matter for the federal government to determine when those borders can open safely. Hopefully an accelerated rollout of vaccination will help that. As you have heard, the assumption we have factored into the budget is that a vaccination will not be widely available until the second half of next year, 2021. I think that is realistic. We are seeing some early distribution of, I think, the Pfizer vaccine in the United Kingdom, but I think we need to see how that works first. I think the federal government has said that we are not going to have a vaccine available widely until March. They will start the rollout in March. I have no criticism of that. It is a very significant thing (a) to develop a vaccine to a coronavirus but (b) to roll it out—particularly a vaccine that is not temperature stable and requires a very significant supply and distribution chain to enable it to be distributed safely. I think that remains to be seen. Until those parts of the Queensland economy can open up, people are going to be struggling for work.

There has been a rapid and strong recovery since May, thankfully. We are 500 persons above the employment level in May, when the restrictions were really heavy. The monthly number of hours worked in Queensland rebounded between May and October—0.4 per cent above pre-COVID levels. We are the only state where those jobs have come back.

On year-average terms employment is now forecast to rise—I think this is important—one per cent in 2021. We thought there was going to be a three per cent decline when we handed down the fiscal and economic review on 7 September. That gives you an idea of how difficult it is to forecast. We thought there was going to be a three per cent decline in 2021. From 7 September to 1 December, we now see what is happening. Those jobs are coming back. We now predict a one per cent rise in employment in 2021. That is why it was so difficult to do a budget. We have done our very best. I again commend the Under Treasurer and Treasury officials for everything they have done to pull a budget together in such a short time—perhaps the first time in 60 years there has been a budget within 31 days of an election. They have done the best they possibly can to make those numbers robust, but we just do not know what is around the corner.

Going forward beyond this financial year—2021-22 to 2023-24—so the end of the out years: solid growth, two per cent, in employment and 2¼ per cent as the economy recovers. In quarterly seasonally adjusted terms employment is forecast to rise by 6¾ per cent through the year to June 2021. From June 2020 to June 2021 we think employment will rise 6¾ per cent. That is an aggregate of 318,000 people in employment from the June quarter 2020 to the June quarter 2024. That would be a great outcome if we could land that.

We expect Queensland employment to be faster than New South Wales or Victoria based on comparisons and forecasts, including in their recent budgets. That would be a strong thing as well for our state. We hope that unemployment has peaked in the September quarter at 7.9 per cent. We want to see that come down, but as people move to Queensland—86,000 people coming over the forward

estimates as activity increases—they will want to work here, so our participation rate is going to be higher, and that is the real challenge. We have more people engaging and wanting to work which means we need to find them more jobs whereas in other parts of the country they are not actively looking for work. That is why we have a higher level of unemployment. It has been a challenge for our state for 45 years now and we have to do our best to reduce that unemployment level.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Treasurer. With the loose time frame we have, we might move to the opposition. I understand that the member for Kawana has a question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Treasurer, have you ever used a personal email address to conduct ministerial business?

Mr DICK: Yes, I have and the member for Kawana would be aware of that because the opposition lodged a right-to-information request in relation to that.

Mr BLEIJIE: What date was that, Treasurer?

Mr DICK: I do not know. I am not in the opposition.

CHAIR: Hold on; thank you, Treasurer. Member for Kawana, did you have a follow-up question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely. What date was that, Treasurer?

Mr DICK: I do not know the date.

CHAIR: Is that the date of the right-to-information request or—

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I am just wanting to know when the Treasurer used his private email account.

CHAIR: Sorry. It was not about the right-to-information request; it was about the dated email.

Mr DICK: As I have said publicly, I used a personal email address to forward emails to myself at home so I could print out documents, particularly to finalise speeches and other public documents. I have made that statement publicly.

Mr BLEIJIE: Treasurer, have you used your private email address since the Premier changed the ministerial code to say that ministers are not able to do that?

Mr DICK: No, not to the best of my knowledge.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I ask to call the CEO of Energy Queensland please. Mr Duke, with respect to the Capital Statement, it has in here that the digital office capital expenditure of Energy Queensland is nearly \$900 million of expenditure. Can you briefly tell the committee what that expenditure is for in terms of the digital office capital expenditure?

Mr Duke: I thank the member for his question. Energy Queensland is in the process of undertaking a very extensive upgrade of its IT infrastructure. The member may be aware that Energy Queensland looks after some \$25 billion to \$26 billion worth of assets and many of the IT systems which were involved in managing those assets, particularly those from the Ergon Energy business—it was of course part of the merger of Energex and Ergon to form Energy Queensland about four years ago—were in, let us say, a state that was not in line with modern technology. We are spending a program over a number of years to put in place the IT infrastructure that is required to run a complex technical business and to make sure that we can provide both safe and reliable service in terms of electricity distribution to the people of Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Duke. Can you explain to the committee as well what the original or initial scope of the works were—the cost of the original scope, noting it is nearly \$900 million? Was there an original scope when this was looked at?

Mr Duke: I thank the member for his question. I commenced with Energy Queensland on 1 April of this year, so the member's question goes back to a time that well precedes my arrival on the job. The scope of work which is currently being undertaken was well defined and has been through the approval process with government and we are probably about two-thirds through the implementation of that scope.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Duke, and I have a follow-on question, if I may. Who is conducting the rollout? Which company is conducting the rollout of this?

Mr Duke: We have resourced the implementation of this digital enablement building blocks program with a combination of our own staff and a number of direct hired contractors. It involves a program where there are literally almost of the order of 100 different pieces of information technology infrastructure that are being implemented over a number of years, so we have resourced that internally and with fixed term contractors who bring in specialised skills and know-how for the particular programs that we are working on.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is with the specialised skill which is with reference to my next question. It has been put to me that one of the companies or consultants involved in this is SAP technology, which, if you recall, was the entity responsible for Queensland's biggest maladministration with the health IT bungle. Can you confirm to this committee whether SAP is involved with respect to this IT rollout?

Mr Duke: I thank the member for his question. Indeed, SAP are one of the major IT vendors in the world and of course they are indeed part of our DEBBs program of IT infrastructure. We are extremely mindful of the issues that were encountered at an earlier stage in a different part of government and we will certainly be doing a significant amount of road testing and running systems in parallel for a number of months to make sure that we do not have any difficulties with the cut over to the new system.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Duke. It concerns me—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, the member for Noosa has a question. You are still continuing, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes. It concerns me what you have just said in terms of confirming that SAP is involved given that it was involved in the Queensland Health IT bungle, and you have acknowledged that you are road testing things from this particular platform. Is there no other—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, just as a general counsel, a restatement of the question's answer is not required. Simply put your question to the witness if you can.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. It is to allow the witness to better understand the next question.

CHAIR: I think the witness reasonably understands his own answers to the questions, with due deference. Member for Kawana, put your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is for the witness to determine and for me to determine, Mr Chair; thank you. Mr Duke, is there no other company in the world, in Queensland or in Australia that could have done this technology without going back to a system which cost Queensland taxpayers billions of dollars in one of the biggest maladministrations overseen by the former Labor government that we have ever seen—

Mr DICK: Not as bad as Robodebt.

CHAIR: Treasurer!

Mr BLEIJIE:—and—

CHAIR: Sorry. I am just counselling the Treasurer not to interject.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Very rude, isn't he; very rude?

Mr DICK: I apologise to the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: Given SAP has a history in Queensland with the health IT payroll bungle, how has Energy Queensland satisfied itself that it is up to the job and we will not have a repeat, bearing in mind this is a \$900 million program you are implementing of taxpayer money? How have you satisfied yourself that we are not going to have a repeat of the health IT payroll bungle with the rollout of this new IT program?

CHAIR: Before Mr Duke answers, I did counsel the member for Kawana about restating the precepts of the answers and then having a long winded question, but then the question itself was repetitive. I do counsel him, but there are within it reasonable issues to be dealt with.

Mr Duke: I thank the member for his question. We have a project team that is managing this digital enablement building box program over a number of years that, in my experience, as a person who has run major capital projects in various locations, including in this state, I have not seen. It is without precedence the level of diligence and rigour which has been undertaken by the team in managing the development and implementation of the program and indeed the scrutiny of both the board and the use of some external arm's length folks to make sure that we are delivering this in line with our expectations and in line with the costs that we expected that we would entail.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Duke, can you advise the committee on two things: one, whether there has been any overruns to date and, secondly, when is the project due to finish?

Mr Duke: I thank the member for his question. Our expectation is that the project will complete in the calendar year coming and of all the line items at the moment you could count the number of areas where there is some overrun on the fingers of one hand. That is my understanding. My experience of running significant and large projects is that it is normal that you will have some things that are a little ahead of budget and other things that are well behind. On balance, we are looking to be under budget.

Mr BLEIJIE: Under budget, did you say?

Mr Duke: Yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, if I may continue?

CHAIR: Do you have a quick question, member for Noosa?

Ms BOLTON: Yes.

CHAIR: Is this a logical point to divert?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am going to a new subject so the member for Noosa may want to ask her question.

Ms BOLTON: I refer to the implementation of South-East Queensland bulk water prices to be charged by Seqwater for 2021-22 to 2024-25. Can you advise what this will really mean to the end user, which is, in the south-east corner especially, my community through Unitywater?

Mr DICK: Thank you for your question, member for Noosa. I will take some advice on that and will try to come back to you with a more comprehensive response prior to the end of the hearing. If not, I will discuss whether I will take it on notice. Yours was a clear question and I hope that I will be able to take appropriate advice about providing you with an effective answer before the end of the hearing.

CHAIR: We have an opportunity for you to do that at the end of the session. Member for Kawana, do you wish to continue?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I have a question to the Under Treasurer if I may. With respect to Queensland Treasury Savings and Debt Plan, there is a headline 'Senior executive service: natural reduction of senior executive service roles'. Can the Under Treasurer confirm to this committee when we talk about senior executive service roles we are talking about public servants; is that correct?

Ms Hunter: As I said earlier, the basic tenet of the savings and debt plan is to ensure that we shore up the front line. Non-frontline roles include, in some number, senior executive service roles, as do some frontline roles. For example, a number of doctors in the health system are paid according to the health senior executive service rates. SES positions are contract positions and, again, every agency is being asked to review the number of SES positions they have. Particularly as members of the SES leave a role, agencies are required to consult with the Public Service Commission prior to any decision to re-advertise.

Mr BLEIJIE: The question was are they public servants to which, yes, you have answered that, thank you. When we talk about natural reduction we are talking about natural attrition. So Queensland Treasury does have a natural attrition policy with respect to public servants in the state of Queensland; correct?

Ms Hunter: The SESs are actually members of a separate service, the senior executive service.

Mr BLEIJIE: Public servants, Under Treasurer. They are public servants.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana—

Mr BLEIJIE: It is quite a simple question. They are public servants or they are not.

Ms Hunter: They are contracted officers. That is the point of differentiation.

Mr DICK: I have a point of order. The nature and classification of public servants, including the nature and structure of the SES, is a matter for the Public Service Commission. It is not a matter for the Under Treasurer.

CHAIR: With respect, I do not know that that is a point of order.

Mr DICK: The question is clearly beyond the capacity of the Under Treasurer to answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is your debt and savings plan.

Mr DICK: No, not the question you asked, member for Kawana.

CHAIR: You are suggesting it is not—

Mr DICK: It is not within the capacity and the competence of the Under Treasurer to answer that question, particularly given that the member for Kawana was in the same room as the Public Service Commissioner earlier today and did not ask the question.

CHAIR: I understand the point of order. The Under Treasurer has given an answer in relation to this as far as the Under Treasurer could. It is not within the capacity of the Under Treasurer to structure those offices; that is the point that the Treasurer was making.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, indeed, so we have confirmed that. Thank you, Mr Chair.

Mr DICK: On a point of order, that was not the answer. Confirmation was not the answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: You do not want people to know you are sacking public servants. That is what you are doing and you do not want anyone to know about it. You are trying to hide it. We have got the answer.

Mr DICK: Chair, I have taken a point of order. I am not arguing with the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: We have got the answer. Thank you.

CHAIR: Order! Member for Kawana, we were going so nicely. The point that the Treasurer made was a reasonable one about—

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, thank you, but I am not going to sit here quietly and let the government get away with nonsense.

CHAIR: Order, member for Kawana! The Treasurer simply made a point of order explaining the various officers' responsibilities that I initially took to be not a point of order and on further explanation I understood. We direct our questions to those who have those responsibilities and there was an opportunity to do it earlier. That was a fair enough point of order. Member for Kawana, you have had a good run. I intend to continue to give you a good run, but I do not want you to speak out of order or to abuse the standing orders and certainly not to engage in attempting to draw the Treasurer out of the sequence of questions. If you have a question for the Treasurer put the question to the Treasurer.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. I have a question to the Under Treasurer. I refer to the Service Delivery Statement and Treasury's role in delivering the budget. Will the Under Treasurer advise the total expenditure on external consultants contracted to assist with developing the budget?

Ms Hunter: Thank you for the question. Could I ask you to restate that? I am sorry, you were talking about the actual construct of the budget?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes. How much did Treasury spend on external consultants to assist with the construction of the Queensland budget?

Ms Hunter: The construction of the budget was—

Mr BLEIJIE: Constructing, writing, drafting, helping, assisting, advising—external consultants. What is the total cost of external consultants who assisted—

CHAIR: I think we have the question. Thank you for restating it, but we have the question and now I ask the Under Treasurer to answer it.

Ms Hunter: The budget office was responsible for the construction of the budget.

Mr BLEIJIE: There were no external consultants employed or contracted to assist with the budget preparations; is that correct?

Ms Hunter: I will certainly confirm that for you before the close of this session.

Mr BLEIJIE: If I can ask the QIC CEO to come to the table, please, Mr Frawley, thank you. I refer to page 168 of budget paper 2 and the dividend and income tax equivalent income from the public financial corporations sector. On Friday, 22 November QIC spent \$22,203 on an employee of the year function in Brisbane. Where was the function held and how much of the \$22,000 was spent on alcohol?

CHAIR: Mr Frawley?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is not a laughing matter actually. There are 214,000 Queenslanders who are out of work so I am interested in public expenditure on alcohol.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana!

Mr Frawley: I thank the member for the question. I would have to take that on notice,

CHAIR: Within the standing orders, that is not something you can answer at this stage?

Mr Frawley: I cannot, no.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chair. I have noticed an increasing trend now. The CEO has indicated that he is happy to take it on notice and I know they have to take it on notice through the Treasurer, but I am not going to accept this 'we will get back to you'. Mr Frawley has indicated he is happy for it to be taken on notice, so I am officially asking through you, Chair.

CHAIR: The process is to ask the Treasurer if he could take that question on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Hence my point of order. Mr Treasurer, are you happy for that to be taken on notice and delivered back appropriately under the standing orders?

CHAIR: At that point the Treasurer may indicate a willingness to get back at the end of the session time with further information or to take it on notice. That is the prerogative of the Treasurer as the responsible minister under the standing orders to make that decision.

Mr BLEIJIE: Hence my point of order.

Mr DICK: If I might respond to the member for Kawana, as I have said consistently throughout this hearing—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order. I did not ask the Treasurer a question. I asked the CEO. I am asking the Treasurer whether he is taking it on notice pursuant to the indication given by the CEO.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we got about three words in. It is perfectly understandable for the Treasurer to put context around this. Treasurer?

Mr BLEIJIE: Sorry, Mr Chair, under the standing orders it is not. The question I asked was to the CEO. The Treasurer can say yes he will take it on notice or no he will not. Under the standing orders if I ask the Treasurer a question he can answer the question about the alcohol, but I did not; I asked the CEO. The question to the Treasurer, through you, Mr Chair, is whether he is taking it on notice or not.

CHAIR: I understand that, but that is not anything to do with the standing orders. I will put the question myself to the Treasurer: will you take that on notice and what context can you give us?

Mr DICK: Will I be permitted to respond to your question, Chair?

CHAIR: I am certainly asking you to respond to my question.

Mr DICK: As I have said consistently through this hearing, I believe my responsibility is to respond to this committee as quickly as possible. Where an officer such as the chief executive of the Queensland Investment Corporation, the Under Treasurer or myself are unable to provide an answer, as the member for Noosa asked me a question, I will endeavour to provide that information to the committee.

As has been my practice, I fully anticipate the committee will make a note of those questions and if I do not respond then I will take it on notice. That is what I have done in every estimates hearing I have appeared before. The first thing we will do is note Mr Frawley is unaware of the answer. We will try to get that information and bring it back to the committee and then we can sequentially go through those matters that have been raised. Then, if it is not answered in the committee hearing, I will consider taking it on notice.

The formal answer to the member for Kawana is, no, I will not take that on notice. What I am doing now is that I will come back to the committee later in the hearing the best I can and then we will reassess where we are.

CHAIR: I understand and we have put the question to you.

Mr TANTARI: Can the Treasurer please advise how the jobs and growth program provides job opportunities for regional Queensland?

Mr DICK: Our \$175 million Jobs and Regional Growth Fund is helping to advance Queensland's priorities, our economy and Queensland jobs by creating long-term operational jobs and capital investment in regional Queensland. To date, 38 projects have been announced, delivering over \$2 billion in capital investment and creating more than 1,646 operational jobs in regional Queensland. In the 2019-20 financial year nine projects were supported, committing \$54.815 million in grant funding, creating 575 operational jobs and leveraging over \$1.758 billion in capital investment in Queensland. Some of those projects have been significant.

Allweld Manufacturing in Maryborough, just down the road from the member for Hervey Bay's electorate, has been supported to expand its manufacturing facility. That is the sort of project that I was talking about previously when I answered the member for Noosa's question. It has been supported to expand its manufacturing facility and diversify the production of customised transporters into the defence and aerospace industries. It is a company that wants to supply into the defence manufacturing chain in Queensland and Australia and we are supporting them. That project will lead to the creation of 12 full-time jobs over the next four years. It is a small to medium sized enterprise that we are supporting to give them the sustainability to engage in the defence manufacturing industry space and aerospace.

Australian Prime Fibre, known as Oreco, will create 140 new jobs in expanding their horticultural and garden products businesses in Childers. That is where they have their major production manufacturing facility. You can buy their products in places such as Bunnings and elsewhere.

We are supporting Australian Mines Limited's \$1.5 million nickel and cobalt Sconi project at Greenvale. Those are the new economy minerals of nickel and cobalt. That is 250 kilometres west of Townsville. That project is still going through an approval stage, but if that mine proceeds it will create 89 long-term positions once fully operational.

Elliott Agriculture is a meat processing facility in Roma. It will be expanded with 12 new jobs by refurbishing their chilling and secondary processing facility.

I was able to visit the great Sunshine Coast company HeliMods. We will help them to accelerate their \$10.30 million expansion to deliver a large-scale state-of-the-art aircraft manufacturing and modification facility at Caloundra, creating up to 68 new jobs. What an impressive business that is.

John Dee's expanded meat processing facility at Warwick and beef feedlot at Inglewood will leverage \$16.7 million in capital investment, creating 155 long-term jobs. Qualipac is responding to increased export demand for Darling Downs produce to be made into retail-ready products by producing a new produce service centre at Inglewood. Things are steaming ahead at Inglewood. That will create 21 new jobs on the Darling Downs. Signature OnFarm boutique abattoir near Moranbah will create in excess of 80 new jobs, generating \$27.9 million in capital expenditure.

I met with representatives from Grillex, formerly known as Unisite, in Bundaberg. It is a great local business in Bundaberg. They are seeking to expand their outdoor and leisure product manufacturing facility. If anyone has ever used an electronic barbecue in a local park in one of your suburbs, regardless of where you live, it was probably made by Grillex. They are going to create 45 jobs by expanding. That will support a \$3 million capital investment. That is not necessarily our investment, but what the company will do with our support. The Queensland government wants value for money for Queensland taxpayers, but we also want jobs, which is critical.

That project, as you have heard, has delivered jobs throughout Queensland in a variety of enterprises. That gives you an insight into the manufacturing, agricultural and production base of Queensland. A lot of those are small and medium sized businesses that are looking to become bigger businesses. They are in traditional industries such as meat processing all the way through to manufacturing businesses and advanced manufacturing businesses such as HeliMods.

Basically, HeliMods fits out helicopters for emergency response and rescue services, not just here in Australia but around the world. They have received contracts to fit out helicopters for some of the provinces in Canada. It is a terrific local company. We are pleased to be able to support them to expand and provide that sustainable jobs path. We know that 80 to 85 per cent of manufacturing jobs are permanent full-time jobs, so the more we can support manufacturing the more we can create permanent full-time jobs, particularly in a time of uncertainty for the economy and employment. That is significant. That has been a very good program.

Mr TANTARI: It is great for the regions. Thank you.

Mrs McMAHON: Treasurer, could you please advise the committee on Queensland government investment growth throughout the crisis?

Mr DICK: Our financial investments held in the nonfinancial public sector primarily comprise assets held to support long-term superannuation and insurance liabilities. As at 30 June 2019, prior to COVID-19 and before its significant adverse market and economic impacts, the state held \$33.199 billion in investments, so almost \$33.2 billion in investments. Investments held by the state have been impacted by volatile market conditions produced through the crisis and of the balance of investments held at 30 June 2020 the total has been reduced to \$31.366 billion. The level of investments held is forecast to increase as investment markets recover, obviously, as you would hopefully anticipate through this financial year and beyond.

In addition, the government is making significant investments in the Queensland Future Fund, the debt retirement fund that we are establishing. Investments are forecast to increase to \$37.44 billion by 30 June 2024, so significantly going ahead beyond those investments held at 30 June last year—\$33.199 billion. That would be an overall increase of \$6.075 billion over the forward estimates, adding to the wealth of Queensland and our state's worth. We will, of course, establish our Future Fund.

Companies like Energy Queensland are holding those assets as well. That allows me to respond to one of the matters raised by the member for Kawana. If you listen to the member for Kawana, you would think SAP was some cowboy outfit not available or not fit to provide high-level IT services to the Queensland government and entities.

Mr BLEIJIE: It didn't do too well in Queensland Health.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, come on.

Mr DICK: SAP's annual revenues last year were \$45 billion. That is the equivalent revenue base of the state of Western Australia, the state of Tasmania and the Northern Territory, whose total revenues were \$46 billion. SAP employs in excess of 52,000 people internationally, across 50 countries. The member for Kawana said he was concerned whether they were 'up to the job', but that is one of the largest IT companies in the world, well known and well recognised. In fact, the lead contractor in the Health payroll project was IBM and not SAP, as I understand it. That was not an accurate representation for the committee or for Mr Duke. To put that to him was inaccurate.

Of course, we have had other significant IT failures in the nation. The last national census was a debacle and Robodebt is probably the most significant IT failure in the country. People took their own lives as a consequence of that. Very sadly and regrettably, for a Prime Minister who talks a lot about values he has never apologised to those families or those individuals impacted by it.

Mr BLEIJIE: Did you ever apologise to Queensland Health?

Mr DICK: Yes, I have apologised to—

Mr BLEIJIE: Did you?

Mr DICK: I apologise again.

Mr BLEIJIE: What about SPER? Did you apologise to SPER?

Mr DICK: Member for Kawana, if you had listened to what I said when I was the health minister, I apologised publicly in the parliament—

Mr BLEIJIE: I rarely listen to you.

Mr DICK: It was one of the first things I did and I have done so publicly. That is in stark contrast to the opposition, who never apologised for shutting the Barrett Adolescent Centre—

Mr BLEIJIE: Because we did not stuff up any health payrolls.

CHAIR: Oh, member for Kawana!

Mr DICK:—without a replacement. The only comment the opposition ever made about the commission of inquiry that was held into that was the member for Surfers Paradise, who called it a witch-hunt when, again, people tragically took their own lives.

Mr CRANDON: Ros Bates is still waiting on an apology.

CHAIR: I thank the Treasurer—

Mr DICK: Who was that?

CHAIR: Treasurer, please do not engage with these people. I thank you—

Mr CRANDON: Ros Bates is still waiting.

Mr DICK: Who is waiting?

Mr BLEIJIE: Ros Bates is waiting for an apology, the member for Coomera says.

Mr DICK: I apologise to the member for Mudgeeraba for whatever offence she has taken.

CHAIR: Treasurer, thank you for your apology. It is duly noted. I really counsel those opposite. I know the day is getting long and the answers may not have been as you anticipated, but that does not mean that we break down our general behaviour and stop following the standing rules and orders. It is an opportune time that we adjourn for a break. I ask those to reflect on some of that behaviour and to come back within the standing orders for the next session. The hearing will resume at 4.15 pm to continue the examination of the estimates for the portfolio areas of Treasury and Investment. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 4.01 pm to 4.15 pm.



CHAIR: Welcome back, Treasurer and officials. The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure for portfolio areas of Treasury and investments. I call on the non-government members. Member for Kawana, do you have a question?

Mr BLEIJIE: I call Mr Frawley from QIC back to the table, please. Mr Frawley, with respect to the previous question I asked you about the function that QIC held on 22 November, I unfortunately had run out of time. I had a series of sub-questions to that though. One of them was with respect to the expenditure of \$22,203. I was keen to know if you could advise the committee on how much was spent on entertainment out of that \$22,203?

CHAIR: Mr Frawley, I anticipate your answer, but nonetheless.

Mr Frawley: I cannot give you the exact detail, but it is probably worth noting that the \$22,000 was embedded in an amount of \$60,000 for various Christmas functions we conducted around our offices around the world. Most of this expenditure was for staff Christmas parties. QIC had in excess of 800 people through that financial year, so the cost was approximately \$50 per staff member. Staff events are co-funded with our social clubs, so employees contribute their own monies to these events. In line with COVID-19 restrictions, there will be no in-staff Christmas parties this year. It might be worth noting that in relation to the member's question around entertainment per se, there was no entertainment.

Mr BLEIJIE: No what, sorry?

Mr Frawley: There was no band.

Mr BLEIJIE: We have the function on 22 November where QIC spent \$22,203. We then have seven days later, on 29 November, that QIC spent a further \$13,676 on another end-of-year function. Is that part of the \$60,000 you are advising the committee, or is this on top of or different functions?

Mr Frawley: That would be a client function.

Mr BLEIJIE: The one on 22 November, which was an employee end-of-year function, that was the \$22,203?

Mr Frawley: Correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: A separate function on 29 November for \$13,766—that was a client function?

Mr Frawley: It was.

Mr BLEIJIE: Do you know how much was spent on alcohol at that function out of the \$13,000?

Mr Frawley: I do not.

Mr BLEIJIE: Would you find out for the committee?

Mr Frawley: I will.

CHAIR: Mr Frawley, would you know the expenses incurred by the QIC in the financial year 2012-13?

Mr Frawley: The overall expenses?

CHAIR: No, the function expenses, in a similar fashion.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am asking my questions, Mr Chair, and I am asking Mr Frawley about his current role as the CEO, with all respect.

CHAIR: Certainly, but I took the opportunity to ask a similar question about a different financial year.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, we have just come back and we are in the non-government section. Perhaps you would like to ask that question in the government section.

CHAIR: We have a process that the committee has agreed to that if there are any clarifying questions we change over to government time—which we are still in at the moment, you will be happy to know—and once we have concluded that we go back to opposition time.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can Mr Frawley answer my question before he gets to your question then?

CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr BLEIJIE: What was the alcohol expenditure at that function on 29 November?

Mr Frawley: The client function?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes.

Mr Frawley: I do not have that figure.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can you find it? I assume it is QIC expenditure, the \$13,667?

Mr Frawley: Yes, sure.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is QIC expenditure for a client?

Mr Frawley: For a range of clients—not one, multiple clients; both government and non-government clients.

Mr BLEIJIE: Will you be able to find the alcohol expenditure out of that?

Mr Frawley: If we can find the bill, I can give you the alcohol content.

Mr BLEIJIE: That would be great. Did any government employees, ministerial staff or ministers attend that function?

Mr Frawley: The client function?

Mr BLEIJIE: Correct.

Mr Frawley: No.

Mr BLEIJIE: With the other function I mentioned on 22 November, did any government employees, ministerial staff or ministers attend that function?

Mr Frawley: The staff function, no.

Mr BLEIJIE: There was another function on 4 August 2019. Mr Frawley, can you advise the committee the location and alcohol expenses for the \$18,809 employee midyear function on 4 August and the \$5,858 Sydney employee end-of-year function on 28 November 2019?

CHAIR: Mr Frawley, I anticipate your answer.

Mr Frawley: I do not have the alcohol content figure. I can let you know that that was an end of financial year function with staff and clients.

Mr BLEIJIE: How many functions does QIC have a year? What was the total expenditure on functions, both end of year functions and client functions, in the last financial year?

Mr Frawley: I do not have that, but I would say it would be circa \$100,000.

Mr BLEIJIE: That was for the previous financial year?

Mr Frawley: It would be circa that, including client functions. As I stated before, we have clients in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. We also have clients in the US. We obviously entertain as we need to. I do not think we are overindulging our staff or overindulging our clients in a relative sense to many of our competitors.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have a question for the Under Treasurer. I refer to page 1-85 of the Service Delivery Statements and the Treasury income statement. What was the total value of contracts awarded to KPMG over the past financial year?

Ms Hunter: I am taking advice. What I can say is that, as you are aware, the savings and debt plan does target reductions in reliance on consultants and contractors. Can I check your question? It was in relation to a specific sort of advice?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, would you restate the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: What was the total value of contracts awarded to KPMG over the last financial year?

Mr DICK: Is that 2019-20 or 2020-21?

CHAIR: Last financial year.

Ms Hunter: I am able to advise that KPMG's financial advisory services provided advice to the Financial Provisioning Scheme as a risk adviser. The value of that contract was \$3.136562 million. There was also advice provided to the former Under Treasurer in relation to the design of the COVID-19 industry support package assessment fees. The value of that work was \$444,228.

CHAIR: Under Treasurer, do you wish to add further to that answer?

Ms Hunter: Yes, I do. There were an additional number of services provided to the commercial group, to the former Under Treasurer and to the corporate group in relation to the financial management practice manual review and to the Cities Transformation Taskforce to the total value of \$342,894.

Mr BLEIJIE: Under Treasurer, the first figure you gave—the over \$3 million figure—could you give that to the committee again?

Ms Hunter: It was \$3.136562 million for the risk adviser in relation to the Financial Provisioning Scheme.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to those three figures you have given and those contracts issued to KPMG, how many of those engaged or involved Mike Kaiser because he was at KPMG?

Ms Hunter: Each of these contracts were engaged by the former Under Treasurer so I am sorry I am not in a position to provide you with that answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect Under Treasurer, we are talking about nearly \$4 million worth of money that Treasury—

CHAIR: Are you arguing the answer, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I am not. I am asking a subquestion. Treasury have given KPMG through contracts nearly \$4 million and it is pretty important to know where the money was contracted to. Under Treasurer, is that something you may not know off the top of your head but you can get from one of the other Treasury officials in the room today?

Ms Hunter: I can tell you that all of the work was contracted to KPMG financial advisory services. I can certainly provide advice in relation to the extent to which Mr Kaiser was involved with those services by the end of the session.

Mr BLEIJIE: As I understand through the open data information, on 2 July there was also a contract value of \$750,000. Are you aware of that one?

Ms Hunter: I am assuming that is a figure of \$759,565.

Mr BLEIJIE: The figure I have is \$750,000 for a contract awarded on 2 July 2019 in relation to the KPMG interchange arrangements?

Ms Hunter: I understand the KPMG interchange arrangements was a contract undertaken by the Cities Transformation Taskforce. I will confirm that, but that is my recollection.

Mr BLEIJIE: Now I am interested in the other figure you have just mentioned—the \$759,000 figure—that was not mentioned before? What was that one for?

Ms Hunter: That figure relates to engagement with the Financial Provisioning Scheme. I mentioned that earlier. I am assuming that is a subset of that work.

Mr BLEIJIE: Of which work? We had before the over \$3 million, the \$440,000 and the \$342,000 contracts.

CHAIR: The Financial Provisioning Scheme.

Mr BLEIJIE: Now you are talking about the \$759,565 figure. That does not add up with the other ones.

Ms Hunter: We are talking about three-month periods. This is the amount relevant to that figure for advice to the Financial Provisioning Scheme. From the period 1 July to 30 September 2020, the expenditure was \$759,565.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mike Kaiser, who was at KPMG, is now working as an acting director-general. What processes have you put in place for current contracts that were awarded to KPMG that now have a former employee as acting director-general? What processes have you put in place to ensure integrity of those contracts that are still being administered at the moment?

Ms Hunter: We will certainly be taking advice from our council in relation to any procurement provisions we need to adopt. I understand Mr Kaiser is taking up that position in the new year.

Mr BLEIJIE: Under Treasurer, with respect to expenditure, can you advise the total value of contracts awarded to Newgate over the past financial year please?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I have an indication that the member for South Brisbane wants to ask a question.

Ms Hunter: I am sorry. I am just referring to the advice which I have. I do not have advice before me in relation to any contracts with Newgate Pty Ltd. Do you have further detail that would assist me, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I do. It is Newgate Communications Pty Ltd. In the open data there are contracts of \$59,000, \$25,000, \$38,000 and \$11,000. I am after the total spent for Newgate. If you want to get back to the committee, I am happy with that.

To end that round before we move to the member for South Brisbane, I want to know whether any of those contracts—once you find the details—have previously involved John Lee or how many of those contracts that were awarded involved John Lee?

Ms Hunter: We will endeavour to come back to you before the close of session.

CHAIR: I call the member for South Brisbane.

Dr MacMAHON: My question is also for the Under Treasurer. The budget includes what the government has called a savings and debt plan underpinned by six principles that will be used to cut \$3 billion out of the public sector spending over the next four years. There is a second separate commitment for almost 10,000 extra health staff which will be funded by savings of \$1.08 billion over four years under what are called efficiency measures.

CHAIR: Member for South Brisbane—

Dr MacMAHON: I am getting to the question, yes. Thirdly, there is a promise of 7,000 teachers and teacher aides—

CHAIR: Member for South Brisbane, do you have a question?

Dr MacMAHON: I do—that will be delivered without any new money. My question is: what is the cost of the teachers and new teacher aides?

CHAIR: I am disappointed, member for South Brisbane, that I have to counsel you in the same way that I have to counsel the member for Kawana.

Ms Hunter: I refer the member to the Budget Highlights. Certainly the budget does have provision for growth in terms of teacher positions and support positions within schools. It also includes provision for capital. Again, in relation to the savings and debt plan, earlier I talked about the focus of the savings and debt plan is actually to strengthen the front line. I talked about providing an assurance that the intention is not to cut essential frontline positions.

Clearly, most of the growth in the public sector occurs in the big line agencies of health and education. That is somewhat driven by population but also driven by extraordinary circumstances such as the times we find ourselves in. Health, as you would be aware, has had a significant injection to manage the impacts of COVID-19, so too has there been support for additional positions in schools to support young people who may be impacted in terms of mental health. We see \$61.9 million in the budget to deliver the Shifting Minds Flagship range of programs and significant additional funding to health operations. Again, the budget does contemplate growth in education largely in line with population growth, but there are additional resources being provided to support young people who may be experiencing significant mental health issues potentially as a direct consequence of COVID-19 but more broadly in the population.

Dr MacMAHON: I have a follow-up question.

CHAIR: My question is to the Treasurer. Could you please advise the committee on the government's interest payments? How do they compare with recent history and also how do they compare with other relevant jurisdictions?

Mr DICK: Just to assist the member for Kawana and the observation you made, Chair, in 2012-13, which was the first year of the Newman government, QIC spent \$89,000 on events and entertainment for events. That is 50 per cent more than the \$60,000 spent in 2019.

To help the member for South Brisbane, we funded those positions through existing funding models including the growth funding that we have locked in with the federal government. If you have a look at Budget Paper No. 1, particularly the fiscal outlook on page 17, expenditure over this financial year and the forwards will be \$260 billion. Looking to try to trim our cloth, I have said from the start \$3 billion over four years is not unreasonable, particularly when every family—in your community I know there are a lot of young people out of work; they cannot get a job; they are struggling at the moment—are watching every dollar, and we need to do the same but, as you know, very clearly not impacting on the front line with the thousands of additional public servants who will be appointed by our government over the next four years.

Turning now to interest, interest repayments impact on all of that. What are our interest expense figures for the state? How does that impact on where we allocate expenditure? Interest expenditure is one of those. Falls in key revenue such as GST coupled with increased expenditure in response to the pandemic has led to general government sector estimated total borrowing rising to \$61.263 billion by 30 June 2021. Despite rising borrowings, Chair, in responding to your question, our interest expense—the cost of servicing debt—is forecast to be around 3.1 per cent of revenue in 2021, well below the peak of 4.7 per cent in 2013-14 during the Newman LNP government. That is comparable to New South Wales, which is also forecasting interest expenses at 3.1 per cent. This is before their ratings downgrade. Our interest costs were about the same as a AAA rated state in 2020 and better than Victoria, which is forecasting interest expenses at 4.2 per cent of revenue in 2021.

We have benefited from interest rates trending lower over recent years, reflecting an easing bias in central bank's monetary policy. We are actively managing our borrowings by reinforcing maturing higher cost debt at record low interest rates, trying to refinance as necessary to take advantage of those record low interest rates. So to better position the government in that environment, we are actively reducing refinancing and interest rate risk by extending the duration of debt maturities.

Through a combination of debt reduction and low interest rates, the general government sector interest expense as a proportion of revenue has declined over successive Labor budgets, with a smaller proportion of state revenue required to service Queensland's debt. In dollar terms, general government interest expenses have fallen substantially from a peak of \$2.3 billion in 2014-15 to an estimated \$1.7 billion in 2021, while interest expenses are forecast to increase to \$2 billion in 2023-24. That is in four years time. That is still below the peak in 2014-15. What we will be paying in 2023-24 will be better than what we were paying nine years previously.

By comparison, New South Wales and Victoria's general government interest expenses are forecast to increase relative to the 2014-15 financial year. New South Wales' general government interest expense was \$2.2 billion in 2014-15 and is forecast to increase to \$2.5 billion this financial year, 2020-21, and \$3.1 billion in 2023-24. Victoria's general government interest expense was \$2.1 billion in 2014-15 and is forecast to increase to \$2.8 billion in 2020-21 and \$3.9 billion in 2023-24. We are doing better than our peer states.

I do not want to borrow any more money, but the reality is that if we do borrow we want to do it at the most competitive rate possible. That means that the interest burden on the budget and the interest burden on Queensland is lower as a consequence. That is an important thing for us to hold to. I want to thank the Queensland Treasury Corporation for the great work they do in managing those borrowings for us.

Mr TANTARI: Treasurer, can you please advise the committee on the impacts of COVID-19 on Queensland's population growth and how these forecasts compare with other jurisdictions?

Mr DICK: Population growth, not surprisingly, is expected to be negatively impacted by the pandemic, in particular as a consequence of restricted international travel. In year average terms, Queensland's population grew a solid 1.7 per cent in 2018-19 with natural increase, net interstate migration and net overseas migration all contributing to the growth in that year. With international travel restrictions implemented in late March, as expected net overseas migration was heavily impacted in the June quarter 2020. The largest impacts to net overseas migration are expected during this financial year 2020-21, particularly in the March quarter 2020-21, so we have not really felt the most significant impact of the restrictions. That is primarily due to an expected large drop in international student arrivals in early 2020-21.

Early interstate migration data shows only a minimal impact of the crisis and related border closures on Queensland's net interstate migration, with departures from Queensland to other states falling to more than arrivals to Queensland—so still more people are coming to Queensland as are leaving—however, the subsequent relaxation of interstate border restrictions should see interstate migration returning to more normal levels over time. The natural increase is not expected to be materially impacted by the pandemic, with only minor changes to birth rates and death rates, I am advised by Treasury. As a result, Queensland's population growth is expected to slow to 1.5 per cent in 2019-20. It was 1.7 per cent in 2018-19 and 1.5 per cent in 2019-20 before slowing a further one per cent in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Given the solid net interstate migration to Queensland, Treasury advises we are less reliant on net overseas migration to drive our population growth. As I have said previously and in the budget speech, 86,000 people are expected to come to Queensland net interstate migration—that is net interstate migration for the four years to 2023-24, and that is from the federal budget—so the impacts of the pandemic on population growth are expected to be less pronounced in Queensland than in other eastern states. That is broadly in line with the population projections for Queensland, as have been set out previously in the federal budget.

Prior to the pandemic, interestingly, Victoria had the strongest population growth, growing by 2.1 per cent in 2018-19. This was driven by strong net overseas migration. The Victorian budget, however, outlined expectations of a sharp fall in net overseas migration due to the pandemic. Population growth in Victoria was forecast to grow to 1.6 per cent in 2019-20. We were at 1.7 per cent. No, that was 2018-19, I am sorry. It was 1.6 per cent in 2019-20, slowing to just 0.2 per cent in 2020-21 and 0.4 per cent in 2021-22. Net international migration has effectively stopped for Victoria.

New South Wales experienced more moderate population growth of 1.3 per cent in 2018-19 as at 30 June, with strong net overseas migration partially offset by negative net interstate migration. New South Wales' budget indicated that their expectation of international borders being closed through to the end of 2021 is expected to heavily reduce net overseas migration. As a result, New South Wales' population growth is expected to slow to 0.9 per cent in 2019-20, no growth in 2020-21 and 0.2 per cent in 2021-22.

In relative terms, although significantly impacted by international travel restrictions, we are travelling pretty well because of the strong attraction of interstate migrants, and that will help us offset the decline in net international migration to Queensland, so that will hopefully help the restoration of the Queensland economy.

Mr TANTARI: Treasurer, can you please advise the committee on how jobs growth has been distributed across regions? How is the budget planning to create jobs across every region of Queensland?

Mr DICK: Regional jobs growth is going to be so critical for our recovery. Some of our regions have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, particularly our tourism-exposed regions. You know a little bit about that in your part of the world: no international tourists are coming to watch the whales in Hervey Bay. In some other respects, the dry tourist market and the growth in domestic tourism from other Queenslanders going to a beautiful place like Hervey Bay has helped offset that.

ABS labour force data at a regional level is only available in original terms and is very volatile, and I think that is a real issue. We are trying to pick up a lot of things out of COVID, but the ABS labour force data was replaced by the ABS by the payroll and jobs data, which was done fortnightly. I think that going forward we need to look at those datasets and work out what is particularly relevant to various jurisdictions going forward. There is a lot of reliance put on the ABS labour force, but that has been so volatile and out of whack in some ways compared to the fortnightly payroll and jobs data. We are doing a lot of work in Treasury around that, and I will try and give you some updates on that.

All regions are impacted by COVID-19 across Queensland, so we developed our regional recovery action plans to look at specific initiatives targeted to key regional industries, particularly tourism related sectors, as well as a range of broad support measures to support businesses across all regions. You know that includes—and I have said it before—substantial payroll tax relief, job support loans and grants for small businesses to protect workers, businesses and households.

The tourism regions of the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Cairns were the hardest hit by the impact of COVID-19. Those regions saw a decline in employee jobs—and this is using payroll and jobs data—of more than 10 per cent between mid-March and mid-April. Some other key regions, including Townsville, the Wide Bay and Darling Downs-Maranoa saw a fall in employee jobs of just over eight per cent in that period. The remaining regions that were not as directly affected or reliant on tourism related activity, including the Queensland outback, Ipswich, Moreton Bay, Central Queensland, Logan, Beaudesert and Mackay, recorded relatively lower—but still substantial—declines in employee jobs ranging from 6.3 to 6.9 per cent.

Labour market conditions, as you know, have improved. The latest ABS jobs and wages data for late October shows the largest increase in employee jobs since mid-April recorded in Cairns, the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, so the areas most impacted have come back the strongest, with employee jobs up more than 6.5 per cent in recent months. Toowoomba, up 5.3 per cent and Townsville, up 5.1 per cent, have recorded substantial improvements in employee jobs. Other regions to record notable growth in employee jobs include: Mackay and Central Queensland with the Wide Bay and Darling Downs-Maranoa, increases between 4.6 per cent and 4.8 per cent; the number of employee jobs in Logan-Beaudesert, Ipswich and Moreton Bay north have rebounded by around three per cent since mid-April; while jobs grew two per cent in the Queensland outback. Rebounding growth in those regions has not been as strong, but they were less impacted than other parts of the state, as I have said earlier.

We are continuing to support jobs in the regions through a range of initiatives as well as our capital works program, which this year will support 28,700 jobs outside greater Brisbane in 2020-21. There are a range of projects that will continue to support that. There will be jobs created from establishing our renewable energy zones and the funding that will come through our \$500 million Renewable Energy Fund, which is about directly investing through our GOCs into renewable energy generation; \$10 million for the Collaborative Exploration Initiative, particularly for the North West Minerals Province; and \$10 million over the next four years to develop the renewable hydrogen industry, bringing total investment in the Hydrogen Industry Development Fund to \$25 million. Other major infrastructure includes the Cairns Marine Precinct, Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct, a new film production studio in North Queensland and a range of significant road projects that will create jobs as well. There is a lot happening in regional Queensland and there is a lot more to come too.

Mrs McMAHON: I have a question for the Treasurer. Could you please advise the committee on Queensland's business investment throughout the crisis and how its business investment forecasts compare to other jurisdictions?

Mr DICK: Chair, how long is left in this session?

CHAIR: There is five more minutes, I am told by my deputy.

Mr DICK: Thanks very much. I just wanted to fill you in on a couple of issues.

CHAIR: Treasurer, there is some flexibility in that if you go longer on our questions we will take it off ourselves later.

Mr DICK: I think that is a great innovation, Chair, and that allows a bit of free flow. Global economic activity business confidence has been badly impacted by COVID-19. Business investment is expected to fall by 9¾ per cent in 2020-21 in Queensland. There was a similar forecast for national decline in the federal budget. It is about on par with what the federal budget says is going to happen nationally, so we are not an outlier there. We have seen a recovery in activity and business confidence because of the strong restrictions and controls we put in place. Interest rates are low. Fiscal support measures are high at both state and national levels to support business cash flow. A recovery in demand from the domestic and global economies, combined with the expected reopening of international borders, should boost business confidence. As overall economic activity recovers, we hope to see an improvement in business investment, which we hope would naturally follow.

A sustained recovery in business investment is expected from 2021-22, so we need to get through this financial year again, with the budget forecasting business investment to grow by 4¾ per cent in 2021-22. It included solid growth in both key components of business investment—non-dwelling construction and machinery and equipment. They are some of the key indicators of investment in Queensland historically.

Growth is likely to further strengthen in subsequent years. That is similar to the rest of Australia. The Commonwealth budget is forecasting in 2020-21 a fall in national business investment of 9½ per cent, compared to 9¾ per cent, and then recovery in 2021-22 up six per cent, which is slightly higher than us but again takes into account the collapse in business investment in places like Victoria. Can I say most other states do not publish any detailed forecast for business investments, but we think the way we have handled the pandemic—the health response and now the economic recovery—is going to send a strong signal to business and industry that Queensland is the place to invest and that you can be confident that investing in our state is a good thing and will rightly provide you with an appropriate return over time as we strengthen our economy and continue to manage not just the health response but also the economic response of COVID.

CHAIR: We can all agree on this side that is the place to invest. I now turn to other questions and I note the member for Kawana has a question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Under Treasurer, I refer to the contract register, which I was talking about before where you mentioned the over \$3 million contract payment to KPMG. There is a missing figure in the government contract register from 6 September 2019. Are you able to confirm with the committee what the date was of that over \$3 million contract with KPMG? Was that 6 September or is that a different one as well?

Ms Hunter: Thank you for your question. I do not have the date with me but I am very confident we can confirm that before the end of the session.

Mr BLEIJIE: I would appreciate that. Mr Chair, to the Under Treasurer, and if you are able to confirm that the contract date of the over \$3 million contract that you mentioned—

Ms Hunter: This is for the Financial Provisioning Scheme risk advice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. And if it is not 6 September 2019 as disclosed in the contract register? It is showing a contract was entered but no amount on it. If you can fill that blank for the committee as well, that would be appreciated.

CHAIR: That was not a question. I call the member for Kawana with a question.

Mr BLEIJIE: The question is will the Under Treasurer commit to get back to the committee about what contract contained in the contract register to KPMG was signed on 6 September 2019 and for the amount?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we have been through this discussion before. The process is if you wish to put a question to the Treasurer to have the question put on notice then you can—

Mr BLEIJIE: I think, Chair, the Under Treasurer was saying that she will get the date of that—

CHAIR: I am just making it clear. I am just trying to be helpful that if you wish to put the question on notice then to ask the Treasurer to put it on notice. That would be the process.

Mr BLEIJIE: Treasurer, are you happy for those two issues to go on notice?

Mr DICK: No, but we are happy to try to get back to you with it.

Mr BLEIJIE: Under Treasurer, with respect to the HomeBuilder program, I understand the federal government gives the money and it is administered by the Office of State Revenue. Is there a delay in the processing times of those applications that are submitted? My understanding is that there were 34 to 35 staff taken out of one department to the other and there is quite a delay in the processing. Are you able to confirm or deny that please?

Ms Hunter: Thank you for your question. Certainly, the level of interest in the HomeBuilder grant has resulted in the Office of State Revenue receiving large volumes of applications. As at 2 December 2020, the Office of State Revenue has received 7,477 HomeBuilder grant applications. Of these, 3,095 grant applications have been processed, including 1,853 pre-approval requests which are given precedence due to finance considerations. This is a step Queensland introduced to ensure that those applicants who wished to factor the HomeBuilder grant into their loan applications were in a position to give some assurance to the bank that they were eligible and being considered for the grant.

Certainly, we realise that the HomeBuilder grant provides an important stimulus and much needed assistance to individuals and families in the process of renovating or building a new home. To ensure the HomeBuilder grant is paid to eligible applicants as quickly as reasonably possible, the Office of State Revenue has almost doubled the resources allocated to process the large volumes of applications, and staff have been working regular overtime.

Again, some HomeBuilder applications have been subject to extended processing times, but I am very confident that the increase in resources for the Office of State Revenue will ensure that applications are processed within a timely manner. I must say that not only are we receiving significant interest but, unfortunately, we are also receiving a high volume of incomplete applications. This requires us having to go back to applicants and provide support to work them through the applications to ensure they provide us with the information that we need.

As you know, the Australian government announced the HomeBuilder grant on 4 June and it did take time for states and territories to work with the Commonwealth to develop an administration mechanism for these grants because they were time limited. I have been advised by the Office of State Revenue that we continue to work with other jurisdictions to ensure that, like them, we expedite processing of the grants.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, I have a question to the Treasurer. Treasurer, earlier this year, the Productivity Commission reported that the state's economy was in a poor condition before the coronavirus pandemic—I repeat: before the coronavirus pandemic. Is this why the Treasurer has revoked the independence of the Queensland Productivity Commission—because of its honest and scathing assessment of the Labor government's handling of the economy before coronavirus?

CHAIR: I think you were skating close to some of the standing orders, but nonetheless I call the Treasurer.

Mr DICK: The answer is no.

Mr BLEIJIE: Why is it being absorbed into another department?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you put the question on a condition of why it was happening and you got the answer. If you had asked it in a more open-ended way, the Treasurer may have been invited to give a longer answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: No. He has answered my question perfectly, thank you.

Mr JANETZKI: My question is to the Treasurer. Separate to the government's \$3 billion debt and savings plan, the Treasurer has stated that the government's health commitments to employ an additional 9,000 staff are reliant on the two per cent productivity dividend. When asked about that, the Treasurer commented, 'How you can find \$270 million or thereabouts is something that is easily done from a \$16 billion health budget.' Will the Treasurer provide some examples of what funding will be cut over the next four years as part of this productivity dividend process?

Mr DICK: I am happy to get those examples for the member and provide them to him by the end of the hearing, otherwise I will take it on notice.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a question for CleanCo. I want to begin with one quick point of clarification. When the Renewables 400 program was announced, the Premier indicated that that program which CleanCo is managing was separate from and additional to CleanCo's own 1,000 megawatt target by 2025; is that still the case?

Dr Schweizer: That is correct.

Mr BERKMAN: Turning then to that full 1,400 megawatt target, of those 1,400 there is currently only a plan for 18 wind turbines, or 100 megawatts, to be publicly owned. Public ownership comprises only 1\14th of the new renewables generation CleanCo is contributing to. The government has committed to maintain the proportion of public ownership in Queensland's energy system as renewables come online, but isn't it the case that CleanCo's current renewables commitment, that 1\14th of public ownership, is well below that goal?

Dr Schweizer: I thank the member for the question.

CHAIR: Dr Schweizer, some of these questions may go across to government policy decisions, but as far as the financing of CleanCo that is within your purview, just answer it within that perspective.

Dr Schweizer: Thank you for that clarification, chair. I perhaps could provide some colour on the commitments we have already made and then leave the rest of the comment to government as it regards policy. To date we have identified and committed to 932 megawatts of that 1,400 megawatt target of which 400 is the outcome of that renewable process. As the member correctly pointed out, 100 megawatts of that will be publicly owned in the form of the Karara wind farm and the other 830 megawatts will be contracted from privately developed solar and wind developments to CleanCo. The remaining 470 or so megawatts to be found are not yet identified and therefore could have any ownership structure.

Mr BERKMAN: One more quick follow-up, if I may chair? CleanCo's mandate is to support new, clean energy. If CleanCo is not building, owning and operating an asset for the most part but simply investing in purchasing power from private projects, it is a bit harder to be sure that the capacity is additional to what would have been built otherwise. So the question is: how does CleanCo determine that the projects it is supporting are actually additional rather than things that the private sector would have gone through with anyway?

Dr Schweizer: I thank the member for the question. Part of the definition of our target is that it is a new renewable project. It is one that is enabled to go ahead because of our investment. If I take the example of the MacIntyre wind precinct, which includes 930 or so megawatts in addition to our 100 megawatt wind farm, because of our contract with ACCIONA to purchase 400 megawatts of wind energy from that precinct, we significantly expanded the total size of the precinct. Originally it was planned at just under 600 megawatts, and now it is over 1,000 megawatts. We can trace that back specifically to the commitment that CleanCo made to be the off taker of that wind energy.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maiwar. I think the member for Toowoomba South has a question.

Mr JANETZKI: Can I just call Mr Frawley, QIC CEO again? Mr Frawley, in relation to the Virgin deal, it has been reported that approximately 10 per cent of the \$200 million committed by the Queensland government into Virgin is through a capital investment, with the remainder being a mixture of loans other financial incentives; is that the case?

Mr Frawley: Thank you for the question. The \$200 million investment into Virgin consists of debt, equity and incentives.

Mr JANETZKI: So 10 per cent equity is right? And then the remainder is made up of those loans and other incentives?

Mr Frawley: No.

Mr JANETZKI: You are not at liberty to—

CHAIR: Minister, would you be able to give a point of clarification?

Mr DICK: Yes. Where has that been reported? Can we have the context of the claim?

CHAIR: It is a general point that it has been reported. It is not actually giving any evidence that adds to the conversation. We could just say, 'Is it 10 per cent rather than?'

Mr JANETZKI: It has been reported in the *Financial Review*.

CHAIR: In this case, where is this quote coming from, or put the question simply as, 'Is it 10 per cent?' for instance and then we do not have those issues that the Treasurer raises.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you, chair. The loan component of that Mr Frawley, are they secured or unsecured loans?

Mr Frawley: Secured.

Mr JANETZKI: Was QIC charging a management fee in relation to that transaction on the Virgin investment?

Mr Frawley: No.

Mr JANETZKI: Okay. In respect of the 10 per cent or thereabouts of the equity that the Queensland government—

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba South, the witness has given an answer.

Mr JANETZKI: In respect of the equity component of the Queensland government's investment into Virgin, did that right attract any voting rights?

Mr Frawley: No.

Mr JANETZKI: What is Virgin's debt position now after the restructure?

Mr DICK: A point of clarification, chair. I have had the same experience when someone has asked me a question about the nature of the commercial activities of a third party entity. That is not a matter for the government; it is a matter for Virgin.

CHAIR: Thank you, Treasurer.

Mr DICK: How is the question in order to be possibly answered?

CHAIR: I do note the Treasurer's point of clarification. There is a point of order, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: A point of order, Mr Chair. When the Treasurer announces \$200 million of taxpayer funds to go into Virgin, yes it is a matter for this committee. The Treasurer said, 'I have big bazookas and I am going to use them.' It is a matter for this committee when taxpayers are funding \$200 million. I encourage that we continue with the line of questions.

Mr DICK: On a point of order, chair?

CHAIR: No, I think I can resolve this. We are not going to examine the finances of the myriad of companies that QIC has investments in to ask about their continual and varied structures, investments and debt positions. I find the question out of order but welcome any other clarifying point of order that may transpire. Is there a point or order from the deputy chair?

Mr STEVENS: No, I have a question. On the same matter, the QIC has decided a \$200 million investment in Virgin is a sound investment for Queenslanders. What employment guarantees were given to QIC by Virgin to justify the massive investment in an airline that had gone into administration?

Mr Frawley: Part of the conditions around the investment were to do with maintaining the head office of Virgin in Queensland. It was also to maintain all of the staff that were possible to be maintained. Clearly we need to allow the people that we are investing in to make decisions, but we made it very clear that we would like the head office of Virgin to remain in Queensland, along with many other staff. However, clearly with investments that we make across infrastructure and private equity, we do not have a right to completely control the FTE count of our investments. They will do that on best endeavours.

We are there for a financial return—it was not a grant or a handout—and we are anticipating a return of somewhere in the order of seven per cent from the investment, which will be made up of debt, equity and incentives.

Mr STEVENS: Just to be clear from Mr Frawley's answer, there is no guarantee that headquarters will stay in Queensland?

CHAIR: Is that a question?

Mr STEVENS: That is the question. I just want to clarify the answer. You said that you would like them to but it is not a condition that they do.

Mr Frawley: They have made a commitment to stay in Queensland for a period of a minimum of five years.

Mr JANETZKI: Mr Frawley, on the question that the member for Mermaid Beach asked, is the seven per cent return on investment guaranteed?

Mr Frawley: No. All of our investments come with risk. We do not invest in things that are guaranteed. We ensure that we assess risk and commensurate return against that risk.

Mr JANETZKI: Is that rate of return net of government borrowing costs?

Mr Frawley: That is a net return of seven per cent.

Mr JANETZKI: Moving on to the Queensland Future Fund, Treasurer, has the fund been established? There appears to be some conflict between Budget Paper No. 2 at page 70, where it says that the fund is expected to be established by 30 June next year, and page 59 of the same budget paper, which states that assets totalling over \$5½ billion have been included in the fund as in the CFER in September. Can you clarify that for us, please?

Mr DICK: As I have said previously, the fund will be established and operating by 30 June 2021.

Mr JANETZKI: And the \$5.67 billion in assets that had been included in the fund as at CFER in September? If the fund has not been established, how are there assets in a non-existent fund?

Mr DICK: I have given you an answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: Not a very good one. The disrespect you have for the committee!

Mr DICK: I have given you a clear answer, sorry, and I am entitled to do so.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you, Chair. Will the Treasurer then provide a breakdown of the assets and their values included which make up that \$5.67 billion figure?

Mr DICK: I have made it clear to the member for Toowoomba South and all other members of the House. I did say earlier that they voted in support of the legislation creating the Future Fund, and I thank them for their support of, in fact, two of the central pillars of our economic recovery plan. One is the creation of the Future Fund. I see the member for Hervey Bay nodding. Even he is aware of this and he was not even a member of the Legislative Assembly. I thank the opposition for supporting the creation of the Future Fund and also the legislation that the defined benefit scheme—

An opposition member: Ha, ha!

Mr DICK: Members of the opposition may think it is funny, but I think it is critical to our economic response.

Mr BLEIJIE: I was going to get the member for Hervey Bay to explain it to us!

Mr DICK: Member for Kawana, you supported the legislation ensuring that the defined benefit scheme would be fully funded by law. I am making observation on it because it is not often observed that the opposition, in the lead-up to the election, supported critical aspects of our economic recovery plan.

The assets identified to go in the Future Fund will be the Titles Registry, equities owned by the government and a billion dollars in excess funds held by the defined benefit scheme. That is the position. That will be what goes into the fund. As you can imagine, it is a rather complicated thing, particularly the transfer of the Titles Registry to a new fund of this nature, but it will deliver dividends for Queensland.

Mr JANETZKI: Is there an expected rate of return for the Future Fund?

Mr DICK: Yes, of course we will expect a rate of return. We are not predicting anything at this stage, given the nature of the economy, but, obviously, its being held and managed by the Queensland Investment Corporation gives me incredible confidence that we will get the best possible return for Queenslanders on those funds.

CHAIR: Treasurer, can you please advise the committee on Queensland's tax competitiveness in the wake of COVID-19? Obviously that is tax competitiveness in comparison with other jurisdictions.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. I am very happy to provide a response to that question. Obviously COVID-19 and the associated response measures have had a very significant impact on revenue available to all jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth government, including tax revenue. We are committed to creating an economic environment that supports businesses and jobs growth and ensures competitive taxation and regulatory settings do not place undue strain on businesses and households. That is the balance we are striving to find, which is why we committed to no new or increased taxes in the election and we have delivered on that promise in the 2020-21 budget.

We need to have a competitive taxation system. That is critical to providing a competitive advantage to business, driving productivity and growth. Those matters are interrelated. Taxation per capita in Queensland is lower than the average in other states and territories. In 2021 it is estimated that Queensland's taxation per capita of \$2,767 will be \$628 per capita less than the average of other jurisdictions. That highlights the ongoing competitiveness of the Queensland taxation regime.

Alternative measures of tax competitiveness such as the Commonwealth Grants Commission tax effort—tax as a share of gross state product—also show that our tax rates are amongst the most competitive in Australia. In its 2020 review the Commonwealth Grants Commission assessed that, in

terms of its tax effort metric, which is an indicator of the extent to which governments burden their revenue bases, Queensland's tax effort in 2018-19 was 9.3 per cent below the national average. Taxation as a share of gross state product also confirms that Queensland's taxes are competitive. Since peaking at 4.3 per cent in 2014-15—another peak under the Newman LNP government—Queensland's tax-to-GSP metric fell to 3.8 per cent in 2018-19 before increasing slightly to 4 per cent in 2019-20. This again puts to bed this myth that Labor governments are high-taxing governments—

Mr BLEIJIE: It is the truth.

Mr DICK:—when in recent history the government that had the highest taxation as a share of GSP—

Mr BLEIJIE: Nine new taxes you introduced.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana!

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a fact. Nine new taxes Labor introduced in the last parliament.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana!

Mr DICK: I will not repeat the schooling I gave the member for Kawana in parliament last week.

Mr BLEIJIE: What, about your off-the-cuff JFK photo?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, that was unbecoming last week and it is unbecoming this week.

Mr BLEIJIE: I was not pulled up in the parliament, Mr Chair, by the Speaker.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we are nearing the end of this process.

Mr BLEIJIE: I can tell. The Treasurer has lost his mojo.

Mr DICK: This puts to bed the myth—it is like the death myth that we have laboured under for 10 years, that somehow debt borrowed by Labor governments was worse or more damaging than debt borrowed anywhere else by anyone else. We have clearly demonstrated that that is not the case. I inform the members for South Brisbane and Maiwar that the credit ratings for New South Wales and Victoria have been downgraded today. Victoria's credit rating is now below Queensland's and New South Wales's has been reduced to AA-plus, like Queensland. Net, Queensland returns to the top of the leaderboard when it comes to credit ratings.

We have put to bed this myth that somehow we are high taxing when taxation was 4.3 per cent of GSP under the LNP. In comparison, taxation as a share of GSP across the other states and territories was an average of 4.3 per cent in 2019-20. Queensland's taxation as a share of GSP in 2019-20 was also significantly lower than New South Wales, at 4.8 per cent, and Victoria, at five per cent. Given that the expected future growth in taxation revenue is driven by the expected recovery in the Queensland economy, taxation revenue as a proportion of Queensland's economy is expected to remain relatively stable over the forecast period, rising only slightly, from four per cent in 2020-21 to 4.1 per cent in 2023-24. Of course, that will still be lower than the percentage of GSP almost 10 years previously under the LNP.

The Queensland government is committed to maintaining our competitiveness. That makes us an attractive place for businesses to grow where the overwhelming majority of Queenslanders are employed. We must be competitive to achieve growth both in the general economy and in employment.

Mr TANTARI: Treasurer, could you please advise the committee on the government's commitment to providing social housing for Queenslanders in need?

Mr DICK: Thanks, member for Hervey Bay. I know it is an important matter for you in your region. It is a matter we have had discussions on, as I have with other members of parliament. The government is committed to providing social housing and housing support services for Queenslanders in need. Our \$1.8 billion Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 is delivering new social and affordable housing, a range of integrated support, new products and services and reforms to the broader housing system to improve outcomes for Queenslanders across the housing continuum.

In this year's budget we have committed \$526.2 million in 2020-21 towards constructing new social housing dwellings, upgrading our existing properties and supporting delivery of services. This investment, which includes funding allocated under the \$1.8 billion Housing Strategy, is part of our capital program covering both the housing and construction jobs program and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and will deliver 452 social housing dwellings and commence construction on 832 this financial year.

In addition to investment in new dwellings, the government is looking to the future by purchasing dwellings and preparing land for construction in later years. This activity is necessary to support the ongoing delivery of the housing capital program in future years. Prior to the election I announced an affordable housing program that we are kicking off in Queensland. That is the first of its kind. One of the challenges we face is the withdrawal of the federal coalition from properly funding housing. It is quite scandalous that 50 years after the Whitlam government first made landmark improvements there—but it really goes back to the Chifley government after the war—that the federal government wants to contract and reduce its spending nationally, and that disadvantages some of the most disadvantaged people in the country, including First Nation Queenslanders and others.

In that respect, in 2020-21 there is \$241 million allocated to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing outcomes with a focus on social rental housing and more housing services in discrete communities. Our government is also committed to helping First Nation Queenslanders, those experiencing family and domestic violence and young people through a \$139 million investment in our specialist homelessness services. The government is continuing to work hard to drive greater investment for private and non-profit housing providers, as I mentioned a little bit earlier. The state has established a framework for the community housing sector to work with the state to grow community and affordable housing and leverage growth from the Queensland government's investment in the sector under the Partnering for Growth initiative.

Further opportunities exist to leverage Commonwealth funding support and financial arrangements as well as facilitating private sector investment, and that is Build-to-Rent. One of those things that we have talked about previously is the Build-to-Rent pilot. There is \$70 million set aside for the delivery of up to 240 affordable rental dwellings, so these are people who may be in jobs and have a salary, but if you are living in the inner city and you work as a wardsman at the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital or work in another capacity there—not necessarily on a high salary—you will need to be able to access your workplace.

Developing that Build-to-Rent pilot is very important to ensure affordable housing and accessible housing is available to Queenslanders, particularly in very expensive suburbs close to the city. Our substantial 2020-21 investment in new capital expenditure sits within the total housing capital and services budget at over a billion dollars, so we are going to continue focusing on that very strongly and continue that long-term commitment we have made.

Mrs McMAHON: Treasurer, could you please provide further details to the committee about the contribution of \$500 million that the Renewable Energy Fund will make to the economic recovery in Queensland and the government's target of delivering 50 per cent of the state's energy needs from renewable sources by 2030?

Mr DICK: Thanks, member for Macalister. This is a very important investment we announced at the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review—perhaps the most substantial investment a government has made in renewable energy—and of course has both the economic impact to assist with recovery but also the important environmental impact of driving the achievement of our 50 per cent renewable energy generation target by 2030. We announced that as part of our Unite and Recover economic recovery plan and that will permit, through the Renewable Energy Fund, our government owned corporations to directly invest in commercial renewable energy projects and support infrastructure to be undertaken by those companies.

As you heard a little earlier, renewable transition has already seen 44 large-scale renewable energy projects commence operations, enter into construction or be financially committed since 2015, with more than \$8½ billion in investment and more than 7,000 construction jobs across Queensland. Our strong investment environment has supported good progress against the 50 per cent renewable energy target. In the third quarter of this year Queensland hit an important milestone, supplying over 20 per cent of electricity from renewable sources. When you think that the number was zero when the Palaszczuk Labor government came to power, it really demonstrates what can be achieved by Labor governments.

The \$500 million Renewable Energy Fund is a vehicle for government to support further renewable energy development and related infrastructure, either directly or in partnership with the private sector, and the achievement of our renewable energy target. We have so many natural advantages and we are trying to leverage off that when it comes to renewable energy. In terms of investments through the fund, just to let you know how it will work, member for Macalister, they are expected to be made progressively over the next three years as opportunities are identified and commercial propositions are developed for energy government owned corporations and approved through the fund.

Investment proposals will be considered based on key objectives and criteria. The first criteria for investment proposals will be to support additional renewable energy generation and storage capacity, and that is an important aspect—that is, the storage capacity component, not just generating the renewable energy but how we store it—and Queensland's renewable energy target. This could include renewable energy generation or storage technology like batteries or supporting network infrastructure—again, another important piece in that puzzle.

Investment proposals will need to demonstrate commercial viability and support new and ongoing employment opportunities, so we have to deliver the economic and also employment return to Queenslanders. All investment proposals considered through the fund will need to demonstrate that the Queensland Procurement Policy and Best Practice Principles: Quality Safe Workplaces will be applied across projects to support local jobs and businesses—we have been very clear and up-front with that from the start—and drive broader economic, environmental and social outcomes.

That fund will complement the \$145 million we are putting into the renewable energy zones which is to connect up renewable energy production with the network for northern, central and southern Queensland. That is going to be important, as is strategic network investment, streamlining the development of new renewable energy projects and working through industrial energy demand in supporting industry development in Queensland through renewable energy. That continues to send messages that we are a strong place and a safe place and a stable place for investment—an attractive place for investment—and create more jobs as we go along. We are heading in the right direction and we think that renewable energy investment fund will help turbocharge our acceleration towards the 50 per cent renewable target.

CHAIR: Treasurer, could you please advise the committee on the delivery of the government's QRIDA jobs support loans?

Mr DICK: Thanks very much, Chair. The billion dollar COVID-19 Jobs Support Loans scheme is providing much needed funds to enable Queensland businesses and non-profits to keep operating in the face of the pandemic. As one of the first business support packages in the country, the scheme had unprecedented demand from business and non-profit organisations across the state. The scheme is administered by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority, otherwise known as QRIDA, and supports Queensland businesses and non-profit organisations to retain employees and maintain their operations through low-interest loans of up to \$250,000.

The scheme provides loans for a term of 10 years. In the first year there are no repayments required and no interest charged, so it is of great assistance to those businesses and entities in the first year. In the second and third years of the loan, interest is charged at a concessional rate of 2½ per cent, but again no repayment of principal is required. In years 4 to 10, principal and interest repayments will be made, with the interest rate remaining at 2½ per cent. Those loans have supported a broad range of industries across Queensland. There has been very high demand from the hospitality and catering industries—as you can imagine, they were badly affected by COVID-19—and administration type industries that provide support and services to other businesses or households. We have successfully delivered funds to support nearly 7,000 businesses. Ninety per cent of those loans have been made to small businesses too, so I think that is a very significant thing to note as well.

QRIDA also offered free access to business advisory services for organisations that were unable to access the scheme, so again we have provided assistance to them. Some 290 businesses took up that opportunity, and we would encourage them to do that. That is a great way to reposition your business—that is, to take external advice from a third party on how you are travelling, what your business plan is and where you need to go. We are very pleased that the scheme has worked well and will again help underpin those businesses that were really struggling and allow them to progress in a positive fashion over the years to come.

CHAIR: And hopefully grow as the economy recovers.

Mr DICK: Absolutely, and given the capacity to repay those loans.

CHAIR: I now turn to the member for Hervey Bay. Do you have a question?

Mr TANTARI: Yes, I have, thank you, Mr Chair. My question is to the Treasurer. Could you please advise the committee on Queensland's net export growth throughout the crisis and how net export growth and its forecast compares with other jurisdictions, what is the impact of China's recent import decisions and of the weather and international travel conditions?

Mr DICK: You have the trifecta there, member for Hervey Bay. That pretty much covers off everything that is the challenge for Queensland at the moment. All of those are having an impact. To go to the first part of your question, Queensland's overseas exports of goods and services are forecast

to fall by 11 per cent in 2020-21, so a big decline this financial year but hopefully a significant rebound in 2021-22 of $9\frac{3}{4}$ per cent, so not as high as the fall but a significant return to overseas exports of goods and services. Obviously the decline is as a result of the impact of the virus, which will also flow through to lower imports of goods and services forecast to fall by five per cent in 2020-21 before recovering by four per cent in 2021-22 as the economy recovers and demand for imports increases. While net exports are expected to detract from overall growth in 2020-21, ongoing recovery of international trade should see net exports contribute to Queensland's economic growth in 2021-22. We talked a little bit about that earlier.

By way of comparison with other jurisdictions, the decline in both exports and imports forecast for Queensland is consistent with most other jurisdictions. New South Wales and Victoria, which rely more heavily on service exports, are expecting even greater impacts on their exports of services, obviously, being more service exposed. The exception is Western Australia whose key commodity is iron ore. Their exports of iron ore and gold were largely unaffected by the pandemic, with Western Australian exports forecast to remain flat in 2020-21 before returning to growth in 2021-22. One of the risks in the outlook for Queensland exports is an escalation of ongoing trade tensions between Australia and China. That would come as no surprise to members of the committee following reports of China's increased tariffs on the export of a number of Australian commodities including coal, beef, sugar, copper, ores, timber, lobster, wine, barley and cotton. Queensland's primary exposure to those bans is through coal and beef, two of our biggest exports, with billions of dollars of those key commodities exported to China each year. Queensland beef producers are expected to be less impacted as they are currently being supported by high prices and the improved seasonal conditions are encouraging herd rebuilding. The ban on lobsters will also present challenges to this important but much smaller sector. About 85 per cent of Queensland lobster exports go to China. That is an impact on our state, regrettably.

Coal exports are expected to recover sustainability in 2021-22, growing by 9.75 per cent, or $9\frac{3}{4}$ per cent, as the global economy begins to recover. Export volumes of both LNG and other metals have not been as materially impacted by the pandemic, with LNG export volumes in October 2020 rebounding to the highest on record, I am pleased to say, while exports of metals are expected to remain around their current level over the forecast period. The Bureau of Meteorology, as you know, has forecast that the present La Nina weather pattern is likely to continue until at least the end of summer 2020-21 with the expected improvements in seasonal conditions expected to support production and export of crops. This is expected to be more than offset by the decline in beef exports as farmers seek to rebuild their depleted herds in light of the more favourable weather conditions—making some progress there. It is swings and roundabouts, as there often is.

Tourism exports have already fallen to extremely low levels while the impacts on education exports are not expected to flow through fully until March 2021 with many international students enrolled for 2020 having already arrived in Australia ahead of the border closures in late March 2020. That is expected to remain unchanged. So there are some challenges on the horizon.

CHAIR: When the Premier was speaking about exports her chief of staff brought out a pumpkin. Mr Kernel does not have any lobster here? We are disappointed by that.

Mr DICK: We are very respectful of the standing orders and the procedures of this committee—I am not saying that the Premier is not.

CHAIR: It is out of respect for the standing orders on props that they have not brought a lobster in. Member for Coomera, do you have a question?

Mr CRANDON: My question is to Damien Frawley. Mr Frawley, what is the QIC's internal rate of return target?

Mr Frawley: I thank the member for the question. Are you talking about a particular asset? Are you talking about infrastructure versus real estate? Are you talking about—

Mr CRANDON: I am actually talking about the 'GI team's long-term stewardship and active asset management of our diversified portfolios has continued to deliver strong returns for our clients, with an annualised since inception internal rate of return of 14 per cent,' that type of internal rate of return. Do you have an internal rate of return that you target?

Mr Frawley: In our infrastructure area we are looking to target somewhere between eight and 12 per cent. In our real estate portfolio we are looking at somewhere between six and eight per cent. In our diversified growth portfolio we are looking currently at somewhere between five and seven per cent given where interest rates have gone and that portfolio does have a lot of fixed income in it. So the discount rate, given where interest rates have gone, is probably going to mean that there is a reset on the IRRs of all the asset classes.

Mr CRANDON: The equity investment you are making in Virgin of seven per cent, that is below par as far as your other investments are concerned?

Mr Frawley: Different investments have different rates of return.

Mr CRANDON: That is an equity investment.

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, Mr Frawley had just begun his answer. Have the respect to let him finish the answer.

Mr Frawley: The area that I did not mention was private equity. Our private equity expected return and expected IRR can be somewhere between 12 and 20 per cent. I cannot disclose what our expected return for Virgin is, particularly the equity component of that—it is commercial-in-confidence—but it sits in the private equity bucket so we would think that is probably somewhere at the outer limit of that private equity investment, or IRR.

Mr CRANDON: Just to clarify, earlier you said that your net return that you expect from Virgin is seven per cent.

Mr Frawley: That includes debt and equity.

Mr CRANDON: Do you have a time line on that expected return?

Mr Frawley: We are hoping that that would come through within the next couple of years.

Mr CRANDON: So you are targeting seven per cent over the next couple of years. They have guaranteed—

Mr Frawley: They have not guaranteed anything.

Mr CRANDON: They have guaranteed staying in Queensland for five years.

Mr Frawley: Sorry, yes.

Mr CRANDON: Is that factored in to your rate of return that you are targeting?

Mr Frawley: We do not see the link in terms of investment return where they are positioned or domiciled.

CHAIR: Generally it is our job to argue that it is a great place to keep businesses and have a good rate of return not the opposite, member for Coomera. Do you have a question?

Mr CRANDON: Absolutely. Thank you for your help there. The decision to invest in Virgin at a net return of seven per cent, the fact that they were staying in Queensland for five years did not form part of the decision?

Mr Frawley: That was a consideration. As the Treasurer mentioned earlier, the decision was taken in May around economic benefit to the state. There is also a fundamental belief that Virgin, if successful, will contribute two and a half billion dollars to GSP over the next five years. That is not an investment return per se, that is an economic return and a social benefit to the state and we did take that into account when assessing the merit of that investment on behalf of our client.

Mr CRANDON: Were you considering an investment in Virgin before the Treasurer announced the investment?

Mr Frawley: We work closely with all of our clients. The government happens to be our shareholder, but they also happen to be our largest client. Like we do with all of our superannuation fund clients as an example, we take mandates from those clients and those mandates are executed upon. But we assess the investment merit of each of the investments that we make and then we make a recommendation to our client.

Mr CRANDON: A net return of seven per cent is quite low, relatively speaking?

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, before you put the question I ask you not to interrupt the answer before he finishes. The idea is to put the question and then get the answer. I have an indication that the member for Ninderry also has a question.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you, Chair. Relatively speaking, seven per cent return is a low return for that type of investment?

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, we seem to be going over the same ground and there is a bit of repetition.

Mr CRANDON: Not at all, Chair. I am not going over the same ground. I am leading down a particular line of questioning that Mr Frawley understands. I am simply asking a further question.

CHAIR: I have given an indication that the member for Ninderry has a question. Member for Coomera, you have put the question although it seems repetitive to me. Mr Frawley?

Mr Frawley: With a cash rate at 10 basis points and a 10-year bond rate at 80 to 90 basis points, a seven per cent return looks reasonable to us. That is including debt and equity. Of the whole \$200 million package, not all of it was debt or equity. As I said, there was an incentive in that.

Mr CRANDON: I understand that. Going further, the Treasurer was disinclined to indicate a rate of return for the Future Fund. You would have a thought on the rate of return for the Future Fund that you would be targeting for the government as a client?

Mr Frawley: We are still modelling that as we speak.

Mr CRANDON: How would you model it? Would it be a diversified portfolio and, if so, what would the expected return be?

Mr Frawley: Ultimately it would be diversified. On the public record there is known assets that are going into that fund. \$1 billion is coming in in cash. That investment and that \$1 billion will be invested fairly quickly in a range of different assets and then the Titles Registry will come across as well. We are still assessing the performance outcomes for the Titles Registry and the valuations are currently being worked on.

Mr CRANDON: I have one final question in that respect. When you talk to the people from Treasury about the investment portfolio, what sort of a proposal would you be putting forward as far as an expected rate of return that you would be targeting for the government on that first \$1 billion? How would you put that as, 'Look at this, this is what we are aiming for'?

Mr Frawley: I think that is commercial-in-confidence with all of our clients, frankly. We do not disclose the negotiations or the expected returns for our clients at all, be that government clients or non-government clients.

Mr CRANDON: Taking Treasury out of it, what would you typically do with a no-name organisation that comes to you with \$1 billion to invest? What would you be aiming for in a diversified portfolio return?

CHAIR: Hypothetical questions are not part of the questioning. The member for Ninderry has a question.

Mr PURDIE: Can I call up the state actuary, Mr Cannon. My question refers to page 1-77 of the SDS in relation to the defined benefit obligations. What is the current vested benefit index level of the defined benefit scheme?

Mr Cannon: That is a little difficult for me to answer.

CHAIR: Mr Cannon, can we hear the question again?

Mr PURDIE: What is the current vested benefit index or VBI level of the defined benefit scheme?

Mr Cannon: That is a little difficult for me to answer. The valuation report, as at 30 June 2020, has been completed and has been submitted to the QSuper Board. However, until the board has been able to receive that and acknowledge that report, I am unable to speak of the exact contents of that document, I am afraid.

Mr STEVENS: Are you telling me that it was 30 June and that we are now in December and still you do not have approval to answer a legitimate question?

Mr Cannon: Absolutely not, no. To explain the process behind the valuation and the calculation of these numbers, there is a six-month period that APRA mandate from 30 June. We have to produce the report within that time frame. We have completed within that. As I said, we submitted the report just last week to QSuper. The report is final, but it is not able to be discussed publicly until the recipient of that report—that is, the QSuper Board—has been able to receive it and adopt it. After that, the QSuper Board will make that document public. They have to do so within 20 business days from the date of the board meeting once they have adopted that report. That is why I am a little hesitant. I apologise for not being able to be more forthcoming with those numbers.

I gave evidence before the earlier version of this committee in July about the preliminary models, if you like, I have for the funding position of the scheme. At that time I indicated vested benefits indexes of around, I think, 108 from memory, or around that, and a surplus position I estimated at that time of around \$3½ billion. As I said, I cannot speak to the actual numbers that we have ended up at finally, but I am comfortable with the indications given to the committee at that time. That will be shown as soon as that report is able to be publicly presented.

Mr PURDIE: As a follow-up question, in 2017 at a similar estimates hearing you indicated that your preferred target buffer was 120 per cent. Is that still your belief at the moment?

Mr Cannon: The funding management process around the scheme has changed subsequent to the Queensland Future Fund Act and the introduction of the guarantee that was referred to by the Treasurer earlier. Now the funding management focuses on the accrued benefit position as opposed to the vested benefit one, and that vested benefit approach was done within the so-called spirit of the APRA funding and solvency standards. The target buffer actually was not a minimum.

It is very important to understand that the target buffer was a threshold where once the scheme was above that level that would prompt me to then report to the government through the valuation report that perhaps there was scope for further repatriations from the scheme because the scheme was so well funded, that is, more than 20 per cent on the vested benefits index. So it is not a minimum level but a buffer above. If it was below that buffer, I would not make those recommendations. I stress that was under the old funding regime which has now been superseded subject to the Queensland Future Fund Act, so those questions are moot in that sense. I do not make a recommendation or any commentary now in the valuation report, which will be released soon enough with regards to target buffers.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Cannon, and we look forward to it. Treasurer, we have had a series of questions about the investment in Virgin. Can you explain some of the social and economic benefits that come from investing in Virgin for the state of Queensland?

Mr DICK: I am happy to do so. I also have answers to those issues raised by the committee, which I will proceed to. I do not want to preclude any questions from members, but it might be helpful.

CHAIR: We are measuring our time and we have taken some time off the opposition to make sure we balance that.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. Of course, it was very important to get Virgin flying again. We made that clear. To have competition in the airline market was very important, particularly for regional Queensland. We are now seeing the benefit of that as restrictions are removed and more people want to travel and fly.

Of course, the investment in Virgin was opposed by the state LNP every single step of the way and condemned, which they continue to do today. It is important that we look at what the LNP says at a state level and what they do at a federal level. In the *Australian Financial Review* on 25 May, in the Rear Window column by Joe Aston and Tom Richardson, they put a very clear spotlight on the money that was given. It was not an investment with a rate of return, which I and QIC have secured for Queensland, but a gift that was made to Rex Airlines.

Members of the committee will know Rex Airlines is based in New South Wales and owned by Singapore companies. The federal government provided \$67.6 million in support to Rex Airlines, \$53.8 million in untied grants. For the benefit of the member for Coomera, it is not the 12 per cent return or an eight per cent return or a seven per cent return that we have secured—nothing. That represented 21.3 per cent of Rex's annual revenues. In equivalent terms, it would have been the federal government gifting Virgin Airlines, on a then market capitalisation basis, \$1.2 billion. I have not heard a word of criticism of that gift made by the federal coalition and the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack. To quote Mr Aston and Mr Richardson in that article, 'So McCormack, the Deputy Prime Minister, told Virgin to find—

Mr PURDIE: Point of order, Mr Chair. Is there a page on the SDS this relates to? This is a state budget we are talking about, not the federal.

CHAIR: We just had a very long series of questions about the state's investment in Virgin and its benefit.

Mr PURDIE: That is a state investment; I understand that.

CHAIR: The Treasurer is making comparison with other jurisdictions and their investments or gifts in the airline industry. I rule that it is relevant.

Mr DICK: I have one quote to conclude—

So McCormack told Virgin to find "a market-led solution" but gifted Rex all the cash it needed. Sharp—who is the Chairman of Rex, former National Party federal minister—

who just so happens to also be a longstanding National Party official, exalted McCormack's "meaningful assistance package" designed to "prevent [Rex] from collapsing". The audacity of the cronyism almost eclipses the cronyism itself.

Enough said about Virgin and Rex.

Mr BLEIJIE: John Lee—

CHAIR: Order!

Mr DICK: I will respond initially to that in relation to the KPMG 6 September matter. Regarding the 6 September KPMG contract that the member for Kawana asked about, the contract, I am advised, disclosed on 6 September with zero value related to an existing contract with KPMG for the industry support package. This was a time variation from an earlier contract to extend the contract but there was no dollar impact.

In relation to Mr Mike Kaiser, I am advised that Mr Kaiser had no hours billed in relation to advice provided to the Financial Provisioning Scheme.

In relation to budget preparation, I am advised that the budget office prepared the budget and no consultants were employed in its preparation.

In relation to Mr John Lee and Newgate, I am advised Mr John Lee was not part of the contracted team for Newgate's projects in 2019-20.

So all the assertions made by the opposition and the inferences made were false and wrong—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chair. The Treasurer has just outlaid why I was concerned before. He has just indicated my—

CHAIR: There does not seem to be a point of order here; there seems to be an argument.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, if you can hear me—

CHAIR: I will bear with you, but I do warn you that I do not want a frivolous or argumentative point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, with respect, you will hear my point of order. The point of order is this: the Under Treasurer indicated—when I asked about Mike Kaiser, I asked about all the KPMG contracts. The Treasurer has just answered one contract out of all of those contracts. I wanted to know, and this committee wanted to know, whether Mike Kaiser was involved in any of the KPMG contracts employed by Queensland Treasury, not one, as the Treasurer has just indicated.

CHAIR: Understood. That is not a point of order, but you have clarified your position. It could be a point of clarification seeking the indulgence of the chair, not a point of order, but thank you very much.

Mr DICK: I will have to look at the transcript of what the member for Kawana said. If it relates to other contracts, I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: It did. There was over \$3 million, there \$750, \$759. Thank you for taking it on notice.

Mr DICK: I am happy to look at the transcript and if it does refer to other contracts, I am happy to take that on notice.

In relation to the QSuper and Sunsuper proposed merger, as I said in my answer, I understand the former treasurer raised certain issues that would need to be addressed for the proposed merger of QSuper and Sunsuper to proceed. Those issues were (1) whether it is in the best interests of members and members are being kept informed of developments; (2) appropriate governance and protections to preserve member benefits and manage government's liabilities in relation to the QSuper defined benefit scheme; (3) appropriate representation of the Queensland government as an employer sponsor on the board of trustees of a merged entity; (4) proposed arrangements for the delivery of services to the government superannuation office; (5) continuation of community service activities, particularly those supporting Queenslanders facing challenges accessing their superannuation; and (6) demonstration of appropriate consultation and satisfactory outcomes with relevant stakeholders. As I indicated, those are the policy positions of the government and they will be the policy positions under which the merger is considered and there is no change to that.

In relation to QIC employee benefits, QIC manages, as I have said earlier, \$79 billion on behalf of 120 global clients. Dividend is not the best measure, I am advised, of returns from QIC to government. QIC delivered \$2.5 billion to the government in 2019-20, including defined benefit scheme payments plus dividends, tax equivalents and competitive neutrality fees. The dividend and tax equivalent paid to the Queensland government are attributable, in part, to the fees received from QIC's private clients. Given QIC is a globally recognised investment manager, it must compete with institutions around the world to attract and retain staff.

QIC performance payments in 2019-20 were, on average, \$66,000 per employee. This is 28 per cent down, I am advised, on the previous year and less than half the amounts paid per employee in 2013-14 and 2014-15 financial years under the LNP government. Under the Newman LNP government,

performance payments in 2014-15, on average, were \$137,000 per employee. In 2013-14, they were \$131,000 per employee. I am also advised that non-monetary benefits to key management personnel are salary sacrificed car parking, motor vehicle leasing and annual leave.

In relation to a Queensland Health productivity dividend—and hopefully this will finally put this to bed for the LNP; another myth that we are setting aside—health funding under Labor has increased every year and will continue to do so. We are constantly criticised by the LNP for wasting public money and bloating the public service. We make no apologies for growing the number of staff who work in Queensland Health. The increase in the Health budget each year is determined by taking into account a number of factors: population growth, ageing population, decline of private health insurance, the increase in chronic disease and many other factors. A productivity dividend is factored into accounting for continuing improvements in productivity and efficiency within the system.

Examples of initiatives that improved productivity which I was asked include new medical equipment that cut the time for procedures in allowing more patients to be seen; electronic medical records and time sheets; Hospital in the Home projects that treat patients at their home, freeing up hospital resources which is especially important in aged care; increasing telehealth services; investment in better equipment in regional areas reducing the need to transfer patients to Brisbane; and satellite hospitals in the suburbs to deliver dialysis and chemotherapy, freeing up hospital resources.

Productivity dividends mean that in February 2020 pre COVID, we did four per cent more surgeries than in February 2019: an eight per cent increase in general surgery, 5.9 per cent increase in gynaecological procedures, 13 per cent increase in neurology, 2.5 per cent increase in orthopaedic surgery and 14.9 per cent increase in neurosurgery. As I said, during the election campaign, this has happened for five years. No-one has noticed. The only people who have noticed are those people who have received additional surgeries and they are grateful for it, and I am grateful to Queensland Health staff for delivering that sort of dividend to the people of Queensland.

This is in stark contrast, can I say, Chair, to the policy of natural attrition that the LNP took to the election, a policy that was comprehensively rejected. Refusing to replace people who leave or retire is not a productivity dividend; it is simply a cut.

In regards to Treasury car parking spaces, Queensland Treasury has about 1,000 employees and 72 car parking spaces. Some 44 car parking—

Mr BLEIJIE: Natural attrition is here.

Mr DICK: Wrong. The contention of the member for Kawana is wrong.

Mr BLEIJIE: Your plan—natural attrition.

Mr DICK: There are 44 car parking spaces at 1 William Street. I am responding to your question.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you have done so well.

Mr BLEIJIE: He is misleading.

Mr DICK: Given the Queensland government does not own 1 William Street, a deal that was struck by the former Newman LNP government, those spaces are leased for \$26,965.58 per month. The remaining 28 car park spaces are located at 61 Mary Street and 53 Charlotte Street and are leased for \$10,436.44 per month. The Treasury no longer has car parking spaces at the Myer Centre.

In relation to Queensland Treasury Corporation non-monetary benefits, non-monetary benefits to key management personnel total \$85,075. Those benefits comprise car parks and fringe benefits tax on those car parks. The breakdown of the non-monetary benefit to key management personnel is \$66,878 for the cost of car parks and \$18,197 in fringe benefits tax on car parks.

In relation to bulk water costs—this was asked by the member for Noosa—I would note that under the Queensland government's COVID-19 Fiscal Economic Response package, Queensland households will receive a \$200 rebate to help offset household electricity and water costs of which \$100 is for water bill relief. I can advise the committee that South-East Queensland bulk water prices are set by government based on recommendations from the Queensland independent economic regulator, the Queensland Competition Authority. The charges for bulk water supply represent around 30 to 35 per cent of a customer's final water bill, with the remaining costs the responsibility of the council owned distributor retail businesses such as Unitywater and Urban Utilities.

SEQ bulk water prices are set to June 2021 based on the last QCA price review from 2018 to 2021. SEQ bulk water prices for 2021 increased by 3.49 per cent, consistent with the Queensland Competition Authority recommended price. The QCA review scheduled in 2020 to inform future prices

was deferred by 12 months due to COVID-19 and is now proposed to commence in 2021. As a consequence of COVID-19 delaying the next QCA review, QCA recommended prices are not available for the 2021-22 year. The government will make a decision about bulk water prices to apply for 2021-22 in 2021.

One point of clarification, the Virgin loan is not secured; it is unsecured. Other than the question put by the member for Kawana—and we will check the transcript—if there are other contracts that he referred to for the provision of services by KPMG, we will provide a response on notice to the committee in regard to any involvement Mr Kaiser had in relation to those contracts.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: There is a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: With regard to the question with respect to Mr John Lee, I would appreciate if the Treasurer could check the transcript because my questioning was the same with respect to Mr John Lee and all the contracts, not just Mr Kaiser. I believe the Treasurer has not disclosed the alcohol expenses for QIC as we had indicated.

CHAIR: That is true, member for Kawana. I was going to bring that up. I have learnt more about the QIC Christmas club than I care to learn. Obviously other members have different interests. The deputy chair wants to be invited.

Mr DICK: They are certainly drinking less alcohol than they did under the LNP.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am interested in public expenditure with over 214,000 people out of work at the moment.

Mr DICK: You cannot blame them for drinking more under the LNP.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, the Treasurer can answer this as he sees fit, but there were a number of questions about alcohol at a function on the 29th and at an August function. It was something that the Treasurer endeavoured to get back to committee on. You can answer as you see fit.

Mr DICK: I will come back to the committee in relation to those two events. I am happy to do that. I will take that on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: There were three events.

CHAIR: We have them. We can take them from the transcript. If there were three events, we have an undertaking that that will be taken on notice.

Mr DICK: Just to clarify, Mr John Lee was not part of the contracted team for the Newgate projects—I said that earlier—in 2019-20. There are no other projects that he was involved in.

CHAIR: That had been said before. I took note of that. We have been taking note of that here. We look forward to the exciting nature of the Christmas club at QIC.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, point of order. This is a budget estimates committee hearing and the Treasurer even noted that now he has become Treasurer he considers every dollar important. This is taxpayers' money, and 214,000—

CHAIR: You are right, member for Kawana, and I should not—

Mr BLEIJIE: Some 214,000 Queenslanders are out of work and their expenditure matters.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I should have taken that more seriously. Thank you very much for that. It is not strictly a point of order. Nonetheless I take it in the spirit that it was no doubt intended. I realise that every dollar is important, especially these days.

Mr DICK: Can I thank all members of the committee, including the additional members who came, including the member for Kawana, for their contribution to this process. I think we all agree that it is very important to our state. I very willingly appear before the estimates committee and am happy to provide the fullest possible answers to questions. Can I also thank the Treasury for their work in preparing for the estimates committee hearing. It has been an extraordinary period of time, 2020. They have worked with incredible capacity and ability to provide me with the support I need. I thank them publicly for their work. Thank you, Chair, for your work.

CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, as I did for DPC, I wish to thank all of the public servants and those who work in government owned corporations for their work. We are in unprecedented times when we ask all servants of Queensland to look for innovative solutions and deliver great service to the people of Queensland.

We note that you can take the exact wording of the questions from the proof transcript of this session which will be available on the Hansard page within approximately two hours or by watching the broadcast if there is any lack of clarity. I thank the Treasurer, the Under Treasurer and departmental officers for your attendance. Thank you for your final remarks. The committee will take a break and the hearing will resume at 6.30 pm, at which time the committee will commence its examination of the estimates of the portfolio areas of the Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport.

Proceedings suspended from 6.04 pm to 6.30 pm.

ESTIMATES—ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE—TOURISM INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION AND SPORT

In Attendance

Hon. SJ Hinchliffe, Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport

Ms K Adams, Chief of Staff

Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport

Mr J Lee, Acting Director-General

Mr J McAlister, Deputy Director-General, Tourism and Major Events

Mr A Sly, Acting Assistant Director-General, Sport and Recreation


Dr S Pearson, Deputy Director-General, Innovation

Tourism and Events Queensland

Ms L Coddington, Chief Executive Officer

Stadiums Queensland

Mr T Harris, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** Good evening. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport. My name is Linus Power. I am the member for Logan and chair of the committee. With me tonight is my erstwhile deputy, Ray Stevens, the member for Mermaid Beach. The other committee members are: Mr Michael Crandon, the member for Coomera; Mrs Melissa McMahon, the member for Macalister; Mr Dan Purdie, the member for Ninderry; and Mr Adrian Tantari, the member for Hervey Bay. Minister, you are very popular tonight in that you have visiting members present. They are: Mr David Crisafulli, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Broadwater; Mr Tim Mander, the member for Everton; Mr Sam O'Connor, the member for Bonney; Mr Stephen Andrew, the member for Mirani; Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; and Dr Amy MacMahon, the member for South Brisbane.

The committee will examine the minister's portfolio areas until 9 pm. I remind those present 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 the 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 or opinion. I look forward to that being the case.

I intend to guide these proceedings so that the relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members. A reminder that officers permitted the use of their mobile phones and electronic devices should ensure they are switched to silent mode. Also, I remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, 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 minister or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Sport open for examination. The question before the chair 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 for the opportunity, Chair. It is a great honour to be asked by the Premier to serve as Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport and help the Palaszczuk government deliver Queensland's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. It has been an extraordinary year, as I know we would all acknowledge, and one which does find me fronting an estimates committee hearing for a portfolio that I was sworn into 3½ weeks ago.

This year has been one of the most challenging in more than a century, with few in Queensland, Australia and indeed the world unaffected by the global pandemic. From initial meetings I have had with the tourism industry leaders and stakeholders, these challenges continue, but it is encouraging to learn signs of recovery are showing. With the summer approaching and COVID health advice seeing the border reopening to Greater Sydney and Victoria on 1 December and today's announcement that the border will reopen to Adelaide at 1 am this Saturday, 11 December, Queensland tourism is rebuilding and we are good to go.

Since the onset of COVID-19 the Palaszczuk government acted quickly to protect jobs and impacted business, committing over \$8 billion in health and economic measure, including over \$617 million in direct support and recovery for the tourism and events sector. On top of this, the Palaszczuk government also committed an additional \$74 million in new funding under the Rebuilding Queensland Tourism election commitment to ensure a rapid and enduring recovery for the tourism industry, including: \$4 million to deliver business capability training for industry; \$15 million for Tourism and Events Queensland for a marketing blitz to encourage travellers to experience Queensland; \$20 million in events boost to secure more events for Queensland, including \$14 million for major events and \$1.5 million a year for business events; a \$20 million Tourism Activation Fund to activate Queensland tourist experiences across the state; and a \$15 million Regional Tourism Organisation Fund to provide a special one-off funding injection into our regional tourism organisations.

The Palaszczuk government's strong economic recovery plan is delivering a thousand jobs a day as businesses scale up and get Queenslanders back to work. Our action on borders kept Queenslanders safe from COVID-19 and also put our state at the epicentre of Australian sport, supporting local jobs. Ingenuity and support from stakeholders saw Queensland deliver a safe haven for Australian women's cricket, Super Netball, the Melbourne Storm, the WNBL and the AFL, including the first ever AFL grand final to be played outside Melbourne. Stakeholders' support also saw the COVID safe return to play for thousands of local clubs and associations, reopening participation sport and recreation so important to our communities right across Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government's strong commitment to innovation means Queensland is leading the way in the search for a COVID vaccine as well. Our Advanced Queensland initiative contributed \$10 million to kickstart the University of Queensland's development of a coronavirus vaccine, and it looks promising. This much anticipated vaccine could be proudly stamped 'Made in Queensland'.

I know there is a lot to look forward to in 2021 as we work together on continuing to kick goals for Queensland's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. I would like to take this opportunity to thank officers of the new Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, which has existed for a little over three weeks, for all their work in preparing for this estimates hearing. This preparation was over a very truncated time frame and was undertaken at the same time as the department was going through the process of a significant machinery of government change. I acknowledge that.

I also thank the chair and the committee members for the opportunity to appear before you today and speak to my portfolio appropriation. Thank you for that opportunity, Chair. I look forward to questions from your members and their guests.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. I now turn to my erstwhile deputy chair to indicate whether he has a question or whether another opposition member has a question.

Mr STEVENS: I will defer to the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Good evening, Minister and officials. My first question is to the acting director-general. It is with reference to the Auditor-General's report on the awarding of sports grants—report No. 6. On page 9 of that report, it is noted that the previous minister approved \$150,000 to a state sporting organisation that was not recommended by the department. Which organisation was that?

Mr Lee: As to the specifics around your question, was it for a particular organisation, did you say, that the amount was awarded? Could you reframe that question for me please?

Mr MANDER: Sure. On page 9 of that Auditor-General's report it was noted that a \$150,000 grant was awarded to a state sporting organisation that was not recommended by the department. I am interested to know which organisation it was.

CHAIR: Obviously we are making reference to a report by an outside organisation. It may not have been transparent within the Auditor-General's report. You can answer within the scope of your understanding, Mr Lee.

Mr Lee: I do not have that level of detail for the member. I am happy to ask, if the chair permits, for the deputy director-general who is responsible for sport to come up to the table and attempt to answer that question.

CHAIR: Of course, you can refer it to the appropriate officer.

Mr Lee: Andrew Sly.

CHAIR: Mr Sly, did you hear the question from the back?

Mr Sly: Yes, I did. I thank the member for the question. My understanding is that it is actually not a state sporting organisation. That related to a specific club. That was an eligible club not recommended but the minister of the day decided was warranted to be funded under that program.

Mr MANDER: Can you name that organisation?

Mr Sly: Yes, I can—Victoria Point Magic.

Mr MANDER: What sort of club is that?

Mr Sly: I would have to take that on notice, if I can, with permission from the director-general and the minister. I will come back to you.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, do you have any further questions?

Mr MANDER: I do. I will continue my question to the assistant director-general. With relevance to the same report, the report noted that the minister rejected 14 grant applications under the Female Facilities Program that were recommended by the department and approved another 18 grants that were not recommended. Can the assistant director-general provide a list of those 32 organisations?

Mr Sly: The department does not generally release the names of unsuccessful applications in any program to protect any prejudice from future applications. That is the policy at this point in time. That would be the same for the successful ones as well at this point in time given that that is a previous program that has been approved. That is the position of the department at this point in time, to not identify those particular clubs.

Mr MANDER: Could you answer this question? Of those 14 grant applications that were rejected by the minister, have they received subsequent funding under the Female Facilities Program or any other program?

Mr Sly: With permission, I will need to take that question on notice, if that is okay.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: We will endeavour to get that information back during the hearing.

Mr MANDER: Continuing on the same theme, when the minister rejected those applications, did the department seek a reason from the minister as to why he made that decision?

Mr Sly: No is my understanding.

Mr MANDER: Would that be standard practice not to ask for a reason? Why was a reason not asked of the minister?

Mr Sly: At that particular point in time, the department received advice from the minister, at which point in time the department provided a further brief to the minister to confirm his decision, but that did not include reasons as to why those particular clubs were or were not approved.

Mr MANDER: The minister had unabated authority with regard to the decisions he made in that regard.

Mr Sly: At that point in time, the minister held the delegation to make the decisions that he made. I would say, as the audit report identifies, those processes were changed in February 2020 this year to separate the power between the minister and the financial delegate which is now the director-general. Also, the department seeks at all times for improvements to process and probity and that sort of thing, just to put that on the record.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Through you, Chair, the audit report made four recommendations—

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order. Quite clearly, the question from the member for Everton was through the director-general rather than the minister on the matter.

CHAIR: I take that point of order. You are correct. If I might, this is obviously crossing into policy areas. I ask the minister to give some background on that area that is possibly not able to be answered by the public servant.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: One thing that is very clear is that the government has committed to implementing the four recommendations made by the audit report. The report identified some issues with the department's record-keeping processes. They have since been rectified. The government made the policy decision to do that. That has been committed to and delivered by the department already.

Mr MANDER: Of those 14 organisations whose grants were rejected, do they know that they were rejected? Were they ever advised that they were successful?

CHAIR: Is that directed to the minister?

Mr MANDER: To the assistant director-general.

Mr Sly: No. Only successful grants would be published on the public record.

Mr MANDER: Were there any other ministerial interventions between February 2020 and September 2020?

Mr Sly: No. The separation of power under the new guidelines in February 2020 separated the ministerial responsibility from the department responsibility.

Mr MANDER: The former minister stated publicly that it was his responsibility to intervene because the department had got it wrong. Will the assistant director-general advise what the department actually got wrong?

CHAIR: Are you addressing the assistant director-general or the acting director-general? We did refer to Mr Sly when there was specifically—

Mr MANDER: It is the same—the assistant director-general. He is the one who seems to have the knowledge.

CHAIR: I have been reminded that I have been remiss in that all questions have to be directed either to the minister or to, in this case, the acting director-general who can then refer. I probably should follow that practice. I have been remiss on that one.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I raise a point of order. I would also express a concern that putting that question to either the director-general or the assistant director-general might be interpreted as seeking an opinion about these matters.

CHAIR: Could you direct your question to the acting director-general, and I will re-listen to the question?

Mr MANDER: I ask the acting director-general: what processes were not carried out that the minister was not happy with that caused him to intervene?

Mr Lee: I would refer to you the audit report on this.

CHAIR: With due respect, you are asking about the mental state of a previous minister about his happiness or unhappiness, which is clearly seeking an opinion.

Mr MANDER: No, I am not. I raise a point of order. The report very clearly states that the department did not keep appropriate records in the decision-making process of the minister. It is relevant to that particular point.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, you seem to be answering your own question. The question that was asked was: why was the minister, in your opinion—it has to be your opinion given that it is a commentary on his state of mind—not happy? I find that difficult to answer.

Mr MANDER: Let me rephrase it.

CHAIR: That is a good idea, member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Let me rephrase it to the acting director-general. Did the minister explain to the department what they got wrong that caused him to intervene and change decisions that the department had already made?

Mr Lee: Unfortunately I would not have that level of detail having just arrived in the new department. I think what is very clear from the audit report is that there was a need to improve the governance of that process for the allocation of grants. There have been a number of recommendations arising out of that report and they have been implemented.

Mr MANDER: Acting Director-General, you are not aware of that, but would any one of your officials be aware of the answer to the question I asked?

Mr Lee: I cannot read their minds, sorry.

Mr MANDER: Why don't you ask them?

CHAIR: It is up to the acting director-general if he feels it is useful for another officer to give additional information. In this case the acting director-general has not done that. I note that the member has suggested it.

Mr MANDER: One of the many shortcomings that the Auditor-General picked up was a lack of transparency with regard to the interaction between the department and the minister. In the interest of transparency, will the acting director-general produce for this committee all briefing notes to the minister that are referenced in the Auditor-General's report?

Mr Lee: I will have to take that on advisement.

CHAIR: We also had a discussion in the last session about the standing rules and orders about taking questions on notice. Please take note of that.

Mr MANDER: Minister, the Auditor-General's report said that the changes in the recommended grants resulted in grants awarded to the ALP electorates increasing from 44 to 68 per cent, while the LNP electorates' share of awarded grants decreased from 43 to 28 per cent. Is this not just a classic case of pork-barrelling?

CHAIR: There might be a point of order. Member for Everton, do you want to withdraw that question yourself?

Mr MANDER: Let me rephrase the question. Does this process not show a clear bias by the minister to favour Labor electorates?

CHAIR: The definition of 'imputation' is to say that when a minister shows bias, and you actually used the word in the question. I find it very difficult to not see that as an imputation when it directly is using those words. It is not even close. Member for Everton, do you have another question? I know that many of the cross benchers have questions—

Mr MANDER: I would like an answer to that question, Mr Chair, because this is a damning Auditor-General's report.

CHAIR: I know that you would like to have an answer to a question that is not within the standing orders, but it is not my role to allow questions that are not in the standing orders. I notice that the member for Noosa is here and has a question. Do you have a question that is within the standing orders?

Ms BOLTON: Minister, I refer to page 135 of the SDS regarding tourism industry development. In addition to the COVID-19 International Tourism Adaption Grant and the Growing Tourism, Growing Tourism Jobs program, will the minister outline what will be available for businesses in our communities severely impacted by ongoing international border closures?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As we have seen during the whole of the period in response to the global pandemic, the government's implementation of its plans to help the whole of the economy recover from the impacts of COVID-19 has been aimed at rebuilding whole sectors of the economy, but particularly Queensland tourism as the nation's leader in visitor market share and one of the destinations of choice for transformational experiences. To grow resilient regional economies and create sustainable jobs it has been really important that we focus so much on this sector.

Since the onset of COVID-19 the government acted quickly, committing over \$10 billion in health and economic measures, including over \$617 million in direct support and recovery for the tourism and events sector. This includes: industry support and stimulus packages; jobs support; loans; cash relief on certain government fees, charges and taxes; worker retention and placement initiatives; aviation route and development support; destination marketing; small business and regional industry grants, loans and relief; and the extension of fee waivers for tourism operators in protected areas.

Support and recovery measures that are helping on the ground to save Queensland tourism businesses include: the \$25 million Queensland Tourism Icons Program; \$25 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund; \$15 million airline route support program; \$5 million International Tourism Adaptation Grant program; \$11 million in targeted transition support for the Far North Queensland tourism industry; \$174 million in industry support program funding for tourism businesses; \$137 million in approved loans for some 950 tourism businesses under the small business COVID job support loans scheme, supporting over 11,500 jobs; and almost \$75 million in Small Business COVID Adaptation Grants. That is what has been at the core of how we have supported the tourism industry.

That \$74 million set of programs and initiatives outlined during the election and delivered on in funding in the budget goes to the pathways of how we can continue to provide support indirectly within the tourism portfolio, but there are other measures across other agencies where we will continue to see

support and responsiveness to the circumstances of the industry. As we re-emerge and as markets re-emerge, hopefully—and I know that the industry wants to see this too—government's role can decline so the industry can step back into being in the space where it wants to be: delivering jobs and opportunities for the industry itself and delivering profits for businesses. Where we see the challenges continuing we stand ready to work with industry and be responsive to their needs, as we have done throughout the pandemic.

CHAIR: Does the member for Everton have a question within the standing orders?

Mr MANDER: I want to go back to the previous question that was ruled out of order and try again. Minister, as I mentioned, the changes in recommended grants resulted in grants awarded to ALP electorates increasing from 44 to 68 per cent while LNP electorates' share of awarded grants decreased from 43 to 28 per cent. Will the minister explain that apparent imbalance?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I think the programs were about responding and ensuring that sporting organisations had access to the funds they needed to develop their facilities, and those who were successful in that process were the ones that were successful. Unfortunately, all of these are massively overprescribed. That is one of the challenges. We have such a great diverse and growing, thankfully, sport and recreation sector and community based and participation sector right across the state, so seeing programs such as these oversubscribed unfortunately is not a new thing. It was not a new thing for the program that was administered by the previous minister under the previous department, and I am sorry to say I suspect that it will not be anything that will be a surprise when this department now is next in a position to offer opportunities and programs like that.

The outcomes that were reported on in the QAO report resulted in recommendations that were made by the Queensland Audit Office. As I say, the government has committed to implementing and has been implementing these recommendations, including also seeing and acknowledging—as it did before those recommendations—that the department changed the sports grant process in February 2020 to reflect the director-general being the decision-maker for grants. For that reason there were no specific recommendations made about that particular matter because it had already been done. That change and review had already been done.

The fact that you will see a grants program that is oversubscribed, and as a consequence there are some successful applicants and there are some unsuccessful applicants, has not been new in this area and will not be new into the future. It will not be a revelation for anyone into the future.

Mr MANDER: Minister, was the imbalance towards LNP seats purely bad luck?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I think you have to say that all of these things are competitive applications. I cannot see into the process of what determined the outcomes and what determined the final allocation. I am sure there have been other occasions in the past and other occasions in the future where those imbalances will reflect a different set of things. I can assure you that they are not matters that I would be taking into account in the process of determination of the design of a system.

Ultimately, very clearly a system is now in place where the director-general has the role in determining the outcomes of such sports grants packages going forward. I have great confidence in that being handled appropriately and around responding to where the need is and what meets the criteria. Those are the measures that need to be in place, and sometimes that will result in a disproportionate nature of an allocation according to those political measures. They should not be criteria, and I can assure you they will not be criteria going forward.

Mr MANDER: I agree with that. So the change in process is necessary due to the previous minister's inappropriate intervention—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: No. As I made clear, there have been changes that have been made to internal processes to reflect and respond to the QAO report, but there were also reforms that were made ahead of that time to reduce the risk of such outcomes and concerns.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I now turn to the member for Macalister.

Mrs McMAHON: With reference to page 2-135 of the Service Delivery Statements in relation to continuing to secure and leverage new major events, will the minister provide an update on Queensland's 2032 Olympic bid?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Macalister for the question. This morning, as I think the Premier may have referenced to this committee earlier today, the Premier met with the Australian Olympic Committee president, John Coates, to discuss progressing Queensland's 2032 Olympic bid to

the next stage. I was pleased to be a part of those meetings. It was at that meeting that the Premier formally introduced me to President Coates in the role of supporting the Premier and supporting the government's engagement in this enterprise.

Earlier this year, as the nation's collective focus was rightly on the response to and recovery from the global pandemic, the Olympic Candidature Leadership Group agreed to place the 2032 candidature discussions on hold. That was back in March. This was a decision that the Olympic Candidature Leadership Group partners—the federal government, the state government, local governments, the Australian Olympic Committee and Paralympics Australia—all made together. However, it is now the appropriate time to resume discussions regarding whether hosting the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games is in the best interests of all Queenslanders.

COVID-19 has resulted in significant economic and social impacts at the state, national and international level. Therefore, it is a critical time for the Queensland government to adopt a considered, fiscally responsible approach regarding its consideration of a 2032 games opportunity going forward. Notwithstanding these challenges, it is acknowledged that the potential economic and social recovery benefits of a games in Queensland are significant. The value proposition assessment considered by the Queensland government in December 2019 found that hosting the games is feasible with financial and operational services support from all three levels of government. The value proposition assessment noted that the games could: generate quantifiable economic benefits of around \$7.4 billion; support about 130,000 direct jobs; accelerate the development of key infrastructure; boost international tourism spending by more than \$20 billion; deliver up to \$8.6 billion in new trade opportunities; and provide procurement and supply chain opportunities for businesses throughout the state.

Through you, Chair, as the Premier stated this morning, we will look at and watch closely the progress, preparation and delivery of the 2021 Tokyo Olympics before we put together a formal funding agreement. The Premier has also stated that all levels of government must support this bid. As such, she is in the process of contacting the Prime Minister to discuss funding. Today's announcement by the Premier is an exciting next step on the road to 2032, and I look forward to taking part in the recommencement of the discussions regarding candidature and being involved in that Olympic Candidature Leadership Group.

Mr TANTARI: Minister, with reference to page 2-144 of the Service Delivery Statements in relation to publicity and promotional value generated by Tourism and Events Queensland, will you outline the Give it a Go in Queensland campaign?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Hervey Bay. I know his part of the world has certainly been affected by the green shoots and the re-livening of the tourism industry here in Queensland.

I was pleased yesterday to launch a new campaign to urge thousands of Australians to come to Queensland, filling in the huge demand for workers in the state's tourism industry as travel restrictions ease. The Give it a Go campaign has been developed after feedback from the industry revealed that thousands of job vacancies were already emerging throughout the state. With the reopening of our borders and a marketing blitz focus on those southern states, we are seeing thousands of tourists book holidays in Queensland over Christmas. Where possible, we want Queenslanders to take up these jobs, but there are so many positions up for grabs that we are also widening the search to other states. As I was saying yesterday, whether it is being a barista at Burleigh, a waiter in the Whitsundays or a kitchen hand in Cairns, our regional centres have jobs on hand and they want to see people come and take them up right now.

We have received positive feedback from the tourism industry after launching the campaign yesterday, with the CEO of Fraser Coast Tourism and Events Ltd, Martin Simons—whom I am sure the member for Hervey Bay would be aware of—saying that the speed this campaign has come together is first class. Workforce challenges are across-the-board and likely to be with us for the next couple of years due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. The Queensland Tourism Industry Council CEO, Daniel Gschwind, said that the Give it a Go campaign, along with the reopening of our borders, is driving huge demand for the industry.

New data shows that there is an increase of more than 30 per cent in tourism job vacancies to be filled. For young Queenslanders who, say, have just finished school or university, snapping a job up in the regional tourism industry is a great gap year adventure. I think that would be a great thing for people to do. So many people potentially looked to do that overseas in the past but those opportunities are not there. We have got a great diverse, broad state where some wonderful experiences can happen. I think there is endless potential for people to work in the morning and spend the rest of the day at the beach or seeing sights, or vice versa if that is more to their taste.

Give it a Go job seekers will be entitled to a \$300 discount to get to their employment destination with Greyhound Queensland. The Working in Queensland Whimit pass will be valid for 90 days and will be available for purchase until 31 January 2021 at \$399. There is the plug and ad for Greyhound, but that is a big discount that they have partnered with us on. In addition, Queensland Rail's Regional Workforce fare will offer 60 per cent off one-way fares for travel along the coast from Brisbane up to Cairns. This offer will be available for purchase until 31 January 2021 as well.

To qualify for those discounted offers—as committee members get this word out—workers will need evidence of a job offer in Queensland's tourism industry. That will help get them to where they need to go. As I have said, Queensland boasts some of the world's greatest tourism experiences, and this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the sights of the Sunshine State and get paid for it at the same time. It is a great opportunity to get out there and have that experience.

Equally, it is not just for young people. I think there will be a lot of older workers who may have been displaced out of other industries or indeed might see this as an opportunity for a soft entry to retirement to get out there and have some experiences. There are housekeeping jobs and hospitality jobs in the front line. There are a whole range of jobs that there is great demand for right across the state.

CHAIR: That older worker thing does sound enticing, but I have made a commitment to the Premier and I will stick through the four years. I will have to turn my back on the offer but you were doing a good sales job. With reference to volume 1 of the Service Delivery Statements in relation to building and maintaining relationships with key international investors to create opportunities for inbound investment, will the minister provide an update on the progress of the international student arrival plan?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair. I know this is a very hot topic right throughout Queensland and a few particular parts of Queensland. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this question.

In relation to the state's plan for returning students—and in recognition of the importance of this sector and its impact on the broader economy—I confirm that last week Study Queensland submitted a draft Queensland student arrival plan to the Queensland Student Arrival Working Group which includes representatives from the federal government. New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have submitted draft plans. I understand that Victoria and South Australia are still working on their draft plans. This follows the Premier writing to the federal minister for education, Dan Tehan, on 30 November noting that the Queensland government is willing to work with the federal government to develop a Queensland student arrival plan for the safe return of international students in the future.

A significant amount of work has already been undertaken by the sector which can go towards finalising the plan and the significant logistics needed to ensure the timely, safe and efficient return of students to Queensland. As the Premier has said publicly on a number of occasions, this is on the basis of mandatory hotel quarantine for students returning to Queensland. I remind the committee that the state borders reopened only last Tuesday, and this was one of the preconditions that the federal government had on accepting a plan. The Palaszczuk government is eager that any border return of international students will be informed by the outcomes of the industry-led pilot program in the Northern Territory which has been supported by the federal government as well.

The return of international students to Queensland on charter flights will be in addition to repatriation of Australians. That is important to understand and note. Additional charter flights will also allow extra capacity for return of Australians, with the potential for Australians to fill gaps on student flights. This is not an either/or thing; it is in addition to. It creates potential for even more Australian return flights. But equally, it is important to note that there is also significant opportunity for increased freight export for the return leg of these student charter flights. One of the challenges that has been faced by so many industries in Queensland has been a reduction in international flights that has damaged their export logistics. The federal government has said that it will only consider further international student arrivals for 2021 if a satisfactory number of Australians have been returned by Christmas. We are very keen to understand and see that that occur as well.

Prior to the pandemic, international education and training was Queensland's largest services export sector, contributing some \$5.8 billion. As well as supporting educational institutions and research, the sector generates revenue for the retail, food and accommodation industries and it was estimated to provide more than 27,000 jobs overall in 2019.

This morning, I wrote to all 10 vice-chancellors at Queensland's universities asking them to nominate a representative for the industry working group. I am also convening a video meeting of all 10 vice-chancellors on Wednesday morning while I am at JCU in Cairns to discuss the next steps in Queensland's student arrival plan. There are steps going forward. I look forward to this and to the work that we are doing with the Australian government to see the return of international students to Queensland.

Mrs McMAHON: With reference to page 2-133 of volume 2 of the service delivery statements in relation to advancing Queensland through innovation, will the minister provide an update on the progress of the University of Queensland's COVID-19 vaccine?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Macalister for the question. I note that earlier this year the Premier acted really quickly and backed a possible COVID-19 vaccine. That candidate vaccine is showing promising early signs at the University of Queensland. The Palaszczuk government committed \$10 million in funding through the Advance Queensland Initiative to support UQ to fast-track the development and production of this potential vaccine for COVID-19. Finding a fast, safe and effective vaccine to prevent infection from this coronavirus is an urgent public health priority. Thanks to 20 years of strategic investment under successive Labor governments through Smart State and Advance Queensland, today we are in a position where we can say that Queensland researchers are leading the world in this work.

The University of Queensland is tasked by the global Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) with developing a COVID-19 vaccine. Queensland's vaccine candidate is now only one of five worldwide to have a manufacturing deal with CEPI. Queensland's global biotech leader, CSL Limited, has announced that it has signed an agreement with CEPI and the University of Queensland to manufacture Queensland's vaccine. Further, on 7 September 2020 CSL advised that it has signed a heads of agreement with the Australian government to supply 51 million doses of UQ's COVID-19 vaccine candidate should clinical trials prove successful and the vaccine is proven to be safe and effective for humans. This a major milestone.

A phase one human trial is now underway and is expected to be completed in the coming days. Early data on safety and immune responses from the phase one trial looks promising. I am advised that it has been well tolerated by the volunteers and that the antibodies have been effective in neutralising the virus in lab testing. Should these clinical trials be successful, the UQ COVID-19 vaccine may be available to Queenslanders as early as mid-2021, helping accelerate the return of a strong and productive economy here in this state and beyond.

This vaccine candidate is now one of the most promising in the world, with the potential to save thousands of lives not only in Queensland but across the globe. It goes to show what we already know—that Queensland has some of the world's best medical researchers. It is great to know that Queensland and Australia through UQ and CSL have the skills to develop and manufacture the vaccine to support the current and future clinical trials and, if all goes well, to manufacture the final vaccine in Australia for Australian and global demand.

The development of this vaccine will show the world that Queensland can lead the way in providing global solutions for global markets based on world leading research. One could not think of a more important thing to be a feather in the cap of, as I say, Advance Queensland and its progenitor Smart State.

Mr TANTARI: With reference to page 2-143 of volume 2 of the SDS in relation to Tourism and Events Queensland generating demand by building Queensland's competitive position, will the minister provide an update on the Good to Go campaign?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I know the member for Hervey Bay just cannot get enough of these tourism questions! It is such an important part of his local economy. Last week as the state's border reopened to the southern states, the Palaszczuk government launched a major tourism campaign in Queensland's largest domestic tourism markets of New South Wales and Victoria. The campaign blitz will reach some 8.3 million people in New South Wales and in Victoria. As you all know, tourism is vital when it comes to rebuilding our economy and supporting jobs. We are saying to tourists in New South Wales and Victoria and now also throughout South Australia, 'We want you.' Coronavirus has had a huge impact on our tourism industry and we want you back.

We understand that more tourists means more jobs. This marketing blitz will safeguard jobs and help thousands of tourism industry businesses right throughout the state make the most of that important summer holiday period. But as I know, the member for Hervey Bay will appreciate that the successful intrastate campaign of Good to Go has already driven 11 million visitor nights and pumped

\$1.5 billion into Queensland's economy. I saw that firsthand in Hervey Bay in recent weeks. It is only thanks to the way Queenslanders managed the health crisis that we now are in this strong position and that we are able to welcome back even more tourists for Christmas and right across the summer.

From reef to rainforest and from Coolangatta to the Cape, Queensland really does have something for everyone, and there is nothing better than Christmas and summer holidays in the sunshine state. The campaign is part of more than half a billion dollars that the government has invested in tourism recovery since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. I hope we will see many 'no vacancy' signs right out across this state this summer, especially in regions like Cairns and the Gold Coast that have been hit particularly hard by COVID-19.

Last year Australians spent \$53.8 billion on international trips. I pause and reiterate: \$53.8 billion on overseas trips. This campaign will enable us to tap into that pent-up demand for travel amongst tourists, especially in New South Wales and Victoria. I hope that the campaign will inspire interstate visitors to stay longer and spend more in Queensland. We are already seeing some indication of bookings that are for more than five days. It is not just the weekend trips. It is really good to see that the campaign is showcasing the breadth of experiences that are on offer in Queensland and encouraging that longer stay in place of an international holiday. People having a chance to visit and spend time right across the whole of the state is really important. We know that Queensland is one of the world's favourite holiday destinations. This is an opportunity for more Australians to experience that. As they have been dreaming of their summer holiday, this is the place for them to have it.

CHAIR: I will do my best at the break over Christmas, Minister.

Mr MANDER: Minister, my question is about the Gabba naming rights. I note your response today to question on notice No. 5. I thank you for that. It has been 21 months since the government launched the EOI process for the Gabba naming rights. I see the explanation with regard to why it has not been announced yet. When can we expect an announcement of the successful proponent?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Everton for his question. As the member will be aware—I know that he pays attention—recommendation 5.3 of the Stadium Taskforce interim report in 2018 provided that the naming rights to the Gabba be put out to tender, subject to retaining 'Gabba' in the stadium name. It was suggested by the Stadium Taskforce that selling naming rights to the venue would reduce the need for taxpayer subsidy and allow investment in ageing infrastructure, including turnstiles and facilities.

In response to the recommendation Stadiums Queensland undertook an 11-month, three-stage tender process to secure naming rights for the Gabba. This process concluded in early 2020 with a proponent identified. KPMG, Queensland Treasury Corporation, Queensland Treasury and the former Department of Housing and Public Works assisted at different stages of the tender process, with DHPW and Queensland Treasury involved at all stages.

An independent probity auditor, OCM, was engaged along with the independent transaction manager from Axiom Project Services Pty Ltd. Stadiums Queensland engaged Nielsen Sports, a global leader and independent adviser in sports intelligence and measurement, to complete an evaluation of the naming rights benefits. While details around the naming rights proposal remain commercial-in-confidence, discussions with an identified proponent are ongoing. The outcome of the Gabba naming rights process is currently for consideration by the Queensland government and will be assessed as part of broader government deliberations.

The sporting and entertainment worlds remain in a state of flux amid the global pandemic. That will be a key consideration in terms of progressing any arrangement for all the parties concerned. You can understand that we might not be in the position where we will be rushing this right now. We want to continue to work with any potential proponent and assess global circumstances as we go forward.

Let's not miss this opportunity to celebrate what the Gabba achieved over the last few months—

Mr MANDER: That is fine, Minister. I am aware of what has been achieved. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I might get there when you ask the next question!

CHAIR: Was there a point of order? I missed that.

Mr MANDER: Just a subsequent question.

CHAIR: Had you completed your answer, Minister?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I am alright.

Mr MANDER: Chair, you said you were not paying attention.

CHAIR: I did notice that the minister was continuing his answer and then there was noise over there that I assumed was a point of order, but the minister is willing to yield the floor.

Mr MANDER: Minister, how much did that EOI process cost the Queensland taxpayer? It has happened over the last 21 months.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I refer that matter to the acting director-general.

Mr Lee: I do not have the exact details on what an EOI process cost, but I will take that on advisement and try to get back to you before the end of the hearing tonight.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. I appreciate that.

CHAIR: I just note the standing orders with regard to that.

Mr MANDER: Minister, has the \$35 million that was committed by the state government towards the Gabba now been fully expended?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The \$35 million upgrade that the member for Everton refers to was recently completed at the venue—ahead of the AFL grand final that was held on 24 October 2020 which was the culmination of the way in which that venue achieved some really outstanding things over the past few months. We saw that world-class venue host an incredible 35 AFL games this year—more than three times the number of games experienced in any normal season pre COVID-19. It is an amazing achievement. I want to say thank you on behalf of all Queenslanders to the staff at the Gabba for the way they maintained the field and did so alongside the completion of the upgrades that were being undertaken around that famous facility. To see it perform the way it did and deliver those 35 AFL games this year was extraordinary. While I am noting that, I also want to acknowledge the team that supported another member of the Stadiums Queensland stable in Metricon Stadium for the way it delivered an extraordinary number of games this season.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the acting director-general. Do the department or any of the department's statutory bodies, or previous versions of the department, currently have contracts with Newgate Australia?

Mr Lee: I will attempt to answer the question obviously as I am currently taking leave of absence from that organisation. From the research I have undertaken in starting in the department and creating the department, I can confirm that none of the statutory bodies or the component divisions that make up Tourism, Innovation and Sport have any contracts with Newgate.

Mr MANDER: Acting Director-General, could you advise how much you were reimbursed for chairing the Stadium Taskforce?

Mr Lee: Yes. Thank you for the question. That is a matter that I think goes back more than two financial years, so that amount is not before me as we are here tonight but I think it is publicly available.

CHAIR: You think it is publicly available?

Mr Lee: I would say it would be, from previous estimates hearings.

Mr MANDER: So can you save me looking it up?

Mr Lee: No.

Mr MANDER: Fair enough. Acting Director-General, considering your previous role with Newgate, can you provide the probity advice you received to manage a potential or perceived conflict of interest?

Mr Lee: I think it would help the committee if I gave a more detailed answer—and thank you for the warm welcome to the committee! As a former CEO of a number of NRL clubs and some Olympic sports I have worked extensively in mainly the private sector in the last decade. In the last two years I have worked for—I have now taken leave from—Newgate Communications. During that time, at no stage have I ever performed the role of lobbying. My role has always been as an adviser to government. For example, this year I have advised the Australian Tax Commissioner, Chris Jordan, on matters relating to the ATO and some issues they have had. I can confirm that Newgate Communications is a supplier on the whole-of-government standing offer arrangement and it has participated in some select tenders for that work and also for work this year in the COVID task force.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Mr Chairman, I have a question to the minister. Minister—

Mr Lee: Just before the member asks that question, that was the generality. The specific question was around integrity commission advice. I am aware that the Premier sought advice from the Integrity Commissioner before an approach was made for me to become the acting director-general.

On being approached to take on that acting role, I contacted the Integrity Commissioner and I have responded to the Integrity Commissioner based on the questions that she had. You will also find available on the Public Service Commission my declaration of interests which make it very clear that I have removed any perception or real conflict of interest to be able to undertake this role. I have also provided a copy of that to the minister.

CHAIR: I turn to the member for Broadwater.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Minister, the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016-2020 will become obsolete this month. When will a replacement plan be released?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: For a start, I want to say that the Palaszczuk government will always work towards developing ecotourism opportunities that are ecologically sustainable and that are aimed at delivering environmental and social benefits to traditional owners and to communities right across Queensland. Let me make it really clear that ecotourism is not tourism activities in ecologically sensitive places; it is tourism opportunities and experiences that support a sustainable outcome. Sometimes those things seem to get confused by some people, so ecotourism and the Ecotourism Strategy are very important.

The strategy that the member for Broadwater has referenced is a Department of Environment and Science led strategy, so I do not have the detail of that before me now. While it is a whole-of-government framework for delivering adventure and nature based tourism experiences—and that balance, as I said, is really important, that is that protection of natural and cultural heritage with tourism activities and benefiting communities, including traditional owners—under the plan there are a whole lot of different partnering projects that are going on to deliver iconic tourism facilities and experiences throughout Queensland such as the Queensland Ecotourism Trails Program. There have been a number of those that have been completed recently like the Scenic Rim Trail in the Main Range National Park and the Green Mountains camping area in Lamington National Park, and they are both already in very high demand. There are others that are in progress.

In terms of where the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016-2020 is going, I respectfully suggest that later during the estimates period there will be an opportunity for committee members on the appropriate committee to direct those questions to Minister Scanlon, but I can assure members of this committee that I stand ready to work closely with Minister Scanlon and her team to deliver on what are genuine ecotourism experiences that preserve and protect community resources and their natural and cultural values for future generations while delivering value to our very important tourism sector. Ecotourism is and is going to have to be a part of the way in which we rebuild better in the tourism sector. I know that the member for Broadwater is very passionate about this and I am keen to tap into his knowledge and his understanding in order to achieve good outcomes for Queensland. However, I reiterate that ecotourism genuinely needs to be ecotourism, not tourism in ecologically sensitive areas, as some people seem to think it is.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I have a follow-up question to the minister, and I am going to turn to some of those examples because there has been that tension between the departments as to why things have not happened. In February this year former minister Jones stated that the Cooloola Great Walk would be completed in late 2020, yet here we are. Will the minister please advise the committee whether construction will still be completed this year?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The Cooloola Great Walk, which runs from Noosa North Shore through to Cooloola through to Rainbow Beach, is one of the projects that has been identified. We are really committed to it and others like the Wangetti Trail, the Ngaro Walking Track and the Paluma to Wallaman Falls Trail. All of those are ones that I know have had challenges and continue to have challenges. In terms of the Cooloola Great Walk, I might seek some assistance through the acting director-general to provide a more specific response in terms of the time frames on that particular project.

Mr McAlister: For the Cooloola walk in Great Sandy National Park, it is still on track for delivery in mid-2022. We have a preferred operator which is CABN. You might have seen that announcement.

Mr CRISAFULLI: The former minister's statement was that it was to be completed in 2020. The former minister also said that the business case for Paluma to Wallaman would be completed by late 2020 and the former minister also said that a contract winner to deliver low-impact accommodation from the Thorsborne Trail would be announced shortly. That was in February last year. Could you update the committee on the progress across those three?

CHAIR: Generally questions should be short and direct with limited numbers of points. There were a number of points there. I do not know if you followed that completely. If you did—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I understand where the member for Broadwater is going. I understand his point about statements that have been made in the past. Some of those statements were made in the past before we were dealing with a global pandemic. In particular, let me make this very clear: in relation to a number of these projects, the key stakeholder group with which these projects have been worked through has been First Nation people. We need to be very clear that First Nation people were not only, according to the medical advice, some of the communities in our state that were at most grave risk from the impact of the global pandemic; they were also identifying themselves as being very concerned about that.

If anyone understands the history of the impact of viruses like this one and others that have preceded them, historically it is our First Nation people who have borne the brunt terribly from global and localised health issues like this one. As a consequence, there have been a number of stakeholder engagement processes and consultation processes that have been even more greatly disadvantaged than other stakeholder engagement processes right throughout the state because First Nation people have been very reluctant to have broader engagements and people from outside of their own communities come and meet with people in person with lesser access to other alternative ways of engagement. This has had a significant impact on these projects, like some others which have involved engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

CHAIR: The member for Mirani has a question.

Mr ANDREW: On page 132 in volume 2 of the Service Delivery Statements at dot point 6 it states—

support Queenslanders to be more physically active, healthier and better connected while also supporting elite athletic success.

I bring to your attention Brewers Park in Sarina. The government made a plan in 2012 for the completion to be done in 2022. There are four stadiums now going up, two in Rockhampton and two in Mackay, two of which are 400 metres apart, and nearly \$74 million already being spent on the three stadiums now being built or being added to. When will Brewers Park be completed, because we have kids there who cannot go and change in private and have to urinate behind trees and vehicles?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I acknowledge the member for Mirani's question and thank him for raising this issue. In terms of community sporting facilities right throughout the state, as I alluded to earlier, we are faced by a huge challenge of overwhelming demand and not necessarily the same capacity to meet all of that demand in terms of improved facilities.

I want to correct some of the misapprehensions that the member is under in relation to stadia, which are a different beast to community sports facilities. I think the member seems to be under the impression that there are two stadia in Rockhampton being proposed. There are two separate proposals. I can assure the member that only one will ever get up. It will either be Browne Park, where it should be and where the Queensland government has identified and committed funds for it to be delivered, and not Victoria Park which is a proposal proposed by some people associated with the Australian government—not with full funding, I should add.

I am very aware of both venues. When I was growing up I used to visit my grandmother's home a lot, which was within less than a kilometre of both locations. Victoria Park I can assure you goes under water very, very regularly; Browne Park does not. Browne Park is the preferred location. There will not be two stadia there. I can assure the member that will never happen. That will never happen. There will be, with the support of this government and hopefully other levels of government coming to their senses, a redevelopment of Browne Park, the traditional home of Rugby League in Rockhampton. As a consequence there will be a great rectangular stadium in that city that will cater for a range of sports and I think that is an outcome that is entirely appropriate and will be taken advantage of by constituents of the member for Mirani in a major way, I am very, very sure. He will have a large number of constituents who will be very excited about that prospect.

In terms of the issues that he raises with the community sports facilities, that is where we need to continue to work on making sure we have the right systems and the right ways of assessing and providing support for community sports facilities. We have made a commitment in this budget to a range of community sports facilities that will improve access for people to participate in sport and recreation. As someone who has been intimately involved in community sport and community activity throughout my life, I am very keen to see that continue as we go forward over this next four years and beyond and that we can make sure that we see great facilities being improved in cooperation and engagement with communities throughout the length and breadth of the state.

Mr ANDREW: We just wanted to see the 2022 commitment taken. The bike trail for—

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, the time allocated for the opposition members has expired for now. I can try to get back to you. I have been commanded to ask questions by the Deputy Chair.

Mr STEVENS: I am trying to help him.

CHAIR: I spent a great afternoon at Browne Park at the Central Queensland Rugby League grand final and I would love to see it developed.

Mr MANDER: You've never refereed there! It's a dump!

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I take that interjection. I want to get that on the record to make sure Rockhampton people know what the member for Everton thinks of them.

Mr MANDER: That's why it should be at Victoria Park.

CHAIR: I think it was very atmospheric on the afternoon, but I would love to see it improved with some great investment. I did not think it was a dump though. In relation to volume 2 of the Service Delivery Statements outlining the service area highlights of tourism industry development, can the minister update the committee on the Palaszczuk government's \$74 million election commitment to rebuild Queensland tourism?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair. I really do appreciate the opportunity to reiterate what we are doing to back tourism and back it into the future, not just through the challenges that it has been experiencing but, as I say, to make sure that we rebuild Queensland's tourism industry even better.

Knowing and appreciating how hard the sector has been hit by the global pandemic, we committed \$74 million in the Rebuilding Queensland Tourism commitment aimed at fast-tracking the restoration of jobs and the broader economic recovery of the tourism industry in this great state. I am pleased to advise the committee that we will deliver, just to reiterate, \$20 million for a Tourism Activation Fund. We will work with the tourism industry and tourism industry councils to activate tourism experiences right across the state. There is \$15 million for a marketing blitz to encourage travellers to experience Queensland—and we have made some references to some of that already—and \$20 million for an events boost to secure more events for Queensland to support the It's Live! in Queensland major events calendar. I think that has been a great success over a long period of time, but particularly over the last number of months we have seen it come into its own to help overcome some of the challenges we have experienced. That includes \$14 million for major events and, as I said earlier, \$1.5 million a year for business events. We all know that events play an important role in building our communities and boosting local communities. The Palaszczuk government is focused on securing more events and this boosting will ensure that this happens. We will also invest \$15 million in our Regional Tourism Organisation Fund. This is a special one-off funding injection in our regional tourism organisations and will assist each of the 13 RTOs to target and attract new visitors.

We will also invest \$4 million to deliver business capability training and futureproofing for the industry. This investment builds on previous funding committed by the Palaszczuk government for capability building within the industry. We are partnering with tourism businesses so that they are set for success now and into the future. The Queensland Tourism Industry Council chief executive, Daniel Gschwind, welcomed this commitment during the election and welcomed the way it was delivered in the budget last week. He said—

The funded initiatives are aligned with the QTIC election priorities ... The focus is on stimulating investment, attracting airlines, events and visitors. It also delivers substantial additional support for Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and an element of capability building, which is close to our work. In addition, there is support for additional Great Barrier Reef initiatives with direct relevance to tourism. Speaking more generally about other things in the budget within government he went on—

In addition, there is support for additional Great Barrier Reef initiatives with direct relevance to tourism. He went on to say—It must be acknowledged that the Queensland Government did provide considerable crisis support for tourism operators over this year which made an enormous difference to the viability of thousands of businesses in our industry.

This is an opportunity for me to reiterate that the government will always support the Queensland tourism industry because we know that supporting tourism also means supporting jobs.

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

Mrs McMAHON: With reference to page 138 volume 2 of the Service Delivery Statements, in relation to total expenses listed for 2020-21, will the minister provide an update to the commitment to the Sunshine Coast Stadium?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for Macalister for her question because I know that she is a passionate Rugby League person like so many on the committee and over on this side of the table as well. The Palaszczuk government's budget for regional sport infrastructure

does include \$20 million for stage 1 of the Sunshine Coast Stadium and its much anticipated expansion. During the COVID pandemic, Queensland became the epicentre for Australian sport, hosting the Melbourne Storm, and that is particularly relevant obviously to the Sunshine Coast Stadium, but also Super Netball, the WNBL and the AFL bubble.

This year the Sunshine Coast Stadium has been put to the test, being the temporary home ground for the Melbourne Storm or, as I think some people like to refer to them, the 'Sunshine Coast storm' premiers when they relocated to the Sunshine Coast in mid-June due to the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Victoria. The Storm played six home fixtures at the Sunshine Coast Stadium this year, with a Sunshine Coast Stadium site-specific COVID safe plan, approved by Queensland Health's Public Health Unit.

After proving its capacity to host events on the national stage and proving Queensland's sporting infrastructure is up there with Australia's best, it is now the Sunshine Coast Stadium's time to shine. The expansion of the Sunshine Coast Stadium will ultimately boost spectator capacity from 10,000 to 25,000 people, including an additional 10,000 in fixed seating and a further 5,000 people to watch from the hills at the northern and southern ends. It sounds like a beautiful place to enjoy Rugby League, Chair, as you clearly do, as well as other sports.

The project will not only transform the stadium; it will further strengthen the Sunshine Coast's emerging position as a sporting, entertainment and tourism destination in Australia, which is something that more broadly we are keen to see. Expansion will open the Sunshine Coast to more top-tier sporting events and training, plus music extravaganzas such as the two Elton John concerts held in March. Stage 1 of the Sunshine Coast Stadium expansion will deliver millions more dollars for the local economy and 150 jobs during conjunction. The Palaszczuk government's \$20 million commitment to the Sunshine Coast Stadium is a great example of investment in capital infrastructure to drive economic recovery, providing jobs and positive flow-on benefits to the local economy.

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council, the owners of the stadium, has announced it will contribute \$28 million to the \$68 million cost of stage 1. The stadium upgrade is shovel ready, but we need the federal government to clear the last hurdle to match the state's \$20 million. Last week I wrote to the federal minister for sport, Senator Richard Colbeck, seeking a federal government commitment of \$20 million to match the Palaszczuk government's commitment. I really urge the federal government to confirm it will support the stadium's expansion and create those 150 jobs on the Sunshine Coast just in the construction stage, let alone the jobs bonanza going forward. This important expansion will provide the capability to stage national sport events and large entertainment events, with the Sunshine Coast Stadium servicing a catchment population of more than one million people, as Mayor Mark Jamieson always reiterates to me when he talks about this and other major projects.

Mr TANTARI: With reference to page 2-135 of volume 2 of the Service Delivery Statements and the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund, can the minister please provide an update on the fund?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for staying doggedly at these tourism questions. The Palaszczuk government has delivered record investment in tourism infrastructure. On 19 May 2020, the Premier announced the Queensland economic recovery strategy, Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs, which outlines the Palaszczuk government's guiding principles for how we will get Queenslanders back to work. It is no surprise that tourism is front and centre in this strategy.

The first stage of recovery initiatives included an additional \$25 million injection into the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund to fast track the development of new and improved shovel-ready projects. We know that those projects will strengthen Queensland's tourism industry and deliver economic benefits. It is no surprise that the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund was highly oversubscribed. We received 273 project registrations in June this year. I am pleased to update the committee that 22 projects were successful in receiving funding through the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

Here is a snapshot of the projects. They include the Crocarena at Port Douglas, with enclosures for crocodiles, a presentation platform, stadium seating and the ability for guests to dive in. That sounds interesting. Paronella Park at Mena Creek on the Cassowary Coast has funding for a new amenities block and infrastructure. That is a very popular location and a very popular attraction in Far North Queensland.

The Southport Yacht Club was successful in receiving funding for the development of a superyacht berthing facility, which will add significantly to infrastructure on the coast. I am sure the Gold Coast members of the committee, such as the member for Mermaid Beach and the member for Coomera, will be pleased to see that investment on the Gold Coast.

On the Sunshine Coast I am sure the member for Ninderry knows that we are investing in tourism. Through this fund we have delivered funding to Aussie World for a new roller-coaster attraction and supporting infrastructure. I saw that being constructed only a couple of weeks ago. There is amazing progress on that new roller-coaster attraction. I am sure the member for Ninderry will line up to be one of the first to on that roller-coaster.

CHAIR: We would love to see the photo that they take at the end of the ride.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The Bellingham Maze will get funding for a new children's reality maze and nature based playground, including an observation deck. Adam Cheshire from Bellingham Maze was full of praise, when I was speaking to him at Aussie World. I am hoping to get back to the Bellingham Maze personally soon. Adam was full of praise for the funding program. He said—

Thanks so much for providing us with such an a-maze-ing opportunity—

You have to get the pun there, Mr Chair—

CHAIR: It has been a long day, Minister.

Mr MANDER: If you have to explain it then it is not a very good one.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: He continued—

to grow our business and further contribute to the Sunshine Coast tourism experience. It is difficult to express how grateful both Robyn and I are and how excited we are to get underway in turning our vision into a reality.

They are a very impressive young couple who have turned that business around. They have made it grow already and are taking advantage of these opportunities to make it grow even further. These investments right across Queensland aim to unlock the full potential of Queensland's natural assets and our tourism drawcards. The future really is bright for the Queensland tourism industry. In this role, I look forward to seeing all 22 new Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund projects come online over the next year.

CHAIR: 'A-maze-ing'—I see!

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I hope you can find your way out when you get there, Chair.

CHAIR: Not tonight I wouldn't. With reference to page 2-135 of the Service Delivery Statements and the Growing Indigenous Tourism in Queensland Grant Fund, can the minister please inform the committee of the types of Indigenous infrastructure projects that will be supported across the state?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you for your interest in this really important part of the way in which we can develop our tourism product. The Palaszczuk government is committed to enhancing Indigenous tourism across Queensland by providing funding for the development of products and experiences. The \$7 million Growing Indigenous Tourism in Queensland Grant Fund was announced to coincide with the Year of Indigenous Tourism 2020. The fund will support the development of new and sustainable Indigenous tourism products and experiences to help showcase the culture and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have partnered with Aboriginal corporations, traditional owner groups, prescribed body corporates, Indigenous businesses and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils.

I am pleased to inform the committee that nine Indigenous projects will be funded through the Growing Indigenous Tourism in Queensland Grant Fund. Four projects are in Tropical North Queensland. A funding contribution of \$1 million towards the Thursday Island Tourism Information and Business Centre has been allocated. There is \$250,000 towards the Kowanyama Visitor Camping and Tours Pilot. There is a very precise \$981,748 towards the Olkola Cultural Knowledge Centre in the shire of Cook. There is \$950,000 for the Saltwater Club First Nations Maritime Cultural Heritage Adventures and Experiences. I am really looking forward to meeting with the proponent there and seeing the progress on that project in Cairns later this week.

The projects continue. In the Bundaberg region, the Gidarjil Development Corporation will receive \$490,000 for the Mon Repos Cultural Tourism Project. In the Fraser Coast region, which I know the member for Hervey Bay will be very interested in, the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation will receive \$877,000 to provide a range of cultural experiences for visitors to K'Gari, otherwise known as Fraser Island. I acknowledge that the Butchulla people and all people who have a great interest in K'Gari are very concerned about the devastating impacts of the fire at the moment. Through the member for Hervey Bay, I pass on my best wishes. I was speaking to the CEO of Fraser Coast Tourism & Events today, as I mentioned earlier. He was talking me through some of the challenges experienced there and some of the good things that are going on as well.

As we keep coming down the coast, we get to the Sunshine Coast region. Again the member for Ninderry will be pleased to hear that we will be providing Saltwater Eco Tours with \$297,500 towards an historic timber sailing vessel in order to launch and promote an open-water Indigenous sailing experience, which will be the first of its kind in Queensland.

In the Southern Queensland country region, there is \$542,826 to be provided to assist with the establishment of the Bonye Biar Bush University, and in the outback, \$1 million will be provided to create The Fringe Camp @ The Dolly in Barcaldine. Chair, you will be interested in that. You are a regular visitor to the Barcaldine like myself.

We want to ensure Queensland is attracting high-value visitors, and visitors demand new tourism experiences all the time. We know that by investing in these new Indigenous tourism infrastructure projects, we will be creating those new experiences and experiences that are aligned with where the demand is growing. Queensland can indeed be a leader in Indigenous tourism experiences and our programs in partnership with Indigenous Queenslanders will take our tourism offering to new heights. I really commend those projects to the committee and look forward to seeing more of them personally.

Mr TANTARI: With reference to page 135, volume 2 of the Service Delivery Statements, there is mention of the \$25 million Queensland Tourism Icons Program. Can the minister please provide an update to the committee on how the program has assisted tourism icons across the state during COVID-19?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The reality is that, as I have just mentioned, some of those emerging new products—through the challenges of the pandemic, some of our most well-known and most beloved tourism products were under great financial stress and risk. That is where our Queensland Tourism Icons Program which allocated \$25 million for urgent financial support to some of those largest and most significant tourism businesses was really needed as well. It was vital for these businesses to survive the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. You have to remember these are some of the biggest employers in our tourism industry. Our response was swift to ensure that the Queensland tourism industry was placed in a viable position for when the visitor economy recovered. The Palaszczuk government's goal was to sustain employment, stimulate jobs and to ensure a flow-on effect with those economic businesses right throughout the supply chain that these major products are a big part of.

I can inform the committee that the 12 major Queensland tourism operators invited to apply were Village Roadshow Queensland, including Movie World, Sea World, Wet'n'Wild and Paradise Country; Ardent Leisure Group—Dreamworld; Australia Zoo, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary; Aussie World; SEA LIFE Sunshine Coast; Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary; Freeman Corporation, which includes Hartley's Crocodile Adventures, Cairns, Birdworld Kuranda and Kuranda Koala Gardens; Quicksilver Cruises; Experience Co, which runs various North Queensland reef and adventure tourism operations; Skyrail Rainforest Cableway; and CaPTA Group, the owner of four Cairns tourism operations.

Additionally, an allocation of \$3 million within the \$25 million was set aside for outback tourism operators. Through this tourism icon program, we consulted with Outback Queensland Tourism Association, and 17 outback tourism operators received some funding, including the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, Australian Age of Dinosaurs, the Qantas Founders Museum, Waltzing Matilda Centre, the Birdsville Hotel and the Birdsville Bakery. This funding was warmly received by outback operators.

Ivor Davies, the managing director of Undara Experience said, 'The Queensland Tourism Icons Program grant has been the most significant step in kick-starting our improvements program and for that we are very grateful.' Glenda Daly, the general manager of Cobbold Gorge said, 'We are thrilled to be chosen as recipients of the Queensland Tourism Icons funding.' Debbie Gleeson, Acting Manager of the Australian Workers Heritage Centre said, 'Our organisation is certainly extremely grateful for the marvellous support shown by the Queensland government and all involved in the designing and implementation of same at such short notice. It has been a tremendous boost to the Australian Workers Heritage Centre and I am sure I can say all the outback tourist attractions in receipt of the grant funding.'

It is really important that we saw those tourism icons thrive and continue to deliver memorable and enjoyable experiences and stay open and ready for the growth back of the visitor economy.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Acting Director-General, when announcing \$5.5 million for pontoons at Howard Smith Wharves, former minister Jones stated, 'This new river terminal will mean you can have a drink or something to eat at a restaurant, jump on a boat and be relaxing at an island within 40 minutes.' What advice was provided to the minister to base the 40-minute claim on?

Mr Lee: I think that matter has been corrected on the public record.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Acting Director-General, in 2017 there was a commitment of some \$25 million to deliver infrastructure on Great Keppel Island. How much of that money has been spent to date?

Mr Lee: I seek your indulgence while I get the brief, thanks.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I can talk about it immensely.

Mr CRISAFULLI: No, but I have other questions I can go to the minister with while that is coming forward.

CHAIR: Sure, that will be good. You are addressing questions to the minister, member for Broadwater?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes.

CHAIR: We are still holding that question in abeyance.

Mr CRISAFULLI: On 9 July, previous minister Jones committed to developing a code of conduct for short-term letting. Has this code been developed?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In relation to the short-term letting issue, the work that has gone on across a range of stakeholders ultimately identified that the best course of action was for local governments to be the determinants of how those matters were dealt with. As a consequence, we have seen some responses that have been quite helpful and responsive to the nature of local communities' issues and concerns. It was a really complex balancing act that was sought to be achieved through some sort of one-size-fits-all approach, but frankly that did not end up working. As all the stakeholders involved continued to get into that work, it became clear that not only did operators not want the additional red tape but also there were really different attitudes in different regions. As a consequence, as I am sure the member for Broadwater as a former local government minister would appreciate and as I can say as a former local government minister, local communities like to have as much as possible local solutions. That was ultimately the outcome of the engagement process that happened across industry, councils and other agencies: from a state's point of view, that was the best way of resolving things.

Several Queensland councils already have solutions in place to meet the local challenges related to this form of holiday accommodation. A very particular one is the Noosa council, which has put in place arrangements that best act to balance this complex set of issues. Using their relevant local authority, their powers and their ability to consult with industry and local communities, they have achieved an outcome on that that did not necessitate a statewide, point-in-time, blanket regulation.

As a consequence, such an inflexible statewide set of measures for short-term accommodation letting providers is not now being considered by the Queensland government. We will consider re-engaging with relevant stakeholders on this matter should that issue continue to come forward as one that we need to respond to. At this point in time, it seems that in those areas where the issue is the most acute councils are dealing with it in very different ways. For instance, the way in which the City of Gold Coast has dealt with these issues is very different to way in which the Noosa Shire Council has dealt with these issues. That seems to be a far more appropriate and responsive way to deal with it rather than a statewide blanket response.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I must commend the minister on his defence. There is a common theme about commitments made that were not followed through so the minister has done very well.

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater, I am disappointed. I know it is late at night and we are getting tired.

Mr CRISAFULLI: It was a compliment, Mr Chairman, I can assure you.

CHAIR: Yes, exactly. It was a comment. We have standing orders that state that you put questions and the minister answers the questions. That is what we are doing today. Do you have a question without a comment?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Yes, indeed. You mentioned before about international students and an important move there. When did the Queensland higher education sector first submit a proposal for an industry COVID safe plan? When was the first submission on that made?

CHAIR: Probably the day after the borders closed.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I suspect that may be the case, Chair. I am not aware of that exact date and that process. I would be happy to call forward an officer from Trade & Investment Queensland's Study Queensland area to respond to that issue.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I would be happy for you to take that on notice. We just need a date.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: We will get back to you before the end of the session. I am not sure whether Shannon Willoughby is here to respond, but we will get that for you.

CHAIR: We will just note that you will get back to us by the end of session with the date.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Perhaps we could deal with the earlier question to the acting director-general.

CHAIR: The earlier question was about Great Keppel.

Mr Lee: As the member would be aware, there is an original commitment for \$30 million. In terms of the two financial years 2017-18 and 2018-19 there were funds expended to the total value of \$3.14 million. For 2019-20 there was another \$781,000. Therefore, that totals \$3.93 million.

For those aware of the matter, it was originally held by Tower Holdings and then there was a transaction that was to occur that had a series of issues and complications. The matter with the lease sits with the Minister for Resources rather than with our department. There have been multiple efforts made to look at the situation. If the quantum of the works is a lot more than that and if the proponent is not going to move forward on that basis then there have been attempts to look at other public interests that will be able to support the island and trips to and from the island.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Acting Director-General, could you give us a breakdown of what \$4 million has been spent on to date?

Mr Lee: I will take that on advisement.

CHAIR: I note the general advisement is that taking questions on notice is directed to the minister.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I have a follow-up to that. In October the member for Keppel committed to investing \$30 million, subsequent to the original \$25 million—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: No, it was an additional \$5 million to make a total of \$30 million.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Sorry, my apologies. It was over and above the original commitment to take it to \$30 million. I look in Budget Paper No. 3 and see only \$20.5 million allocated for project. Could you explain the discrepancy there?

Mr Lee: Again, I would hope to get back to you by the end of the hearing.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will ask a question of the CEO of Tourism and Events Queensland. I refer to the past financial year and the value of grants provided for events that have been cancelled. I understand the complexities with this year. Could you explain the detail of the list of those events which received funding but did not go ahead?

Ms Coddington: A ban on mass gatherings was one of the first COVID-19 related restrictions put in place, limiting gatherings to small numbers and preventing large events from taking place. The directions triggered force majeure clauses in many TEQ's contracts where the event date fell within the period of the ban on mass gathering as well as into the commercial contracts that the event organisers had entered into.

The sudden cancellation of events would likely have led to significant financial losses incurred by the event organisers and have affected their ability to make good on their suppliers, many of them Queensland businesses. Consistent with the recovery programs implemented across governments at all levels, TEQ's approach is to work closely with affected event organisers on their ability to fulfil their contractual obligations to TEQ.

Whilst TEQ considered the individual circumstances of each event when determining whether to make a milestone payment under the event contract, TEQ also ensured that a consistent approach was taken across all events. TEQ's strategy has been to balance its role as custodian of public funds with supporting the Queensland events industry, including Queensland suppliers, through this crisis. Of the 192 events supported by the TEQ in 2019-20, 42 were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Amounts paid to individual events are commercial-in-confidence, as you know, but consistent with our board directive and substantively in recognition of contractual obligations already fulfilled, TEQ estimates the total paid in 2019-20 to events that were scheduled to take place in 2019-20 but cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions was approximately \$7.7 million. That is in the milestone payments prior to the event. As we know, many of the events had to be cancelled at very short notice and a lot of the milestone payments that our contracts are made up of were already delivered on. While there has been a limited number of instances where negotiations have determined it to be unviable for an impacted event to proceed at a later date, the surplus moneys stemming from instances have been relocated to other opportunities.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Could the CEO explain what that quantum is in terms of that financial component? How much of the \$7.7 million was that?

Ms Coddington: The \$7.7 million was payments that were made for events—the milestone payments had been made, but the events could not occur.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Was there are a portion of that money that was clawed back?

Ms Coddington: There was some clawed back.

Mr CRISAFULLI: How much was that?

Ms Coddington: We also had another payment, very similar to the amount of \$7.7 million, that was clawed back and not paid to events that were cancelled and postponed this year.

Mr CRISAFULLI: TEQ's annual report has a graph of overnight visitor expenditure showing Victoria overtaking Queensland as Australia's second largest market. Exactly when did this occur? That is at page 2-143 of the SDS.

Ms Coddington: We look at overnight visitor expenditure in a number of different ways. The total overnight visitor expenditure has exchanged with Victoria over the last few years. We look at our leisure expenditure, which we have more control over—which is our holiday and visiting friends and relatives expenditure. Queensland sits second on that behind New South Wales and has done for many, many years.

Mr O'CONNOR: My first question is to the minister. I will start broadly. In estimates last year, former minister Jones said she was undertaking a review into Advance Queensland. Has this review been completed? I have the *Hansard* if you want a reference.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: We are very proud of the way in which Advance Queensland, which was launched in 2015 as the Palaszczuk government's vision for the future and our investment strategy for a stronger and more diversified Queensland economy, has delivered. It has delivered amazingly for Queensland. As I mentioned earlier, the grounding it has delivered and the support for the University of Queensland vaccine candidate process is based on the way in which Advance Queensland continues to invest in the state. It has been a project all about investing in Queensland's employment—generating new economic opportunities and developing high-value knowledge based jobs for the future and jobs in current industries as well as new industries. It is also about making sure that our traditional strength industries are responsive to changing world circumstances, as this year has demonstrated stronger than just about anyone.

It has delivered some amazing success stories—some \$628 million to back more than 7,200 recipients as at 30 September 2020. They were projects that directly supported close to 25,000 Queensland jobs. They were backing people right across the regions, with more than 60 per cent of the funding recipients located in regional Queensland. These recipients have reported more than 11,000 of the total jobs supported across the initiative.

Mr O'CONNOR: Would the minister like the *Hansard* from the last estimates about the review commitment from the previous minister?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I am establishing the background.

Mr O'CONNOR: We have the 'About' section on the website, but we do not have the review.

CHAIR: I note that that was designed to be disruptive. The minister is being relevant to the answer. I ask that we listen respectfully to the minister. Member for Bonney, I note you were previously on this committee and you know of the good standards we have. I ask that you continue to uphold them.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Advance Queensland has been building a strong innovation ecosystem that is ready to take the next step. Innovation will be the key to our recovery and it will be a big part of our recovery from the pandemic. In this next phase, reviewing how that works is very important. In this next phase of Advance Queensland we will target our efforts to focus on the areas of greatest impact for Queensland—to assist industry to remain competitive in these challenging times and to adopt new technology and fast-track their ability to scale and grow. Advance Queensland is here to support new Queensland jobs in our new economies.

That stands in stark contrast to what we saw under a previous government. The LNP cut more than \$50 million from the Innovation budget. They slashed more than 56 Innovation staff. Those employees were included in the 950 staff that they sacked from the department of science. They cut \$20 million in Smart State grants, \$6 million from the Smart State contingency fund, \$6.4 million from the Business and Industry Transformation Incentives program, \$1.5 million from the 'What's Your Big Idea Queensland?' program and \$6.1 million from the Productivity Hubs program.

In contrast to that sort of record, we know that we will not only deliver, as we have done over the last five years, for innovation in this state but also reinvent it. That is what the review means.

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The opportunities around the review will mean that we will reinvent this to make sure that the established and strengthening innovation ecosystem continues to grow and continues to be supported—not just continue to do the things that we have done to create it but to take it to the next step and to take it further.

Mr Crisafulli: That's a no.

CHAIR: Member for Broadwater, there were continual interjections through that section.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Sorry, he was being so relevant, Mr Chairman!

CHAIR: With respect, I will make a ruling about whether it was relevant. I was closely observing it. He was making comparisons with previous budgets which we have ruled previously are relevant to the discussions we have here. Member for Bonney, do you have a further question?

Mr O'CONNOR: I do, Chair, and I commend the minister for taking two hours to mention a government that left office six years ago. When will the review be completed?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In terms of the review of Advance Queensland and the structures that were created to deliver and develop Advance Queensland, my view is that I want to see that completed by mid-next calendar year. I need to engage more—I have only been in the job 3½ weeks—with that ecosystem and with the stakeholders in order to understand how quickly we can do that. I am keen to get going early in the new year, but I do not want to say that it will be done within weeks or a couple of months. I want to make sure that we crack on and make sure that the changes that we would want to see made—and they are not great—are responsive to the industry and the stakeholders in that industry. I certainly think that by the time we are back here together—which is not all that far away—in an estimates setting that you would well and truly see the results of that review in place.

Mr O'CONNOR: I would like a quick clarification. The review promised at last estimates will be delivered next year.

CHAIR: There you go, member for Bonney. He is already writing your questions for next estimates.

Mr O'CONNOR: I just confirm that the review promised mid last year will be released mid next year.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The review, like so many others that involve significant stakeholder engagement and contact which was affected by the global pandemic, has been in a place where it is entirely appropriate that we now seek to follow that through and engage with the sector. I am now here to do that. That is what I look forward to doing.

CHAIR: Member for Macalister, do you have a question for the minister?

Mrs McMAHON: Minister, page 132 of volume 2 of the SDS refers to our support for Innovation through Advance Queensland. Can you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is investing in Queensland's innovation to back our start-ups?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, member for Macalister. I really appreciate your interest in how the innovation ecosystem is making a difference to Queensland's economy. We have been partnering with start-ups and SMEs to commercialise and scale-up projects with job-creating potential as a priority in our Advance Queensland strategy Building our Innovation Economy.

Since its launch, we have invested \$42.5 million to support some 334 Queensland businesses to scale up. This program has supported businesses from a range of sectors including tourism, agriculture, advance manufacturing, robotics and artificial intelligence, renewable energy and construction. Our latest round of Ignite Ideas will be doing just this. We are investing more than \$3.7 million towards 31 projects as part of round 7. These are exciting projects that harness our innovation potential to make Queensland more competitive in the emerging industries of the global economy.

I can announce that through \$200,000 in Ignite Ideas funding, we are backing Australia's first telemedicine hospital—Docto Health—to develop new technology to assist rural GPs to provide health and prescription advice and joint specialist consultation online. We all know that innovation, health care and hygiene can play its part in supporting our health services and health workforce during a pandemic.

I can also announce that Soul Safe is another Queensland start-up harnessing innovation to help our community during COVID-19. Soul Safe will receive \$100,000 to create their online training platform for businesses and employees to understand infection control and reduce the spread of diseases in the workplace.

Further, I am pleased that we are backing Sunbirds to bring their solar powered drones to the outback to support our farmers in advance land management and aerial mapping. It is a \$100,000 investment towards making work easier and safer for some of Australia's most remote farmers. The project also involves developing a simplified process in obtaining a drone licence. Hopefully people will not say that I need a drone licence after tonight.

The Sunbirds project will not only support graziers but a supply chain of mechanics and engineers who specialise in maintaining unmanned aerial vehicles. We know that Queensland is becoming a national and international hub for drone tech, with our state to be home of the national headquarters of the first Defence Cooperative Research Centre for Trusted Autonomous Systems, which opens in 2018.

Scaling up projects to ensure Queenslanders are creating jobs in the new emerging sectors of the economy is a crucial piece of the Palaszczuk government's plan for our COVID-19 economic recovery, so I am very proud that Ignite Ideas is just one program that is helping Queenslanders break into new markets and create jobs that are defining the global knowledge based economy.

CHAIR: Minister, with reference to page 133 of volume 2 of the SDS and the Office of the Chief Entrepreneur, will the minister provide more information on the role of this office and its benefit to Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The Office of the Queensland Chief Entrepreneur was established in 2016 to support the development and promotion of Queensland's start-up ecosystem. The Office of the Queensland Chief Entrepreneur was an Australian first and has also now been replicated in South Australia. It is a part-time voluntary position on a rotational basis, with the current Chief Entrepreneur being Ms Leanne Kemp. Ms Kemp is the third voluntary Queensland Chief Entrepreneur and the first female Chief Entrepreneur.

In 2019 Minister Jones asked Ms Kemp to extend her term from one year to two years, with that term finishing on 31 December 2020. In Ms Kemp's tenure that role has expanded to liaise with other governments, departments and agencies to support departmental forums, workshops and advice, including suggestions that relate to technology start-ups. Ms Kemp has travelled extensively to the regions of Queensland and met with entrepreneurs right across the whole of the state. I want to thank Ms Kemp for her tenure as Queensland's Chief Entrepreneur over the last two years, as she is finishing up on 31 December and has indicated she does not have time to continue in the role.

In line with the earlier request from the member for Bonney, this is an opportunity—along with other aspects of Advance Queensland—to assess the future model of the Office of the Chief Entrepreneur which should build on the current model's success. It should align and support Queensland's Unite and Recover economic recovery plan, which highlights innovation as an opportunity to build back better for a stronger future. A variety of models are deployed across other jurisdictions, and we should learn from them and adopt beneficial approaches for Queensland. Over the past five years Queensland's innovation system has matured significantly. Early innovation leaders and champions have been joined by a large and growing cohort of innovators, researchers, investors and businesses to create a thriving and exciting sector in Queensland. Our leadership and engagement model should tap into this.

COVID-19 has accelerated the need for innovation to be applied across all sectors, and collaboration between government, corporates, research, start-ups, investors and the community will be key. There are a number of potential options moving forward, which is why in the new year I will begin a process of engagement with the innovation ecosystem in Queensland about what a future model should look like. Early discussions have indicated that an option may be an innovation advisory council consisting of a panel of entrepreneurs and innovation experts who are best placed to advise the Palaszczuk government about how to best to unlock increased potential through innovation in existing industries and where the government is investing heavily; for example, in manufacturing and infrastructure.

I think this is an exciting time. I want to again thank Ms Kemp for her contribution as Chief Entrepreneur. I look forward to the ways in which we will continue to see that role and its inspiration supporting and inspiring the innovation sector.

Mr TANTARI: With reference to page 138 of volume 2 of the SDS and the mention of the Marine Tourism Rebate Scheme, will the minister provide an update on the benefits of the program?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for his question and I acknowledge how important the marine tourism sector is in his local community. The tourism and events industry, as I have said on a number of occasions, is one of the economies most directly and heavily impacted by COVID-19. On 3 September 2020, a \$2 million COVID-19 Marine Tourism Rebate program was announced as part of the North Queensland tourism and events recovery package. Successful eligible applicants are reimbursed up to \$20,000 for 2020-21 berthing fees paid at privately owned marinas. The rebate program opened on 7 September 2020 and will remain open until the program is fully subscribed and funds are expended.

In listening to the marine tourism industry, and to further support our tourism reef operators, I approved an extension to the rebate program that came into effect on 27 November 2020 to include a number of local government areas further along the Great Barrier Reef coastline. I am pleased that over 129 marine tourism businesses in the Whitsundays, Douglas, Livingston and Townsville local government areas have applied, requesting 92 per cent of the available rebate funds.

Many marine tourism operators are unable to resume business until international borders re-open, and those that are operating are doing so with reduced passenger numbers. We have seen that all around the reef the industry supports 64,000 jobs, and tourism is critical to supporting local communities in local government areas right across the whole of that Great Barrier Reef coastline. In the Whitsundays tourism supports one in three jobs, and in Tropical North Queensland tourism supports one in five jobs. This is considerably higher reliance on the tourism sector than other parts of regional Queensland. The Whitsundays, Port Douglas and Cairns are real gateways for visitors to the Great Barrier Reef, and that is why it is very important that we support these marine industries and the operators who are there.

In the year ending December 2019, nearly 1.2 million overnight visitors to Queensland indicated that they wished to visit the Great Barrier Reef on their trip. As international borders are unlikely to re-open in the near future, North Queensland's coastal area may be one of the last to recover its tourism industry to the full extent.

The rebate program directly supports Queensland based maritime tourism businesses operating vessels in those eligible local government areas along the Great Barrier Reef coastline. In order to refine the rebate program, officers from my department engaged with the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, Tourism and Events Queensland and a number of regional tourism organisations along the coastline from the tropical north through to Bundaberg. Equally, the re-opening of the Queensland border has been great news for the maritime tourism industry, but I know there is more news they are looking forward to and want to have as well.

Mrs McMAHON: Minister, with reference to page 142 of volume 2 of the SDS mentioning Queensland's world-class events calendar maximising social and economic benefits for Queensland, can the minister please explain how the Palaszczuk government's support for the Women's National Basketball League played a part in assisting North Queensland's economic recovery?

CHAIR: Hold on! We have to get out of here tonight. If we are going to ask the minister about basketball, we have to warn him to contain himself. Minister, your passion for basketball is well-known, but we have to get out of here tonight.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will start by acknowledging that I know that the member for Macalister has a close interest and great passion in basketball as well. Queensland can be really proud of keeping Australia's sporting passion alive this year. Thanks to our strong health response, Queensland was able to restart so many professional sporting activities and also play host to major national competitions and really blockbuster events. It has been really critical to our economic recovery and helping some of Queensland's regional areas in particular get back on their feet.

We know that major sporting events and competitions can play a significant role in supporting the tourism industry, encouraging visitors to spend more and stay longer in our regions. That is why, as part of our \$11.3 million package to boost Far North Queensland's tourism as part of our economic recovery strategy, we have invested \$3 million towards securing the 2020 WNBL. Having the WNBL in Cairns, Townsville and Mackay has been a great opportunity to support the visitor economy in those areas of North Queensland and Far North Queensland. By partnering with the Cairns, Townsville and Mackay regional councils, the package has enabled our north to lock in the entire season, which has been a great season to follow and watch. There was a really great game between the Southside Flyers and the Melbourne Boomers yesterday.

It means there will be 60 games of the WNBL exclusively for North Queensland across Mackay, Townsville and Cairns, as I have said. We have to acknowledge that this is the second-best league in the world. Women's basketball is a great game and a high-quality and very competitive sport internationally. The WNBL is genuinely the second-best league in the world after the WNBA. I am sure the players and staff from the Townsville Fire have been keen to show off on their home turf to all the players and fans from those other teams—like the Southside Flyers, Melbourne Boomers, Sydney Uni Flames or the Adelaide Lightning, just to name a few of those other teams. I think it has been fantastic to see this support, particularly for elite level women's sport. We have also shown it for netball and the Australian women's cricket team who had some of their events earlier this year here in Queensland.

I look forward to being in Townsville next week for both the semifinals and the grand final. I hope the Fire will be there. It is really true that there has never been such a diversity of professional sport being played in Queensland this year. I know as both the Minister for Sport and the Minister for Tourism that this is something we need to take advantage of and build our profile as a sporting capital to support jobs in tourism and see us bounce back—and, no, that is not a basketball pun.

CHAIR: You only went mildly over time, Minister. I commend you, given the nature of the question. The member for South Brisbane has a question.

Dr MacMAHON: My question is to the acting director-general. Regarding the FairPlay voucher scheme, how many of these vouchers were issued in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 financial years?

Mr Lee: Through the chair, I take that question on advisement and I hope to get back to you before the end of the hearing tonight.

Mr O'CONNOR: I have a quick question and hopefully a simple one for the minister. Does the minister have a private email address and has he ever used it for ministerial business?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes and no.

Mr O'CONNOR: A total of 10 companies in round 3 of Advance Queensland's Hot DesQ program received a grant from the government, including seven foreign companies. What was the total grant amount that these companies received?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: We will make an attempt to get back to you before the end of the session on that.

Mr O'CONNOR: Following on from your last question on Advance Queensland, how many times has the Advance Queensland economic council met over the past financial year?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is again something I will have to get back to you on, obviously not having been directly associated with it. I am sure we can get back to you on that before the end of the session.

Mr O'CONNOR: Do you want to defer to the deputy director-general?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will get back to you before the end of the session.

Mr O'CONNOR: Under Advance Queensland, the University of South Australia has had a \$1.7 million multiyear funding deal to support ambitious CEOs and executives of Queensland firms with high-growth potential to lead their businesses to the next level. Why wasn't this contract awarded to a Queensland university?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is a matter that I might ask the acting director-general to either respond to—although we might need to get the question repeated—or potentially have a deputy director-general come forward and answer.

CHAIR: Do you want the question repeated?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, could you repeat the question.

Mr O'CONNOR: There was a \$1.7 million grant under Advance Queensland to the University of South Australia to support ambitious CEOs and executives of Queensland firms with high-growth potential to lead their businesses to the next level. Why wasn't this contract awarded to a Queensland university?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will ask if the deputy director-general, Dr Sarah Pearson, can answer that.

Dr Pearson: In terms of the contract that went to South Australia, it was considered at the time, and still is, to be one of the best programs in the whole of Australia that delivers this sort of growth program for scale-ups. As you can imagine, it needs to be very, very detailed and very much driven by experts. There was a significant amount of due diligence that was conducted to see where was the best place to be giving us that sort of service, so that is why it was chosen.

Mr O'CONNOR: Can I have a follow-up question?

CHAIR: Certainly. Just direct your question through either the minister or the acting director-general and they may wish to refer it to Dr Pearson if there is too much specific detail that Dr Pearson is better placed to answer.

Mr O'CONNOR: Through the minister, did the department approach any Queensland based institutions as a viable option?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I might ask Dr Pearson to answer that question.

Dr Pearson: Thank you very much for the question. I believe so. We had received excellent feedback from all the Queensland companies that went through this program. Not only did we do our due diligence to see who would be the best to deliver the program, but it also delivered outcomes that the participants really valued.

Mr O'CONNOR: To clarify, were any Queensland based institutions approached—as in universities—instead of going to South Australia?

CHAIR: I thought that question had been answered.

Dr Pearson: I said I believed so, yes.

Mr O'CONNOR: Was that about the participants in the program?

Dr Pearson: I said both. I said that I believed they had.

Mr O'CONNOR: So they took part in the program, some Queensland universities?

Dr Pearson: No, not in the delivery of the program.

Mr O'CONNOR: But were they approached to deliver the program?

Dr Pearson: I believe so, yes.

Mr O'CONNOR: What were the outcomes and when does the multiyear deal end?

CHAIR: That is either directed to the minister—

Mr O'CONNOR: To the minister.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I might ask that Dr Pearson answer that.

CHAIR: Dr Pearson, the question was: how long is the arrangement in place for?

Dr Pearson: Thank you very much for the follow-on questions. It is a program that has now completed. It has done its job and been completed so it is not a continuing multiyear program. Just quickly, back to your question also in terms of how they were selected, it was an open procurement process so it was open to whoever wanted to apply for it and they came out as the best candidates.

CHAIR: The member for Bonney and I share the answer that if the question is university the answer is Griffith, but we might accept that others can do some other things. Does someone else have a question?

Mr O'CONNOR: Can I go back to what I had before?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr O'CONNOR: It is the same question I had before about the most recent round of the Hot DesQ program. The minister wanted to get some more information.

CHAIR: What we have is a process where at the end we get back to the questions. We have set aside time for that that we are hoping to get to. Moving quickly, is there a last question perhaps?

Mr O'CONNOR: I had some follow-ups on that once we get some further information.

Mr STEVENS: My question is to the CEO of TEQ, Ms Coddington. I refer to page 2-143 of the Service Delivery Statements and TEQ's strategy and research service area. What advice has TEQ provided to the Chief Health Officer in relation to Queensland's interstate borders?

Ms Coddington: Thank you for the question. My understanding is we have not provided advice on border issues.

Mr STEVENS: If I may follow that up, you do not provide any advice in relation to the economic impact of border closures to the minister or Premier?

Ms Coddington: TEQ worked with Treasury—I am just checking—in the early stages to estimate the economic impact of COVID-19 on the state, and a value of \$6.5 billion was calculated.

CHAIR: Looking at page 133 of volume 2, will the minister update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is growing the innovation sector's significant job creation potential for Queensland? I am particularly interested in things like Toowoomba ag tech and logistics domestic hub.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It is a key focus of the Palaszczuk government's plan for economic recovery to not just invest in our traditional strengths but investing in emerging industries that present enormous potential for Queensland to create jobs. Agriculture is a multibillion dollar industry that is crucial to our regions. We have really seen it come into its own during the pandemic, and Queensland is home to some of the world's leading experts in agriculture and agricultural technology. Through Advance Queensland, the Palaszczuk government is supporting a new multimillion dollar ag tech and logistics hub in Toowoomba. Our Advance Queensland strategy, Building our Innovation Economy, outlines that by supporting clusters and hubs we can really grow our priority sectors. We know that agriculture and agri tech are key strengths of the Darling Downs region. That is why we are investing \$3 million to deliver an ag tech and logistics hub based in Toowoomba.

The hub will bring together industry, start-ups, SMEs, agribusiness, training providers, supply chains—including manufacturers and investors—to drive productivity, create jobs and stimulate the economy in the Darling Downs and across Queensland's regions. It will give a direct opportunity for start-ups to pitch their ideas in solving a problem faced by agribusiness. The hub will allow the testing of robotics and autonomous technology like drones and support workshops, mentoring programs and industry forums that will help across the board.

It is clear that ag tech and agriculture 4.0 is growing faster than other parts of the economy. If we want regional Queensland to be international leaders in ag tech, we need to double down and bring the best of the sector together. That is why the consortia led by Toowoomba based FKG Group will include industry and university partners as foundation members in the hub.

Chair, I also want to note, as I know we are getting close to the count times, that there is one issue I did want to clarify.

CHAIR: One more question and we will give you time to clarify all of them, or do you want to do this one now?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will do this one now, as I think most of the rest of the clarifications will be done by the Director-General. In response to a question from the member for Everton in relation to the Gabba, I referred to the \$35 million all being expended. I want to clarify now that I got that slightly wrong. It was \$34 million that has all been expended. There is a \$1 million project in relation to upgrades of lifts which is yet to be done. That was held off in the context of that could not all be done while what is going on right now is going on. I suspect that that is one that will happen after the test and the BBL requirements on the stadium over the summer.

Mr TANTARI: With reference to page 133 of volume 2 of the service delivery statements and the mention of support for innovation through Advance Queensland, can the minister update the committee on how Advance Queensland's partnerships with start-ups and businesses is creating new jobs and taking Queensland innovation to the new world?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his question. Through Advance Queensland we are supporting a range of programs to back our innovators, start-ups and SMEs to reach their potential with a vision to ensure Queensland plays a leading role in the challenging global knowledge based economy. Since we launched Advance Queensland in 2015, the Palaszczuk government has invested some \$628 million to help Queensland be more competitive in these high growth sectors of the economy. But more importantly, it means one thing—jobs for Queenslanders for the future.

Since 2015, Advance Queensland has supported close to 25,000 jobs, as I mentioned earlier. I am proud that, of the 7,200 recipients of Advance Queensland support, more than 60 per cent have been based in regional Queensland supporting 11,000 jobs, as I said earlier. This means making it easier for innovators to find investors for businesses to scale up their operations and our universities to work with businesses to solve challenges.

For example, again as I referred earlier, the \$42.5 million Ignite Ideas Fund which has supported some 334 Queensland businesses to scale up their operations, contributing to a stronger Queensland economy creating jobs for the future. The recipients of that include Go1, a home-grown start-up success story mentioned in committee sessions earlier today that I know are greatly supported by the Logan representatives here on the committee. They really are thriving.

Launched in 2015, Go1 is a marketplace with more than 500,000 courses and other learning items created by local and international experts. It started with 19 workers and now employs more than 100 people in Queensland. It has offices in the UK, Malaysia, Vietnam, the United States and South Africa. Today Go1 are recognised as an established leader in online learning and education. It is working alongside some of the largest companies in the world and covering a range of industries and international markets.

Other Ignite Ideas recipients included two-time recipient BiVACOR, the Queensland company which has gone global with its artificial heart device designed to take over the complete functioning of a patient's failing heart. Queensland start-up Gilmour Space Technologies, founded by two brothers in 2013, is now one of Australia's leading space companies, pioneering new and innovative hybrid propulsion technologies that offer lower-cost access to space. There is female founded Lilley Place in Queensland, a Queensland business that committed to providing the best client care in mental health services no matter where you live, using remote therapy services via video and phone consultation. The world is hungry for Queensland innovation, and that is why through Advance Queensland we will back up our start-ups and their ideas to take them from our backyard to the world stage.

CHAIR: Thank you, minister. It is certainly exciting in terms of start-ups. As we are coming to the end of the time allocated for consideration of expenditure of the areas of responsibility for the Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport, I might note that there were some questions that had some detail to be revisited. I believe the acting director-general, Mr Lee, has some feedback for us.

Mr Lee: First, the member for Broadwater was seeking a date for when the higher education COVID-safe plan was submitted for international students. I can confirm that the higher education pilot plan was first submitted on 17 July. Subsequently, there was obviously the outbreak in Victoria that did change how the national cabinet wished to deal with the return of international students. I can confirm that with that proposal being redundant because of the architecture, how it was framed and subsequently what happened with managing COVID, there is now a scaled up, longer-term plan that has been submitted.

In terms of the other question regarding the \$30 million for Great Keppel Island, the member was correct in that \$3.93 million has already been expended. In the forward estimates there is another \$20.5 million. The differential is \$5 million which is allocated through State Development through Building our Regions. That money is set aside there.

There is a correction to make. The member for Everton asked a question regarding the award of \$150,000. We made an error. That was not to Victoria Point Magic; it was actually an allocation awarded to Football Queensland to deliver lights for Meakin Park. That is for the teams that train there. Sorry for that error.

Another matter concerned Fair Play vouchers. I do not have the financial year 2017-18, but for 2019-20 there were 40,530 vouchers redeemed for almost \$6 million. That was for rounds one and two. From 1 July 2020 to 26 November 2020, another 15,141 vouchers have been redeemed under rounds two and three. In total, 4,700 activity providers are registered for Fair Play.

In relation to another question regarding Queensland taxpayer funding towards the Gabba naming rights process—again, I think that was from the member for Everton—the expense breakdown was in total: a digital advertising campaign of just under \$50,000 as part of the advertisement, a printed campaign of just under \$23,000, concept designs of \$13,000, and consulting fees of \$46,000. The total expense for the EOI was \$133,377. All those were incurred not in the financial year just passed but in 2018 and 2019. I think that just about covers it.

CHAIR: We had some questions about how many times Advance Queensland had met. That was just asked very recently so someone might be still in the process of doing that.

Mr Lee: I am sorry, I do have that for the member for Bonney. The Advance Queensland Economic Council was proposed as part of the draft Building Our Innovation Economy, or the Advance Queensland Strategy. This council was not included in the final strategy as alternative methods of engaging and working with industry were preferred through a series of workshops and other methodology.

CHAIR: Lastly, there was a question about the expenditure that had already happened on Great Keppel Island and the breakdown of what was expended.

Mr Lee: During the hearing I gave that answer of the 3.93.

CHAIR: We will look at the transcript. Thank you very much.

Mr O'CONNOR: I asked about the Hot DesQ program.

CHAIR: Very late in the piece there was a question which I do not remember about Hot DesQ.

Mr O'CONNOR: I am happy to repeat it, Chair. A total of 10 companies in round 3 of the Advance Queensland Hot DesQ program received a grant from the government, including seven foreign companies. What was the total grant amount these companies received?

Mr Lee: The total funding, as I understand it—I am trying to read this note. It is like reading a doctor's prescription, no disrespect to the deputy director-general!

CHAIR: Nor, no doubt, to doctors!

Mr Lee: The total funding was \$850,000, of which \$650,000 was for international. That was for 500 applicants across three rounds, with 60 successful start-ups selected over 40 countries and five Australian states. I hope that gives the member what he needs.

Mr O'CONNOR: I would have liked some follow-ups, but that is all right.

Mr Lee: The clock has beaten us.

Mr O'CONNOR: Or the minister not knowing.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. With all of that information we note that there are no questions taken on notice. I take this opportunity to thank the minister, the acting director-general and officials for their attendance. Minister, do you have any final words?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Chair, I thank you, your committee members, the guest members, your staff and all of the parliamentary staff, including Hansard and attendants, for their support. I thank my staff and the departmental team for all the work they have done to bring this together for today.

CHAIR: I take this opportunity to thank all of the parliamentary staff. One of the things that probably goes unnoticed, because it is so good—I thank them every year, because I do notice them—is the audio technicians, as well as Hansard. I also thank Lucy and the secretariat staff. I also take the opportunity to thank the deputy chair. We often do not agree but we do it in reasonably good humour, which helps us get through these things. Thank you to all of the participants today. With that, I conclude the hearing of the estimates of the Economics and Governance Committee for 2020. I thank my fellow committee members. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 9.03 pm.