

FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2020

ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS

Estimate Committee Members

Mr CG Whiting (Acting Chair)
Mr LL Millar
Mr CE Boyce
Ms JC Pugh
Mr LA Walker
Mr TJ Watts
Mr JJ McDonald

Members in Attendance

Mr SJ Minnikin
Dr A MacMahon
Mr MC Berkman
Ms FS Simpson
Mr JP Bleijie
Mr PT Weir
Mr TL Mander

In Attendance

Hon. MC Bailey, Minister for Transport and Main Roads
Ms T Van Alphen, Chief of Staff
Department of Transport and Main Roads
Mr N Scales, Director-General
Queensland Rail Limited
Mr N Easy, Chief Executive Officer
Cross River Rail Delivery Authority
Mr G Newton, Chief Executive Officer

The committee met at 9.00 am.



ACTING CHAIR: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Transport and Resources Committee open. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which our parliament stands and their generations of elders past, present and emerging. My name is Chris Whiting, member for Bancroft, and I am substituting as chair of the committee for today's hearing as Shane King, member for Kurwongbah, is unavailable. The other committee members are: Mr Lachlan Millar, member for Gregory and deputy chair; Mr Colin Boyce, member for Callide; Ms Jess Pugh, member for Mt Ommaney; Mr Les Walker, member for Mundingburra; and Mr Trevor Watts, member

for Toowoomba North. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to ask questions at its hearing today so other members may be present over the course of the proceedings. I welcome the member for South Brisbane and the member for Chatsworth, Mr Steve Minnikin.

Today, the committee will consider the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent mode. Please be advised that photography and video recording of the proceedings by officials or members of the public is prohibited. Also, I remind you that food and drink, other than water, are not permitted in the chamber.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. This means that a very quick changeover between witnesses is required to meet the set schedule. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: transport and main roads from 9 am to 11 am and 11.30 to 1.15 pm; energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2 pm to 3.30 pm; public works and procurement from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm; and resources from 5.30 pm to 6.45 pm and 7 pm to 8.45 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 1.15 pm and will suspend proceedings for a break between 11 am and 11.30 am. I acknowledge the visiting members who may be present and who have been granted leave by the committee: Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa; Stephen Andrew, member for Mirani; Michael Berkman, member for Maiwar; Amy MacMahon, member for South Brisbane; David Crisafulli, Leader of the Opposition; David Janetzki, Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Jarrod Bleijie, member for Kawana; Fiona Simpson, member for Maroochydore; Steven Minnikin, member for Chatsworth; Pat Weir, member for Condamine; Tim Mander, member for Everton; and Brent Mickelberg, member for Buderim.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide today's proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored fully, without imposing artificial time limits, 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 minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of transport and main roads open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

Mr BAILEY: Thank you. Good morning, Acting Chair, committee members, MPs and all the officials here this morning. It is an honour to once again serve as Queensland's transport and main roads minister and to now also be responsible for the transformative Cross River Rail project. The Palaszczuk Labor government knows transport and roads are vital to jobs and our economy—now more than ever as we deliver Queensland's plan for economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of our world-leading health response to COVID-19, construction of infrastructure was able to surge ahead across Queensland in 2020 when sites were shut down in other parts of the country and internationally.

To tackle the economic impacts of the global virus, we need to continue to invest in better roads, better transport, better ports and better rail lines. It means thousands of secure jobs for Queenslanders, improving productivity for our economy and better safety for those travelling throughout our state. That is why we worked collaboratively with the federal government to lock in \$4.8 billion in additional joint stimulus packages over the past 12 months.

Building on our strong track record, the Palaszczuk Labor government will now deliver an historic fifth record Transport and Roads Investment Program. Over the next four years \$26.9 billion will be delivered creating more than 23,600 jobs across Queensland. Once again, the vast majority of that

investment—\$17.8 billion—will focus on our regions, supporting 16,180 regional jobs. Queenslanders will see major projects, like the \$1 billion Gympie bypass, the \$480 million Bruce Highway upgrade between Edmonton and Gordonvale, and close to \$2 billion in M1 upgrades completed. We will deliver on our real \$12.6 billion jointly and fully funded Bruce Highway plan, with 33 projects underway and more than 120 in the pipeline. We will boost the inland freight rail from Charters Towers to the New South Wales border, improving efficiency for our freight industry and taking heavy vehicles off the Bruce Highway. Our \$1.5 billion fully funded second M1—a full 16.1-kilometre alternative route from the AFL stadium at Carrara to the marine precinct at Coomera—will start construction next year.

Trams will extend their reach to Burleigh Heads, with our \$709 million third stage of the Gold Coast Light Rail. We will see 662 local jobs come online in the near future with the six-laning of the Bruce Highway between Caboolture and the Sunshine Coast, and more than 800 jobs with the \$1 billion Rockhampton Ring Road.

We will continue to build Queensland's biggest rail project—the \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail—and Queensland trains will be built by Queenslanders in Maryborough under this government. The Palaszczuk Labor government has locked in a billion dollars in rail manufacturing pipeline for long-term, stable manufacturing jobs and supply chains across Queensland, including supply chain manufacturing in Rockhampton. We will strengthen our coastal shipping industry with a \$21 million commitment to get more local crews on ships, supporting a new shipping service between Townsville and Brisbane, and deliver more maritime skills and training.

The Palaszczuk government will always back Queenslanders—unlike the LNP when in power. When the member for Broadwater was at the Newman cabinet table, they cut \$1.6 billion from Queensland roads, sacked 14,000 workers including 700 RoadTek road builders, and spent \$100 million trying to sell public assets, like the Port of Townsville and the Townsville to Mount Isa rail line under Strong Choices. The LNP, who just two days before the last election were exposed in their costings, revealed that they would secretly cut \$700 million from regional roads stimulus projects and road maintenance across the network to fund their puny six-kilometre version of the second M1 on the Gold Coast. It included cuts of \$75 million to the Mount Lindesay Highway, a \$37 million cut to the Kennedy, a \$32 million cut to the Flinders and a \$25 million cut to Shute Harbour Road in Airlie Beach just to name a few.

Our Palaszczuk Labor government's record road and transport program will make sure that those upgrades are built and will not be cut while also delivering a full second M1. We will not sack, sell and cut as did the opposition leader. During the recent election campaign, the LNP commitment to 'surplus over this term' campaign was yet another example of its commitment to that ideology. How do we know the opposition leader and the LNP will cut again if they have the chance? As the member for Chatsworth said in his post-budget reply speech last week, 'Past behaviour is indeed the best way to predict future actions.' Queenslanders backed our Premier and our record and vision for the sunshine state. The Palaszczuk government will continue to back them with record investment in jobs, roads and transport.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now start questions. I call a non-government member to start the questions.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Acting Chair. Before I begin, I also congratulate the committee for the work it has done as well as the public officials here. I thank everyone very much for their time. Through you, Mr Acting Chair, my first question is to the minister. I refer to page 43 of Budget Paper No. 1 that states, '... our government will continue to respect and honour the trust and confidence placed in us by Queenslanders.' Early this week, an email was tabled from the mangocube account to stacia1@bigpond.com. That was sent on 22 April 2015. Can the minister confirm that he sent the email?

ACTING CHAIR: Before we start, member, I did appreciate your opening by referring it to the SDS, but questions about emails that occurred in 2015 are not evidentially relevant to the estimates and expenditures before the committee.

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, Mr Acting Chair, I have actually—

ACTING CHAIR: I have not finished yet.

Mr MINNIKIN:—quoted from budget paper No. 1.

ACTING CHAIR: I know. I am talking about the context of your question. I am saying that emails from 2015 are not evidentially relevant to the estimates and expenditures before the committee. I am advising you to recast your question. I will keep on stating that. If I need to rule the question out of order I will, but I am giving you a chance to recast that question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Acting Chair, to be fair when I am referring to Budget Paper No. 1 and actually quoting from the Treasurer's budget speech, anything pertaining to integrity, which is outlined clearly in Budget Paper No. 1, will not be admissible?

ACTING CHAIR: I understand what the member is getting at with budget papers, but I am looking at the context of the question. Today we are examining the expenditures and the estimates for the current budget, anything that goes to efficiency or effectiveness of the current expenditure. I have indicated three times to the member how I regard that particular question, and that is why I have asked the member to recast it.

Mr WATTS: With respect, are you suggesting that the integrity of the minister in not following the ministerial code of conduct is not relevant to the budget procedures?

ACTING CHAIR: What I have stated, as I have said now for the fourth time, is that emails from 2015 are not evidentially relevant to the consideration of expenditure in the current budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: All right, Mr Acting Chair. So we will never know whether the Premier replied to that email, but I will move on to my next question, if I may?

ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is in relation to the director-general. Director-General, have you received any emails from the minister from the minister's non-government email account about work related information?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. The direct answer is that all emails pertaining to non-government sources were referred to the CCC for investigation in 2017. If there were any emails at that point, they would have been given up to the CCC, which brought down with its recommendation I think in 2017.

Mr MINNIKIN: Just for clarification, through the Acting Chair, to the director-general, is that a 'yes' or a 'no'?

ACTING CHAIR: I think you have your answer for that, member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: A 'yes' or a 'no'? Okay. Through the acting chair, my next question is to the CEO of Queensland Rail, Mr Nick Easy. Good morning, Mr Easy. A straight up-and-down 'yes' or 'no' question: has the CEO received any emails from the minister from the minister's non-government email account about work related information?

ACTING CHAIR: Just a clarification, the member is asking about emails that have occurred in the time frame of the estimates we are examining; is that correct, member for Chatsworth?

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, correct—any emails but particularly in relation to the budget. Any emails? 'Yes' or 'no'.

Mr Easy: I thank the member for the question. The answer to your question is 'No'.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you. A further question to Mr Easy, if I may, through the acting chair, please?

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Easy, have you received any emails from the minister from the minister's non-government email account as they pertain to this particular budget document?

Mr Easy: I thank the member for the question. The answer is 'No'.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, sir, thank you. A further question, please, through the acting chair?

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr MINNIKIN: This one is to the CEO of the Cross River Rail Authority, if I may? Good morning, Mr Newton.

Mr Newton: Good morning.

Mr MINNIKIN: A straight up-and-down question: have you, the CEO, received any emails from the minister from the minister's non-government email account about work related information?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The answer is 'No'.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Newton, thank you. A further question through the Acting Chair?

ACTING CHAIR: Yes, certainly.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, following a CCC investigation in which you were described as ‘very foolish’, the Premier implemented changes to the ministerial code of conduct in relation to the use of private emails by ministers for government business matters. Minister, have you used your private email account about the code of conduct change in 2018?

ACTING CHAIR: Stop there please. First of all, I am just going to jump in there. The member started off his introduction with a clear imputation and inference. Can the member for Chatsworth state the question directly without resorting to any inferences or imputations?

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, are you still using your mangocube email for any government business using under-channel markers? Are you still to this day using a private email for government purposes?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for the question. I am fully committed to complying with the ministerial handbook, and I do so.

ACTING CHAIR: Next question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Through the acting chair, to be perfectly clear—there is no mangocube equivalent email that the minister is using for government official business?

ACTING CHAIR: Can the member be a bit more specific? It sounds like a bit of a fishing expedition. Can the member state his question directly and not make it repetitive? Can the member recast it?

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly, Mr Acting Chair. Subsequent to the ministerial handbook upgrade in 2018, has the Minister been using any private email of any description for government business?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for the question. As I answered in the previous question, I am fully committed to complying with the ministerial handbook as amended in 2018. It is pretty much the same answer.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Minister. Through the acting chair, that is a relief. So no more foolish behaviour, that is good to know. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, if I may through the acting chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr MINNIKIN: If I could move on to page 43 of Budget Paper No. 1—I refer back to it again—‘... our government will continue to respect and honour the trust and confidence placed in us by Queenslanders.’ I note that the reference I am about to give, just for the information of the acting chair. This is a civil case and not a criminal case before the court and does not offend standing order 233. My question is to the director-general, if I may please Acting Chair?

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly, but make sure you furnish enough information so we know what is going on. Please proceed.

Mr MINNIKIN: Can the director-general advise whether the minister or the minister’s office asked the director-general to have his department speak with Mr Jim Soorley about the ongoing lease arrangements for property where the Wilsons Boathouse restaurant is located at Manly?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. The answer to that is ‘No’.

Mr MINNIKIN: A further question, if I may, to the director-general?

ACTING CHAIR: Yes, certainly.

Mr MINNIKIN: Was the director-general aware that Mr Soorley was not a registered lobbyist?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. I have only met Mr Soorley once in passing—in a coffee shop at 1 William Street. I was not aware whether or not he was a registered lobbyist. I have had nothing to do with that individual.

Mr MINNIKIN: To be clear, the code of conduct specifically states—

an entity that is not a registered lobbyist must not carry out lobbying activity for a third party client ...

To be clear, Mr Scales, you had no idea who the gentleman was—

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I understand where you are going with this but, once again, I draw you to the examination of the current expenditure. It is fine to look at the efficiency or effectiveness of expenditure, and I understand where you are basing that integrity reference, but I caution you to bring this back to the relevance of the examination of the budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly, Mr Acting Chair. I will again refer to the very first document of the budget pack. All members of parliament opened their plastic wrapped pack only a few weeks ago. One of the first documents that each of us turned to was Budget Paper No. 1—not 2, 3, 4 or 5. I again make reference to the fact that the Palaszczuk government ‘will continue to respect and honour the trust and confidence placed in us by Queenslanders’, which is an overarching narrative framing reference statement about the integrity of the government in relation to framing this budget. The issue with Wilsons Boathouse is one that is on foot and part of the budget process.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand that, member, but you are asking about someone passing by someone in a coffee shop. You have had the answer to that. I will allow Mr Scales to furnish an answer.

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. We do carry a complete register of lobbyists—who we talk to, who was at a meeting, the purpose of the meeting. That is published and that is up to date. You will see that for this year and last year there is a very comprehensive list of who lobbyists are and who met with them. From memory, I am pretty sure I have never met with any lobbyists—this financial year anyway.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Scales. Did someone else from the department speak with Mr Soorley about the issue? You said that a register was published. To the best of your knowledge, did someone from elsewhere in the department speak with Mr Soorley about this particular issue?

Mr Scales: Mr Soorley is not on that register.

Mr MINNIKIN: Given that fact, to the best of your knowledge, no-one else from the department then continued dialogue with Mr Soorley, knowing that fact?

Mr Scales: I can say to the honourable member that we have never met Mr Soorley, as far as I am aware.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, when you say ‘we’, who are you referring to—the department?

Mr Scales: We have never met Mr Soorley at all, as far as I can determine.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, I refer to Mr Soorley and your department knowing that he was not a registered lobbyist. In relation to any direct contact that you had with anyone else in the department, when you made the comment that you referred it on to the department, to whom did you refer it specifically? When you were first approached by Mr Soorley and you said that it was operational and referred it to the department, to whom was that referred?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, obviously we are looking at the efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure. Trying to keep track of people’s movements throughout Queensland over the past year—I can understand what you are going on with. I am going to allow that question, but I will allow the minister to answer in whatever way he sees fit.

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is a matter the LNP has referred to the CCC for investigation. I think it would be inappropriate for me to be commenting on and pre-empting its investigation, given it is the LNP opposition itself that has referred this to the independent watchdog for scrutiny.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, what contact have you specifically had with the owner of the lease for Wilsons Boathouse? What was, specifically, your involvement with Mr Soorley in relation to this matter? It goes to the very heart of a lease, which is part of finance, which is in this particular budget.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, the minister has given an answer on this question regarding the CCC. I will let this question through and the minister can respond in whichever way he sees fit, briefly or otherwise.

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. Once again, I remind the member that it is his party that has referred this matter to the CCC for investigation. That is a choice it has made. While an investigation is underway, it is inappropriate for me as a minister to pre-empt an investigation.

Ms SIMPSON: Minister, in your lengthy preamble you went back to the year 2012. I refer you to an alleged email from you on 22 April 2015 to stacia1 @bigpond.com. Is this email authentic?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, being late, you obviously missed what I said previously. That is, questions about emails that occurred in 2015 are not evidently relevant to the estimates of expenditure—

Ms SIMPSON: That is a cover-up, Mr Acting Chair. The minister went back to 2012—

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore, that is a reflection on the chair. If you do that again you will be warned under the standing orders.

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Acting Chair, I take you to the minister's charter letter from the Premier about integrity and accountability.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand, member for Maroochydore, but this is the fourth time—maybe the fifth—that I have said it—

Ms SIMPSON: Can I ask the question, Mr Acting Chair, or am I going to get shut down?

ACTING CHAIR: Wait till I have finished, member for Maroochydore. I will state it again. Questions about emails that occurred in 2015 are not evidently relevant to the estimates of expenditure before the committee in 2020.

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, Mr Acting Chair, what was the relevance, then, of the preamble about the Newman government? What are the standards here, to be quite clear? Is the minister able to cherry-pick dates but the opposition is not able to ask questions pertinent to the minister's portfolio?

ACTING CHAIR: You know the answer to this, member for Chatsworth. You have a budget here to examine—expenditures and estimates for this current year. You can refer to the SDS. I will judge each question on the context and the content as to whether it offends standing orders. I have made myself clear about what I think of this line of questioning. I have also made myself clear about describing this process in language that is not parliamentary. Members, do you have further questions along a different line?

Mr WATTS: Point of order, Mr Chair. I am just trying to understand. Under standing order 181, if the minister introduces history as relevant to his budget we are then not allowed to question that history?

ACTING CHAIR: You are allowed to question what is in the expenditure and the estimates for this current budget. You may look at past budgets in a way that is relevant to the pattern of expenditure.

Mr WATTS: So integrity is not part of expenditure?

ACTING CHAIR: Member, I am going to ignore that interjection. I have given everyone here clear direction about how I expect things to proceed today.

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the minister. It is an integrity and accountability question and it is pertinent certainly to his ongoing role. Minister, is that 2015 email authentic or not?

ACTING CHAIR: I am going to rule that question—

Ms SIMPSON: The public has a right to know. It should not be covered up.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Maroochydore!

Ms SIMPSON: This is a cover-up with double standards.

ACTING CHAIR: I am warning you under the standing orders. Next time you will leave the room under standing order 253A.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Chair, may I ask another question of the minister?

ACTING CHAIR: No. It is time to go to government members. You can leave that for the next part.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, I will, thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: It will be my turn first. Minister, can you advise what the Palaszczuk government's record investment in roads and transport projects, outlined in Budget Paper 3, will mean for economic recovery and job creation? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Mr Acting Chair. It is refreshing to get a question about the actual budget for 2020-21, half an hour into the session. The Palaszczuk government has delivered a fifth record road and transport budget. It is worth \$26.9 billion, supporting 23,600 jobs as part of the state's economic recovery plan, which was well known, which we took to the election and which was endorsed by Queenslanders overwhelmingly.

It is part of a \$56 billion infrastructure program over the next four years and our record investment in roads and transport includes \$17.8 billion, or 66 per cent, outside the Brisbane region which is estimated at supporting more than 16,000 regional jobs. That is because our government delivers for all Queenslanders regardless of what part of Queensland they live in. Queenslanders backed the Premier well and truly on her record of delivery for Queenslanders. On the Gold Coast and Logan we will deliver \$4.5 billion in projects supporting 3,800 local jobs. In Brisbane, Ipswich and Redlands we will invest \$3.6 billion supporting 3,100 local jobs in those areas. In the Moreton Bay region, which is

an area which I know is beloved to your heart, Mr Acting Chair, and on the Sunshine Coast—where we are very happy to welcome two new MPs in Nicklin and Caloundra and the new MP for Pumicestone—we will be investing \$3.6 billion supporting 3,200 local jobs.

In the Wide Bay and Burnett, which recently returned an extra two Labor MPs as well thanks to our strong record, we will be investing more than \$1.7 billion supporting 1,550 local jobs. On the Darling Downs the investment is \$745 million supporting 860 jobs. In the south-west we will also see nearly \$300 million in improvements supporting 370 local jobs and \$1.4 billion in Central Queensland with 1,300 local jobs. Across the central west we will see \$328 million and in the Mackay and Whitsunday area we will see \$1.3 billion with more than 1,200 jobs. In Townsville and the north there is a \$1.4 billion program in North Queensland supporting 1,370 jobs. In Cairns and Far North Queensland we will invest \$1.86 billion supporting 1,700 local jobs in Far North Queensland. In the north-west there will be \$443 million supporting 480 local jobs.

Our designation of these job-boosting investments across Queensland is certainly in stark contrast to the record of those in opposition. I covered in my opening statement their appalling economic record in Queensland, including recently in the election campaign. The projects that would have been cut under those costings include projects like Shute Harbour Road in Airlie Beach, the Flinders Highway, Lawrie Street in Gracemere, the Carnarvon Highway—

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Acting Chair, I raise a point of order. This estimates process is in relation to the government's performance, not what was warranted by the LNP in the lead-up to the election. It is about the current budget, so I ask for your direction please.

Mr BAILEY: I am outlining that these projects are actually fully funded in this budget and they would not have been if we had not been elected, so the Carnarvon Highway that is fully funded by us would have been cut by those opposite—

ACTING CHAIR: On that point of order, we looked at a previous budget with regard to further patterns here. The minister has talked about what is being spent, so I understand what you are getting at, but I invite the minister—

Mr MINNIKIN: Acting Chair, so as opposed to machinery of government as it pertains to setting a budget with the transmission of private emails, just to be clear.

ACTING CHAIR: You are not going to bait me on this one, member for Chatsworth. I have made my—

Mr MINNIKIN: I am not trying to bait you, Mr Acting Chair. I am showing you the respect that you deserve.

ACTING CHAIR: Once again, I say that we have only just started on government questions. I understand where you are coming from, member for Chatsworth. We are looking at the expenditure. We are looking at estimates. We are looking at things that point to the efficiency and effectiveness of spending. Let us look at the context of the questions and the statements that point out a pattern to that expenditure. I understand what you are saying, but I invite the minister to continue.

Mr WATTS: Sorry, but, Acting Chair, you are suggesting that integrity is not part of that?

ACTING CHAIR: You can go on to that, member for Toowoomba North. If you put it in a question and it is in the correct context and content, go for it. Minister, please continue.

Mr BAILEY: I am talking here about projects that are fully funded in this budget that would not have been fully funded in the budget otherwise if there had been a different outcome in the election. Those projects include the Carnarvon Highway, Six Mile Creek from Pomona to Kin Kin, Steve Irwin Way from Beerburrum to Palmview, the Mount Lindesay Highway, the Cleveland Redland Bay Road duplication, the Kennedy Highway from Mareeba to Atherton, Beenleigh Redland Bay Road and Caloundra Road to Ridgewood Road. These are all projects funded in this budget that would not have been funded under those opposite in terms of their costings that they released only two days before the election. I am happy to talk integrity. I have complied with all COVID health requirements throughout the year, not something you can say about all members of the committee.

Regional Queensland will continue to be the major beneficiary of another record transport and main roads budget under this government. Over the next four years Queenslanders will see major projects like the \$1 billion Gympie bypass, the \$480 million Bruce Highway project from Edmonton to Gordonvale and of course the M1 upgrades. Not only will we build the biggest rail project we have seen in Queensland with the Cross River Rail project; we will back Queensland manufacturing by making those trains with Queensland workers in Queensland in Maryborough, something I know the member

for Maryborough, my assistant minister, has been vehemently supportive of throughout his time as an MP and continues to be as my assistant minister. I am very glad to have his assistance. We have committed a \$1 billion rail manufacturing pipeline to lock in long-term stable manufacturing jobs in Maryborough and supply chains across Queensland, including in Rockhampton.

Building on our current and future M1 upgrades, our \$1.5 billion second M1—a 16.1-kilometre alternative route from the AFL stadium at Carrara to the Coomera marine precinct—will start next year, and that is something that I am looking forward to. We will see more of the iconic blue and yellow trams on the Gold Coast—a very proud Labor achievement—with the third stage, a \$709 million project being built from Broadbeach to Burleigh. We will also see the six laning start on the Bruce Highway to the Sunshine Coast between Steve Irwin Way and the Bribie Island turn-off, something that I know the new member for Pumicestone and the new MPs on the Sunshine Coast are very supportive of.

The inland freight route—a key election commitment of ours—also has funding from Charters Towers to the New South Wales border. That will improve freight efficiency and take some of those big, long haul heavy vehicles off the Bruce Highway. They have faraway destinations in Victoria. It will save them a lot of time. It will also mean that we have better freight access into North Queensland during cyclone season where occasionally, unavoidably when a cyclone is active, the Bruce Highway gets cut. Having a freight route that is in good shape and is better than what we have today is obviously a good investment in supporting our North Queensland communities during those difficult times.

We will also build more bike lanes and rail trails as the only party with a policy for active transport, and that includes the Cairns Southern Access Cycleway, the Bundaberg to Gin Gin rail trail and the Sunshine Coast hinterland bike trail. I make it very clear: I think we have great opportunities in terms of the tourism market and rail trails in our state. With our weather, with our landscapes, with our diversity of experience, I think we can make huge inroads in terms of the tourism market in that active tourism area. We have a lot of old rail lines that have been disused for a long time that are sitting there waiting for that opportunity. I have been very proud to establish that rail trail program.

We will also strengthen our coastal shipping industry with a \$21 million commitment to get more local crews on ships to support our new shipping service between Townsville and Brisbane with more maritime skills and training. Under our government, the Bruce Highway remains a major focus with 33 major projects currently underway up and down the Bruce Highway and continuing the delivery of our jointly and fully funded \$12.6 billion, 15-year Bruce Highway Upgrade Program. That includes a state funded \$100 million boost, helping to improve safety, flood immunity and capacity along the Bruce Highway.

QTRIP also includes \$280 million over four years for the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme where we partner with local government fifty-fifty on traffic programs, and that is one we restored which had been cut by the previous government, and mayors are very supportive across the spectrum across Queensland. It is only this government that can be trusted to keep that program in good shape. We have \$1.18 billion allocated to road safety programs which are important in terms of reducing road trauma and saving lives. QTRIP also now reflects our \$1 billion worth of investments that we have made in jointly funded economic stimulus programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes \$400 million in state funding towards a \$440 million package of road upgrades under our Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs plan and \$415 million in a jointly funded package of road upgrades that is part of the Commonwealth's economic stimulus package to deliver shovel-ready projects across the state's network. There is \$185 million in jointly funded accelerated works on the Roads of Strategic Importance project and our government's plan will see work continue to progress and kick off right across Queensland on projects such as the Gateway Motorway and Bruce Highway upgrades—dubbed the Moreton Connector, which you would be familiar with, Acting Chair—with \$2.1 billion, \$1.5 billion for the Coomera Connector and more than a billion for the Rocky ring-road. For the M1 we are seeing a billion dollars going into that fantastic upgrade between Varsity Lakes and Tugun after we have completed the Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes section and there is also a billion dollars allocated for an M1 upgrade for Daisy Hill and the Logan Motorway.

There is another billion dollars for the Gympie bypass, which is an entirely new piece of Bruce Highway to take traffic away from one of the areas where the Bruce Highway goes under very easily, with a lot of rainfall, at Gympie. That will again increase the flood resilience of the Bruce Highway as well as having a safer piece of highway. There is \$932 million for the Bruce Highway between Caloundra Road and the Sunshine Motorway which we will complete next year. That has been a phenomenally successful project up on the Sunshine Coast. There is \$750 million for the M1 between Eight Mile Plains and Daisy Hill. We are also seeing \$514 million for the Haughton River floodplain overall from Ayr to Townsville. That is also going very well and is ahead of schedule. We are seeing

\$481 million go to the duplication of the Bruce Highway from Edmonton to Gordonvale, including active transport and, of course, we will complete soon the Ipswich Motorway Upgrade from Oxley Road to Rocklea, an area down on the south side that is on the edge of my electorate.

The Cairns Ring Road will get \$359 million, from the Cairns CBD and Smithfield. The Mackay Port access project is funded. We are seeing the Maroochydore Road-Mons Road interchange, a huge project, a \$300 million project. You cannot miss that as you drive through there along the Bruce Highway. The Centenary Bridge upgrade is a new initiative which I know the member for Mount Ommaney has been a strong advocate for. We will be very pleased to see work start next year there. With the Townsville Ring Road stage 5, I know the member for Mundingburra will be pleased about the \$230 million in joint funding to get that underway. There is \$25 million for the Bruce Highway and the Cairns Southern Access Corridor. The inland freight route gets \$200 million. The Smithfield bypass, of course 100 per cent funded by this government in Far North Queensland, is progressing very well linking Macgregor Road to the Cairns Western Arterial Road. We will see \$158 million there to duplicate the Bruce Highway to four lanes through Parkhurst as part of the Rocky northern access upgrade project.

In the near future we will start the Walkerston bypass, which is a flow-on from the Mackay Ring Road. We have built the first two and a half kilometres of the Walkerston bypass as part of the Mackay Ring Road and we will complete that as part of this \$150 million commitment to get those big fuel tankers out of the very narrow main street in Walkerston. There is \$125 million for the Linkfield Road overpass. There is \$123 million for the Kate to Aumuller streets section of the Cairns Southern Access Corridor, which is very advanced now. The Mackay Northern Access gets \$120 million. We have seen great progress this year on that. Riverway Drive stage 2 gets \$59 million from Allambie Lane to Dunlop Street. The Sumners Road interchange is advancing very well—another project dear to the heart of the member for Mount Ommaney. We will see a huge increase in capacity and an improvement to the active transport network there through grade separation. We will see \$80 million allocated to the Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road, a very popular tourist destination that will also be welcomed by local residents.

The Mount Lindesay Highway will see \$75 million from Stoney Camp Road to Chambers Flat Road. The duplication of the Capricorn Highway out to Gracemere in Central Queensland is progressing extremely well. I think we will see a traffic switch there this month as we build another section of it. The Cairns Western Arterial from Redlynch Connector Road to Kamerunga Road duplication gets \$60 million. Another section of the Mount Lindesay Highway from Johanna Street to South Street gets funding of \$53 million. The Kennedy Developmental Road gets \$50 million for progressive sealing.

I would like to highlight the \$100 million we have received and allocated in terms of stimulus funding for just simply sealing dirt roads all across Queensland, something I know the mayors are very, very supportive of. Just to finish off, the member for Mundingburra will be very supportive of the \$46.4 million for Stuart Drive, the Townsville Connection Road between University Road and Bowen Road Bridge at Townsville.

That is just the road component. In terms of rail, there is more than a billion dollars for the Rail Network Strategy, including \$255 million for the New Generation Rollingstock, European Train Control System fitment and \$600 million for our rolling stock expansion project. Light rail, as I mentioned, on the Gold Coast gets \$709 million. Level 2 upgrades for the European Train Control System is \$646 million and, of course, the Sunshine Coast rail duplication, \$560 million—more than half a billion dollars worth of funding after we started and completed the business case after it was thoroughly ignored by the previous government. There is \$97 million for an upgrade of the Mayne Yard vehicle and pedestrian access, and we are seeing \$95 million for the Loganlea train station relocation, as well as upgrades to a range of train stations between Fairfield and Salisbury into the Cross River Rail project.

As you can see, member, there is a huge investment in QTRIP. We had a record budget last budget and since that time we have added close to \$4 billion in stimulus, not just from the COVID packages this year in terms of the pandemic, but of course the Inland Rail deal that we landed with the federal government in November of last year added nearly \$1.9 billion into the Queensland coffers as well. This QTRIP is close to 50 per cent larger than the last QTRIP of the previous government.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. We will now go to non-government members for questions. I welcome back the member for Maroochydore and we have the member for Kawana here as well.

Mr MINNIKIN: A question, if I may, through the chair, to the minister. Minister, why did you not inform the Integrity Commissioner of your contact with Mr Soorley? Why didn't you?

ACTING CHAIR: I rule that out of order. I have been through the reasons for that before.

Mr MINNIKIN: That is actually listed in section 71 of the Integrity Act.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand that. This is about the seventh or eighth time I have explained this. You need to show how it relates to the expenditure of the current budget, specific expenditure, a policy, the efficiency or effectiveness.

Mr MINNIKIN: It actually is involving a lessee with a lease—formerly a lease—at the Manly Boat Harbour which is an income stream for the state government. I believe it is totally pertinent in relation to the business conduct. It appears to be yet another ‘mangocubism’. We are sick and tired of the cover-up that appears to be here.

ACTING CHAIR: Member, I will not take that interjection. If you have a specific question about specific issues that relate to the budget I invite you to ask it.

Ms SIMPSON: I have a question for the minister. It relates to the budget, in particular around staffing and recruitment. I ask the minister: is it usual practice to consider the ideological perspectives of director-general candidates when recruiting?

ACTING CHAIR: You know what I am going to say here. You have an argument in there, you have an imputation in there as well that forms the content and the context of that question. Would you like to recast that question directly without resorting to those imputations, inferences or arguments?

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the minister: what consideration does the minister give to the ideological perspectives of director-general candidates when recruiting?

ACTING CHAIR: You have repeated that, but I will allow the minister to answer as he sees fit.

Mr BAILEY: I am surprised. I thank the honourable member for the question. The member, having been a member of parliament since 1992, seems oblivious to the fact that directors-general are appointed by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Ms SIMPSON: Perhaps I will refresh the minister’s mind. I refer to the email of 22 April 2015 allegedly from the minister’s private account which outlines a discussion about a potential director-general and their ideology. Is this email authentic?

ACTING CHAIR: I am ruling that out of order.

Ms SIMPSON: It is completely pertinent to expenditure and staffing—

ACTING CHAIR: I have read it. I have ruled it out of order.

Ms SIMPSON:—and the fact that the minister has said—

ACTING CHAIR: Member, I have previously warned you.

Ms SIMPSON:—that he is not supposed to have involvement and yet there is a document here—

ACTING CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections!

Ms SIMPSON: This is a cover-up! The minister can answer—

ACTING CHAIR: The member can leave the chamber under 253(a) for one hour.

Whereupon the honourable member for Maroochydore withdrew from the committee room at 9.48 am.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chairman.

Mr BAILEY: What a stunt.

Mr MINNIKIN: Not a stunt. The minister’s integrity is at the heart of this. That is what it is about.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, you are also warned under standing order 253A.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Acting Chair, my point of order, if I may? The email has been tabled at a previous estimates committee on Monday. It has been discussed in detail, with a previous chair ruling the questions in order. It is entirely appropriate for this estimates committee to grill this minister on his private email account, bearing in mind the email dealt with potential director-general applicants. It does not matter what year the email was. The question to the minister is this: did you send an email to Annastacia Palaszczuk—palaszczuk1 @ bigpond.com—with respect to director-general appointments?

Ms PUGH: Is this a question or a point of order?

ACTING CHAIR: Either way, if it is a question I rule it out of order along the lines I gave before.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: I appreciate what the member has seen—and I will get to your point of order—about what was done on Monday. I re-emphasise that a question about emails that occurred in 2015 is not evidently relevant to the estimates and expenditures before the committee in 2020.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order. Whether it is an email, a discussion or a letter, when it deals with expenditure and hiring practices of a ministerial office it is entirely relevant. Anything but that will deem this estimates committee a complete farce and this estimates process a complete farce. When an email deals with the hiring practices of this minister it is relevant.

ACTING CHAIR: There is no point of order. You have strayed into an argument—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Acting Chair, I ask then, on a procedural matter, for you to explain to this committee how the hiring—

ACTING CHAIR: Are you moving a motion, member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Acting Chair, I am not. I am asking you to explain to the committee how the hiring practices and expenditure contained in emails from this minister from a mangocube account to the Premier at the time are not relevant.

Ms PUGH: Point of order, Acting Chair.

Mr BAILEY: Acting Chair, again I am astonished that the member for Kawana, who has been in this parliament for four or five terms, also does not understand that directors-general are hired by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and not by me—totally oblivious.

Mr BLEIJIE: You wrote the email from mangocube.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Kawana, cease your interjections.

Mr BAILEY: He has no idea.

ACTING CHAIR: There will be no arguing across the chamber. The member for Mount Ommaney has a point of order.

Ms PUGH: I was simply going to raise that the minister has outlined that he is not the appropriate minister and therefore this is not the appropriate estimates hearing to be raising this at.

Mr BLEIJIE: Really, Mr Acting Chair, then a point of order—

ACTING CHAIR: I understand your point of order in terms of where appointments come and go. Member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Acting Chair, the email that has been mentioned today that you have ruled out of order, which I disagree with, also talks about the need for a QPC chair with an ideological perspective contra to ours and—

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much, member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: How is that not relevant to the minister's own portfolio?

ACTING CHAIR: Member, I have made my ruling on this. I ask the non-government members to perhaps pursue some questions that are relevant to the estimates.

Mr BLEIJIE: This is a disgrace.

ACTING CHAIR: Member, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr BLEIJIE: This estimates process is a farce.

ACTING CHAIR: Member, you are warned under standing order 253A.

Mr WATTS: Acting Chair, point of order. I want to clarify, in the Acting Chair's point of view, are you suggesting that integrity is not part of this budget hearing?

ACTING CHAIR: I know you have raised this point of order before, member for Toowoomba North. As I said, each question is judged on its context and its content and whether it relates to the budget papers. Of course, you can touch on those things that are mentioned in budget papers, but it needs to be relevant to the expenditure and the efficiency and effectiveness of policies or specific expenditure for this. I understand what you are getting at. Certainly you can cast a look at issues of whatever you see in the budget papers, but I am asking you to direct your questions towards this.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Acting Chair, I have a question. I reference again Budget Paper No. 1, page 14, regarding the commitment to make trains in Queensland, which the minister has outlined in his opening statement. My question, through the acting chair, is to the director-general. With reference to the government's commitment to build additional trains needed for Cross River Rail in Maryborough, can the director-general advise the terms of that tender process?

Mr Scales: This is subject to a full procurement process. We have already been in the marketplace to test the market. We have now released an EOI that will soon be followed by a request for proposals. The evaluation will then be carried out by the department. We will be then advising the minister in March next year. Through the EOI and RFP processes, the tenderers will confirm production rates and time frames. We will look at detailed design. We will also look at local content, but also consideration of a pipeline of work going forward and also what local content we can actually get into the process.

Mr MINNIKIN: As a supplementary question, Director-General, you used the plural ‘tenders’. My question specifically is: what train manufacturers other than Downer have an existing facility in Maryborough with the capacity to build those new Citytrain units? You mentioned plural.

Mr Scales: There are a number of manufacturers that can actually build the six-car sets we need. Part of this initiative that the minister mentioned is also to build a new facility that will manufacture these trains.

Mr MINNIKIN: An open tender process with Downer EDI pretty much being in the box seat and your definition of an ‘open tender’ is effectively when there is really one manufacturer in Maryborough?

ACTING CHAIR: Before we go to that, can we recast that? There is an argument and an inference with ‘box seat’. Do you want to recast that question?

Mr MINNIKIN: I will move on to my next question, which is to the minister. I refer to QTRIP at page 25, regarding the rolling-stock expansion project. The government has made a commitment to build trains at Downer’s facility in Maryborough. Can the minister advise if the commitment was discussed at the meeting between Evan Moorhead’s lobbyist firm, Anacta Strategies, acting on behalf of Downer, and your senior policy adviser on 11 March 2020?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question, but the question itself is erroneous. It is not correct.

Mr MINNIKIN: Is that a yes or a no?

Mr BAILEY: You might need to reframe the question because clearly you do not understand the process. There is an EOI process that is open and you do not seem to understand that. It is an incompetent question.

Mr MINNIKIN: And you, sir, who have been referred to as ‘foolish’ by the CCC, I will again ask—

ACTING CHAIR: Wait, member. There will be none of this cross-chamber chatter. Members and Minister, questions and answers will conform to standing orders.

Mr MINNIKIN: There seem to be some ministers with glass jaws—

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, will you recast—

Mr MINNIKIN:—but I will move on to my next question.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to add to that answer, though. We are very proud of the fact that we are going to build trains in Queensland with Queensland workers. We will not send them overseas, as the previous government did, and give the work—

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order.

Mr BAILEY: It is relevant to the question. We are building Queensland’s—

ACTING CHAIR: One moment, Minister. We have a point of order.

Mr MINNIKIN: My point of order is on relevance. The question was specifically in relation to the commitment at the meeting with Evan Moorhead’s lobbyist firm. That was the question. It was very specific. Is the minister able to enlighten the committee on that particular point? It is not about where the trains are being built. Where is the minister’s involvement in relation to the lobbyist firm?

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, member for Chatsworth, we have that as well. I think the minister answered that. Do you want to return to the answer that you gave, Minister?

Mr BAILEY: I am happy for him to rephrase the question so that it is accurate and does not have factual difficulties.

Mr MINNIKIN: When it comes to—

ACTING CHAIR: Do not go there, member for Chatsworth. Do you want to recast your question?

Mr MINNIKIN: My question to the minister is: what about at other meetings that Mr Moorhead’s company and Downer had with your senior policy adviser on 1 April 2020, 20 April 2020, 29 April 2020, 13 May 2020, 15 May 2020 and 29 June 2020?

Mr BAILEY: My office maintains a contact with a whole range of stakeholders across my portfolio. You can understand that it is one of the larger portfolios in government, so it is normal for my staff to meet with stakeholders. Disclosure of those contacts is absolutely in line with legislative requirements.

ACTING CHAIR: Is there a quick question before I go back to the government members?

Mr MINNIKIN: This is a question to the minister. During 2020 in the lead-up to the state election, were other train manufacturers granted as much access to your office as the client of Mr Moorhead's lobbying firm?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I understand what you are getting at there.

Mr MINNIKIN: Just to give you some clarification, Mr Acting Chair, it was an extension of the previous question.

ACTING CHAIR: Perhaps you want to re-do that one?

Mr WATTS: Point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: Let me finish. I am letting that one through. The minister can answer that as he sees fit.

Mr BAILEY: There is an EOI process that we put out to allow any number of manufacturers to bid for this work. Given that that process has commenced, I am not really at liberty to talk in a lot of detail about that for probity reasons. However, it is normal for meetings to happen with all kinds of rail manufacturers in my portfolio. We do so in conformity with the legislative requirements. This is a problem that occurred under the previous government where they had non-disability compliance—

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Acting Chair, my question was in relation to any other firms given the same opportunity—

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, the minister is answering.

Mr BAILEY: We will not make the same mistakes of sending these contracts overseas, as the previous government did, and we are having to rectify them now at a very large cost because of their incompetence when it came to the manufacture of trains.

Mr WATTS: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: One moment, Minister.

Mr WATTS: Acting Chair, you have ruled that history cannot be spoken about in this place when it comes to integrity, yet the minister continues to talk about history—

Mr BAILEY: Point of order. That is clearly not—

ACTING CHAIR: You have no point of order, member for Toowoomba North. I understand what you are getting at. There is no point of order. Minister, did you want to finish your answer?

Mr BAILEY: I think I have answered that question quite fully.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Acting Chair, can I seek clarification then?

ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr MINNIKIN: In relation to the question, were any other manufacturing firms given the same degree of access in terms of coming through the minister's door? It is a simple question.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, that is the third time you have repeated that. Minister, do you have anything more to add?

Mr BAILEY: I have fully answered that question. We meet with stakeholders from a whole range of quarters—that is normal. We report any legislative requirements that are needed we conform to, full stop.

ACTING CHAIR: I will go to government questions now.

Ms PUGH: Minister, my question is regarding the capital allocations to the Cross River Rail project as set out in Budget Paper No. 3. Can the minister outline the benefits of Cross River Rail to commuters on the Gold Coast, Ipswich and Sunshine Coast lines?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. Once complete, future commuters across South-East Queensland will all benefit from Cross River Rail's new suite of infrastructure, particularly those on the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Ipswich lines, but every line will benefit. It is a much needed second inner city rail crossing which will unblock the system. We will see a range of new underground stations in the heart of the city, and we will have better transfers and more direct access to the CBD.

I was very pleased to see some of those work sites in the last couple of weeks. They are going very well. The station box in Woolloongabba is huge. To have heavy rail going straight into the CBD, straight to the Gabba, clearing the Gabba after big games—900 people every three or four minutes—will transform the region.

We are seeing the economic impact of the project going very well with \$4 million a day going out the door with regard to workers. There are 2,400 workers so far. Cross River Rail is key to relieving congestion across South-East Queensland with population growth continuing due to the attractiveness of the region.

This project is fully funded by the Palaszczuk Labor government. There is no contribution from the federal LNP government. It was indeed cut by the previous Newman government and promised to be cut again in the 2017 election—

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes, what is your point of order?

Mr MINNIKIN: Elements with your consistent ruling in relation to the previous government, irrelevant to the answer.

ACTING CHAIR: I will talk to this point of order. Once again, you can point to previous budgets in terms of indication of current patterns. I know that the minister has argued that certainly cuts in a previous budget are still impacting on the current budget. That certainly helps inform me on my rulings. The minister is answering the questions. If he can continue, that would be great.

Mr WATTS: Point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: Another point of order?

Mr WATTS: Just for clarification, you are suggesting that appointments of directors-general in previous budgets are not relevant, but this is?

ACTING CHAIR: There is no point of order. Minister, you can continue.

Mr BAILEY: Commuters travelling across South-East Queensland will benefit hugely from this project. By 2036, we will see the population growth surge considerably and the Cross River Rail project promoting a lot of modal shift. Some of the benefits will be that people coming in from the Sunshine and Gold coast lines to get to the CBD will have a very direct underground line to do so. The new Albert Street and Roma Street stations will be very popular. At the moment, because there is quite a circular rail system in the CBD, people coming from the south often get off at South Bank and at South Brisbane and then walk across the bridges. The train loops through the Merivale Bridge, around, connects to Roma Street and then it still really only skirts the CBD. If you look at where the Roma Street station and Central stations are, the heart of the CBD is actually quite some distance from a convenient rail station. So having the Albert Street station in particular, but also the Roma Street station which will connect with the inner Northern Busway and with other lines is really key.

Being able to take the train, if you are on the Beenleigh/Gold Coast line, directly in via Boggo Road, via the new Gabba station, then straight to the Albert Street station, servicing the CBD buildings, QUT Gardens Point, Queen's Wharf and Queen Street Mall will be phenomenal. One of the entrances will be quite close to the Queen Street Mall. Being able to service the heart of the CBD for the very first time, this is a great project. It will also see precinct redevelopments at the Gabba and at Albert Street. The demolition of the old Transit Centre at Roma Street is almost complete. I do not think anybody will mourn the loss of probably one of the uglier buildings in Brisbane, built in the 1980s. The redevelopment opportunities in that precinct are absolutely fantastic. We look forward to doing that.

We will see commuter times drop considerably. Once the commuter times drop, we will see a lot of people shifting from their private motor vehicle onto the rail network. That will give everybody who drives on our motorways a boost as well because, with less traffic and more people using the rail line, we will gain better out of our whole transport network. That is really what we need to achieve.

If you are leaving the Gabba after a Big Bash game, you will be able to get on a heavy rail service. In the current situation, the multitude of buses do the best they can, but it is a pretty messy exit from the Gabba. I look forward to seeing 900 people going out on a train every three or four minutes which will clear the Gabba so much better.

The Exhibition station will be a full-time station now. Workers in the area, particularly our health workers who have done a phenomenal job throughout the year dealing with the COVID pandemic, understand the need to conform to the COVID social distancing requirements, unlike the member for Toowoomba North. It also means that whole redeveloped RNA precinct with a lot of inner city apartments will have a full-time station at the Ekka station.

All the new stations will be fully accessibility compliant so that people who have disabilities, parents with prams and senior citizens will be able to get on and off the network well. The new stations are future-proofed for the future.

The other thing that I would like to point out in terms of the Cross River Rail project—that is fantastic—is we will be adding three stations in the growth areas around the northern Gold Coast—so Helensvale North, Pimpama—and down at Merrimac, Worongary. Those stations being installed there will be fully accessible. We are seeing continued very strong growth in population particularly around the Pimpama area, so making sure that people can get to Brisbane easily without necessarily getting onto the M1 is important. It will not suit everybody, but it will suit a lot of people, so rail and road working together is important.

Ipswich commuters will also benefit because they will see a smaller demand for the arterial roads coming in around the Ipswich Motorway and the Centenary Highway. Also, the project dovetails nicely with our Sunshine Coast rail duplication project which will be more than half a billion dollars of new rail infrastructure on top of Cross River Rail.

I think this government's record of investing in public transport—it has been a need that has been identified since the late 2000s because of the bottleneck in the middle of the rail network. We saw a number of unfortunate iterations when it really should have been done right the first time. However, the 2017 budget saw the decision of this government to fully fund this project, given that the federal LNP government would not come to the party on it. We just needed to get on with it because the population growth was putting enormous pressure on our transport networks. We walk the walk when it comes to investing in our transport network. We do not cut; we invest and we build. We do not moan and whinge; we get on and get it done.

I am very proud of this project. I am very familiar with this project since working for then minister for transport, Anastacia Palaszczuk, back in 2011-12. It is one I am very pleased to see fully funded and underway and now to have responsibility for.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. I refer to the capital allocation to the government owned ports corporation set out in Budget Paper No. 3. Will the minister advise how our publicly owned ports managed the COVID-19 crisis and what the capital investment means for the economic recovery and jobs across the supply chain? Can the minister advise the committee of any ongoing impacts of the liquidation of Queensland Nickel on the Port of Townsville?

Mr BAILEY: I congratulate the member on his election. It is great to see another former councillor join the ranks of the state parliament. I look forward to working with him. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic has resulted in many significant challenges and disruptions to our economy. We have had to deal with that, particularly in terms of ports and our international shipping. The two significant international vectors for COVID-19 carriage and potential infection into Queensland are international aircraft and international shipping.

Maritime Safety Queensland has coordinated the maritime response in Queensland with guidance from Queensland Health and the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre in terms of applying directives, protocols, risk assessments, border interventions quarantine and precautionary measures. MSQ worked very closely with the maritime industry through regular communication, stakeholder engagement and regular meetings. The maritime response has been highly successful and has relied upon risk assessments, precautionary measures, ship vetting and reporting, intelligence, quarantine, border restrictions, medical support to seafarers, case management and management of crew changeovers. Most importantly, MSQ has well-established and proven protocols for dealing with COVID-19 cases on board ships.

While MSQ played a key role in coordinating our maritime response to the threat of COVID, our publicly owned ports continue to play a vital role in combating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as part of our government's economic recovery plan. We did receive a little bit of criticism there from former premier Campbell Newman about being overly regulatory about it and then a few days later I recall the *Ruby Princess*—

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Acting Chair.

Mr BAILEY: This is highly relevant.

Mr MINNIKIN: What is the relevance of the commentary from the previous premier? Are we going to bring Anna Bligh into this as well?

Mr BAILEY: You seem to be ashamed of him.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, thank you for your point of order.

Mr MINNIKIN: No, I am not.

ACTING CHAIR: As aligns with my ruling on the same point of order, Minister, you can continue but obviously stick to being relevant to the question.

Mr BAILEY: I thank you for your guidance. We have been very clear. There has not been one identified infection through any of our ports in Queensland because we have taken a hard line on this, despite the criticism of some. We saw the *Ruby Princess* situation in New South Wales. Our hardline stance has proven the test of time and kept Queenslanders safe.

Despite those challenges, our publicly owned ports continue to perform well. For instance, the North Queensland Bulk Ports hosts more than a thousand people at work. There are about 130 employees. This financial year they have spent \$17 million at the port of Mackay on a range of projects that will boost the port's competitiveness and generate local jobs. That includes upgrades to wharves 1 and 4, stabilisation works at the western revetment and essential maintenance dredging.

We do not just keep our ports in public hands, we invest in them, as the member would be aware.

Mr MINNIKIN: Brisbane port, you flogged that.

Mr BAILEY: The member might be interested in the port of Townsville—a really important piece of our economic supply chain. We are seeing it handling around \$10 billion worth of trade each year, having 70 per cent of the population of Northern Australia in that part of our state. The country's largest sugar, lead, zinc and copper molasses port is there. It superseded Darwin in the last financial year as the largest national cattle export facility. It is a strategic defence port as well. It has dedicated cruise port facilities and is well positioned for growth when that returns. The \$1.4 billion Townsville port expansion involves staged construction of up to six new berths, land reclamation and channel widening and deepening to cater for trade growth of up to 48 million tonnes by 2040. That channel upgrade project is a key initiative and is jointly funded. It will be very important for jobs in North Queensland.

The port has also been attempting to negotiate with Clive Palmer's Queensland Nickel in good faith to see berth 2 returned to service. I am advised Clive Palmer and his companies have refused to meaningfully engage in any commercial discussions. Since Clive Palmer put Queensland Nickel into liquidation in 2016, resulting in hundreds and hundreds of Queensland job losses, berth 2 has sat idle. In fact, Townsville port is still owed almost three-quarters of million dollars in unpaid harbour dues from Queensland Nickel's previous use of berth 2. That has been outstanding for some years.

This is the same Clive Palmer who hosted the former LNP presidents on a superyacht on election night only a month or so ago—

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Acting Chair.

Mr BAILEY: On cue.

Mr MINNIKIN: I do not see that this commentary has any relevance to the budget estimates. It is completely irrelevant.

ACTING CHAIR: You know what, member for Chatsworth, I can understand where you are coming from in terms of this. I ask the minister to stick to the question and wrap up.

Mr BAILEY: Certainly. I am simply outlining that there is a debt outstanding to the Port of Townsville. It is a budget reality. Perhaps it is not surprising that the member for Chatsworth is intervening on Clive's behalf here today.

Mr MINNIKIN: We do not need commentary from someone described as foolish by the CCC.

ACTING CHAIR: There will be no cross-chamber chatter. Minister, I ask you to draw your answer to a conclusion.

Mr BAILEY: I could talk about superyachts a little more broadly because there is a reference in the budget, but I will be generous to the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: Email me.

Mr BAILEY: We hope that debt is rectified soon. It is an embarrassment, to be frank, that somebody who is so wealthy continues to owe such money for services rendered. I am hopeful that that can be rectified and does not go on for a number of years more. That would be beneficial to everybody. Perhaps we are not surprised at the situation, but it is regretful. I have faith in the CEO and the port's leadership to continue to work in what is a very difficult situation, let us be frank. We hope that that debt owed to the people of Queensland—that is who it is owed to—is rectified.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to non-government questions.

Mr MINNIKIN: I refer to the Capital Statement at section 1.3 on page 8 regarding Cross River Rail. I would like to ask a series of questions to the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority.

Mr BAILEY: What page was that?

Mr MINNIKIN: Page 8 of the Capital Statement at section 1.3. Mr Newton, with reference to the request for project change 9 currently before the Coordinator-General for EIS assessment, the reason for the proposed change is to optimise the track geometry. Is it correct to say that this means, in layperson's terms, reducing the curvature of the track's alignment?

Mr Newton: Is the reference there in the context of the language that is used in the RfPC9?

Mr MINNIKIN: Effectively, what does it mean—optimising track geometry? Is the curvature wrong?

Mr Newton: With this project there are obviously a lot of technical elements to it, particularly in that southern area where the portal merges into a very complex part of the rail network. In relation to the track geometry, the RfPC9 is a reflection of what is now the adopted design and gives alignment to what is going to be the delivered alignment for that project. It has a curvature in the order of a 300-metre radius which is consistent with the preference for the Queensland Rail operation arrangements. That is what is reflected in the request for project change 9.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, just to be clear—and I stand to be corrected—I am pretty sure that request for project change 8 and 9 have all taken place subsequent to the 31 October state election. These two changes have been post election. Is that correct?

Mr Newton: Is the question relating to the dates on which those decisions were made?

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes.

Mr Newton: In regard to request for project change 8, it was submitted on 18 August 2020 and it was approved on 19 November 2020.

Mr MINNIKIN: The approval was on 19 November.

Mr Newton: Yes, on 19 November. In regard to request for project change 9, it was submitted on 20 November and it is still currently out for public consultation with a future assessment by the Coordinator-General.

Mr MINNIKIN: Chair, I would like to pursue this line of questioning about this curvature, this track alignment issue. Chair, this is a very serious consideration.

ACTING CHAIR: Sorry, a very what consideration?

Mr MINNIKIN: Serious consideration.

ACTING CHAIR: Serious—I thought you said 'secretive'.

Mr MINNIKIN: This is a serious consideration, Acting Chair, because we have seen a number of accidents around the world where derailments have occurred at different bends that have been too tight for the train's speed. Chair, by way of a quick background to enable Mr Newton to answer this question, 79 people died in an accident in Spain in 2013 and an Amtrak train in America crashed in 2015 on a bend killing five people. My question is to the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. Why did it take almost one year into construction to realise that the design has serious safety concerns?

ACTING CHAIR: You have stated there have been those two incidents which are important context to your question. To assist the department, can you furnish more reports or more documents regarding those particular incidents?

Mr MINNIKIN: I am happy to provide that.

ACTING CHAIR: We will have a look at that when it appears. In the meantime, if you could provide an answer?

Mr MINNIKIN: Chair, in the interests of time, the reality is that it appears as though the curvature of the track absolutely is a huge safety concern. How will this change impact on the budget of the project?

Mr Newton: In relation to the curvature of the southern portal, this has been an area that has had quite a lot of scrutiny by engineers for design for quite some time. As has been stated on many occasions—and I will repeat—this is quite a complex part of the railway. It is a convergence between the Cleveland line and the southern line, the freight flyover goes through that area, as well as the

dual-gauge carriage way where the XPT passes through. It is a quite complex part of the rail. Safety in design is a very high priority—No. 1 priority. We work very closely with the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Queensland Rail looking at future operations and how the design will align with future operations and arrangements.

The design has evolved over time. It has gone through ranges of evolutions. It is not unusual for a project of this scale and of this complexity to see design evolve. As we move from a concept design through to a more detailed design, those refinements come through. Through consultation with our colleagues at Queensland Rail and Transport and Main Roads, each one of those challenges is aimed to be overcome. I am pleased to say that the design reflected in request for project change 9 does provide that confidence around the design, does give confidence around the alignment and does achieve that 300-metre curvature that was targeted as far as the operation of the rail network goes.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Newton. It is a relief to know that people will not be in train accidents with a curve that is too profound. Thank you for the answer to that question. What is the anticipated impact for commuters on the Gold Coast line because of these necessary changes to the rail southern modification? What are the impacts on commuters?

Ms PUGH: I raise a point of order. I do not understand. When you say 'impacts' do you mean travel time? Is that what you are getting at?

Mr MINNIKIN: I am including travel time. I am including frequency. I am including local disruption to the region where the southern modifications will physically take place because it is a design modification.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you for your clarification.

Mr Newton: Chair, can I just seek clarification. Is the question in relation to the construction of the rail or the operation of the rail?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth?

Mr MINNIKIN: It is in two parts. First of all, what will the resultant impact of the initial changes be on the engineering construction design? There is a corollary to that: what will then be the impacts on commuters to those changes given that it is now a cut and cover? That is based upon what we have seen and heard over the last couple of years with last-minute changes to the actual design of that southern modification based on interesting property investments.

Mr Newton: Chair, I am not sure what that last bit is referring to.

ACTING CHAIR: Neither I am. I am trying to figure it out.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, my question is: with the changes outlined in request for project change 9 with the cut and cover operation now and the change to track alignment curvature specifically, what are the anticipated impacts for commuters specifically on the Gold Coast line?

Mr Newton: There was a reference in the question to cut and cover which is the construction methodology. For those not necessarily familiar with this part of the rail network, as I said before, there is a lot of different commuter rail and freight rail and other rail operations in that area. As far as the construction methodology goes, it is one that has had quite a lot of scrutiny and a lot of interest in it.

It is worth noting that the original concept design was a full cut and cover of that alignment. It has gone through several iterations. Request for project change 4 identified the potential for canopy tubes as an alternative methodology. With request for project change 9, it is really more reverting back to the original methodology, which is full cut and cover.

With regard to the cut and cover method that is being proposed, in summary terms, that will see a reduction in the tunnelling requirement which was going to be using canopy tubes. On average, about 95 metres I think it was of tunnelling will be replaced with about 65 metres of cut and cover. That methodology is safer, more efficient and faster. It also means that there will be impacts. There would have always been impacts regardless of the methodology of construction that was used. To come to those impacts, we work very closely with Transport and Main Roads, particularly TransLink, and also very closely with Queensland Rail in the arrangements that have been developed.

We have identified that there will be some possessions. The aim with those is to try to target areas or times of the year where there will be lesser patronage on the trains—the areas that have been targeted, as are identified in request for project change 9.

ACTING CHAIR: I think the director-general wants to furnish more details.

Mr Scales: If I can help the member for Chatsworth on the curvature side: with the Amtrak accident, which was obviously a tragedy, I think when the detail comes on that it will have been about speed and maintenance. The curvature that we are talking about today is all about the wheel rail interface. It is a steel wheel on a steel rail. If you have curves, you can get wheel squeal—

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Scales. I appreciate your assistance.

Mr Scales:—and also wear. Part of the solution that Mr Newton is alluding to is to take away wheel squeal and wear. Also, because the curvature is immediately following a station it is not at high speed. As the train is accelerating or decelerating towards the station, it is not going at high speed. I think you will find the two examples that you quoted were at particularly high speeds.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Scales. I appreciate your offer of help.

Mr Scales: I was just trying to help the committee.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you. In the interests of time, I have a further question to Mr Newton. Given the requested changes in the construction scope, is there a variation in the PPP contract for these works?

Mr Newton: There are in relation to the modification design, which is being talked about in this space. We are working through a commercial process with the PPP operative. The process is well outlined in the contract, and that is the process that we are following.

Mr MINNIKIN: What will that increase for the taxpayer result in with those modifications to the PPP, if any?

Mr Newton: We are currently in commercial negotiations, so those matters are commercial-in-confidence.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, was this issue apparent because of the station change to Boggo Road?

ACTING CHAIR: Can you clarify that?

Mr MINNIKIN: It goes very much to the heart of why—

ACTING CHAIR: I was wondering when we would get there.

Mr MINNIKIN:—we are now at modification 9. There have been a couple of modifications literally in the last few months—that is the essence of the question—and, from a financial perspective, the resultant impact in relation to the station change to Boggo Road on the taxpayer. It is very relevant, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes, I am not saying it is not relevant. We just need to understand the context of the question. Who was that directed to?

Mr MINNIKIN: That question was for Mr Newton.

Mr Newton: The Boggo Road station was in the reference design and is the station that will be delivered.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have further questions in relation to Cross River Rail. Again my reference is the Capital Statement, section 1.3, page 8. Whilst Mr Newton is in the chair I might jump to that question in the interests of trying to save some time. I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, section 3-9 and also the Report on State Finances tabled on Monday of budget week, which noted that the cost of the Cross River Rail PPP has seemingly blown out from \$12.1 billion to \$16.402 billion in the last year. Is that correct?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, the figure you are referring to is obviously from a government paper.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, correct. The budget papers, correct.

ACTING CHAIR: Can someone furnish us with a copy of that?

Mr BAILEY: That is a very creative interpretation.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will take my advice from someone who is qualified, not someone described as foolish.

ACTING CHAIR: Members! Mr Newton, is there something you want to address on that question or do you want to refer that elsewhere?

Mr Newton: I am just unfamiliar with the origin of those numbers. The Cross River Rail project budget, as has been spelt out in the budget papers since 2017, has been \$5.4 billion in the forward estimates for the capital delivery of Cross River Rail, and it remains as such.

Mr MINNIKIN: My reference is very much the budget papers that were handed down in budget week, so that is the actual reference.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you want to address that question to the minister?

Mr MINNIKIN: No, Mr Acting Chair. My question was very much to Mr Newton. If Mr Newton does not know the answer to that question then I will move on.

ACTING CHAIR: I am inviting you, if you want, to direct that question elsewhere.

Mr MINNIKIN: In the interests of time I will just simply reference the notes to the financial statements. I am actually quoting directly from that. I am happy to provide that for guidance—through the acting chair—in relation to the figures as outlined. There is a \$12.1 billion increase now to \$16 billion in the last year.

Mr BAILEY: Point of order, Acting Chair.

Mr MINNIKIN: I just want to know whether that in fact is correct, because that is a significant Cross River Rail project blowout.

Mr BAILEY: Point of order. The document the member is referring to is related to the Treasury session, which was earlier this week. He may have missed his opportunity to ask his question, but those figures are simply inaccurate.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is in relation to Cross River Rail. How relevant is that?

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to take a question on it, but it is a very creative bit of accounting by the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: Which is why you are not qualified to answer it.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth! I just have notes from audited consolidated financial statements. The question is: is this part of the expenditure or the documents we are actually—

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: I am not asking you. I am putting that as a question to the director-general.

Mr Scales: On public-private partnerships, from time to time governments will enter into PPPs or service concession agreements where the government will partner with the private sector to construct and maintain and operate infrastructure assets where it represents value for money. This has been a practice of successive governments. A number of these arrangements are already in place within the transport portfolio, and the member for Chatsworth's questions relate to that.

The development of these arrangements is led by Queensland Treasury in conjunction with the relevant agency—that is Mr Newton's agency and my own—but accounting standards require the reporting of future obligations that arise from these arrangements. Generally, these relate to future repayments to proponents post completion of the infrastructure. The financial obligations arising from these arrangements are set out in the Queensland government's Report on State Finances each year. This includes all arrangements, including: schools, training facilities, hospitals and transport infrastructure, and the table set out that I think the honourable member is referring to is that very table.

Changes between financial years could be for a number of reasons: new PPP arrangements coming into place; decreases generally representing the reduction of the term whereby future obligations are reducing due to repayments. We have Gold Coast Light Rail G:link, which is a PPP; New Generation Rolling Stock, which is a PPP; and Toowoomba bypass, which is a PPP. We also have coming on, obviously, Cross River Rail, but we also have Airport Link, the Gateway and Logan motorways, Brisbane Airport Rail Link and Port Drive motorway. I cannot give the committee any guidance on why it has gone up, but it has gone up because it is a requirement for us to report that in that particular way.

The chair is correct: I am an engineer; I am not an accountant. I cannot give you any more than that. But it is a requirement that we have to include that on PPPs on our government balance sheet.

Mr MINNIKIN: I really appreciate your assistance, Mr Scales. You are right: it is a requirement. Respectfully, that does not answer the question why there is a \$4 billion blowout. I will move on to my next question, if I may.

ACTING CHAIR: We will come back to non-government questions in a moment.

Mr BAILEY: My understanding is it is all PPPs.

Mr MINNIKIN: Four billion dollars.

Mr BAILEY: Nonsense.

Mr Scales: I think what the member for Chatsworth is getting at on the difference is that this is the first time, I think, that Cross River Rail has been added to the government PPP register. I do not think it is an increase. I think it is just recognising that Cross River Rail is actually there for the first time.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is across the whole of TMR.

Mr BAILEY: On time and on budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: No, it is not. Far from it.

ACTING CHAIR: I think we have the answer. We will go to government questions and we will come to the crossbenchers before we finish this.

Ms PUGH: My question is to the minister. Regarding the capital allocations to projects on the M1 and the second M1 as set out in Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's plan is for the M1 and the second M1, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: Labor has certainly not wasted one second since we were elected in 2015 in terms of working hard for better roads for the Gold Coast and Logan, including the M1 and now the second M1, because Brisbane residents who travel regularly to the Gold Coast are beneficiaries as well. Our record is a far cry from the LNP, who blocked the second M1—as was well reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* at the time—and it has been left to this government in terms of getting the second M1 up and going.

We have gazetted all three sections. We had no corridor when we came into power when it came to the second M1, and we have gazetted all three sections of the corridor going from the AFL stadium at Carrara all the way up to the Logan interchange. That was in 2016, 2017 and 2019. We have done community consultation since then. We have fortuitously secured \$750 million worth of funding from the federal government and a similar amount from the state government. It is a \$1.5 billion commitment to the second M1. This is very important, because the northern Gold Coast is a very high population growth area and we need people to get to where their services and jobs are, which predominantly is on the Gold Coast. At the moment they have to get on and off the M1, and that is putting tremendous pressure on the M1 and the interchanges. We need this corridor.

I am very pleased that, under the Palaszczuk Labor government, stage 1 of the second M1 will start construction next year—16 kilometres of new corridor all the way from Carrara, through Helensvale and up to the Coomera marine precinct. In comparison, the policy of those opposite only promised a six-kilometre section from the old Gold Coast Highway into Coomera, which was a very inferior version that stakeholders were not pleased to see. Those are our M1 commitments.

Under the previous government we did not see a single new dollar for the M1. We are seeing billions going in under this government. We have completed the first upgrade of the Gateway merge and we are now on to the second section. It is much bigger, worth about \$750 million—three quarters of a billion dollars—with more packages rolling out. Down on the Gold Coast we have fully completed the Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes widening ahead of time. That is a fantastic project. I think that everyone is pleased when they see it. We have to continue that six-laning all the way down to Tugun because that is where the choke point is. We would have been much further ahead if we had had any investment from the previous government. It is not a mistake we are going to repeat on the Gold Coast.

With the section from Varsity Lakes to Tugun, anyone who has driven through there recently can see that the whole landscape has changed enormously. It has some other fantastic features, other than the six-laning to meet the demand from motorists. We are seeing a whole environmental plan there. We will see a fauna underpass. We will see active transport integrated into its entire length. That is our general policy when we do these big road upgrades. Wherever we can get active transport bolted in there, we do that. We have done that on the Ipswich Motorway and we have done that on the Gateway Arterial north. We will also see it on the Bruce Highway south of Cairns and we will also see it down there at the M1 from Varsity Lakes to Tugun. People have that active transport option.

We have not ignored the interchanges. We saw construction start and finish on the exit 54 interchange under the Palaszczuk Labor government. We are seeing the upgrade of the Oxenford exit 57 completed and it is going very well. Traffic is a lot smoother through there, and that is one of the growth areas. We have seen funding come through for other exits as well, exits 41 and 49. We have seen construction already start at exit 41. I have seen that a number of times now. Exit 49 has also got funding from both the state and federal governments as part of our deals with them.

We have been very happy to be working with the federal government to see upgrades to the M1, as well as upgrades to the second M1. Given that we did not have a corridor in 2016 and now we have \$1½ billion flowing to construction starting only five years later, it is a phenomenal achievement. It is one that those opposite could have advanced when they were in power—

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order. Relevance.

Mr BAILEY: I am talking about a budget item which is the Coomera Connector.

Mr MINNIKIN: This financial year, we are talking about.

Mr BAILEY: They do not like to hear about what they cut.

ACTING CHAIR: Hang on, members. The question asked about any alternative approaches. The minister's answer has been relevant. Could the minister continue.

Mr BAILEY: I am very happy to. What we saw was reports at the time that the second M1 was blocked by the government, of which the members for Chatsworth and Toowoomba North were members. In a report in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 25 April 2014, the headline was 'End of the road for traffic relief plan as road corridor quietly scrapped'. That is the record of those opposite when it comes to the second M1. You can only rely on a Labor government to invest in infrastructure—

Mr WATTS: Point of order, Acting Chair. You have already ruled that we cannot discuss integrity and the government's approach to that historically. I would like to know why we are discussing a former government's approach.

ACTING CHAIR: Member—

Mr WATTS: If integrity is not relevant, then other things cannot be relevant.

ACTING CHAIR: No, member, do not—

Mr WATTS: If one is relevant, then the other needs to be relevant.

ACTING CHAIR: Member, there is no need to carry on like that—

Mr WATTS: Well, there is, Acting Chair, because you will not let integrity questions be asked.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, you are close to reflecting on the chair. As I said, it is the context and the content of the questions. You can touch on what is in the budget papers here. I am finding the minister is being relevant and he will continue.

Mr BAILEY: Thanks. I would certainly like to point out that as a community leader and MP I have always conformed to COVID-19 health directives—

Mr WATTS: Relevance, Acting Chair.

Mr MINNIKIN: The member for Stretton didn't.

Mr WATTS: The minister has not always conformed to integrity issues as a minister.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, the next time I pull you up on this it will be a warning under the standing orders. The minister is being relevant. Can you please continue

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to move on from integrity matters—

Mr MINNIKIN: I bet you are.

Mr BAILEY: Well, some people have got records and we will point them out.

Mr WATTS: As the minister has.

Mr BAILEY: I was not sacked. You were.

Mr MINNIKIN: You were called foolish.

ACTING CHAIR: One moment. Member for Chatsworth, I have pulled you up on those interjections a couple of times. I do not want to warn you either. I am just asking you to cease your interjections.

Mr BAILEY: Our record on the M1 is billions of dollars going into the M1 on interchanges, on widenings, on active transport, on appropriate environmental plans and on landscaping plans that go with it. The second M1 is much needed in one of the fastest growing regions in the country, let alone the state. I am looking forward to going to the opening of construction down there next year. The department is working very hard on that project. We are going to see more than 700 jobs flow on the Gold Coast. This is much needed. This government invests in the roads that the Gold Coast needs, as well as rail—including light rail and we also duplicated the heavy rail from Helensvale to Coomera in

the first term. It was absolutely necessary to have a competent and fully functioning transport plan for the games. There had been no plans before that. We are very proud of our transport record and we will continue to invest where investment and jobs are needed.

ACTING CHAIR: We have 15 minutes in this session. I will ask a question and then we will go to one question from the non-government members and then if we can squeeze in two questions from the crossbenches. Minister, I refer to the transport and main roads annual operating budget regarding the COVID-19 economic recovery response. Could you outline the steps taken during the pandemic to keep essential services running and what this has meant for protecting jobs?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the acting chair for the question and it is really a very pertinent question given the pandemic that has impacted on all of us here in Queensland and worldwide in the last eight or nine months. It has certainly taken a large toll and I would like to place on record my thanks for all the health officials, our government and people right across the state who worked together to flatten the curve. While we provided strong and consistent leadership—and I would like to pay tribute to the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, whose advice has been fantastic and world leading, and I also thank Queenslanders who adhered to it and participated—without the participation of Queenslanders, we could not have achieved what we have.

In terms of the impact on transport operators who provide essential services throughout Queensland, our public transport workers, our operators and our road crews have ramped up their cleaning efforts. They implemented safer boarding measures to protect commuters, drivers and workers. Importantly, we kept projects moving throughout Queensland throughout the COVID pandemic with appropriate measures in place.

During the peak of the COVID pandemic around March and April, we saw numbers down as much as 95 per cent. People living in our regional and remote towns rely on services and they would have been cut off without those services so I would like to thank all of those transport workers who kept going to work and kept providing those services during a really difficult time. They did a magnificent job and I cannot thank them enough as their Minister for Transport.

The Palaszczuk government announced a \$54½ million central transport package to support Queensland's bus, ferry, personalised transport and regional air services. That was very important for our decentralised state. With this package, operators and workers employed running services for up to six months as our economy recovered. In terms of regional aviation, there was support for QantasLink, Rex, Skytrans and Hinterland Aviation to continue running air services on reduced schedules to regional and remote communities to complement federal grant funding which contributes to rebuilding of a more frequent timetable. While the demand was, to be quite frank, through the floor, those services still were absolutely essential. It was a pleasure to work with the federal government through that, and I acknowledge the cooperative approach to the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, working with Queensland on that.

With regional buses, there was support for bus operators to continue to run services in Cairns, Innisfail, Townsville, Magnetic Island, Bowen, Whitsundays, Mackay, Yeppoon, Mount Morgan and Gracemere, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Bundaberg, Elliott Heads, Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Gympie, Maleny, Kilcoy, Woodford, Minjerribah, Toowoomba and Warwick. With regional ferries, we saw support for operators to keep running services on a reduced schedule to Thursday Island, Magnetic Island, Minjerribah, Southern Moreton Bay Islands and Coochiemudlo.

In our personalised transport industry, we extended the existing booked hire/taxi driver authorisations and the taxi/limo licences for six months to help them there. There was a further waiver of the annual taxi industry security levy for 2019-20. We extended all existing booking entity authorisations for six months, and we extended the refund policy for holders of booked hire service licences so that they can receive a pro rata refund if they choose to surrender their licence.

We also waived fees for operators to deregister and re-register their vehicles. I thank all personalised transport drivers out there who continued to work with adjusted measures in place when demand was so low. We still needed them out there.

In terms of heavy vehicles, we continued the existing registration freeze for a year. We removed the deregistration and the re-registration fees so that, if people needed to 'hibernate' their vehicle for a while with no market, they were able to do so without paying fees to us to do that. I think that was a really appropriate measure. In terms of licensing registration fees, we saw fees to cancel and re-register vehicle registrations, including safety certificates, waived. Learner drivers did not have to pay costs to renew their learner licences until they could book a practical driving test. We certainly looked out for those people who were coming up and were affected.

We also announced an additional \$23 million in support payments for taxi and limousine operators and licence holders. In total, there are more than 3,200 taxi licences and 500 limousine licences across the state of which a lot are mum-and-dad businesses. Many in the industry were hit very hard but they did a great job to continue operating.

We also had a package in terms of taxi and limousine licence holders which involved \$3,500 per licence to taxi and limousine operators and an additional \$1,000 per licence to the wheelchair-accessible taxi operators—very important—to ensure that people with disability have access to transport services. We were very glad to support them. There was \$1,000 per licence to taxi and limousine licence holders. There was also \$1,500 to authorised booking entities for each affiliated taxi or limousine, capped at 1,000 vehicles, and for entities to provide booking services—predominantly for taxis and/or limousines.

ACTING CHAIR: Great!

Mr BAILEY: As you can see, Acting Chair—

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr BAILEY:—there is very strong support for our industry, and we work collaboratively. We caught up regularly with telecoms. I want to thank everybody right across all those different parts of our transport industry for working with the government in a very unprecedented time to support people—not just protect people—and make sure they had the services they needed.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will go to one quick question from the non-government members.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth?

Mr MINNIKIN: My question is to the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. Is there still a dispute with the contractors over modifications to the southern portal area or any other areas that is costing taxpayers \$2 million a day, and, if so, how much has the liquidated damages amount cost to date in total?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, \$2 million a day?

Mr MINNIKIN: Two million.

ACTING CHAIR: Where is this outlined?

Mr MINNIKIN: Through the acting chair, this has been well reported.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand that, but that part of your question needs to be verified. Ignoring that bit at the moment until we can verify it, does the CEO want to address the gist of that question?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. Yes, I will, Acting Chair. As I understand, the question relates to the southern area modification. It comes to what I was referring to previously about the process of the modification. As the design evolved, the movement from the concept design through to the detailed design takes a very structured process under the contractual arrangements. We have been working in close cooperation with, as I said, our colleagues from the Department of Transport and Main Roads to work through the detailed design from their perspective and also closely the contractors as they evolve that design. As is evident in Request for Project Change 9, that design has now been achieved. We have been going through a process of commercial realignment between the original alignment and the final one. In relation to the question, there is no trigger for liquidated damages under any aspect of where we are at the moment with the project.

Mr MINNIKIN: In relation to the most recent changes, eight and nine, what are the extra costs to date pertaining to those two changes—in fact, any of the changes?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The process to which I was referring basically allows a move from one design to the other. Essentially, we gave notification under that process to the contractor to move from one design to the other. That was done on 26 February. The next day we communicated with them to move to the new design.

Mr MINNIKIN: In relation to any contract on the Cross River Rail project, what has been the total cost to date of any liquidated damages for any design elements or any parts of the Cross River Rail project?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. There have been no claims and there have been no costs incurred for liquidated damages on the project to date.

ACTING CHAIR: Okay.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, sir.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you for that. Obviously we would appreciate any evidence backing the claim of \$2 million being brought to the table. I am happy to table this one here which will obviously explain for prosperity the previous discussions. Is the committee happy to table that? It is so tabled.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: All right. We will go to the member for South Brisbane.

Dr MacMAHON: My question is to the director-general. The government has announced \$1 million for a transport study for the Montague Road corridor to be jointly funded with Brisbane City Council. Given that any actions coming out of this study will take some time and that the issues of Montague Road are urgent, why has funding for this study been pushed out to as late as 2024?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. There are a number of election commitments within the South Brisbane electorate, and the member would be aware of that. Effectively, within the department I am trying to manage everything. Basically, we have to manage everything across a \$9.8 billion organisation. It is being pushed out mainly just because of timing.

Dr MacMAHON: Given that this is just a study, can that not be expedited?

Mr Scales: I will flick pass that to the minister because it is an election commitment.

Mr BAILEY: Given that it is related to an election commitment, it is appropriate that it be directed to me rather than the director-general. We have made a range of commitments on active transport as well as local traffic commitments in the member's electorate and elsewhere. The government is 100 per cent committed to implementing our election commitments, and we will ensure that that occurs.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a question also for the director-general in relation to the Jindalee Bridge upgrade on Centenary Highway, which is funded in the budget but which does not include bus priority lanes proposed in the 2009 Western Brisbane Transport Network Strategy. Can the director-general confirm whether and under what body of work bus priority lanes are being considered for the Centenary corridor from Darra to Toowong?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. The planning study for that upgrade was finalised in March 2019. It will actually reduce the frequency and the severity of crashes. As far as bus movements are concerned, as a general planning tool it depends on what will be the frequency of the bus network. It also depends on other matters such as loadings, origin and destination. If you take what we have done over the past few years in Brisbane, our 29 kilometres of busways are probably the best in the world. We are doing transit lanes where we can and fitting them in where we can.

What we tend to find—and I have seen this not just in this city but in other countries where I have worked—is that enforcing them can be really difficult. If you just take an example here in Brisbane, we used to have some bus-only lanes on Coronation Drive that were removed. Whether that is the right or wrong decision is not a matter for me, but I will be advising the minister on where we should be putting bus lanes and the efficacy of those bus lanes. The member would appreciate that it is the enforcement of those bus lanes. That is why our busways are so effective, because they are 29 kilometres of world-class facilities that are used to great extent. In fact, the busways carry about 18,000 people a day in each direction, which is more than heavy rail. The answer to your question is—I have gone around the houses a bit—that it depends on the frequency required, whether we can get bus lanes in, is it peak or off-peak, and what is the efficacy of it? I will be advising the minister on that.

Mr BERKMAN: Can I just clarify quickly, Acting Chair?

ACTING CHAIR: Just briefly.

Mr BERKMAN: You referred to a planning study completed in 2019. Was that the Centenary Motorway planning study to which you referred?

Mr Scales: Yes, it was.

Mr BERKMAN: Okay. From what you said, it sounds like it did not arrive at firm conclusions about the inclusion of priority bus lanes on the motorway, or did it conclude not to include those lanes?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the supplementary question. The Centenary Motorway upgrade is mainly about vehicular travel rather than buses. They would have to be interspersed with normal cars, trucks and light vehicles.

Mr BERKMAN: So there are to be no priority bus lanes on the Centenary Motorway following that planning study?

Mr Scales: Not that I am aware of, no.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. That was quick. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 11.30 am continuing with the examination of the estimates for the transport and main roads portfolio.

Proceedings suspended from 11.00 am to 11.30 am.

ACTING CHAIR: Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now continue its examination of the proposed expenditure for the transport and main roads portfolio. Before we go to questions, Minister, I believe you have some more information about one of the questions asked previously?

Mr BAILEY: I refer to earlier questions from the member for Chatsworth in relation to Cross River Rail and changes in cash flows in the PPP table of the Report on State Finances at page 5-49. I am advised that the table is an aggregation of the net cash flows of all state PPPs, not just the Cross River Rail PPP. The Cross River Rail PPP achieved financial close on 1 July 2019 and thus was not included in the financial year 2019 information which was disclosed as at 30 June 2019. The Cross River Rail PPP has now been included in the financial year 2020 information for the first time. This accounts for a proportion of the variance between the years along with the movements in the valuation of other completed transactions. For example, the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing also achieved financial close during financial year 2020. There has been no cost blow-out as suggested by the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: My question is to the director-general. Mr Scales, I refer to QTRIP page 25 and the item Rollingstock Expansion Project. This item is the 20 new trains to operate on Cross River Rail. I note that over half of the spend occurs after 2024, so exactly how many of the 20 new trains will be in service at the time Cross River Rail opens in 2024 or, apparently now, 2025?

Mr Scales: As to how many trains will be delivered, we want all 20 trains available for the opening of Cross River Rail. The cash flows are as you have just said in QTRIP. Until we get the manufacturer on board, as I said in answer to an earlier question—they will be giving us when the trains will be actually delivered. That cash flow you have is the best we have at this point in time, but it does indicate 2025, which I think is when we will be opening Cross River Rail.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, why will all of the trains not be ready when Cross River Rail opens, potentially?

Mr BAILEY: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair. There is clearly an imputation in that question. It is very loaded.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will rephrase it: will the new trains be ready in time for the Cross River Rail opening?

Mr Scales: Yes, they will.

Mr BAILEY: And they will be made in Queensland.

Mr MINNIKIN: I would like to move on to the second M1. I refer to the Capital Statement at page 83 regarding the Coomera Connector. Director-General, on what date will a motorist be able to actually drive on the road?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. I will go through a bit of a preamble first. The Coomera Connector will be a new north-south transport link between Loganholme and Nerang. Located east of the M1, it will be supporting the future transport needs of that area, which, as we all know, is very fast growing. As the minister said earlier, \$1.53 billion has been committed by the Australian and Queensland governments on a fifty-fifty basis for the southern section.

We have put out to industry and we had an industry briefing on 1 December 2020. A reference design and business case are currently being developed for stage 1. Upon approval of the business case, construction of stage 1 is expected, as the minister said, to commence mid 2021. We have broken it up into three packages: stage 1 north, Shipper Drive, Coomera, to Helensvale Road, Helensvale; stage 1 central, Helensvale Road, Helensvale, to Smith Street Motorway, Molendinar; and stage 1 south, Smith Street Motorway, Molendinar, to Nerang Broadbeach Road, Nerang.

Construction of stage 1—that is the full stage 1—is to be completed by the end of 2025. What we will be looking to do—I cannot give you any further information at this point because we are still not through the construction phase—is open in stages on that sort of basis. I cannot give you an exact date

at this point in time. I am not avoiding the question, but it would be speculation on my part. We are looking to open it end to end for traffic from mid 2024. If that helps: end to end mid 2024, but it is progressively from that point till 2025. The first vehicles on the road will be mid 2024, if that helps.

Mr MINNIKIN: It certainly does help. Director-General, in relation to the Coomera Connector, or second M1, how much funding was sought from the federal government in this year and across the forward estimates?

Mr Scales: The cash flows that we sought from the federal government were a fifty-fifty commitment. We got their matching, so it is a \$1.53 billion project. The cash flows ramp up as we ramp up construction. If the question is how much is in this financial year, you will see that there is not a great deal in this financial year but it ramps up as the construction—

Mr MINNIKIN: Very, very little, I saw.

Mr Scales: The reason for that is that we have to do the geotech and we have to make sure all the surveys are done. We have most of the land and we gazetted the land on three different dates, which is actually before the committee. You will see activity on ground and then it will ramp up. That is why the cash flows are as they are.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, when was the funding of the federal government officially sought, approximately?

Mr Scales: I do not have a date, but I am sure that the minister will have written to the Deputy Prime Minister at a point in time. If I take you back to when we actually started gazetting the road, we started gazetting the road some years ago—the final bit being gazetted on 15 March last year. It has been in the forward program for a while.

Mr MINNIKIN: Given that half of the funding for the Coomera Connector is beyond the forward estimates, you are saying that, just to be very clear, in relation to the project stage 1—that is 16 kilometres or thereabouts—that will be finalised in 2024?

Mr Scales: The first stage will be progressively opened from 2024 to 2025. That is the plan.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is still a few years away.

Mr BAILEY: It is a big project. You cannot build a big project overnight.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you for the commentary.

ACTING CHAIR: Just a minute. I am struggling to hear some of the comments. Maybe that is a good thing. If you are speaking, please speak clearly so I can hear properly.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, is the government considering road upgrades through the Eagleby Wetlands or Daisy Hill conservation area, just to be crystal clear?

Mr Scales: We have not done that work yet. That is a policy matter for government.

Mr MINNIKIN: So no work done at all yet on that?

Mr Scales: We have started outline work but we have not completed that work. We are concentrating on the southern section.

Mr MINNIKIN: So outline work only? Thank you, Mr Scales.

ACTING CHAIR: Just clarifying that answer, Mr Scales, what was your last comment? Completion work?

Mr MINNIKIN: 2024, I believe.

ACTING CHAIR: Okay. Continue.

Mr Scales: That was for the southern section. For the northern section we have not completed the planning work yet. That is in train.

Mr MINNIKIN: Just for clarification, that was the Eagleby Wetlands tranche, Mr Acting Chair. Moving on, if I may, this is a further question in relation to the CEO of Queensland Rail, if I could ask a few questions to Mr Easy, please. Mr Easy, the Strachan inquiry made 36 recommendations and the government has accepted all of those 36 recommendations. Noting the answer to question on notice 9, which says that recommendations 35 and 36 are still outstanding, can you please outline why these recommendations are not fully implemented, given it is almost four years since the Strachan report?

Mr Easy: I thank the honourable member for the question. With respect to the Strachan commission of inquiry, there were 31 recommendations that were relevant to Queensland Rail. Recommendations 35 and 36 were not the responsibility of Queensland Rail, so that is a question probably best directed to the department or the director-general.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Easy. What is the full cost of implementing the recommendations of the Strachan report? What has been the cost to the taxpayer to date to implement the Strachan inquiry report recommendations?

Mr Easy: I thank the honourable member for the question. That has been answered in the questions on notice. What I can report is that in the financial year 2019-20 the costs spent on the recommendations were \$733,000. We expect to have all of the recommendations applicable to Queensland Rail closed out by the end of this year, so there will be no more expenditure to taxpayers or for Queensland Rail regarding the completion or further work on the recommendations.

Mr MINNIKIN: Just for clarification, I believe that every recommendation apart from 35 and 36 have been implemented, so with regard to every recommendation that pertains to Queensland Rail—1 to 34, or whatever it pertains to—have they all been implemented now from Queensland Rail's perspective, the ones that are relevant to Queensland Rail?

Mr Easy: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am not sure where you get your information from, but what I have answered is that there are two recommendations pertinent to Queensland Rail that have to be closed off and signed off by the Citytrain Response Unit. The two recommendations are relevant to two items. One is to do with communications via TransLink to customers, particularly in the event of services that are interrupted. We have done the work to respond to that recommendation. We believe that we have closed that out. That recommendation and material is before the Citytrain Response Unit for consideration and we do understand and expect that that will be closed out prior to the end of the year. The other recommendation is to do with structural surplus, and that was a recommendation that was considering the appropriate and optimum number of resources to service the timetable and the services that we are delivering each day to our customers. The important aspect of that work was considering the appropriate level of overtime that should be considered for the resourcing.

In the Strachan inquiry there was quite a lot of information around overtime and there was an indication that perhaps a zero level of overtime might be appropriate. We have done benchmarking across other operators around Australia. We have looked at how we optimise our resources and support overtime. Importantly, our operation and any rail operation in Australia or indeed around the world does have a level of overtime. It is a shift environment and we do expect that there will be overtime. Overtime is used for a range of things. It is used for special events, it is used for training and it is also used to support the timetable. The work we have done in considering what is an appropriate structural surplus for the organisation would suggest that overtime in the order of 9½ per cent to 12½ per cent is an appropriate level of overtime. Again, that material has all been provided to the Citytrain Response Unit for consideration and we would expect that would also be closed out prior to the end of the year. Based on those two items, there would be no remaining recommendations for Queensland Rail to close out.

ACTING CHAIR: Director-General, do you have more information?

Mr Scales: Just to help the member for Chatsworth and his question, 35 and 36 are Citytrain Response Unit ones and 36 is particularly complicated because it relies on the overall organisation of the network. Recommendation 35 is that the Citytrain Response Unit independently assures, monitors and reports on the progress of the implementation of the Strachan industry requirements, so Mr Easy cannot answer 35 because that is the oversight.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, he has made that clear.

Mr Scales: And 36 is the really complicated bit that follows 1 to 34.

Mr MINNIKIN: As very complicated as it is, the reality is that after four years not all 36 have been implemented, so thank you for that information. I want to go back to Mr Easy in relation to something you alluded to, and that is the overtime bill. Could you please advise the forecast overtime bill for train drivers and guards for this current financial year in dollars—not percentage, in dollars, raw dollars?

Mr Easy: Certainly. I thank the honourable member for the question. The budget for the 2020-21 financial year for train crew is \$24.3 million.

Mr MINNIKIN: Sorry, but if you could just repeat that—24 point—

Mr Easy: It is \$24.3 million. Just for context, in 2019-20 it was \$28.3 million, so it is a significant decrease on the previous year.

ACTING CHAIR: Can you clarify in terms of, as the member asked, percentages to give us more context?

Mr Easy: Sorry, but I think the member is referring to—there are a number of ways of expressing utilisation of overtime. There is another measure which is the percentage of overtime hours worked as a percentage of total hours worked. I am happy to furnish that information to the committee as well, and I will use 2016-17 as the reference point. For drivers that number was 23.4 per cent and guards was 18.8 per cent. In 2019-20 that was reduced for drivers to 13.02 per cent, so that is a reduction from 23.4 per cent to 13.02 per cent, and for guards it was 10.86 per cent, which was a reduction from 15.5 per cent. In both those instances, as a percentage, there are significant reductions and in a budget sense the forecast budget for the financial year 2020-21 is also a reduction.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Easy, going back to percentages, I think you said something between nine per cent and 12 per cent would be what you would define as the norm. What would the \$24.3 million be as a percentage? Given that you have mentioned this nine per cent to 12 per cent or 12½ per cent band, how would the \$24 million compare?

Mr Easy: I thank the honourable member for the question. That would be something that I might need to seek some advice on. However, if I do look at the last six months in terms of where we sit within that range, we are operating within that range today and we are also operating within our budget. So I am comfortable that with respect to the benchmarking and the work we have done to define what is an appropriate level of structural surplus we are within those parameters.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you very much for your answer, Mr Easy, but if I could get that calculation done that would be appreciated.

ACTING CHAIR: Director-General?

Mr Scales: Just for the benefit of the member for Chatsworth, you mentioned Eagleby and Daisy Hill. Just for the sake of the record, Daisy Hill is not part of the Coomera Connector at all, so I just make that really clear.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Scales.

Mr Scales: On the Eagleby side, although we have not done the work yet, it will not go through Eagleby. It is only in the vicinity of Eagleby, so it is not intended to go through there. I just thought I would put that to the member. So Daisy Hill does not connect at all and the other one is in the area.

Mr MINNIKIN: I appreciate that, Mr Scales. Given that the minister has not been definitive in relation to any specific mapping, I appreciate the commentary. Mr Acting Chair, my final question—

ACTING CHAIR: Hang on, member for Chatsworth. Just questions; we are not giving a running commentary here. Your next question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Again, back to Mr Easy. Mr Easy, how many drivers did the department have as at 30 June 2020 and how many drivers—and I stress here that I am talking drivers—are you forecast to have on 30 June 2021?

Mr Easy: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do not have the driver numbers at those dates that you are specifically referring to, but I am happy to report on the number of drivers as at 31 October. There are 289 drivers and 485 guards that have been trained and are now fully qualified and working on the South-East Queensland network. There are a further 59 trainee drivers and 64 trainee guards that are currently in training.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Easy. A further question through the chair?

ACTING CHAIR: No, actually. We will move on to government members. You can come back to that one. Put a bookmark on that one.

Mr MINNIKIN: I shall.

Mr WALKER: I have a question to the minister. I refer to the capital allocation for the smart-ticketing project as set out in Budget Paper No. 3. Can the minister outline what benefits smart ticketing will bring to the public transport system across Queensland?

Mr BAILEY: Thanks very much for the question, and it is a very good one because what we need is a ticketing system that is best practice that will increase the level of patronage on our public transport system and advances on from the go card system, which has its advantages, but we have to stay ahead of the curve. A \$371 million commitment from the Palaszczuk Labor government is absolutely that commitment.

For the very first time, on completion of this project, every Queensland public transport commuter, whether they are in Cairns, Townsville, Gold Coast, Brisbane or Ipswich, will have the very same ticketing system with a choice of multiple options on how to pay: mobile phone, smart watch, debit card,

credit card options will all come online. It means that people will board quicker and leave quicker and that means that we can get more services out of our asset base and our workforce. This is a fantastic project.

Regional Queensland is a very important part of this. This is a new system for 18 different regional areas as well as South-East Queensland. We have all sorts of different legacy systems in different areas, a whole lot of different local histories, but you can be almost guaranteed when you come to South-East Queensland they will not be the same. This system will be the same. It is not just good for Queensland residents, it is also good for tourists. If you are up to see the Barrier Reef and are spending a few days in Brisbane it will be the same system. That is only because of the foresight of this government that we are investing in smart tickets, a system that is now in play in cities like Chicago, London and others. It is a great innovation.

The go card did serve Queenslanders quite well, but this is a much more convenient payment system. It encourages people to use public transport more often. It is an account based system and it was the first in Australia. It allows you to choose your own preference, whatever you use. Some people prefer their watch, some prefer their phone, some prefer a card. It gives people a choice. For the first time Queensland customers will be able to set up an account via a new app or web platform and have the choice of several payment options. They will also be able to use major contactless credit and bank cards and wearable devices.

I can reassure people they will still be able to use their go cards under the new system. We want to give people the choice to use the payment method that is most convenient and comfortable for them. Where smart ticketing has been brought in there have been large numbers of people who have moved quickly onto it because they can see the advantages of it. It has been very successful where it has been brought in. It is part of our commitment to providing better public transport. We are not just investing in augmenting and adding to the rail network, through Cross River Rail, the Sunshine Coast rail duplication and the Gold Coast Light Rail, in a way the previous government did not, we want to make the user experience better for the customer. You have to be thinking about the commuter and the customer and if you are thinking like them then you will come up with innovations like this.

This system is modern, intuitive and accessible. It will be introduced with new readers and new improved fare gates as well. People will be able to manage and personalise their transit account options more effectively through the app or the website. It integrates their ticketing and journey planning options underpinned by real-time information. We will see bank grade security features in place for those choosing to use their credit cards and smart devices for payments, as well as privacy protections for commuters. The new system is being delivered by go card operator Cubic Transportation Systems who were successful following a competitive multiyear tender process. Cubic will draw on their global experience with proven technology and experience from other installations in London, Chicago and Vancouver.

Starting Monday I am very happy to announce to the committee that we will be launching our first trial for customers on the Gold Coast Light Rail, another great Labor legacy in Queensland. Tourism benefits will flow from the new system as tourists will be able to use one system across the state, as I have previously outlined. You get off the plane as a tourist and it is a very, very convenient system.

In July the artwork for the new ticketing system was rolled out on G:link tram No. 15 on the Gold Coast providing a spectacular visual image for Queenslanders and our visitors. I would also like to pay tribute to all our transport workers who have been out there on the trial engaging with the public. I saw them in action. People were very interested. They are doing a great job in terms of engaging with the public. We look forward to the further rollout of this system so that whether you live in Townsville, Maryborough or Brisbane you will have the same convenient ticketing system, which obviously gives us good data to run a good public transport system and know where the services need to go but is easy for people to use and if we can achieve some modal shift, of course, everybody who is a motorist will then get a benefit. If people are starting to use public transport more that means a better transportation system for everybody.

ACTING CHAIR: Can you outline the Palaszczuk government's investment in roads and rail on the Sunshine Coast and what benefits this provides to local businesses and jobs?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member and Chair for the question. The Sunshine Coast is somewhere I have been visiting very often, not just in the last term but over two terms. We have seen there a record spend of \$3.6 billion on road and rail infrastructure under the Palaszczuk Labor government supporting 3,200 local jobs. I think it is reasonable to speculate that the election of the

members for Nicklin and Caloundra are certainly related to the very strong record on the Sunshine Coast in terms of jobs, road and rail by this government. Other results also reflected that, with significant swings to the government in most seats on the Sunshine Coast.

What we saw as part of that package is \$3 billion going into upgrades on the Bruce Highway; \$35 million for the Bells Creek Arterial Road to get ahead of investment and draw other investment and jobs into the Sunshine Coast and the very fast growing area around Caloundra South; \$550 million for the Sunshine Coast rail upgrade where we see heavy construction work starting next year; and close to \$70 million in stimulus funding for local Sunshine Coast roads like Ridgewood Road, Steven Irwin Way, Beckmans Road intersection—and I know the member for Noosa has been strongly advocating for Beckmans Road.

Under this government this is funding that is locked and loaded, fully funded, and we are committed to it. We did see that some of this funding was going to be reallocated by the opposition to fund their version—the smaller version—of the M1. That would have seen our commitments in this budget to Beckmans Road, worth \$10.5 million, \$3.75 to Ridgewood Road at the Caloundra intersection there, \$18 million for Six Mile Creek Bridge, \$18 million for Steven Irwin Way from Beerburrum to Palmview; and \$19 million for the D'Aguilar Highway reallocated to fund the second M1 under the LNP. It would be very unfortunate for Sunshine Coast residents to be treated in such a shabby way.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr BAILEY: These are fully funded under this government and no doubt that is why the support for the government increased significantly across the Sunshine Coast, including in seats like Kawana, Buderim and Ninderry. We saw a very consistent lift in the level of support for the government because we back the Sunshine Coast.

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr BAILEY: It is a growing area and they are getting infrastructure that they need, both the road and rail. I hear a lot of murmuring. I am not sure what that is about. I sincerely look forward to working with the member for Caloundra and member for Nicklin. The member for Caloundra grew up in the area and has seen the area change enormously in his time. Having run three times now, he is absolutely committed to his community. I have now done many media conferences with him. He is not someone who sells out the Sunshine Coast at all. He backs it in all the way.

Mr WATTS: Point of order, Acting Chair. I am not sure this is in the SDS anywhere.

Mr BAILEY: I am referring to Sunshine Coast expenditure.

ACTING CHAIR: I am sure the minister is going to continue to adhere to the question's parameters.

Mr BAILEY: I know the member for Caloundra supports these investments in Sunshine Coast road and rail. He is emphatic about his support. I look forward to working with him much more as we go to many media conferences, many openings and many construction milestones. I will be on the Sunshine Coast regularly, as I have been over the last term in particular but over the last five and a half years. The Sunshine Coast is a growing area and we need to keep investing in infrastructure there. I absolutely look forward to working with all MPs on the Sunshine Coast who have a positive mind frame on this. I know the members for Caloundra and Nicklin are in that category.

Mr WALKER: Minister, regarding the capital allocation to projects in North Queensland as outlined in Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's plan is regarding roads and transport in the region and whether he is aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I know the member for Mundingburra is a furious advocate for Townsville and North Queensland. Having served four terms, I believe, on the Townsville City Council he is someone who is very committed to grassroots representation. I look forward to working more with him.

We are seeing a record QTRIP \$26.9 billion worth of investment in road, rail and ports across Queensland. Sixty-six per cent of that is being spent outside of the Brisbane region for a total of \$17.8 billion. We are seeing more than 16,000 direct regional jobs. Of course, Townsville and North Queensland will get their fair share of that with \$1.4 billion, supporting nearly 1,300 jobs. I have been to Townsville many times, backing in and working with the former members and the current members, making sure that North Queensland gets the infrastructure it deserves. We have also delivered already the first stage of Riverway Drive and we are fully funded now with joint funding for Riverway Drive stage 2. For Stuart Drive, as we have previously discussed in the committee, \$46½ million is a very substantial commitment to upgrades there and I thank the member for his advocacy.

On our investment in North Queensland, the government is very well represented, I have to say, with the three Townsville MPs, as well as four Far North Queensland MPs and the member for Mackay. This government is very heavily represented in regional areas. I know that the advocacy is very strong and strident and delivers results for North Queenslanders. We are seeing a \$12.6 billion fully-funded 15-year plan for the Bruce Highway with 33 projects underway. The inland freight route, of course, will benefit Townsville by bolstering that inland route so that those long-haul, really heavy combinations with very long distance destinations can save up to four or five hours with a bolstered inland freight route or second Bruce, as it has been called. We have seen \$4.8 billion in joint stimulus funding, as I have outlined, in five different stimulus packages in the past 12 months since the inland rail deal and the four packages around the COVID stimulus response, working with the federal government to get actual outcomes rather than the outrage of some.

We have seen \$12 million going to improve the truck access to the new Lansdown industrial precinct on the Flinders Highway south of Townsville. I have been glad to be out there many times in terms of that work. That is on top of the \$5 million previously invested to upgrade the intersection—and I believe it is now complete—on the Flinders Highway at Woodstock Giru Road to improve access there. There will be a lot of industrial opportunities in that precinct, which means jobs for North Queenslanders and, of course, the Drive It facility there, which the government backs 100 per cent.

We are seeing substantial support, as we have done throughout this government, backing in North Queensland investment. We have kept the port in public hands, we kept the rail line to Mount Isa in public hands and we are investing in them to make sure that the supply chain is as effective as it can be, but we also have to ensure that the road networks are in good shape too. We are seeing those investments continuing with a fully funded Bruce Highway plan—not a hoax or an unfunded plan, but a fully funded plan. North Queenslanders obviously understood that during the election. With your election and also the members for Townsville and Thuringowa, I look forward to working with all three of you to ensure that North Queenslanders are well represented and these projects are delivered.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to questions from non-government members.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Easy, the Strachan inquiry also recommended that there will be a five-year rolling forecast of demand and supply for train crew. Could you please advise the number of train crew required for the next four financial years?

ACTING CHAIR: I will allow that one through, but I ask the CEO to focus on the coming financial year. I understand that part of that question throws out into future years. There is obviously a plan, but there could well be some hypotheticals involved in that as it involves a number of different years of planning. I will ask the CEO to focus on what is involved in the coming year.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Acting Chair.

Mr Easy: We certainly have done work around resources to support future requirements and it was an important recommendation of the Strachan inquiry to make sure there is a pipeline of recruitment to support our service delivery. If you look at the funding for the financial year, the majority of that is through the transport services contract, which is around 88 per cent of our funding. That does include provision for train crew, both drivers and guards. The increase for the financial year 2020-21 includes additional expenditure of around \$10.5 million to support train crew in that pipeline of recruitment.

Mr MINNIKIN: One of the crucial things was that a five-year rolling forecast be undertaken as well. Can you assure the committee that you are actually on top of a five-year rolling forecast as per that recommendation of the Strachan inquiry?

Mr Easy: I can assure you that we do have modelling that we have prepared that assists us with our train crew requirements. Of course that needs to be reviewed on an annual basis and needs to be reviewed against the timetable and all of the operational readiness preparation attached to the future requirements. We are working very closely with the department on that.

ACTING CHAIR: Mr Scales, do you have anything to add?

Mr Scales: To help the committee and the member for Chatsworth, the department is working on a rail network strategy, a high-level one, that we will be giving to the minister for consideration soon. Obviously we were well advanced with the rail network strategy until COVID-19 occurred and then we ended up losing 80 per cent or more of our patronage. The patronage is actually slowly rising. The high-level rail network strategy will also drive Mr Easy's rail requirements going forward. Once we have done that and given it to the minister for his consideration, we will be a lot more able to answer your questions, I think.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Scales. I have one quick question to Mr Easy and then I will have a couple of questions for Mr Scales, if you do not mind, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Easy, what level of overtime has been factored into those calculations with the five-year rolling plan?

ACTING CHAIR: Once again, Mr Easy, if you do have those further figures it is good to focus on what is happening in the upcoming financial year or in the budget under consideration.

Mr MINNIKIN: With forward estimates, correct.

Mr Easy: I think it is important when we are talking about how we consider those future requirements that there are many variables. Overtime is not the only variable that needs to be considered in that. It is a consideration of many things including the train crew recruitments, planned leave requirements that are again specified in our enterprise agreements, levels of overtime, levels of availability, levels of unplanned leave. I am trying to stress that overtime is one consideration but there are many other matters that are factored into those future considerations and requirements.

Mr MINNIKIN: You do not have a specific quantum as part of that calculation of the overtime component?

Mr Easy: I do not have a number that I can give you today, no.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a couple of quick questions to the director-general in relation to the second Bruce Highway or inland freight route. I reference QTRIP and the ministerial foreword at page 5, on the inland freight route from Charters Towers to Mungindi as an important alternative to the Bruce Highway. Director-General, can you advise: when did planning and design work commence for this so-called second Bruce highway?

Mr Scales: As part of the Queensland Labor Party's 2020 policy document, 'A real Bruce plan', which is based on an 80-20 federal-state funding model, the government has committed \$200 million over five years towards the project that you have just referred to. It is a nationally accredited north-south key freight route, also known as the inland freight route. It is 1,184 kilometres from Mungindi on the New South Wales border to Charters Towers.

The freight route provides this well needed alternative because, as we all know, the Bruce gets cut when we have tropical cyclones. The policy document identifies \$109.71 million of existing commitments on the route, so there is already work being done. We are also taking advantage of the Roads of Strategic Importance, ROSI, early works funding that we have been able to secure from the federal government on the Townsville to Roma corridor in the Australian and Queensland governments' rural economic stimulus packages. Those committed investments, which are already there, include intersection upgrades, widening of priority sections, covert and bridge replacements, pavement strengthening and also progressive sealing. There is a lot of support from users and key people such as Gary Mahon, who is a member of the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council and his day job is with Queensland Trucking Association. To answer the member's question, that route is there already and has been there for a long time. It has already had work allocated to it through ROSI, but this coalesces the whole thing in the one solid commitment.

Mr MINNIKIN: Specifically, when will the first kilometre of bitumen be laid? In other words, at least say month and year—not day, but month and year.

Mr Scales: That probably requires a degree of speculation and I do not think it would help the committee if I was to speculate and get it wrong.

Mr MINNIKIN: There is nothing planned?

ACTING CHAIR: I think the minister is—

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to add to that more specifically. We already have \$125 million in joint funding locked in for upgrades along that route, and some of those works are already underway.

Mr MINNIKIN: So bitumen, ready to rock and roll?

Mr BAILEY: There is work underway along that route right now under the ROSI package.

Mr MINNIKIN: Including the first kilometre of bitumen?

Mr BAILEY: There is work underway right now, can I repeat, under the Roads of Strategic Importance on that freight route—right now. Member, you may not have driven it recently, but that is happening.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have driven it a lot, Minister.

Mr MILLAR: Director-General, when did the department discuss the project—that is, the inland freight route—with the federal government and how was that undertaken?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. We discuss a lot of things with our colleagues in the feds on a regular basis. We have very regular dialogue with my colleague Simon Atkinson who is my equivalent down in federal land. We have a number of discussions on not just existing projects but future projects. On this particular one, I would have to check. My minister might be able to help because it is a policy matter.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to add to that. When the policy was released during the campaign, I wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister as a courtesy to inform him of our policy. Subsequently, now that the government has been re-elected, I have written formally to the Deputy Prime Minister to commence the process of discussing the matter with the federal government. We have had a very good relationship with the federal government, in particular in the last 12 months, when it comes to road funding in Queensland. I look forward to continuing that process. One can understand with the budget and estimates being the main focus of the last few weeks, I have not had the opportunity to meet the Deputy Prime Minister to talk face to face about this matter, but I am sure we will be able to in the coming couple of months when both of our diaries allow us the time to do so.

Mr MILLAR: Director-General, is the whole project reliant on federal funding of 80 per cent? By that, I mean if the federal government does not contribute funding, will the state government still expend its \$200 million?

ACTING CHAIR: There is a high degree of inference and hypotheticals in that question. Member, do you want to recast your question to avoid those parts offending standing orders?

Mr MILLAR: Will the state government be expending \$200 million on this inland freight route and does that include the federal government's funding?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. It relies on an 80/20 funding split. As to whether or not we are successful, I would sincerely hope we would be because this is an existing route that will help us in times when we have flooding on the Bruce. It is a highly used route and it is a good alternative to the Bruce as it stands. As to whether the state would commit the \$200 million to this particular route if our federal colleagues did not come to the party on 80 per cent, it would be a matter for the minister, I would have thought.

Mr BAILEY: I can add to that. The government has made a very clear commitment. The \$200 million is a clear commitment, member for Gregory. We will absolutely invest in the road. As well as the current commitments and the projects that are underway under the Roads of Strategic Importance program, there is \$125 million there. We are seeing considerable investment on this inland freight road. Do we want to see more happen? Absolutely. We will be talking to the federal government about it because it is a strong economic enabler and it is a piece of policy that the Queensland Trucking Association, the RACQ and the Transport and Logistics Council all back 100 per cent. They are all very key stakeholders in our freight economy, as well as our road economy with RACQ, so this is a very strong piece of policy and we look forward to implementing it.

Mr MILLAR: Director-General, I note that a significant destination for freight using the proposed inland route would be the Port of Brisbane via the Warrego Highway. Given the issues with the Bremer River Bridge that limit the use of large truck combinations, do you acknowledge that the Warrego will be a weak link in the chain when it comes to activating the proposed inland freight route?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question—

Ms PUGH: Point of order. That sounds like they are asking for an opinion rather than a question about the budget.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Mount Ommaney, it assumes a level of knowledge on this bridge over the Bremer. Bearing in mind it is asking on policy and there is some assumption there, I will let that one through, but if the director-general could answer that in a broadish way. Obviously if it refers to policy, refer it to the minister.

Mr Scales: We are aware of where the constraints are on the whole network and we are working very closely with our colleagues not only at federal level but also at local authority level to improve the network as much as we possibly can. The Warrego Highway has 20 projects on it now—\$635 million. I am aware of that particular bridge and I am aware of the load constraints, but we will get to it all eventually. I cannot give you a timetable on it, but if we are talking about this particular bridge, it will be a matter of policy for the minister. It is not just that bridge on the network; there are a lot of bridges, as the member would be aware. We will get around to them all eventually.

Mr BOYCE: Minister, the federal government has committed \$20 million of a total \$25 million spend to replace the John Peterson Bridge over the Boyne River at Mundubbera. Why is this project being pushed out to the 2023-24 budget for delivery? It is an old, dangerous bridge with a fatality occurring there recently. It is also the most important transport link to the north and south for the local area.

ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I am not sure where that would be best directed to.

Mr BAILEY: I will take that question. I was out there at the bridge when we announced the funding with a range of rural and local government representatives. We are very happy to partner with the federal government to get that work done. There is design work to be done, as with any \$25 million project, so there is a bit of work to do there. We have to see that process through to completion before we can construct the bridge. That is the normal process that any road project would have. If there are opportunities for us to complete the work sooner, I am happy to look at them.

Mr MINNIKIN: My question is to the Queensland Rail CEO, Mr Easy. While Mr Easy is walking to the table, in the interests of time I am referring to SDS, volume 2, page 156, regarding passenger transport services, in particular the delivery of train services. Mr Easy, I note that recently published data showed an alarming spike in signals passed at danger, SPAD. It jumped from approximately 1.74 SPADS per million train kilometres to 1.89 in September, an almost 10 per cent increase. In October, there were 1.94 SPADS per million train kilometres, significantly higher than any time in the last 18 months. Specifically, Mr Easy, what happened?

ACTING CHAIR: Before you answer, can you explain to the members and everyone around what exactly a SPAD is?

Mr Easy: A SPAD stands for 'signal passed at danger'. It is effectively when a train passes onto a section of the network without authority; it passes through a red signal. Often when they occur, they are very short distances past the signal, but at Queensland Rail we take this very seriously and it is very important whenever a SPAD occurs that there is a very strong investigation around each of those SPADs. It is important to acknowledge that we have a task force that works with the unions and the workforce around the management of SPADs.

We had a rate at 1.73 at the end of the 2019-20 financial year. We have seen a slight increase in the SPADs over the last two months, but I am also very pleased to report that in November that rate has dropped again. We had two SPADs in the month of November. There are some cycles and some changes that occur around SPADs. If you look at the history around this period of time, we often see a slight spike in the numbers on the network. Nevertheless, we are taking them seriously and I am pleased to report a reduction in November. We would expect over time—it is a rolling average—that rate to decrease again.

Mr MINNIKIN: The fact is that there was a 10 per cent increase. How effective has the prevention task force been?

ACTING CHAIR: Bear in mind that you are asking for an opinion on that. I will let that one through. Answer that question as you see fit, Mr Easy.

Mr Easy: The task force has been in operation for some time. If you go back 18 months to two years ago, the rate was well over two. I think what we have seen is a very effective task force. We work very collaboratively with the workforce and the unions. Our train crew take this matter very seriously, as we do within management. We continue to work with the workforce. SPADs occur on all networks around Australia and around the world. If you look at our rate in comparison to other operators in Australia, you will find that our SPAD rates are quite low and certainly less than what you see elsewhere. We are quite proud of the rate we have, but clearly there is more work to do and we will continue with that focus.

Mr MINNIKIN: But given the 10 per cent increase in SPADs, can you rule out that excessive overtime is not a contributing factor?

Mr BAILEY: One month's set of figures, what a joke.

ACTING CHAIR: We might come back to that. We will bookmark that one. We will move to government questions.

Mr WALKER: Regarding the capital allocations to the Mount Isa line project as set out in Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister give an update on the improvements to the Mount Isa line and what this investment means for the economic recovery, improving certainty on the line and jobs in regional Queensland?

Mr BAILEY: I am very happy to talk about the Mount Isa rail line—a rail line stopped from privatisation by this Palaszczuk Labor government. It was on the chopping block and would have gone if the Newman government had been re-elected with the member for Chatsworth as the assistant minister for public transport. We saved it from being privatised—

Mr MINNIKIN: You have been referred to as foolish by the CCC, though.

Mr BAILEY: We have also bolstered it significantly. What we saw was an extraordinary weather event in 2019, the likes of which is very rare. It demolished large sections of the rail line. In fact, it engulfed it. There was literally water over the top of it. It was a huge project to restore it.

Fundamentally, we know it is a really important part of the supply chain from the minerals province to port and then out to our export markets. It is a 1,000-kilometre rail line. We have not only repaired it but also bolstered it significantly in terms of the quality of the line, reducing the travel time to get minerals to port. While it was offline, we increased the flood mitigation along the line to increase its resilience during extreme weather events. You can be assured that we continue to invest in the Mount Isa rail line and we will keep it in public hands. There is no doubt about that at all. I know you support me in doing that.

Queensland Rail invested \$64.3 million into maintenance and capital improvement in the last financial year. In 2020-21, \$57.6 million is planned to be invested in the line. The Palaszczuk government recently committed further projects to be delivered as part of a \$50 million investment in the line. That covers things like flood resilience, replacement of ageing rail equipment like sleepers and ballast, as well as the potential for enabling double-stack containers on rail services. There are obvious productivity advantages if that is achievable. It is something we are looking at. It would have a standard container and a half height to run from Mount Isa to Stuart and potentially to the port at Townsville.

The business case on that initiative is being finalised by the end of this year. I look forward to seeing that and working with you on that. It will finalise the cost of such an initiative, investigate the engineering viability and ensure that the demand is there to make it economic. The engineering viability would include obtaining the appropriate clearance under various structures and allowing sufficient height to enable the multistacking. It would be the first of its kind on the Queensland Rail network. We look forward to seeing the business case and what it might have in store.

The flood recovery works that we did along the line were very important. I was out there on site not long after it was damaged. The damage and the overturned train that had been engulfed by floodwaters took quite a clean-up. It is now complete. There were a lot of workers in towns along the line heading out to Mount Isa who did a magnificent job in incredible conditions. I cannot commend enough those workers who were working out there all day every day in 42 degree temperatures.

In terms of our plan for mineral freight exports on the Mount Isa line, there is a \$360 million investment by the Palaszczuk Labor government over five years to maintain and improve the line. There is a \$30 million allocation for a new common user freight terminal at Townsville, with the Port of Townsville providing the remaining \$18 million. To further drive the shift of freight from road to rail, we have an \$80 million commitment over four years from two budgets ago to subsidise rail access charges on the Mount Isa line for our minerals province. Since announcing the scheme, five quarterly payments have been made, totally \$23½ million, to help industry. To date, the Mount Isa Line Incentive Scheme has seen over 7.4 billion gross tonne kilometres moved on the Mount Isa line, and a total of 4.7 million tonnes of freight was moved on the Mount Isa line in 2019-20.

These investments will deliver great certainty for the industries that rely on the Mount Isa line and will continue to generate regional jobs. Member, you would be very familiar with how important that is. That is our commitment. Unlike the commitment to sell it off when the member for Broadwater, then a previous member for Mundingburra, tried to sell off the port—

Mr MINNIKIN: Labor did sell them.

Mr MILLAR: You sold Queensland Rail.

Mr MINNIKIN: You sold Queensland Rail.

ACTING CHAIR: Order!

Mr MINNIKIN: Short memory.

Mr BAILEY: It seems that some members of the committee are still as committed to those sorts of principles as ever, judging by their interjections. You can be assured that Labor will keep investing in North Queensland and our public assets to enhance them and create jobs. That is our commitment. We will not cut train driver training like the member for Chatsworth did. We certainly will not be cutting projects like—

Mr MINNIKIN: Some 472 cut services—hopeless.

Mr BAILEY:—Cross River Rail. We are providing more rail services than have ever been provided in Queensland.

Mr MINNIKIN: Hopeless. Rail fail.

Mr BAILEY: It is very easy to rhyme two words together, member for Chatsworth, but it is a lot harder to actually deliver projects.

Mr MINNIKIN: You try and do it.

Mr BAILEY: And nitpick. This is a government that will not be distracted by nitpicking.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair.

Mr BAILEY: Speaking of nitpicking.

Mr MILLAR: What is the relevance of this to the budget?

ACTING CHAIR: If the minister could return to the question, that would be good.

Mr BAILEY: I am just covering our commitment to rail. We are seeing heavy investment, not cuts like we have seen in the past by other governments. Investment, jobs, infrastructure—that is what this government stands for and we will back North Queensland all the way.

ACTING CHAIR: Regarding the road safety performance standards set out in the SDS, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's approach is to improving road safety and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: When it comes to responsibilities as Minister for Transport and Main Roads, road safety is certainly one of the most important I have. I take it very seriously. I think our record of reform in terms of road safety has been very strong and continues to be very strong. The Queensland road safety strategy has been in place and we have seen a range of outcomes. Last year was the lowest ever year in terms of fatalities in Queensland since records began 50 years ago. Unfortunately, this year we have seen an increase, which has been regrettable. We are certainly concerned to see that happening. Although, after a record low year last year there is probably a bit of context there. Road safety specialists tend to look at a five-year average in terms of trends. We want to see fatalities driven down even further.

In terms of the fatal five causes of road trauma that continue to feature in deaths and serious injuries on our roads, we see 20 per cent of fatalities caused by speeding and 27 per cent caused by being unrestrained—that is, not wearing a seatbelt. I find it extraordinary that people still do that. We are taking that on. I will cover that in a moment. Some 49 per cent were crashes related to alcohol and illicit drug use. We still have a way to go there. While our police do a magnificent job in terms of random breath testing units and getting out there and enforcing, we still have some way to go.

Under our Road Safety Action Plan, our major achievements over 12 months include \$140 million in targeting road safety program funded safety upgrades on our road system, and over \$71 million will be spent on projects that include safety improvements benefiting vulnerable road users throughout Queensland between 2018-19 and 2021-22. Our flashing school zone sign program has done over a thousand schools now which is very good in terms of protecting our primary school kids. Our action plan also includes regional consultation. We have had forums, for instance, in places like Maryborough and Rockhampton.

We have our Co-Lab youth innovation challenge which we remain committed to. I think it is important that in this road safety space we have young people designing programs to engage with young people. The older we get the more remote we get from the culture around young people. We continue that each year where the winning campaign gets fully shot and promoted on digital media. I think it is a really good program.

I want to say a couple of things about distraction and seatbelt use. The new cameras that we have been trialling this year were pioneered in New South Wales by an innovator there. I sought to have those trialled in Queensland as quickly as possible. The distraction of using your mobile phone while you are driving means you are not looking at the road and you are not ready for the unpredictable that happens when we all drive. I am very clear about this.

We dealt with alcohol and drink-driving with random breath testing and we saw massive reductions in fatalities once RBT started coming in and people realised they would definitely get caught. We have to have the same approach to distraction. The cameras that we have been trialling in the

Queensland context I am very keen and committed for them to roll out across the state and that they be used randomly—that they are not just fixed but move to any part of the network so that, if you are using your mobile phone illegally and endangering the lives of others on the road, you will be caught.

The innovation that I want to see happen as well is that this technology picks up if you are not wearing a seatbelt. What we see is that more than a quarter of our fatalities are people not wearing a seatbelt. While noncompliance is expected to be about four or five per cent, their over-representation in fatalities is quite tragic.

I look forward to the rollout of those cameras across Queensland, not just on distraction but also on people not wearing a seatbelt. They will be rolled out across Queensland. They will be done randomly. I look forward to keeping the committee and the public engaged with that. People will get fair notice. I think there has been a lot of publicity already that they are coming. They will be important armouries in driving down the number of fatalities on our roads.

ACTING CHAIR: Briefly, before we go to opposition questions, regarding the capital allocations for rolling stock expansion project, can you outline the steps the Palaszczuk government is taking to revitalise Queensland's rail manufacturing industry and how it will support the economic recovery by investing in regional jobs and businesses?

Mr BAILEY: This budget lays the foundation for a new era in rail manufacturing in Maryborough in our state of Queensland. It locks in a billion dollars worth of rail manufacturing pipeline for Maryborough and for Queensland. That includes \$600 million for the first 20 new Queensland built trains for Cross River Rail. Train manufacturers have been invited to bid in a procurement process to build them in Maryborough—our great rail heritage city.

The government has also guaranteed that any future order for additional trains beyond the first 20 for Cross River Rail will be built in Maryborough by Queensland workers, not by overseas workers. We will make sure that they are disability compliant—I can assure you of that—something that was not achieved by those opposite in the previous government.

The government has also committed a million dollar business case for the replacement of iconic regional trains—like the *Spirit of the Outback*, *The Westlander* and *The Inlander*—which are now becoming quite old in terms of fleet life. The carriages for these new regional trains will be built in Maryborough. The next generation of trains that travel across our state will be built by Queensland workers. This new era of train manufacturing will support up to 690 new jobs. The Palaszczuk Labor government also believes in leveraging regional rail manufacturing in terms of the supply chain to include, for instance, the Rockhampton rail yard site. Rockhampton has a great history there and will be included in part of that regional supply chain.

We will be working to secure the land to establishment a rail maintenance, manufacturing and logistics centre. This commitment adds to other Labor commitments to regional rail jobs, including \$2½ million invested to upgrade the Queensland Rail Portsmith rail maintenance facility in Cairns, where I was happy to visit relatively recently. We are also growing work at the Redbank workshops in Ipswich and commit to maintaining Queensland's rail maintenance depots in Townsville, supporting 234 local jobs.

We are committed to keeping Queensland Rail in public hands and we will continue to invest in better manufacturing facilities. I think I have covered it fairly well. I do not want to stir up the opposition members of the committee any further. Our record on rail is incredibly strong. Whether it is building and expanding the network with Cross River Rail, the Sunshine Coast rail duplication or the Mount Isa line, we have a very strong record.

We reformed the disability provisions so that the disability community is heavily involved in the design and that all different kinds of disability are taken into account in the design. It should have been done in the first place. It is regrettable that it was not. Rail, not just in terms of our freight economy in regional Queensland but also our tourism economy up and down the coast, and also our commuter needs in South-East Queensland are very important as we see population growth continue. You can be absolutely assured that this Labor government will continue to back rail all the way, and we will do it competently and thoroughly in a way that has not always been the case before we were elected.

ACTING CHAIR: I will go to the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: I refer to SDS volume 2 and the departmental overview on page 2-147 and, in particular, 'maintaining efficient, reliable and safe transport infrastructure'. I have some questions, if I may, to the director-general. The Queensland audit report No. 4 showed that TMR faced a \$4 billion

renewal backlog for its road network as at 30 June 2017. This was forecast to increase to over \$9 billion in the following 10 years. Mr Scales, could you advise the amount of the maintenance backlog as at 30 June 2020 and the forecast maintenance backlog as at 30 June 2021?

Mr Scales: Before I do that, I think it would be useful for the committee for me to give a bit of background because the numbers seem to be rather large.

Mr Minnikin: Extremely large.

Mr Scales: Firstly, we have done quite a bit on the technology side. Firstly, we have something called iPAVe, which is a large truck that goes around the network. It is an intelligent pavement assessment vehicle. It is a truck like no other. Basically, it has seven lasers which pick up deflections as it moves over the road. It collects data as it moves along, including video imagery to monitor the response of the pavement under load. We get continuous pavement deflection profiles from this. It has very high accuracy and resolution. The whole point of this is that it allows us to better determine where to spend our maintenance dollars. One pass is needed. It operates at traffic speed. There are more data measurements than static testing. There is no traffic control required, so it is safe. It is also measuring roughness, rutting, texture and cracking. So the first bit is technology.

Mr MINNIKIN: Excuse me, Mr Scales, I do appreciate the background, but the clock is running and I would really like to get to the heart of the answer to my question—the quantum for June 2020.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I am finding this very relevant. I am a former councillor, so I love hearing about this kind of thing.

Mr Scales: I just need to give you the background and then I will give you the numbers and why the numbers are as they are. We have doppler lasers and we are using technology. We are also a member of the National Asset Centre of Excellence, so we are looking at what can we do on the maintenance side to keep the maintenance under control. We use foam bitumen, which is really good after a flood which we get a lot of. We are also using EME2, which is high-density pavement but it also takes 25 per cent less CO₂ to produce. We are also using drones—

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, through the chair, this is—

Mr Scales: I need to get this on the record, member, honestly, because it is a big number.

Mr MINNIKIN: I only have a certain amount of time to ask a lot of pertinent questions on behalf of the taxpayers of Queensland.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I do understand that. I understand where we are going with this.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to add to the director-general's—

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, Acting Chair, I did not ask the minister. My question was deliberately to the director-general.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I am determining where this goes. Once again, I ask the director-general to continue his answer.

Mr Scales: I need to do this. I need to get it on the record. The first thing is technology. The second thing is unsealed roads. In 2012, when I first got this job, we had 4,737 kilometres of unsealed roads. We have reduced that to 3,919 kilometres—818 kilometres less. Once we have sealed something there is less maintenance.

We also have the advantage of a \$4.4 billion maintenance budget in QTRIP. The fourth element is QTRIP itself because it allows us to maintain part of the network with—

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, I have huge respect for you but I also respect the clock. My question is specifically: what is the backlog maintenance as at June 2020-21?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, cease your interjections. We are getting to the answer. It is just taking longer every time you jump in.

Mr Scales: The exact number is very difficult to—

Mr MINNIKIN: So you do not know.

Mr Scales: I will explain why.

ACTING CHAIR: We will ignore that interjection.

Mr Scales: If you just take an absolute number, it is affected by things like bitumen. Bitumen went up by 30 per cent earlier in the year. I think the more eloquent way to put it is the amount of road that requires rehabilitation or resurfacing has been reduced by 643 kilometres, which is about the same distance between Longreach and Mount Isa. I do not have a number for you yet because QTRIP only came out of the budget—

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, Director-General, we are here at estimates and you do not have figures for 2020 or 2021 in relation to backlog maintenance. I have further questions.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, the minister is furnishing some—

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, through the chair—

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to give a figure. The member wants a figure. I can give him a figure, but he does not seem to want to hear it.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. The question was to the director-general. We have a finite time for opposition questions. The member for Chatsworth wants to get through some questions. Allow him to do that. He has the answer from the director-general. Let's get on to the next question.

ACTING CHAIR: We have some more information being furnished. We will put this as a question from me coming off our time. Minister, can you furnish more information?

Mr BAILEY: I simply provide these numbers for the benefit of the committee. In QTRIP for this budget we see \$4.44 billion being allocated for maintenance, preservation and operation of the state controlled road network. That represents an increase of \$1.67 billion, or 60 per cent, over that allocated in the last year of the Newman government. We have seen a massive increase in maintenance, and it was actually maintenance that the LNP tried to cut.

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Chair. That is completely irrelevant. The question was the backlog maintenance figure blowout, not what is 'gunna be gunna be'. What is the figure?

Ms PUGH: Point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, the point of order was to me. It was not addressed to the minister.

Ms PUGH: I was going to say that the question was a government question coming off government time, so I do not know why the member is so upset.

ACTING CHAIR: Minister, do you have anything further to add to that?

Mr BAILEY: No.

ACTING CHAIR: The director-general is finishing his answer to the previous question.

Mr Scales: One final point. The updated estimate for the backlog at 30 June 2020 is due at February 2021. We do the work and then we will publish it in February 2021.

Mr MINNIKIN: I look forward to that answer. The State of the Assets Report also showed that 23 per cent of culverts had a condition rating of poor or very poor. Could the director-general advise the percentage of culverts with a rating of poor or very poor as at 30 June 2020 and the forecast for June 2021? In the interests of time, if that figure is not available until February next year I am prepared to move on to my next question.

Mr Scales: That is indeed when it will be ready.

Mr MINNIKIN: Can the director-general please advise the number of structures that have been classified as defective and therefore have a structure management plan in place as at 30 June 2020 and the forecast of the Structure Management Plan in place for 30 June 2020-21?

Mr Scales: We have 3,100 structures or thereabouts which we monitor, as I have said in my earlier answers, with new technology. I would have to look at the numbers to see where it is because it does change. One of the structures that is currently being worked on is the Captain Cook Bridge, so we are replacing all of the bearings on that. The other one is the Gateway flyover, which we are about to reopen because that structure has been strengthened adequately and sufficiently. I have to say that if you take the number of timber bridges in the network—for example, on the Peak Downs Highway we replaced four timber bridges with new structures, so the amount changes, not on a daily basis, but it does change a lot. February would be the time I would be able to give you a more fulsome answer because that is when we will have the results.

Mr MINNIKIN: I appreciate that, Mr Scales. Has any calculation been done on the economic impacts of these load limits on the freight sector in relation to driving Queensland's economy, or will that too be allocated or ascertained in February of next year?

Mr Scales: No, I can give a response on that now. If you take the Gateway flyover as an example, we reduce the operations to the centre of that structure and we put a camera there to make sure that people are—and I have to say that operators were adhering to that—going down the centre. Instead of going across that structure at 80 kph, for example, it would have reduced the speed to 60 kph, so there would have been a reduction in speed just for that bit of the structure by itself. In the event of flooding, tropical cyclones or whatever, we always look at the structures that have been impacted and we try and get them up and running as soon as possible.

I cannot speculate on the answer that you want because it changes depending on what the issue is. What we do do—and I think the flyover on the Gateway is a really good example of that—is not stop any of the loads. We just put them down the centre. We put a camera there so we could make sure they were adhering to the centre line—which they did do, which was really good—and that structure has now been modified. We will be advising the minister soon on when we are using the centre—

Mr MINNIKIN: Next year?

Mr Scales: No. It will be very soon.

Mr MINNIKIN: Wonderful. Mr Scales, what will the asset sustainability ratio be for the financial year 2020-21? The asset sustainability ratio, what will that be?

Mr Scales: That is a very good question. I cannot really speculate on that for the reasons I have given before. We are looking at the maintenance budget and we are looking QTRIP, all of which will have an effect on that particular ratio.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, why isn't the government prioritising road maintenance? What is going on?

Mr BAILEY: I will take that question even though it is full of imputations, Mr Acting Chair. Let's be very clear: the representations here by the member for Chatsworth are just simply not accurate whatsoever. We see that maintenance preservation operation is 60 per cent higher in the budget than it was in the last year of the Newman government when he was the assistant minister for public transport.

Mr MINNIKIN: Audit report No. 4, backlog maintenance under your watch—

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, cease your interjections. If it happens again I am going to warn you under the standing orders. I have been telling you all day to cease your interjections.

Mr BAILEY: The member does protest too much. Since the QAO audit report was finalised, the total length of the state controlled road network that requires rehabilitation and resurfacing has been reduced by 643 kilometres. This comprises 854 kilometres that has been eliminated from the length of the network requiring road resurfacing treatments, offset by an additional 211 kilometres requiring rehabilitation.

Can I also add that the member seems to have overlooked question on notice No. 3 tabled yesterday, which sets out details of the stimulus projects. There are a whole range of projects strengthening culverts and structures as part of the \$4.8 billion in stimulus funding flowing into Queensland in record levels under this government and the federal government working together to help our economy in terms of the COVID pandemic.

The final thing I would say is that in the costings that were released two days before the election the LNP was raiding the maintenance funding to pay for their puny little second M1 on the Gold Coast, which is not even half the length of ours. In the last election the LNP actually promised to cut maintenance in the double-counting botch-up by the member for Everton, supported by the member for Chatsworth, no doubt, and the member for Toowoomba North and others. The botch-up that occurred included raiding maintenance funding. I would say to opposition members: do not come to this committee trying to be pure as the driven snow on maintenance when it was the LNP that tried to cut maintenance without telling anybody, with a botch-up, by doubling counting in their costings, which was an enormous error. Fortunately, the people of Queensland saw through that. What we are seeing is more money going into both infrastructure and maintenance under this government than we have ever seen before. For those opposite to pretend that they are somehow paragons of virtue on this issue really is quite laughable.

Mr MILLAR: My question is to the director-general. This is in relation to the QTRIP document and at page 129 where it refers to the Peak Downs Highway from Clermont to Nebo and the Bee Creek bridge upgrade and planning. I refer to the 2019 QTRIP and \$500,000 for planning design of the Bee Creek Road bridge upgrade on the Peak Downs Highway which is used by large trucks transporting freight from mine sites to the port. The planning and design work should have been completed in 2019-20. This year's QTRIP refers to \$390,000 to complete the same project, it seems, which will not be completed until 2021. Can the director-general advise if the project has been delayed and if so why?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. Just for clarification, did you say Bee Creek?

Mr MILLAR: Yes, Bee Creek, 30 kilometres west of Nebo.

ACTING CHAIR: Director-General, that is a long preamble, but if you could briefly answer it, that would be great.

Mr Scales: I think we are working very hard on that particular road not just with Adani in particular but also with the other people who use it for transporting. As you well know, trucks go from the port to the mine site but they go back to the maintenance side on the port. At the moment, what we are looking at is what the best possible solution to that is. We are looking at a propping solution first, and then we would be looking at an adequate and sufficient bypass road, and then we would be looking at a solution for the actual road itself. It is not that it has been delayed; it has just become more complicated than we thought it would be originally. I thank the honourable member for the question. It is on our plan. We are going to prop it first and then get to a solution later.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to government questions.

Ms PUGH: My question is to the minister. I refer to page 3 of the Service Delivery Statement and transport and main roads vision and purpose of a transport network that is accessible for everyone. Can the minister update the committee on the Palaszczuk government's focus on transport options for all Queenslanders?

Mr BAILEY: Access to our public transport system for people who have disabilities is absolutely important. It is a very important human right. As of July 2020, almost 20 per cent of Queenslanders have a disability and, being a geographically diverse state, many people live in remote and rural areas. People are living longer so there is a number and proportion of people who are 65 years and over who can expect to live half of their remaining years with some level of disability obviously through the ageing process. We need to accommodate them in terms of our design and how we deliver a transport system.

What we saw was the regrettable situation where the NGR trains were ordered that were not disability compliant. We have committed an estimated \$511 million in upgrading stations to improve accessibility across the South-East Queensland network, and we will be ordering trains that have got the input of people with a range of different disabilities. I would like to say a big thank you to all of those different disability groups for giving us all of their corporate experience and knowledge of how people use public transport. That was used to go into the design as we rectify those trains in Maryborough with Queensland workers.

Under our Queensland Rail Station Accessibility Upgrade Program, 21 station upgrade projects are at various stages—from planning and design through to construction and completion. Accessibility upgrades generally deliver new footbridges with lifts and platform raising so there is not that big step up into the carriage. Other project features include accessible toilets, hearing aid loops, tactile floor and platform surfaces, lighting upgrades, improved CCTV and wayfinding signage, as well as new bicycle enclosures.

Since 2015 we have seen accessibility upgrades completed at Nambour, Dinmore, Graceville, Alderley, Newmarket, Strathpine, Morayfield and Boondall—with those last three completed relatively recently. Main construction has commenced at Auchenflower, Cannon Hill, Dakabin and Ipswich stations this year. The latest round of stations to be upgraded through the program has been announced and these stations include Banyo, Bundamba, Burpengary, Lindum, Morningside and Wooloowin. This new tranche includes full platform raising, setting a new standard for all future station upgrades to be delivered by Queensland Rail. We are also progressing the transit oriented developments proposed for Albion and Buranda stations and collaborating with TMR on planning to upgrade the Loganlea station.

As part of Cross River Rail, which only could happen under this government, we have contributed an additional \$57 million towards accessibility on some of the older stations on our network at Fairfield, Yeronga, Yeerongpilly, Moorooka, Rocklea and Salisbury as part of the Cross River Rail project. We have also allocated \$11.7 million to upgrade platform 1 at South Bank station to ensure better integration there with the Southpoint development and to deliver an improved facility for customers.

Queensland Rail is also rolling out a \$48.8 million program to partially raise low-level station platforms across the network. The four-year program, which started in June last year, will provide further improvements for customers while we continue to undertake full accessibility upgrades as part of the rolling Station Accessibility Upgrade Program. The project includes raising the core zone of the platform height to reduce the vertical gap between the station platform and the train, and that greatly increases access for customers. As at November 2020, the program had raised 33 platforms at 13 stations, and another four stations are planned to be delivered by July next year. Queensland Rail is investigating the options to reduce that horizontal gap between the platform and the train interface for high-level platforms.

In closing, we have formed the Queensland Accessible Transport Advisory Council as of September 2020. It is being chaired by retired District Court Judge Michael Ford. The TMR Accessible Transport Networks Team also launched an expression of interest process for membership which was open through to mid-November. Once appointed, members will provide independent strategic advice to the Palaszczuk government, TMR and also Queensland Rail on policy, accessibility, functionality and compliance matters for major Queensland transport projects. That is what should have occurred earlier, but we are proud to have ensured that that is the case and that design is included from the ground up, from the very beginning. We need a public transport system that takes those factors into account and that also includes all of our customers, no matter what their mobility needs might be.

Mr WALKER: Minister, regarding the capital allocations to the Bruce Highway and inland freight route, can the minister advise what this investment means for economic recovery and jobs in regional Queensland and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously the Bruce Highway and the inland freight route are both very important for regional Queensland, our economy and jobs. We have covered pretty well the fact that we have a fully funded, fully joint program on the Bruce Highway, worth \$12½ billion over 15 years, and that supports more than 2,400 Queensland jobs. I have been very glad to have had frequent visits to the Bruce. I drove the entire Bruce in 2017, which has been emulated by some others afterwards which is good to see. I always encourage people to do that.

The inland freight route is a very important part of the network as well. We need to see greater bolstering of that network—things like widenings, strengthenings and bridge improvements. We need to be bolstering that whole network so we can take some of those bigger heavier combinations and reduce the numbers of heavies on the Bruce Highway. At 1,600 kilometres, it is nearly twice the length of the Pacific Highway in New South Wales.

Some of the key safety outcomes we have been able to achieve include: 170 kilometres of pavement widening and wide centreline treatment, 76 overtaking lanes, 131 protected right turn slots installed, 13 new rest areas installed and 18 intersections signalised. We have seen a 28 per cent average reduction in the number of fatalities and a 14.7 per cent average reduction in the number of serious injuries from 2014 to 2019 in comparison to the 2013 crash records thanks to those ongoing investments.

In terms of our Real Bruce Plan, we are looking at flood mitigation to make the Bruce Highway more resilient. The Haughton River floodplain project will be completed next year. It is a huge site across a natural floodplain. We are seeing an elevation in terms of the road network, with a new bridge being put in that is much higher than the old one across the Haughton River. We are seeing the Gympie bypass which will take away a weak point in the Bruce Highway where it goes under at Gympie very easily. We have seen the Mackenzie Creek project south of Townsville also completed. We want to see a more resilient Bruce Highway, given that we are a tropical and subtropical state and that we do get impacted by cyclones, and that is important too.

In closing, in terms of key opportunities on the inland freight route, we believe that once fully complete it will reduce truck movements on the existing Bruce Highway by up to 49 per cent. It can cut travel freight times between North Queensland and key markets in Sydney and Melbourne. By doing the sort of things I outlined in terms of bridges, widenings and improving its quality to allow greater volume, there will be some real benefits to the freight industry, a very strong advocate of this project. This is very much about policy driven by a government that is in touch and listening to industry and industry being in touch with what is needed on the ground. We have been very happy to work with the Queensland Trucking Association, the RACQ and the Transport and Logistic Council. They all have been very supportive of this policy, because it means not just better reliability in terms of North Queensland and cutting freight times—and that means cutting the level of emissions when better routes are traversed—but also a safer Bruce Highway. Everybody in this room wants to see that.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, a question from me before we go to one final question from the opposition. Regarding capital allocations into Moreton Bay in Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister advise the Palaszczuk government's plan recording roads and transport in the region? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: Thank you very much for the question, Acting Chair. I acknowledge your very long history of advocating for and working with Moreton Bay communities as a local councillor as well as in your current role as a member of parliament. I enjoy working with you and will continue working with you, because it is a huge growth area in terms of South-East Queensland as well as our state. The Moreton Bay region and the Sunshine Coast will benefit from \$3.6 billion of investment, supporting 3,200 local jobs. Our investment includes the government's \$2.1 billion congestion-busting road plan for Moreton Bay commuters. The job-boosting plan is looking at a new arterial road, informally dubbed the 'Moreton Connector', to be built between Dohles Rocks Road at Murrumba Downs and Anzac Avenue at Mango Hill. It will also deliver upgrades to the Gateway Motorway, Gympie Road and Bruce Highway as well as including new ramps at Dohles Rocks Road and a new bridge over the Pine River. This plan will mean that more Queenslanders obviously spend less time in traffic and more time doing the things that they love.

When built, the Moreton Connector will reduce travel times for locals in that region, reducing the need to get on and off the Bruce Highway and use alternative routes. That is something that I think will be welcomed by local residents. It also will allow Griffin residents easy access to North Lakes and bring hundreds of jobs to the local economy, which we know is very important at this time. Collectively, the Gateway Motorway, Bruce Highway and Gympie Road carry about 310,000 vehicles a day. That is 100,000 more vehicles a day than on the busiest section of the M1, so it is clear that a plan is needed for new roads and major upgrades going forward into the future. We have to be smart about how we do that. However, we do not want to see it grinding to a halt, but that is seemingly what the LNP has planned. Under the LNP's disastrous plan in this region, new ramps would be built by themselves at Dohles Rocks Road without any new—

Mr MINNIKIN: A point of order, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: There is no point of order. The member asked me about relevance.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, relevance.

ACTING CHAIR: No, this is exactly what I am asking—alternative approaches.

Mr BAILEY: This is the federal LNP's disastrous plan. Presumably, it is supported by the state LNP as well.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is Liberal-National Party coalition; be precise.

Mr BAILEY: It is a live issue that is related to the budget, clearly. While those opposite may want to run interference, let me outline what the LNP's disastrous plan would be here. It would be building the ramps by themselves at Dohles Rocks Road without any new routes or extra capacity. My department looked at the ramp-only idea and carried out traffic modelling to show what the impact would be. The modelling showed that building on the ramps without doing other works to take local traffic off the Bruce Highway would make congestion worse as far back as the Deception Bay Road interchange in the morning peak and extend congestion as far back as Bracken Ridge and Linkfield roads in the afternoon peak. Under the LNP's plan for the morning peak, an additional 12 minutes would be added to travel time and for the afternoon peak, an additional 17 minutes would be added to the travel time, that is, adding half an hour to everyone's commute every single day that they make the trip.

I asked my department to brief local LNP politicians—federal politicians, of course—who, even when advised of this modelling, did not seem to care. Simply building the ramps, as the LNP has planned, would be a disaster for every Bruce Highway motorist and every resident in the Moreton Bay region. That is why our comprehensive plan to build a new arterial road, to build a new bridge over the Pine River and to upgrade the surrounding road network as well as the ramps is the only way forward that makes sense. We will continue to work with the Moreton Bay Regional Council and the federal government to progress our vision to improve the road network there and not see traffic grind to a halt.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will go to one final question from the opposition.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Acting Chair. My final question is to the director-general, Mr Scales, in relation to COVID stimulus accelerated road programs and reference to QTRIP. Specifically, how many of the accelerated road projects announced by the minister in May this year will actually be completed in the next 18 months?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. That is a very detailed question; I am just waiting for the brief to appear. While we are doing that, I know that one of the areas that we have accelerated is the Smithfield bypass. We were able to accelerate it because there was less traffic on the road. As part of the recovery response in partnership with the Australian government, we have announced over \$1 billion for new road network improvements, including: \$185 million of jointly funded roads of strategic importance, \$400 million as a state funding injection and \$415 million as part of the Australian government's economic stimulus package.

In terms of the specific projects about which you asked in non-government question No. 5 on 4 December 2020: we have commenced Gavial Gracemere Road, which will be finished in mid-2022; we have commenced construction on New England Highway, Yarraman to Toowoomba, which will be finished in mid-2022; we have commenced construction on the Barwon Highway at Talwood and Nindigully, widen pavement, to be finished in mid-2021; we have commenced construction on the Richmond-Winton Road to replace culverts, that will be mid 2022; we have started on Gatton-Helidon Road, Lockyer Creek bridge, strengthening the bridge, and that will be finished mid-2021; we have commenced construction on Bowen Development Road, Cramsie-Muttaborra Road and Cloncurry to Dajarra Road which will be finished either late next year or, the last one, the Dajarra Road, in mid-2022.

The other thing that is important to stress as well, just because we are planning projects does not mean there are not jobs because the planning side takes a lot of effort as well. There are a lot of jobs for our colleagues in the consulting community.

Mr BAILEY: I think the director-general missed one. Also on that list in response to non-government question No. 5 on notice which was asked on 4 December, construction commenced on the Cleveland-Redland Bay Road, Magnolia Parade to Benfer Road to duplicate lanes. That one has also started in that very long list that the director-general just read out.

Mr Scales: For the benefit of the committee and the member, last year the QTRIP program was \$3.1 billion, but we actually did \$3.4 billion. We did \$300 million more than we thought we would, and the stimulus certainly helped. We worked really well with the construction industry. Each site had a COVID-19 plan, and we did not stop a single site. Right at the start, I was concerned that we would have problems in terms of supply, but the supply problems in fact did not eventuate. Thank God we did not have a tropical cyclone, either. To the member's point on COVID-19, we produced an extra \$300 million. As the minister read out—the Anita Street project that I missed—there is a lot of work underway. It is not just the construction side; the planning side as well is creating lots of jobs.

Mr MINNIKIN: But the backlog may be too much. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. We will go to the member for Maiwar who has a question.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a question in relation to the Station Accessibility Upgrade Program. I should start by saying how glad I am to see the Auchenflower upgrade underway. I have also been on the record for a long time about the need for accessibility upgrades at Taringa station, which is only accessible via really narrow stairs. I want to clarify very quickly with the director-general, first of all, which agency—QR or the department—is responsible for producing that priority list of stations requiring upgrades?

Mr Scales: The priority list is produced after consultation with the minister, but it is a QR list. Because we fund it through the transport services contract, we are involved. The Strachan inquiry listed major projects that should be undertaken either by QR or by us, and it was decided that upgrades to existing rail stations would be handled by QR. It would be a QR initiated thing. We would be involved because of TransLink and our transport side of things and the fact that we are the funder. Then eventually those recommendations would go to the minister, who would make the decision.

Mr BERKMAN: I suspect that, despite that split of responsibility, this should not be difficult to answer. I am curious to know when the list was last reviewed. In terms of Taringa, did that review consider the newly opened private hospital right next to Taringa station?

Mr Scales: I am quite interested in that station because I know it pretty well. The hospital itself is that private hospital, as you said. There are two other stations I think in your electorate that are fully independently accessible. That is Toowong and Indooroopilly, either side of Taringa. If you have two accessible stations very close to each other—these two are—we would look at Taringa in its constructability. There are a lot of challenges. You have that car park as well as the coffee shop that is next to it, and then you have the underpass that goes to the station when you come down from whatever road it is to get there. I think it is more about constructability. It would need lifts and, because you have a station either side of it, that would not have gone forward at this point.

Dr MacMAHON: Director-General, the payments to Cubic for the cost of running the go card network were reported on until 2012 but are now not publicly reported. What are the current costs of the contract with Cubic to run the go card network?

Mr Scales: I do not have a number to hand. The contract that we have with Cubic—it has already been reported on in this session by the minister—is obviously the next generation ticketing project, which is \$371 million. The cost of running the Cubic network has TransLink in there as well. It also has the 131230 number, which is run separately.

With the minister's indulgence, I will have to take that one on notice. It is not a simple calculation because we have our people involved; we have the call centre involved, which subject to a separate arrangement with a provider; there is 7-Eleven, which has costs of running their card on the top-up system. I do not think it is a simple question to answer. It is a great one to ask. If you consider there are 550 locations to buy go cards and 635 locations to top up a go card, I would not have information on how much that costs. Cubic would have to come over the top to manage all of that and make sure the ticket machines and the top-up machines themselves are adequately and sufficiently maintained. It is complicated. I do not have a number to hand, but the minister would have to agree for us to take it on notice.

Dr MacMAHON: Will the minister take that question on notice?

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: We have an agreement that he will take that on notice. There is also some information outstanding on the percentage of overtime. That was from the member for Chatsworth. What is the percentage of?

Mr MINNIKIN: It was about overtime funding—overtime blow-out as a percentage of the industry standard of between nine per cent and 12 per cent. I was asking for a percentage based on the \$24 million.

ACTING CHAIR: So that is the percentage as outlined by the member. Do you want to address that or do you want to take that on notice?

Mr BAILEY: I imagine if the information has not been able to be found at this point we will supply it to the committee when it is available.

Mr WATTS: Is that question being taken on notice?

Mr BAILEY: We are happy to take it on notice.

ACTING CHAIR: There are those two questions on notice as outlined. Minister, could you give us a quick wrap-up before we finish this session?

Mr BAILEY: Thanks very much, Acting Chair. I close by offering a sincere thank you to everyone on the committee and the visitors to the committee. In particular, in terms of all the work that is done—a huge amount of work goes into the estimates process—I sincerely thank all of our staff in Transport and Main Roads, in Queensland Rail, in all our different port authorities—they do a fantastic job—the Gold Coast Waterways Authority and of course the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. They have plenty going on and estimates has been an additional process for them.

I say a big thank you to all of the officers and staff here and a special thank you of course to my ministerial staff, including my chief of staff. I think everyone would appreciate that for ministerial staff estimates is probably the least favourite process they go through. I thank them for their incredible level of commitment. I thank everybody involved in the estimates process, whether it is the committee, department officials or my office. It is a big time of year. I sincerely wish you all a merry Christmas and happy new year.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of transport and main roads has expired. Minister, I note that you have taken two questions on notice during this session. The committee has resolved that answers to questions taken on notice must be provided to the committee secretariat by 10 am on Tuesday, 15 December 2020. You can check the exact wording of any outstanding questions in the proof transcript of this session of the hearing which will be available on the Hansard page of parliament's website within approximately two hours.

I thank the minister, departmental officers and ministerial staff for their attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 2 pm with the examination of estimates for the portfolios of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement.

Mr BAILEY: And a quick thank you to you, Acting Chair, for stepping in at very late notice due to the chair have a little bit of a back issue. I thank you so much for doing that.

Proceedings suspended from 1.17 pm to 2.00 pm.

**ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—ENERGY,
RENEWABLES AND HYDROGEN, PUBLIC WORKS AND PROCUREMENT****In Attendance**

Hon. MC de Brenni, Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement

Mr S Zanatta, Acting Chief of Staff

Ms M Hallam, Chief of Staff

Department of Energy and Public Works

Mr James Purtill, Director-General

Ms K Standen, Deputy Director-General, Energy Division


Mr G Atkins, Deputy Director-General, Building Policy and Asset Management

CleanCo Queensland

Dr M Schweizer, Chief Executive Officer

Queensland Building and Construction Commission

Mr B Bassett, Commissioner

 **ACTING CHAIR:** I welcome Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer, who will be substituting for the member for Toowoomba North for the rest of the committee's proceedings today. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 5.15 pm and will suspend proceedings for a break between 3.30 pm and 3.45. The committee will consider the minister's portfolio as follows: energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2 pm to 3.30 pm and public works and procurement from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm.

Members who have been granted leave to ask questions today include Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa; Stephen Andrew, member for Mirani; Michael Berkman, member for Maiwar; Amy MacMahon, member for South Brisbane; David Crisafulli, Leader of the Opposition; David Janetzki, Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Jarrod Bleijie, member for Kawana; Fiona Simpson, member for Maroochydore; Steve Minnikin, member for Chatsworth; Pat Weir, member for Condamine; Tim Mander, member for Everton; and Brent Mickelberg, member for Buderim. I remind those present this afternoon that the committee's hearings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent mode. Please be advised that photography and video recording of the proceedings by officials or members of the public is prohibited. I also remind you that food and drink, other than water, are not permitted in the chamber. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of energy, renewables and hydrogen open for examination. The committee will now consider the energy, renewables and hydrogen areas until 3.30 pm. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Acting Chair and members. I want to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered this afternoon and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I also want to acknowledge the chair and members of the committee and my department in preparing for today's hearing.

This year the Palaszczuk government has supported Queenslanders when they needed it the most. When the Premier declared a public health emergency, Queensland's frontline energy and QBuild workforces heeded the call. We asked these frontline staff to keep working to deliver power for our essential services like our COVID call centre. We asked them to keep our schools and our hotel quarantine sites sanitised. We asked them to keep the power on for Queenslanders who could not leave their homes. I am pleased to report that they did exactly what Queenslanders asked of them and, on behalf of Queenslanders, I say thank you to those workers.

COVID is not the only disaster threatening Queenslanders this year. Thanks to our Household Resilience Program, the Palaszczuk government has protected more than 3,200 households from the devastating impact of cyclones. We are not just reinforcing roofs and windows; we are reinforcing Queensland's economy. As we finalise allocations of the \$21.5 million phase 2 of the program, I can announce today that a further 200 households that have expressed interest will benefit from our vital investment. My department will make contact with those registered applicants to share today's good news. The Palaszczuk government eased household budgets this year, too, by delivering a \$200 utility relief rebate to more than two million households and over 180,000 small businesses benefited from our \$500 rebate as well. Of course, this was only possible because Labor remains steadfastly committed to Queensland's state owned energy assets. It also means that we were able to deliver the \$50 asset ownership dividend.

Cleaner, cheaper energy is part of our government's steadfast commitment to job creation and economic recovery from COVID-19. As our state's manufacturing resources industries grow, we are growing our energy generation to match this new demand, having enabled or directly invested in over 2,000 megawatts of capacity across seven large-scale renewable projects just this year alone. That represents more than \$2.7 billion in project investment and more than 1,800 construction jobs for Queenslanders. I am pleased to advise the committee today that we are poised to build even more. I can announce a further 192 projects have been proposed across Queensland's three renewable energy zones. The figures show that these projects have the capacity to generate 60,000 megawatts of clean energy. To put that into perspective, that combined capacity could power the nation. In just over six years our policies have turned the energy investment climate on its head, transforming the state from the LNP's zero dollar, zero megawatt renewables vacuum to an \$8.5 billion energy investment and a 7,000-job powerhouse.

But it is not just about helping households. We are also supercharging Queensland's businesses. I am pleased to inform the committee that our government has invested a record \$10.4 billion into Queensland businesses this year. That is 39,000 Queensland businesses supported by our Buy Queensland approach—businesses like Bundaberg and Beenleigh Rum whose production of hand sanitiser kept our teachers and students safe at the height of the pandemic. As we invest in expanding our manufacturing industries, we will continue to back local suppliers. As economies around the world are taking a hit, the Palaszczuk government has been delivering our economic recovery plan—a plan to support Queensland households, to keep Queenslanders safe, to keep Queenslanders in work. That is exactly what this budget delivers and I welcome the committee's questions this afternoon.

Finally, Mr Acting Chair, if I could just seek your indulgence for a moment, this year the QBuild family suffered a devastating loss when a plane went down on the way to Lockhart River from Cairns. Five people went to work that day who never came home and we have mourned the loss of our colleagues and our friends since. Their dedication to serving our community and our state shall not be forgotten.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now go to questions.

Mr WEIR: My first question is to the minister with reference to Budget Paper No. 1 at page 43. Minister, do you have a personal email account and have you ever emailed or received an email from stacia1 @bigpond.com?

ACTING CHAIR: In line with what I ruled earlier this morning, questions about emails that occurred in 2015 are not evidentially relevant to the estimates and expenditures before the committee in—

Mr MILLAR: Mr Acting Chair, I raise a point of order. This is not referencing 2015; this is just referencing an email account.

ACTING CHAIR: I had not finished. What I would say is that any questions relating to that period are not going to be relevant. However, if you are asking the minister about general use of personal emails, I am sure the minister has an answer.

Mr WEIR: I will rephrase the question. There was a quite notorious case of a previous minister for this portfolio using a personal email. Can you assure this committee that you do not use a personal email account to do ministerial business?

Mr de BRENNI: I am happy to take that question from the member. Yes, I can assure the member that I am very confident that I act in accordance with the ministerial handbook.

Mr WEIR: My next question is to the minister. With reference to page 3 of SDS 3 relating to the energy services service area highlights, specifically to help agricultural businesses realise energy savings through energy audits and transition to appropriate new tariffs, Minister, is the government still planning on implementing the phase-out of transitional and obsolete tariffs by 30 June 2021?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. As I said in my introductory speech, I think it is clear, the Palaszczuk government's track record in supporting businesses through the energy portfolio. It is only the one government in Queensland that has taken any action to assist those businesses in regional Queensland. I presume the member is referring to obsolete tariffs. The one government that has taken action to support those businesses has been the Palaszczuk government.

As the member would know, those obsolete tariffs have been frozen for three years and the extended phase-out date for those tariffs is 30 June next year. I can inform the committee that the former energy minister, Anthony Lynham, wrote to the Queensland Competition Authority asking them to develop a suite of new retail tariffs. He did that so that they could design options to deliver customers additional savings. There are three new controlled load tariffs which became available on 1 November this year. The three controlled load tariffs are likely to be of particular interest to customers on obsolete tariffs that are phased out. These will be the businesses to which the member refers, particularly those working in regional Queensland in the agricultural sector, small businesses, businesses like foundries, et cetera. The QCA found that on average the new tariffs that commenced on 1 November could reduce energy costs significantly for some customers on those obsolete tariffs. In fact, they estimated that a typical customer currently on an obsolete tariff could reduce their annual energy cost by 30 to 35 per cent by switching to an alternative tariff. To be clear, that would be for options of switching from tariff 62, 65 or 66 to tariff 34.

Eight new additional retail tariff options become available on 1 January 2021 as well, and we are inviting customers who are interested in those tariffs to contact Ergon to talk about the potential benefits. I know that businesses working in the sugarcane industry, for example, would be interested in these. I know the peak body Canegrowers was pleased to see the introduction of these new options. In fact, the peak body said, 'The introduction of tariff 34 was a victory for irrigators', and that trial participants acknowledged the tariff had delivered worthwhile cost savings for their businesses. I am advised that as of this month Ergon Energy Retail estimates that of the 22,000 business customers in regional Queensland almost all of those would benefit from the new tariffs.

In respect of that minority who may be impacted in a different way, so those who will not be making a saving, I am obviously closely monitoring that. I am continuing to ask my department to provide me comprehensive advice about that. I want to update the committee that I have also written in recent days to peak bodies representing those businesses and invited them to meet with me directly to consider ways in which our government can support them through that adjustment.

Mr WEIR: A follow-on from that question: since May 2019, this is on question on notice 853, it says there has only been a 33 per cent decline in the number of farmers using these obsolete transitional tariffs. How does the government expect to get the rest of the nearly 10,000 farmers off these tariffs before 1 July 2021?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question and his interest in these new tariffs that are, as I said, delivering in the main to those regional businesses some savings. It is important, of course, that we acknowledge that in Queensland we have seen over the last three years year-on-year reduction in wholesale energy costs and reduction in retail prices in Queensland. Of course, there is another six or seven months until those tariffs fully phase out. We are encouraging those customers to obviously work with Ergon in making their decisions around the new tariffs to which they seek to adjust to and, of course, the Palaszczuk government will be providing support.

I think it is important to update the committee on the support that has been provided to date. Members are probably aware of our \$20 million Business Energy Savers Program. It has been a core component of our commitment to support regional businesses through this period of adjustment. There

are two separate initiatives under the program that deliver energy audits to identify improvements that the customer and the business could consider. Secondly, we are also providing financial co-contributions to help implement new equipment and processes. The Energy Savers Plus Program also offers grants of up to \$20,000 for up to half the cost of installing that new equipment.

The Large Customer Adjustment Program offered up to \$250,000, meeting half the cost to install that new equipment. I am advised that 191 businesses have so far accessed those energy audits under the programs and they have brought real savings. For example, just one farm in North Queensland is expecting that this year they will see an 89 per cent reduction in annual electricity costs after investing in a 30-kilowatt solar system and implementing other efficiency measures based on audit recommendations. I think that, combined with support to date and, of course, with the invitation that I extended to those businesses to work with Ergon Energy Retail to discuss options available to them, and, thirdly, the invitation that I have extended in the last few days to those businesses' peak bodies to discuss with me what other assistance we can provide them through that adjustment period.

Mr WEIR: I might move on from that. My next question is to the CEO of CleanCo. This is with reference to page 15 of the capital statement 2020-21 relating to the Burdekin Falls Dam business case. In 2017 the Premier promised \$100 million of Stanwell dividends to help fund the proposed hydro-electric power station at Burdekin Falls Dam. The project was slated for commencement in 2020 creating 200 construction jobs. Could you provide an update on this project, where the \$100 million that was meant for SunWater is and whether we can expect construction to commence before the end of next year?

Dr Schweizer: I thank the member for the question. As the member may be aware, CleanCo was founded with \$250 million of capital to invest in an asset to build, own and operate on behalf of the people of Queensland. Included in that \$250 million was the \$100 million to which the member refers. We have identified in our first year of operation the Karara wind farm as the asset that we will build, own and operate on behalf of the people of Queensland. That is a 102.6 megawatt wind farm to the south-west of Warwick due to begin construction in earnest late next year in partnership with Acciona which is building a 920-odd megawatt wind farm next door. In total we expect that precinct to contribute about half a billion dollars to the local community and to generate somewhere in the order of 600 to 700 jobs during construction as well as ongoing jobs related to operations. That is the project that CleanCo has selected to deploy that capital to.

Mr de BRENNI: Perhaps for the benefit of the member I could make a small addition to the CEO's remarks. I want to make it clear to the committee as well that our government is developing a hydro study as part of the Powering Queensland Plan. That study is canvassing projects right across the state. That study will help inform government about the best opportunities to invest in this important technology. I know that the member is very interested in Burdekin hydro and I can confirm that Burdekin hydro is being assessed as part of that statewide study. Committee members may note that progressing that study is the first energy item listed in my charter letter from the Premier. In that respect evidently it will be a priority of mine. Announcements about the future of Burdekin hydro will be made after consideration of all of the options identified in the study. I look forward to engaging with the member in respect of the progress of that study.

Mr WEIR: Minister, who will be making the decision as to the future of that \$100 million for the Burdekin Falls? Will it be yourself or CleanCo?

Mr de BRENNI: The simple answer to how government decides where we invest taxpayers' funds is that it is a decision that is typically made by government through its established mechanisms of the Cabinet Budget Review Committee and/or cabinet itself, based on the information and advice that will come through that study and the advice that the department gives me in terms of being able to provide that to my colleagues. Of course, they will look at the best return for taxpayers and meeting the broad suite of government objectives.

Members are very well aware, I am sure, of the government's targets in respect of renewable energy. We also are acutely aware of the benefit that facilities like hydro and others like that proposal can deliver to Queensland's overall energy and electricity network and the contribution, in fact, that it can make to the National Energy Market going forward. There will be a lot more work to be done before we get to make a decision, but I am happy through the course of that to engage with members who are interested in the progress of that study.

Mr WEIR: On that same issue, given that it was an election commitment in 2013, when would we be likely to see hydro operating at Burdekin Falls Dam?

Mr de BRENNI: I think the question really is a matter of opinion given that we have not completed that study at this stage. There are a number of steps to go through before we would be in a position to give construction or operative dates of any of those renewable energy projects. I think that once the study is completed, decisions of government get made and then we will be informing the community and working with those communities and our project proponents and, of course, CleanCo as our renewable energy government owned generator in Queensland. I am looking forward to seeing CleanCo playing a major role going forward in a range of opportunities across the state. In terms of a specific date, we are not in a position to be able to provide that at this time.

CHAIR: We will go to some questions from government members. Minister, I refer to the SDS page 3-3 and the service area highlights. It indicates that next year will include a focus on renewable energy zones. Can you outline the results from the register of interest process that was launched in September?

Mr de BRENNI: I think members across the board would be very well aware that the Palaszczuk government has announced three major renewable energy initiatives. The first is the \$500 million Queensland renewable energy generation fund that will allow Queensland government owned corporations to invest in commercial renewable infrastructure, providing benefits to Queensland taxpayers, regional economies and, importantly, creating more jobs in regional Queensland. Building on the success of the initial \$15 million Hydrogen Industry Development Fund, the Palaszczuk government has also committed a further \$10 million to continue the growth and development of that emerging industry.

The Palaszczuk government has also committed \$145 million to unlock the renewable energy zones in North Queensland, Central Queensland and South Queensland. Those zones will allow us to coordinate and foster renewable development in the most suitable areas of the state by supporting the delivery of efficient common-user transmission infrastructure. As part of that process, we will prioritise the attraction of industrial energy users to hook into this infrastructure so that they can access that cheap reliable electricity and create more jobs in regional Queensland, specifically around hopefully the growth of manufacturing in regional Queensland.

I can report to the committee that an online registration of interest survey for Queensland renewable energy zones, or QREZs as they are colloquially known, was released between 10 and 25 September. The intent of our survey was to gather information and the level of participant interest from industry groups, as well as their scope, the location they are looking at, the scale of the project proposal, their timing and, of course, their technology types. I am pleased to inform the committee that the survey received overwhelming interest from industry. That confirms that there is a very high level of enthusiasm and excitement in the development of renewable energy zones in Queensland from project proponents. I am very pleased to announce that, in total, 192 projects registered their interest. That represents 60,699 megawatts of project capacity. I welcome the proponents' estimates showing their projects would support more than \$93.7 billion in investment and more than 57,000 construction jobs if they were all developed. In comparison, the New South Wales government's registration of interest for their renewable energy zones received 113 responses, totalling 27,000 megawatts or \$38 billion in investment.

On average, the projects that have come forward were around 300 megawatts in capacity, but range in scale from one megawatt to 3,600. For the QREZs, more than 31,000 megawatts of solar PV generation was registered, followed closely by wind generation with more than 27,000 megawatts. Combined solar PV and storage projects were the most common registered. They represented 69 out of the 192 project registrations, accounting for 24,000 megawatts. The inclusion of storage technologies, as well, was highly favoured by the respondents. Seventy per cent of projects involved some storage component in their submission and a range of early storage technologies were included, such as flow batteries, hydrogen fuel and compressed air energy storage. Pumped hydro energy storage projects were also represented across nine projects, which ranged from 250 to 1,500 megawatts in capacity.

The majority of those projects are anticipated to begin construction over the course of the next six years, but more particularly in 2021 and 2022. Again, this highlights the potential for QREZs to assist significantly in the economic recovery of Queensland through the support of those high numbers of construction jobs and also the indirect jobs that are created as a result of those projects being delivered.

ACTING CHAIR: Following on from the previous question regarding Queensland's renewable energy zones, can you outline for the committee the next steps for rolling out these zones?

Mr de BRENNI: We are particularly pleased about the results of the expression of interest process for the three zones in northern, central and southern Queensland and what they represent for the future of our electricity network in Queensland. As I outlined in response to the previous question, these zones are areas of very high potential which will support and optimise a mix of projects, including wind, solar and the storage that I just mentioned. We expect that they will play a vital role in achieving our 2030 target for 50 per cent renewable energy, and to provide a pipeline of jobs in both construction and ongoing operations. The overwhelming response from industry to our registration of interest process indicates that high level of investor interest as well. As I said, there are 192 projects coming forward. As the member has recognised for this question, we now must work to enable those projects to be developed.

The next step is to use the projects that have registered interest to inform us as to which are the most promising areas for the development within our broad zones, so tightening up those broader zones; we are currently progressing that work. In consultation with industry, we will then consider the optimal transmission investments that are required, the necessary commercial arrangements, the access frameworks—always important—and the community engagement that is critical that will underpin those zones. It is important that we work through all of those various elements to make sure we get this right because this really does set our state up for the future.

We will be working closely with Powerlink, our government owned transmission network service provider, to help us consider those options. They have the expertise and the know-how as well to roll out the infrastructure in the most efficient way to maximise the investment. We are also working, importantly, with the national market bodies, leveraging the work that they do in terms of their work across the entire National Electricity Market as well.

We are looking at streamlining renewable energy project development, too, through improved facilitation activities, as well as attracting industry to our new renewable energy zones, the idea being to promote hubs of industrial activity and employment growth. Further engagement and analysis will be a priority of mine, as we continue into the new year. I look forward to updating the parliament and Queenslanders on our progress.

Ms PUGH: Minister, on page 3 of the SDS, it refers to the Queensland government's renewable energy target. Can you provide an update on the progress made towards reaching the 50 per cent renewable energy target, please?

Mr de BRENNI: I can, indeed, provide you an update on our commitment to the 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. Firstly, I would like to indicate what a favourable climate for renewable energy investment our target has created. It has enabled more than \$8.5 billion of investment since December 2016. It has supported the creation of around 7,000 construction jobs across the state so far. These jobs are across 44 large-scale renewable energy projects which have commenced operations, becoming financially committed or are now under construction. These additional 44 projects that are right here in Queensland mean that our state will benefit from more than 4,630 megawatts of renewable energy capacity. Combined with our state's very impressive small-scale and other renewables, we have more than 8,300 megawatts of total renewable capacity.

Through you, Acting Chair, this has also resulted in the fact that in the third quarter of 2020, for the first time, you and the members will recall, the Premier announced that over 20 per cent of our state's electricity needs have come from renewables. This follows what was a remarkable renewable blackout under the former LNP government. During that time we saw no large-scale renewable projects constructed, so it was quite concerning that during the election the LNP committed to scrapping that renewable energy target which really does jeopardise that investment and, of course, jeopardises the associated jobs that come to regional Queensland as a result.

Our government owned corporations—CS Energy, Stanwell, Energy Queensland and CleanCo—have enabled the construction of 2,000 megawatts of new renewable capacity into our grid, and this will only grow. It is only going to grow with the \$500 million Queensland Renewable Energy Fund which will facilitate new commercial projects as we advance towards that 50 per cent target.

Small-scale solar is going from strength to strength. At the end of October, the figures show that more than one in three or 643,496 Queensland homes and small businesses have rooftop solar panels, helping drive down their energy costs.

To match this growth in renewable energy, the private sector is getting on board as well with our renewable energy target by demanding that more and more of their energy needs come from renewables, too. In recent weeks we have seen companies such as Sun Metals announcing targets to become carbon-neutral. Businesses like that one are putting their money where their mouth is with

direct investment in renewables to ensure that they can reach their goal. We have seen BHP commit to using electricity to power their sites. They have recently announced they will reduce emissions from electrical use in Queensland. To achieve this, they will buy renewable energy from our state owned clean energy generator, CleanCo. Coles has also announced that they will source more than 90 per cent of their Queensland electricity from CleanCo in a 10-year deal.

Members, through you, Acting Chair, it is this sort of investment and the return to our state in the form of dividends that would not be possible if the LNP had sold assets if they were elected in 2015, or if they were recently elected and delivered on their commitment to scrap the renewable energy target.

We have advanced in this state. The Queensland government has ensured that we have advanced from seven per cent renewables when we took office to accelerating past 20 per cent in recent weeks. We will carry this momentum forward and provide the regulatory environment and the financial support necessary to advance Queensland to our 50 per cent target by 2030.

Mr WALKER: Minister, on page 3 of the SDS, the department is required to attract industrial energy users in relation to the CopperString project which will facilitate further resource projects in the north-west. What are the next steps in this process?

Mr de BRENNI: Can I say it is an honour to receive a question in the estimates hearing from the new member for Mundingburra. Again welcome to the Queensland parliament. I thank you for asking about the CopperString project. I know that, as a North Queenslander, the member understands the importance of energy infrastructure to regional economies; there is no doubt about that.

This infrastructure supports incredibly vital industries—mining and smelting—in addition to supporting regional households. The Palaszczuk government has always been committed to a secure, affordable and clean electricity supply for North Queenslanders. In doing so, we are ensuring that we are committed to economic and employment opportunities from renewable generation and investment. That is why we have invested and entered into an agreement to support the next phase of CopperString 2.0.

Members are probably aware, through you, Acting Chair, that this high-voltage 1100 kilometre transmission line will connect the North West Minerals Province into the National Electricity Market and could support over 750 full-time jobs during its construction, and ongoing support of 30 operational jobs. By providing affordable power to the north-west, CopperString could support thousands more good, secure jobs. They are the sorts of jobs that range from those in new mineral mines, all the way through to minerals processing, new investment in renewables, and we are very keen to see a growth in manufacturing right across Queensland, particularly in our north, jobs for those living in areas from Mount Isa right through to the constituents that the member for Mundingburra represents so ably.

Across North Queensland the project has the potential to deliver another 3½ thousand jobs and an additional \$154 billion in minerals production out to 2050. Those jobs would largely be in the vital resources sector. There is an estimated half a trillion dollars worth of new economy minerals in the region. They are minerals such as those that are vital for battery production, including copper, cobalt, scandium and vanadium. Our government has recognised the valued role of the resources sector in the Queensland economy, with the sector investing over \$21 billion since 2015. These minerals give our state a great opportunity to create additional value-add through advanced manufacturing of things like batteries and other technology that our society will need and crave in decades to come.

These minerals are also vital to our renewable energy target. We have been very clear about our commitment to meeting the 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. We are making good progress, as the committee has heard today. Connecting the north-west to the NEM will ensure that this region is able to access our state's growing renewables base and not be solely reliant on gas-fired generation.

In May, the Premier announced the government would provide investment of \$14.8 million to support the project, taking our government's total contribution to \$15.98 million. The investment is supporting further feasibility and regulatory work for the proposed project. As well, the Coordinator-General has declared it a coordinated project and issued final terms of reference for CopperString's environmental impact statement.

To conclude, prior to the election the government also signed an implementation agreement for the project which will underwrite the additional development costs, including the remaining costs associated with completing the environmental impact study. The agreement and the funding provided mean that CopperString is very well placed for a final investment decision and construction to

commence in mid-2021. I am pleased to also note, for the benefit of the committee, that I will be meeting with CopperString next week. We will be talking about the next steps for their project. I look forward to working with the proponents to advance this project in the months ahead.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to non-government questions.

Mr BOYCE: My question is to the CEO of CleanCo with reference to page 59 of the Capital Statements 2021 related to the Karara Wind Farm. In relation to construction of the Karara Wind Farm, has CleanCo encountered any issues sourcing components—turbines, generators, towers et cetera—for the project?

Dr Schweizer: We have not to date. We have been very fortunate with all of our new renewable projects, which total at this time about 932 megawatts of new renewable capacity before 2025. We have been working very closely with our delivery partners and so far we have not had any challenges with supply chains as a result of the pandemic or anything else.

Mr BOYCE: Are you or CleanCo aware of the many issues that the AGL wind farm at Coopers Gap has encountered recently? Has this been taken into account in relation to the construction of the Karara Wind Farm?

Dr Schweizer: Yes, we are very keen to learn from the experiences of other developers of wind farms—that is both in Queensland and also across Australia and beyond; for example, through the Wind Farm Commissioner. We take care to learn from the experiences of other wind farms and other developers in a few key areas. The first would be community engagement. We have come a long way in Australia in the last decade in engaging with our communities and making sure that wind farms and other renewable developments are welcomed by the community and seen as an economic opportunity as opposed to an impost. That is one of the key areas we look at.

A second would be the technical aspects. That relates to construction as well as operation. A third would be related to the various approvals that you have to seek in order to build a wind farm, whether it is at the federal level for environmental approvals, at the local level for development approvals or connecting to the grid, for example. At CleanCo, being a relatively new player, we are very keen to make the most of the lessons that others have learnt as well as rely on the very deep experience of Acciona, our delivery partner, which has built wind farms all around the world and is very much on top of the issues such as the ones the member has referenced.

Mr BOYCE: Fifty of the 123 generators at AGL's Coopers Gap project have to be replaced. There have been significant issues such as noise problems, blade breakages, UL system failure, bulk failure, marrying plate problems and tower No. 10 has been condemned and is being demolished. Is the Karara Wind Farm using the same component suppliers as the Coopers Gap project?

ACTING CHAIR: Member, when presenting evidence as part of a question we often ask for verification. You have made some claims as part of that question. If you could table any documents outlining these alleged problems or particular problems that would be useful. I think the gist of your question is about avoiding any potential problems in our projects under consideration here?

Mr BOYCE: I have a letter from AGL confirming that. I have not had an opportunity to copy it for members, but I am happy to table the letter if that is your wish.

ACTING CHAIR: We will have a look at it and see whether it can be tabled. In the meantime, without referring to the letter could you come to the nub of your question to the CEO?

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair. Is the Karara Wind Farm using the same suppliers as Coopers Gap?

ACTING CHAIR: That is what I needed.

Dr Schweizer: Thank you for the clarification. To my knowledge we are not, but I would be happy to confirm that and come back to you to ensure the accuracy of that answer.

Mr BOYCE: Could we have that taken on notice?

ACTING CHAIR: We may well have a chance to get back to you on that before 3.30 pm. It will be the decision of the minister at that point if that is taken on notice.

Mr de BRENNI: I wonder if it is ordinary practice and appropriate that all of the component parts of a project like that and who manufactured them and who supplied them is shared with another organisation? Whilst there may be an attempt by Dr Schweizer to obtain that information, it may not be information that AGL is willing to share. I think we should be conscious of setting an expectation that government owned corporations have free access to that sort of information.

ACTING CHAIR: Clearly there are regulations and precedents around commercial-in-confidence. I notice that this letter has 'AGL confidential' on it. We might have a look at this during a break.

Mr BOYCE: Minister, what oversight and quality control systems are in place to make sure that wind turbine components do what they are supposed to do?

Mr de BRENNI: I think this is a follow-up question along the same lines as the previous one which seems to be asserting that there is some issue with the standards or the quality of workmanship in respect of products that are being sourced or used. I presume the member is continuing to refer to the components of the Karara Wind Farm. It would not be a responsibility of mine to be across the details of those standards. For all projects there are engineering standards that are required to be adhered to. If the deputy director-general does not have anything to add in this regard then I have no reason other than to expect that the highest standards of engineering are being applied to all of CleanCo's projects, just as they are to projects right across the state.

As the Minister for Public Works, I can assure the member that Queensland engineers meet the highest standards. The Board of Professional Engineers in Queensland takes very seriously the responsibility for ensuring that the built environment, whether it is a wind farm, a bridge, a road or a building, is built to the highest standard. I think Queensland has a very good record in respect of that. I am sure that all of the government owned corporations that are represented here today ensure that they attract the highest level of engineering standards.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr de BRENNI: I will just round out my response, Acting Chair. If the member seriously has some real concern about a piece of kit or equipment that is being used and has had a concern about that before today, I think it is entirely reckless to withhold that until an estimates hearing to let me know or to let other officials who could do something about that know.

Mr MILLAR: I raise a point of order, Acting Chair. As I have said before, we have a finite time to ask questions from the opposition. We have a list of questions here. We have taken the minister's advice on board. Let's move on.

ACTING CHAIR: We understand that. I think the minister had finished his answer. Is that correct?

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Do we have further questions?

Mr BOYCE: I have further questions, Acting Chair. I find it quite appalling, Minister, that you are not aware of these problems at AGL wind farm. Can the minister confirm that AGL's generating licence has been suspended and, if so, why?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Callide, in your preamble you have given an opinion. I understand there may be some response to that. Can you rephrase your question so it does not offend standing orders?

Mr BOYCE: Certainly. Can the minister confirm that AGL's generating licence has been suspended and, if so, why?

Mr de BRENNI: I think I will say three things about that. First, I reject the imputation that I am not aware of matters pertaining to that project. I am aware of matters pertaining to that project. I intend to visit the site in the next week or so. I can confirm for the member that it is my advice that such operating arrangements and authorities are not suspended. They do hold an authority ongoing under the Electricity Act.

Mr BOYCE: Minister, what guarantees do we have that there are no problems with the other 72 generators at the Coopers Gap Wind Farm?

ACTING CHAIR: Member, you are drawing a broad bow. You are going to have to tie this to expenditure. Can you nominate where this is referred to in the budget papers?

Mr BOYCE: I raise a point of order, Acting Chair. This is an extremely relevant question.

ACTING CHAIR: I have just asked you to point out where—

Mr BOYCE: It is part of a huge billion dollar project in my electorate that is affecting the entire community.

ACTING CHAIR: That may be, member for Callide, but we are examining the expenditure in the current budget. We are looking at the effectiveness and efficiency of expenditure. I need you to point out where this is relevant to the budget papers. Did you want to furnish anything more on that?

Mr BOYCE: Certainly. On page 59 of the Capital Statement, Karara wind farm is listed there. Components for these wind towers have come from Brazil, China, India and Spain. Does Queensland have a manufacturing base capable of producing these components and, if so, why aren't they made here?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Callide, you are touching once again on information. You have to back this up. You are making statements. You have to show some veracity—

Mr MILLAR: I raise a point of order, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: I have not finished yet. Your question is about origin of components. Is that correct? There is silence, so I will go to the member for Gregory on a point of order.

Mr MILLAR: My point of order is that it is a simple question. Components for these wind towers have come from Brazil, China, India and Spain. Why can't we get these components made here in Australia? It is a simple question.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand your point of order. You are stating where they have come from. The origin of them surely cannot be in the budget. You have to back it up. You have to show some veracity.

Mr BOYCE: I raise a point of order, Acting Chair. I would like to lodge a formal protest. You are doing nothing but running—

ACTING CHAIR: Don't say it! I will warn you.

Mr BOYCE: Acting Chair, I will continue. Minister, has QIC incurred a net loss in regard to their investment in AGL's Coopers Gap Wind Farm and, if so, how much?

Mr de BRENNI: Through you, Acting Chair, I know the member comes to estimates with some interesting approaches. I am sure that he is aware that the administration of QIC is a matter for the Treasurer.

Mr BOYCE: Minister, what is the government doing to ensure quality products are being used in the renewable energy sector given the government is pursuing a 50 per cent renewable energy target?

Mr de BRENNI: I am happy to take the question. First of all, again, I say that it is incredibly reckless and it goes to the member's complete opposition to the increasing investment in renewable energy in this state.

Mr MILLAR: I raise a point of order, Acting Chair. It is a question that the member for Callide has asked the minister, and I think he should get straight to answering the question.

ACTING CHAIR: I thank the member for Callide for that straightforward question. I think the minister is coming to the nub of the question.

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Chair, I think I am entitled to put my response into some context. The member has asked about what the government is doing to ensure the quality or robustness of materials that are used in renewable energy projects. In doing so, he has inferred that for some reason materials that are being used or available for use in Queensland or perhaps in this nation are not of an appropriate standard. I have just briefed this committee on the investment attraction through the renewable energy zones and the likely increase in jobs that that will create in regional Queensland. To come in here and infer that there are inferior products being used strikes at the heart of investor confidence in renewable energy in Queensland. It is reckless. I would invite the member to withdraw those comments.

Mr BOYCE: I raise a point of order, Acting Chair. The AGL wind farm, in the letter I have here, are confirming that the 50 generators have to be replaced. Obviously that is a significant failure.

ACTING CHAIR: We are conferring on your question, member for Callide. Do you want to repeat that?

Ms PUGH: It was a point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Callide, what was your response to that?

Mr BOYCE: Acting Chair, the AGL wind farm has suffered a significant failure having to replace 50 generators—

ACTING CHAIR: I am going to halt you there. I know where you are going on this. Has the minister taken personal offence at those comments?

Mr de BRENNI: I do not take personal offence. I take offence on behalf of the future of renewable energy in Queensland.

Mr MILLAR: I raise a point of order.

Mr de BRENNI: The member is clearly on a path of attempting to undermine investor confidence in renewable energy in this nation. It is completely inappropriate.

Mr MILLAR: I raise a point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: I will come to your point of order in a moment.

Mr de BRENNI: He continues to talk about a project that is not funded by this budget. There is a significant problem in respect of relevance. I would ask, Acting Chair, you rule on that in the interests of protecting future investment in Queensland renewable energy.

ACTING CHAIR: I will come back to that in a moment. What is your point of order, member for Gregory?

Mr MILLAR: My point of order is that the member for Callide should not have to withdraw because it was not a personal reflection. It was a general issue about a wind farm in his electorate. He now has a letter confirming some of those issues. I do not think there is any need for a withdrawal.

ACTING CHAIR: We will just pause for a moment. I am going to confer with the secretariat. Minister, due to it not being a personal reflection, we cannot ask the member to withdraw that particular comment. I invite the member to bear in mind what the minister has said about investor confidence and perhaps make a clarifying statement about what his intentions are with this line of questioning.

Mr BOYCE: Mr Chair, it is my intention to make it known to the people of Queensland that QIC has invested heavily in these renewable energy projects, among them the AGL project. These moneys are people's superannuation moneys, people's—

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Callide, we are not getting anywhere on that. Do we have a question from another member?

Mr WEIR: With reference to page 3 of the SDS, 'Energy Services, Service Area Highlights', specifically 'developing options for energy storage to complement large-scale solar and wind deployment', Director-General, there has been considerable growth in the solar industry in Queensland. Has any modelling or analysis been completed by your department on where these solar panels are manufactured and made?

Mr Purtill: With respect to the componentry of those parts, no. The department does not have a role in oversight of the componentry of those panels.

Mr WEIR: Given the recent increase in volatility and uncertainty with Australia's relationship with one of our trading partners, where are the alternative markets to source solar panels and any of those other options in Australia should that relationship sour further?

Mr Purtill: Again, as part of the portfolio responsibilities of the Department of Energy and Public Works I do not have direct oversight of which markets panels are purchased from across the world. It is honestly a commercial matter for companies. They have to comply with Queensland's procurement requirements across the board for our public investments, but otherwise they are commercial matters for the companies that choose to invest and build wind farms, solar farms and indeed storage capacity, be that batteries or other storage components. They are definitely commercial matters.

Mr WEIR: Has the department done any modelling or analysis of what the impact would be if China stopped allowing the export of solar panel components to Queensland, and would this impact on our ability to meet the 50 per cent renewables target?

Ms PUGH: Point of order. That is a clear hypothetical. It is drawing a very long bow.

ACTING CHAIR: It is a hypothetical question. Do you want to recast that question?

Mr WEIR: I just think the modelling should be done. I would be surprised if it is not being done.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, can the minister please outline what work the Palaszczuk government has done to establish Queensland as a leader in renewable hydrogen?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member very much for the question. I know that the member understands the need for Queensland to absolutely position itself to take advantage of the economic opportunities and associated jobs that the emerging hydrogen industry presents for our state.

The National Hydrogen Strategy indicates a domestic industry could generate over 8,000 jobs and \$11 billion a year in GDP by 2050. Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk released the Queensland Hydrogen Industry Strategy 2019-2024 in May 2019, positioning Queensland as a frontrunner in this global emerging energy market which the Queensland University of Technology estimates will grow to a \$1 trillion economy by 2050. The strategy's objective is:

... drive the development of an economically sustainable and competitive hydrogen industry that creates economic growth, opportunities for new export markets, generates the highly skilled jobs of the future, while supporting the transition to a low-emission economy.

The strategy also details the need to focus on supporting innovation, facilitating private sector investment, ensuring an effective policy framework, building community awareness and confidence, and facilitating skills development for new technology. Key to the implementation of the strategy is the \$15 million Hydrogen Industry Development Fund to support the development of a sustainable hydrogen industry here in Queensland. As I indicated earlier, that fund has been extended.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the successful projects under the fund. Funding agreements have been executed with all four successful fund recipients. The approved projects are: \$1.7 million towards the Australian Gas Networks Limited project to build a renewable hydrogen production facility to undertake a blending trial of up to 10 per cent hydrogen in the Gladstone city gas distribution network; \$942,000 towards a project to build a renewable hydrogen plant at eco camps within the Spicers Retreats' Scenic Rim Trail; \$5 million towards Sun Metals' integration of renewable hydrogen into potential applications, including remote area power, transport and heavy industry; and \$4.85 million towards the University of Queensland to build a renewable hydrogen plant and refuelling facility to service intercampus hydrogen buses between St Lucia and Gatton.

It is essential that the Queensland government works to ensure that projects such as these continue to advance to build infrastructure and capability right here in Queensland. Other supported projects being delivered in line with the strategy are: \$250,000 to the H2 export plant at the government's Redlands research facility, where the member's colleague and co hydrogen champion is a solid representative of the opportunities out in the Redlands; and \$387,000 to a hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle trial to integrate five hydrogen cars into the government vehicle fleet. I look forward to them arriving on our shores in early 2021. This project supports the establishment by BOC Limited of a \$4.18 million renewable hydrogen production plant at Bulwer Island and hydrogen refueller at QUT Kelvin Grove campus.

The Palaszczuk government has a track record right here in Queensland after only 19 months, which is why the additional \$10 million investment included in the budget last week for the Hydrogen Industry Development Fund is so exciting. These additional funds will ensure the continued support of this exciting emerging industry, which is set to create highly skilled jobs and export opportunities for our state.

Mr WALKER: Following on from the previous question, how does the Hydrogen Industry Development Fund encourage investment from the private sector?

Mr de BRENNI: Before I answer that, I can provide an answer to the earlier question with respect to equipment and components of the kit at the Karara Wind Farm versus Coopers Gap. I can confirm I am advised that the turbines are not the same.

The hydrogen industry strategy has five focus areas to drive development of this sustainable energy industry: firstly, supporting innovation; secondly, facilitating private sector investment; thirdly, ensuring an effective policy framework; fourthly, building community awareness and confidence; and fifthly, facilitating skill development for the new technology. The fund is fundamentally designed to address the first two focus areas of supporting innovation and the facilitation of private sector investment. The \$15 million first iteration of funds, as members know, was heavily oversubscribed, clearly demonstrating the level of demand and interest for government involvement in this emerging industry. The further \$10 million boost to the fund demonstrates our commitment to continue working together with industry partners, universities and all levels of government to produce hydrogen—importantly, at scale.

Cleaner, cheaper fuel is what will underpin the future of Queensland's manufacturing industry here at home and is what countries around the world are after as they transition to low or, in many cases, no-carbon economies.

The first project to be backed by the fund is also a first for Australia and it is a prime example of how this fund is leveraging investment from the private sector. This project by the Australian Gas Networks Ltd, AGN, also builds capacity and capability that benefits our domestic energy market. AGN

receives support via funding through an agreement of \$1.77 million towards its \$4.2 million renewable hydrogen project. It will deliver a production facility to undertake a blending trial, delivering up to 10 per cent renewable hydrogen into the Gladstone city gas distribution network. The project is the first to blend renewable hydrogen into a gas network with residential, commercial and industrial customers. As a result, Gladstone is set to become the first city in Australia to be powered by a blend of natural gas and hydrogen.

The fund has also provided industry with support to test new technology. As I mentioned, Spicers Retreats committed to sustainable energy practices across their network of resorts and their new ecoexperience at the Scenic Rim trail has received a commitment of \$942,000 towards the world's first off-grid renewable hydrogen energy storage system, LAVO. Over two stages, Spices Retreats will build a \$2.141 million renewable hydrogen solution that includes a solar farm, electrolyzers, storage systems and fuel cells.

Collectively, the four projects backed by the first round of the development fund have total project costs in excess of \$37 million. That is 2½ times the funding commitment delivered by our government, so good leveraging there.

The Palaszczuk government's priorities to help Queensland recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 are clear—that we will support industry to create new jobs. We know that renewable energy creates jobs. Our 44 renewable energy projects have created over 6,800 jobs already across regional Queensland. The private investment leveraged by the now \$25 million development fund shows that Queensland is the place to invest. It is the place to invest in a world-class renewable, scalable hydrogen industry.

Ms PUGH: Minister, page 3 of the SDS talks about the department's role in Queensland's electricity prices. Can you update the committee on the actions the Palaszczuk government has taken to lower power prices for Queenslanders?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I know the member is very passionate about the Queensland government delivering lower electricity accounts for her constituents. As the member knows, the Palaszczuk government has delivered lower electricity prices for Queenslanders in both regional Queensland and the south-east. Residents of South-East Queensland have seen reductions in their energy accounts. The Australian Energy Regulator's *Annual retail markets report 2019-20* shows the median standing offer for South-East Queensland fell by around 10 per cent for the first 12 months that ended in June, but customers should continue to shop around. A household could save up to \$400 a year on their account by finding a more competitive deal, and small businesses can achieve up to a \$700 saving by doing the same.

In addition, as part of our response to COVID, the Palaszczuk government assisted households and businesses manage their energy costs through our \$500 million utility relief package. The package provided \$200 to households and \$500 to small businesses in the form of a credit that was automatically applied to their accounts between April and July 2020. A further \$50 asset ownership dividend payment was applied to all household bills between September and November 2020, providing further relief at a cost of \$100 million. Households will see another \$50 credit on their accounts in 2021 and I know they are looking forward to that.

In addition to the dividend payments, regional Queenslanders are seeing the benefits of our government's policies with their third straight year of electricity price reductions. In 2021, typical regional households are expected to see a reduction on their account of \$84, typical small businesses will see a reduction of \$75 on their account—over three per cent—while large businesses will benefit too, with annual accounts set to drop by between 10 and 13 per cent. In total, regional households will have seen \$600 put back into their hip pocket over the last three-year period. Small businesses will have an extra \$1,000 to invest into their operations over that same period. We contrast that with previous administrations, including the LNP, who saw the largest account increases on record as they closed power stations.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. We are talking about this budget not past budgets. We have had that conversation this morning in regard to an email.

ACTING CHAIR: The minister is nearly finished. He has just mentioned that one there. Bear in mind, it is context and content of the answer and the question. I am judging it on its totality. Minister, can you continue please.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you for your guidance, Acting Chair. I am simply making the point that for households and businesses in Queensland their energy costs are going down, not up as they did under the LNP.

Mr MILLAR: You need to come out west; it is a bit different.

ACTING CHAIR: We have one more brief government question.

Ms PUGH: Minister, just briefly, page 2 of the SDS outlined your role supporting and growing Queensland's renewables sector. Can the minister outline the Queensland government's Renewable Energy Fund and the opportunities for Queensland that will come from this program?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank you for that question. This is in the context of our commitment to our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. As I mentioned earlier, we are proud to have passed the milestone of 20 per cent. It is quite an achievement, given the state of the sector when we did come to office in 2015.

To date, a high proportion of renewables going into our grid are privately owned, including more than 3,000 megawatts of rooftop solar and 3,300 megawatts of large-scale projects operating and a further 2,100 megawatts that are committed. This investment in Queensland demonstrates that our strong policies are giving confidence to international investors. It is my job to continue to maintain that confidence of international investors—that Queensland is open for business in the renewable sector. These projects are creating jobs and helping to lower energy costs here and in the southern states as well.

However, our government is also committed to maintaining majority ownership of Queensland's electricity generation, which is incredibly important. Public ownership is something Queenslanders have consistently supported at the ballot box, and I can assure members that we will honour that support. The Palaszczuk government established CleanCo, which has recently invested in the first fully publicly owned renewable energy asset in this state since the last of the northern hydro projects were completed back in 1999. That is the 100 megawatt Karara Wind Farm that we have spoken about to some extent today.

CleanCo's other renewable and low emission assets include Swanbank E, Barron Gorge, Kareeya, Koombooloomba and Wivenhoe hydro power plants totalling 1,116 megawatts. Whilst our fleet of thermal generators is young and it is efficient, we will need to continue investing in additional generators to maintain the public-private balance. The \$500 million Renewable Energy Fund is the government's latest program to assist our government owned generators on that journey. The fund will enable our government owned corporations to invest in new large-scale renewable energy projects and the supporting infrastructure to go with it. This may include wind, solar, storage and network projects.

Stanwell, CS Energy, CleanCo, Powerlink and Energy Queensland will be able to present these investment and funding proposals to government for consideration and approval through the fund. Investments may include a combination of government owned corporation borrowings and government contributions, depending on the nature of the investment proposals and the funding requirements. Investment proposals will be considered based on key objectives which will be set by government. We expect those to be finalised in the new year and engagement with our GOCs to commence shortly after. They will include criteria that maximise public ownership, ensuring projects comply with government procurement rules and, importantly, value for money for taxpayers. We expect these investments will be made progressively over this term of government.

This investment is vital not only for the future of our energy network but also for our economy as we continue to push towards recovery from COVID-19. The funded projects will need to comply with our government procurement policy and that will ensure importantly that we maximise local job opportunities and that regional economies especially will continue to benefit from our state's renewable energy boom.

ACTING CHAIR: Before I go to questions from the members for South Brisbane and Maiwar, we have time for a brief question from the member for Condamine.

Mr WEIR: My question is around hydrogen. Page 3-2 of volume 3 of the SDS relating to the departmental overview states specifically to: '... position Queensland to capitalise on emerging opportunities for domestic hydrogen use and long-term export'. On 9 July 2019 the then minister for state development, manufacturing, infrastructure and planning announced \$15 million for a hydrogen industry development fund. Director-General, are you able to give a breakdown of that funding on the percentage given to green hydrogen projects and brown hydrogen projects?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. I will have a quick look to see how much I can assist around those. In terms of breaking them down into green versus brown, or blue as they say—but I know what you mean—I will endeavour to get back to you by the end of our session after the break. I

am sure that we will be able to do that. Rather than rush in and try to choose which of those projects falls into which category, I would rather be accurate and come back to you with the split on those projects that we are aware of at the moment.

Mr MILLAR: Mr Acting Chair, a point of order. We will take that as a question on notice?

Mr Purtill: I am confident we can get it back.

ACTING CHAIR: If we do not have that answer by that time, it is up to the minister to decide whether he will take that on notice. Do you have a quick follow-up?

Mr WEIR: I have another line of questioning.

Mr Purtill: Sorry Acting Chair, could I just confirm the exact nature of the question? Is it for all hydrogen projects?

Mr WEIR: Yes, I want the breakdown of what are purely green hydrogen projects and what are combination.

Mr Purtill: Government funded projects?

Mr WEIR: Yes.

Mr Purtill: All right.

Mr de BRENNI: Through you, Acting Chair, the member is talking about the four successful hydrogen industry development fund recipients—Gladstone City, Scenic Rim, Sun Metals and the University of Queensland; the member wants to know which of those are blue or green?

Mr WEIR: Yes.

Mr de BRENNI: I think we can probably establish that shortly. If we cannot do so by the end of hearings today, we might need to come back. At this stage I think we can get it to the member.

ACTING CHAIR: We will do a wrap-up at the end of the next session for any unanswered questions across your portfolio. Member for Maiwar?

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you very much, Acting Chair. I have a couple of quick questions to follow up on the minister's comment before about the maintenance of majority public ownership. I have a question for the director-general. How does the department measure the level of public ownership in the generation sector? For example, is it based on megawatt hours of production, taking into account actual output or is it that sort of nameplate capacity?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member very much for the question. In terms of identifying what percentage of power generation comes from government owned corporations, we will use the nameplate-generating capacity. You can imagine the actual output is so variable.

Mr BERKMAN: Indeed. Understood. What is that level currently?

Mr Purtill: I can get you the exact figure, but I can give you an approximate figure straight off the top of my head: about 62 per cent. I will get you the exact figure in a minute.

Mr BERKMAN: Wonderful, thank you. With the Acting Chair's indulgence, given how very brief those answers were, we have heard about the \$500 million invested in ongoing public ownership. Does the department have a target for how much generating capacity that \$500 million should purchase?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. It really will be on the merits of the projects as they are brought forward and assessed by the government owned corporations. Certainly, there are some general rules of thumb around the generating capacity of different types of renewable generation for example, but there is a whole range of factors that might affect that. There might be projects that come forward, for example, with commercially very exciting storage options attached to them. In relation to the actual generating capacity, there may be other factors that are just as important or as appealing to a project as the pure percentage of electrons that it produces per dollar invested in the project. We see that across a lot of our programs that we are looking at. There is an array of mixtures of solar with batteries, wind with battery, pure solar, pure wind. It could be that locations where the wind, for example, might really smooth out the profile during the day might have better advantages or it could be about the locations of projects in terms of their system strength and being able to either contribute or not deteriorate—do no harm to—the system. It is very difficult to say, 'We want to get X megawatts per dollar.'

Mr BERKMAN: Understood, thank you.

Mr Purtill: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for South Brisbane?

Mr Purtill: Sorry, Acting Chair?

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr Purtill: The answer is 65.7 per cent.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you.

Dr MacMAHON: Thank you, Acting Chair. My question is for the director-general. All of Queensland's coal-fired power stations will have to close in order to meet the government's net zero emissions target for 2050, including two that are owned by private companies. How is the government ensuring decisions about the future of those private power stations are being made with the involvement of workers and to ensure that those workers are fully supported?

ACTING CHAIR: Just before we go there, member for South Brisbane, the first part of your question had a big hypothetical. Do you want to repeat the last part of your question, avoiding offending standing orders?

Dr MacMAHON: Director-General, how is the government ensuring that decisions about the future of privately owned power stations that will eventually close are being made with the involvement of workers and to ensure those workers are fully supported?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member very much for the question. Some of the elements of the question that pertain particularly to transition over time and the skills that are required into the future, would honestly fall in other portfolios including industrial relations, employment, small business and training as opposed to the pure energy components of this portfolio.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have a further question, member for South Brisbane?

Dr MacMAHON: No, thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Before we close, do you have any further information that you want to come back to? We have a number of issues here that we may need to deal with.


Mr Purtill: Thank you, Acting Chair. You may recall that I said I would come back with details on the percentage of government investment in green versus blue, or brown, hydrogen projects. We have asked the department of state development people who are helping out back on the phone—because they were done under the state development portfolio at that time—and all four are green hydrogen projects. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Any other parts that we need to do deal with there?

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Chair, I do not think there is anything outstanding from us.

ACTING CHAIR: We are just about at time. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 3.45 pm, continuing with the examination of the estimates for the energy, renewables, hydrogen, public works and procurement portfolio areas, specifically public works and procurement. I ask any departmental officers who are not participating in the next session to exit the chamber as quickly as possible as the committee will have a quick changeover period. That allows us to keep to the hearing schedule. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 3.28 pm to 3.45 pm.

 **ACTING CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now continue its examination of the proposed expenditure in the energy, renewables, hydrogen, public works and procurement portfolio areas. I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of public works and procurement open for examination. The question is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I call on the member for Everton to ask the first question.

Mr MANDER: Good afternoon, Minister and officials. My first question is around government accommodation. Director-General, on Monday the Premier stated—

... my understanding was that Cameron Milner was seated next to a couple of staff members.

Can the director-general advise whether any work space in 1 William Street was allocated to non-government employees—visitors—during the election campaign period?

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Acting Chair. I think the member for Everton ought to know that the Queensland Government Accommodation Office, of which he would have some experience, performs its functions in accordance with the requirements of other agencies for making available floor space and office fit-out. I am sure he is aware that the decisions around who would sit in any particular

office or any particular office space outside of the Department of Energy and Public Works would not be something that pertains to the responsibilities of this director-general or me. Nor is it a matter that impacts on the efficiency or effectiveness of the budget.

Mr MILLAR: On the point of order, we are referring to page 3-5, 'Service Area Highlights'. Accommodation is a part of the budget process and I think the member for Everton has the right to ask that question.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, member for Gregory. Having a look at what we are doing here, we are looking at the efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure or government policy. Where a person may or may not have sat in a government building I think is drawing a long bow. I suggest that the member recasts that question to make it as relevant as he can to the expenditure under review.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Acting Chair. My question, again, is to the director-general. Has the Australian Labor Party been invoiced for the use of office accommodation during the election period, specifically to 1 William Street?

ACTING CHAIR: I might—

Mr MANDER: We are talking about expenses and revenue of the department—expenses that may have been forgone or revenue that has not been collected. The Premier has admitted that a non-government employee was situated and located at 1 William Street. I am trying to ascertain whether there is any revenue owing to the government for the use of that office space.

ACTING CHAIR: I will allow that at this point, but certainly the director-general can answer that in the manner he sees fit.

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. Visitors, whether they be contractors or visitors to the building, are a matter for each department. In terms of an invoice for anybody who might visit the building, be they a consultant who is there working or anybody in fact, this department does not furnish an invoice for that accommodation.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, is it normal practice for government accommodation to be made available to non-government employees or non-government contractors to carry out their own business without any expense being incurred by that particular person or organisation?

Mr Purtill: Matters of accommodation in the various government departments in their own spaces are matters for each and every department on their own and not a matter for the Department of Energy and Public Works.

Mr MANDER: Can I—

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly, member for Everton, but bear in mind that you have asked the question a couple of different ways now.

Mr MANDER: I would argue that they are different questions, Mr Acting Chair. Again, the question is specifically about a policy. Is it government policy to allow non-government workers or non-government contractors to have workspace in government accommodation offices without any expense being incurred? That is a policy question, Mr Acting Chair—government policy question.

ACTING CHAIR: Who is it directed to, member for Everton?

Mr MANDER: To the director-general.

ACTING CHAIR: If you are asking specifically about government policy, it may be that it is better directed elsewhere.

Mr MANDER: Department policy; let me clarify that.

Mr Purtill: I am sorry, member, but could you repeat the question? I am sorry.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes, we are just struggling to see where you are going with this.

Mr MANDER: It is pretty straightforward to me, Mr Acting Chair. Is it department policy to allow non-government employees or non-government contractors access to workspace in government accommodation without incurring any cost?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. It is difficult for me to answer that on behalf of other government departments, but I can assure you that in the Department of Energy and Public Works we would certainly accommodate, for example, agency staff in our premises with no cost incurred. We would make space for a consultant or a contractor to come and work in our space. I presume that would be the same across government, but I would not like to speak for other government departments, only this one.

ACTING CHAIR: Any further questions, member for Everton?

Mr MANDER: Yes, to the director-general. Of course that policy you just mentioned then would be appropriate for people who are paid by the government, but for non-government employees or non-government contractors who do not have any remuneration relationship with the government would that be a policy of the department to allow that to take place?

Mr Purtil: I thank the member for the question. We do not have any policies that would point to such a scenario.

Mr MANDER: Because it is unheard of. Maybe that is why.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Everton—

Mr MANDER: That is why there would be no policy.

ACTING CHAIR:—you have had the answer given in about three or four different ways. You have got the answer I think you are going to get. Do you have a different line of questions?

Mr MANDER: I have further questions, Mr Acting Chair. My question is to the minister. Minister, has there been any disclosure to the Electoral Commission of Queensland for in-kind support given to Cameron Milner for having workspace accommodation in 1 William Street during the election period?

ACTING CHAIR: On that question, do you mean a declaration of in-kind support to the AEC? Is this a party matter or a government matter?

Mr MANDER: I am asking the minister if he is aware of any declaration made.

Mr MILLAR: And it is the Queensland Electoral Commission, not the AEC.

ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I am going to give you a broad brush to deal with that. I think it may be outside your area of responsibility.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Acting Chair. I think the director-general has made it quite clear that the matters about agency budgets ought to be directed to those agency CEOs or their responsible ministers. You have already heard, member, that there is a policy in this regard. The line of questioning is well outside the budget. It is a question that has no bearing on the role of the Queensland government accommodation office or the Department of Energy and Public Works and I would ask, Acting Chair, for you to provide some further guidance to the member in terms of relevance to the budget.

Mr MILLAR: Mr Acting Chair, I raise a point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: No, hang on. In response to what the minister has said, some of the things we look at are the organisation, the efficiency, the effectiveness of a unit of administration, specific expenditure, how the policy is funded and any impediments to that efficiency or effectiveness. As I have said, member for Everton, I think you are stretching it in connecting that to the budget under review. I know that you will have another question, but I say to you to bear that in mind, otherwise we will move on to some more questions from elsewhere.

Mr MANDER: Mr Acting Chair, the department is responsible for government accommodation, so my questions are relevant to the appropriate use of government accommodation. I will ask my next question then—thank you—to the minister. Will the minister advise whether any other government accommodation outside of 1 William Street was used by the Australian Labor Party for electioneering purposes?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Everton, I am thinking that may be once again an area outside the minister's responsibility. I am going to ask the minister if he wanted to make a comment on that, once again responding in the way he wants to.

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Chair, I am happy to make a comment. The member for Everton has repeatedly asked about matters that he knows do not pertain to this and I know that the member for Everton will be frustrated because he is pursuing some political agenda here this afternoon, just as frustrated as I have been and others have been in his failure to answer questions about the LNP taking \$1.4 million in rent from the construction firm Walton while they were in trouble—\$430,000 of this in the year that they collapsed—

Mr MANDER: If you are going to improve on your D rating, Minister, you are going to need to do better than that.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Everton, I have given the minister a bit of broadness to respond to this.

Mr de BRENNI:—and the Australian Electoral Commission certainly questioned that arrangement. There are plenty of people on the Sunshine Coast—tradies on the Sunshine Coast—who are still waiting for the member for Everton to explain his actions there.

Mr MILLAR: You are not talking about the budget.

Mr de BRENNI: The member for Gregory makes a very good point: neither is the member for Everton, so let us get back to what we are here to talk about.

Mr MILLAR: Yes, but the member for Everton is talking about the budget.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory. Thank you, Minister. Do we have any further questions?

Mr MANDER: I do, thank you, Mr Acting Chair. My question is to the director-general. Director-General, is the department responsible either directly or through a contract for issuing access passes to 1 William Street?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. This is the security passes in and out, including visitors or staff or all of it?

Mr MANDER: All of it.

Mr Purtill: All right. I am very happy to assist because my deputy director-general is able to give me some advice on that, because I am new in the chair. State government security is now run by the Queensland Police Service and therefore it is the Queensland Police Service that issues those security passes.

Mr MANDER: Does that include visitor passes?

Mr Purtill: Sorry, Protective Services.

Mr MANDER: Does that include visitor passes?

Mr Purtill: Yes, everything that is issued at the concierge desk is my understanding. JLL, the building managers, will actually do the work under direction from them, so the Department of Energy and Public Works is not involved.

Mr MANDER: Okay; thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Do we have some different questions or further questions?

Mr MANDER: Not for now.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to government members.

Ms PUGH: Minister, with reference to page 5 of the Department of Energy and Public Works SDS, can the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government is supporting women and girls to gain training skills and employment in the construction industry?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I am proud to be part of a government that is steadfast in its commitment to achieving gender equality in our society. Under the leadership of our Premier and the Minister for Women we have achieved board gender parity, for example, on the Queensland Building and Construction Board. I am proud to be part of a government that is doing its part. Of course, member, there is still a lot of work to be done. In the building and construction industry, for example, in Australia only 2.4 per cent of the tradies on the tools are women and girls. As a nation I think that we can do better and it is something that I am committed to see change.

That is why the Palaszczuk government is a proud supporter of the National Association of Women in Construction who are leading the fight for thousands of Queensland women and girls to be able to work on the front lines in the construction industry. It is because of the association's hard work, their advocacy and their leadership, that more women are lining up for a career in the building industry.

In partnership with NAWIC, the Palaszczuk government believes that an 11 per cent female target in the construction workforce is an achievable target—that it is fair. That is why we are committed to it and we will act to help deliver on this because we do not want to just talk the talk, we want to walk the walk. I am proud to be a minister for construction and I am proud to wear an 11 per cent sticker on my hard hat every time that I visit a construction or, now, an energy site.

Members, I am proud to report to the House that last year we broke ground on Queensland's first ever project with a target of women working on the site, a social housing construction project in Cannon Hill. We announced that it was our intention that 30 per cent of the workforce on that project would be women. We set this target well above—a stretch target—the 11 per cent and I am pleased to report that we have met it. In fact, I can report that 44 per cent of the professional services on the site are

performed by women. One hundred per cent of the early works was completed by an all-women fencing team through yourtown. We have recently hosted Try a Trade Days to promote construction careers for locals in years 10 and 12 and so far 20 local school students have had hands-on experience in blocklaying, plumbing and carpentry and 25 per cent of these young women are certain that they want a career in construction.

This is just one project, and we still have a long way to go before we reach that 11 per cent target, but we are taking important steps towards achieving equality across the construction industry and when those young women who said they wanted a career in construction are ready, I am committed to making sure that there is a place for them in the government owned QBuild as well. We set ourselves the same target of 11 per cent of new apprentices in QBuild and I am also proud to say today that we have surpassed that. We have hit now 14 per cent.

That is in stark contrast to the dire situation that women in Queensland would find themselves in under an LNP government. The positive trend that we are seeing in female participation reverses what was a negative one when the member for Everton was a minister, when he sacked 9,000 women of the 14,000 Queenslanders when he was in Campbell Newman's cabinet.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. We have had this conversation this morning. We are focusing on the budget. This is the 2020-21 budget. Can we focus on the budget?

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. We are focused on the budget. As I have said, you can refer to past budgets in terms of laying a pattern for the future and, as we said with when we were discussing the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, if those budgets have had an impact on the current budget there is some latitude there, but let us let the minister finish.

Mr de BRENNI: It is fair enough too, Acting Chair. I would not want to be reminded of that record either. In the year ahead women in Queensland's construction industry can know that there is a place for them here. In my view one day we will not need targets, we will not need quotas, but until that day comes the Palaszczuk government is committed to doing whatever we can to achieve gender equality not just in the construction industry but across Queensland's entire economy.

ACTING CHAIR: With reference to page 3 of the Department of Energy and Public Works SDS, will you advise how the Palaszczuk government is ensuring that subbies and tradies get paid in full, on time every time?

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Acting Chair, for your important question. The Palaszczuk government is investing in jobs and infrastructure across the state under Queensland's economic recovery plan. We are supporting the 240,000 Queenslanders working in Queensland's \$46 billion construction sector to make sure that they stay in work. As I am sure all members would agree, it is vitally important that these subbies and tradies who work in our building and construction industry get paid for the work they do, that they get paid in full, on time every time. After all, that is only fair.

Ensuring they are paid in full and on time every time will be a critical part of Queensland's economic recovery. We would not accept it if a nurse did not get paid for her work in a COVID clinic, we would not accept it if a police officer did not get paid for securing our borders and we would not accept it if a firefighter did not get paid after battling a bushfire. I am confident when I say that Queenslanders would agree that it should not be any different for the men and women who go to work every day building our state. That is why our government introduced landmark security of payment reforms with project bank accounts at the centre of a suite of protections that are now the strongest in the nation.

I can report to the committee that phase 1 of the project trust accounts has been a great success. Since March 2018 over \$1.2 billion has flowed through project bank accounts for 312 government projects. This has provided certainty for tradies working on these projects that they will get paid for the work they do. Tradies working on projects like the Toowoomba State High School Performing Arts Centre or the \$4 million auxiliary fire and rescue station located in Longreach.

Following extensive review by the Building Industry Fairness Reforms Implementation and Evaluation Panel we have made changes to strengthen and enhance our security of payment framework and they include streamlining the project trust accounts framework with continued rollout to the whole industry. We have enhanced the powers of the Building and Construction Commission as well to investigate claims of false statements, which is critically important. We have also given more powers to tradies and head contractors themselves to go after developers that have not paid. We remain committed to ensuring that Queenslanders who work in the building and construction industry get paid for the work that they do and we are committed to full implementation of project trust accounts by 1 January 2023.

This is in stark contrast to the weakening of the minimum financial requirements which left the QBCC blind to the financial health of licensees. I am sure the member for Everton is across what led to the weakening of those MFR laws. He was at the helm, as we heard earlier, when instead of supporting tradies they were taking rent from failing builders. We know that in the lead-up to the last state election that Queensland tradies overwhelmingly and emphatically supported a continuation of our project trust account regime.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. This has nothing to do with the budget. The minister is just trying to be political. Can we get back to the budget, please?

ACTING CHAIR: I am sure the minister is coming to the nub of the question.

Mr de BRENNI: I am, Acting Chair, because the budget certainly addresses the revenue and expenses of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission whose job it is now to oversee the new project trust account framework that has transitioned from administration by the then Department of Housing and Public Works, now to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. It bears repeating that that process was emphatically supported by Queensland tradies and builders. We know that when the LNP talks about fine-tuning those provisions that they mean, in fact, rolling them back. It is clear that only the Palaszczuk government can be trusted to ensure that tradies are paid for the work that they do.

Mr WALKER: With reference to page 5 of the Department of Energy and Public Works SDS, will the minister outline the progress of the Palaszczuk government's Household Resilience Program and advise if there are plans for future programs?

Mr de BRENNI: I am pleased to advise the committee that the Household Resilience Program is delivering for Queenslanders in Mundingburra and, in fact, it is delivering for regional Queenslanders more generally. This year it is a \$21.25 million partnership with the Commonwealth of Australia to improve the resilience of homes against cyclones in at-risk communities. It is helping reduce insurance premiums, too. That is important because it alleviates the cost-of-living pressures when Queenslanders need it most. We know that this program is already saving Queenslanders on average \$310 per annum on their household insurance premiums. I am pleased to have announced in my opening remarks today that another 200 households will soon benefit from that important program.

Already the Palaszczuk government has made great progress in keeping households safe. From Bundaberg to the far north, our Household Resilience Program has delivered 227 grants awarded in Bundaberg, 188 in the member for Mundingburra's electorate and we have even managed to squeeze a couple into Callide, just to name a few. So far, 1,566 grants have been awarded in phase 2 of the program, supporting households to complete much needed repairs. We have seen 1,260 roofs replaced, 250 sets of windows protected and 95 door replacements.

Our program is not just keeping Queenslanders safe; it is also doing the incredibly important job of keeping locals in work by investing in local businesses. I am pleased to advise the committee that 414 local contractors have been engaged through the program and to date \$27.10 million has been injected into local businesses. Those are businesses such as A & J Roofing Solutions in Cairns, which has employed two staff specifically to work on the program; Top Roof NQ in Townsville where the owner, Justin, has told us that 90 per cent of the reroofing work his company completed was for people who could not otherwise afford it, which is welcome news for those households; and Alline Roofing in Rocky where the director, Clint, has told us, 'The program allowed us to keep people employed and use extra subcontractors.'

It was pleasing to see that the LNP liked our policy so much during the recent election campaign that they copied it and re-announced it themselves. But, of course, Queenslanders know who to trust when it comes to their safety and to the regions. They know to trust the Palaszczuk government because through natural disasters, whether it is cyclones, floods or pandemics, for that matter, Queenslanders know that they can trust the Palaszczuk government to stand shoulder to shoulder with them. With the Household Resilience Program we are taking a proactive approach and bolstering the resilience of homes in cyclone-prone areas, we are keeping Queenslanders safe, we are helping to reduce the cost of living and, of course, we are keeping local tradies in work.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go back to the opposition for their questions.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the minister. Will the minister detail how the department will achieve the \$3.185 million savings target this financial year set by the Treasurer's savings and debt plan?

Mr de BRENNI: What we will not do is we will not cut services. In fact, as you have heard the Treasurer explain the way in which those efficiencies are achieved, it is about doing more with less. We certainly will not sack QBuild workers, as the member for Everton did so callously when he was responsible. We certainly will not sell off any publicly owned assets.

Mr MILLAR: You did that in 2009. You have no more to sell.

Mr de BRENNI: To support Queensland's economic recovery, we will be implementing a savings and debt plan within government. In total, that will deliver savings to the tune of \$3 billion over four years across government. To date I am advised that we have already achieved \$352.2 million across government. That has been achieved across a range of measures. Specifically, we will continue to focus on achieving those savings. I am advised that they will be distributed across the agency, focusing on core business. Members would be aware of marketing restrictions. We have been asked and I will be ensuring that the department continues to simplify government communications.

Additional savings will be achieved through sustaining effective frontline services and reinforcing the front line. Of course, it is critically important that those Queenslanders who need the services of government have them delivered effectively, but we will be looking at the use of consultants, contractors, labour hire and long-term agency temps. We have ensured that we will be incredibly prudent when it comes to ICT. Members are aware that we have reset the dial on ICT projects, including a six-month freeze on new ICT, except of course those related to critical safety or cybersecurity. We will make better use of existing government buildings and, of course, encourage and facilitate our dedicated public servants to, where possible, be able to work from home.

We are confident that the savings that have been apportioned for the Department of Energy and Public Works will be achieved. I am confident that the director-general will deliver those savings and, at the same time, make sure that Queenslanders have the services they can rely on and that they continue to enjoy a strong sense of job security with our government and a strong sense of satisfaction in serving Queenslanders.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the director-general on the savings and debt plan issue. Will the director-general advise how many senior executive service roles have been reduced since the savings and debt plan was initiated?

Mr Purtill: It is a little complicated by the recent machinery-of-government changes. Elements of the former departments have now formed the new Department of Energy and Public Works. There are no senior executive service positions that have changed status as part of that. We have very clear direction around future recruitment, and our strategies for achieving our savings and debt plan targets are very clear. Each of our areas of procurement across the building policy management area, our energy division and our commercialised business units, QBuild and QFleet, would all be part of that mix as we go forward. Certainly we are very confident that we will be achieving our savings and debt plan through the mechanisms that the minister has just outlined.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, how many department staff have been appointed through closed merit recruitment during the financial year as instructed by the savings and debt plan?

Mr Purtill: I will endeavour to have any detail that we have available for you before the end of the session. I am sure that we would be able to compile that and, if not, I will ask the minister for his permission to take it on notice. We will endeavour to get you that information during the rest of the hearing.

Mr MANDER: On a similar theme, Director-General, which time limited programs in the department will cease as directed by the savings and debt plan?

ACTING CHAIR: I am going to point out that the member has a hypothetical in there, but I will give the director-general some latitude to answer that question.

Mr MANDER: Mr Acting Chair, this is a direct question about the finances of the department. The Treasurer has instructed that these savings are to be found by these methods. I am asking specifics along those lines.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand, but you have included the hypothetical of closures.

Mr MANDER: That is what has been asked by the Treasurer through the savings and debt plan.

ACTING CHAIR: As I said, that may well involve a hypothetical but I will let the director-general answer that question.

Mr Purtill: Programs that have involved the use of consultants, contractors, labour hire and long-term agency temps, for example, will not be initiated into the future. We will be particularly focusing on what internal resources we can remobilise towards any of that work.

The minister also mentioned resetting the dial on our information and communication technology programs. We have initiated a six-month freeze on investment in new ICT projects. Projects that were in flight at the beginning of the savings and debt plan have been subject to an assessment as to their ability to continue. If I can give you an example of a critical system that was in flight when the savings and debt plan came along, it would be our system around the QFleet vehicle management system that continues to be executed. It is a limited life program. We are developing new ICT kit which will then better manage that fleet. That project continues. Projects that were critical like that, or to safety or cyber security, would continue, but there is no initiation of projects unless mission critical for safety or cyber security in that short term.

Mr MILLAR: In regard to that line of questioning with those limited life programs, or time limited programs, Director-General, has there been a head count on how many staff or how many contractors/consultants will go because of those programs not existing?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. I have a current profile for the number of contractors in the organisation, but I do not believe that I have ready access to, if you like, the future head count and how that might change. That would be quite an exercise in understanding when limited life programs are finishing and so forth. I do not think I would readily have that information available, given it is a projection into the future. I can tell you what the head count is and the employment status of the department as it stands at the moment.

Mr MILLAR: What would that status be at the end of the financial year?

Mr Purtill: The end of financial year FY21?

Mr MILLAR: Yes.

Mr Purtill: That is very difficult for me to answer. I can give you the fixed date which I can get now—on a fixed date as to what that breakdown would be, but I do not have a projection from now until the end of the financial year, on the mix.

ACTING CHAIR: I think we have an indication there from the director-general that we will try to get some associated information for that. We may well have that at the moment.

Mr de BRENNI: Through you, Acting Chair, I think the question has been answered. I think it was asked by the committee at question number 10 for which an answer has already been provided to the committee. It was a question on notice responded to already.

ACTING CHAIR: That question has been provided, as delivered there.

Mr MANDER: QBCC Commissioner, I refer to the answer to question on notice G3 with reference to combustible aluminium composite panels. Across all stages, how many buildings have now been assessed through the Safer Buildings program?

Mr Bassett: The QBCC has been running the Safer Buildings program for a number of months now. If the member just bears with me while I get my briefing, I will be able to give you some specific details.

ACTING CHAIR: To clarify, member for Everton, are we talking about public buildings, private buildings?

Mr MANDER: I am talking about the buildings that are under the Safer Buildings program.

ACTING CHAIR: Not being the chair of this committee, I am unsure if that extends across the private sector or is it just in the public sector.

Mr Bassett: Acting Chair, I can certainly speak on the Safer Buildings program which we are administering which deals with private buildings. I will take advice obviously from the minister as to anything to do with public buildings et cetera.

ACTING CHAIR: As I said, not being the chair of this committee, I am unsure about how broadly that goes. If we can get an answer to that question from the member for Everton, do you have that information?

Mr Bassett: Yes, I do. In October 2018, there was an amendment under the Building and Other Legislation (Cladding) Amendment Regulation that made it easier to establish combustible cladding checklist. As at 30 November 2020, some 24,002 building registrations had gone through the Safer Buildings program. Of that 24,002, over 17,000 buildings completed the Safer Buildings program with no further obligations. These are all private buildings. Some 2,558 buildings are yet to complete the Safer Buildings program and there were 4,243 registrations that were abandoned, that is, they were either registered in error or they were removed as a result of, for example, duplicate registration. To

date, of the buildings remaining in the program, 182 have identified as a potential cladding fire risk and these buildings will require further assessment to determine the extent of any rectification that might be required.

Mr MANDER: There were a whole lot of figures you gave pretty quickly then, Commissioner. Is it correct to say that 24,000 have been checked and, of that, 182 were non-compliant?

Mr Bassett: I thank the member for the question. It is important for the member to note that the QBCC has not had a role in checking the individual buildings that have gone through the program. The Safer Buildings program was about building owners undertaking a Safer Buildings cladding checklist. Of those 182 that have identified as a potential—and I say a potential cladding fire risk—those buildings will require further assessment to determine the extent of any rectification, if any, is required.

Mr MANDER: I may have confused you there with my question, I am sorry. I have my figures the wrong way around. So, 24,000 that were eligible but 17,000 have been checked, is that right?

Mr Bassett: As at 30 November 2020, there were 24,002 building registrations, that is, people or building owners that registered through the Safer Buildings program. Of those 24,000, over 17,000 completed the first or the second part and did not require anything further in respect of any further checks.

Mr MANDER: The 182 then relates to what?

Mr Bassett: The 182 have passed all the way through to either section 3A or part 3B and, of those 182, if they have gone all the way through, that means that they have had a fire building engineer or a building expert say that they may have a fire cladding risk.

Mr MANDER: The remaining buildings that need to be checked out of that numbers what now?

Mr Bassett: As at 30 November 2020, there are 2,558 buildings that are yet to go all the way through the Safer Buildings program. The QBCC is working very hard to remind those building owners and those registrants of their obligation to come in and complete the Safer Buildings checklist by 3 May 2021. We are working, as good regulators do, in a facilitative way, but we are in the process right now of determining what regulatory approach we may take if in fact those 2,558 buildings do not go all the way through.

ACTING CHAIR: I will go to the government members for a question.

Mr WALKER: With reference to page 13 of the Department of Energy and Public Works SDS, will the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government is ensuring that Queenslanders are protected against unsafe building work when recovering from a natural disaster?

Mr de BRENNI: It is the right of all Queenslanders to feel safe in all buildings where they live, work or play. It is well regarded that the Palaszczuk government has been a nation leader when it comes to addressing the issue of nonconforming building products, some of which the member for Everton was interested to hear about from the Queensland Building and Construction Commissioner a moment ago. It is important that we protect Queenslanders against issues like combustible cladding. As members, we know that we passed a chain of responsibility law in 2017. The effect of that is to hold all participants in the supply chain accountable for the standard of building products used in our built environment. This legislation is now being used by other states as it sets the standard for laws that best protect residents.

When the issue of combustible cladding hit home globally we acted quickly to identify and progressively rectify the issue. As the commissioner alluded to, it is occurring throughout the private sector but we are also doing it with respect to government buildings that required it. Perhaps I will save the opposition some time with their follow-up questions by outlining that, as at 31 October 2020, 174 government buildings that have been assessed have either been cleared, rectified or are in the process of being so. We are doing it just as the private sector is working through that process.

We established the Safer Buildings combustible cladding checklist so that private building owners could identify whether their building may potentially have combustible cladding. We heard from the commissioner just a moment ago an update in terms of those figures. There were around 17,000 registrants at the start and now we are down to just 2½ thousand remaining. With some five or six months to go we are seeing strong action in respect of that.

I can inform the committee that through that process it has been identified that less than one per cent of buildings require some form of rectification. What that really shows us is that Queensland does not have the scale of the problem that exists in states like Victoria and New South Wales when it comes

to combustible cladding. I think there are a lot of reasons for that, but primarily Queensland has had a strong and proud record of setting the highest building standards in the nation. We should be proud of that as a state, as a government and as a construction sector.

I thank all of the building owners who have been working cooperatively through the process with our government and the commission. While we know the scale of the problem is limited in Queensland, we are taking proactive measures to ensure it remains that way. We have again taken the nation-leading action to ban the use of combustible cladding. It was Queensland in October 2019 that banned the use on any buildings of ACP products with a 30 per cent or greater core of polyethylene. We banned the use of EPS products on external wall installations on class 2 to 9 buildings that are over three storeys. Those bans will ensure these products will not be used in construction.

That all works together to ensure that our tradies are kept safe at work and that all of us are kept safe in our homes and workplaces. These measures work proactively to ensure that tragedies like the one we saw in the Grenfell Tower fire in the UK do not happen here in Queensland, but we cannot do that alone. That is why we will continue to advocate for the Morrison government to implement a ban on the importation of these products. It is well regarded that keeping these products out of the Australian market altogether is the safest way to ensure they do not end up on buildings where they should not be. Just as we have done throughout 2020 in terms of focusing on keeping Queenslanders safe, it has been our response to combustible cladding that is leading the nation in keeping Queenslanders safe too.

Ms PUGH: With reference to page 16 of the Department of Energy and Public Works SDS, can the minister outline for the committee progress with regard to the Palaszczuk government's plan to rebuild QBuild?

Mr de BRENNI: I am pleased to advise the committee that QBuild is back. We have a skilled and agile workforce prepared to respond when disaster strikes. They are out on the ground rebuilding public assets when we really need them—in circumstances following a storm or a cyclone. Over the last year and a half since we announced the Rebuilding QBuild program, we have now engaged 299 extra tradies and 57 apprentices across the state. I am pleased to advise that next month we will see 40 more join the QBuild team.

We are boosting jobs in regions by delivering reinvigorated depots in communities like Rockhampton, Cairns, Bundaberg and even Caboolture. That means more locals working on projects like the new youth detention centre at Wacol and the social housing complex that I announced previously. It targets women participation. It means more young Queenslanders getting the training, the skills and the experience they need to thrive in the construction industry.

As we know, QBuild jump into action when we need it most. In 2020 QBuild was responsible for over 40 hotel COVID cleans, utilising local contractors arranged and managed by QBuild supervisors. Just a few weeks ago during the Springfield hail storm, 155 of our QBuild staff and contractors were out on the ground assisting residents. On behalf of that community, I thank them for that effort.

QBuild has a proud history and a record of an incredibly loyal workforce. Recently I met Rod McMahon. He was a QBuild tradie from 1956 to 2012. His first job meant he was based at the corner of Ann and Edward streets. He was one of those Queenslanders who helped build Queensland. Lee is a QBuild apprentice sparky who works here at Parliament House. I am sure all members have seen Lee around. Lee was from Mossman, served for the Australian Defence Force in the Northern Territory and came to our state to find decent, steady, secure work. He found it here in parliament with QBuild. He is at the commencement of his career, but he has the opportunity for a lifelong career just like Rod.

People like Lee and Rod have not forgotten how the alternative government gutted QBuild, sacking 1,654 workers and scrapping the apprenticeship program. Queenslanders have not forgotten how those cuts unfairly targeted our regions, unfairly targeted apprentices and were loaded against women. I advise the committee that the proof really is in the pudding in terms of our commitment to QBuild after the LNP destroyed it. We are rebuilding it. We are backing those frontline workers. We are not sacking them.

Mr MANDER: How many more thousand are you employing?

Mr de BRENNI: We are boosting skills and apprenticeships.

Mr MANDER: How many more thousand? How many private contractors will you put out of work in the regions?

ACTING CHAIR: Member, your interjections are not being taken.

Mr MANDER: Electricians. Master Electricians said to me yesterday that you are putting electricians out of business.

ACTING CHAIR: Member, your interjections are not being taken.

Mr de BRENNI: I say to the member for Everton, now that he has copped a demotion from deputy leader after Queenslanders saw his plan to cut, sack and sell, we can only imagine—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair.

Mr MANDER: You are not going to improve on your D rating, Minister.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Everton and minister, there is a point of order.

Mr MILLAR: This has nothing to do with the budget whatsoever—back to the budget.

ACTING CHAIR: The member is obviously engaging in some cross-chamber chatter which is, I know, against standing orders. I am sure we are all back on track now.

Mr de BRENNI: It is clear that the rebuilding of QBuild is playing a significant role in the economic recovery of Queensland. It has Queensland in prime position to lead the nation in economic recovery. The Treasurer just last week announced figures and data showing that Queensland is in fact leading the nation in that recovery. I am proud that QBuild is playing a significant role in that. I also acknowledge that those directly employed Queenslanders who will be out on the tools are already preparing our assets like our schools, social housing, courthouses and facilities in a range of areas, including in our parks, for what Queensland has heard from the Bureau of Meteorology could be a challenging storm season. I know that our QBuild workforce will be there when we need them.

ACTING CHAIR: Minister, can you outline the total investment in Queensland businesses made through the Palaszczuk government's Buy Queensland policy? That is with reference to page 5 of the department's SDS section.

Mr de BRENNI: We will always put Queenslanders first and Queenslanders' jobs first. It is fundamentally how we have managed to get our economy back on its feet so quickly and so effectively after the COVID pandemic. I am pleased to advise the committee that we have achieved a new record. Government investment in Queensland businesses this year has surpassed \$10.4 billion. That means that more than 39,000 Queensland registered businesses and their workforces have benefited. The 2019-20 investment continues the trend of consecutive year-on-year growth of investment with Queensland businesses, representing a \$1.5 billion increase on the 2018-19 investment. That is a 16.4 per cent increase in local investment since our Buy Queensland procurement policy was initiated.

Since Buy Queensland was introduced, over 51,300 Queensland businesses have supplied approximately \$27 billion to budget sector agencies. Of this, I am proud to say, \$5 billion has been supplied by 22,000 regional Queensland businesses. Proof of those benefits of Buy Queensland can be seen in projects like the Queensland Country Bank Stadium, where we saw 1,900 North Queensland workers supported—121 apprentices were on that job, as well as 17 trainees. There were 488 local businesses in the supply chain and local businesses were awarded 72 per cent of the trade packages. The contract for the supply of the turf system enabled a local company to employ an additional 23 local staff. In other communities, in the electorate of Bancroft, 290 local businesses—businesses like Dingo Road Services and Creed Electrical—have supplied \$24.7 million to government. In Mount Ommaney, 379 businesses—businesses like Doval Constructions and CellCon—have supplied \$115.6 million in product to government.

On the other hand, the opposition have opposed the Buy Queensland procurement policy every step of the way. They voted against it in the House. They voted against the wage theft inquiry. They have exposed themselves as anti-Queensland workers time and time again. What that represents is voting against businesses like the 708 businesses in Callide that have supplied to the Queensland government such as B&B Earthmoving and Sanson Homes—they have supplied \$28.5 million in product to government—or the 1,080 businesses in Toowoomba. All you need to do is scratch the surface of the LNP policy and you will see that if you work for a company that has been successful enough to attract overseas investment then the LNP does not support you.

Mr MILLAR: I raise a point of order. What he is saying right now has nothing to do with the 2020-21 budget.

ACTING CHAIR: Member, I have asked the minister specifically about businesses in this area. I find that he is being relevant.

Mr MILLAR: He is straying.

ACTING CHAIR: Wait for it. I know that the minister is coming to the end of his answer. Minister, could you continue?

Mr de BRENNI: I find it difficult to see how explaining how our record capital budget announced by the Treasurer of \$56 billion and our focus on ensuring as much of that is invested with Queensland businesses as possible is straying from the relevance of what we are here for today.

Mr Millar: No. It was what you said afterwards that was straying.

ACTING CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr de BRENNI: What I am saying is that the Palaszczuk government will support businesses that support Queensland workers as opposed to the LNP's approach where they treat workers at businesses like Lend Lease or Rex airlines as some sort of second-class citizens because their business has some foreign investment.

Mr Millar: That is not true.

Mr de BRENNI: We are all very well aware of their approach to manufacturing overseas with trains from India compared to the billion dollar pipeline that is being supported by building Queensland trains in Queensland, in Maryborough.

Mr Millar: Is that a part of your portfolio, is it?

Mr de BRENNI: Our budget and our procurement policies are unashamedly pro-Queensland—they are pro-Queensland business and they are pro-jobs.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to opposition members for non-government questions. Who would like to start?

Mr MILLAR: The member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: I have further questions for the QBCC commissioner. Commissioner, I refer to page 89 of the QBCC's annual report. In particular, I refer to Mr Philip Halton, former chief of staff of the minister and former deputy commissioner of QBCC. Can you explain the basis of his termination please?

Mr Bassett: Point of correction, if I may, through you, Acting Chair. Mr Halton was not terminated; Mr Halton's position was made redundant.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, was that role abolished before or after 13 May 2020?

Mr Bassett: The QBCC's former deputy commissioner departed the QBCC on 13 May 2020. That is the date that the redundancy took place.

Mr MANDER: How long did the deputy commissioner's role exist in QBCC?

Mr Bassett: The former deputy commissioner started in January 2018, if I am not mistaken—10 January 2018. He was employed with the QBCC until 13 May 2020.

Mr MANDER: Was there a deputy commissioner's position before he was appointed?

Mr Bassett: The answer is no.

Mr MANDER: What was the reasoning behind abolishing the position?

Mr Bassett: The former deputy commissioner joined the QBCC to continue the journey that we have been on for some time now, to make the organisation a more risk based strategically focused regulatory organisation. During the former deputy commissioner's time at the QBCC, he was focused on a couple of key things to aid in that regard. The former deputy commissioner has of course a regulatory background—a significant regulatory background. One of the key things that the former deputy commissioner was asked to do by me as its commissioner was to drive our focus about having a detailed strategic regulatory approach. I am pleased to say that the former deputy commissioner delivered that. It is one of the key ways that the QBCC continues to operate today.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, was there a tenure when he was appointed in 2018? What was the term of the contract? Was there a time period?

Mr Bassett: The former deputy commissioner had a three-year term which is quite normal for senior executive servants in statutory authorities such as the QBCC.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, what was the time spent out of the three years that he worked for the commission?

Mr Bassett: I will refer to my previous answer to another question from the member. He commenced on 10 January 2018 and worked until 13 May 2020. By my calculations, that is around 2½ years out of the three-year period.

Mr MANDER: He received \$181,000 in termination which would seem to exceed the remuneration that would have been owed to him for the remaining period of that contract. Is that correct?

ACTING CHAIR: Are those details on the public record?

Mr MANDER: Yes, it is.

ACTING CHAIR: I just wanted to clarify that. Commissioner, is that a figure or an amount that is on the public record?

Mr Bassett: Yes, it is. The financial statements on page 89 of the QBCC 2019-20 annual report note that the former deputy commissioner was paid, as the member articulated, \$181,000 in termination benefits in 2019-20.

Mr MANDER: That was not my question. That \$181,000 would be in excess to what he would have been paid had he filled out the remainder of his contract. Is that correct?

Mr Bassett: The termination benefits had an additional \$26,000 as part of the payout as a post-employment payment. Post-employment expenses include amounts as an expense in respect of employer superannuation obligations. It is comprised of the termination payment, annual leave entitlements and annual leave loading. There was also an amount paid for legal fees and outplacement services.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the minister, and I refer to the Cairns Convention Centre expansion. How many events have been postponed due to the delay of the delivery of this project?

Mr de BRENNI: The most significant impact on convention centres in Queensland and around the world has been the global pandemic. It was happenstance that the majority of the impact on the convention centre coincided with its closure for refurbishment. Members would be aware, and I have reported this publicly on a number of occasions, that due to the impacts on international supply chains for products that are not available in Queensland—of course, we have a local content plan with the contractor to ensure that as much of the building material as possible that goes into that building are locally acquired—there were a number of components that were sourced internationally. There were operable walls, for instance, from the United States; seating from Europe that was delayed; and of course it has been well reported that—

Mr MANDER: Point of order. I am not really interested in the background. It is a specific question. The point of order is about relevance. How many events have been postponed due to delays in the opening of the convention centre expansion?

ACTING CHAIR: I find it is quite relevant because we are talking about anything that may have impacted on the opening date. Continue, Minister.

Mr de BRENNI: We obviously have been working very closely with the convention centre operator and the Cairns community, the Chamber of Commerce, Advance Cairns, Tropical Tourism North Queensland, Mayor Bob Manning and of course the local Labor members in the Cairns region to ensure that as soon as possible we are able to restore the normal operations of the convention centre. However, the pandemic has not allowed that to occur in the way that we want it to.

The member would be aware we ensured there was no cancellation of the most popular tenant or the most popular hirer of the venue, which of course is the Cairns Taipans. We worked closely with the club and the NBL to ensure they had an alternative location to play out of, so I am pleased to advise the committee that in respect of those events none were cancelled. They were simply held at another location. It also enabled Queensland to become the national host of the netball season. We were very, very proud of that. In fact, one of the outcomes that we have seen from the way that Queensland responded to the global pandemic, despite the challenges of supply chain disruptions—and I am sure the new sports minister would agree with me—is that we have seen more sport in Queensland, despite smaller crowds, than we would have seen otherwise. I also know that the hosts of those venues have worked particularly closely with the hirers to ensure they could host those events commercially.

We have not seen action from the convention centre operator to book any additional events until there is certainty around the resolution of those delays caused by the pandemic, so the answer to the member's question is that we are not aware that any events were postponed because bookings were not taken because of the prevailing international circumstances. The member would be aware that conventions—mass gatherings of citizens indoors—were restricted until very, very recently. Whilst those issues are being resolved, we will see the finalisation of the refurbishment works as soon as

possible. The commissioning works will follow closely to ensure that, as soon as refurbishment is completed, new bookings can be taken. We do know that that convention centre is a huge attraction for economic activity in the Cairns region.

Mr MANDER: Thanks, Minister. That was very succinct. My question now is to the director-general on the same subject. Director-General, the minister just referred to supply chain disruptions as one of the reasons for the delay. Could you advise the value of all procurement from China for this project?

ACTING CHAIR: Could you be more specific, member for Everton?

Mr MANDER: Yes. What is the value of all procurement for this project that will be coming from China?

Mr Purtill: It is a Lendlease build, and honestly I am just not privy to that information directly. I am not even comfortable to commit to accessing that information. We have contracted the head contractor, Lendlease, and I am not aware of any requirement in their contract for that type of information to be elucidated. Therefore, I would not even be comfortable to say that I will get it for you. Sorry.

Mr MANDER: Is there anything in the contract with regard to the percentage of local buy?

Mr Purtill: Yes, because the contract was awarded under best practice principles that include provisions around Buy Queensland.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, could you provide further information on percentages with regard to the Buy Queensland policy for that project and whether that has been met or exceeded?

Mr Purtill: We do have some information. Obviously, we are still in the middle of the build so the information is along a progress line. I have some information effective 4 December 2020: of the 77 subcontracts that have been awarded—76 of those by Lendlease and one by QBuild—54 were awarded to local companies; 430 of the 495 onsite workers inducted are local, and that represents an 87 per cent local workforce against a target of 85 per cent.

Mr MANDER: Back to the QBCC commissioner, please. Mr Bassett, I refer to page 92 of the annual report of the QBCC and the \$339,845 consultancy payment made to a key management personnel officer prior to his appointment to a three-year contract. What was that consultancy contract for?

Mr Bassett: If the member would give me a bit of time I will go to that part of the annual report.

ACTING CHAIR: In the next few minutes we will go to government questions and then we will give the minister and director-general some time to address any outstanding issues there may be. That will give the minister some time to wrap up as well.

Mr Bassett: Would you mind repeating that question, please, just to make sure I address the member's question.

Mr MANDER: There was a \$339,845 consultancy payment made to a key management personnel officer prior to their appointment to a three-year contract. I just want to know what that consultancy contract was for.

Mr Bassett: I am sorry. Which line item on page 89 are you looking at?

Mr MANDER: There is an explanatory note which talks about 'transactions with people/entities related to the QBCC'. It is a conflict of interest statement, I assume, or declaration. It says—

During 2019-20 the QBCC paid for consultancy work performed by a key management personnel officer prior to their appointment to a 3 year contract role commencing 9th April 2020. The payments from 1st July 2019 till this date was \$339,845.

Mr Bassett: I know the matter that the member is referring to. The question relates to the appointment of our current chief strategy and transformation officer. Prior to the appointment of the chief strategy and transformation officer, they did a significant amount of work as a consultant for the QBCC.

Mr MANDER: And that amount of money was for one year?

Mr Bassett: I am just looking at that number now, at the note. Yes, it says the payments were from 1 July 2019 to the date of 9 April 2020.

Mr MANDER: So it was actually less than one year? It was \$339,000 paid to a contractor for basically nine months work?

Mr Bassett: I thank the member for the question. Yes.

Mr MANDER: Would you find that amount an extraordinary amount of money to pay a contractor—

Ms PUGH: Point of order. That is clearly asking for an opinion.

ACTING CHAIR: Member, would you like to recast that question?

Mr MANDER: Have you ever had a contract of that size paid to a contractor for nine months work?

Mr Bassett: I would not have the answer to that available to me.

Mr MANDER: A further question. That person was appointed to your staff following the contract expiring. Did they go through a merit selection process to gain the position they have now on QBCC?

Mr Bassett: Every person who is appointed to the senior leadership team of the QBCC goes through a rigorous process. I can confirm that that process included a national search. The appointment included members of the QBCC board being on that committee to make sure that it was a merit based process. In response to the member's question, the direct answer is, yes, it was a merit based process.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to government questions.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 5 of the Department of Energy and Public Works SDS, can the minister outline how the Palaszczuk government's Buy Queensland best practice principles are supporting jobs in Cairns and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I thank all of the committee members for their interest in the Cairns Convention Centre project—our \$176 million expansion and refurbishment of that important economic activity generator in our state's far north. That project will see a new forecourt and lobby, a 410-seat lecture space, three 120-seat meeting rooms and new exhibition space. By leveraging an additional estimated 20,000 visitors to the region, this project is expected to inject up to \$50 million into the local economy each year. Importantly, the project means work for an estimated 570 strong local workforce.

I am pleased to update the committee that so far—and perhaps this goes to the earlier question from the member for Everton—87 per cent of the 495 inducted workers on site are locals, meaning that Lendlease are exceeding their local workforce target. The workers will benefit from the Buy Queensland best practice principles that set out minimum expectations around best practice industrial relations, best practice workplace health and safety, and high standards of best practice for trainees and apprentices. We implement these principles because we believe workers have a right to return home safely from work each day, they have a right to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and workers in the north have a right to decent pay just as workers in South-East Queensland do too.

Some of the local companies working on the Cairns Convention Centre project include EndFire Engineering, a business based in Cairns with 19 local workers currently performing fire protection work on the project, and Cairns Steel Fabricators. They are also based in Cairns and are fabricating and erecting the structural steel, and all 10 of their inducted workers are local to Cairns. Just a few months ago, I met with former North Queensland Cowboys Javid Bowen on site. He is one of the 31 apprentices on this huge project for the region. He is getting on-the-job experience and learning the skills that will set him on a pathway for a long career I hope in the construction industry. With projects like this, we are investing not only in important infrastructure but in Queenslanders—such as young tradies like Javid and the many other tradies and apprentices who are delivering the project. We are supporting the businesses that employ Queenslanders like him because they pay their workforce a decent wage and they employ locals.

Mostly and importantly, the Palaszczuk government is supporting Queensland's economic recovery by sticking up for Queenslanders. We kept Queenslanders safe through the pandemic, and now we are boosting the economic recovery especially of the north but truly for all of Queensland by investing in major projects just like the Cairns Convention Centre refurbishment and upgrade.

Ms PUGH: Minister, with reference to page 5 of the Department of Energy and Public Works SDS, can the minister outline the progress made towards the Palaszczuk government's commitment to an annual doubling of the number of electric vehicles in QFleet?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government has a clear commitment to investing in emerging technologies and an ongoing adjustment to a cleaner future. In 2018 I released the QFleet Electric Vehicle Transition Strategy, setting out a pathway to boost the

number of electric vehicles in the government fleet. Our commitment is to more electric vehicles, long-term fuel savings and our target to reduce emissions as well. It will help us achieve the government's target of net zero emissions by 2050.

The member may be aware that the transport sector is Queensland's second largest source of emissions. As part of the Palaszczuk government's strategy, we have set a target to double the number of electric vehicles in our fleet annually until 2022. I am happy to report we have already met the 2020 target, with 74 EVs already with another four on order. That is in addition to the 1,508 hybrid QFleet vehicles already driving on Queensland's roads.

As I reported to the House last week, in a big first for Queensland, we have five Hyundai Nexso hydrogen vehicles on order that will take to our roads early next year. Members might recall though that Queensland's first go at a hydrogen car was 40 years ago. You might recall Premier Bjelke-Petersen unveiled the Horvath hydrogen car back then. UQ experts rightfully claimed it would not work but Bjelke-Petersen ignored the expert advice. I can assure the committee—and reassure all Queenslanders—

Mr MANDER: We are going back 50 years now; you are getting better.

Mr de BRENNI: that the Hyundais are on order. I can assure all members of the committee that they are the real deal. I have driven a like model myself. They do boast the world's best fuel efficiency, safety and driving range. They have a range of up to 800 kilometres, meaning you could drive to Bundy and back. They only take three to five minutes to refuel, which is pretty similar to most petrol cars. They will be using hydrogen manufactured in Clayfield by BOC Australia. Best of all, they emit nothing but water vapour.

We have a clear plan to reduce emissions. Those opposite have no credibility when it comes to reducing future emissions. The LNP shadow minister for the environment brought nothing with him except their plan to roll back our protections and our renewable energy targets. We will not ignore the science and we will take future technologies seriously. We can assure Queenslanders that we will continue to drive our state forward by investing in future technologies. We have set those clear targets to reduce our emissions and employ those emerging technologies, like hydrogen power and electric vehicles that will help get us there.

ACTING CHAIR: We have time for one last brief question.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 13 of the energy and public works SDS, will the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government is protecting Queensland home owners when their homes are impacted by natural disasters?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member very much for the question. As all members know, preparing for and responding to natural disasters is always a part of Queensland life. It is well known that Queensland is the most natural disaster prone in the state. With every flood, cyclone or storm, Queenslanders do rebuild. To avoid future heartache and problems down the track it is important that we rebuild safely and, of course, with licensed contractors. When disaster strikes, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission now activates an online register of local licensed contractors ready to pick up the pieces. Every licensed contractor is vetted to ensure they hold the appropriate qualifications for the work they are listed to perform. Home owners can also find QBCC approved contracts as well as receive security and protection through the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme. QBCC staff community recovery hubs offer on-the-ground support and building advice, while the contact centre operates dedicated lines for home owners impacted by disasters.

We will always be there to assist communities get back on their feet by supporting local tradies to be engaged directly in rebuilding their own neighbourhoods. For the benefit of the committee some examples are: in the 2019 North Queensland floods, where 615 licensed contractors signed on to the North Queensland flood register operated by the commission, over 500 flood related site visits were conducted; and in the 2019-20 bushfires 263 licensed contractors were registered with the commission and officers were out on the ground at recovery hubs in Stanthorpe, Canungra and in Peregian. More recently, the register was activated for November's hailstorms in the western suburbs of Brisbane. Of course, the last thing that devastated home owners need is for repair works to be faulty or carried out by an unlicensed contractor. That is why we focus so hard on rebuilding the capacity of the commission.

I can confirm that in 2020-21 Labor will continue to restore confidence and fairness in the industry. I can proudly say that under the Palaszczuk government, our building watchdog now has the sharpest teeth in the country. We will always help communities get back on their feet by supporting local tradies to be engaged directly in rebuilding their own communities.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. In terms of wrapping up, I will ask whether the director-general or anyone else needs to provide information that was outstanding. I believe we had one about how many closed appointments there were under the savings and debt plan?

Mr Purtill: Thank you, Acting Chair. I have the answer: as at 11 December in the 2020-21 financial year there have been no permanent appointments of departmental staff as a result of a closed merit process. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. I think that was everything? We do not have any questions on notice. Minister, I invite you to wrap up for two minutes.

Mr de BRENNI: Yes, thank you Acting Chair. I would like to thank you, Acting Chair, and the other committee members for their time today. I would like to thank my director-general, James Purtill. I also want to acknowledge the former director-general of the department of housing and public works, Liza Carrol. I acknowledge the department staff. I acknowledge the staff of the government owned corporations that joined us for the previous session as well as the staff of the statutory authority, the commission and other statutory authorities across government, of course, for their monumental efforts alongside our frontline workers in Queensland to what has been an extraordinary 2020. Finally, I thank former minister Dr Anthony Lynham for driving the development of Queensland's energy sector and, importantly, I acknowledge and recognise his significant work in delivering lower energy prices for Queensland businesses and households. Thank you, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of energy, renewables, hydrogen, public works and procurement has expired. As I said, we have no questions on notice. Thank you, once again, Minister, departmental officers and ministerial staff for your attendance. Thank you once again to our secretariat. I request that the minister and departmental officers exit the chamber as quickly as possible as, once again, the committee has a changeover period before we hear from the next minister. This will allow the committee to keep to our hearing schedule. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 5.14 pm to 5.30 pm.

ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—RESOURCES

In Attendance

Hon. SJ Stewart, Minister for Resources

Mr B Murphy, Senior Policy Advisor

Department of Resources

Mr J Purtill, Acting Director-General

Ms B Parker, Deputy Director-General, Business and Corporate Partnership


Mr S Ferris, Deputy Director-General, Georesources

Mr W Kearnan, Deputy Director-General, Lands

Ms K Platt, Chief Finance Officer, Business Corporate Partnership

Resources Safety and Health Queensland

Mr M Stone, Chief Executive Officer

 **ACTING CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio area of the Minister for Resources. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 8.45 pm, suspending proceedings during this time for a break from 6.45 pm to 7 pm. I acknowledge the visiting members who may be present who have leave: Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa; Stephen Andrew, member for Mirani; Michael Berkman, member for Maiwar; Amy MacMahon, member for South Brisbane; David Crisafulli, Leader of the Opposition; David Janetzki, Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Jarrod Bleijie, member for Kawana; Fiona Simpson, member for Maroochydore; Steve Minnikin, member for Chatsworth; Pat Weir, member for Condamine; Tim Mander, member for Everton; and Brent Mickelberg, member for Buderim.

I remind those present this evening 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 for questions in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preamble, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcast of the proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent mode. Please be advised that photography and video recording of the proceedings by officials or members of the public is prohibited. Also, I remind you that food and drink, other than water, are not permitted in this chamber.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers, ministerial staff and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of resources open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Acting Chair, and members of the committee. I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land where we gather today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I am joined here today by my chief of staff, Mr Brett Murphy; Director-General James Purtill; Deputy Director-General of Lands and Valuer-General, Wally Kearnan; Deputy Director-General of Georesources, Shaun Ferris; Deputy Director-General of Business and Corporate Partnership, Brenda Parker; Resources Safety and Health Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Mark Stone; GasFields Commissioner, Warwick Squire; and Land Access Ombudsman, Jane Pires.

For more than a century, the resource industry has underpinned Queensland's economy. It supports more than 73,000 jobs across our state and represents \$54 billion in exports. Royalties from resources pay for nurses, doctors, police officers, teachers, hospitals, roads and schools. Never has its role been more crucial than it is right now, as it leads us on the road to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the resources sector for working closely with the government and health authorities to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the community. This collaboration has allowed the sector to continue to operate safely, providing jobs and ongoing business in regional communities like mine.

While we are still living with the pandemic and we will be for some time, the resources sector has a vibrant future and will be crucial for our regions. To set out a strong vision for this sector, this government has committed to delivering the resources industry development plan. To keep the pipeline of resource projects and jobs coming, we are delivering more than \$29 million in exploration grants, initiatives and COVID-19 support for explorers and miners. This government has a laser-like focus on supporting the industry to find and mine the metals needed for electric and hybrid vehicles, batteries and wind turbine generators.

Through this year's budget \$9 million is being invested over the next few years to help explorers discover critical new economy minerals like cobalt and vanadium. To help get into the new economy global supply chain faster, earlier this year we fast-tracked a \$2 million investment to understand the potential for rare-earth minerals. Furthermore, we will pump in another \$11.7 million to keep explorers on the hunt for new economy minerals for the next three years. To help keep explorers' boots on the ground, we are reducing their operating costs and have waived \$9.8 million in rent alone, freezing exploration fees and charges at their current rates until July 2021.

In the gas sector, work has begun on Queensland's \$5 million gas infrastructure study that could open the Bowen Basin as the next gas frontier and potentially create 1,000 construction jobs. My department has been engaging with the gas sector to scope the study and ensure it will meet their needs to help them with future investment decisions. Gas plays a critical role as a transition fuel on our path to renewables. That is why this study will also look at ways to capture gas emissions from coalmines in the Bowen Basin. This opportunity is a win-win proposition as it will increase gas supply and at the same time reduce our emissions. New gas infrastructure could boost the development of gas production in the Bowen Basin and make more gas available for Queensland manufacturers, leading to more affordable gas and supporting jobs across our critical supply chains and industries.

Coal, including steel-making metallurgical coal, will continue to play an important role for jobs and economic growth in the years to come. You cannot have a renewables industry without the steel needed for wind turbines and solar infrastructure. In September this year we approved what will become Queensland's third largest metallurgical coal mine. The mine will have a production life of 80 years and is expected to produce up to 15 million tonnes of metallurgical coal for steel production each year.

We are also providing relief in other areas of my portfolio to make sure we help those who are doing it tough wherever we can. That is why we have waived state rent for about 72 tourism businesses operating on state owned land until 31 March next year, recognising that the tourism industry has been one of the hardest hit through the pandemic. State rent has also been waived for about 6,000 farmers and businesses until 31 December this year, because a strong Queensland agriculture industry will be a driving force in Queensland's post-pandemic economic recovery.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my department for all their hard work in preparing for this estimates hearing. I would also like to thank the acting chair and the committee members for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to questions from members.

Mr WEIR: I refer to Budget Paper No. 1, page 43. Minister, do you have a personal email account and have you ever emailed or received an email from stacia1 @ bigpond.com?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question and I do have a personal email account and have had for probably 15 years, but I have never received an email from stacia1 @ bigpond.com, no. Following my ministerial induction session, I am advised that, in accordance with the Queensland ministerial handbook of June 2020, I should only receive emails via governmental email accounts for official business. I understand that if a communication is received in a private email account that relates to my ministerial portfolio related business I must forward that email from that private email account to the official ministerial account within 20 days of receipt of the email. If a response is required, a ministerial email account should be used to respond. I have also asked my electorate office staff to initiate the same process with emails received in my electorate office that relate to my ministerial portfolio.

Mr WEIR: Very good. My next question also refers to Budget Paper No. 1 at page 43. Minister, why did you not propose the acting director-general or any other officer in the department to act in the director-general's role until a full merit based selection process was undertaken instead of bringing in Mike Kaiser?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. As you are probably aware, the acting director-general is actually serving two ministers, so it is appropriate that short-term arrangements should be put in place. Mike Kaiser will be the acting director-general from January for three months, allowing for the position to be advertised and a full merit based selection process to take place. Mike Kaiser is a highly qualified individual who has years of experience as an executive in government corporations and will be a strong supporter of the resource sector, which will continue to support our economic recovery. Mr Kaiser's appointment has been welcomed by key resource sector stakeholders including the Resources Council and APPEA.

As the Premier has said to all of us, including our directors-general, we have a big job ahead of us and she expects everyone to roll up their sleeves and get on with the COVID recovery. The people of Queensland re-elected us to get on with the job, and that is exactly what we are focusing on. I am advised that as part of the recruitment process for all new directors-general candidates are advised that the Queensland Public Service code of conduct requires all Public Service employees to disclose potential or perceived conflicts. I thank Mr James Purtill for the work that he has done in the very short time that we have been together. Particularly on the day that I was sworn in, that afternoon Mr Purtill had a very extensive brief prepared for me, such is the work that he is prepared to do, and I thank him for the work done already.

Mr WEIR: My next question is to the director-general. With reference to page 54 in the SDS volume 3 under the heading 'Budgeted financial statement' and specifically referring to the department's administration of revenue from state land, Director-General, issues around the relationship between the head leaseholder on Keswick Island, China Bloom, and the 140 sublessee residents on the island have been well ventilated in the media. Could you clarify for the committee how many complaints the department has received in relation to the activities of China Bloom on the island?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. We have had officers from the Department of Resources visit the site recently. We had other government members in March visit the site with local government. The issues pertaining to the relationship between the head lessee and sublessees at Keswick Island have been a matter of some consternation for parties for quite a period of time with a range of issues that span across local government issues, Department of Environment and Science issues as well as the relationship that we have with the head lessee for the Land Act leases. I have a lot of empathy for people in terms of how confusing that might be for them as they start to look for opportunities and deal with some of those conflicts that they perceive and that may or may not be happening across all of those areas.

For the Department of Resources our relationship is simply one of a lease that has been issued under the Land Act to the head lessee, China Bloom, and that allows them to have private sublease arrangements which are commercial in nature between the head lessee and the sublessee. Having said that, I understand the significant consternation that those relationships can have. We have other sites where there has been similar consternation about what people believe as sublessees they are able to extract from the Land Act relationship. In an effort to end the long-running dispute between Keswick Developments and the sublessees, the former department of natural resources, mines and energy attempted to mediate a resolution over these private commercial matters. However, I must admit it was frustrated by the parties' inability to reach an amicable agreement and as such DNRME has to cease proactively liaising with sublessees.

Mr WEIR: My other question about that relates to commercial flights and access to that island. Is there movement to resolve that issue for the lessees?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. Again, any matters to do with logistics or travel arrangements would not be part of our involvement in the Land Act leasing. I know it is hard to get to.

Mr WEIR: Okay. Director-General, with reference to page 49 of the SDS volume 3 under the department's service area highlights, specifically referring to land valuations, in question on notice No. 798 it notes that in the last six years 40 per cent of the landholder objections have been upheld. What is going on here and why is the department getting overturned 40 per cent of the time once the original decision is appealed?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. Given that the Valuer-General is here, I would like to ask the Valuer-General to come up and respond to your question, if that is okay.

Mr Kearnan: I thank the member for the question. In relation to the objection process, on the release of our valuations all landholders have a period of 60 days to object and if they do we have objection conferences. As part of that process they are required to provide us with evidence to suggest why the valuation may be in error. With that information made available to us, we then make an assessment of whether or not the grounds of the objection have some merit. If they do, we indeed will reflect on our valuation and if it requires amendment we do so. It is in response to that information that the landholder brings forward.

Mr WEIR: In light of that, I have a question to the minister. Given the large increase in the number of valuations being overturned, do you plan to hold a review and reconsider the methodology used to consider Queensland's property values?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The Valuer-General and I have met and we have had several conversations. There are a large number of valuers around the state who will perform their duties. As the Valuer-General, who is an independent statutory role, has already highlighted, there are processes where people can object and make those objections heard. We also understand that market surveys were conducted in each of the 62 LGAs throughout Queensland and the market surveys along with stakeholder consultation were the basis for deciding which LGAs would be included in the 2020-21 program.

The market surveys analysed recent property sales in each of the LGAs to determine sales activity, trends and the predicted market movements across various market sectors. Market sectors such as residential, rural residential, multiunit, commercial, industrial and primary production were analysed. The 2020-21 annual program will focus on LGAs which have the largest predicted changes in values. You can see there, member for Condamine, that there are processes put in place, but I will ask the deputy director-general of lands, Mr Wally Kearnan, to add further to my comments.

Mr Kearnan: I can inform the member that following the departure of the former Valuer-General on 9 October there has been an opportunity to reconsider the leadership positions within the State Valuation Service. Since the implementation of the Land Valuation Act and the reintroduction of the role of the Valuer-General in 2010, there has been limited change to the operations of the State Valuation Service.

The business operations of the State Valuation Service are now led by an executive director. Along with myself, we are considering systemic improvements to the State Valuation Service. We intend to look at strategies to increase public confidence and trust in the valuations made, including improved stakeholder engagement; communication and transparency in the decision-making; public access to information; strategies to ensure the State Valuation Service has access to all the necessary evidence and information to inform correct valuations.

We are also looking at improvements to existing processes which enable landholders to make proper objections to issued valuations, to have these objections considered and for the decisions to be made in a timely manner. We are also looking at workforce optimisation and design, including considerations of the functions and roles, the practices and process and the use of technology and automation. Recognition that systemic improvement of the State Valuation Service is required has recently been cited by the Land Court of Queensland. I met the president of the Land Court to discuss these issues this week.

Mr WEIR: On that same line, Minister, there has been a huge increase in legal fees. There was a 610 per cent increase in external legal fees from \$164,088 in 2014-15 to \$1,165,040 in 2019-20. Could you explain to Queenslanders why they need to fund this large increase in legal challenges to land value rulings and what is being done to get these costs lower?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I think I will ask the deputy director-general of business and corporate partnerships, Brenda Parker, if she could respond to that question.

Ms Parker: I do not have that information with me so I would have to take that on notice, through the minister.

Mr STEWART: Could we look at getting that information and having it back to the committee by the end of the session, if that is possible?

ACTING CHAIR: Yes. To add on to that, having experienced this on council, it may only be one case that led to that, but a number of cases would be useful.

Mr STEWART: We will look at getting that information back to the committee to answer the member's question. If that is not possible by the conclusion of today then we will take it on notice.

Mr WEIR: For clarity, that would be the increase both in internal staff and external staff because both have gone up significantly since 2014-15 to 2019-2020.

Mr STEWART: Thank you. We will get that information for you hopefully by the end of the evening.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to government questions.

Ms PUGH: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 3-54 of the SDS and the department's responsibility of administering the revenue from state land on behalf of other agencies, can the minister please inform the committee about the land rent waiver COVID-19 relief measure his department has administered?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. As the member has stated in her question, my department has the responsibility for administering funds on behalf of the state for a range of activities, including revenue from state land. This includes a collection of land rent on leases, licences and permits managed by the Department of Resources on behalf of the Queensland Treasury. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic the Palaszczuk government moved incredibly quickly to implement relief measures that would benefit ordinary Queenslanders, relief which included the waiving of state land rent for a period from 1 April to 30 September.

This initial land rent waiver included a wide range of lease categories administered by my department, including primary production and agriculture, business, community clubs and tourism leases. I can advise the committee that this initial land rent waiver saved lessees, licensees and permit holders approximately \$33.8 million at a time of great uncertainty for all Queenslanders. This government did not stop there. Close to 6,000 farmers, businesses, tourism operators and community and sports clubs who have been doing it tough will not be required to pay state land rent until 2021 under an additional \$14.1 million in COVID relief.

I want to stress how privileged I am to be part of this government that has continued to support our agricultural industry, tourism operators and the business community through measures such as these. We have provided land rent relief to more than 72 tourism businesses who operate on state owned land and islands, saving a total of more than \$5.5 million, including \$2.55 million under the most recent waiver. We know that a strong Queensland agricultural industry will be a driving force in our post pandemic economic recovery. Under the most recent rent waiver more than 4,700 primary production lessees, including farmers on pastoral leases, have shared in \$8.18 million worth of savings. I can advise that on average this will save farmers doing it tough approximately \$1,730 each across the quarter to 31 December.

We are also supporting Queensland's business communities with over 1,100 businesses of varying sizes who house their premises on state land sharing in \$5.85 million of savings. These savings have allowed businesses to upgrade equipment, keep their contracts with suppliers and, most importantly, keep Queenslanders in jobs. Large community and sporting clubs who lease state land have also shared in the savings. It is vital that we keep Queenslanders active and connected with their communities, which is why we have continued to provide ongoing support through our waiving of land rents. We have also made the process as straightforward and as stress free as possible. Lessees were not required to apply for this rent waiver as it was automatically waived for those eligible.

This Palaszczuk government has not only kept Queenslanders safe through our strong health response, but we are continuing to deliver our plan for economic recovery to support our farmers, tourism operators and our local businesses through these tough times.

Mr WALKER: In reference to volume 3 page 51 of the SDS, can the minister please advise the committee on the outcome of the latest round of Collaborative Exploration Initiative grants?

Mr STEWART: I welcome the member for Mundingburra to his first estimates. Exploration is a vital part of our resource sector, providing the discoveries that will lead to the development of the resources projects of the future. I note that the Australian Bureau of Statistics have reported an increase in exploration expenditure in both the minerals and gas sectors in Queensland over the 12 months to September 2020, up from the previous 12-month period. This is good news for our exploration sector and shows that, despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, our exploration sector has remained strong.

This government has undertaken a range of activities to support our exploration sector, recognising that that assistance will lead to opportunities for regional jobs and development, as well as new sources of royalties for the people of Queensland. One of the most important support programs for the exploration sector has been our Collaborative Exploration Initiative. The Collaborative Exploration Initiative and its precursor, the Collaborative Drilling Initiative, are important government

programs that support exploration by industry in frontier areas or using new techniques. Under the Collaborative Exploration Initiative, explorers can apply for grants of up to \$200,000 for new and innovative exploration activities. The grants act as a complement to government-led exploration works by fast-tracking exploration across a wide range of areas.

In 2019 the government extended its support to the Collaborative Exploration Initiative as part of the New Economy Minerals Initiative, which included \$3.6 million to support the program. The new economy minerals are the commodities such as cobalt and rare earths that we need to power our batteries, phones and electric vehicles and renewable energy technology. They will play a big part in the devices and technology we use in the years and decades to come. In June of this year, in response to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the state economy, the government boosted its support to the program by an additional \$10 million over four years.

In July of this year, the expanded Collaborative Exploration Initiative received a record 145 applications, well above the previous rounds. A total of 25 projects proposed by 24 companies ranging across Queensland's mineral provinces in the north-west, north-east, Wide Bay and south-west regions were supported. While the latest round remains on foot, encouraging early results have been reported. Of particular interest is a potential discovery that will be fully confirmed by Aeon Metals at their Beauchamp prospect west of Mount Isa. The Beauchamp prospect is an iron-oxide-copper-gold formation that is not only an ideal fit with the minerals targeted by our New Economy Minerals Initiative but also holds potential for a large new discovery in proximity to Mount Isa.

The collaborative grants scheme is well suited to support those companies tackling high-risk high-reward exploration, generally targeting deposits at great depth and beneath non-mineralised cover material. We need to support explorers to take risks, as hopefully they will make the discoveries that will power the future of our resources industry, leading to employment opportunities and royalties for the people of Queensland. That is why this government is supporting our exploration sector through programs such as the Collaborative Exploration Initiative. The next Collaborative Exploration Initiative round will be released for application in May 2021 for work to be conducted over the 2021-22 financial year. Subsequent rounds will be released in May of each year of 2022 and 2023 for subsequent financial years.

ACTING CHAIR: Minister, can you advise the committee of the potential implications of the Commonwealth government's threat to reserve Queensland gas for domestic use?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question because it is an important one. I doubt anyone would object to ensuring there is sufficient gas available for Australian homes, our power stations and industry now and well into the future. The important thing is the way—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. How does that question relate to the budget that we are exploring now for 2021?

ACTING CHAIR: Volume 3, page 48. Continue, Minister.

Mr STEWART: I doubt anyone would object to ensuring there is sufficient gas for Australian homes, our power stations and industry right now and well into the future. The important thing is the way we go about ensuring families, power generators and industry can access the gas that they need. The Palaszczuk government's domestic gas policy applies before the investment decision is made. The gas producer very clearly understands that if he accepts exploration or production acreage and invests in exploration or production for a block with a domestic supply condition then that gas must go to the domestic market. The investor knows that up-front.

The policy developed by the Commonwealth government, first under Turnbull and now under Morrison, can apply after an investment is made. At its worst, it teases gas from a producer after they have invested into their projects. The implications of this can be very significant. A producer may face a reduction in price or be unable to meet supply obligations under long-term contracts. This sort of behaviour is a real block to private investment. The implications of this can be significant for future investment in the gas industry and therefore in future gas supplies. This sort of behaviour is particularly damaging to our international reputation as a safe investment destination. Our gas industry has a number of Australian companies, including Santos, Origin, Beach, Senex and Comet Ridge, but we also have investment from China, Japan, South Korea, the US, the UK, France and Holland. A policy of ex-post-reservation of gas for domestic use threatens the future of investment in Queensland and Australia.

The strange thing is that those opposite have been silent on this matter. They were silent when the Prime Minister did a deal with the New South Wales government that promised them \$2 billion if they would facilitate the production of 70 petajoules of gas. Queensland has been doing the heavy

lifting on gas for a decade, but the prize goes to New South Wales—those who have obstructed and delayed gas projects endlessly. I am sure that is about to change because, like me, the new shadow resources spokesman understands that New South Wales has succumbed to the campaigns of Lock the Gate and others.

Mr MILLAR: And you guys haven't?

Mr STEWART: I know that he will support the Palaszczuk government and the people of Queensland to ensure that we get a fair deal from the federal government. We cannot afford silence from those opposite.

To conclude, the reservation policy of the Commonwealth government is a danger to the future gas supplies and a danger to future investment across a range of industries in Queensland. The Commonwealth should be getting behind Queensland, supporting the heavy lifting that the Palaszczuk government have been doing and those opposite need to help, particularly the member for Condamine. To assist the honourable members to understand the Commonwealth's policy, I seek leave to table the flow chart prepared by the Commonwealth government.

ACTING CHAIR: We will have a look at that.

Mr STEWART: I think this is a case of 'we're from the government and we're here to help you'.

ACTING CHAIR: We will need to get some copies.

Mr MILLAR: Yes, we will get some copies of that, but how does that relate?

ACTING CHAIR: It relates to the minister's answer.

Mr MILLAR: It was purely political commentary; that is what it was. It is nothing to do with the budget.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Mount Ommaney?

Ms PUGH: Minister, in reference to volume 3, page 51 of the SDS, can you please advise the committee what actions your department is taking to manage Queensland's legacy and abandoned mine sites?

Mr STEWART: My department continues to manage risks at disclaimed and abandoned mines in line with the Queensland government's Abandoned Mines Management Policy. In recent years the Palaszczuk government has made legislative changes to promote the recommercialisation or repurposing of abandoned mine sites. This framework provides a more robust regime in respect of the management of tenure ownership and residual risk associated with resource activities. The acts implemented to facilitate those improvements include the Mineral Resources Act 1989, the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the Mineral Resources Regulation 2013 and the introduced Mineral and Energy Resources (Financial Provisioning) Regulation 2019.

Specific changes have occurred as a result of those amendments and they include an expanded list of remediation activities allowed on an abandoned mine, abandoned operating plant and offside affected land; the ability to assess residual mineral resources for recommercialisation and alternative repurposing options; powers that allow the Queensland government to run competitive tenders to recommercialise abandoned mine sites; an increased oversight of the resource authority holder when there is a change of ownership; disqualification criteria to assess an applicant's suitability to hold tenure in Queensland; the establishment of a new fund to support post-closure management of residual risk from resource activities; an associated requirement for a post-surrender final rehabilitation report stating residual risk with a resource tenure surrender application; and the development of the residual risk calculator.

This government is delivering on several initiatives as part of the reforms through the financial assurance framework for the resource sector. This includes finalising the risk and prioritisation framework for abandoned mine management and remediation, having completed a targeted consultation process in 2019-20 with industry, environment, research and landholder representatives. The framework will be implemented in early 2021 and will inform priorities for the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, work programs and funding submissions to the Financial Provisioning Scheme.

My department has kicked a number of goals over 2019-20 through the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, and highlights include the ongoing assessment of the social and environmental risk at priority abandoned mines, including on-ground assessments of 32 sites with 17 assessed as priority sites. A further 32 sites remain to be assessed in 2020-21.

At the former Linc Energy site, the department has completed demolition of the gas-to-liquid plant and surfaced gathering network, decommissioning and remediating five processed water dams, completed assessment of high priority wells and the design and tender of the plug and abandonment program, and expanded the underground monitoring network with installation of seven additional monitoring bores. This has been a significant program of works delivered on time and on budget.

At the Mount Morgan mine, the department has helped to facilitate a scale and purchase agreement between Norton Gold Fields and Heritage Minerals Pty Ltd to allow Heritage Minerals—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: One moment, Minister.

Mr MILLAR: You know what I am going to say.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes. I understand what the member is saying there, but I am sure the minister is moving to conclusion for this particular—

Mr MILLAR: Wrapping up, not filibustering?

ACTING CHAIR: No, member. I am pointing out that it is clear that the minister is moving towards a conclusion for this particular question.

Mr STEWART: I thank the Acting Chair for his guidance. A total of 14 shafts were made safe by repair programs in the historic goldmining communities of Charters Towers and Gympie. My department takes the safety of our environment and community seriously. This work and the ongoing commitment to improve and modernise our legislative framework will ensure that the risks and the costs lie with the appropriate owner and not Queensland taxpayers.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. We will go to opposition members.

Mr WEIR: I will come back to Keswick Island again. Would the minister be able to inform me how many hectares of leased state government land are currently held by Chinese companies or their Australian subsidiaries and what is the combined value of these holdings?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. As you are aware, Keswick Island certainly has been in the media of recent times and has certainly attracted a lot of attention with regard to foreign ownership. As you are no doubt aware, every time a foreign investor invests into Queensland land, such as Keswick Island, it must go through the federal government's Foreign Investment Review Board first.

I can advise that my department is not aware of China Bloom holding any other leases in Queensland, apart from the two pertaining to Keswick Island. I have been advised of media reports pertaining to the ownership of other islands in Queensland.

Regarding a range of other island resorts in the Whitsundays region, I can advise that on St Bees Island, right beside Keswick, a small proportion of the island is leased by a China based company with the remainder of the island being national park. Other islands surrounding Keswick, including Scawfell, Wigton, Cockermouth and Carlisle, are all national park which is looked after by the Department of Environment and Science. Four are currently administered by foreign owned companies—that is Daydream, Hayman, Lindeman and South Molle. Seven leases are currently administered by Australian based companies which are Camp, Hamilton, Brampton, Hook, Elysian Retreat, Palm Bay and Long Island Resort, Happy Bay. I am happy to come back to the member with more information in relation to any of these islands if they require further detail.

Mr WEIR: The question was relating to all holdings that were held by Chinese companies or subsidiaries, and whilst the statement was that it goes through the foreign register, could the minister guarantee that he will be supporting the residents on those islands from these foreign companies such as we are seeing with China Bloom?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. As the Acting Director-General has highlighted to you this evening already, the disputes between the head lessee and the sublessees—we have been doing some work with those particular parties, but it is a contract between the head lessee and the sublessee. Our remit is to ensure that the head lessee is actually meeting their lease agreements with the state government. I can advise that two department officers were deployed to Keswick Island on a fact-finding mission on Tuesday this week to investigate the claims made by the residents firsthand. I can advise that department officers who visited the island had conversations with both sublessees and the island manager to discuss those concerns raised. In addition to this visit, I can advise that in conjunction with my department, we have taken several actions aimed at assisting the head lessee and sublessee to resolve those ongoing issues.

First and foremost, my department met with representatives of China Bloom on Friday, 27 November and have been in frequent discussions since where those department officers reiterated the need for China Bloom to communicate with sublessees as to why certain actions have been taken.

Additionally, I can advise that I have discussed the matter with the Director-General of Resources and have asked the director-general to write to both the head lessee, the Basil Bay Residents Association and the Keswick Island Progress Association to remind them of the remediation and arbitration options available to them under the Land Act. I can also advise that mediation and binding arbitration under the Land Act were introduced by this government during the last term to assist the resolution of disputes between head lessees and sublessees.

Additionally, I am advised that department officers met with four of the island's 140 sublessees in person in March of this year. There has also been regular engagement via phone and email with sublessees regarding their concerns. During these meetings and points of contact, my department has reminded all parties involved of the mediation and binding arbitration options available to them. Again, I can say without hesitation—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr MILLAR: I think the minister has answered the question comprehensively. We have a lot of questions to get through, Minister. Acting Chair, if we can get onto the next question that would be great.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand what you are getting at. I am sure the minister is getting through. This particular one, I am finding, is illuminating. If the minister could continue but certainly bear in mind that we are moving through these questions.

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Acting Chair, for your guidance. I can say without hesitation that this government is 100 per cent committed to make sure that all relevant activities on the island are in accordance with the lease conditions, and my department will continue to work to that effect.

Mr MILLAR: Comprehensive answer, thank you, Minister.

Mr STEWART: You're welcome.

Ms PUGH: So the point of order was that the answer was too good?

Mr MILLAR: No, it just went on.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, members. We have not got long to go. Let us just keep it together.

Mr WEIR: Minister, my question is with reference to page 51 of the SDS, volume 3, resource safety and health services. In May 2020, the Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry was established by the former mines minister after the devastating blast at Grosvenor Mine. According to the original terms of reference of the inquiry, you were meant to be in possession of a copy of the final report on 30 November 2020 that was suitable for publication, including the findings and recommendations. On 17 September 2020, the terms of reference were quietly changed to delay the final report until 31 May 2021. Minister, why has the Coal Mining Board of Inquiry been delayed by a further six months, doubling the initial time the board was meant to have to hand down its findings?

ACTING CHAIR: I point out that that is a long question.

Mr WEIR: It needed a bit of clarity around it. I know it was long.

ACTING CHAIR: It did. It certainly matches the fulsome answers.

Mr STEWART: I know that the opposition, as does the Palaszczuk Labor government, consider the safety of Queensland workers as paramount. On 6 May 2020 a report of the incident at the Grosvenor mine near Moranbah was made to the Queensland Mines Inspectorate. The operator, Anglo American, reported a gas ignition on the longwall which resulted in five coalmining workers receiving burns to their upper bodies and airways. The board of inquiry established in May by my predecessor, Dr Anthony Lynham, to inquire into this incident delivered its interim report in August and delivered part 1 of its inquiry report to me last week. Acting Chair, I seek leave to table the board's part 1 report for the benefit of the committee.

ACTING CHAIR: We have a document from the federal government and this report. There being no objection, they are both tabled.

Mr STEWART: I take this opportunity to thank the board for their forensic and considered work. The board has indicated that they will resume hearings about the Grosvenor incident in March 2021 and any resulting findings and recommendations will be included in its part 2 report to be delivered by

31 May 2021. The board is conducting its inquiry in accordance with its terms of reference to minimise any risks of compromising the Mines Inspectorate's investigation or prejudicing any potential future prosecutions. I look forward to receiving the board's final report and findings and recommendations for improving the safety of coalmine workers.

Presently, Grosvenor mine remains closed under an active compliance directive of the inspectorate, with no persons having access to the underground workings. The five Coal Mining Board of Inquiry workers who were injured in the explosion that occurred at Grosvenor underground coalmine on 6 May this year have been discharged from hospital. Four of them continue to undertake rehabilitation and some follow-up surgery. I am grateful that they have been released from intensive care and, as you can appreciate, will be with their families in the lead-up to Christmas. I am also advised that the Queensland Mines Inspectorate's investigation into the nature and cause of the incident, led by the deputy chief inspector of coalmines, is on track to be completed this month.

Mr WEIR: Would you commit to implement the recommendations from that Coal Mining Board of Inquiry in full?

Mr STEWART: As I highlighted in my previous answer, this is part 1 of the report. It is an interim report. I think it would be a little too premature at this stage to commit to those recommendations. We will wait until the second and final part of the report comes to us. We will ensure that we have a tripartite approach to this—industry, the unions and the government—to make sure that we put the necessary steps in place following the inquiry and report.

Mr WEIR: My question is to the CEO of Resources Safety and Health, Mr Stone. I reference page 51 of SDS volume 3 and the Resources Safety and Health service. It has been revealed that in the four years leading up to the explosion at Grosvenor mine last year that seriously injured five workers, there were 98 incidents of dangerously high methane levels recorded at the mine. These incidents accounted for nearly 60 per cent of all methane exceedences in the state's nine underground mines. Despite these numerous incidents, the mine was not once forced to stop production. Do these actions of the Mines Inspectorate to allow workers to continue working in dangerous, unsafe conditions meet Queensland's high mine safety expectations?

Mr Stone: Could I seek clarification? Were you referring to all of the undergrounds and then specifically Grosvenor mine or all underground coalmines?

Mr WEIR: Grosvenor.

Mr Stone: I believe the question you have asked formed part of the evidence that Coal Mining Board of Inquiry examined as part of its initial tranche of hearings. I think it is important to give some context to the management of methane exceedences in Queensland's coalmines. To do that, I would like to step back probably two to three years to 2017 when the Mines Inspectorate undertook a significant audit activity of undergrounds because it had concerns that there may be an underreporting of methane. That audit took place and unfortunately those concerns were realised. The Mines Inspectorate prepared a best practice document and issued that to the industry. It presented and discussed it with industry around why those exceedences were occurring and what mines needed to do and indeed what some mines had done to implement effective controls. That is the middle of 2019.

If we then quickly move on, and I will come specifically to the point you raised about interventions by the Mines Inspectorate. Foreshadowed in that best practice guideline was the likely requirement to amend regulations to increase the level of prescription around controls of methane, around reporting and around signage in underground coalmines. Those amendment regulations took place in December 2019 and January 2020. I think the board of inquiry also heard some of the impact of those additional prescriptions. Essentially, they are more protective for workers and put greater obligations on industry to control.

The Mines Inspectorate does suspend operations when it believes that the risk is at an unacceptable level. In the financial year 2020, of the total high-potential incidents reported by industry, I believe there were 160 relating to methane management and the Mines Inspectorate has suspended operations at sites and will continue to do so. It is the most effective control, but we must take a step back and must recognise who has the primary obligation to manage methane at sites. It is the operator.

The relationship that is set up by the legislature in Queensland is one where the primary obligation holder is the operator. By and large risks are managed well, but where they are not managed and where risk is at an unacceptable level, the Mines Inspectorate absolutely ceases the operations so it can be operated safely.

Mr WEIR: You might have to clarify that for me a little. Why would the inspectorate not have suspended mining with that high number of incidents? Are you saying they have the power or they do not have the power?

Mr Stone: The Mines Inspectorate absolutely has the power. There are several forms of methane exceedence, but if we take one, perhaps the most serious one, the explosive range of methane is five to 15 per cent. The Queensland legislation says that when the general body of methane concentration reaches 2½ per cent—so half of the lower level—the mine is declared a dangerous place. The operator must evacuate the workers to a place of safety. The operator must notify the Mines Inspectorate.

For those types of incidents with the greatest potential—I think that is fairly clear—it is more likely. When the Mines Inspectorate is notified they want to know very quickly: does the mine understand why control has been lost? The board heard that there are a number of reasons methane may spike in an underground coalmine. If the Mines Inspectorate is not convinced that the site understands why the methane gas occurred, they are not convinced the mine understands how to regain control then absolutely they will suspend the operation. They have done so and they will continue to do so.

Mr WEIR: The CFMMEU have publicly stated that workers at all three Anglo American underground coalmines have expressed fears for their safety since the Grosvenor explosion. Minister, can you provide assurances to our mineworkers and their communities that the department has been engaging with and holding companies like Anglo to account over their mine safety record?

ACTING CHAIR: Providing assurances is outside the remit of what we are examining here today. I will let the minister answer that with a broad spectrum of possibilities.

Mr STEWART: As we have highlighted, the health and safety of all workers is absolutely paramount for this government. Queensland now has some of the toughest mine safety and health laws anywhere in the world including an offence for industrial manslaughter. That is because the Palaszczuk government has implemented the most substantial suite of reforms to mine safety and health in 20 years. I am sure, member for Condamine, you will agree with me that the most important thing that comes out of a mine or a quarry at the end of each shift has to be the workers. I know I have your support on that.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to a safe and healthy work environment for everyone at a mine and quarry site. That is why we introduced industrial manslaughter as an offence in the mining industry. As I have said, Queensland has some of the toughest mine safety and health laws anywhere in the world. That is thanks to the reform of our government. The government is committed to investing \$5 million into research to support sufferers of occupational lung disease. The funding will support research into medical treatment to improve the health and wellbeing of workers.

Mr MILLAR: I raise a point of order. I think the question was about Anglo America and holding them to account in regard to safety. Yes, black lung is very important, but I think the question was pretty direct at the end.

ACTING CHAIR: As I said, I have given the member a broad spectrum. I am sure he is finishing his answer and then we will move to questions from government members. Did you want to finish, Minister?

Mr STEWART: That is fine, Acting Chair. I will take your guidance.

Ms PUGH: With reference to volume 3, page 1 of the SDS, Minister, can you please advise the committee how the government is backing Queensland's resource sector?

Mr STEWART: I make it clear to the committee that the Palaszczuk government backs Queensland's resource industry. We always have and we always will. The resource sector is the backbone of Queensland's economy. Our regions, like mine, are supporting more than 73,000 jobs across the state and are worth more than \$54 billion in exports.

Over the past five years, this government has facilitated \$21 billion in investment in resource projects across Queensland, supporting the creation of more than 8,000 jobs. This government recognises that the resource sector will play a critical role in Queensland's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why in October this year the Treasurer committed that a re-elected Palaszczuk government would deliver a Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan.

The resource sector is and will continue to be a key element of the Queensland economy for decades to come. Regional development, both growing our regions and supporting jobs, is central to our state COVID-19 economic recovery plan. Strong regional economies are critical to rebuilding the strength of the Queensland economy, and our resources industry is integral to the vibrancy of our

regional economies. That is why our Resource Industry Development Plan will set out a strong vision for the resource sector into the future and includes actions that will help regional communities recover from their economic impacts of COVID-19.

As the Treasurer outlined, this plan will have a key focus on the following: targets for industry growth; responsibly unlocking our resources; assisting the state's explorers to discover new deposits of new economy and base minerals by leveraging future rounds of the \$10 million Collaborative Exploration Initiative; examining opportunities to continue advanced processing of resources in Queensland; growing our mining equipment, technology and services, or METS, sector in line with our METS 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan; working with communities to maximise the resources sector contributing to their economic and social wellbeing; facilitating access to our network of common user ports, rail lines and electricity infrastructure; and reviewing our regulatory processes to ensure that they are streamlined.

I can underscore the government's commitment to the resource sector and the community that any regulatory change of material impact will be subject to a 12-week consultation process consistent with the Office of Best Practice Regulation guidelines. I can also reiterate the Treasurer's commitment that the government will consult widely on the development of the Resource Industry Development Plan.

COVID-19 has clearly demonstrated that when government and industry work in close partnership our resources sector is even stronger and more resilient. We will be consulting with key industry bodies such as the Queensland Resources Council, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, as well as with agriculture and community groups.

I look forward to this consultation commencing in the near future. I am also looking forward to delivering on the commitments we include in the finalised plan which will set up the sector very strongly to continue to lead the state's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to volume 3, page 48 of the SDS in reference to supporting Queensland jobs, can the minister please advise the committee on action the government is taking to ensure North Queensland continues to have a strong economy?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I know that you are a proud and very vocal North Queenslander like myself. This government is committed to the prosperous future for the North West Minerals Province and the regional jobs and economic opportunities it provides in our cities like Townsville. The Townsville Regional Recovery Action Plan announced earlier this year supports the continued operation of the Mount Isa Mines copper smelter. The support package will allow for the rebricking and maintenance work due at the smelter in September 2021 to be undertaken and keep the site operational. This financial support underpins more than 1,000 manufacturing jobs in North Queensland, including 350 jobs at the Mount Isa Mines smelter itself, 220 jobs at the Townsville copper refinery and 520 jobs at the Incitec Pivot operations in North Queensland.

The North West Minerals Province for decades and has delivered significant economic benefits to Queensland. The expected global demand outlook over the next decade for copper and other new economy minerals is strong. The Queensland government expects to see continued development of mines and the growth of these exports and local value add.

In the week immediately following being sworn in as the Minister for Resources, I had the pleasure of visiting Mount Isa and was fortunate to meet with the Glencore team and two of their operations including the George Fisher underground mine and the copper smelter. As the Premier has said, the people who work in that copper smelter have some of the toughest jobs, particularly the day we were there. It was 38-odd degrees and those guys were working at that smelter and boy oh boy were they sweating.

Investing in Glencore's smelter is money well spent and positions the North West Minerals Province for future localised processing. Over the coming decades the North West Minerals Province can capitalise on the growing demand for new economy minerals. It has significant geological potential and a renowned history as a world-class minerals province. There are opportunities in traditional metals like copper, lead and zinc in the region but there are also great opportunities in emerging resources like cobalt, vanadium and rare earth minerals which will be a key part of our low-emissions energy future. However, to support future economic mineral developments we need to keep existing supply chains open and keep the Mount Isa economy strong which is why we have committed to this economic support.

Maintaining Queensland's local mineral processing capability will allow us to leverage that capability to develop value-adding industries around new economy minerals. The latest round of the Department of Resources' Collaborative Exploration Initiative has closed. Seven projects were awarded \$965,000 in exploration grants to help explorers discover new economy minerals around Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Julia Creek and Georgetown. The data from the projects will be made freely available in January 2021 via my department's open data portal to encourage further exploration and mining investments in the region.

This government has also initiated programs to encourage further development of the North West Minerals Province's potential. This includes improvements to the Mount Isa and Townsville rail line, including upgrades to Townsville port and backing the CopperString 2.0 project.

Dr MacMAHON: Acting Director-General, of the 18 coalmines approved by the Palaszczuk government, how many have mining leases that extend to 2050 or beyond?

Mr Purtill: I will have to get the exact list for you rather than me guessing at the answer for you. I will endeavour to have it before the end of the session rather than take it on notice.

Ms PUGH: With reference to page 3-48 of the SDS and the department's commitment to deliver sustainable benefits for current and future generations of Queenslanders, can the minister please inform the committee about the actions his department has taken to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by means of land transfers?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is a supporter of this government's commitment to delivering positive outcomes for our many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities right across our fantastic state.

I am pleased to advise that my department, the Department of Resources, supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the transfer of land under the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991. This process provides for the grant of land known as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land. The land transfer process is a significant provision in both acts I previously mentioned, which recognises the interest and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to land. The grant of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land provides for ownership of land to allow for self-development, self-reliance and cultural integrity. The land titles transferred under these acts are inalienable freehold land that cannot be sold.

It is important to note that the grant of this title to land is significant as it is held forever for past, present and future generations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations and land trusts hold the titles to the land on behalf of native title holders or the ancestors and descendants of people who are connected to the land. I am pleased to inform members of the committee that approximately 6.1 million hectares of land has been granted as inalienable freehold for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are approximately 2.5 million hectares of land yet to be granted under the act.

The current portfolio of land to be granted includes the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deed of grant in trust lands, certain Indigenous reserve lands and the lands that have become transferrable after enactment of the acts as a result of decisions made about the most appropriate tenure. There are multiple legislative steps that my department undertakes as part of the process to grant inalienable freehold. This includes coordination of the declaration of land as transferrable, survey of the land to enable the grant of freehold, as well as consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with connection to the land and other stakeholders. These actions culminate in a handover of the freehold title to land.

As part of this process there is a requirement to ensure that any services provided from the land, particularly those that support essential community infrastructure, can continue to be provided post transfer. Conventionally, this is achieved through my department facilitating the issue of leases to those service providers. I am pleased to advise that in 2019-20 my department finalised the transfer of 23 properties with a total area of 7,133 hectares to titles to hold in trust for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. One of the land transfers undertaken by my department in November 2019 resulted in the handover of deeds to a total of 211 hectares of land on the tip of Cape York—including the site of the once iconic Pajinka Wilderness Lodge Resort—to its traditional owners, the Gudang/Yadhaykenu Aboriginal Corporation. This land transfer provided social and economic opportunities for the traditional owners as well as the wider community of the northern peninsula. Another significant land handover ceremony that my department undertook this July—


Mr MILLAR: Point of order. It is 6.45 pm, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: I imagine the minister is coming to the end of his answer.

Mr STEWART: Members of the committee, I can only commend the significant and cultural work that the members of the Land and Native Title Services division of my department undertake each and every day they come to work. Their commitment to understanding allows this government to continue supporting both current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Queensland.

ACTING CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn for a short break. The hearing will resume at 7 pm, continuing with the examination of the estimates for the resources portfolio area.

Proceedings suspended from 6.45 pm to 7.00 pm.

 **ACTING CHAIR:** The committee will now continue its examination of the proposed expenditure for the resources portfolio area. Before we go to questions, Director-General, you had a clarification to make.

Mr Purtill: I did. In response to the member's question regarding Keswick Island, I believe I may have said that in March 2020 the DNRME officers met with sublessees on the island. I want to clarify if I did say that. It was actually a meeting in Brisbane with the Keswick Island Progress Association.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to some further questioning from non-government members.

Mr WEIR: My question is to the minister and I will reference page 48 of SDS volume 3. Minister, does the continued delays in approving New Acland stage 3 signal to the rest of the resource sector that this Labor government is not going to approve any new thermal coalmine projects in Queensland?

ACTING CHAIR: There are obviously some imputations in there and some hypotheticals. I appreciate the member for Condamine's interest in this. I am going to let the minister answer that question.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I answered this question in parliament last week. However, I am happy to reiterate my response for the benefit of the member. The Palaszczuk government has a strong record on supporting and advancing the resource industry. Since taking office, we have supported more than \$21 billion worth of investment in resources projects, resulting in more than 8,000 jobs in the mining and gas sectors.

The New Acland stage 3 project has had significant community interest and has a protracted legal history. With this in mind, the Palaszczuk government has committed to accept the decisions of the courts on the New Acland coalmine expansion. The High Court recently heard an appeal by the opponents of the mine and are still deliberating their decisions. Given the commitment we made to Queenslanders in 2017 to accept the decisions of the courts, we will await the High Court outcome before finalising the remaining approvals for this project. This week I met with the CEO of New Hope Group, Reinhold Schmidt, and also reiterated to Mr Schmidt the government's position.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. The question was directed at thermal coal and the expansion of thermal coal in Queensland. The minister did not answer the question. Do you support thermal coal expansion in the Queensland mining sector?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory, that is not the way I saw the question.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order—

ACTING CHAIR: Is that your next question?

Mr WEIR: For clarity, the last part of the question was whether this government would approve any new thermal coal projects in Queensland.

Mr MILLAR: It was a direct question.

Mr WALKER: Point of order. There were two questions—

Mr MILLAR: No, there was not.

Mr WALKER: Sorry, I am speaking. One was about Acland mine and then there was that little bit at the end so there were two questions.

ACTING CHAIR: I thank the member for the point of order. There was some confusion about that, I accept that, but I think the original question from the member for Condamine was about the approval for one particular one and the member for Gregory was talking broadly about support across the state.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. The question was: is the Labor government going to approve any new thermal coal projects in Queensland? That was the question.

ACTING CHAIR: I will not rehash that, but we will take that as a question. Minister, there are some hypotheticals once again in that, but I am going to allow you to answer that in a broad sense as you see fit.

Mr STEWART: As I had initially highlighted in my last answer there, the reasons why we have not gone down the road of the New Acland mine—

Mr MILLAR: He talked about Acland; he did not talk about thermal.

ACTING CHAIR: He is answering your question.

Mr STEWART: are because of the decisions through the court, and we have made that abundantly clear.

Mr MILLAR: It is not about the court case; it is about thermal coal.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory, he has just commenced his answer.

Mr MILLAR: I just want to get him back on track.

ACTING CHAIR: I call the minister to keep on going with his answer.

Mr STEWART: Thank you. As I said, the question was specifically around New Acland. We talked around the processes and we have said we have made it abundantly clear to Queenslanders since 2017 that we would await the decisions of the courts. That has not changed because we have had some new members or a new minister. Meeting with the CEO last week I reiterated—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. It is not about Acland specifically; it is about whether the Palaszczuk government will support the increase of thermal coalmines in Queensland.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand that, member for Gregory. Once again, the minister has just commenced his answer—

Mr MILLAR: But he is going back to Acland.

ACTING CHAIR: He is prefacing his answer with this particular example. I have no doubt the minister will move onto the broad question.

Mr MILLAR: I hope so.

Mr STEWART: Thank you. As I said, we met with the CEO just this week and reiterated our stance on New Acland and he understood that particularly. Let me assist the member for Condamine if this is not already very clear to him. I support the coal industry, the natural gas industry, our important minerals industry and our quarries because they are important to all Queenslanders.

Mr MILLAR: And thermal?

ACTING CHAIR: Keep going, Minister.

Mr STEWART: They are important to regional Queensland. They are important to my own community. It may be useful for the honourable member to remember some of his own history and that of his party. In the member's maiden speech in this House, the member gave what I thought was a lightly veiled warning—

Mr MILLAR: Who? Which member?

Mr STEWART: The member for Condamine.

ACTING CHAIR: Keep going.

Mr STEWART: He gave a lightly veiled warning to the CSG industry that he would be watching them.

Mr MILLAR: Absolutely.

Mr STEWART: Mr Acting Chair, I seek leave to table a copy of the member for Condamine's maiden speech for the benefit of the committee.

Mr BOYCE: Point of order, Acting Chair. This is totally irrelevant and I would ask that you govern on that.

ACTING CHAIR: As I said, in response to the last question about support for the industry, the minister is prefacing his answer, as far as I can see, with a discussion about this particular example, which was referenced before, and he has now commenced talking about the government's support for the industry and is comparing and contrasting as well. Can I point out that the minister was only a couple of minutes in. Can we give the minister some time so we can see where he is going on this?

Mr STEWART: There is nothing necessarily wrong with that maiden speech. Not one is going to give—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. The question is: does the Labor government support thermal coal projects in Queensland? That is the question.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory, this is the third—

Mr MILLAR: Yes or no?

ACTING CHAIR: This is the third time I have pointed out that the minister is answering the question.

Mr MILLAR: He is not answering it.

ACTING CHAIR: Please do not continue interrupting with these points of order. We are letting the minister finish.

Mr STEWART: Thank you. I will go back to how I was answering the question and I will say it again for the member for Gregory. I support the coal industry—

Mr MILLAR: Thermal?

Mr STEWART: the natural gas industry, our important minerals industry and our quarries because they are important to all Queenslanders and they are important to regional Queensland.

Mr MILLAR: This is an interjection. Do you support thermal? Yes or no?

Mr STEWART: And they are important to my own community. I think I have made it abundantly clear that I support the thermal coal industry. The member needs to remember that if he wants to apply that scrutiny to resource activities in his own electorate then he should be prepared to apply it equally across the whole state. I am sure the member for Condamine would be aware that his previous opposition leader, the member for Nanango, as I am advised was opposed to coalmining in the Nanango electorate but supported the Adani mine in another electorate. He would be aware that the same opposition leader—

Mr WEIR: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: One moment, Minister. What is the point of order?

Mr WEIR: We now are going into ancient history and the facts are not being told in their entirety. I am happy to ask another question.

ACTING CHAIR: I would like to clarify this. I want the minister to finish his answer and have a chance to do it.

Mr MILLAR: A point of order. He has—

ACTING CHAIR: I will not be continually interrupted by these points of order.

Mr MILLAR: No, no.

ACTING CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr MILLAR: My point of order—he said he just supported the thermal coal industry. He said that. That is what we want him to answer, yes or no. He said ‘Yes’ so he has answered the question. Let’s move onto the next one.

ACTING CHAIR: The member for Gregory might be satisfied with the answer so far, but there are other members of the committee who want to hear the answer. Once again, let us cease the interjections, cease the frivolous points of order and let the minister finish his answer.

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Acting Chair. The member for Condamine would be aware that the same opposition leader at first opposed New Acland—

Mr McDONALD: A point of order, Acting Chair.

Mr STEWART:—and then supported it.

Mr McDONALD: A point of order, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Callide!

Ms PUGH: No, I think it is actually Lockyer.

Mr McDONALD: A point of order, Acting Chair. Under standing order 118, relevance. The issues surrounding the former opposition leader have nothing to do with the question.

Mr MILLAR: Let’s move on.

ACTING CHAIR: No. This is about the eighth time I have said that we are letting the minister finish his answer. He has only just touched on this compare and contrast. The rest of us want to hear his answer. This will just take even longer if you keep interrupting.

Mr MILLAR: With all due respect, Acting Chair, he seems to be verballing the member for Condamine on his maiden speech. We asked a question, yes or no, does he support thermal coal—

Mr WALKER: A point of order.

Mr MILLAR:—he has said, 'Yes, I do support thermal coal.' Thank you for the answer, we welcome that.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory, you are not the acting chair of this committee; I am. I want to hear more. The member for Mundingburra, you have a point of order?

Mr WALKER: Thank you, Acting Chair. I have a couple of points. Earlier on this evening, we were told to hurry up and cut the answers short, then to hurry up and tell the answer. There is only one acting chair, I thought. I might be the new kid on the block, but I am not the chair. The other thing is, Mr Acting Chair, I just heard the member accuse someone of being verballing. That is unparliamentary. How are we to conduct this if we have two acting chairs, a point of order and now the member is complaining how long the answer is? Earlier he said 'shorten it up' and he wanted to go for dinner.

ACTING CHAIR: I think your point—

Mr MILLAR: No, I think—

ACTING CHAIR: One moment. The point of order is relevance. The member is finding the answer relevant. I agree with you there. Can we please let the minister finish the answer?

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Acting Chair. The interesting thing about this apparent emerging line from the member for Condamine is that he fails to understand that convincing himself that Labor is somehow anti resources is vastly different from the reality. Importantly, it is very different from the way the voters of Queensland saw Labor's approach to this state's vital industry sector at the last election. Acting Chair, to assist the member for Condamine understand my position, let me repeat what I have said already: I support the coal industry, I support the natural gas industry, I support our important minerals industry and I support our quarries because they are important to all Queenslanders, they are important to regional Queensland and they are important to my own community. Thank you, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Are we happy to table the member's maiden speech?

Mr MILLAR: It is already in *Hansard*.

ACTING CHAIR: Why not?

Mr WEIR: Do it.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. It is so tabled.

Mr MILLAR: My next question is to the director-general. With reference to page 3-49 of the SDS 'Natural Resource Management Services, Service Area Highlights' and specifically 'releasing the enhanced Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) and vegetation mapping, assessment and monitoring in Queensland', has the department prepared and finalised the 2018-19 land cover change in the Queensland Statewide Landcover and Tree Study?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. The next report, which will include enhancements to the SLATS program specifically to identify and report on the condition and extent of regrowth vegetation to inform habitat conservation, will be issued by the Department of Environment and Science. The Department of Environment and Science has advised that the enhanced SLATS for the 2018-19 reporting period will be finalised in the first half of 2021.

Mr MILLAR: My next question is to the director-general. Can you explain the rationale as to why the 2016-17 and 2017-18 land cover change in the Queensland Statewide Landcover and Tree Studies were released in the same document and simultaneously?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. Ultimately, the production of the SLATS report is a matter for the Queensland Herbarium which is a part of the Department of Environment and Science. My department does not have, if you like, say over the release program or the timing of that release. All of the interpretive work is effectively done by the Queensland Herbarium.

Mr MILLAR: Another question to the director-general, do the full versions of the 2017-18 SLATS report exist and, if so, would you be able to table these for the benefit of the committee?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. Could you just help me to understand when you say 'the full versions', is that because they were conjoined?

Mr MILLAR: Yes, they were conjoined.

Mr Purtill: Ultimately, again, the decision around the publication of SLATS information is a matter for the environment and science portfolio, and how that material is presented is a matter for the Department of Environment and Science.

Mr MILLAR: They were summaries, weren't they?

Mr Purtill: Summary documents.

Mr MILLAR: Why were they summary documents?

Mr Purtill: I do not actually recall that. They were referred to as summary documents.

Mr MILLAR: Why do we not have the full version? Why do we have the summary documents and not the full version?

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory, I think it has been pointed out a couple of times that this comes under the Herbarium, which is under the Department of Environment and Science and the Great Barrier Reef. Perhaps those direct questions would be better directed towards that department.

Mr MILLAR: Yes, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: You agree with me?

Mr MILLAR: I have always agreed with you.

Mr STEWART: Is that in *Hansard*?

ACTING CHAIR: Due for another question!

Mr MILLAR: It has been a long time.

ACTING CHAIR: We have an hour and a half go to yet!

Mr STEWART: But wait, there's more!

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any further questions?

Mr MILLAR: I am going to hand to the member for Condamine.

ACTING CHAIR: Okay. One quick question before we go to government members.

Mr WEIR: My question is to the director-general. With reference to page 3-54 of the SDS 'Departmental income statement', in rounds three and four of the Collaborative Exploration Incentive, a company by the name of Chinova Resources was awarded two grants worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Chinova Resources' parent company is Shanxi Donghui Coal Coking & Chemicals Group Co Ltd, a group with historical ties to the Chinese government. Director-general, what checks are made by your department to ensure that these taxpayer funded grants are not going to multinational companies that will put foreign interests before those of Queenslanders?

Ms PUGH: Can I—

ACTING CHAIR: You have a point of order, member for Mount Ommaney?

Ms PUGH: Just that that was a very long preamble.

ACTING CHAIR: It was. I think that—

Mr WEIR: I announced it; that's why.

ACTING CHAIR: Well—

Ms PUGH: Providing context, right?

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, member for Mount Ommaney. That was a long preamble and there were some unnecessary parts of that. With that in mind, I am asking the director-general if he would like to answer that question?

Mr Purtill: Thank you, Acting Chair, and thank you, member, for the question. To be frank, there were parts of the question that I do not think would be appropriate for me to respond to.

ACTING CHAIR: We will certainly give you that latitude to choose which parts.

Mr Purtill: I am happy to tell the committee about the Collaborative Exploration Initiative grants. The process to determine preferred applicants for Collaborative Exploration Initiative grants involves a vetting through both internal and external assessment panels to ensure that removal of bias in our decision-making, but the origin of the company or its ownership, for example Foreign Investment

Review Board matters, are actually not relevant to the issue of those grants. We are looking for compliance with Queensland laws and with the integrity and veracity of the proposed projects that are put forward. Yes, Chinova Resources was awarded two of those grants as were a raft of other exploration companies across not only the North West Minerals Province but throughout Queensland.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any information you wanted to furnish us with in relation to that, member for Condamine? Alright. We will go on to government questions. I will start off. Minister, in reference to volume 3, page 48, of the SDS, can you update the committee on actions being taken to ensure that the Queensland resources sector continues to be at the forefront of global investment?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. We are bringing a more strategic view across Queensland's large and diverse mineral and energy resources sector. To support this view, a business change initiative is underway to form a dedicated resources planning and intelligence business unit within the Department of Resources. The new resources planning and intelligence unit will bring together a wide variety of data and information about the resource sector in Queensland and analyse and interpret that data in the context of the global economy in which the sector operates.

The need for a group dedicated to industry intelligence has been recognised as increasingly important given the risks, threats, opportunities and forces of change impacting on our very valuable and important resources sector. In this modern world of information overload, now more than ever we need dedicated experts who can curate that information to focus on data that is reliable, valuable and relevant to decisions that we as government need to make. By creating a specific resource planning and intelligence unit within the department we will not only assemble the right data and information; we will also turn that data into intelligence and insights that support policy development, decision-making and engagement.

The group will provide a variety of roles. It will work to identify and protect resources for future use. It will promote greater collaboration with and between the research sector and industry. It will encourage new investment in the Queensland resources sector through targeted grant schemes. It will be a hub for the ever-growing requests for information on past performance of the sector, current status and future outlook. This last point will be the highest priority of the unit as it provides a reliable source of information that has been assembled and curated in such a way as to ensure accuracy, ready availability and applicability of use.

The group will be formed by a strategic realignment within the department's Georesources division. Specifically, this group will serve a range of functions including the Geological Survey of Queensland. The Geological Survey of Queensland has served this state for about 150 years, and its core purpose remains to help enable industry exploration and development success. In doing so, this department attracts investment to Queensland's minerals and energy resources sector and helps keep Queensland's economy strong. This new priority for the department represents yet another adaptation to support the changing needs of Queensland's resources sector.

Mr WALKER: With reference to volume 3 page 51 of the SDS, can the minister please advise the committee on steps the government is taking to develop the North West Minerals Province?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Like me, the member understands the importance of the North West Minerals Province and what it means to cities like ours of Townsville. The Palaszczuk government is committed to a prosperous future for the North West Minerals Province and the regional jobs and economic opportunities it provides. The North West Minerals Province has been one of the world's richest mineral-producing regions for decades and has delivered a legacy of economic benefits for Queensland. The expected global demand outlook over the next decade for such base metals as copper and the emerging new economy minerals is strong, and we expect to see continued development of mines and growth in these exports and local value-add.

The Queensland government established the North West Minerals Province Taskforce in 2015 and subsequently developed a strategic blueprint to secure the future of the region long term. The blueprint was supported by new funding of \$39 million in the 2017-18 budget and focused on facilitating continued resource development, diversifying the regional economy and delivering community services. A biennial review of the blueprint was published in July 2020. It highlighted excellent progress across the program, particularly in terms of resources sector development and in terms of world-class precompetitive geoscience delivery through the \$27 million Strategic Resources Exploration Program, delivered by the Department of Resources.

To continue taking the province to the next level and to maximise emerging global opportunities in low-emissions energy and transport solutions, the Palaszczuk government funded \$13 million for our New Economy Minerals Initiative. The work under this initiative includes a strong focus on accessing

the potential of former mine sites to test their potential for new supply. This has already been successfully demonstrated by New Century Resources and the amazing work they have done with processing tailings at the old MMG Century mine near Mount Isa. Another key element of the New Economy Minerals Initiative has been collaborative exploration grants. The latest round of these grants has now closed. Seven projects were awarded \$965,000 in exploration grants to help explorers discover new economy minerals around Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Julia Creek and Georgetown.

As part of our COVID-19 response we have also implemented a range of additional initiatives which will see the North West Minerals Province play a lead role in boosting regional jobs and local economies. We provided an additional \$10 million to boost our collaborative exploration grants for new economy minerals over four years. This will continue the momentum we have started, particularly in the north-west and north-east minerals provinces.

The Townsville Regional Recovery Action Plan supports the continued operation of Mount Isa Mines' copper smelter. This support will underpin more than 1,000 manufacturing jobs in North Queensland including 350 jobs at the Mount Isa Mines smelter itself, 220 jobs at the Townsville copper refinery—I know, member, that you came out and visited that site with me and the Premier—and 520 jobs in Incitec Pivot's operations in North Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government has also initiated programs to encourage further development of the North West Minerals Province's potential. This includes \$50 million for improvements to the Mount Isa-Townsville rail line to lead to more reliable and accessible freight opportunities. We are also backing the CopperString 2.0 project's feasibility work. This project could create hundreds of jobs during construction and potentially provide cheaper and more reliable power for miners in the North West Minerals Province.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 3-49 of the SDS and the department's priority to implement the suite of vegetation management commitments, can you please update the committee on the activities of the vegetation management hub?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is a strong supporter of this government's vegetation management reforms and of all the work the staff have done in the vegetation management space in the former department of natural resources, mines and energy and the current Department of Resources. I am pleased to have the opportunity to update the committee today on the great work my department is doing through the veg hub, also known as the 135VEG phone line. Some members of the committee may not be aware of the reliable, professional and specialised advice that the veg hub staff provide to landholders across the state. However, I can advise the committee that the introduction of the physical hub, located in Charleville, has resulted in business efficiencies which have significantly benefited the landholders of Queensland.

Since its introduction in 2018 the veg hub has received 16,892 calls as well as 2,502 emails. My department estimates that approximately 99 per cent of these vegetation inquiries are answered and addressed by the vegetation hub staff themselves, without referral to another officer. This has reduced double handling of inquiries and has also allowed my department to continue to provide excellent customer service and to act as a point of information for landholders in Queensland.

With a dedicated and highly trained permanent staff of five, the veg hub is additionally supported by officers around the state who can be called on if required. By basing the team at Charleville, the staff at the vegetation management hub are best placed to respond to the often complex inquiries made by regional and rural landholders and assist them in understanding the available options when undertaking any potential vegetation management activities.

The veg hub initiative is intrinsically linked to the delivery of services and allows other staff based in regional Queensland to spend more time in face to face or virtual meetings with landholders and stakeholders alike as they now have greater capacity, due to the work of the dedicated staff in Charleville.

When the department evaluated the types of inquiries the vegetation hub staff received, it became clear that many referred to clearing for firebreaks. I can advise that, since early December 2019, an experienced Queensland Fire and Emergency Services officer has been embedded within the veg hub team to assist with those inquiries. I would encourage any landholder who has any questions or concerns or would like additional information about the vegetation management framework to make contact with the department via the 135VEG number.

ACTING CHAIR: Following on from that, Minister, you informed the committee about the rules surrounding clearing for firebreaks. Can you expand on that?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Let me preface my answer by addressing the scale of last summer's bushfire season. The bushfires that caused the damage were absolutely unprecedented, not only here on the Sunshine Coast but particularly when we think about what happened in New South Wales and Victoria. Understandably, in the aftermath of that terrible event many landholders in Queensland have contacted the department looking for clear information about what the rules are surrounding clearing for firebreaks under this government's responsible vegetation management framework. Let me be clear: under our responsible vegetation management framework, landholders can clear for firebreaks, clear fire management lines and undertake fuel reduction burns. Media reports that have suggested otherwise are inherently false.

I want to take the opportunity now before the members of the committee to clarify how our longstanding vegetation management provisions have allowed Queensland landholders to protect their property from the threat of bushfire for nearly the last 20 years. Under our responsible vegetation management framework, exemptions mean that landholders do not need to get an approval from the department nor notify the department when they are clearing necessary firebreaks of up to 20 metres wide or 1½ times the height of the tallest adjacent vegetation, whichever is the greatest. Landholders can also clear fire management lines of up to 10 metres wide. Any landholder who wishes to clear firebreaks wider than permitted under these exemptions can apply for a developmental approval. Furthermore, in the event of an emergency, landholders can also undertake any reasonable clearing required by an authorised fire services officer. Our vegetation management laws also provide an exemption to undertake a hazard reduction burn in order to reduce excess fuel loads. A landholder does not need to notify or obtain any approval under the laws to undertake hazard or fuel reduction burning provided they have a permit from a local fire warden under the Fire and Emergency Services Act. As I said earlier, these responsible regulatory exemptions under the vegetation management framework have been in place for almost 20 years.

I can advise that, as an additional streamlining measure, on 6 December 2019 an amendment was made to the Planning Regulation 2017 to reduce overlap between the vegetation management provisions that apply to firebreaks or fire management lines at the state level and the differing controls that might have been applied by local councils through their planning schemes. That amendment means that firebreaks and fire management lines to the widths described previously will not require a local government development approval in most council areas. This streamlining has reduced confusion for landholders seeking to undertake bushfire mitigation works to protect against existing infrastructure.

The exemptions cover most landholders' needs in relation to clearing for firebreaks and fire management lines. In recent years the department has only had one application for clearing for wider firebreaks or fire management lines. I can additionally advise that officers from the department continue to work with officers from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to provide accurate and expert information and advice to landholders in Queensland. Since early December 2019, Fire and Emergency Services has had an experienced Queensland Fire and Emergency Services officer embedded in the successful veg hub in Charleville. I understand that this arrangement has operated particularly effectively in assisting landholders seeking information about bushfire mitigation, receiving timely and expert advice as to the bushfire mitigation options available to them.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. We will move to members of the opposition.

Mr WEIR: I have a quick one on those questions I was asking before. The director-general mentioned tenures under the foreign review act, but do you have records of, say, how many tenements are currently held by Chinese companies? Do you have access to those types of records?

Mr Purtill: I thank the member for the question. The suitability for the issue of tenure assessments that it—

Mr WEIR: I am not asking about suitability. Do you know how many hectares of resource tenements are currently held by Chinese companies or their entities here in Australia?

Mr Purtill: Thank you very much for the clarification. The answer is no, but I would like to explain why the answer might be no. Having worked personally in a joint venture between Korean, French, Malaysian and Australian companies where their equity position in that joint venture changed throughout the course of that period—so too do many mining projects—it is not something that we actively monitor to the extent that it is pretty dynamic.

Mr WEIR: Of any nationality.

Mr STEWART: Acting Chair, if I could update the committee on a previous question?

Mr MILLAR: Was it from the government or opposition?

ACTING CHAIR: It does not matter.

Mr STEWART: It was a question from the member for Condamine with regard to costs of litigation for valuation related matters.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr STEWART: Thank you. I have a response.

Mr MILLAR: It is not long, is it?

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, member for Gregory.

Mr STEWART: Come on, member for Gregory! Do you want the full information?

Mr MILLAR: We have more questions to ask, Minister.

Mr STEWART: For the financial year 2019-20, the State Valuation Service spent a total of \$1,165,040 on external legal costs. This includes legal professionals such as external instructing solicitors and counsel from the private bar, Crown law and legal disbursements. External legal costs also include professional witnesses and experts such as quantity surveyors and town planners. Internal legal costs for the 2019-20 financial year were \$340,524. I am advised that the State Valuation Service recognises that there has been an increase in litigation since 2014 but has actively pursued alternative dispute resolution processes to resolve matters outside of the Land Court of Queensland. Where these cannot be resolved, all landowners have the right to appeal to the Land Court of Queensland. As previously mentioned by the deputy director-general and Valuer-General, the State Valuation Service is looking at systemic improvements to ensure Queenslanders have access to reliable and accurate valuations. For the 2019-20 financial year, there were 10 matters heard in three hearings—that is, the Land Court of Queensland heard multiple matters in some of those hearings. All matters related to valuations of commercial or industrial properties. Valuations have become significantly more complex primarily due to the application of planning schemes and the consideration of the land's highest and best use.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Condamine.

Mr WEIR: I will defer to the member for Lockyer.

Mr McDONALD: My question is to the minister regarding fossicking. Minister, many of us receive a large volume of correspondence from landholders, fossickers and small miners regarding frustrations regarding numerous legislative issues associated with the Fossicking Act. I understand that these are complex and varied issues, but given the minister is new to the role and the government is at the start of a four-year term, will the minister commit to sitting down with these various stakeholders on the issue and walk towards a balanced and sensible compromise to end the conflicts between landholders, leaseholders and the fossickers?

Ms PUGH: Mr Acting Chair, I raise a point of order. As much as I appreciate the member's enthusiasm for fossicking, I would say that that is more of a consultation type question than a budget type question.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand the member for Mount Ommaney's point of order on that. Bearing in mind the preamble and the fact that there is a hypothetical there about conflict, I am going to allow the minister to answer that and I will give him a bit of breadth to do so.

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Acting Chair, for your guidance and I thank the member for the question. The Queensland government acknowledges the popularity of fossicking as a recreational activity and the benefits that fossickers bring to local tourism in regional towns across the state. When I was at Springsure it was very popular, particularly in the Gemfields area, as you are probably aware, through places like Sapphire and Rubyvale.

We provide several options to acquire a fossicking licence, including purchasing online and from authorised agents. As a testament to the popularity of fossicking, over 20,000 fossicker licences were issued in the two years from 2018-19 and 2019-20. A fossicker's licence entitles the holder to fossick on most land in Queensland, except national parks, as long as landowners' consent is obtained. I acknowledge the importance that recreational fossickers place on access to fossicking land, but I also note that there are many land users and landowners that must be managed by the state. The Queensland government considers that the current regulatory framework is appropriate and effectively manages the many and varied land users that exist within Queensland. The Fossicking Act 1994 and the activities it regulates must coexist with other land users managed by legislation such as the Mineral Resources Act 1989 and other resources acts, the Vegetation Management Act 1999 and the Land Act 1994. All of these acts serve valuable purposes.

In recent years the Department of Resources has experienced a steady increase in fossicking inquiries and activity on the ground indicating that the current framework is effectively enabling fossicking to occur. There are currently 11 fossicking areas, nine designated fossicking lands and 21 general permission areas that are available for fossicking in Queensland, totalling over 20,000 hectares. These areas are typically managed by relevant regional councils in conjunction with the Department of Resources and the Department of Environment and Science. Fossickers must not enter any areas held under mining leases and claims without the permission of the lease or claim holder. Nine of the general permission areas are on state forest lands which have been established with the written permission of the Department of Environment and Science and any person who holds a lease pursuant to the Land Act 1994.

In cases where a leaseholder does not provide or withdraws their permission, then the general permission area cannot be declared or must be closed by the department. The department conducts targeted inspections of fossicking areas and general permission areas to ensure fossickers are operating within the provisions of the Fossicking Act 1994 and any special considerations of access that apply to an area.

The Queensland government continues to work with local stakeholders to identify new areas for fossicking and access suitability at general permission areas. Since 2018 the general permission areas have been created in the Clermont gold mining area, Four Mile West and Flat Diggings, adding over 4,500 hectares available for fossicking. The department will continue to support a vibrant fossicking community with access to extensive fossicking opportunities in a way that balances the interests of the land users and landowners.

Mr MILLAR: My question is to the minister. I reference page 53 of the SDS 3, capital purchases, referring to the funding for the stock route network. Minister, as the current Queensland Stock Route Management Strategy 2014-2019 has expired and the current Stock Route Management Regulation 2003 expires in August 2021 and that day is fast approaching, can we expect the promised new stock route review strategy to be released and will it be before the end of the year as previously promised to drovers?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I know this is something that is very dear to his heart, particularly in his electorate. Approximately 72,000 kilometres of Queensland roads are declared as stock routes. The stock route network includes reserves for travelling stock—

Mr MILLAR: Minister, I know what a stock route is. I am asking a question.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory!

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. When can we see the review strategy released and will it be released by the end of the year as promised to drovers?

ACTING CHAIR: Your point of order, member for Gregory—

Mr MILLAR: It was a direct question.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory, I am still the chair here. The minister has just commenced his answer. I will ask him to continue.

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Acting Chair, for your guidance. Located along the stock route network is state owned infrastructure such as water facilities, holding yards and other assets. Local governments maintain these facilities and to assist local governments the Palaszczuk government, through my department, continues to provide direct financial support to local governments in their role as the day-to-day managers of the stock route network. Capital works projects focus on ensuring water is provided by upgrading water facility assets and improving safety and protecting assets by building fences and night yards.

In 2020-21 the Department of Resources will allocate \$800,000 in capital funding to approximately 13 local governments for water facility projects. In addition to the capital funding, \$140,000 has been allocated for maintenance projects which are anticipated to occur at 22 stock route watering facilities across the state to ensure their safe and efficient operation. In 2019-20 the department provided \$759,264 in capital funding to 14 local governments for 49 water facilities across the state and \$149,000—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. As my question stated, will the promised new stock route review strategy be released before the end of the year as previously promised to drovers? That is a direct question.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, member for Gregory. Minister, we have appreciated the information about stock routes for those of us who do not have stock routes in our electorate, but can I request that you talk about the stock route strategy?

Mr STEWART: Thank you for your guidance, Acting Chair. The primary focus of the stock route network management strategy is to coordinate the multiple uses of the stock route network and its multiple stakeholders. Since the stock route network is primarily used for the purpose of travelling stock, the primary stakeholders are those managing travelling stock, namely state and local government, and those actively using that network to move stock. I can tell the member that as mentioned in my response to the question on notice, a final regulatory discussion paper will be available for public and stakeholder consultation in early 2021. As I also mentioned previously, the finalised Queensland stock route management network strategy will be available for stakeholders in early 2021. These two documents will be released in due course. We will continue to liaise with local governments and stakeholders on the matters going forward.

Mr MILLAR: Just a follow-up question, Minister, and thank you for that answer. When can we have some certainty around these stock routes? This is an issue that has been going on for a very long time. Dr Anthony Lynham, the former minister for natural resources and mines, was trying to resolve this. We did have proposed legislation come before the House but it did not go through. There is confusion and concern about stock routes in most of Queensland. When can we have some sort of finalisation and completion so that drovers can feel certainty around stock routes?

ACTING CHAIR: Member, that is a long preamble and long question. You want certainty?

Mr MILLAR: I want a date.

ACTING CHAIR: What do you define as certainty?

Mr MILLAR: This being sorted out and we have a proper strategy in place to give some certainty to drovers so they know they are going forward with a proper plan.

ACTING CHAIR: You want to know a date when it will be released?

Mr MILLAR: Yes, a date. Will it be this year, next year, 25, 35? When is it going to be?

ACTING CHAIR: I think the minister has furnished some information about that. I am going to help you out here, member for Gregory.

Mr MILLAR: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: It is a pleasure. You have talked about the release of a strategy. Is there any more information that you can give around dates in the future?

Mr STEWART: I can, Acting Chair, and I thank the member for his question. A review of the effectiveness of the existing Stock Route Management Regulation will be finalised in 2021 following further consultation with local governments, AgForce and other interested parties. The subject of the consultation undertaken to date has focused on proposals to increase the fees prescribed under the Stock Route Management Regulation 2003 for travel and agistment permits on Queensland's stock route network.

As the Stock Route Management Regulation 2003 is due to expire, as you have said, on 31 August 2021, it is appropriate that discussions continue amongst all those stakeholders about the appropriateness of the prescribed fees to travel stock along the network and for short-term grazing on the network. I understand these fees have not increased since their introduction in 1989. Only the permit fee for agistment is subject to annual indexation, as the value of the travel permit fee is too low to attract annual indexation. I acknowledge that both the Local Government Association of Queensland and AgForce have consistently advocated for an increase in fees, particularly those that apply to travelling stock. I certainly understand their desire to ensure that there is adequate funding available to local governments for the future management of the network. I also understand that they would like to see changes to the legislation so that all revenue associated with the fees and charges stays with local government.

I will give these matters careful consideration as part of making the new regulation. Equally, I am mindful to ensure, as you are no doubt aware, member for Gregory, that there are no undue financial burdens placed on drought affected stock owners who are reliant on using those networks to move their stock to greener pastures.

Mr MILLAR: So we will have this fixed up by August 2021?

ACTING CHAIR: I think that question has been answered.

Mr MILLAR: It has not, but anyway I will move on. Minister, still on stock routes and to clarify, the regulation expires in August 2021. Can you guarantee to the committee that it will be fixed up before the Stock Route Management Regulation 2003 expires in 2021?

Ms PUGH: Point of order. That goes into next year's budget and SDS, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: There are some issues with asking for an ongoing guarantee and expenditure. Can the minister briefly furnish an answer that may or may not meet the member for Gregory's requirements?

Mr STEWART: I think I answered that during my last answer to the member's question. As I said, the existing Stock Route Management Regulation will be finalised in 2021. Following further consultation with the LGAQ, AgForce and other interested parties, as I mentioned previously, a finalised Queensland stock route management network strategy will be available in 2021.

ACTING CHAIR: I go to the member for Mundingburra.

Mr WALKER: In reference to volume 3, page 51 of the SDS, can the minister please advise the committee how the government is backing new economy minerals in Queensland?

Mr STEWART: Like me, the member knows how important this is for our mining sector and, particularly, the potential it will bring for our kids who are sitting in classrooms today. It means that there is a certain career path for them. I think that certainly is what our kids need, particularly in today's economy.

In November last year this government announced the five-year \$13 million New Economy Minerals Initiative. The term 'new economy' describes the impacts of global transition in energy, industry, sustainability and investment trends that are being driven primarily by the shift to renewable and low-emission energy sources. Those new economy global transitions are creating rapid and large demand for a range of minerals—new economy minerals—that are used in renewable and low-emission technologies. Those minerals are the commodities and rare earths needed to power our batteries, phones, electric vehicles and renewable energy technology. They will play a big part in the gadgets, devices and technology that we will use in the years and decades to come.

The New Economy Minerals Initiative is focused on quantifying Queensland's potential for the supply of minerals to the new economy. Those minerals present a significant opportunity for Queensland and this government wants to see their potential realised. New economy minerals are required to support the shift to electrification of our new energy systems. For instance, take copper that will be critical for transmission networks or cobalt, nickel and vanadium, the battery minerals, that are essential for storage and batteries. Those minerals are all found right here in Queensland.

Key works under the New Economy Minerals Initiative are well underway and include regional scale geophysical and geochemical surveys to define new primary ore bodies, as well as studies of the secondary prospectivity of mine tailings and waste materials, including those in abandoned mines right across the state. The work to date has attracted interest from international partners, including the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, Japan's resource security agency, which has a particular interest in cobalt and rare earth elements. The Department of Natural Resources is working with the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation to establish a cooperative agreement, including funding of geoscience works by the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation. The New Economy Minerals Initiative includes a suite of exciting and innovative research projects that are being progressed with research partners—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order. I feel this question is actually repetitious given the last question about the North West Minerals Province. Certainly it is a very similar answer. Acting Chair, I ask for your clarity.

ACTING CHAIR: I do not think it is a point of order. Member for Mundingburra, are you finding this relevant?

Mr WALKER: It is very informative, Acting Chair.

ACTING CHAIR: That is all I need to know.

Mr STEWART: I thank the Acting Chair for his guidance. Member for Lockyer, I was talking about the role of the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation. Japan is right behind this. They are very keen to see how things are going. That was not part of my previous statement, but I am more than happy to include that into it if you desire.

The New Economy Minerals Initiative includes a suite of exciting and innovative research projects that are being progressed with research partners including the University of Queensland, our own James Cook University, the Queensland University of Technology, the University of Adelaide, the Australian National University and the CSIRO. You see, those things are different. This research is focusing on a range of geoscience topics relating to new economy minerals.

Mr McDONALD: It is the first thing that was different.

ACTING CHAIR: Members, can we concentrate, please.

Mr STEWART: A strong focus of this work is the trialling of alternate means of mineral extraction used, for example, in biological mechanisms such as bacteria and plants to concentrate minerals for simpler and more effective recovery. In June 2020 the Queensland government committed a further \$10 million to the Collaborative Exploration Initiative as part of the response to the COVID-19 crisis. This program is being managed under the New Economy Minerals Initiative. It is designed to aid explorers in their search for new economy minerals and to help fast-track the discovery and development process.

The New Economy Minerals Initiative also sees my department working with the federal Critical Minerals Facilitation Office to identify and progress a mechanism to build new supply chains for critical minerals, also commonly called the new economy minerals, with a focus on generating federal funding, market engagement, accreditation and research amongst other matters. The Department of Resources is also working in partnership with Trade and Investment Queensland to engage with key European markets for investment into new supply chains and facilitate the off-take of product from our state. By focusing on developing new markets for our minerals, this government is leading in one of our key traditional strengths, the resources sector, to help supercharge our economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. As we recover from the pandemic, the government is focused on supporting jobs, growing our regions and opening up markets for our new economy minerals that allow us to go from strength to strength.

ACTING CHAIR: In reference to volume 3, page 51 of the SDS, Minister, could you please update the committee on the rollout of the Geological Survey of Queensland's online portal?

Mr STEWART: In August this year, the Geological Survey of Queensland was proud to launch two new data platforms for use by industry and the public at large. In technology terms, the data platforms are known as 'data lakes', which represent the leading-edge design for storage of large and diverse volumes of data in a way that enables easy search and access.

The most fundamental advantage of the data lake design is enabling linked data where queries can then be used to hone in on a specific topic, for example, every occurrence of vanadium in Queensland, or a defined area, or an association with some other feature such as a particular company. The first new platform, the lodgement portal, is for use by industry to submit data as required as a condition of the tenure holding. The second new platform is the open data portal for use to search and access Queensland's very large geoscience data stores.

While the launch of technology platforms is not an uncommon thing, these two online portals represent a very significant leap forward for Queensland. For the first time in the 152-year history of the Geological Survey of Queensland, all of the state's geoscience data is now available for discovery, access and use by industry. It is important to remember that data is the currency of trade in exploration and the mining world. Most importantly, it is free.

To give some context of that uplift, in the past we could only make two per cent of our geoscience data available due to technical and commercial limitations, including the simple cost of data storage itself. We are now making 100 per cent of our data available for free.

Until now, our state data repository was a series of obsolete and disparate systems with limitations on the one hand and increasing costs to maintain and operate the other. Over a three-year period commencing in early 2018, the Geological Survey of Queensland undertook a data modernisation project across the entire geoscience data ecosystems in Queensland with a focus on data, technology, business progress, regulatory reform and skills and capability.

The lodgement and open data portals have set up Queensland with a world-leading data ecosystem. We are fielding inquiries from Australia and overseas jurisdictions as well as affiliated agencies within the Queensland government to extend or replicate the capabilities provided by the new system because it is free.

While it is gratifying to be seen as a leader in the data and digital space, it is the benefit to industry that is most important. By that, the core purpose of the Geological Survey of Queensland is to help enable industry exploration success, measured in terms of making exploration more efficient, more

effective and ultimately more discoveries. Our new data portal will let explorers use the capabilities of modern data science, advanced analytics, machine learning and computer-to-computer communications because it is free.

Needless to say, the systems have been welcomed by industry. For example, the exploration and mining company, Oz Minerals, has said the new developments represent 'brilliant work, and the GSQ is leading the way with investment in the core data platform which will lead to discovery of new mineral deposits in the future'.

The system is also being heavily used. On an average day, some 1,000 users are online and conduct more than 230,000 downloads of various types of volumes and data because it is free. This includes reports and data that was not previously available for download by industry.

The most staggering example of our vast store of seismic data which has been collected since the seismic technique was first developed in the 1960s was where we had accumulated more than 100 terabytes of data of which we could only make three terabytes available on our legacy systems. In simple terms, member for Gregory, we have released a tsunami of information for industry to use because it is free.

Mr MILLAR: You have said that a couple of times.

ACTING CHAIR: Order, members.

Mr STEWART: The project has provided many other benefits, too. For example, it has allowed for six legacy systems to be shut down. Once again, the magnitude of that achievement should not be understated. Since July 2020 we have continued to use the department's QDEX system which has been in use since 1988. This is a system that was 32 years old and, while it has served the industry and government well, it has well and truly seen the end of its life.

The portals have also enabled us to reduce our per terabyte data storage costs by orders of magnitude while at the same time allowing the department to make available all of the state's geoscience data because it is free.

In summary, the project has been a resounding success. It will significantly improve the work of our industry explorers, it will remove the risk of failure we had remanded in the old systems, and it was delivered ahead of time and on budget—and it is free.

Mr MILLAR: Well done. That was a fantastic speech.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Gregory, you are becoming unruly. I am going to move now to opposition questions.

Mr WEIR: My question is to the CEO of Resources Safety and Health Queensland, Mark Stone, in reference to page 21, SDS, volume 3, resource safety and health services. Mr Stone, it is now over four years since the Monash review recommended changes to the coalmining safety and health regulations to implement X-rays and other tests for Queensland miners. Earlier this year your government confirmed the health truck would be on the road by the end of the year. Where is the truck?

Mr Stone: I thank the member for the question. The member is correct. In April of 2020, Resources Safety and Health Queensland partnered with Heart of Australia to construct and deliver a mobile health unit that would provide respiratory health exams to resources sector workers and also, as part of the agreement, to provide general health and wellbeing services to remote communities. The health truck, or the mobile health unit which is a large B-Double vehicle—it will be the fourth in the fleet of Heart of Australia vehicles—is being constructed as we speak. The initial plan was that that vehicle would complete construction towards the end of the year, that is now, and that it would be in field testing and hitting the road probably around March/April.

One of the key benefits of the mobile health unit is that it is a first-of-a-kind service to offer high-resolution computed tomography, HRCT, scanning which is a really key service to the resource sector workers, as we have found through the course of the coal workers' pneumoconiosis journey. In order to ensure that that HRCT service is reliable and is able to serve the workforce, we found that it needs to have a very specific power supply and it needs a certain amount of lead shielding. That has changed to some degree the chassis design for the vehicle. All summed up, it has got to be right and it is taking a little bit more time to get the design right, which is a first of a kind, so that it can be of benefit to workers.

Mr WEIR: As a follow-up question, Mr Stone, in 2018 the Queensland government Project Management Office found that at least five mobile health units would be required to adequately service Queensland mine sites and that was when travel time for the vehicle itself was ignored. The PMO went

on to estimate that the minimum cost in one year would be more than \$6.2 million, yet only \$2.2 million has been allocated and one vehicle. Can you point out exactly where in the budget the department will be funding the full amount required to satisfy the recommendations of the Monash Review?

ACTING CHAIR: Just on that, you are touching on future funding. You have talked about what is in the current budget, but you have also touched upon potentially future funding which obviously involves cabinet considerations and deliberations. I will ask the CEO to bear that in mind when he comes to an answer for that. Can I point out, too, it is being constructed in the electorate of Bancroft as well.

Mr Stone: To the first part of the question, I think at the time that the PMO had prepared that information that was based in part on the experience in the US in the Appalachian coal fields which are characterised by smaller coal-producing fields with some very large distances between. If you contrast that with the Bowen Basin where there is a high concentration of mines in and around Moranbah and other locations, I think it is fair to say that when we revisited the logistics around what a mobile health unit could realistically cover, plus the fact certainly since 2016-17 of the other reforms to the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme, we have made reforms around ensuring that registered providers in regional communities have the ability to perform radiography, radiological studies and spirometry.

What has happened over the space of a few years is that the regional footprint of fixed health providers has improved and therefore the demand on a mobile health unit has reduced, but is still needed. It is one unit and not five. We are partnering with Heart of Australia, with their experience, which is probably more than a decade, I would say, because they know what mobile health provision looks like. They are experts in it. We will gladly use their experience.

When it comes to the funding, the mobile health unit was partly funded through limited life funding associated with an appropriation for pneumoconiosis. When that health unit gets into service, it will be the same as all of the other reforms, they will be sustained through funding which either comes from the safety and health fee, which industry pays for the regulator, or a future funding model consideration by cabinet. That is the sustained future funding model that PMO talked about and which former minister Dr Lynham talked about in the RSH bill reading in February of this year, I think it was.

Mr WEIR: With reference to page 51 of SDS Volume 3, Resources Safety and Health services, recommendation 29 of the inquiry into the re-identification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland found that the current proportion of unannounced inspections undertaken by the Mines Inspectorate is totally inadequate. Can the minister advise whether or not the government has followed the recommendation of the *Black lung white lies* report and increased unannounced mine inspections to 50 per cent of all inspections to ensure the integrity of dust management oversight is maintained?

ACTING CHAIR: There was an imputation in the first part of the question where you said 'totally inadequate' and you are asking for an opinion. However, I think the last part of your question was the nub of the question. Minister, can I ask you to answer the last part of the question advanced by the member for Condamine.

Mr STEWART: I think it is timely to thank the coal workers' pneumoconiosis committee for the work they did. Because of their extensive work we are now in a position where we can act and certainly make sure that the inspectorate are doing absolutely everything they can to keep our workers safe. As we have already agreed, the most important thing to come out of those mines are our workers each and every day at the end of their shift. We need to make sure they go home to their friends and family. We certainly take those audits very seriously. I refer to Mark Stone, the Chief Executive Office of Resources Safety and Health Queensland, to extend on my comments.

Mr Stone: Indeed, the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee recommended that unannounced inspections be 50 per cent of the total. The select committee did not provide a rationale for that recommendation. It was merely stated that they should be at that level. Following the government's support or in principle support for the recommendations, the regulator sought advice from an expert independent consultant of high-hazard industry and asked the simple question: what should it be? We characterised the Queensland resources sector—the coalmining and other parts of the industry. The advice we got was that a good range for high hazards should be between 10 and 20 per cent. That reflects process safety best practice and personal safety best practice. The regulator adopted that in 2017, I think. Since that time we have consistently delivered between 10 and 20 per cent of our inspections unannounced.

I can provide some context as to the benefits of unannounced versus announced inspections. For the current financial year as at 30 November, the Mineral Mines and Quarries Inspectorate had undertaken 102 unannounced inspections. That is 23 per cent. They have some reasons they are overachieving at the moment. The coal inspectorate had undertaken 36, which is 15 per cent.

The last thing I would say is that they are really important and valuable to the inspectorate for three very quick reasons. First of all, when a coalmine worker or another resource sector worker makes a complaint, oftentimes the regulator will want to just turn up on site and verify or otherwise what is going on. The second reason is that, particularly in quarrying, we have had a series of serious accidents and some fatalities where guarding is not present on equipment. That is really basic so the inspectors will just show up. They have done that 260 times and they have stopped conditions on site 35 times. We are pretty confident as a regulator that that 10 to 20 per cent is a sensible place to be. If we have a need to ramp it up we will do so.

Mr WEIR: Going on what Mr Stone has just said about the success of those visits and bearing in mind that the government agreed from that report to implement 50 per cent, does the minister intend to go to 50 per cent as agreed by the government?

Mr STEWART: What we did was agree to action the recommendations. What the CEO has just highlighted to you is that we have actually actioned the recommendations. I think his explanation has very clearly indicated why we have our particular levels from that.

Mr WEIR: With reference to page 51 of SDS Volume 3, Resources Safety and Health, according to the testimony at the Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry, the Queensland Board of Examiners wrote to your predecessor requesting action to ensure mine staff were not taking advantage of loopholes in qualification transfers from other Australian jurisdictions. Minister, will you commit to taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure the competency of people working in Queensland mines in accordance with the request from the Queensland Board of Examiners?

Ms PUGH: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair. That is not a budget question. Where in the SDS is that?

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Mr Acting Chair. It is with reference to page 51 of SDS Volume 3, Resources Safety and Health services.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand both points of order. Member for Mount Ommaney, I understand your point of order with regard to where this is in the SDS. It would be hard for the minister to commit to doing that when we are examining the budget. It certainly would be within the remit of the efficient and effective spending of current funds. I am going to allow the minister to answer that in broad terms. After this we will come back to government questions.

Mr STEWART: Can I ask the member for Condamine to repeat the question?

ACTING CHAIR: Just the last part, member for Condamine.

Mr WEIR: Will you commit to taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure the competency of people working in Queensland mines in accordance with the request from the Queensland Board of Examiners?

Mr STEWART: Thank you for repeating that question for me. We ensure we get the highest quality people we possibly can through our recruitment processes. We ensure they have extensive experience working in the industry. At the end of the day, we want to make sure that people have worked in the industry, know the industry and have the correct certification to ensure they can perform their jobs and know exactly what they are doing.

The health and safety, as I have said already, of all workers in our mine industry and in our quarry industry is absolutely paramount for our Labor government. There are currently rigorous background checks made prior to granting mutual recognition to applicants from other states and we will continue to work with the independent Board of Examiners and other stakeholders to best protect Queensland workers. The independent Board of Examiners has already completed a large body of work on this complex matter, and further work is continuing regarding qualifications and competency, as well as mutual recognition of other state's competencies.

ACTING CHAIR: We will go to government questions.

Ms PUGH: With reference to page 3-51 of the SDS, can the minister please provide an update on the compliance action undertaken by, and prosecutions commenced on behalf of, the Resources Safety and Health Queensland?

Mr STEWART: As I have said many times now, government's resource safety laws require companies and those who run resource operations to commit effort and invest in protecting their workers from harm. We want our workers who work in those mines and quarries to come home to their family and friends at the end of every shift.

Resources Safety and Health Queensland inspectors play an important role engaging with operators, workers and senior office holders across the resource sector to help them understand and meet their obligations and enforcing compliance when they fail to do so. The Palaszczuk government's legislation Resources Safety and Health Queensland Act 2020 commenced on 1 July 2020, establishing Resources Safety and Health Queensland as an independent statutory body solely responsible for regulating workers' safety and health in Queensland resource industries.

The act also provides that the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor is exclusively responsible for prosecuting serious offences under resource safety legislation ensuring strong, independent, expert decision-making about prosecution activity. Prosecutions have commenced following the investigations of fatalities, serious accidents and high potential incidents. During the 2019-20 financial year, prosecutions were commenced in relation to seven incidents on mine sites, quarries and petroleum leases. The prosecutions involve charges being laid against 20 defendants.

A prosecution against four defendants arising from an incident at a quarry was finalised as a result of a decision by the Industrial Court that the complainant did not have standing to commence the prosecutions. This decision is currently under appeal of the Court of Appeal.

A prosecution was commenced against 14 defendants arising from an incident at the Fairfield Quarry that resulted in the death of a worker. Of these prosecutions, one has been finalised as a result of a plea of guilty, with the remaining three listed for sentence in February 2021.

A prosecution was commenced against two defendants arising from an incident at the Saraji mine that resulted in the death of a coalmine worker. The prosecutions are ongoing.

A prosecution was commenced against two defendants arising from an incident on a petroleum lease that resulted in serious injuries to a worker. The prosecution against one defendant has been discontinued and the other is listed for sentence in January 2021.

A prosecution was commenced against three defendants arising from an incident at the Moranbah North coalmine that resulted in the death of a coalmine worker. These prosecutions are ongoing.

A prosecution was commenced against four defendants arising from an incident at the Middlemount coalmine that resulted in the death of a coalmine worker. These prosecutions are ongoing.

A prosecution was commenced against one defendant arising from an incident at the processing plant of a coalmine that resulted in a coalmine worker sustaining serious injuries. The prosecution is ongoing.

Lastly, in the 2019-20 financial year, there have been 101 incidents where some or all of the mining or quarrying operations were suspended. The health and safety of our resource workers is paramount for the Palaszczuk Labor government. Any loss of life or serious injury in mines and quarries is unacceptable.

Ms PUGH: With reference to page 3-48 of the SDS and the department's delivery of property services, can the minister please update the committee on the status of e-conveyancing in Queensland and the current move towards interoperability between electronic lodgement network operators?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is particularly interested in e-conveyancing and the benefits e-conveyancing has for her constituents in the process of organising documents required for property transactions—and I can tell by the smile on your face.

In light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to digitally prepare, sign and lodge documents has never been more important. E-conveyancing offers substantial benefits and efficiencies when compared to traditional property transactions. These benefits include the ability to receive immediate confirmation of lodgement and notification once a transaction is completed, the ability to settle multiple transactions at the same time, as well as security provided when settling financial matters.

As I am sure members of the committee are aware, e-conveyancing is a national scheme that was introduced some 10 years ago to move property conveyancing into a digital age, as I previously outlined. I can advise that the Registrar of Titles and my department have been working with other jurisdictions to develop a regulatory and technical framework for the interoperability between electronic lodgement network operators, also known as ELNOs.

Electronic lodgement network operators are approved private operators who, under a national law, provide a front-end system that enables professionals undertaking conveyancing on behalf of their clients to lodge and settle property transfers electronically. I can advise that there are currently two

electronic lodgement network operators operating across large jurisdictions—PEXA and Sympli. Presently, these two ELNOs must operate in a stand-alone capacity. This means that, where there are four parties involved in a transaction—for example, the vendor's lawyers, the vendor's bank, the purchaser's lawyer and the purchaser's bank—all four parties need to be subscribers to the same ELNO. As you can imagine, this has had a major impact on competition, as parties involved in the transaction currently must be all subscribed to the same ELNO.

This may seem like a tiny technical issue, but resolving this problem will remove a major headache for those involved in facilitating property transactions across Queensland. To address the issue, my department has been working with other jurisdictions to develop a regulatory and technical framework for interoperability between electronic lodgement network operators. Many industry stakeholders have been public in their support for the interoperability including the Queensland Law Society and the ACCC.

I can also advise members of the committee that the main consultative vehicle has been the national Interoperability Industry Panel, which commenced in December 2019, which includes representations from peak bodies such as the Law Council of Australia, the Australian Institute of Conveyancers, the Australian Banking Association, as well as registrars, ELNOs and the Commonwealth Digital Transformation Agency. The panel is an important way to inform industry of the ongoing work of interoperability. The peak bodies on the panel ensure that deep industry engagement across experts in all jurisdictions in Australia is occurring and that progress is being made towards finding a national solution. I look forward to working with my department and interstate colleagues in 2021 to continue working towards a solution for the problems currently presented by the lack of interoperability by e-conveyancing.

Mr WALKER: With reference to volume 3 page 51 of the SDS, can the minister please advise the committee on the outcome of the Queensland Exploration Program?

Mr STEWART: The resource sector has always been a key driver for jobs and economic growth. Exploration is the lifeblood of our resource sector, and continued government support for private investment will help identify new deposits to ensure the long-term success of the industry. As we look to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Queensland government is committed to ensuring the sector remains a strong and sustainable industry for Queensland. In February this year the government released the *2020 Queensland exploration program*, which scheduled tender releases for nearly 7,000 square kilometres of land for coal and petroleum and gas exploration throughout the year.

This included a tender that opened on 7 May 2020 for two coal exploration areas across 108 square kilometres near Moranbah in the Bowen Basin, Queensland's premier producing region for high-quality metallurgical coal, which is required for the production of steel. This tender process also saw an increased focus on proponents' safety performance in the tender evaluation to further this government's absolute commitment to safety in the mining industry. Following a robust evaluation process, companies were appointed as preferred tenderers. These appointments follow on from the tender release in August last year across 458 square kilometres, also in the Bowen Basin. One preferred tenderer has been appointed from that process for the 380 square kilometre area located south-east of Emerald.

Ms PUGH: Minister, my question is with reference to page 3-51 of the SDS. Can the minister please provide an update on the compliance programs of the: coal; minerals, mines and quarries; petroleum and gas; and explosives inspectorates in the financial year 2019-20?

Mr STEWART: Resource Safety and Health Queensland administers the four resource safety acts which apply to the mining and quarrying, petroleum and gas, and explosives industries. Being a risk based regulator, the RSHQ annual compliance and enforcement program focuses on serious, current and emerging harms across the resource sector. Queensland's resources safety laws require companies and those who run resource operations to commit effort and invest in protecting their workers from harm. RSHQ's four inspectorates—the Coal Mines Inspectorate; the Minerals, Mines and Quarries Inspectorate; the Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate; and the Explosives Inspectorate—each have compliance programs that necessarily and purposely vary from year to year to reflect industry activities, safety performance and emerging risks.

During 2019-20 the Coal Mines Inspectorate focused on supervision, gas management and ventilation, high wall stability, tyre management, vehicle interactions and idiosyncratic exposure through the use of pyrometric chemicals in the industry. Inspectors undertook investigations into three fatalities at coalmines and a methane explosion at the Grosvenor mine in May, and have participated in the board of inquiry into this serious accident.

The Minerals, Mines and Quarries Inspectorate has continued to focus on the respiratory dust hazard across the industry while continuing the campaign for change, focusing on other hazards, which commenced in March 2019. The campaign is focused on guarding, mobile equipment and isolation, all of which have featured in a number of fatalities and serious accidents in recent years. In conjunction with the campaign, the inspectorate conducted targeted inspections resulting in 31 directives being issued to suspend operations. During the 2019-20 year the Minerals, Mines and Quarries Inspectorate completed an investigation into a serious accident at a quarry where a person became entangled in a conveyor. This matter is currently being considered for potential prosecution by the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor.

The Explosives Inspectorate conducted 537 inspections, 25 audits and 13 investigations during the year—activity which underpins community assurance relating to the safety and security of explosives manufacturing and storage, which is vital to the mining, quarrying and construction industries in Queensland. The Explosives Inspectorate implements an online explosives security assessment and management system which is used to issue security clearances to persons having access to security-sensitive explosives. The system uses Queensland Police Service and Australian Security Intelligence Organisation criminal history data to assist in vetting applications. Importantly, persons with current domestic violence orders are no longer issued with security clearances, honouring a previous Palaszczuk government commitment.

The Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate has focused its compliance efforts on: drilling rig safety, petroleum, coal seam gas, well integrity, the state's major pipelines, and gas work and gas defective safety. It delivered an important proactive health project, including a respiratory dust monitoring program for hydraulic simulation or fracking contractors. I am advised the inspectorate continues to invest in stakeholder engagement committees and industry forums, participates in national safety groups in order to improve safety awareness and disseminates information about safety and health matters.

Mr WALKER: With reference to volume 3, page 51 of the SDS, can the minister please advise the committee on the action the government is taking to ensure confidence in the exploration sector and the outcome of these actions?

Mr STEWART: This government is committed to our exploration sector. We recognise that a vibrant exploration sector is critical to developing a healthy pipeline of resource projects into the future. It is pleasing to see that exploration expenditure has remained strong in Queensland, despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that mineral and petroleum exploration expenditure in Queensland has increased. In the 12 months to September 2020 mineral exploration was over \$410 million—up from over \$334 million in the previous 12-month period. This is an increase of around 22 per cent. Additionally, for the 12 months to September 2020 petroleum exploration was \$278 million—up from over \$187 million in the previous 12-month period. This is an increase of around 48 per cent.

These good expenditure results show that explorers are confident to invest in Queensland and that our proactive assistance measures have paid off. I welcome the release of the Queensland Exploration Council's 2020 Exploration Scorecard and I note that the Department of Resources has a long history with the council. It is a sign of a healthy off-roading environment that an independent body prepares an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to our most important and valuable mineral and energy resource sector. This year's scorecard—which carries the by-line 'Past, Present and Future' is especially notable in marking the 10th anniversary of the scorecard process and provides the opportunity to reflect on how sentiment has changed over those 10 years. It is also pleasing to hear the message of this year's scorecard—optimism—in the exploration sector. That optimism was not only enjoyed during the COVID-19 crisis but rapidly emerged with newfound optimism, as evidenced by the sector's healthy level of activity and financial support. This 10th anniversary scorecard gives cause to recognise significant improvements made in the delivery of assistance and support by my department for the sector.

The exploration sector faces many challenges, and it is important that they are successful in finding the new deposits needed not only for industry but, most importantly, for the materials needed as we transition to a new energy era marked by global shifts towards renewable and cleaner energy solutions. The scale of the challenge to ensure our exploration industry is healthy, vibrant and successful is best enabled by a framework of facilitation with appropriate checks and balances in regulation of the industry too. The scorecard shows we are getting that balance right.

Equally, it is pleasing to note the shift towards acceptance and embodiment of the three very important investment criteria of the modern era—environmental, social and corporate governance, or ESG—in the sector. The scorecard calls out the sector's adoption of, and adaptation to, ESG as the single largest shift, which is appropriate given the risk to the industry's reputation if those things are not managed well, as evidenced recently in the Pilbara. As with any scorecard, areas to build on have been identified. We are committed to examining these areas for improvement for both industry and government.

Mr MILLAR: Acting Chair, with your indulgence, can I thank all the staff here tonight. It is quarter to nine on a Friday night and you are all here. Your dedication is absolutely admirable. I thank you for your service, and well done. It does not go unnoticed what you are doing here tonight. I know you are all looking to get to the door and have a beer, but you will get there soon.

My question is to the minister and it relates to page 49 of volume 3 of the SDS under the headings 'natural resource management services' and 'service area highlights' and where it says 'releasing the enhanced Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) and vegetation mapping, assessment and monitoring in Queensland'. Minister, in your charter letter, it provides you a directive to maintain self-assessable codes for vegetation protection and amend where necessary in consultation with the Queensland Herbarium. Minister, what are you considering amending and will you commit to consulting with landholders and farmers before changes are made?

Ms PUGH: Point of order, Acting Chair. I am sure you know what I am going to say. This is asking the minister for an opinion. It is not referencing the budget papers. It is a policy question that is more suited to parliament not to estimates.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. It is referencing the budget papers and it is in the charter letter.

ACTING CHAIR: I understand. You did well referencing the budget papers for that, but there are certainly potential problems in asking the minister to commit to a further course of action that may go on beyond this particular budget. However, I do ask the minister to answer the question in a briefish kind of way.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government is absolutely committed to ensuring Queensland has sustainable and balanced vegetation management laws. The Department of Resources, as you are well aware, has a number of officers and staff able to assist landholders with any issues or inquiries that they might have. This includes, as I have already highlighted, the great work that the Veg Hub is doing out at Charleville where the department operates and is doing very successfully.

This government went to the 2015 and 2017 elections with a commitment to reintroduce sustainable vegetation management laws to better protect Queensland's environment, and that is what we have delivered. I can advise that we did not tighten any of the rules that regulate firebreaks. It is just another example of any fearmongering that might be around. I can also advise that firebreaks continue to be cleared to that 20 metres, or 1½ times the tallest adjacent vegetation.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order. I am talking about self-assessable codes, not firebreaks.

ACTING CHAIR: I think firebreaks is part of the self-assessable codes, but I am sure the minister is talking about other components that reach that part of the self-assessable regime.

Mr STEWART: I thank you for your guidance here, Acting Chair. In 2018-19 the government completed a review of eight of the nine accepted development vegetation clearing codes to ensure they achieve their purpose and are based on best available science. That review process included independent scrutiny of each of the codes by both the Queensland Herbarium and the CSIRO, as well as public consultation. The resulting revised codes have been in place since June 2019 and the native forest practice code is the last remaining code to be finalised.

Mr MILLAR: So you will commit to working with farmers and landholders if you are making changes?

Ms PUGH: Point of order. There is a clear inference in the question that the minister has some kind of plan to change the legislation. Where is this information coming from? It is just a hypothetical.

Mr MILLAR: It is hypothetical to what?

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, member for Mount Ommaney and member for Gregory. I think the minister has outlined, in accordance with our previous commitments, about revisiting the self-assessable code, which I think we have touched on there. I am trying to recall in the answer, but I think the minister talked about working with the stakeholders. Is that correct?

Mr STEWART: Yes. Acting Chair, I do have a question on notice—

ACTING CHAIR: First of all, the answer is yes.

Mr MILLAR: I am glad you have cleared that up, Acting Chair, thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Before we get to the end, I think there was one outstanding issue about copper mines for the member for South Brisbane.

Mr STEWART: Yes. I have an answer for that one. I am advised that there is one project with mining leases granted to 2050 that was approved under the Palaszczuk government. This is for the Olive Downs project or metallurgical coal. As I am sure members are well aware, metallurgical coal is a critical element for a number of emerging and future technologies, such as wind turbines, electric vehicles and a range of smart devices. It should be noted that all existing tenure holders will have the right to apply to renew those tenures.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you need to provide some more information about a previous question?

Mr STEWART: Yes, in reference to page 3-51 of the SDS and the question about whether I would provide an update on the compliance of the coal, mineral mines and quarries explosives and gas inspectorates in the financial year 2019-20. There were 511 explosive inspections, not 537, so I wish to correct the record in that space.

ACTING CHAIR: Members, the time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio area of resources has expired. We have no questions on notice. I thank the minister, departmental officers and ministerial staff for your attendance tonight, and thank you to Hansard and members of the secretariat. I thank the member for Mount Ommaney for her patience and perseverance. I am amazed you made it through this week. Did you want to say anything?

Ms PUGH: No, not at all.

ACTING CHAIR: There was going to be a comment about having a potential stranger in the chamber but that did not happen. All the best for the upcoming birth.

Ms PUGH: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Is there anything else from the opposition?

Mr MILLAR: You have done a good job, Acting Chair. Thank you very much.

ACTING CHAIR: You are not doing me any favours, member for Gregory, but thank you. I really appreciate that. Minister, did you want to do your closing?

Mr STEWART: I will. Before we close, I want to place on record my sincere thanks to the staff from the Department of Resources, Resources Safety and Health Queensland, GasFields Commission Queensland and the Land Access Ombudsman for their tremendous amount of work that has been done in the preparation of these hearings. I am really grateful to each and every one of you. You have done an outstanding job.

To the Acting Director-General, James Purtill, who is heading to energy after five years at the helm of this department, I can say thank you sincerely for your leadership that you have given this department. You are absolutely leaving it in great shape, and I thank you for your support of me coming in as the new kid on the block. You did an outstanding job and you will be sorely missed.

Thank you to my deputy director-generals, Brenda Parker, Wally Kearnan and Shaun Ferris, and their teams. I acknowledge my shadow, Pat Weir, the member for Condamine, and visiting members of the committee. I would also like to thank the committee and the parliamentary staff, Hansard and the attendants.

I especially acknowledge my ministerial staff. Special mention must go to Talbot Speechley, Stephanie Kamic, Belle Brookfield, Michael Saunders, Paul Woodland and of course Brett Murphy. They are all former staff members of Dr Anthony Lynham who have worked tirelessly throughout the election campaign and had the unenviable task of bringing a new minister up to speed on the portfolio through a budget and now estimates all in four short weeks.

Acting Chair, you have done a great job. It is really a privilege to take part in an estimates process, even if it was super compressed this year and, boy, what a year it has been. I would also like to thank the member for Mount Ommaney and her future daughter for their tireless work in staying up through these estimates as well as sitting in on other estimates hearings today and throughout the week, and now you have my permission to go into labour.

Thank you all. I reflect the kind words of the member for Gregory. Have a wonderful festive season. Have a great break. Thank you to everyone for your involvement in estimates today. Thank you very much for your professionalism in chairing this estimates hearing, Acting Chair. Merry Christmas everyone. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Merry Christmas. I declare this hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 8.49 pm.