

TUESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2020

ESTIMATES—COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE— COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND DIGITAL ECONOMY

Estimate Committee Members

Ms CP McMillan (Chair)
Mr SA Bennett
Mr MC Berkman
Mr JM Krause
Ms CL Lui
Mr RJ Skelton


Members in Attendance

Mr TL Mander
Dr A MacMahon
Mr J-P H Langbroek
Dr CAC Rowan
Ms A Camm
Mr JP Bleijie

In Attendance

Hon. LM Enoch, Minister for Communities and Housing, Digital Economy and the Arts
Ms H Jackson, Chief of Staff
Mr A Sutherland, Senior Policy Advisor
Mr C Vernon, Policy Advisor
Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
Ms Clare O'Connor, Director-General
Ms T Woolley, Deputy Director-General, Housing and Homelessness
Ms K Herring, Deputy Director-General, Arts Queensland
Queensland Performing Arts Centre
Mr J Kotzas, Chief Executive
State Library of Queensland
Ms V McDonald AM, State Librarian and Chief Executive Officer

Committee met at 9.00 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning everyone. I declare the hearing of estimates for the Community Support and Services Committee open. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

I would like to introduce the members of the committee. I am Corrine McMillan, the member for Mansfield and chair of this committee. Mr Stephen Bennett, the member for Burnett, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are Mr Michael Berkman, member for Maiwar; Mr Jon Krause, member

for Scenic Rim; Ms Cynthia Lui, member for Cook; and Mr Robert Skelton, member for Nicklin. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to ask questions at its hearing today and so other members may be present over the course of the proceedings.

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 the order of this committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for camera operators in estimates hearings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices now be turned off or switched to silent mode. Also I remind you that food and drink are not permitted in this chamber.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearings. 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: community, housing and digital economy from 9 am till 10.45 am; arts from 11 am to 11.45 am; seniors and disability services from 12.30 pm to 1.45 pm; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships from 2 pm until 3.15 pm; children and youth justice from 3.30 pm till 5.15 pm; and multicultural affairs from 5.30 pm until 6.15 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 11.45 am and will suspend proceedings during this time for a short break from 10.45 am to 11 am. The visiting member present is Mr Tim Mander MP, member for Everton. Welcome, member. 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 this 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 order 112 and standing order 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 as chair intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be fully explored and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from both government and non-government members of this committee.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the Hon. Leeanne Enoch, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of communities, housing and digital economy 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.

Ms ENOCH: Thank you, Chair, and members. Can I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather and, of course, pay my respects to all of our elders. This year has been like no other. COVID-19 has brought challenges and hardships for Queensland communities, both emotionally and economically. Throughout this year the Palaszczuk government has worked tirelessly to support the most vulnerable in our community. We have provided accommodation and support services for those who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Our government acted quickly to stabilise the private rental market and helped ensure families would not lose their homes.

The Palaszczuk government's priority is and always will be the safety and wellbeing of Queenslanders. That is why during the height of the pandemic in March we announced the \$24.7 million package to assist vulnerable Queenslanders, making sure that people had a roof over their head when needed most. Throughout this time we also delivered emergency rental regulatory measures, including a moratorium on rental evictions, and we partnered with REIQ, RTA and Tenants Queensland to support the rental sector. Since March we have assisted people with short-term accommodation, supported 874 households into social housing and 868 into suitable private housing as at 30 September. During this time vulnerable Queensland households received 220,547 forms of housing assistance, including emergency housing, social housing, private market assistance and homelessness services.

Building social housing to accommodate those in need is an important part of our work, but it is not the only solution. Through the Housing Strategy we are matching people's individual needs and circumstances to the right products and services. We are designing targeted services for those in the community experiencing domestic and family violence, seeking employment, elderly Queenslanders,

young people, families and First Nations peoples. Importantly, First Nations peoples are at the forefront of decision-making when it comes to creating housing outcomes in their communities. The Palaszczuk government is investing \$898 million over four years in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. In the 2020-21 budget we remain committed to improving housing outcomes for First Nations peoples across the state with a \$241 million investment.

The Palaszczuk government has the largest investment in social housing construction since World War II and Queensland is the only eastern seaboard state to have a reduction in the homelessness rate since 2001. We are continuing to significantly boost our social housing in this state. Under the Queensland Housing Strategy we are delivering more than 5,500 social and affordable homes through the \$1.6 billion Housing Construction Jobs Program. In addition to this, in May the Palaszczuk government announced the \$100 million Works for Tradies initiative to support 240 jobs in the construction sector, supporting an additional 215 social and affordable homes. Under this Works for Tradies program new construction is commencing in the weeks ahead at Waterford West, Morayfield and Frenchville in Rockhampton. Queenslanders will continue to be supported into the future with more than \$1 billion allocated to housing and homelessness in the 2020-21 budget.

We know that when our communities are strong Queensland is strong. That is why we are investing \$143 million into our communities in the 2020-21 budget. This will see \$19.9 million in the state's network of 125 neighbourhood and community centres, including \$1 million for Thriving Queensland Communities grants to 60 neighbourhood and community centres. There is also \$1.7 million allocated for 15 neighbourhood and Care Army connect workers for communities most impacted by COVID-19. To address the immediate needs of community members experiencing vulnerability, an additional \$6.2 million package of emergency support over two years is also included in the budget. This package includes \$4 million to provide financial counselling support and a pathway to no-interest loan schemes.

I would like to now discuss the digital economy. The Palaszczuk government is ensuring Queenslanders have the skills for jobs now and into the future to support the digital economy and key industries across the state. Through the \$200 million Future Skills fund we will invest \$8 million over four years to deliver the Digital Professional Workforce Plan to address the forecast amount for an additional 10,000 digital professionals in Queensland by 2024. This is great news for Queenslanders looking for a career in the digital economy.

The Palaszczuk government delivers services to a diverse customer base of five million residents and over 500,000 businesses. To date we have supported more than 115 million customer interactions through 13QGOV, qld.gov.au and Queensland government customer service centres and agent programs. The tireless efforts of the contact centre staff who work 24/7, 365 days a year are providing frontline support for services such as community recovery and SES calls, COVID-19 related calls, including Queensland border travel restrictions, information and referrals.

I now turn to the arts portfolio.

CHAIR: I am sorry, Minister. Your time has now expired. Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Burnett and Deputy Chair.

Mr BENNETT: I will hand over to Mr Mander.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Minister and officers. My first question is to the director-general with reference to the Service Area Highlight 'to support transparent government through the State's archives', on SDS page 1-112. I table an email that was referred to in previous estimates hearings.

CHAIR: I am sorry, member, but if you are going to table an email—

Mr MANDER: I seek leave to table that.

CHAIR: The member for Everton has asked for leave. Is leave granted, committee? Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. Will the director-general advise whether the email from mangocube6 @ yahoo.co.uk to stacia1 @ bigpond.com regarding Paul Simshauser was provided by the Premier's office to the State Archivist for recording under the Public Records Act?

Ms O'Connor: I do not know anything about this email. My understanding is that that issue has already been investigated and that the CCC would be the best source of advice on that. This is an historical email and an historical issue. I have been given no information on that.

Mr MANDER: To clarify, this has nothing to do with the corruption inquiry; it has to do with the Public Records Act. I would like to know whether this private email, which contains government business, has been recorded under the Public Records Act, as is the requirement?

CHAIR: Member, with all due respect, the director-general has answered your question. Can we move now to your next question?

Mr MANDER: Point of order, Madam Chair. The director-general has not answered the question. She thought I was speaking from a different perspective. It is a requirement of this department to keep the Public Records Act—

CHAIR: I am sorry, member for Everton. You are undermining the chair. You are now warned.

Mr MANDER: I ask for a point of clarification, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: I am sorry, member. You are undermining the chair. I have said that the director-general has answered your question. I ask that you move to your next question.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, how many emails were provided by the Premier's office in relation to the use of stacia1 @ bigpond.com for recording under the Public Records Act?

Ms O'Connor: Again can I say that in March 2018 the Premier announced guidelines about the use of private email accounts. The Ministerial Handbook was updated at that point to reflect this. The Ministerial Handbook is administered by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I do not have that information and you should refer those questions, I believe, to the Premier. In terms of public servants, there are also policies that govern the use of private emails and that policy is administered by the Public Service Commission. I would encourage you to refer those questions there.

Mr MANDER: I continue my line of questioning to the director-general. The issue is this: has the State Archivist recorded the information from private emails that involve the Premier and Minister Bailey, as has been tabled? It is a responsibility of the State Archivist to ensure that the public records are kept up to date—

CHAIR: I am sorry to interrupt, member. Again we are actually moving towards the standing order that relates to repetition of the question. The member asking the question is under a warning. I ask for the final time that the member for Everton move to his next question.

Mr KRAUSE: Point of order, Madam Chair. The question has been asked again because the director-general has not answered the question yet. If the director-general would answer the question, he would be able to move on.

CHAIR: Member, the director-general has answered the question. I ask that the member for Everton or the deputy chair move to the next question.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Chair. My question remains with the director-general. After the findings of the CCC investigation into the use of private email accounts, what attempt was made by the State Archivist to ensure that government business communicated through ministerial private email accounts was recorded for the purposes of the Public Records Act?

Ms O'Connor: I think I may have covered some of that when I talked about the changes to the Ministerial Handbook and also to the way in which public servants deal with private emails. Those changes went to the heart of that question about how public records are preserved. It is the role of the State Archivist to make a decision about how public records are preserved, if warranted, into the future. The Ministerial Handbook was updated on that front and there were guidelines issued for public servants. Those guidelines and the Ministerial Handbook set out the processes that must be followed.

Mr MANDER: It was always a requirement under the ministerial code for ministerial records to be kept up to date through the state Public Records Act. There was no change. It was a reminder of what the code was. The question remains relevant: what attempts were made by the State Archivist to make sure that any government business communicated through a private email account was recorded under the Public Records Act?

Ms O'Connor: Member, I think I have covered that off and I will ask for some guidance from the chair. If there is a suspected breach of the Public Records Act and, member, if you suspect such a breach, you can refer it to the chief executive of the relevant agency. Then the State Archivist provides technical advice on whether the act has been followed. That advice can be in an educative format, it can be in terms of guidance, or simplification of outdated and cumbersome policies and procedures. It is really not the State Archivist's responsibility to manage the Premier's records. It is up to the DG of each department to do that. That is part of their role.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the director-general. After the findings of the CCC investigation that described Minister Bailey's use of private emails for government business as 'foolish', did any ministers or did the Premier furnish any information to the State Archivist that was communicated through private email accounts so that the Public Records Act could be recorded appropriately?

CHAIR: Member, I have given one informal warning. We are now moving towards the issue of relevance.

Mr MANDER: Well—

CHAIR: No, member. The issue is relevance. I bring you back to the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020.

Mr KRAUSE: Point of order, Madam Chair. The question is relevant in that the department is responsible for the State Archives and the recording of public records under the Public Records Act.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Mr KRAUSE: The question is directly relevant.

Mr MANDER: It is in this.

CHAIR: Sorry, members! Member for Everton, you are now formally warned under the standing orders of the Queensland parliament. Member for Everton, I ask you to move on to the next question.

Mr MANDER: Minister, how can Queenslanders have any confidence that the obligations of the Public Records Act have been met when it is obvious that information has not been provided from ministers about the contents of their private emails and that that has never been recorded under the Public Records Act?

CHAIR: Minister, prior to you responding, it would appear that the member is seeking an opinion. However, I will give you the liberty of responding to the question as you see fit.

Ms ENOCH: Thank you, Chair. I thank the member for the question. The question also contains an inference, but I will seek your guidance on that. Members, the State Archivist has a very clear role. That role is to ensure that the development and promotion of efficient and effective methods, procedures and systems for making, managing, keeping, storing, disposing of, preserving and using public records. That is the major function of the State Archivist. The State Archivist is not responsible for the everyday operations of government agencies or other entities. That is the responsibility of the CEO or DG of those entities—to ensure that those who report to them, or that they have responsibility of, adhere to the various acts, including the Public Records Act.

The State Archivist has been funded to be able to support the advice and the review of materials if a CEO or DG feels as though—that somebody within their responsibility has breached that act. The State Archivist has been funded through a number of programs that have seen some revitalisation of that have work. The record keeping transformation program, for instance, has seen a \$12.7 million investment and we saw the rollout of stage 1 of that this year. That continues to be invested in to ensure that we are able to keep records for the future.

Mr MANDER: Minister, it is apparent that the Public Records Act has not been updated to include government business communicated through private email addresses, so will you instigate an audit of government business communicated—

CHAIR: Sorry, member—

Mr SKELTON: Point of order on repetition and relevance.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nicklin. Member for Everton, you are seeking again an opinion or making an inference.

Mr MANDER: I have not asked the question yet, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Sorry. Member for Everton, could you just rephrase your question, please?

Mr MANDER: Minister, will you instigate an audit of government business communicated through private use by ministers to ensure the Public Records Act is upheld?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. As has already been explained several times to the member, there has been a review of the Ministerial Handbook and a review of the policies related to private email use by public servants. That is now in place and that is being adhered to.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, in relation to the CCC investigation into the Premier's former Chief of Staff, David Barbagallo, can the Director-General advise whether the resignation email of Mr Barbagallo was ever retrieved?

CHAIR: Member, would you mind just sharing with the committee the relevance to this particular agency in relation to your question?

Mr MANDER: The relevance is, I would have thought, Chair, very obvious, that this department is responsible for the Public Records Act. It is responsible to make sure that any government business communicated in any way is recorded. My question is quite simple: was the resignation letter of David Barbagallo ever retrieved and recorded?

CHAIR: Director-General, I understand that this question again is repetitious. However, I will give you the opportunity—

Mr MANDER: It is a totally separate subject, Chair.

Mr KRAUSE: Separate question, Chair.

CHAIR: Sorry, members. I will allow the Director-General to answer the question as they see fit.

Ms O'Connor: That is a review that is still under way. I cannot comment on a review that is still under way.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, when is that review due to be finished?

Ms O'Connor: Member, reviews take as long as they take. They are set out in terms of terms of reference and it depends on the number of items considered and witnesses interviewed, so I have not got a due date for that review.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, how long has the review been going for?

Ms O'Connor: Member, I will get that date for you.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

CHAIR: In the meantime, member, can we move on to your next question?

Mr MANDER: We can, thank you. Minister, since the Labor government has come into power, the social housing waiting list has increased by 10,000 or 55 per cent. Why has—

Mr SKELTON: Point of order.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nicklin. Member for Everton, could you just rephrase the first part of your question to ensure that it does not contain an inference.

Mr KRAUSE: Point of order, Madam Chair. The member for Nicklin just said 'point of order'. He did not say anything else.

Mr MANDER: What is his point of order?

Mr KRAUSE: I ask you to direct the member not to interrupt the shadow minister.

Mr SKELTON: The point of order is you are offering an opinion and making an inference.

Mr KRAUSE: Madam Chair, that is a frivolous point of order and I ask the member for Nicklin to withdraw.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Scenic Rim. I ask that the member for Everton resume his question, just taking care around the inferences made at the beginning of that question.

Mr MANDER: There is zero inference. I am stating facts, Madam Chair. Since—let me say it again—since the Labor government came into power in early 2015, the social housing waiting list numbers provided by the department has increased by 10,000 or nearly 55 per cent. Why has the system become broken under Labor?

CHAIR: Minister, I understand that the question is seeking an opinion—or stating an opinion. Minister, I ask that you respond accordingly and as you see appropriate.

Ms ENOCH: Thank you, Chair, for your guidance and I thank the member for the question. Can I offer my congratulations to him returning to some oversight of the housing and homelessness portfolio. I am sure there are many people from the sector that do not share that same congratulatory theme, however. The housing register is an incredibly important tool. It is not the be-all and end-all, but it is a

very important tool to be able to support vulnerable Queenslanders. Every single person and every single household who has counted on that housing register comes into contact with staff from the Housing Service Centre and their situation is assessed. They may be provided other housing support services. In fact, in 2019-20 alone, there were 220,547 forms of housing assistance provided to Queensland households.

For those who are on the housing register and receive housing assistance opportunities this does not immediately mean that they get removed from the housing register. You can remain on the housing register and still receive other housing assistance. That is a very different situation to when the member for Everton was responsible for this portfolio. What we saw from the member for Everton was the wholesale cutting of people from the housing register if they received other assistance. As I understand, they also cut people from the register if they did not respond to correspondence that was sent to them.

We do not discriminate against people. We allow people to remain on the housing register. We allow households to remain on the housing register even if they are receiving other assistance from the agency. These are often very vulnerable Queenslanders. In fact, about 82 per cent of the people and households that are on the housing register are assessed as very high or high need. It is only right that they receive other assistance and still have the opportunity to remain on the social housing register. It is a very fair, person-centred approach to supporting people who are vulnerable, unlike what we saw from the LNP, which simply cut people from the register.

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Madam Chair. In the last exchange from the member for Nicklin, I bring to the committee's attention an unparliamentary gesture. I ask that it be withdrawn and that he apologise. I suggest he grows up.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I take very seriously the point of order. The member for Nicklin is absent for the moment, but when he returns I will undertake to do that.

Mr MANDER: Let us use the minister's own figures. At April 2019 the very high needs list was 8,924. At September 2020 it was 16,270. The very high waiting list has increased 82 per cent in a 19-month period. Would the minister explain that increase?

Ms ENOCH: Just to remind the member, Queensland has not been immune to a global pandemic. The pressures on families and households are reflected in some of the high need cases that have come forward to the department. The department has been working incredibly hard to ensure that those who present to a housing service centre are supported through the various housing service assistance measures that are available. In terms of social housing—

Mr MANDER: Minister, it increased by 50 per cent before the pandemic hit.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, allow the minister to finish.

Ms ENOCH: If the member was paying attention to my earlier response, he would know that we do allow people to remain on the housing register, unlike what we saw when the member for Everton was the housing minister.

Mr MANDER: These are your own figures. It is like for like.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, you asked the question and it is appropriate now that the minister be given time to respond.

Ms ENOCH: I know this might be a very foreign concept to the member for Everton, but the department is a—

Mr MANDER: It is a hurtful fact for the people who are not in housing.

Ms ENOCH: This is a human service department and so it is person centred in its approach. There are hundreds of thousands of accounts of services that have been provided to households across Queensland.

Mr MANDER: Despite that, it has dramatically increased.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, your interjections are not being taken. I ask that you cease your interjections. I ask the minister to complete her response.

Ms ENOCH: When the member for Everton was the housing minister in this state he put in place a situation where tenants were threatened with having to share their homes with complete strangers. They were written to—

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Madam Chair, on relevance. The minister has been asked a simple question to give an explanation. Reflecting on something that happened eight years ago is hardly relevant.

CHAIR: Thank you, member. Minister, could you come back to the question. I remind members of the opposition that their interjections are not advancing the work of our committee. I would ask members to allow the minister to answer the question in its entirety.

Ms ENOCH: Thank you for your protection. I make very clear—and I know it is a hard concept for those opposite in terms of the important tool that the social housing register is—that the social housing register is not a list of people whom we get to exclude or include at a whim or at the discretion of a policy. Households are able to remain on the social housing register even if they are receiving other assistance. As I have said, there are multiple areas providing assistance. From the private market there are products and services. There is assistance like, for instance, bond loans. We saw 25,307 households assisted in 2019-20. With bond loan plus, 2,043 households were assisted up to 30 September. Some 10,964 households were assisted with rental grants. Through the RentConnect Advisory Service a total of 14,801 households were assisted with RentConnect services. A total of 130 households were assisted through the Helping Hand Headlease. Some 213 households were assisted with rental security subsidies. There was assistance under the no-interest loan schemes, and the list goes on and on.

As we are person centred and this is a human service department there are those—and, of course, there are the pressures that the pandemic has continued to put on families—who have received other services, many of which I have just listed, and who are able to remain on the register. Unlike what we saw under the leadership of the member for Everton, those people were just cut from the register. It may have made his waiting list look very low, but the thing is that people were not being supported. We will remain very person centred as a human service department ensuring that people and households are able to stay on the housing register.

CHAIR: Before we move onto government questions, member for Nicklin, the member for Burnett has taken offence at a gesture made. I ask that you withdraw.

Mr SKELTON: I withdraw.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nicklin. We now move to government questions.

Ms LUI: With reference to page 1-144 of the SDS, will the minister outline how the Palaszczuk government has been creating jobs in the construction industry through the delivery of the Housing Construction Jobs Program, Works for Tradies boost and the delivery of seniors and accessibility assistance?

Ms ENOCH: The Palaszczuk government's positive health response means that we can get on with the job of delivering Queensland's plan for economic recovery, accelerating social housing construction, generating jobs and building homes for Queenslanders. We understand that secure, quality jobs and job security are more important now than ever before. One way we are delivering on our commitment is through the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027. Our \$1.6 billion investment in the Housing Construction Jobs Program will see us deliver more than 5,500 new social and affordable housing dwellings. In 2020-21 alone our funding commitment for social housing is \$526.2 million, which includes the Housing Construction Jobs Program and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. What does this mean for Queenslanders? It means 452 new social housing dwellings, construction commencing on a further 832 and more than 1,540 full-time jobs supported in the construction sector.

We know the impacts of COVID-19 have been felt right across Queensland. That is why we have committed to the economic recovery of our state. In response to boosting our economy, we injected \$100 million into the Works for Tradies program. In 2020-21, this program will see the commencement of 215 new social homes and will extend through to 2021-22. Not only is this good for the people of Queensland; but it will drive economic activity and support approximately 240 jobs in the construction sector, with \$70 million budgeted for 2020-21.

We are also Building Queensland's social housing supply through Partnering for Growth with the community housing sector which is delivering new supply in a way that supports the growth and sustainability of the sector. Since the launch of the Partnering for Growth initiative on 21 November 2018 through to 5 October this year, 1,121 new social and affordable dwellings have been approved to the value of \$203.1 million, supported by \$136.9 million of Queensland government investment.

The Palaszczuk government's economic and recovery plan also includes the \$10 million Seniors and Accessibility Assistance initiative to respond to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Queensland. The Seniors and Accessibility Assistance initiative was delivered through the existing Home Assist Secure program to fund urgent, larger, one-off works for higher cost safety and

accessibility improvements with eligibility consistent with Home Assist Secure eligibility requirements. This initiative provided subsidies of up to \$5,000 for eligible seniors and people with disability. It enabled 2,814 Queensland households to continue living safely at home and has supported over 3,600 trade jobs for Queenslanders across the state.

When the LNP were in government they made all sorts of promises when it came to the delivery of social housing. However, they never lived up to any of the promises they made to Queenslanders. Since coming to office we have already commenced three times the number of social and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homes than commenced when the member for Everton was housing minister, and we are only just getting started.

Mr SKELTON: My question is to the minister. Thank you for all the hard work in this space. It means a lot to our electorate in Nicklin, where there is a big homelessness issue. With reference to page 1-114 of the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy SDS, will the minister outline how the Palaszczuk government is supporting vulnerable Queenslanders during the COVID-19 pandemic to help ensure that they have a roof over their head and that it can rain safely during COVID-19 restrictions?

Ms ENOCH: The safety and wellbeing of Queenslanders has been an absolute priority of the Palaszczuk Labor government through the COVID-19 public health response. Our focus has been on the most vulnerable in our community and ensuring that everyone has safe, secure and sustainable accommodation.

On 25 March 2020 the Queensland government announced the \$24.7 million housing and homelessness coronavirus response package to assist vulnerable Queenslanders and support our partners. Additional funding was allocated to continue the response. As at 31 October 2020, a total of \$36.3 million has been provided to help Queenslanders experiencing homelessness and impacted by COVID-19 to transition into longer term accommodation and access support.

As at 30 November 2020, there have been 3,390 requests for COVID-19 emergency housing assistance. My department has supported 884 households into social housing and 877 into suitable private housing and continues to work with customers to achieve safe and appropriate housing with support.

We have also continued to bring new housing stock online through a combination of refurbishment, new construction and head leasing from the private market. The Specialist Homelessness Services that operated the Brisbane shelters have worked with us to ensure they can provide support across a range of housing from the reopened shelters to individual homes in the community.

My department made 958 outbound welfare calls to accommodation providers in the retirement village, manufactured homes and residential services sectors and took 120 COVID-19 related inbound phone calls from that sector. My department ensured that all sectors were informed about the Chief Health Officer's directions and that they understood how they should be applied in their settings by providing clarification, interpretation or further guidance if necessary.

Home Assist Secure providers conducted welfare checks and delivered essential supplies to older people and people with disability so they could remain safely living in their own homes, particularly during the home confinement period which was difficult for many people.

The Queensland government acted quickly to implement temporary regulatory measures on 24 April 2020, developed in consultation with key stakeholders to mitigate COVID-19 impacts on residential leases, including a six-month eviction moratorium to protect tenants who could not pay their rent due to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Housing Security Subcommittee of the Ministerial Housing Council was established to oversee implementation of the COVID-19 response and provide real-time insights about what was happening in the sector to inform government decision-making about any adjustments required to the response. Several key protections continue to apply to 30 April 2021 including allowing tenants experiencing domestic and family violence to end their tenancy quickly.

The Queensland government continues to closely monitor the private rental market and seek advice from the subcommittee about significant change in trends for tenancy sustainment and affordability that may indicate further intervention is required. The Queensland government is positioned to respond quickly and implement any measures necessary if COVID-19 risks change in Queensland.

CHAIR: Minister, with reference to page 1-110 of the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy SDS, will the minister advise the committee how the department is preparing to support Queensland communities during this upcoming summer storm season?

Ms ENOCH: My department coordinates, partners with and secures services for government and non-government agencies to support and enable local human and social recovery efforts. Since July 2020, we have worked closely with our partners to undertake storm and cyclone season planning and preparedness activities including adjusting service models and business practices in line with COVID-19 safe considerations.

All Queensland government agencies have also participated in disaster management exercises and preseasonal briefings and have been busy reviewing their disaster management plans and arrangements. This includes undertaking business continuity planning, ensuring local engagement and supply chain arrangements have been established and putting in place arrangements for workplace surge and sustainability.

During disaster events, Queensland government assistance can be provided online, over the phone or face to face through outreach recovery hubs or referrals to existing community and government services. My department has ensured that its online platforms, systems and tools and contact centres are operational and arrangements are in place to coordinate and prioritise telephone service resumption and engagement across the sector. Community disaster preparedness information is available through all communication channels including on a variety of Queensland government websites and in accessible forms.

I encourage all Queenslanders to be prepared for any severe weather events that we may face. We have just experienced some heavy rain recently over the last few days. I also encourage Queenslanders to visit the Get Ready Queensland website and follow those easy steps to prepare for the season ahead of us.

To support workforce surge, my department maintains a network of Queensland government employees known as Ready Reserves who can be deployed to assist in community recovery following a disaster. As at 18 November 2020, we have 1,967 registered Ready Reserves. I would like to acknowledge and thank those dedicated women and men who give up time with family and friends in times of disaster to assist and support Queenslanders in tough times.

Ms LUI: With reference to page 1-110 of the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy SDS, will the minister outline for the committee how the Palaszczuk government is supporting neighbourhood community centres?

Ms ENOCH: The Queensland government is committed to building thriving Queensland communities where all Queenslanders can participate, are included and resilient, and enjoy high levels of social and economic wellbeing. That is why in 2020-21 we are investing \$19.9 million to continue to support the state's network of 125 neighbourhood and community centres. Two new centres are also on track to open in Kallangur and Thursday Island in early 2020-21, which will take the state's total to 127.

Neighbourhood and community centres are leaders in place based approaches to improving community, family and individual wellbeing. They provide a universal point of access for individuals and families to obtain social supports and advocacy services. As a dedicated resource the department funds Community Connect workers who are located in 12 neighbourhood and community centres in high need communities. My department continues to fund and work with the Queensland Families and Communities Association as the peak organisation for neighbourhood and community centres. This peak organisation supports community centres to help them deliver sustainable and responsive services in their local communities across the state.

The Queensland government knows the full potential of neighbourhood and community centres in building Queensland's thriving communities from 2020-21, especially in regional and remote areas. The department's capital works budget for 2020-21 is more than \$14.5 million and will support 48 full-time jobs. In response to community needs my department will undertake a co-design process with the neighbourhood and community centres sector to develop a new operational and capital investment approach which is robust, fair, equitable and needs based. These new approaches will include practice and program frameworks, service model principles and criteria for determining priorities and locations for future capital and operational investment. Together with the work undertaken in partnership with Griffith University, this important work will identify and inform where investment in neighbourhood and community centres should be focused in communities across the state. It is about ensuring Queensland communities are inclusive, resilient and thriving.

We recognise the critical role connected communities have in the social and economic recovery of the state, which is why we will invest an additional \$1.7 million in 2020-21 to fund 15 workers to connect Care Army volunteers with community through neighbourhood and community centres. These workers will ensure that vulnerable Queenslanders stay connected with their communities and overcome social isolation, building on the work of the Care Army.

Mr SKELTON: Minister, with reference to page 1-112 of the SDS will the minister please advise what role the department's Customer and Digital Group has played in the government's COVID-19 response?

Ms ENOCH: Queensland can now reap the economic benefits of a strong health response. As a result of the Palaszczuk Labor government keeping Queenslanders safe we have secured the health of our economy. We made it through the worst of the pandemic not because of any one person but because five million Queenslanders did the right thing. Smart Service Queensland, or SSQ, played a critical role in our response to COVID-19. In 2019-20 SSQ handled over 115 million customer interactions over the phone, at the counter and online compared to 92 million the previous year. That is a huge increase. SSQ managed increased numbers of phone calls to the COVID-19 and 13HEALTH services. SSQ also provided Care Army registration and phone outreach to vulnerable Queenslanders, information and referrals on Queensland border travel restrictions, and health directives and updates to state and industry plans. SSQ developed and managed the central COVID-19 information and border pass declaration websites for Queenslanders and it provided compliance and reporting services for self-quarantine and self-isolation. SSQ also provided support to the border pass process through phone and email follow-ups, SMS and email push notifications, contact centre calls and an online form.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Smart Service Queensland responded to record-breaking surges in customer demand for phone, online and email services. Over 1.38 million COVID-19 related calls have been managed by the contact centre, with 279,467 calls to 134 COVID and over 346,000 calls to the 13HEALTH line. In addition, 132,585 seniors were successfully contacted as part of the Care Army outreach service, and SSQ received over 5.2 million online border pass applications through the border declaration pass website. Previous experiences in supporting Queenslanders such as the State Emergency Service line and the Community Recovery Hotline have meant SSQ was able to adapt and respond to the fast-emerging needs of the COVID-19 emergency.

It was the LNP who were not as committed to this. They wanted to risk all that we have done in Queensland. They called for the borders to be opened 64 times. When our whole state was doing its best to work together, they chose conflict and criticism over cooperation every single time. Can you imagine the damage that would have been done if the LNP had their way? I want to thank Smart Service Queensland staff for the critical role they played in our response. They have done an amazing job.

CHAIR: I welcome to the committee visiting members: the member for South Brisbane and the member for Surfers Paradise. I now call the opposition for their first question.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the director-general. I want to briefly go back to the issue about the review into the David Barbagallo resignation letter. Could you please advise all expenditure relating to that review incurred last financial year?

Ms O'Connor: I will have to get that information for you.

Mr MANDER: You will take that on notice?

Ms O'Connor: No, I will come back to you before the end of the session, hopefully.

Mr MANDER: I have a further question on the same subject to the director-general. Can you also advise the number of full-time-equivalent staff that have been engaged with the review—I might continue this, because I think you are going to give me the same answer on a couple of other issues as well—the budgeted expenditure for the review in this financial year and whether there have been any consultants that have been engaged in relation to the review, either last financial year or this financial year?

Ms O'Connor: Chair, I will seek that information and come back.

CHAIR: Director-General, as you are not able to take questions on notice, I know that you will get back to the member before the end of the session. I now ask that the member for Everton resume his next question.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the director-general. What is the average wait time for very high need housing waitlist applicants to secure a social housing property?

Ms O'Connor: In Queensland it is a housing register, not a waitlist. Allocation to any vacant social housing property can be based on a range of factors, not on the amount of time since applying. We have already heard from the minister in relation to the households currently on the housing register. People on the housing register can be provided with a number of services and a range of products that the minister has already enlightened the committee about. I do know that many, many households on the register have already been assisted with those products and services.

CHAIR: Thank you. I call the opposition for the next question.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the minister. Minister, with 16,270 households on the very high needs Social Housing Register, do the 10,127 households recorded at September 2020 who are in the high, moderate or lower categories have any chance of securing a social housing property?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. A social housing property is not the only offering that is provided to people and households who seek to be on the Social Housing Register. There are a number of other options, and that is assessed at the time of a household presenting to a Housing Service Centre. Sometimes there might be other options that may also suit the needs of the household that has presented on the housing register. Social housing properties—of which there are over 73,000 social housing and affordable housing options across the state—may not always be the right fit for the particular household that has presented through the Housing Service Centre. That is why it is called a housing register—so that those households are supported via the services available through the Housing Service Centre. As I have already said, more than 220,000 forms of housing service assistance have been provided in the last year alone to households who have presented to housing service centres.

Mr MANDER: So the answer is no chance.

CHAIR: Sorry, member—

Ms ENOCH: Through the chair, I do not appreciate being verbally by the member for Everton, who was the architect of the absolute disaster that he left behind as the housing minister.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, member. Let us cease the debate. Member for Everton, do you have another question?

Mr MANDER: I do. My question is to the director-general. Will the director-general advise how many public housing tenants have maintained their tenancy despite being incarcerated over the past financial year?

Ms O'Connor: I thank the member for the question. I will get that information for you right now. My understanding is that in 2020-21 there were 22 properties where people had been incarcerated.

Mr MANDER: Just a clarification, was that 2020-21 or 2019-20?

Ms O'Connor: It was 2020-21. For 2019-20, there were 21.

Mr MANDER: I have a further question to the director-general. How many homes have been left vacant due to tenants being incarcerated?

Ms O'Connor: They were the vacant properties.

Mr MANDER: In total, how many months were these properties left vacant for?

Ms O'Connor: I might make some comments in relation to the way in which we address and have fair expectations in terms of the treatment of tenants. I can give you days rather than months because that is the data to hand. In 2019-20 it was 177 days, and in 2020-21 it was 67 days.

Mr MANDER: Could the director-general advise: what is the incarceration threshold time before the department declares the tenancy as terminated?

Ms O'Connor: It is usually five months.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the minister. Minister, why is the government keeping public housing dwellings empty for incarcerated tenants when there are over 26,000 law-abiding Queenslanders on the public housing waiting list?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. There is a policy in place—which is the fair absence from your home policy—which allows for the management of tenants in various circumstances. As you have heard from the director-general, there are a very low number of days where we have seen those vacancies.

Mr MANDER: Well, I am sure—

CHAIR: Member for Everton, do you have another question?

Mr MANDER: I do, if I could go back to the director-general. With regards to those in the very high category on the Social Housing Register, how many of those applicants received a home in the last financial year?

Ms O'Connor: I will get that information for you. In terms of new households assisted and allocations to vacancies, there were 6,230 during the 2019-20 year, and 97 per cent of new households assisted were in the very high or high need category.

CHAIR: Do you have another question, member for Everton?

Mr MANDER: I do. My question is to the director-general. With reference to question on notice No. 14, will the director-general advise of the 391 complaints received about illegal activity how many were in relation to drug labs or drug supply?

Ms O'Connor: Member, I will get that information for you. We have it.

CHAIR: Was that immediately, Director-General?

Ms O'Connor: Yes, I have that, Chair. I can advise that in the 2019-20 financial year, in the 54,064 public housing tenancies, the Queensland Police Service confirmed two clandestine drug labs in public housing. There were many more in the private market.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Member for Everton, we have time for another quick question.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, of the 391 complaints received, how many of those resulted in a criminal conviction for the public housing tenant?

Ms O'Connor: I would think that would be a matter for the police and the courts to have that data.

Ms ENOCH: Through the chair, that is a question for the QPS. However, this line of questioning from the member for Everton proves that there has not been a lot of change since he was the—

Mr KRAUSE: Point of order, Madam Chair. Relevance.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms ENOCH: I think it is disgusting—

Mr MANDER: So you do not get people complaining to you about—

CHAIR: No. Member! Minister! We will cease the debate. I will now move to the crossbench. Member for Maiwar, do you have a question?

Mr BERKMAN: I do. Thank you, Chair. At the outset, I would like to table a couple of documents for these questions. The first is the document titled 'Social Housing Eligibility Criteria' dated 2018. I have copies for the committee and for the director-general.

CHAIR: As you are a member of the committee, member for Maiwar, you are able to table that document.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. The second is a webpage printout called 'Check your Eligibility' which is dated 2019. Again, could a copy of each of those be given to the director-general for the purposes of this next question?

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, I will just give the director-general and the minister a moment.

Mr BERKMAN: Indeed. Just let me know when you are ready for me to ask a question about those documents, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'Connor: Yes. Are there two documents or one?

CHAIR: Yes, it is coming, Director-General.

Ms O'Connor: Sorry.

CHAIR: Have you got the second document, Director-General?

Ms O'Connor: No.

CHAIR: Thank you, it is coming now.

Ms O'Connor: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar?

Mr BERKMAN: I will just describe the elements I am most interested in. In the 2018 document under heading 3, 'Intake eligibility criteria', you will see there is a fairly clear correlation between the subsequent headings 3.1 to 3.6 and those equivalent headings in the second document, the 2019 criteria. What I would put to you—and if you can confirm—is that these two documents represent two iterations of essentially the same eligibility criteria over different years.

CHAIR: Member, could you put the question please?

Mr BERKMAN: Do you agree? Is that the case?

Ms O'Connor: My understanding is that these documents were issued. Each document has some similarities. You are going to ask questions about the document?

Mr BERKMAN: Indeed.

Ms O'Connor: Minister, I may have to refer to the deputy director-general at some point; is that all right?

Ms ENOCH: Yes, depending on the question.

Ms O'Connor: Yes, that is right.

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. If I can take you, director-general, or the deputy director-general specifically to 'complex wellbeing factors' under heading No. 7 in the second of those documents, the 2019 criteria, particularly the 'complex wellbeing factors' listed in six dot points.

CHAIR: Member, can we just ask the question, please?

Mr BERKMAN: The dot points three, four and five under 'complex wellbeing factors' do not appear anywhere or have an equivalent in the 2018 eligibility document, do they?

Ms O'Connor: I am just looking now, member. It is a bit of a test.

Ms ENOCH: Through the Chair, I will call forward the Deputy Director-General of Housing and Homelessness to assist with answering that question directly.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the deputy director-general.

Ms Woolley: I think what the member is asking about is the detail that sits under No. 7 and why it is set out in that way and not appearing in the earlier document?

Mr BERKMAN: Yes, specifically under 'complex wellbeing factors include', the third, fourth and fifth dot points represent criteria that do not appear anywhere or have an equivalent in the 2018 eligibility criteria, do they?

Ms Woolley: To assist with your question, I think you are referring to these as eligibility criteria; these are considerations when people are applying for social housing and receiving housing assistance through the department. The department would utilise this information to talk with customers or people presenting in a housing service centre about the sorts of factors which might assist the department in determining an appropriate form of housing assistance as opposed to eligibility criteria.

Mr BERKMAN: I am referring to this first document, the 2018 document, broadly as the 'eligibility criteria'; that is what it says in the title. I am asking you: do those three dot points appear or have an equivalent in this earlier 2018 document? On my reading they do not and I would like, if you can, to show me where in the 2018 document they appear.

Ms Woolley: I thank the member for the question. These are practice guidance for staff in working with customers when they approach the department for housing assistance. The department has undertaken a lot of work through its housing service centres to think about how it can be more person centred in the way it works with customers to provide better information, and that is what this document represents. It is a different document to the 2018 document and it serves to try to assist people applying and working with the department.

Mr BERKMAN: Can I take you to the very head of the 2019 document under the heading 'Check your eligibility'. The second sentence says, 'You must meet all of the eligibility criteria to receive social housing.' In practice, this is a list of criteria that people will consider themselves having to meet in order to be eligible. Is that not what purpose this document serves?

Ms Woolley: No, that is not the purpose of this document. If the minister is okay, I might just refer the member to question on notice No. 668 where I think this question was answered about whether there is a material change in eligibility criteria, and the answer is 'No'.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. In that case could you please point to where in the 2018 document I will find those three dot points—three, four and five under the heading, ‘Complex wellbeing factors include’? Where will I find those in the 2018 document?

Ms Woolley: Member, you will not find those in that because—

Mr BERKMAN: But that does not constitute a change.

Ms Woolley: No.

Mr BERKMAN: So words appear in one document but not in another. ‘Complex wellbeing factors’ appears in one but not in another, but that does not represent a change?

Ms ENOCH: Through the Chair?

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms ENOCH: The deputy director-general has made it clear that these are two different documents, one of which is a document to support the work that HSC staff do in working with clients who present at housing service centres or are looking to meet the eligibility criteria. The question has been answered. It is in a question on notice. The deputy director-general has just provided further information to support the answer.

CHAIR: I thank the minister. We will now move to government questions. My question is for the minister. With reference to page 112 of the SDS, will the minister please advise the committee of the Palaszczuk government’s approach to safeguarding the government’s digital network and data against hackers?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for this very important question. Of course, cybersecurity is a serious issue for all Australians and all Australian governments. The modern reality is that all ICT systems, whether they are public or private ones, are at increasing risk of cybersecurity threats. The Queensland government treats cybersecurity very seriously. We recognise the importance of maintaining the trust and confidence of Queenslanders. When I was last minister for digital economy, to ensure the protection and reliability of our systems against growing cybersecurity threats, in 2016 I established a specialised cybersecurity unit. The unit patrols the gateway to government services and data. It has established strong partnerships across Queensland government agencies and with other jurisdictions to share threat intelligence and to help develop our situational awareness.

In 2018 the government committed \$20.3 million over four years towards an ongoing improvement program. The member may recall that on 19 June the Prime Minister advised that—

Based on advice provided to the Government by our cyber experts ... Australian organisations are currently being targeted by a sophisticated state-based cyber actor. This activity is targeting Australian organisations across a range of sectors, including all levels of government, industry, political organisations, education, health, essential service providers, and operators of other critical infrastructure.

Through the efforts of our cybersecurity staff across the Queensland government, no incidents with significant impacts have been experienced recently. However, our teams remain vigilant to cyberthreats and we will review and adjust our strategies and initiatives accordingly. During the COVID response a pilot program was established in conjunction with local cybersecurity SME RIoT Solutions to rapidly enhance security monitoring of agencies. RIoT Solutions is a local SME specialist in managed security services. Its multimillion dollar contract for vulnerability management services meant it employed five more in its Brisbane based operations centre. The company has now grown to 47 employees and is 11th in the CRN Fast50 list of fastest growing IT companies in Australia.

Queensland is also set to strengthen its position in the booming cybersecurity sector with three new hubs across the state. They will make businesses more secure as well as drive economic growth and create new jobs through a partnership with AustCyber. Cybersecurity innovation nodes are being established in Brisbane, Townsville and the Sunshine Coast in a partnership between the federal government, the Queensland government and the Townsville and Sunshine Coast councils. Queensland is the only state to have a presence in multiple locations. We also appointed the Chief Customer and Digital Officer, with a mandate and responsibility to ensure cross-agency and cross-level coordination. Continuing to enhance cybersecurity is a key responsibility of the chief officer.

Ms LUI: Minister, with reference to page 114 of the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy SDS, will you outline how the Palaszczuk government is working to improve the housing outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, in particular those living in remote communities?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question and for her passion for her constituency with regard to this matter. The Queensland government is committed to reframing its relationship with First Nations peoples and is delivering improved housing outcomes through genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. We are making a \$241 million investment in the 2020-21 budget. This includes \$142.2 million to improve social rental housing and deliver housing services in discrete communities; \$42.5 million to improve state owned and managed Indigenous housing across Queensland; \$32.3 million towards the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan and the establishment of a peak housing body to strengthen the organisational capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector; \$18 million to support private home ownership in remote communities; and \$6 million for homelessness responses, including \$700,000 to complete construction of crisis shelters in Pormpuraaw and Woorabinda.

Improving housing in remote communities remains an ongoing focus of the Queensland government. Under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, NPARIH, and the National Partnership on Remote Housing, the Queensland government invested \$618 million for housing in remote and discrete communities, although our funding was not required under the agreement or partnership. The National Partnership on Remote Housing expired in June 2018, and subsequent federal budgets made no provision for housing in remote Queensland communities. Following the expiry of the national partnership agreement, the Morrison government offered just \$105 million as a final payment—an amount that is insufficient to properly address the need identified in the Australian government's own independent Remote Housing Review that was conducted in 2017. With this final payment the Morrison government has walked away from its responsibility to fund remote housing for First Nations peoples.

Given the absence of a Commonwealth commitment to housing in remote communities, the Queensland government announced a \$40 million interim remote capital program in October 2018. The allocation of this \$40 million has been led by a working group of mayors from the remote and discrete communities, with the government giving priority to community-led decision-making. I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of Mick Gooda, who has been working with mayors and the government in his role as First Nations housing adviser, to maximise local employment and training opportunities for communities. As at 30 September 2020, this program was employing 70 people across the council areas, including 32 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The first four new homes to be completed under this program in Pormpuraaw are ready for practical completion and handover inspection today, after which tenancy allocation processes can commence.

Mr SKELTON: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 114 of the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy SDS, will the minister outline how the department is supporting women experiencing or escaping domestic and family violence?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for this very important question. Tackling domestic and family violence is one of the Queensland government's highest priorities. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring support is available no matter where those affected by this terrible violence live. That is why we are delivering an enhanced response for people experiencing domestic violence that is person centred and responsive to housing and support needs through coordinated referrals, assistance and services. Queenslanders requiring immediate assistance are supported to access crisis and alternative accommodation to enhance safety and are connected to specialist domestic and family violence services or high-risk teams. Once they are safe, housing service centre staff plan and help deliver long-term housing in coordination with other support services.

In 2019-20 there were 6,566 households that were experiencing or had declared that they were experiencing domestic and family violence and were assisted with private housing products including rental grants and bond loans. In 2020 the department established a new domestic and family violence specialist response team to provide expert support to frontline housing staff and multiagency high-risk teams, identify safety issues, tailor housing assistance and partner with the broader service system.

The domestic and family violence COVID-19 emergency housing assistance response included immediate risk assessment, temporary accommodation and transition to longer term accommodation for 74 women, with 64 children. On 24 April 2020 the Queensland government implemented temporary regulatory response measures to support Queensland's residential rental market manage COVID-19 health and economic impacts. These temporary response measures included provisions that allow tenants who experience domestic and family violence to improve their safety in the rental property or end their interest in a tenancy agreement quickly, with limited liability for end-of-lease costs and fast access to a refund of any contribution they may have made to the rental bond held for the property.

In 2020, new domestic and family violence shelters were completed in Caboolture and Coomera and a replacement shelter was completed in Woorabinda. New shelters delivered by the department have been co-designed with women survivors, service providers and the community to be sensitive to the needs of women and children, culture, healing and place. Two additional shelters, in Southport and Charters Towers, are anticipated to be completed in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

In 2020-21, \$34.7 million will be provided through the department of child safety, youth and women to 48 funded organisations to deliver 59 specialist women's shelters, mobile and centre based services. This will provide 322 places of accommodation for women and children per night across Queensland. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ending violence against women and their children, and through this budget the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy is playing its role of ensuring those affected have access to safety and support.

CHAIR: Minister, my question references page 107 of the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy SDS. Will you please advise the committee how the department is supporting Queenslanders during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. Very few Queenslanders have been spared from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, whether that impact be financial, separation from friends and family or adjusting to necessary changes in how we live every day. There is no doubt that we have all made sacrifices, some more than others. The Queensland government has worked hard to support Queenslanders every step of the way, and this support continues as we unite and recover.

The Community Recovery Hotline became active from 19 March 2020. The Community Recovery Hotline enabled Queenslanders affected by COVID-19 and without any means of support from family or friends to get practical assistance such as food or medicine, essential household items, financial assistance, psychosocial support or even just information. Anyone in home quarantine or self-isolation who did not have family, friends or neighbourhoods to help could call the Community Recovery Hotline for assistance with food, medicine and other necessities. In addition to the Community Recovery Hotline, we provided \$200,000 each to the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul and GIVIT to assist people impacted by COVID-19 with emergency relief in the form of food parcels and vouchers, assistance with utility bills and support for families with additional costs in home schooling—something that many Queensland homes were tackling during the COVID-19 period.

Funding was also provided to ensure emergency relief was distributed across the regions. Partnerships were also established with key suppliers including Coles, Woolworths, Master Grocers and the Pharmacy Guild to enable us to focus on the specific need to support older Queenslanders self-isolating. While the LNP were calling for our borders to open, Queenslanders were united in their desire to keep each other safe and supported. The Care Army was mobilised from 1 April 2020, with more than 28,000 willing volunteers generously offering their time to support older Queenslanders. We are now exploring opportunities to further mobilise the Care Army, committing an additional \$1.7 million towards 15 Neighbourhood Connect workers in high-needs communities. Also in this budget \$6.2 million is allocated over two years in the form of an emergency support package that includes \$4 million for financial counselling support and \$2.2 million for practical assistance for those in crisis such as food parcels and essential household items.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Director-General, did you have some follow-up information?

Ms O'Connor: I do, Chair. Is now an appropriate time?

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms O'Connor: Thank you. One thing I do want to clarify is that under the ministerial guidance in terms of the public records, it is actually ministers and assistant ministers who are public authorities for the purposes of the Public Records Act. As the public authorities, the ministers and assistant ministers have a statutory obligation under section 7 of the act to make and keep full, accurate records of activities related to their ministerial portfolio responsibilities. I think before I indicated that the CEOs have a role. They do in terms of the Public Service, but the ministers also have a role.

In relation to the member's questions around expenditure on the review, I am advised that it was done within existing resources. In relation to the budget that has been allocated for the review, there was no specific budget because we expect it will be done within existing resources. In relation to consultants, none is the advice. In relation to additional FTE, it will be done within existing resources, noting that the State Archives is primarily an operational organisation set up to manage records. In relation to the investigation, the referral took place in November 2019.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General.

Ms LUI: Minister, with reference to page 110 of the SDS, will the minister advise how the Queensland government's investment in the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative is creating better social and economic outcomes for people and families in Logan?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. The Queensland government is committed to building strong communities across Queensland. The Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative is one initiative we are using to achieve this. The Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative is a collective impact model which is a long-term community-led movement driven by a local leadership group to address complex social issues. This model has the benefit of empowering community leaders and community members to address issues of disadvantage with their own solutions to shift from acting alone to working together. Stronger Places, Stronger People acknowledges that community leaders and community members are the experts in their own lives, experiences and community dynamics.

Stronger Places, Stronger People provides the framework to help communities achieve change their way. Our investment in Stronger Places, Stronger People contributes to delivering the foundational support and providing the backbone functions that enable communities to plan, develop and implement a community focused plan. The Logan Together movement is Queensland's most mature collective impact model. Over the last five years Logan Together has built considerable momentum across a range of areas. The progress of this approach is demonstrated in the improvements we are seeing in the health and wellbeing of children zero to eight years of age—that critical early childhood stage.

Partnering and collaborating with local service providers to support health and wellbeing, there is progressive evidence of impact—for example, better birthing outcomes and maternity healthcare options attracting women previously not accessing maternity health care. We have seen a 50 per cent decrease in preterm births from 2018 and a 10 per cent reduction in C-sections compared to standard care, and we have seen greater uptake of antenatal visits for vulnerable women—all great outcomes as a result of the Logan Together work. More children are accessing early learning and kindergarten as a result of improved parent and family awareness of learning readiness and enrolment. Importantly, we are seeing an increase in families connecting socially within their community. The profound change we are seeing in Logan is a result of the commitment of this community to a long-term, whole-of-community approach driven at a local level. The Palaszczuk government shares the commitment of this community to achieving that long-term change and remains united with the people of Logan on this journey.

Mr SKELTON: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 114 of the SDS, will the minister outline for the committee the government's progress of the Queensland Housing Strategy's first action plan?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. In June 2017, following extensive statewide consultation, the Queensland government launched the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 and its first three-year action plan to ensure all Queenslanders have access to a safe and affordable home that meets their needs and enables participation in the social and economic life of our prosperous state. I am pleased to advise that we have delivered on this commitment, with 44 actions completed and four with longer project time frames continuing toward successful delivery. Through the Housing Strategy, we have transformed how we work with customers. We have deepened our partnerships across government and the community sector to deliver better outcomes for customers. We have introduced a range of new products and services to assist households into positive housing outcomes and we have grown and diversified our property portfolio to support our growing population.

As I have already mentioned, the Housing Strategy is delivering a pipeline of new supply of social and affordable housing as well as supporting jobs in the construction industry and right through the supply chain. We have completed construction of shelters for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence in Caboolture, Cherbourg, Coen, Coomera, Pormpuraaw, Redlands, Roma and Woorabinda. Two additional shelters in Southport and Charters Towers are anticipated to be completed in 2021 and 2022, as I mentioned earlier.

Through the Housing Strategy we are continuing to deliver Partnering for Impact to reduce homelessness in conjunction with the specialist homelessness sector through systems reform, capability development and five-year funding certainty and stability. The Housing Strategy has fundamentally changed frontline service delivery, including new person-centred customer service approaches to deliver tailored pathway planning in redesigned housing service centres. We are delivering a comprehensive range of assistance to people across the housing continuum, including head leasing properties from the private market to respond quickly to customer need and new products and services to assist people with less complex needs to access or sustain private housing.

Legislative reforms for manufactured homes and retirement villages were delivered, including new behaviour standards, limits on site rent increases and utility charges, and greater transparency requirements for retirement villages. Under the Housing Strategy we have also launched the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan to achieve housing outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders in rural, remote and urban areas of the state, including the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak housing body. In July this year the University of Queensland's Institute for Social Science Research delivered a report on its interim analysis of progress with delivering the action plan. The report found that the Queensland government is on track to deliver on the objectives of the Housing Strategy, with delivery against the action plan setting a strong foundation for future reform.

The first action plan was an ambitious program of work over the first three years of the Housing Strategy. It has established a firm footing for future reform to the housing and homelessness service centre. Over the course of 2020-21 I will be meeting with our service partners and stakeholders and we will jointly plan the next phase of work to be delivered under the Housing Strategy. This will be a plan focused firmly on the government's priorities of protecting the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and building back better from the COVID crisis.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now move to the opposition for their next question.

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the committee for having me here today. Welcome to the minister, director-general, senior staff and bureaucrats. My first question is with reference to the answer to question on notice 3 about the Care Army. Will the minister advise how many Queenslanders registered for the Care Army and what was the cost of administration of the program?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. There were more than 28,000 Queenslanders who registered to become part of the Care Army; an overwhelming amount of Queenslanders who put their hand up to support other Queenslanders in their time of need. I think that is an outstanding outcome. To be able to utilise the Care Army we tapped into the expertise of Volunteering Queensland and provided them with just over \$417,000 to support the Care Army. We also provided some funding to UnitingCare Queensland to provide telephone support to seniors impacted by COVID-19. There were a range of services that were supported, but in terms of the Care Army there was an overwhelming response from the people of Queensland. We have utilised the expertise of Volunteering Queensland to do that work and we provided just over \$417,000 for them to do that work.

Mr LANGBROEK: With the same reference, the answer to question on notice 3, will the minister provide an individual breakdown of the \$19.9 million of funding for the 127 neighbourhood community centres? You can take that on notice if you are prepared to.

Ms ENOCH: We will just take a moment to see if we have that information to hand. It is quite a detailed piece of information that you are requiring. However, what I can say is that the neighbourhood and community centres continue to play a very important role in our communities. Certainly in terms of the funding, it is a very long list. I am happy to read this into *Hansard* if you wish.

Mr LANGBROEK: I do not think we will make it, minister.

Ms ENOCH: In terms of the \$19.9 million, this includes \$17.2 million to contribute to operating expenses, \$1.5 million for 12 Community Connect workers in high needs locations, \$153,568 for the peak body, Queensland Families and Communities Association, which plays a very important role in representing the neighbourhood and community centres, and \$1 million for round 3 of the Thriving Queensland Communities grants for neighbourhood and community centres. That is the breakdown of the funding. In the coming months there will be 127 community and neighbourhood centres of which there are currently 125. There is a vast list of the funding that has been provided to all of them.

Mr LANGBROEK: The individual breakdown, are you willing to provide that to the committee?

Ms ENOCH: I can read it into *Hansard*.

Mr LANGBROEK: I do not need that. If you are kind enough to table it.

CHAIR: Minister, are you happy to table that information?

Ms ENOCH: Yes. It is available.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you.

CHAIR: You will need to seek leave.

Ms ENOCH: I seek leave to table this enormous list of funding that we have been providing to neighbourhood and community centres under the Palaszczuk government's commitment to this work.

CHAIR: Leave is granted. Member for Surfers Paradise?

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question is with the same reference, answer to question on notice 3. I notice the commitment to fund 15 workers to connect the Care Army volunteers. Which centres will they go to?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. The fact that we have had such a massive response to the call to arms from Queenslanders with regards to the Care Army, there is a desire to be able to continue to mobilise those people. For me personally I think that there is a great connection between all of those more than 28,000 Queenslanders who have been wanting to help others to be able to be connected into our neighbourhood and community centres. There is a huge opportunity in all of that. In terms of the allocation of those—


CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt, Minister. It being 10.45 am—

Ms ENOCH: I will speak to you after.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thanks, Minister.

CHAIR:—the committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 11 am with the examination of the estimates of the arts portfolio.

Proceedings suspended from 10.45 am to 11.00 am.

 **CHAIR:** Before I continue proceedings, there was a document tabled during the last session that contained the private information of public servants. I will meet with the committee at lunch to ensure that that information is redacted. Further, Minister, I understand you are going to write to the committee around the CPI change to the figures provided.

Ms ENOCH: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The hearing is resumed. I welcome the member for Moggill. Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the arts portfolio. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the arts open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I call the deputy chair and member for Burnett.

Mr BENNETT: I will hand over to the member for Moggill.

Dr ROWAN: With reference to SDS volume 1, page 107, departmental overview, and page 132, can I ask the Chief Executive Officer of QPAC to come forward? Thank you, Mr Kotzas. With specific reference to the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, which is operating under a dedicated COVID-safe plan, what are the additional ongoing costs of COVID-19 health safety measures at QPAC?

Mr Kotzas: I will have to come back specifically with that exact figure. What we have been able to do since 13 March when we closed for 22 weeks was reallocate our existing staff to be able to collect the contact tracing information and to be able to measure how we respond to contact tracing and the COVID-safe measures. For external hirers, we have been able to carry that cost through by reallocating our own staff. It is not a huge additional figure, but I will return with that exact figure.

Mr BENNETT: Is that taken on notice or will it be given by the end of the session?

CHAIR: Only the minister can take the question on notice. Minister, do you suggest we come back during the remainder of the session?

Ms ENOCH: Yes, I think we will come back.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, are those costs going to be covered by your department or by the state government, or will those additional costs for QPAC be potentially passed on to consumers through higher ticketing or merchandising costs?

Ms ENOCH: As the member would well know, the arts sector was incredibly hard hit by COVID-19, probably more so than any other sector. Literally overnight, performances had to cease because of the necessary restrictions that were put in place. Of course, this government moved very quickly to reorganise internal funding to stabilise the sector as quickly as we possibly could. That meant bringing forward \$5.2 million of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's recurrent base grant and waiving some of the facility and utility costs. I really want to acknowledge the work of the QPAC board and, of course, the CEO, who have utilised some of their own funding and reallocated their own resources to be able to continue to ensure that QPAC was ready to reawaken when restrictions were eased.

I am advised that there will be no change to ticket prices other than the normal increases that you would expect in any other year and no change in rental fees. We have been allocating funds from within budget to be able to stabilise as quickly as possible. The Palaszczuk government has put in place nearly \$60 million worth of relief measures across the whole sector. QPAC, in particular, is an incredibly important part of the arts ecosystem. We have moved accordingly to support QPAC during this time.

Dr ROWAN: To clarify, Minister, it sounds like those additional operating costs will be absorbed within the allocated budget as far as QPAC is concerned?

Ms ENOCH: Correct.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, with respect to formal health advice that you may receive from the Chief Health Officer with respect to the Queensland Performing Arts Centre now being able to operate at 100 per cent capacity, have you received that advice and are you able to table the advice?

Ms ENOCH: I did not receive the advice personally. That advice has been provided by the Chief Health Officer to various entities across the state. That advice has been provided through work that has been happening in conjunction with the Chief Health Officer's office and QPAC and other live venue operators.

Dr ROWAN: With the advice specifically, it is not provided to you, but would it be provided to the CEO at QPAC and those various entities?

Ms ENOCH: The advice is public. The advice that the Chief Health Officer has made is advice that is available to everybody. In terms of the COVID-safe plans that are in place, there has been a great deal of work underway between the Chief Health Officer's office and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and various entities. We do not receive written advice with regards to that. The advice is public.

Dr ROWAN: With reference to SDS volume 1, page 108, and the allocated funding towards the construction of the new theatre at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, can you confirm that this project is on budget and on time?

Ms ENOCH: I can absolutely confirm that the commitment to the building of this new performing arts venue will see the completion of the venue in late 2022 and then there are obviously various other milestones with regards to handover and the opening. As I understand it, that is definitely on time. Keep in mind, of course, that the new performing arts venue is an absolutely transformational project for Queensland. When completed, it will make QPAC Australia's largest performing arts centre, which means that there will be five outstanding venues and the potential to welcome some further 300,000 visitors per year. It is once in a generation.

I am really pleased that I have been able to secure further funding. Investment in the construction of the new performing arts venue will see an allocation of \$7.5 million from the Arts Queensland budget to boost efficiency and sustainability outcomes for the new theatre and \$17.5 million in new funding that will deliver a world-class facility, futureproof the theatre and allow for budget contingency given potential COVID-19 cost impacts.

There have been a lot of lessons during the COVID-19 period and I am very pleased that the Palaszczuk government continues to invest in what will be a transformational project. I am incredibly pleased to be able to see further funding put aside to ensure that we have learnt the lessons of COVID-19 and that we have the kind of theatre that we will be needing for the future. It will be digitally capable to be able to reach households across Queensland, which is something that I think we have learned very much during the COVID-19 period, to be able to pivot really quickly in terms of arts. We saw a lot of work going online. The new theatre needs to be equipped with that, along with many other aspects that we have been able to learn. I am very pleased to be able to see that extra funding provided.

CHAIR: We will move to the opposition crossbench for their first question. Member for South Brisbane?

Dr MacMAHON: My question is to the director-general. First Nations broadcasting has been crucial in supporting First Nations communities and providing information over the COVID period, including organisations like 98.9 FM in South Brisbane. What state funding is currently available to First Nations broadcasting services and what funding is planned for the next four years?

Ms ENOCH: I would like to bring forward the Deputy Director-General, Arts Queensland to assist with that question.

Ms Herring: I thank the member for the question. I would like to get some data from our Queensland Arts Showcase Program. It is our contestable grants program that many applicants can apply for, including not-for-profit entities such as the one you refer to. We will just do a quick search

through the full grant programs for the last financial year if that is the data that would cover that. Certainly they are eligible to apply, but I can confirm they are not a core funded organisation through the four-year funding program, just to be clear.

CHAIR: Minister, are you taking that question on notice? Come back before the end of the session, thank you, minister. We will move to government members for their first question.

Ms LUI: Minister, I refer to page 108 of the SDS. Will the minister please update the committee on the delivery of Creative Together, a 10-year road map for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. Earlier this year, I very proudly launched Creative Together 2020-2030, a 10-year road map for the arts, culture and creativity in Queensland. Creative Together aspires to a vision for Queensland as a state renewed and transformed by arts, culture and creativity, and is built around five key priorities areas: to elevate First Nations arts, activate Queensland's local places and global digital spaces, drive social change across the state, strengthen Queensland communities, and share our stories and celebrate our storytellers.

The Palaszczuk government's two-year, \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package has provided vital stimulus to the sector through COVID-19. The Arts and Cultural Recovery Package, a down payment on Creative Together, has supported new work, activated venues, enabled COVID-safe audience experiences and created more than 9,200 employment opportunities so far. This includes a focus on elevating First Nations arts, strengthening and building its position and reputation. Investment of over \$3.5 million this financial year is helping stabilise Indigenous arts centres statewide and supporting First Nations visual and performing artists and organisations to create new work. Further investment is also supporting Queensland communities by growing local arts and broadening the impact of cultural tourism.

As at 31 October, \$13.34 million has been invested in regional arts programs, projects and applicants, and projects benefiting regional Queenslanders this financial year. This includes \$5.12 million of the Arts and Cultural Recovery Package invested in 155 regional applicants to date, supporting new work, stabilising regional organisations and helping deliver cultural tourism activations in regional Queensland. For example, the Open Air program is funding 16 projects in outdoor and non-traditional settings statewide, supporting local community engagement and providing opportunities for local artists.

Arts portfolio investment also continues to focus on driving important social outcomes for Queenslanders. Annual investment of \$5 million continues to support the First 5 Forever program, providing strong early literacy foundations for Queensland children aged zero to five years, one of the projects that I am very passionate about.

The new Arts Advantage stream in the Queensland Arts Showcase Program is supporting arts led projects which provide social benefits to Queenslanders and their communities. Two projects were announced in the most recent QASP round, supporting Queenslanders with disability through arts projects.

Recognising the importance of activating Queensland's global digital spaces, the Digital Adaptation Fund has allocated \$372,394 to 52 applicants, assisting them to innovate and deliver across digital platforms.

This is just the beginning of what we will achieve through Creative Together. I look forward to updating members further in the future.

Mr SKELTON: Minister, I refer to page 108 of the SDS. Will the minister please advise the committee as to benefits for First Nations people in Queensland from the government's Arts and Cultural Recovery Package?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government is investing in First Nations artists, organisations and communities through the Backing Indigenous Arts initiative and our \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package. A key priority of Creative Together, the government's 10-year roadmap to transform and renew Queensland through arts, culture and creativity is to elevate First Nations arts. The recovery package is delivering on this priority by expanding opportunities for First Nations performing and visual artists and Indigenous arts centres, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to rebound from COVID-19.

The First Nations Commissioning Fund will support 19 new productions and visual art commissions by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners and organisations, providing nearly \$837,000 to deliver Indigenous Queensland stories, arts and cultural experiences, products and celebrations. Under the First Night Showcase Bulmba-ja program, more than \$262,000 will fund the

development and presentation of eight new works at Bulmba-ja Arts Centre in Cairns with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts. This investment builds on the Palaszczuk government's recent \$5.9 million upgrade through Arts Queensland of the former Centre of Contemporary Arts Cairns to establish Bulmba-ja, and these creative development opportunities will bolster the profile of First Nations arts experiences to broader audiences.

The Indigenous Art Centre Launch Fund aims to extend the Indigenous arts centre network, investing \$340,000 in three centres. The 14 existing Indigenous arts centres have also shared in a \$610,000 funding boost to support sustained practice and revenue opportunities during the COVID-19 recovery period. We know there is a huge appetite for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts locally and internationally, as demonstrated by the huge success of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. That is why the Palaszczuk government, through our recovery package, will fund a digital marketplace to support the sale of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and craft from Queensland, complemented by shopfronts in Cairns and Brisbane, to grow access to new markets and counter the supply of inauthentic or fake art products.

It is essential that we invest in the foundations of First Nations arts and cultural activity to enable the sector to emerge with strength and, through Creative Together, we have a plan to support First Nations artists, companies and collectives to thrive, keep culture strong and showcase their stories and cultures in Queensland, interstate and globally.

CHAIR: Minister, with your indulgence, I wondered if the Deputy Director-General had that information that the crossbench was seeking?

Ms ENOCH: Not as yet, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I refer to page 108 of the SDS. Will the minister please update the committee in relation to the government's commitment to Queensland companies supported under the Major Performing Arts framework and the related contribution from the Commonwealth to Queensland's organisations?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member very much for the question. This government continues to do the heavy lifting in terms of government funding support for Queensland's five major performing arts companies. Australia's major performing arts company funding framework has been in operation for almost two decades. Queensland now has five companies in the framework after the Palaszczuk government successfully lobbied all federal, state and territory governments to admit the world renowned Circa Contemporary Circus to the framework last year, a huge success. Circa, alongside Queensland's other MPA companies—Opera Queensland, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Theatre and Queensland Ballet—receive approximately 10 per cent of federal funding committed under the framework, despite Queensland representing 20 per cent of Australia's population.

In 2020 the Queensland government is contributing \$13.62 million in funding to Queensland's MPA organisations compared to the federal government's \$11.15 million. That is, for every dollar Queensland invests in our major performing arts companies, the federal LNP government provides just 82 cents. By way of comparison, for every dollar provided by the New South Wales government to their MPA companies, the federal LNP government kicks in \$3.93. That is \$3.93 for New South Wales and just 82 cents for Queensland.

As arts minister, I have made repeated representations to the federal minister in writing and through the meeting of cultural ministers to remedy this ongoing source of disadvantage for Queensland's arts sector. Historically, Queensland has been disadvantaged in the allocation of federal government performing arts funding. Consequently, the Queensland government is left to foot the bill to make up for the woefully inadequate funding from the Commonwealth government.

Prior to devastating impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Queensland's major performing arts companies supported 527 full-time equivalent positions. In addition to their main stage seasons, MPA companies also deliver community engagement programs in communities across Queensland and will be an important driver of the vision and priorities of Creative Together, our 10-year roadmap. With the relaxing of restrictions thanks to Queensland's strong health response, our major performing arts companies are in a much better position than many performing arts organisations globally. Nonetheless, there will still be challenging times ahead for our five MPA companies. Now perhaps more than ever, it is time for the federal LNP government to contribute their fair share of funding for our major performing arts companies.

CHAIR: I now turn to the opposition for their next question.

Dr ROWAN: I come back to the SDS volume 1 at page 108 and the new theatre. I want to clarify an earlier response by the minister. The project is on time but is it on budget?

Ms ENOCH: As I have said, we have been able to secure further funding to expand the offerings that will be made as part of the new performing arts venue.

Dr ROWAN: But is it on budget or is there additional money that has had to be added to the budget for construction of the theatre?

Ms ENOCH: I am absolutely pleased. I can see why the LNP do not support arts infrastructure in this state, but the Palaszczuk government does. The new performing arts venue will be a transformational project for Queensland. It will make the Queensland Performing Arts Centre the largest in the country. I am very pleased to be able to have secured further funding to ensure that the new performing arts venue is absolutely state of the art, the lessons of COVID-19 are taken into consideration and all design specifications that have been clarified over this last stage of the project are absolutely met. I am very proud.

Dr ROWAN: It sounds like it is on time but not on budget.

CHAIR: Member, we will not have cross-chamber debate. We will move to the next question.

Dr ROWAN: With respect to the Queensland Ballet's Thomas Dixon Centre redevelopment project, is that project on time and on budget?

Ms ENOCH: The management of that refurbishment or that rebuild is not with this department. It is in another portfolio. You should have asked that question of the appropriate minister.

Dr ROWAN: Can I ask the State Librarian and CEO of the State Library of Queensland to come forward? With reference to the SDS volume 1 at page 123, can I ask you as the State Librarian whether the State Library is funding any specific projects in this year's budget or over the forward estimates with respect to maintaining the history and legacy of the Queensland parliament? There was a regional parliament in the last term and there is a proposed regional parliament in Cairns this term. I am specifically wanting to know whether the State Library is involved in any way with respect to projects and those regional parliaments?

Ms McDonald: Generally we do not specifically have that as a project. The documentation related to the parliament would be collected by the State Archives, but we would generally collect and document Queensland's history.

Dr ROWAN: I understand the State Library of Queensland is collecting political campaign material from the 2020 state election and presumably this has been done for previous elections, is that correct?

Ms McDonald: Yes.

Dr ROWAN: How is this information being stored? Does the State Library of Queensland have any specific guidelines with respect to future displays or exhibitions of this material and the apolitical nature of that?

Ms McDonald: The State Library's role is to document, preserve and make accessible Queensland's history. That is for current members of Queensland but also for future generations. The State Library of Queensland, like every other state library and the National Library of Australia, actively collects a representation of election documentation from state elections. We do that across the whole state and we engage public libraries across the state to ensure that we have a full representation of election ephemera. The material is stored along with all of our collections in the John Oxley Library which ensures appropriate temperature and humidity controls to ensure that the material is preserved for future generations.

We would also use it from time to time in exhibitions that we have a regular program of. Our exhibitions program is set out several years in advance. The material may be used for a range of different exhibitions because it can relate to any topic that we may be focusing on.

Dr ROWAN: Is a lot of that digitalised through the library processes of not only the State Library but also the other library facilities you mentioned?

Ms McDonald: We have an active digitisation program which we prioritise each year based on demand from the public for material or for use in our exhibitions. From time to time some of that material would be digitised.

Dr ROWAN: With reference to SDS volume 1 at page 123, I know the minister touched on this a little earlier, but with respect to Indigenous Knowledge Centres in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, can I ask what specific actions are being taken in this year's state budget with respect to those centres?

Ms ENOCH: Indigenous Knowledge Centres, IKCs, which are supported through the State Library, are situated in a number of discrete communities right across Queensland. They play an important role. I have been able to visit a number of those IKCs and see the work they have been doing. In particular, the work that has been happening under First 5 Forever and being rolled out across our libraries and our IKCs has been a very important part of all this. The IKCs are supported under the Public Library Grant. That funding is made available through that grant.

CHAIR: Minister, were you finished?

Ms ENOCH: In terms of the exact amount, support to Indigenous councils operating Indigenous Knowledge Centres in discrete communities was just over \$1.612 million in 2019-20. They are also able to access a number of other programs through the State Library, including, as I have already mentioned, the work around First 5 Forever.

Dr ROWAN: Following on from that specific funding, does that have a specific focus on languages of First Nation people?

Ms ENOCH: Some of the Indigenous Knowledge Centres are run very much in partnership with local councils. The programming of work can be defined locally which speaks to the commitment to local decision-making. There has been a body of work that has happened out of the State Library in terms of Indigenous languages. That body of work is there to support Indigenous Knowledge Centres who may choose to utilise that to further advance work with regard to First Nations languages. There was an exhibition, for instance, called *Spoken*, which I was able to attend. That programming assisted in documenting some examples of language from across different locations in Queensland.

For me, as a First Nations person, First Nations language is obviously something that should be celebrated. I encourage Indigenous Knowledge Centres to utilise the knowledge of their local communities and of course the work that has been happening from the State Library to further strengthen that opportunity to expose more young people to their own language and to support the understanding and growth of Indigenous language in those locations.

CHAIR: I will now move to questions from the crossbench.

Dr MacMAHON: My question is to the director-general. Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the arts and entertainment industry, particularly live music, what plan does the government have to fund an overhaul of lockout and ID scanner laws to ensure small venues can access reasonable exemptions?

CHAIR: Member—

Ms ENOCH: Through the chair, the member's question is not related to this portfolio. It should have been asked to the Attorney-General from my understanding.

CHAIR: Yes. Sorry, member. I was, prior to the minister, suggesting that that should have been directed to another portfolio. If you could resume your questioning.

Dr MacMAHON: Sure. In the same line of questioning, given the impact on the industry, what plans does the government have to fund small to medium sized infrastructure projects and upgrades for purpose-built community live music spaces? That question was to the director-general.

Ms O'Connor: Live music venues are a crucial part of the music ecosystem and make an important economic, social and cultural contribution. You have acknowledged that they were closed as a result of COVID. Certainly they are part of the roadmap to easing restrictions. The Arts and Cultural Recovery Package provided support to ensure venues were ready to open with COVID-safe restrictions—\$458,000 to offset operational costs of 24 live music venues through the Live Music Venue Support fund; \$429,000 to 26 venues to present local live music through the Play Local fund; and almost \$200,000 to support six venues to pilot COVID-safe programming for local artists. Minister, did you want to comment?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question and for her interest in live music in particular. As we know, live music venues were particularly hard hit, as was the entire arts sector, as a result of necessary COVID-19 restrictions. The Palaszczuk government has provided now almost \$60 million worth of relief measures to the arts sector, with a certain focus on live music in particular. You have heard some of the programs that were put to the sector as part of our sustaining that sector. We have invested in arts infrastructure right across the state from the Cairns Performing Arts Centre to Bulmba-ja, which I mentioned earlier; funding was made available to Rockhampton in terms of their new art gallery; and there is the transformational project known as the New Performing Arts Venue. That infrastructure is essential in terms of creating support for the arts ecosystem.

We have been supporting live music venues through our Arts and Cultural Recovery Package—\$22.5 million. There have been some fantastic outcomes. I was able to talk with a venue in Toowoomba recently which was able to open to live music venues just after the height of restrictions started to ease. We are continuing to ensure that there are COVID-safe plans in place to support that sector going forward.

Dr MacMAHON: Through the chair, just to—

CHAIR: Thank you, member. We will now move to government questions.

Ms LUI: My question is to the minister. I refer to page 108 of the SDS. Will the minister please update the committee on Queensland government support for the independent arts sector including for small to medium arts organisations in Queensland?

Ms ENOCH: Independent artists and small to medium sized arts organisations are very much the lifeblood of Queensland's arts and cultural sector. With the onset of COVID-19, the Palaszczuk government moved quickly to stabilise Queensland's small to medium organisations and support independent artists, many of whom had been excluded, sadly, from the federal LNP government's JobKeeper program.

We committed \$7.55 million to extend funding for 38 small to medium organisations fund recipients through to December 2021, supporting ongoing employment for artists and arts workers. The government also boosted funding available under the Queensland Arts Showcase Program and Individuals Fund, enabling artists and organisations to continue creative development and other COVID-safe activities throughout the pandemic. We also provided \$639,000 worth of \$3,000 stART programs to 213 creative practitioners statewide whose employment had been impacted by the pandemic.

The independent sector has also been supported in a variety of ways through the Palaszczuk government's \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package. First Night Showcase Program—Bulmba-ja will provide eight projects with a focus on First Nations people by independent artists and organisations with more than \$262,000 to develop and present new works at Bulmba-ja Arts Centre. A further 11 projects will receive more than \$295,000 under the First Night Showcase Program—Judith Wright Arts Centre, supporting independent and early career artists and organisations to develop and present new works at the Judith Wright Arts Centre.

Supporting early career artists is another priority of the recovery package with the Youth and Arts Pathways program providing nearly \$377,000 to eight independent organisations for job retention or career development activities for young people aged 15 to 25 within the arts and cultural sector. Independent artists and organisations have also received support under a range of other recovery package programs including Creative to Go, Spaces and Places, Play Local and the Digital Adaptation grant programs.

I am pleased to announce today that 11 independent arts organisations will share in more than \$280,000 under the Arts and Cultural Recovery Package through the Sustain: Recovery Support for Independent Arts Organisations program. Recipients including the Cairns Tropical Writers Festival, Toowoomba's Curious Arts Festival and Brisbane's Dead Puppet Society will receive grants of up to \$30,000 to support operational expenses and recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to thank our independent artists and small to medium arts organisations for their innovation and adaptability especially throughout 2020. I look forward to experiencing some of the incredible works on offer in the months ahead.

Mr SKELTON: My question is to the minister. I refer to dot point 2 on page 108 of the SDS. Will the minister please advise the committee as to benefits for regional Queenslanders from the government's Arts and Cultural Recovery Package?

Ms ENOCH: The Palaszczuk government's \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package is helping sustain Queensland's regional arts and cultural sector, supporting new work and COVID-safe arts experiences across regional Queensland. As at 31 October this year, \$12.8 million has already been allocated through the recovery package which is also benefiting regional applicants, organisations or projects in regional locations. This includes Circa's large-scale travelling circus performances in Cairns, Mackay, Broadbeach and Toowoomba; an Outback Music Trail in Jimbour, Miles, Charleville and Windorah presented by Queensland Music Festival; and a regional art trail for Townsville, Charters Towers, Ingham, Palm Island and Magnetic Island.

A highlight of the recovery package is the work we have done to help activate regional venues during the pandemic, ensuring ongoing employment for artists and arts workers. This includes 65 grants through the Play Local and Creative to Go programs to support the hiring of local talent and

programming in regional venues. Creative to Go is supporting 38 projects and 468 artists with more than \$592,000 to deliver live performances and engagement activities in regional venues. For example, Creative to Go supported Delta Divas, a cabaret show of music from the 1960s to tour Bundaberg, Monto, Proston and Childers in September. The Live Music Venue Support program is also helping music venues in Kuranda, Cairns, Bundaberg, Gold Coast and Airlie Beach to offset the costs of delivering live performances, providing \$180,000 to nine regional venues statewide. Cultural tourism is also being supported through the Open Air program with funding for arts and cultural activations in outdoor and non-traditional settings, including across regional Queensland.

Arts Queensland will continue to deliver \$13.8 million in ongoing funding to regional arts activities. This includes \$2.46 million through the Regional Arts Services Network, RASN, which is helping to connect communities, supporting positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and providing employment for artists. RASN will also deliver a \$2.2 million workers' assistance package for the arts sector. This package includes \$1 million for eight creative business advisers located across the RASN network in regional Queensland. We are also continuing to invest in the longstanding Regional Arts Development Fund, supporting regional artists, arts workers and communities through an investment of \$2.08 million. The Palaszczuk government continues to invest in regional arts experiences and artists to drive creativity, deliver social and economic impacts, and secure culturally vibrant and resilient communities. I look forward to updating members further in the future.

CHAIR: Minister, the opposition just had a couple of questions. One relates to the QPAC CEO and COVID; the other was directed to the DDG, Arts Queensland.

Ms ENOCH: I am happy to provide that answer: \$15,000 was received from Arts Queensland under their live music support program for costs associated with ensuring COVID-safe practices are upheld during the centre activation. The funding provided was to support venue costs for cleaning, additional casual staff and appropriate venue demarcation to support the delivery of their COVID-safe plan.

CHAIR: The question for the DDG of Arts Queensland?

Ms ENOCH: I am also happy to provide that answer, and I want to thank all of the members who quickly searched through the database. The organisation in question, while eligible, has not successfully applied for support through funding programs available through Arts Queensland. All of these grants are independently peer assessed. I would direct the member to the \$3.5 million allocated to the Backing Indigenous Arts program in 2020-21 to support that organisation in further applications if that is what they seek to do.

CHAIR: Minister, I now ask you to provide a two-minute closing statement.

Ms ENOCH: I would like to thank the chair and other committee members for their time today. Thank you also to Hansard and other parliamentary staff who contribute to the smooth running of this process. Thank you to the director-general, who has become the new director-general of this newly formed department, and of course the deputy directors-general who have all worked around the clock to support the work today.

I would also like to acknowledge all of the staff from the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy and the CEO of the Residential Tenancies Authority. I would also like to thank Arts Queensland, the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, the State Library of Queensland, Queensland Museum Network, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and the Queensland Performing Arts Company, all of whom have worked incredibly hard over this last year and certainly in supplying all of the work that was required for today. I particularly thank everybody across the arts sector who were very heavily impacted by COVID-19 and have rebounded stronger than ever. All have worked tirelessly to prepare for this hearing in what has been a year of absolutely extraordinary circumstances.

Finally, thank you to my ministerial staff for the work they have done in preparing for today. It has been a huge team effort. I also thank the people of Queensland for all the work they have done to ensure Queensland has managed the health crisis so successfully and in the way they have continued to unite and recover for Queensland's prosperity.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolios of communities, housing, digital economy and the arts has expired. I note that there were no questions taken on notice by the minister during this session. The committee has resolved that answers to questions, if needed, must be provided to our secretariat by 10 am Friday,

18 December. 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 the parliament's website within approximately two hours. I thank the minister and departmental officers for your attendance.

The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 12.30 pm with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

Proceedings suspended from 11.45 am to 12.30 pm.

ESTIMATES—COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE— SENIORS, DISABILITY SERVICES AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTNERSHIPS

In Attendance

Hon. CD Crawford, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

Ms K Kiss, Chief of Staff

Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships


Dr C Sarra, Director-General

Ms M Curtis, Associate Director-General

Mr M Lupi, Assistant Director-General, Disability Accommodation, Respite and Forensic Services

Ms J Lynas, Director of Forensic Disability

Ms K Parton, Deputy Director-General, Policy and Corporate Services

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 3.15 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 1.45 pm to 2 pm. The visiting member present at the moment is the member for Surfers Paradise, Mr John-Paul Langbroek.

I remind those present this afternoon that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today as chair 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. I also welcome Mr Mike Webb and Mr Duke Moolenaar, Auslan interpreters from Deaf Services Queensland. 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 seniors and disability services 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 Crawford: Thank you. I respectfully acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we are meeting today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I acknowledge the committee members and parliamentary staff supporting the committee. I introduce my director-general, Dr Chris Sarra, and my associate director-general, Mary-Anne Curtis, and a range of deputy and assistant directors-general and staff behind me from the department.

I feel privileged to share the vision and achievements of the newly formed Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships with your committee. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, seniors and people with disability make valuable and far-reaching contributions to our communities. Just as all Queenslanders have different needs and priorities, all should have the opportunity to thrive with their human rights respected. As a government, we have a responsibility to ensure seniors, people with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Queenslanders are empowered, are treated with respect and dignity, and have equal access to pathways into employment and social, cultural and economic opportunities. We will build on previous good work and find new ways of working together to ensure that investment, infrastructure and service delivery are driven at the local level to meet local needs and aspirations.

The Palaszczuk government is honouring our commitment to reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. We have commenced work on the next steps towards implementation of the recommendations of the eminent panel treaty report tabled in the Queensland parliament in August of this year. We are in the process of finalising appointments to the Treaty Advancement Committee who will provide expert advice to the government on the implementation of the recommendations. We are committed to get this right—to ensuring that we have the right processes and supports in place to facilitate this important journey that we need to take together.

In July 2020 the Palaszczuk government signed the new national closing the gap agreement, committing to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards 16 new targets aimed at improving life outcomes. We know that the targets are ambitious and that we have a lot of work ahead of us, but with a refreshed national agreement and strong momentum for change we will continue to work with First Nation people towards achieving each of the 16 targets by 2031. With the passing of the Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa act in September 2020, we have progressed work towards the recruitment of the commissioner and the establishment of the commissioner's office. I understand the role will be advertised nationally on 18 December, so we are on track to commence applications for recognition of Torres Strait Islander traditional child-rearing practices from 1 July 2021.

We will also continue to be strong advocates for Queenslanders with disability so that people with disability can achieve their goals and aspirations. On Thursday 3 December, I was able to join with people with disability and sporting wheelies for a game of goalball on the Speaker's Green to mark International Day of People with Disability. I was able to see firsthand the benefits that true inclusion and access can make. I am proud of our ongoing support of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, NDIS, with \$1.974 billion estimated as Queensland's cash contribution to the scheme this financial year. The scheme is not just supporting approximately 78,800 Queenslanders with active NDIS plans; it is also creating jobs and boosting the economy.

Additionally, our state's progress to an age friendly Queensland where seniors are supported, valued and respected in our community remains a priority. We know that the cost-of-living pressures can affect older Queenslanders, and particularly pensioners. The concessions and rebates towards energy, rates and water costs that my department administers go a long way towards helping seniors and eligible Queenslanders make ends meet. Additionally, we continue to raise awareness of elder abuse and address this insidious form of abuse. The COVID-19 pandemic saw the number of seniors reporting elder abuse or seeking assistance rise, as many older Queenslanders stayed at home and were less connected to their support networks. We will ensure a voice for carers on matters that are important to this significant and growing cohort of Queenslanders by progressing new appointments to the Queensland Carers Advisory Council. I undertake to deliver this commitment in the first half of the new year.

My department and the Queensland government are taking forward an ambitious and exciting agenda in the spirit of inclusion, access, equity and reconciliation. As COVID-19 restrictions ease, we are focused on economic recovery to help ensure all Queenslanders have opportunities to thrive. As we have seen this year, when we work together in genuine partnership, when we embrace humanity, strength, resilience and the abilities of all Queenslanders, we can achieve tremendous outcomes.

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

Mr BENNETT: I pass to the member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. I also welcome the minister, the director-general and senior departmental heads, and acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. I also welcome our Auslan interpreters and other members of the committee. Minister, my first question relates to page 118 of the SDS at dot points 2 and 3 and it is about elder abuse and seniors and the relevant helpline numbers. Can you confirm for the committee that the elder abuse helpline number is 1300651192 and the seniors helpline number is 1300135500?

Mr CRAWFORD: I thank the member for the question. Elder abuse, as I said in my opening remarks, is insidious and it has certainly seen a growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. In respect of what are the numbers themselves—can the member go through those numbers again for me?

Mr LANGBROEK: The Elder Abuse Helpline number is 1300651192 and the seniors helpline is 1300135500.

Mr CRAWFORD: I will take that question on notice. I will answer that before the end of the session. Hang on, stand by. Elder abuse prevention is 1300651192. I will get clarification on the other one.

Mr LANGBROEK: Sure, okay.

CHAIR: Member, just to clarify, the Minister will not take that on notice but will have it to us by the end of the session?

Mr CRAWFORD: Correct.

CHAIR: Member for Surfers Paradise?

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Chair. I seek leave to table a copy of screenshots of the Care Army website, because it is relevant to this question. I have made a number of copies.

CHAIR: Thank you, member. Could you just pass myself and the secretariat a copy? The member for Surfers Paradise has asked for leave to table the document. Committee, is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The minister might like to have a look at this. I ask the minister why, on the Care Army website, the same number is given for the seniors helpline and the Elder Abuse Helpline?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member. The first point is that the Care Army is administered by the new department of communities, which appeared before estimates earlier in this session. The document to which the member refers is not actually a matter for this department. The Seniors Enquiry Line is the 1300135500 line, which is what is on the member's document. I do not understand the member's questioning.

Mr LANGBROEK: Minister, I presume that in the preparation for the Care Army the information about the Seniors Enquiry Line and Elder Abuse Helpline would have come to communities for the Care Army website from the minister's department, how could the same number be provided for both lines?

Mr CRAWFORD: I cannot make assumptions on what decisions would have been made at that time. That was during the previous government when the department was the department of communities, disability services and seniors. There may have been reasons why they did that. I do not have that information for which you are asking.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, member.

Mr LANGBROEK: That is fine, thank you, Minister. With the same reference, how can Queenslanders have confidence in recent news items—and, in fact, the minister's own statement a few minutes ago—that phone calls re elder abuse have increased when the phone number that has been widely promoted is exactly the same as the seniors helpline number?

CHAIR: Member, before the minister responds, can I ask if you would mind rephrasing that question slightly so that you are not seeking an opinion?

Mr LANGBROEK: Certainly, Madam Chair. My question is: given that the same numbers have been provided for both helplines, can the minister advise whether the statistics from the calls that have been received will stand up to appropriate scrutiny in terms of the appropriate areas they were meant to go to?

Mr CRAWFORD: I have much confidence that, if a Queensland resident rang the 1300135500 number with a concern or a problem, they would have got the advice or the referral they were looking for. Whether that would then translate to the statistics that the member is referencing, that is a question to which I do not know the answer. I do not think anyone knows the answer to that.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. Madam Chair, my next question: is it possible for the committee to be given the numbers of calls that were made to either of those helplines?

Mr CRAWFORD: Madam Chair, I will take that one on notice. As I mentioned before, because the department split during the machinery-of-government change, some of that information may not be accessible to us right here right now as it would have been in Minister Enoch's portfolio, who was here earlier. I will take that question on notice so that my staff can have a look at it. If I can come back at the end of the session, I will provide a response as to whether we will be able to give that information today or whether it is available at all.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Member for Surfers Paradise?

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I move on then to the Forensic Disability Service and the answer to question on notice No. 14? Can the minister confirm in the last 12 months that Forensic Disability Service clients have had holidays and excursions, including Christmas lights bus tours?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member. If the member is happy, I might ask the Director of Forensic Disability Services, Jenny Lynas, to come up to the table and answer that question and any particular questions about the FDS that are relevant. I am happy for the member to continue the questioning to her.

CHAIR: Welcome.

Ms Lynas: Thank you.

CHAIR: Do you need the member to reread his question?

Ms Lynas: For the benefit of the committee, my role is to provide statutory oversight of the Forensic Disability Service to facilitate the proper and efficient administration of the Forensic Disability Act and to protect and monitor the rights of persons detained at the Forensic Disability Service. Part of my role includes oversighting the compliance of matters such as limited community treatment, which I imagine the Forensic Disability Service is accessing to enable clients to continue their connection with their communities and practise some of the skills they have applied and learnt through rehabilitation and habilitation. The actual operational aspects of those decisions are made within the Forensic Disability Service by a departmental representative. I can talk broadly around limited community treatment. In terms of the specifics of the types of activities, I can talk again generally but, in terms of that specific Christmas lights tour, that may have been prior to my time.

CHAIR: Member, do you have a further question?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, I do, Madam Chair. If the director cannot answer it, perhaps I can ask the Minister if he will be able to find out through the department if a client of the Forensic Disability Service has been on a Christmas lights bus tour?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member. I am happy to get to the bottom of the questioning. I might ask Matthew Lupi to come up to the table. He might be able to give you some insight.

CHAIR: Welcome Mr Lupi.

Mr Lupi: Thank you, Chair. I thank the member for the question. To be clear, the outings to which you are referring are authorised by the Mental Health Review Tribunal. Clients at the Forensic Disability Service have conditions that support their transition, treatment and rehabilitation which means important aspects of engaging still in services external to the Forensic Disability Service, such as work programs, church groups in some cases, and sporting and medical appointments. LCT is authorised under the Mental Health Review Tribunal, so outings such as that would be then assessed in terms of the value to the client's treatment. Yes, in the past I can confirm that an important part of keeping clients connected with the rituals that you and I get to enjoy every year is also taking them out on Christmas Eve or in the week leading up to it to see Christmas lights in a safe and supported way, and they are always escorted.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you.

CHAIR: Member, do you have a further question?

Mr LANGBROEK: I do. My next question, Mr Lupi—and thank you for that last answer—is: can you confirm that, due to a client complaint that he or she could not disembark from the bus that had been organised due to inclement weather, a second Christmas lights tour was arranged?

Mr Lupi: I am not aware of a specific incident. I can follow that up, if you like. I know that over the last couple of years there have been tours. I know that there has been at least one occasion where the weather has interrupted that. As I would with my children, I would organise a second event if I could. It is always done within operational convenience and the clinical risk assessment. I am sure I can get confirmation. If you have a year time frame it would be helpful, member. I am not being disrespectful, but—

Mr LANGBROEK: Not at all. I think it was last Christmas. The information I have been given is that it was last Christmas.

Mr CRAWFORD: I am happy to take that question on notice. We will try to get an answer by the end of the session if we can.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Lupi. Minister could you provide the total cost of security measures, including staff costs, for client excursions and holidays associated—outings—in 2019-20 and anticipated budget costs in 2020-21?

Mr CRAWFORD: I might ask Mr Lupi to take that one as well.

Mr Lupi: The total budget in 2020-21 for the Forensic Disability Service is \$7,560,014. That is marginally up on the budget from the previous year of \$7,497,266. We do not have a specific breakdown of what you refer to as holidays. We have a program investment of clinicians and community support workers. The LCT you are referring to is part of a transition plan for clients. It is a very structured activity. In some instances they are returning to their community of origin to engage with family or to engage with support services that will support them when they leave the FDS. Far be it from me to say, but I do not think they are holidays at all; I think they are part of a clinical treatment program and a service program. The full costs of those are absorbed within the full budget and the staffing costs of the service.

CHAIR: I will now move to the crossbench.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a number of questions in relation to the Forensic Disability Service as well. It may be that those are questions for Mr Lupi or others. Question on notice 19(b) notes that one person has been detained for nine years and four months at the FDS. Is it the case that, effectively, that person has been detained since the FDS has opened?

Mr CRAWFORD: I will ask Matthew Lupi to respond.

Mr Lupi: I think the client you are referring to entered the service shortly after the service was commissioned. They were ordered to be detained at the service by the Mental Health Court at the time. I think it was about 2012. The service was commissioned just before that, so they were not the first client admitted.

Mr BERKMAN: It seems like the sums do not quite add up. I would have assumed that nine years and four months would have taken us back into 2011. Perhaps that is a question of arithmetic that we can deal with later. Is the person you are referring to the man referred to as 'Adrian' in the Queensland Ombudsman's report?

Mr CRAWFORD: Madam Chair, I do not want our department to divulge any information that might breach a person's privacy. I just caution you on that question.

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly.

CHAIR: Yes, that is right. Member, under the standing orders we do need to be cautious about using names. If you could rephrase your question—

Mr BERKMAN: I might just preface the question by saying that the person referred to by the name 'Adrian' is explicitly referred to in the Ombudsman's report and is referred to in the questions on notice and the answers. This is not new information and I do not think it in fact identifies a person by their actual personal particulars. I am just trying to establish: is that person the same person who is referred to in these reports and in the questions on notice and answers as 'Adrian'?

Mr CRAWFORD: I am happy for Mr Lupi to take that question.

Mr Lupi: Yes, I can confirm that the person referred to in answer to question on notice 19 as 'Adrian' is the client you are referring to.

CHAIR: Member, you have one last question before we move to government questions.

Mr BERKMAN: Point of order, Chair. Can I inquire: how many minutes have you allowed me to question so far? Is there a reason I cannot be allowed to pursue a slightly longer line of questioning than the, I would suggest, maybe three or four minutes I have been allowed so far?

CHAIR: Member, we may have time to come back to you. You have one more question.

Mr BERKMAN: Is the man referred to as 'Adrian' still being routinely held in isolation?

Mr Lupi: I can confirm for the committee that, subject to the Forensic Disability Act, which allows for a senior practitioner to make an order for seclusion if it is for the client's safety or for the safety of others, a client may be separated from other parties. In terms of one particular client, referred to in the Ombudsman's report—they have been at the FDS for a long period of time and they are an incredibly complex and challenging client—it is the case that, to manage the daily risk for staff, for that client themselves and for other clients at the service, there are often periods of seclusion from other clients

and from staff for safety. Those are always risk assessed decisions taken by duly qualified officers under the policies and procedures issued by the Director of Forensic Disability and in accordance with the act.

The client while in seclusion, just to be clear, has full access to all of their personal possessions. They have access to their bedroom, their bathroom, a living room, a craft room and two outdoor areas. The only area that a normal resident of the FDS would have other access to is the kitchen. It is not what would be painted as isolation, and staff are constantly engaging with that client whilst they are in that arrangement, and the client at any time can make requests of staff for any of their needs.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Lupi—

Mr BERKMAN: Can I just check, though—

CHAIR: Order!

Mr BERKMAN: I will use your terminology. Is he still being held in seclusion—

CHAIR: Order!

Mr BERKMAN: The question was not answered, Chair.

CHAIR: Member, we will come back to your question.

Mr BERKMAN: Can I ask that the witness answer the question?

CHAIR: Member—

Mr BERKMAN: Is the man referred to as 'Adrian' still being held in seclusion in the FDS?

CHAIR: Member, it is now time to move on to government questions. Minister, with reference to volume 2, page 118 of the SDS regarding seniors, can you advise our committee of the one-stop shop for seniors initiative?

Mr CRAWFORD: The one-stop shop for seniors is a delivered 2015 election commitment that makes it easier for seniors to receive information about and access cost-of-living concessions. It consists of services for seniors that span across online, phone and technical skills development. Through the one-stop shop, seniors can receive information on legal matters, finance and concessions, home support and housing, health, recreation and staying connected, transport, safety and protection, retirement, education, work and technology and grandparenting.

The Seniors Concession Online Service is a significant part of the election commitment, enabling seniors to apply for cards and concessions through a simple, timesaving application process. Released on 14 January 2019, the Seniors Concession Online Service is operated by Smart Service Queensland and provides access to concessions on vehicle registration, electricity, reticulated natural gas, water and rates. In addition, it supports the Seniors Card that provides eligible seniors with access to a range of Queensland government concessions, from the free Senior Shopper to a range of other discounts. It also supports the Seniors Card +go to provide eligible seniors with free go cards through a joint Seniors Card and go card product.

Seniors receive the combined benefits of both cards, including access to discounted fares and a range of Queensland government concessions, and the Seniors Business Discount Card to provide eligible seniors who remain in the workforce with access to discounts on goods and services at participating outlets throughout Queensland.

Mr SKELTON: Minister, I refer to volume 2 page 118 of the SDS with regard to seniors. What is the Palaszczuk government doing to support progress to an age-friendly Queensland that supports our growing seniors cohort to live with dignity in their later years?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you for the question. It is interesting to note that Queensland seniors were invisible under the Newman government. The LNP thought so little of Queensland seniors that they did not even have a minister covering seniors. The Palaszczuk government, in contrast, recognises seniors as an important and growing cohort of Queenslanders who have much to offer to their communities and their state. I am honoured to be asked to serve as the Minister for Seniors in this 57th Parliament. An age-friendly community is one where older people are valued, respected and actively supported to participate in their communities. We want older Queenslanders to lead active, connected and fulfilled lives.

Since the launch of Queensland's age-friendly community strategy and action plan in 2016, the Queensland government continues to be committed to implementing an age-friendly community approach to support older Queenslanders. I am proud of the Palaszczuk government's age-friendly strategy. It enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone

with respect, regardless of their age. It is an initiative that makes it easier for older people to stay connected to people that are important to them and it helps seniors stay healthy and active, even at the oldest ages, and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.

Some \$3 million has been allocated by the Palaszczuk government to support projects funded across all eight age-friendly domains. The Palaszczuk government made a commitment to update the action plan as required. The plan is dynamic in its form. It is a document that has been updated twice already since 2016. The plan has been informed by extensive consultation, including a community survey which attracted more than 9,000 responses, and the first iteration contains 79 actions across 14 government agencies. I want to thank and recognise Queensland seniors for the incredible hardship that they went through during the recent COVID-19 epidemic. I know that a lot of seniors went without support services being easily accessible, they went without being able to leave many of their houses and they also went without being able to see loved ones. We are very fortunate to live in this great state.

Ms LUI: Minister, I refer to volume 2 page 118 of the SDS with regard to seniors. Sadly, we are aware that some of our senior Queenslanders are at risk or subject to elder abuse. Can you inform the committee what the Palaszczuk government is doing to support these most vulnerable in our community?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Cook. Elder abuse has been a shameful secret for too many seniors because often the perpetrator is a close family member or friend. Elder abuse commonly occurs in close family relationships. To help prevent elder abuse, the Palaszczuk government runs an annual elder abuse awareness campaign timed around World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June. The 2019-20 elder abuse campaign was titled 'Elder abuse happens. Know the signs, make it stop' and ran during May and June 2020, including across World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It highlighted the increased risks of elder abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic and encouraged people to phone the elder abuse hotline for advice and support to keep vulnerable Queenslanders safe. Calls to the helpline increased during the campaign. There were 612 calls received during May and June which is an increase of 27 per cent from the March-April 2020 mark. Many people also accessed the campaign website which provides information about elder abuse and how to get help. Website views totalled 20,482 during May and June, which was an increase of 1,400 per cent when compared to the March-April period.

The department has committed \$5 million in the 2020-21 financial year for elder abuse prevention, support and awareness raising, which includes almost \$800,000 for the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit and helpline, \$400,000 for specialist financial information and support, \$100,000 for scams and fraud protection via the Seniors Enquiry Line and \$3.7 million for seniors legal services. Many seniors are unable to afford private legal advice to help them end the abuse. The Queensland government funds 11 seniors legal and support services to support seniors in need of legal advice. I think it is all of our responsibilities as Queenslanders, whether it is at work or at home or as neighbours, to identify the signs of elder abuse and please speak up and defend someone who may not be able to defend themselves.

CHAIR: Minister, I refer to volume 2 page 118 of the SDS with regard to seniors. Some older Queenslanders are unfortunately at risk of social isolation and loneliness owing to a lack of mobility, the loss of friends and family and financial constraints. How is the Palaszczuk government supporting these seniors to live a better life?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, Chair. Approximately 25 per cent of older Queenslanders in private dwellings live alone, with women more likely than men to be by themselves. As Queenslanders age, they can be at risk of isolation due to mobility and transport issues. The proportion of seniors with a driver's licence falls away from age 70 onwards, with less than 40 per cent retaining a driver's licence in their 80s. Social isolation has a detrimental impact on health and wellbeing. As a result, the Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting older Queenslanders to be more socially connected and providing a protective factor to both physical health and mental health, wellbeing as well as the risk of elder abuse and suicide.

In 2016 the Premier launched the *Queensland: an age-friendly community—strategic direction statement* and implementation plan to make sure there is additional support for seniors in the eight domains of transport, housing, outdoor spaces and buildings, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services. In the 2019-20 budget the Queensland government invested \$3.6 million in seniors social isolation programs that operate in 43 locations across the state, from Thursday Island in the north

to Inglewood and St George in the west and all across South-East Queensland. These programs are available to Queenslanders over 60 years of age and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over 50 years of age who experience barriers to accessing community and personal supports.

Mr SKELTON: Minister, I refer to volume 2 page 118 of the SDS with regard to seniors. Can you inform the committee how the Palaszczuk government assists Queensland seniors to navigate services to ensure that they are able to access the support they need?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Nicklin. For some of the more than 800,000 Queenslanders who are over 65 years of age, navigating what is available can prove to be a challenge. For example, the increasing digitisation of information sources often results in seniors being unable to source information in a location and format that is accessible to them. The Palaszczuk government has a strong record in supporting seniors through a range of initiatives that help them navigate the increasingly complex care and support sector. It is committed to ensuring that Queensland seniors are able to access the services they need.

The seniors one-stop shop, as I mentioned before, was a 2015 election commitment that makes it easier for seniors to receive information and access cost-of-living concessions available through the government. The Seniors Enquiry Line, 1300135500, is a statewide information and referral service for Queensland seniors, families, friends, grandparents and carers. That inquiry line is operated by UnitingCare Queensland on behalf of the government. It provides advice and referral information across community, local, state and Commonwealth matters. Assistance and referrals on social activities, household assistance, retirement accommodation, financial and legal matters, health, education, transport and many other topics are provided through this service. I can report that at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 public health advice recommended that Queensland seniors self-isolate, and the community response was outstanding. The Seniors Enquiry Line was expanded to provide social, emotional and practical supports to seniors and to link older people to local community services with the Care Army volunteers.

In addition to these two main information provision mechanisms, the government also funds a number of specialist seniors information and support services. As I mentioned before, that includes the 11 seniors legal and support services and 43 seniors social isolation programs across the state.

Ms LUI: Minister, with reference to volume 2 page 119 of the SDS, can you please outline what protections are available for people with disability who are in the NDIS and Queensland's role in this going forward?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Cook. As the new minister for disability services, my key priority is to keep Queenslanders with disability safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Under the NDIS, nationally consistent quality and safeguards are in place under the jurisdiction of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission commenced operation in Queensland on 1 July 2019 and is now responsible for the oversight of registered NDIS providers. That includes registered providers for NDIS in Queensland, monitoring and enforcing compliance, receiving and investigating complaints about NDIS supports and services.

The Queensland government also has a range of quality and safeguarding functions to complement the jurisdiction of the NDIS commission. For example, operating a worker screening system for NDIS, including yellow cards; authorising the use of restrictive practices; and operating a community visitor function which is administered by the Office of the Public Guardian.

The Queensland government also administers the Human Services Quality Framework which is a comprehensive set of service quality standards for disability services provided outside of the NDIS. We also continue to manage complaints alleging non-compliance with legislation administered by the department, including the Disability Services Act 2006 and the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009. Complaints and compliance issues can be raised by a range of parties including family members, concerned citizens, staff members, advocates, clients and NDIS participants and service providers. The department works across all agencies and levels of government to ensure safeguards are effective and seamless.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and a range of other inquiries and reviews are identifying opportunities to improve quality and safeguards under the NDIS. The Palaszczuk government is closely monitoring the disability royal commission and will seriously consider all findings and recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

CHAIR: I now call the opposition for their next question.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Chair. My reference is the answer to question on notice 2. It is about disability advocacy. Will the government provide resources beyond 30 June 2021 for disability advocacy, noting that New South Wales has?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you for the question. As you would note in the budget, we have funded disability advocacy in this budget. We are currently working with the Commonwealth, as well as other states, in that space beyond 2021. That work is ongoing. Future funding arrangements for advocacy are linked to the current work that we are doing with the Commonwealth government to undertake a gap and needs analysis.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next reference is the answer to question on notice 11 to do with the NDIS and I ask: how many people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or both are in the NDIS?

Mr CRAWFORD: While that exact number comes to me, can I say that it certainly has been an area that was identified where there is still much more work to do, not only in the broader space of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders but also the further you get away from the south-east corner as well where we have more work to do around identifying people who would be eligible for the NDIS as well as work to do around ensuring that we can get more providers in many of those locations providing that work.

The number, as of September 2020, is around 8,000, of the almost 90,000 Queenslanders who are either in or seeking access to the NDIS, identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. That is 9.2 per cent currently. The national average is 6.6 per cent. We are above the national average, but we still have more work to do in identifying and encouraging more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access the NDIS. There is good work going on out there. The government negotiated a \$20 million investment from the Commonwealth to support NDIS access for hard-to-reach clients and those funds have been used in rolling out a statewide assessment and referral team which so far has done an outstanding job of being able to work out there in Queensland and actually accelerate people, who probably did not even know they were eligible for NDIS, and get them onto the system. There is more work to be done in that space.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. I return now to the Forensic Disability Service and I ask the minister have there been any cases of FDS clients absconding whilst on holidays or excursions that necessitated police involvement to recover them?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you for the question.

Mr SKELTON: Point of order. We clarified that these excursions are not holidays. It is offering an opinion.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nicklin. Minister, I will hand over to you to respond or call your delegate as you see fit.

Mr CRAWFORD: I might ask Jenny Lynas to come to the table. She might be able to answer that.

CHAIR: Do you need to have the question re-read?

Ms Lynas: Yes, please.

Mr LANGBROEK: The question was have there been any cases of FDS clients absconding whilst on holidays or excursions that necessitated police involvement to recover them?

Ms Lynas: I thank the honourable member for the question. Limited community treatment conditions, as we heard, are approved by the Mental Health Review Tribunal as part of a forensic order taking into consideration a client's risk and what is considered to keep themselves and others safe. LCT is supported to assist and rehabilitate and to promote quality of life and to assist with reintegration back into people's communities. It occurs on a graduated basis with people spending increasing amounts of time in the community as they transfer through the disability service and particularly as they lead up to transitioning from the service.

There are Director of Forensic Disability policies and procedures, as there are Forensic Disability Service operational practice guidelines which outline how these events are to occur. The key safeguards include ensuring environmental risk assessments are undertaken for every venue and location, that the client is subject to dynamic risk assessment prior to and during those LCT events and LCT conditions require senior practitioner approval.

In response to the question, there was one incident involving a client absconding during LCT during 2019-20. This occurred in September 2019. Being mindful that there are confidentiality provisions which prevent me from talking too much about the details of that specific client—and I need to remain in that scope—however, I can advise that the incident occurred in Townsville when the client

was accessing escorted overnight leave as approved by the Mental Health Review Tribunal. The client was in his room at 3.45 am but at 4 am was identified as missing. The staff at the service who were supporting that LCT contacted police immediately and both police and the Forensic Disability Service took steps to locate that client and he was located approximately one hour later. There are no reported police incidents or concerning behaviour during that period that the client was absent from supervision and the client was safely returned to the Forensic Disability Service.

I can advise that the former Director of Forensic Disability completed a review of the September 2019 incident and, while there are some opportunities to improve practice, it was concluded that the client was supported by a capable staffing team who undertook their duties diligently, escalating the incident appropriately and taking steps to immediately locate the client. As a result of those procedures and the work of staff involved, the client was safely located within a short amount of time and there were no charges or concerning behaviours.

In response to that question, I cannot underemphasise the importance of allowing clients to access LCT as approved by the Mental Health Review Tribunal, particularly when it comes to maintaining connection with community.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Ms Lynas, for that answer. My next question references the answer to question on notice 14. Minister, how many forensic orders, disability, are currently in place in Queensland?

Mr CRAWFORD: Ms Lynas is still at the table. I might ask her to take that question, if you are happy with that.

Ms Lynas: I can talk about the number of clients being overlooked by the Forensic Disability Service. The community clients who are subject to forensic orders, disability, are also managed and overlooked by the Chief Psychiatrist, so I do not have those current figures at present.

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, you are welcome to ask a question. Member for Maiwar, I remind you that you must put your questions to the minister or to the director-general.

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. I will put this question to the director-general in the first instance. Have any charges been laid in relation to breaches of the Forensic Disability Act or other unlawful conduct at the FDS, whether or not those incidents were identified in the Queensland Ombudsman's report?

Dr Sarra: I will ask Jenny Lynas to respond to that particular question, thank you.

Ms Lynas: That is probably best dealt with by Mr Lupi, as I take it that you are talking about staffing.

Mr CRAWFORD: I am happy with that, Chair.

Mr Lupi: Through you, Madam Chair, can I ask the member to repeat the question so that I can be really clear?

Mr BERKMAN: Have any charges been laid in relation to breaches of the Forensic Disability Act or other unlawful conduct at the FDS, whether or not those incidents were identified in the Queensland Ombudsman's report?

Mr Lupi: I can advise that I am not aware of any charges laid by Queensland police against staff at the Forensic Disability Service for breaches under the Forensic Disability Act. If there were matters that were not brought to our attention, that is a matter for police. I am not aware of any.

Mr BERKMAN: The answer to question on notice 15(c), in relation to the Queensland Ombudsman's report, states, 'All recommendations have been actioned and finalised.' Minister, based on your personal knowledge of the FDS, do you understand that to be the case?

Mr CRAWFORD: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: I have further questions, Chair, if I could be allowed just a moment longer.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maiwar. Unfortunately we have to move to government members. I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr BERKMAN: Two minutes questioning, Chair? Honestly. As a full-time member of this committee I am making a genuine request that you afford me more than two minutes at a time to ask questions.

CHAIR: I am sorry, member: on the first occasion you were given five minutes. I have asked the member for Nicklin to resume the questioning.

Mr SKELTON: Minister, can you explain the steps taken to achieve an inclusive society for Queenslanders with a disability through the All Abilities Queensland: Opportunities for all initiative?

Mr CRAWFORD: All levels of government and the private sector need to make sure that Queensland communities are inclusive communities. This means that we need to make sure our community is welcoming and supportive of people with disability when they want to get jobs, participate in education and community activities, receive everyday services and participate in society as leaders. The Palaszczuk government is working to achieve all of those goals through the All Abilities Queensland: Opportunity for all—State disability plan 2017-2020, the All Abilities plan.

The All Abilities plan is given effect by all departments through having disability service plans. Section 221 of the Disability Services Act 2006 requires every Queensland government department to develop and implement a disability service plan, or a DSP, at least once every three years. Those agency-specific plans are a critical mechanism for ensuring Queensland government departments have regard to human rights principles, service delivery principles and government policies for people with disability. Departments report annually on progress against their disability service plans, supporting whole-of-government progress reports on All Abilities plan implementation.

A final progress report and the current All Abilities Queensland plan is being prepared and will be released soon. A highlight of the 2017-2020 progress report will be our \$2 billion investment to make sure that people have more choice and control through receiving services from the NDIS. A key commitment of my charter letter is to deliver the next All Abilities Queensland plan, in collaboration with the All Abilities Queensland Plan Working Party, focusing on employment opportunities for people with disability.

The next state disability plan is being developed in step with the new National Disability Strategy, which was delayed due to COVID-19 but is currently underway. To ensure continued focus and action during the development of the National Disability Strategy and the next state disability plan, all Queensland government agencies have updated their disability service plans for the 2020-21 period. The updated plans also include information about their response to COVID-19. It is anticipated that the next state disability plan will cover the period 2021-24.

Aside from the NDIS implementation, other examples of actions taken under the All Abilities plan include the implementation of Browsealoud digital accessibility software on the Queensland legislation website by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training's Skilling Queenslanders for Work assisted 1,583 people with disability by providing supported training; and the Queensland Museum at South Bank presented four sensory-friendly days. A lot of work is being done, but a lot of work continues to happen. Certainly it is part of my charter letter and it will be a very exciting four years in that space.

CHAIR: Minister, with reference to volume 2, page 119, of the SDS, what support has the Queensland government provided to Queenslanders following transition to the NDIS to ensure that there are adequate transport options for Queenslanders with disability?

Mr CRAWFORD: The NDIS is responsible for transport costs for people who cannot use public transport or travel independently. However, NDIS participants have not received adequate transport funding in their plans. The Palaszczuk government has stepped up and enabled NDIS participants to continue to access the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, which is administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

In 2020-21 the government has committed \$13.56 million to continue the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, which includes NDIS participants. There is also \$6.09 million to continue incentive payments for drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis, to give priority to Taxi Subsidy Scheme members. There is \$21 million over four years to support the modernisation and expansion of Queensland's wheelchair accessible fleet with \$5.6 million committed in 2020-21 alone. There is the \$23 million COVID-19 stimulus package for taxis and limousines, including additional incentive payments for wheelchair accessible taxi drivers.

The longer term policy for transport under the NDIS is expected to be considered by disability ministers in 2021. The Queensland government will be reimbursed by the Commonwealth government for the cost of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme for NDIS participants to ensure that services are not disrupted while longer term arrangements are put in place at a national level.

Ms LUI: Minister, with reference to SDS volume 2, page 119, can you advise if Queensland is ready to meet the Commonwealth government's NDIS worker screening national commencement date?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Cook. As the member would be aware, parliament recently passed the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill on 4 December 2020. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commissioner, in June 2020, amended the

transitional arrangements in the worker screening rules to extend the existing transitional arrangements until 1 February 2021. Queensland is working towards this commencement date and is in close contact with the Commonwealth government.

The bill will commence by proclamation which requires executive council approval. This approach enables flexibility for the government to decide the appropriate timing for commencement in early 2021, taking into consideration operational readiness of providers and the workforce. Queensland has been working towards being ready for implementation of NDIS worker screening for some time, including extensive collaboration with other states and the Commonwealth, the disability sector and other departments.

The new system will strengthen worker screening through a new No Card, No Start arrangement, and a contemporary risk assessment framework. It will be fully automated and enable online identity verification so much faster. It will provide portal access so applicants can check on progress of their check, and it will be transferrable across Australia. It will extend the validity of the check from three to five years which will provide the opportunity for a lower annualised cost.

The Commonwealth NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has overarching responsibility for management of provider registration and communication about the NDIS worker screening change, but the department has also been communicating with the sector now for some time. They have been working with a stakeholder advisory group to guide and support the transition to NDIS worker screening to make sure the needs of the sector are met.

The department, guided by the stakeholder advisory group, has developed a communications plan. Communication about the passing of the legislation has already commenced and resources will continue to be distributed in a tailored way to each stakeholder group. There will also be a focus on ensuring specific resources exist for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support access to NDIS worker screening. A complex case committee is being established to enable specialist knowledge to be incorporated in difficult decisions, including where decisions affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants might require cultural insights.

A new information and communications technology, or ICT, system is being developed and is on track. It is currently subject to security testing with all relevant agencies and has been built with the sensitive nature of the content and privacy requirements in mind. The stakeholder advisory group has viewed and provided feedback on the new ICT system. Staff are currently being trained on the new legislation and on the ICT system. I look forward to the commencement of NDIS worker screening and the additional safeguards it will bring for people with disability and the convenience of a one national check for workers and providers.

CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I now turn to non-government members, the honourable member for Scenic Rim.

Mr KRAUSE: As member for Scenic Rim, I ask you, Minister, when will your department recognise the Scenic Rim region as a distinct district when it comes to funding, not just an 'add on' to Ipswich, Logan or the Gold Coast, to prevent funding intended to assist our region being absorbed by these larger centres? I table for the committee a document relating to various requirements for the region, some in relation to your department and other departments as well.

CHAIR: As the honourable member is a member of the committee, I ask that the parliamentary staff provide a copy to the minister and the director-general.

Mr KRAUSE: Minister, for clarity, the document tabled refers to your department in a general sense only, but the question, as it stands, in relation to funding for the Scenic Rim region, is a general question which I would appreciate your input into.

CHAIR: Minister, I will leave the choice to you, however you may wish to wait until the document is tabled and we can move on to another question until you receive a copy or—

Mr CRAWFORD: Madam Chair, until I see a copy, I am happy to talk broadly. I am running on the assumption that you are referring to the budget papers when they refer to specific regions, member?

Mr KRAUSE: Correct—Logan-Beaudesert, Ipswich, Gold Coast. We are just wrapped up in all that.

Mr CRAWFORD: I have no doubt as a local member that it is an important issue for you, but those decisions about how the budget is broken up into geographical areas is not made by individual departments. In my own electorate of Barron River, it is the Far North Queensland region that I fall into. Here comes the information now, but what I can say—

Mr KRAUSE: Minister, it is a very general question.

Mr CRAWFORD: There is a lot of information in this, member for Scenic Rim.

Mr KRAUSE: Indeed.

Mr CRAWFORD: Enough to probably occupy—

Mr KRAUSE: My point, minister, is that we are just bolted onto big centres.

Mr CRAWFORD: I understand your frustration as a local member, especially as a local member of an electorate that does border up against a big growing part of South-East Queensland. I am not in that same position as a local member, but I would understand that members from probably around in the Redlands and other growing parts, even northern Brisbane, probably have similar frustrations. I do not know if I have the answer to what it is you are looking for today.

Mr LANGBROEK: I return to my last line of questioning, Minister. I asked and I received an answer from Ms Lynas about how many forensic disability orders are currently in place. My question is now, following the ombudsman's report, are there any persons for whom the FDS is responsible but who are not detained at the FDS?

Mr CRAWFORD: I am happy for Ms Lynas to come back.

Ms Lynas: I can advise that there are currently six clients detained at the Forensic Disability Service and there is one community based client who is oversighted by the Forensic Disability Service.

Mr LANGBROEK: My question is with reference to the answer to question on notice 15. Minister, I note that you had said that all recommendations from the Ombudsman's report had been actioned and finalised. On what date was that actually finalised? Would you be able to provide that for the committee?

Mr CRAWFORD: I can advise that the report was received by the government when it was tabled on 21 August 2019. The department's initial response to the report was submitted to the Ombudsman on 20 September 2019. Going through the dates, the last of the recommendations—this is the best I can probably provide, member—is that it was closed in September 2020 at which time the department had moved all recommendations as being finalised. So the best answer I can give you right now is September 2020.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, that is great. I have a question that involves the tabling of an explanatory letter. Again I have done copies for the committee, so I seek leave to table this letter that is from a Lytton constituent—

CHAIR: Member, we will just take a moment to have a look at the letter. Member, we are happy for you to continue to ask the question.

Mr LANGBROEK: The reference is SDS, page 119, dot point 3 about accommodation support, minister. It is a quote, a highlighted portion that you will be able to see, and this particular constituent says—

There are organisations that help with the temporary and affordable accommodation whilst waiting for housing placement;
So she is waiting for housing placement—

these places do not understand or accept people with a disability and/or special needs.

My question is: isn't discrimination and will the department investigate this?

Mr CRAWFORD: I am happy to get a response. I have not seen the document; it has not come this way.

CHAIR: Prior to the committee releasing the document, I am concerned that we have a person's name and personal details. We will provide this to the minister without the person's details. The question is: that the document be tabled. I suggest that we table the document with the redaction.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, happy to have that, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Those of that opinion say Aye. Thank you, members.

Mr CRAWFORD: I am very happy to take this one offline and have my department investigate it and come back to you, whether it is to the member or the committee. There will always be individual Queenslanders who will communicate with members of parliament about grievances or issues they have. Our department is here to try to work with everyone on an individual basis. I do not really want to go into the details of this one. I am not personally aware of this one. I am not going to ask my staff to talk about it on *Hansard*, but I will give you the assurance that we will get back to you. I do not know whether that is on notice or whether we do that directly with the member for Surfers Paradise?

CHAIR: Minister, I will ask you to take that question on notice and I reiterate that the details of that constituent should be kept confidential between you and the member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr CRAWFORD: Do you want me to communicate with the committee or directly with the member?

CHAIR: If it is taken on notice it must come to us and we will ensure the member has the information.

Mr CRAWFORD: We will provide it to the committee on notice as usual and you can disseminate it as you wish to.

CHAIR: Minister, I am conscious that non-government members had a few issues that you were going to follow up on. Firstly, there was a question in relation to phone numbers and the seniors helpline and the Elder Abuse Helpline.

Mr CRAWFORD: We will finalise those at the end of the next session, if you like, Madam Chair. We will do them all at the same time.

CHAIR: The next one was the increasing number of calls to the seniors helpline and the Elder Abuse Helpline.

Mr CRAWFORD: We will do that at the end of the session too.

CHAIR: The next is the number of calls made to the seniors and elder abuse helplines.

Mr CRAWFORD: Same.

CHAIR: And there is the FDS Christmas lights matter.

Mr CRAWFORD: We will endeavour to have all of those by the end of the sessions this afternoon. The ones we cannot we will provide on notice.

CHAIR: Member for Surfers Paradise, would you so indulge the member for Maiwar to ask questions for the remaining three minutes?

Mr LANGBROEK: Certainly.

Mr BERKMAN: I will return to the question I sought an answer to in the first bracket of questions I was given. My question is to the DG. Can you confirm whether the man referred to as 'Adrian' in the Ombudsman's report is still routinely being held under seclusion orders?

Dr Sarra: The client in question obviously is incredibly complex and brings complex matters. Jenny Lynas spoke about that matter earlier. Were there some elements of her response to your question that were not attended to adequately?

Mr BERKMAN: The specific question that I have asked again and that I asked earlier of the assistant director-general is whether that man is currently routinely being held under seclusion orders? Is that still happening?

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, I am conscious that we are bordering on repetition because that question was answered earlier in the session.


Mr CRAWFORD: Madam Chair, I am happy to bring one of the departmental officials up if they can give a succinct answer to the member for Maiwar. I think broadly the answer is yes. I might ask Mr Lupi to answer that.

Mr Lupi: Just to be clear about seclusion, every period of seclusion must be authorised based on the current circumstances. A maximum period of seclusion can be only three hours. At all times while they are secluded they are under observation and supervision for their safety and wellbeing. In relation to the care of 'Adrian', his risk and his treatment plan still requires high levels of seclusion to manage his safety and the safety of staff.

There has been real progress over the last 12 months in relation to opportunities for him to get out and interact with other clients as well as exercise within the perimeter of the service. We are progress driven by the work the staff are doing around his positive behaviour support plan. Yes, as needed, the senior practitioner will make a seclusion order where it is deemed necessary.

CHAIR: It now being 1.45 pm, the committee will take a break. The hearing will resume at 2 pm with the examination of the estimates for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships portfolio.

Proceedings suspended from 1.45 pm to 1.59 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships portfolio. I also welcome Mr Rodney Curtin, Deputy Commissioner of the Family Responsibilities Commission, to the hearing. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships open for examination. The question before this committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I call the member for Burnett.

Mr BENNETT: I defer to the member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: My first question is to the minister with reference to dot point 5 on page 119 of the SDS. What action is the government taking to manage the over-representation of ATSI people on forensic disability orders?

Mr CRAWFORD: A lot of the questioning that we will have today will probably be broadly around the representation of First Nation Queenslanders in a range of places, not only forensic disability but also in corrections, youth detention and the like. This department is committed to ensuring that we can get decision-making happening closer to community—local decision-making, local thriving communities and local empowerment.

Whether we are talking about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people being in forensic disability services or whether we are talking about them being in incarceration generally, there is a large piece of work underway right now around empowering communities and empowering leadership to make decisions closer to community that represent the interests of that community.

Some of those examples may be around alcohol management plans. They could be around education. They could be around health, law enforcement and a range of other things. My answer to your question more broadly, whether we are talking about FDS or others, is that it is more about the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders around self-determination.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question is to the minister, again with reference to dot point 5 on page 119. Following the Ombudsman's report that we spoke about in the last session, could you inform the committee as to what consultation the department had with the FDS to provide a consistent whole-of-service approach to working with ATSI people, families and communities, as was recommended by the Ombudsman?

Mr CRAWFORD: That was probably more of a question for the last session because the staff members that we had here from the FDS would have been the ones who would have undertaken that work, not the staff that we have here from the previous department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. I am happy to have a quick conversation with my DG, but I think it was more for previous people. Madam Chair, I am advised that we still have Mr Lupi in the room. Bearing in mind that this is a question that does cover across two parts of the portfolio, I am happy to bring Mr Lupi forward.

CHAIR: Mr Lupi, would you mind coming to the table?

Mr CRAWFORD: He is earning his money today, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: He is. Mr Lupi, would you like the member to restate the question?

Mr Lupi: Yes, I would, Madam Chair.

Mr LANGBROEK: Welcome, Mr Lupi. The question was about, following the Ombudsman's report, a number of things had to be changed to enhance the Forensic Disability Service. The question is: what has this department done to make sure that there was a consistent whole-of-service approach to working with ATSI people, families and communities?

Mr Lupi: I am aware, through the implementation of the Ombudsman's report, that the administrator and the senior management team of the service, with my support, engaged with local Indigenous elders. At the advice of their local colleagues from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander department, as it was at the time, we engaged with some elders that are based in the Oxley-Ipswich area and started new yarning circle programs in the service for clients to ensure that they had an opportunity to have culturally appropriate connections with senior males within their community that gave them a sense of connection. That led to at least one or two clients then starting to participate in programs external to the service as part of their approved LCT to further retain that connection. At the same time when we were engaging with clients through their transition we were working with local Indigenous support groups and local elders in the communities to which they are returning.

I can confirm that we have done a number of things. There was an event, I believe, in Mabo week where Indigenous elders came in and celebrated with the Indigenous clients that are in the service. We take a whole-of-service approach. In fact, all of the clients participate in that and participate proudly in that.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question, Minister, is with reference to dot point 13 on page 123. What funding and implementation will occur in ATSI communities in this year's budget following the 2013 Smallbone report and the 2017 Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse Steering Committee report?

Mr CRAWFORD: Madam Chair, I just want to caution members about the reference to 'ATSI people'. I am not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, but I feel that the phrase 'ATSI people' could be offensive and offence could be taken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are either in the room or who are watching. I would recommend that a phrase more appropriate such as 'First Nation Queenslanders' or 'Indigenous' might be a better reference.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I ask the committee to take that advice on board.

Mr CRAWFORD: I am going to refer the question, member for Surfers Paradise, to the director-general.

Dr Sarra: Thanks for your commentary regarding that terminology. Youth sexual violence is never acceptable. It has far-reaching mental, social and long-term emotional traumatic impacts for victims, particularly women, young people and children. The Queensland government takes this issue very seriously.

I note that this is not only a matter for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Indeed, it is an issue that has an effect across all sections of the Queensland population. It is a Queensland-wide problem. It does not discriminate between race and cultural backgrounds.

All of us have a responsibility to work together to prevent violence against women, young people and children. Accordingly, the response to youth sexual violence and abuse work sits with the minister's colleague, the Hon. Leanne Linard. She is the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

CHAIR: Member, do you have a further question?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, I do. The next question without notice is to the minister with reference to dot point 13 on page 123. Will the minister provide comparative outcomes of the defunded Neighbourhoods Project with its replacement Youth Empowered Towards Independence given anecdotal reports of a resurgence of youth sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

CHAIR: Prior to you responding, Minister, I am going to ask that the member rephrase his question to avoid any inference.

Mr LANGBROEK: Certainly, Madam Chair. Will the minister provide comparative outcomes of the Neighbourhoods Project with its replacement Youth Empowered Towards Independence given the reports of a resurgence of youth sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

CHAIR: Member, can you reference those reports? Do you have a reference for that evidence?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, I do. I do not know if it is appropriate. I am happy to talk about it. It was the rape of a child in Napranum.

CHAIR: No, that is not what I am asking.

Mr LANGBROEK: Oh, the reference? I stated at the start, page 123, dot point 13.

CHAIR: No, the reference to the data that you are referring to.

Mr LANGBROEK: It is common knowledge that the neighbourhoods project has been defunded and there is a replacement project called Youth Empowered Towards Independence.

CHAIR: No, that is not what I am referring to.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am sorry, I do not understand what you are asking me.

CHAIR: Member, you are referring to an increase in incidents, and I want your reference in relation to that.

Mr LANGBROEK: It is in the news, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Can you just rephrase the question, member, so that there are no inferences and that we can take the question as an accurate context to—

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, I understand. Will the minister provide comparative outcomes of the defunded neighbourhoods project with its replacement Youth Empowered Towards Independence?

CHAIR: Thank you, member.

Mr CRAWFORD: There are two points to that. Firstly, whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people certainly are overrepresented in the data, youth sexual violence and abuse is also a non-Indigenous Queensland-wide issue. With reference to the funding that the member is referring to, I am informed that that is actually a matter for the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, which I believe is up next, so you might like to hold your question for Minister Linard.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question without notice is with reference to 123 dot point 1. How are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities made aware of the Queensland Community Support Scheme?

Mr CRAWFORD: Again, Madam Chair, I do not think that is a matter for this particular department. I think you will find that is another department, but I will take some advice from my director-general. We think that is actually with communities, which was separated from this department, which was Minister Enoch this morning.

Mr LANGBROEK: Could I seek some clarification there? Minister, with regard to the same reference: yes, it is within communities, but it services Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are under 50. What programs does the department have to make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are under 50 and who may be eligible for support under this program aware of services that would be provided by the Queensland Community Support Scheme?

Mr CRAWFORD: Again, the Queensland Community Support Scheme is administered by Minister Enoch, who was here only a matter of hours ago. What I can say broadly is that across the Queensland government every single department has a responsibility in servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, whether it is health, education or law enforcement. There is not one department in the Queensland government, nor in the Commonwealth, that does not have specific work that they undertake with reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It is the role of my department to sometimes be the glue between those and to work with each of those departments on the ground, also down here in cabinet, about ensuring departments are delivering the services that are the right fit for those communities, whether it is a South-East Queensland community such as Logan or whether it is a Far North Queensland remote, discrete community. The program that you are speaking to is a different department to this one, so I am unable to comment on another minister's portfolio.

Mr LANGBROEK: Just following on the same line of questioning, does your department make any assessment of the services provided by other departments? You mentioned Minister Linard and the Youth Empowered Towards Independence program and now the Queensland Community Support Scheme. Does the department make any assessment of those services provided by other departments?

Mr CRAWFORD: The department works with every department in government to deliver the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is not necessarily that they make assessments, but they work with every department in this state to deliver the outcomes. I am not sure where you are going with the question, but the previous department of DATSIP—which has now obviously formed into the new department—has done, and will always continue to, work with other line departments about the services they are delivering. That will be occurring not only here but also at a macrolevel on the ground in places like Townsville, Cairns and a range of places out west. It comes back to what I referenced before about working with traditional owners and working with communities and about local decision-making and empowerment, trying to get the decision-making as close as we can to community to empower everyone. The best answer I can give you is yes, we work with the other departments—

Mr LANGBROEK: By providing feedback.

Mr CRAWFORD: By providing a range of things, but we do not necessarily audit those departments, and we do not actually instruct those departments as to how they will do business as it is their department.

CHAIR: I will move now to the opposition crossbench.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a question that I am asking against the backdrop of the 1991 royal commission into Indigenous deaths in custody and Queensland's ongoing high rate of Indigenous deaths in custody. I am curious to know if the government is looking to implement the remaining recommendations of the royal commission, including particularly abolishing the offence of public drunkenness, and adequately funding non-custodial facilities for the care and treatment of intoxicated persons.

Mr CRAWFORD: Rulings or decisions around what is a crime and what is not a crime are not a matter for my department. Obviously, that is for the Attorney-General and other ministers. More broadly, what I can speak about is the incarceration rate as well as deaths in custody and referencing the 1991 report. We certainly saw those emotions roll pretty heavily with the recent Black Lives Matter campaigns that ran across the world after the George Floyd incident overseas. Emotions are still very high amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

It starts with incarceration rates, but I think the work for this department is in the space prior to that. It is about what work the previous DATSIP department can do with others around avoiding arrest rates, avoiding incarceration rates. Whether that means changes to laws, we will have to wait and see what that looks like. We are not in a position to drive those. We are in a position to provide advice and connect those relevant departments to the stakeholders. It comes back to what I mentioned before about local decision-making and empowerment and putting traditional owners and community leaders in the driver's seat and being able to provide that advice about where they go.

I will use an example around alcohol management plans. Currently in Queensland we have some communities that are well advanced towards community safety plans and being able to provide that shining light to government that they can manage their way out in their community, providing safety and everything else that goes along, as well as the reintroduction of alcohol. We are keen to work with them. That is one small example that goes towards a broader area about self-determination.

Mr BERKMAN: If I might, I wish to ask Dr Sarra a follow-up question. Going to those objectives that the minister referred to in previous answers with the focus on local decision-making, local empowerment and ensuring communities are at the centre of that decision-making, have you received feedback in your role about the retention of that offence of public drunkenness, and how do you think that might serve those overarching objectives if it were to be repealed?

Dr Sarra: If I could take a moment to reflect on the general role of what was the former DATSIP but is now the responsibility of part of what is the new department, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships part. It really is about, as the minister described, the fact that our role in government as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships is not to deliver education outcomes because that is the role of the education department, and not to deliver health outcomes because that is the role of the health department, and on justice outcomes, which we are discussing now, that is the role of Attorney-General's, Queensland police and youth justice—various other departments. Our role is to work in partnership with all of those agencies in order to facilitate a circumstance in which they would do their work more effectively.

Earlier, the minister talked about reframing the relationship. That refers to reframing the relationship in all sorts of ways, across government departments and with communities. The Local Thriving Communities agenda and reframing the relationships in that part has been really important over the last couple of years because it enables Aboriginal leadership and Torres Strait Islander leadership in conversations facilitated by people in our department to ask some of the hard questions of government and to ask some of the hard questions of service providers.

To go to your specific interest, I appreciate your shared interest in those concerns. We are very determined to pursue better outcomes. I have been in continuing dialogue with the Police Commissioner in relation to how those matters can be dealt with more effectively. I think that was reflected recently in relation to the Black Lives Matter protest that occurred during the COVID circumstance. We were in a continuing dialogue and I think that circumstance was executed quite effectively—one could say in a way that was quite honourable and reflected a different relationship that exists, and different when you compare it to what happened in New South Wales, not that I want to put New South Wales down. I can assure you, member, that we are in a continuous dialogue with relevant people across government but also in a continuous dialogue with Aboriginal leadership and Torres Strait Islander leadership about those matters we are both concerned about.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you.

CHAIR: We will move to government members. I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr SKELTON: Minister, I refer to volume 2 page 124 of the SDS. How is the Queensland government working with Queensland's five welfare reform communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge to strengthen local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority and governance to support communities?

Mr CRAWFORD: Chair, before I move onto this, I might clarify an answer I gave before to the member for Surfers Paradise around the other departments. Youth sexual violence actually sits with the Attorney-General, so there will be parts of your question which will be for Minister Linard but the youth sexual violence component sits with the A-G. I just did not want to put Minister Linard on the mat too hard.

I thank the member for Nicklin for the question. Our government is committed to partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with families and communities to support and foster a strong, safe, resilient and thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community across Queensland and is committed to reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. The welfare reform program has been in operation in the Cape York welfare reform communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge since 2008 and Doomadgee since 2014.

A key element of the welfare reform program is the Family Responsibilities Commission, the FRC. The FRC is comprised of the commissioner, a deputy commissioner and local commissioners from each of the five welfare reform communities. In July 2020 the Palaszczuk government appointed the FRC commissioner, deputy commissioner and 29 FRC local commissioners to their role until 30 June 2021.

FRC local commissioners, who are respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, play an important role in the welfare reform of communities and conference individuals for whom they have received a notification. The FRC receives notices for school attendance and school enrolment, child safety, court convictions, domestic and family violence and housing tenancy breaches. On receiving these notices, FRC local commissioners hold conferences with community members who are welfare recipients to encourage them to improve behaviour. Local commissioners can also refer community members to support services and, where necessary, order that a proportion of their welfare payments are income managed. The FRC can order that a person have part of their welfare payment income managed for periods of between three months and one year. Clients can also apply to the FRC to have their income management orders amended or ended during this period of time.

The welfare reform program has delivered parenting programs, youth development activities, infrastructure upgrades, a restorative justice program, business development and employment projects. Between July 2019 and December 2020, \$892,500 has been allocated to the Cape York Institute for the O-Hub leaders program in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge to support community members to access economic and social opportunities. The re-establishment of local Indigenous authority through the work of the FRC local commissioners has been a key achievement of the welfare reform program.

The Queensland government is committed to strengthening local decision-making and, in response to the Queensland Productivity Commission's report into service delivery in Queensland's remote and discrete Indigenous communities, is implementing the Local Thriving Communities reform, a key element of the Tracks to Treaty initiative. Local Thriving Communities is the Queensland government's response to improving service delivery outcomes in all of Queensland's remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including welfare reform communities. Under Local Thriving Communities, the Queensland government is working closely with communities to support community led processes to establish greater decision-making authority in service delivery and economic development, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to shape their own futures for their relevant communities.

Funding of \$85,000 has been allocated in Coen for community engagement to determine the best local decision-making approach. In Aurukun, the government has supported local decision-making through funding of \$207,370 to support the development of local leadership structures. These activities have been led within the community with support from the department. Additionally, funding of \$150,000 in total has been provided to the communities of Aurukun, Hope Vale and Doomadgee which have alcohol management plans in place to develop community safety plans to support local leadership and service responsiveness in the community's approach to alcohol. Doomadgee has also been allocated \$112,343 in social reinvestment funding for a school pool vacation program aimed at reducing youth related crime and improved school attendance.

CHAIR: Minister, with reference to volume 2 page 123 of the SDS, can you please provide details of the non-statutory committee to be established as part of the government's response to Path to Treaty?

Mr CRAWFORD: Can I say from the outset that the Palaszczuk government is committed to continuing the Path to Treaty in Queensland. A treaty with First Nation peoples will benefit all Queenslanders. For First Nation peoples, a treaty will provide formal respect and recognition of their unique status as two of the oldest living cultures in the world. For Queenslanders more broadly, it will help promote reconciliation and provide the opportunity to acknowledge past injustices and to create a shared future—a future where all Queenslanders celebrate and embrace the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have occupied and held rights over this land for more than 60,000 years.

First Nation cultures and knowledge are an enormous resource for Queensland and we should recognise them as such. Treaties are a critical tool in promoting reconciliation and setting the foundation for a new and just relationship and providing Indigenous peoples with the authority to take control of their future. We also know that treaties are a way to deliver practical measures to address community priorities and support social justice outcomes and economic growth. In the spirit of healing and the sentiments expressed through the Uluru Statement from the Heart calling for voice, treaty and truth, continuing to progress the Path to Treaty in Queensland addresses clear and constant calls from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for a treaty.

In 2019 the Queensland government committed to a reframed relationship with First Nations peoples, issuing a statement of commitment and, shortly afterwards, appointing an eminent panel of experts to report on the way forward to treaty. A treaty working group working to the eminent panel undertook community consultations around Queensland in 2019 and provided a report to the eminent panel to inform their advice to government.

As a first step in the process, those statewide consultations found significant support for a treaty process with truth telling and honesty about our shared history at the heart of treaty making. The treaty working group had a wide range of discussions with over 1,000 First Nations and non-Indigenous Queenslanders throughout the engagement process, which included 24 community forums and took place between October and December 2019. Public submissions and online surveys were also completed during that time. In February 2020, just before the COVID pandemic struck, the eminent panel gave its advice and recommendations to the Queensland government. In May 2020 the eminent panel updated its advice to include COVID-19 considerations. We are committed to continuing the path-to-treaty journey. Our next step is establishing a treaty advancement committee to progress treaty in Queensland.

My department will continue to support and work closely with communities and key stakeholders as well as the committee, once established, to ensure that the path to treaty continues to be progressed. We recognise that the path to treaty will be a journey that will require support and advice from experts and the wider community. We know that negotiating treaty or treaties in Queensland will be challenging and complex. As I said earlier, it is important that we get this right. It means that we must engage with all Queenslanders and take into account the complexities of our history in the negotiation of a treaty or of treaties. It is not as simple as copying a process done elsewhere and applying it here in Queensland. It will be a long process that requires patience and perseverance, a process to which the Palaszczuk government has committed.

In conclusion, I note that it was the federal government that said that states and territories should lead the way with treaty. With that, I encourage those opposite to show their support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders by coming on this journey towards treaty with us. I look forward to continuing to work with all Queenslanders to further the treaty conversation and I believe the treaty will be of benefit to us all.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The member for Cook?

Ms LUI: With reference to volume 2, page 177, of the SDS, can the minister elaborate on how the government ensured the safety of Indigenous communities during the height of COVID-19?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Cook. Firstly, I acknowledge the strong leadership in Queensland's remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that resulted in there being no cases of COVID-19 in any community. I acknowledge the dedicated response of community members during what was a very challenging time. I acknowledge the member for Cook being, like me, on endless telephone hook-ups with mayors from all over her patch of Far North Queensland as we worked with them, the State Disaster Coordinator, the director-general and others

to keep them updated on where things were at with COVID. Local disaster management groups in these communities as well as those with high populations of First Nations people have worked very hard to keep people safe.

On 29 January 2020 the former minister for health and minister for ambulance services declared a public health emergency under section 319 of the Public Health Act 2005 due to COVID-19. The Queensland government acted quickly to ensure the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly elders and those with chronic disease who were at greatest risk. On 18 March the Commonwealth government declared COVID-19 to be a human biosecurity emergency under the Biosecurity Act 2015 and a biosecurity determination was made on 27 March 2020. Travel restrictions were enacted in remote and discrete communities on 18 March 2020.

The Palaszczuk government worked closely with communities to respond to the health risk and to Commonwealth and Queensland government COVID-19 measures. This included the transition towards more flexible, state based Chief Health Officer, or CHO, directions. Through the prompt establishment of a COVID-19 response team and the allocation of liaison officers to each community, the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships led several key activities during the imposition of travel restrictions and assisted to resolve several issues, including: chairing the State Disaster Coordination Group Remote Communities Working Group, working with local disaster management groups to ensure the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders were front and centre; coordinating intergovernmental work on implementation and then removal of biosecurity restrictions and interagency leadership on development of Chief Health Officer directives; developing and implementing the roadmap for easing restrictions in Queensland's remote communities; updating local pandemic plans and developing rapid response plans; supporting new mayors and councillors following the local government elections in March 2020; providing support and guidance on quarantine and isolation processes and facilities and accessing additional accommodation options; targeting in culturally appropriate communication materials on quarantine, travel, health, social distancing, funerals and sorry business; maintaining essential services and supplies; amendments to alcohol management arrangements and support for community safety; therapeutic services to support community members such as mental health services; ensuring that only essential workers could access communities and with the appropriate risk management plans; access to education, including online learning options, access to health and other community services and access to economic and social recovery funding programs.

Regular teleconferences were held that brought together all levels of government, including Commonwealth and state ministers; the State Disaster Coordinator, Steve Gollschewski; the Chief Health Officer, Jeannette Young; state government chief executive officers; and local government mayors and CEOs to coordinate responses, share information and hear local concerns firsthand. The government continues to liaise with these communities to monitor the situation and provide support. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic participation is central to the COVID-19 recovery and to building strong, thriving communities.

In closing, when we talk about collaboration, I acknowledge that we had excellent collaboration with all levels of government. I know that we here often go on record attacking the Commonwealth, but I put on record my appreciation to the federal minister Ken Wyatt, who was one of the first out of the box to ring me when I became the new Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships here in Queensland. We worked very closely together to work out how to transition out vulnerable Queenslanders in the biosecurity areas to a more flexible arrangement. He was instrumental in doing his bit down there in Canberra. It was one of the rare opportunities where we see three levels of government coming together with a common interest.

CHAIR: Well done, Minister, thank you. I now call the member for Nicklin.

Mr SKELTON: Minister, with reference to volume 2, page 177, of the SDS, how is Queensland's economic recovery plan maximising jobs and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders post COVID-19?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Nicklin. Leading on from the last question, which was about how we manage the situation of COVID-19, certainly the next step is all about what happens post COVID-19. As many members of government and ministers have sat in this seat in the last week and a half and said, 'You cannot have a strong economic response until you get the health response right,' that is exactly what we did when it came to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, whether in remote areas or in some of the more built-up areas. The work that was done by government to keep them safe was exemplary as well as the work of community leaders.

The Palaszczuk government was the first to act with a package of measures now totalling over \$7 billion, focusing on support where it is needed most. As a government we not only responded to the immediate challenge but are now working at every level and across every sector with an eye to a statewide recovery. We are committed to supporting jobs and economic capacity of all Queenslanders and to build back better. The economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities is an important sector of our recovery and rebuilding program.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation is central to building strong, thriving communities and is a key focus of my department. The Moving Ahead 2016-2022 strategy outlined actions to improve economic participation outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. With the impact of COVID-19, this focus takes on a whole new level of importance.

The key initiatives under Moving Ahead, led by my department, aim to maximise employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business growth throughout Queensland by engaging, supporting and referring. They also focus on delivering business and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through strategic procurement using the Queensland Indigenous procurement policy and the Queensland government Building and Construction Training Policy to leverage planned investment. For example, the Queensland Indigenous procurement policy seeks to increase government procurement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses by setting a whole-of-government target of three per cent of the value of government procurement contracts by 2022. We are making progress towards this target.

I can report that, in 2019-20, 475 eligible suppliers secured direct government contracts worth \$362 million. That was an increase of over \$33 million on the spend in the previous year. This includes procurement spend—not grants—with 17 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils of \$127 million. Further, under the Queensland public sector workforce strategy, as of June 2020 some 2.52 per cent of employees identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander—a significant increase on the 1.98 per cent as of September 2016, at the time of the launch of Moving Ahead. The Youth Employment Program, YEP, brokers employment or training opportunities especially for young people throughout Queensland. In 2019-20, 686 job placements were facilitated by YEP, while a further 347 job placements were secured from social housing and infrastructure projects across the National Partnership on Remote Housing communities and other capital works programs.

DATSIP leverages Queensland government building and construction projects to create skills development, employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Queensland. In addition to securing 347 job opportunities in remote and discrete communities, infrastructure projects delivered \$3.3 million in procurement opportunities within these communities in 2019-20. Outside the discrete communities, jobs and procurement opportunities to a combined value of \$5.9 million were delivered through declared Indigenous projects under the Queensland government Building and Construction Training Policy. A further \$19.6 million in combined economic outcomes was delivered through negotiation on non-declared projects.

My department will engage with other government agencies with primary responsibility for jobs, training and business development to leverage all opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders from the recent Queensland budget, with a clear focus on COVID-19 economic recovery.

CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Deputy Chair, do you have a question?

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam Chair, I am happy to ask a question. With reference to page 121, dot point 13, is the minister satisfied with the financial performance and delivery of the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation?

CHAIR: Member, you are seeking an opinion in asking 'is the minister satisfied'. I give you the option to rephrase that question.

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam Chair, point of order. As I understand it, questions must be able to be answered with either 'yes' or 'no'. It is simply asking about the minister's assessment of the financial performance and delivery of that particular corporation.

CHAIR: If you could just rephrase the start of that question.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thanks, Madam Chair. Minister, would you give us the department's assessment of the financial performance and delivery of the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation?

Mr CRAWFORD: I do not think it is something I can answer, member for Surfers Paradise. My understanding is that there is a cabinet subcommittee that oversees this which is not something that I am privy to.

Mr LANGBROEK: With reference to page 123 and Closing the Gap, does the government support the federal Closing the Gap target of reducing the number of Indigenous children incarcerated by 30 per cent by 2031?

Mr CRAWFORD: We support all 16 Closing the Gap targets. I can give you a bit of background on that. That was, I think, an exceptional piece of work that was led by Minister Wyatt as well as the Prime Minister and Pat Turner, the lead convenor of the Coalition of Peaks. Closing the Gap has been signed by all states' first ministers and premiers, including the Queensland Premier. We signed on 30 July, I understand. This is the first time that a national agreement has been developed and negotiated in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

All 16 targets are very ambitious. All states have signed up. There is also a subcommittee within the new national cabinet framework that the Prime Minister and first ministers have established. Already I have had multiple hook-ups with my peers interstate, whether they cover the various portfolios applying to Indigenous affairs or whether they are from line portfolios such as education or environment. I am very excited about what is happening in this space. I think it will be a great collaboration between the Commonwealth and state governments as we move forward on these 16 targets.

Mr LANGBROEK: Will the Queensland Closing the Gap report then be reporting along the same lines as the federal government's report on the 16 Closing the Gap targets, with the same numbers?

Mr CRAWFORD: That is my understanding, yes. The understanding is that there is a new system—the 16 targets working together and being able to, I guess, streamline it.

Mr LANGBROEK: With reference to page 123, dot point 1, the minister has spoken a lot today about local decision-making. Minister, do you have a plan if local decision-making leads to compromised outcomes?

Mr CRAWFORD: It is hard to say what you would refer to by 'compromised'.

CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt, Minister. Member, your question contains a hypothetical. Could you rephrase the last part?

Mr LANGBROEK: The minister has commented a number of times today about the importance of local decision-making. I am happy to acknowledge the importance of local decision-making. Are there key performance indicators that the minister will use to judge the success of that local decision-making?

Mr CRAWFORD: That is a good question. Hopefully this is something that all parliamentarians can work together on. There is no doubt that local decision-making is important for all Queenslanders, irrespective of their postcode. Everyone wants to have input into things like service delivery, health, education and what they do in their spare time.

When we move into the discrete communities particularly, but also more broadly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, local decision-making is the key. It is the cornerstone of this department's work. Some of those communities are in very good positions. They have outstanding leaders. Some of those are elected members to council and mayors and the like. Others are exceptional leaders who are working in land and sea ranger programs. However, there are also other communities that are not that well advanced and are still identifying those leaders. We have to remember Queensland's history. We are a fairly young state when we compare ourselves to some of the bigger states to the south of us. There is still some intergenerational trauma that occurs with a lot of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. We are committed to work through that.

In answer to your question, as a department that is something that we will be taking a strong approach to and ensuring that, as each community moves forward, we are there to assist them. It is a bit like what the Prime Minister said when he talked about the roadmap around COVID when he said that there will be mistakes and things will go wrong, but we will be there to work with communities in terms of helping them move forward. I will use an example, and I referenced it earlier in answer to the member for Maiwar when I was talking about alcohol management plans. If I can use the example of Kowanyama, for some time those in Kowanyama have been advocating to government that they wanted a renewed approach to alcohol in their community. They have a very strong leadership group in Kowanyama. They have already established a community safety plan. They have had public meetings. They have had great engagement with a number of departments of the Queensland government and they have been working with us very closely about how to progress their wishes as we move forward.

We will partner with Kowanyama, as we will partner with everyone else, about delivering their dreams and aspirations, but sometimes things may go wrong. We are up for that. That is okay. We will work with those communities as we step everyone forward.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question without notice is referenced at page 123 dot point 3. What coordination is occurring between the department and Arts Queensland with regard to Indigenous Knowledge Centres to ensure that they will contribute to relevant Closing the Gap targets with respect to language?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you. He has been pretty quiet for the last hour, so I might give this one to the DG, if you like.

Dr Sarra: Thanks very much, Minister, for that. In leading into your question, I might reflect on the earlier question, if I may. It is important to understand the notion of the relationship with Aboriginal leadership and Torres Strait Islander leadership and that we want to genuinely move government from a place of doing things for Aboriginal people—that is, move beyond doing things to Aboriginal people to a point of doing things with Aboriginal people. We take that relationship seriously and work to enhance both sides of the relationship. Yesterday I was talking to a particular council about how that reframed relationship might occur and if there was a circumstance where we had a different perception of what should be achieved or what should be implemented. I will not mention the community, but we just speculated and I said, 'You might have a local decision-making body that wants to establish a hybrid car-making plant outside your community so that everybody's got jobs.' Clearly in that circumstance the business case would not stack up to enable that, but in the confines of the relationship we can have that conversation about what resources are available and what is best implemented.

Another example is if a particular community felt that through the leadership they wanted to revisit some of the more traditional forms of corporal punishment as a means to afford discipline. Clearly we have a Human Rights Act that we all take very seriously, so in the confines of the relationship we negotiate and we make it clear that we would not let Aboriginal Queenslanders or Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders be subject to something that other Queenslanders would never be subjected to. I hope you do not mind me reaching back.

Mr LANGBROEK: No, not at all.

Dr Sarra: Coming to your question about language, Queensland's action plan to implement the agreement is guided by both internal and external processes, and the internal process will be guided by the establishment of an interdepartmental committee of senior executives to drive the change needed within government. The external processes will involve collaboration and consultation with Queensland's peak community controlled organisations and senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy and service delivery experts. I hope that goes towards satisfying your question.

In relation more specifically to languages and your interest in language, which I appreciate, the Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy was launched on Indigenous Literacy Day on 2 September 2020. The languages policy is a whole-of-government policy to enable future generations of Queenslanders to share in the languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. The government is developing an action plan to support the implementation of this languages policy that embeds respect for and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the everyday business of government. The languages policy was developed in partnership with representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups and other Queensland government agencies.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. We will go to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: Again, this is a question I ask against the backdrop of our high imprisonment rate, particularly incarceration of Indigenous children. Amnesty International's kids belong in community report was released this Reconciliation Week, but we have just recently seen the government reject calls to raise the age of criminal responsibility above 10 years old. I am keen to know, Director-General, to what extent was your department—this one or the previous iteration—engaged in that process and on what basis or evidence did the government reject those calls to raise the age?

Dr Sarra: Thank you, member, for your question. I understand your question is about the extent of engagement, but ultimately it is a question of government policy so I am not feeling in a position to respond.

Mr BERKMAN: Sure. If it is a question that needs to go to the minister, I am obviously more than happy to direct it that way, unless there is insight you can give us into that kind of operational interface between the departments involved.

Dr Sarra: Only to reflect that it is a matter that we are seriously concerned about. As the minister rightly points out, it is a matter for government and for cabinet.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. If the minister has nothing further on that, I do have a quick follow-up question. Again, looking at that framework of community led decision-making and local empowerment, has the department received feedback that raising the age would enhance that kind of locally driven decision-making?

CHAIR: Sorry, but can I just clarify: who are you asking the question to?

Mr BERKMAN: Sorry, to the director-general.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Dr Sarra: I can advise the member and the committee that we are in an ongoing dialogue with a range of stakeholders. Whilst some will express that particular view, we are in a position where we have to take into account the view of a whole range of stakeholders, but ultimately, as the minister said, it is a matter for government policy.

Mr BERKMAN: Sorry; I do not mean to press. I am just trying to untangle in your experience the view on the ground in communities. Is there in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities broad support for the idea of raising the age of criminal responsibility?

CHAIR: Member, sorry to interrupt, but you are asking the director-general for an opinion, so could you rephrase that question?

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. Director-General, is it the case, in your experience, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities broadly support the proposal to raise the age of criminal responsibility?

Dr Sarra: It is the case that we have received correspondence from stakeholders to that effect, yes.

Mr BERKMAN: Okay; thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maiwar. Minister, with reference to volume 2 page 124 of the SDS, would you kindly explain what benefit the ministerial and government champions program has for our Indigenous communities?

Mr CRAWFORD: From the outset, I think this is a wonderful program that we have. The ministerial and government champions program has been an initiative that commenced in 2002 with directors-general and then was expanded under the Palaszczuk government to include ministers and assistant ministers. The program operates across Queensland's remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including Aurukun, Cherbourg, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mornington Island, Mossman George, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area, Palm Island, Pormpuraaw, Torres Strait, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah.

I have had the absolute pleasure of being the ministerial champion for the great community of Mornington Island and recently also for Palm Island as well. The objective of the champions program is to increase the economic and social participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and facilitate cultural recognition and reconciliation. Each cabinet minister and each Queensland government chief executive is assigned as a champion for a remote and discrete community to provide for a direct conduit between the community and their department, but ultimately straight into cabinet.

Ministers, assistant ministers and DGs work closely with mayors and community leaders from their partner community to engage more effectively with the government and opportunities to improve outcomes and challenges faced. I think that a great example, and we talked to this earlier, member for Cook, was the work that Minister Fentiman did by being able to come back from the Torres Strait and be able to articulate into cabinet the need for a better arrangement around traditional child rearing practices. It is one of those square peg round hole situations, if you like, where a minister was able to come and advocate strongly inside cabinet for a change to something. Sometimes it is not always just about building things in communities, sometimes it is about significant policy shifts that need to come back to Brisbane as well.

It is a great opportunity to put senior executives of government into places where they might ordinarily not feel comfortable. Shifting out of the leafy suburbs of Brisbane and going into a remote community hundreds of kilometres from Cairns or Townsville is a great way to expose senior executives to another side of Queensland—not all the bad things either, sometimes incredible landscapes and incredible people and cultural diversity. Many ministers and DGs have come back with new friendships

that they have developed. I can say that since being the minister for this portfolio I have had a number of ministers who have come to me and said, 'Don't you dare shift my government champion community to a different one because I've built up all these relationships and I want to stay there and I have a list of people who will come after you if you do.' There are some great friendships out there that have been developed, but it is more than that. It is about significant building of trust and relationships, like I say, with communities that are in some of the remotest places of Queensland directly connected into George Street.

Ms LUI: Minister, would you please explain what benefit the Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020 will have for Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and explain what the next steps are?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Cook. Maybe you and I should swap seats as you were the one who introduced the bill to parliament. You could better explain this than me. I am just kidding. Can I say thank you for the question. As you well know, being a Torres Strait Islander woman, for generations Torres Strait Islanders have supported their children and each other in loving, supportive, extended families. On 8 September this year the House debated an historic bill of great cultural significance and an Australian first. The Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020 was passed unanimously by the Queensland parliament and received assent on 14 September.

I again acknowledge the support of the opposition and the crossbench as well in passing that bill. Its passage fulfilled the government's 2017 election commitment to legally recognise Torres Strait Islander traditional child rearing practice. The act provides an administrative model for legal recognition of Torres Strait Islander traditional child rearing practice and was informed by three eminent persons, Ms Ivy Trevallion, Charles Passi and Hon. Alistair Nicholson, the Kupai Omasker Working Party and community consultations undertaken in 2018 and 2020. I do thank each of them for the outstanding work that they did. It is a bit like the last question I had, a great example of being able to connect the Torres Strait into the walls of Brisbane.

In my role as the minister for seniors, I also want to particularly acknowledge Aunty McRose Elu, the Queensland state recipient of the Senior Australian of the Year for 2021. I had the delight of hosting her here at the opening of parliament on the green and she had a wonderful day while she was here. Aunty McRose is committed to reconciliation and sharing traditional practices of the Torres Strait Islander people. She is a strong advocate of this process and she is a strong advocate for Torres Strait Islanders as well.

Until now, family relationships have never really been fully recognised by law. The act means that children and adults who have grown up with traditional adoptive parents will finally have their legal identity match their cultural identity. The act includes appropriate protections for access to information about individual circumstances. This is also consistent with the cultural practice. For example, it ensures that only adults, namely the adult applicant for a cultural recognition order or an adult who was the subject of a cultural recognition order when they were a child, or their guardian, may apply to access certain information from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. A child will not be able to gain access to a closed record.

On that historic day in my address to the House I said—

The bill marks a historic and significant milestone in bringing together island custom with Queensland law, delivering on our commitment to reframe the relationship with First Nation Queenslanders and move forward with mutual respect and recognition of a Torres Strait Islander cultural practice that deepens and enriches the lives of our Queensland communities.

I also, member for Cook, quote the words of yourself on that day when you said—

I am humbled to stand here today as a First Nation woman, Torres Strait Islander and member of parliament representing the Palaszczuk Labor government. For the first time, we will see island custom or traditional lore be embedded in Queensland law.

We will work to ensure that the process for applicants is affordable, accessible and culturally appropriate. I identified before some of the next steps that we will be taking, but certainly there will be an advertising process seeking applications for the position of an independent commissioner. They will be an appropriately qualified Torres Strait Islander person, as we said. As I said in my opening statement, that will occur on 18 December. Subject to the proclamation of the act and further processes, we are looking forward to the office of the commissioner being able to accept and consider applications in July of 2021. In closing, members would remember that meriba omasker kaziw kazipa means for our children's children.

CHAIR: Member for Nicklin?

Mr SKELTON: Minister, I refer to volume 2, page 123, of the SDS. Can the minister inform the committee of the work underway to meet the Closing the Gap targets?

Mr CRAWFORD: Thank you, member for Nicklin. I addressed some of this before when I was addressing a question from the member for Surfers Paradise. The government is committed to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage and improving the life outcomes of First Nations Queenslanders. That is why we signed the new national Closing the Gap agreement in July. It is the first time a national agreement has been developed and negotiated in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both through the peak body representatives and community consultations across Queensland in 2019, which was aided by my department.

For Queensland, this approach reflects our existing work to reframe the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the need to add greater value to the principle of self-determination when developing initiatives that aim to improve outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders. At the heart of the agreement is the principle to work and partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in policy development and decision-making.

The number of targets has increased from seven to 16 and the targets speak to the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The agreement sees the Commonwealth, the states, the territories, local governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations jointly commit to the ambitious targets, including improved outcomes in education, employment, social and emotional wellbeing, language preservation and housing; reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice and child safety systems; and preventing domestic and family violence.

The recently released 2020 *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage* report indicated Queensland is achieving better outcomes than the national average across the areas of life expectancy, preschool enrolment, employment, tertiary attainment, household income and children in out-of-home care. Queensland has already made positive progress in key areas including education, with more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders enrolled in vital early education.

CHAIR: I am sorry to interrupt, Minister, on that positive note. There were a number of issues that we endeavoured to provide to the honourable member for Surfers Paradise. The questions that were not taken on notice, firstly, were around phone numbers for seniors and elder abuse helplines. Can you comment there?

Mr CRAWFORD: I can, Madam Chair. UnitingCare Queensland operates the Seniors Enquiry Line and the Elder Abuse Helpline. The Elder Abuse Helpline number is 1300651192. The Seniors Enquiry Line is 1300135500. UnitingCare Queensland, which operates both of those lines, captures data and reports separately on the instances of abuse and general seniors' inquiries. Separate scripting and call coding enables correct reporting. The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit delivers a year-in-review report every year. The 2019-20 report is being finalised at the moment. That report will include data on calls. The Care Army webpage directed people who needed support to call 1800173349, which is the Community Recovery Hotline number. Through that number people could arrange practical help for members of the community who required assistance and did not have a family member, friend or neighbour able to support them with, for example, medication and food.

CHAIR: Minister, that answered three of the four questions, thank you. The final question was on the FDS Christmas lights bus excursion. Was a second tour arranged last year?

Mr CRAWFORD: I am advised that in December 2019 a group of clients were taken to view Christmas lights. Weather spoiled the first outing and a second one was organised. I think it is very reasonable to allow clients to experience Christmas as many of us do. I add that clients do not disembark from the vehicle. They remain fully supervised throughout the outing. The main reason is to ensure that clients remain fully supported and supervised throughout the approved activity.

I know it was not a question I took on notice, but in response to a question from the member for Maiwar I was advised the Ombudsman's report was tabled on 21 August 2019. To correct the record it was, in fact, tabled on 22 August 2019.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I begin by thanking everyone for their attendance. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolios of seniors and disability services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships has expired. Minister, I note that you have taken one question on notice during this session. Is that something that you wish to answer now?

Mr CRAWFORD: No, Madam Chair. We will have to do further work on that.

CHAIR: The committee has resolved that answers to questions taken on notice must be provided to the committee secretariat by 10 am on Friday, 18 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 the parliament's website within approximately two hours. I thank you, Minister, departmental officers, Director-General and Deputy Commissioner for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 3.30 pm with the examination of the estimates of the portfolios for the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Proceedings suspended from 3.15 pm to 3.30 pm.

ESTIMATES—COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE— CHILDREN, YOUTH JUSTICE AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

In Attendance

Hon. LM Linard, Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs


Mr M Smith, Chief of Staff

Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

Ms D Mulkerin, Director-General

Mr R Gee, Director-General, former Department of Youth Justice

Mr W Briscoe, Executive Director, Multicultural Affairs

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 6.15 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 5.15 pm to 5.30 pm. We have a visiting member present Ms Amanda Camm MP, member for Whitsunday. Welcome.

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 for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer particularly 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 this evening 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 honourable minister, Leanne Linard, 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 Children and Youth Justice 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.

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Chair. I would like to start by respectfully acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I would like to congratulate you, member for Mansfield, on your appointment as chair and extend that congratulations to all members of the committee on your election, re-election and appointment to the Community Support and Services Committee. The work that you will oversee and scrutinise for the coming four years is important work and it is work that goes to the heart of some of our most marginalised which brings me to my portfolio.

I am honoured to have been appointed Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. It is a special kind of honour to serve our communities and the great state of Queensland as elected representatives. It is a greater privilege still to represent a department that serves Queensland's most vulnerable families, children and youth and a department that promotes an inclusive and harmonious state where difference is celebrated, not feared.

The people in my department are passionate about what they do, and rightly so, because everything they do has deep purpose. Whether it is reunifying a child with their family or removing them to safety, whether it is walking beside a young person, encouraging them to make better choices and find employment and hope for the future, or empowering a marginalised community, they do much of their work quietly and respectfully in people's homes and communities but very much in the public eye. They have my thanks and my support.

Chair, the reform agenda our government has pursued in child safety and youth justice since 2015 has been ambitious. We have invested more than \$857 million in family support and child protection reforms and funded more than 550 new staff. We have invested more than half a billion

dollars on new detention centre beds and youth justice initiatives to prevent and reduce youth offending. That work continues this financial year with a record \$1.7 billion budget to support Queensland families and to keep Queensland children safe, and we are seeing real change.

Child safety is responding to more child protection notifications than ever and responding faster to the most urgent. Average case loads per child safety officer are around 18, down from 21 under the former government. We continue to stabilise the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into care. We have seen a 23 per cent reduction in the number of 10 to 17-year-olds with a charged offence since last financial year and a nine per cent drop in offences. These are hard-won gains in the face of increasing complexity across our community, further exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19.

While we do not control many of the drivers of disadvantage, my department is in the frontline of responding to them. Today, one in every three children who comes into care has a parent who uses ice. Three out of every families we work with experience domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and criminal histories. What we are seeing as a result is an increase in demand for Child Protection Services.

According to the most recent child safety quarterly data, now available on the department's website, in the year to 30 June 2020, there has been a 4.3 per cent increase in the number of notifications to the department, leading to a 10 per cent increase in the number of children subject to protective orders, and a nine per cent increase in the number of children in care. Despite this increased demand, there are still 1,500 fewer children in the system than predicted in the 2013 Carmody report which could not predict the impact of ice and increased familial complexity. In 2020-21, we are investing another \$166 million to continue building a family support system that provides support for families earlier and helps prevent escalation to the child protection system.

Chair, when it comes to youth justice, we expect young people to be law-abiding. If they are not, we expect them to be held to account. We have invested more than half a billion dollars and the community expects outcomes from this investment, so do we. That is why a decision has been made to cease our investment in supervised community accommodation and redirect those public funds into more cost effective outcomes. Investment in programs such as Transition 2 Success, our 24/7 Co-Responder and restorative youth justice conferencing will continue because they are delivering improved community safety and cost effective outcomes.

Finally, as a Queenslanders and as Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I take great pride in the diversity of our state. Alongside our First Nation peoples, our communities are enriched by people from cultures across the globe. One of the most visible ways we recognise this is through our Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program which returns in 2021 with a record 211 events, sharing in more than \$1.5 million.

It is an honour and a privilege to represent portfolios that focus on families, on community and on hope. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will start with non-government questions. Member for Whitsunday.

Ms CAMM: Minister, my question is in regards to the supervised community accommodation service, or bail houses as they are commonly known. Given that this program started under Labor in 2017 and will cease in January, is this an admission of the government's failure of youth?

CHAIR: Sorry, member, it would appear that you are asking the minister for an opinion. Can you rephrase that question?

Ms CAMM: Madam Chair, I will rephrase that. Given the announcement made today that government funded supervised community accommodation services are to end, what were the results of the independent review that was undertaken in 2018-19 and 2019-20 that led the government to this decision?

Ms LINARD: Thank you member for the question. In regard to SCAs, I will refer to them as, the first two reviews found—and these were publicly released—that SCAs were intended to deliver safe, secure and stable accommodation for vulnerable young people, and they have done that. Evaluation findings show that young people are less likely to reoffend while they are supervised and supported. Approximately 77 per cent of young people did not offend while under supervision and staying at an SCA between 24 January 2018 and 19 September 2020. However, the final independent evaluation of Ernst & Young released today found that SCAs are underutilised and alternative options are more cost

effective. The cost of providing the service is greater than other options such as conditional bail programs. Put simply, despite avoided costs, this SCA model does not present value for money when compared to other programs.

In regard to your question, when SCAs were announced they were announced on the basis that there had been some positive international results. While those first two reviews did indicate that they do deliver safe, secure and stable accommodation, the Premier and former minister did give a commitment that our government would review them by the end of this year.

Post the opening of SCAs there were a number of other initiatives that came on line that are delivering a similar service but at a lower cost. I think it is a responsible decision of government to look at value for money for the public, and the public expects that. We are spending significant money in youth justice reform and we want to make sure we are getting outcomes but it is also value for money. That is what has led to the decision today.

Ms CAMM: I turn the minister's attention to the answer to question on notice No. 15 that outlined that in the three years since establishment there were 5,648 charged offences committed by 210 young people post attendance at an SCA or a bail house. Do you still consider that it delivered safe and secure accommodation and was it a positive solution for young people given the statistics outlined in your government's response?

CHAIR: I am sorry to do this to you, member. The question does ask for an opinion.

Ms CAMM: I will reframe it. I appreciate you bearing with me, Madam Chair. Is it correct that with regard to the 210 young people who attended a bail house in the past three years that 5,648 charged offences had been committed?

Ms LINARD: I think the important word there is 'post'. Those offences were unacceptable. No-one accepts offending in the community. We want the community to feel safe and young people need to be held to account. In the first two reviews SCAs were found to provide safe, secure and stable accommodation. From recollection, the QoN you are referring to was talking about offences committed post people's stay at SCAs. I think that answers your question. It was not while they were present there. I have given you a statistic. It did reduce offending while individuals were supervised. That figure is post.

Ms CAMM: Can the minister outline how much has been spent on that program since 2017?

Ms LINARD: The total cost for SCAs up to 31 October 2020 was \$30.8 million. This includes contracts with suppliers to deliver SCAs and bail support services of \$24 million, purchase costs of SCA properties of \$5 million and \$1.3 million for property maintenance costs, supplies and services and employee expenses.

Ms CAMM: Does that also include the \$426,542 in consultancy fees in the review process?

Ms LINARD: We would like to clarify that. We will come back to you.

CHAIR: Are you taking that question on notice or will you come back to us in the session?

Ms LINARD: I do not think we will formally need to take it on notice. We will absolutely come back to you in the session.

Ms CAMM: Following that line of questioning, why was the Ernst & Young review not released prior to the election?

Ms LINARD: The one that we have released today?

Ms CAMM: Yes.

Ms LINARD: A commitment was given by the Premier and the former minister that SCAs would be reviewed by the end of the year and a decision made. That decision has now been made. The report has been released so you can see the results of that report, as I did when we were considering it.

Ms CAMM: Is the report dated today or is the report dated prior to the election?

Ms LINARD: I will pass you over to Director-General Robert Gee.

Mr Gee: The report is dated September 2020, which is obviously before the election. The committee may or may not remember the COVID-19 cluster that happened at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre on 20 August. We received the final report formally from Ernst & Young in September. To be really frank, we were still working on the COVID outbreak. I had to then assess the policy options with other officers in the department. By the time we did a market assessment about possible options into the future we were in caretaker mode.

Ms CAMM: Based on that response from the director-general, was the former minister briefed?

Ms LINARD: Chair, do we need to have that directed through me or the director-general then refer it?

CHAIR: Yes. I remind members that they must direct their questions to the minister or the director-general.

Ms CAMM: Director-General, was the former minister briefed on the results of that prior to going into caretaker mode?

Ms Mulkerin: I will ask Mr Gee to answer.

Mr Gee: I did advise the former minister that we had received the report from Ernst & Young. I also advised the former minister that we needed to do further work on options around avoided costs and to work with our staff on the ground in Townsville to see what alternative accommodation options were there. I never provided the former minister with any formal advice in terms of whether the program should proceed or not.

Ms CAMM: I have a question in relation to the standalone youth justice department. I direct my question to the minister. In May 2019 the Premier established a standalone youth justice department to fix the youth crime crisis. Given the department has been scrapped after the election, can the minister advise if the government has given up on youth justice or is the problem now fixed?

Mr SKELTON: Point of order.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nicklin. Member, I understand this is your first estimates, but could you rephrase that question to avoid seeking an opinion.

Mr KRAUSE: Madam Chair, I raise a point of order in relation to the member for Nicklin's points of order. All day he has been calling 'point of order' but not actually making any points of order. I ask if you could ask the member to refrain from doing that unless he is actually going to refer to the standing orders and make a point of order.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Scenic Rim. Member for Nicklin, you do need to refer to the standing orders. We will move on. Member, I ask you to rephrase your question.

Ms CAMM: In terms of the standalone youth justice department that was established in May 2019, how much was spent to establish that department and to scrap that department?

Ms LINARD: While I do not support the descriptive words you have used around scrapping things, I would say that the department was established in May 2019 to lead significant reform in regard to the implementation of our record capital investment of half a billion dollars for detention centre beds and interventions in the youth justice space. That work will never be done. There is always important work to be done in respect of stopping the revolving door in regard to young offenders and changing the story for young people.

In the last year and a half, I think the effort of the youth justice department has been extraordinary, as has—and this will make director-general Bob Gee very uncomfortable as I say this—the contribution that he has made as director-general. I have had the great pleasure to work with Robert in different roles including in policing as well.

I think it is important to look at what came out of that. The reforms were guided by the four-year youth justice strategy and the two-year action plan which arose from the fantastic work that Bob Atkinson led. In the first year of that action plan—there are about 155 initiatives, from recollection—98 per cent of those have already been commenced. It is significant work and significant reform. I think they have achieved outstanding results when you look at the reduction in the number of youth offences in Queensland and the number of youth offenders which have both decreased and also the investment in capital with the West Moreton Youth Detention Centre, which I visited the other week, and what they have delivered.

In regard to the machinery-of-government changes, youth justice being integrated into the department with child services I think is a good match. They work closely together in the integration of those services under a director-general, who I will also make uncomfortable by saying this, has 35 years experience in child protection and youth justice. I think it is a wonderful celebration of what director-general Bob Gee has done. I wish him very well in his future role. I also have total confidence in my director-general, Deidre, who sits beside me, to continue that important reform work.

In regard to your specific question about the cost, machinery-of-government changes are cost neutral, so there is no figure to provide you.

Ms CAMM: I have a question for the director-general. The inquest into Mason Jett Lee revealed that employees who were responsible for complex cases were not aware of the basic statutory duties in relation to protecting children. I quote the coroner who said—

... the handling of Mason's case was a failure in nearly every possible way by the relevant employees of the department to comply with their statutory obligations ...

Can you please inform me whether all employees were aware of their basic statutory obligations, and what specific actions have you undertaken to ensure that since this case and the deputy coroner handing down her findings that employees are fully aware of their statutory obligations?

Ms Mulkerin: I begin by extending my sympathies again on behalf of the department to Mason's family. Following the death of Mason Jett Lee, there have in fact been two rounds of reforms inside the department. One was directly after his death. They focused on the immediate findings post his death and the reviews and government investment. Following his death, the government allocated an extra \$200 million over four years to strengthen the child protection system including new frontline positions, increased funding for intensive family support services in high-need locations, extra services to link children and families to health services, child safety officers to work in hospitals and a quality improvement program. That was the government investment. Operationally inside the department at the time there was the creation of a new Morayfield child safety service centre, extra support for working with the local Caboolture Hospital, the commencement of a high-risk DV team and some expansion of some community services. That was the first round of reform.

Post receiving the report from the deputy coroner earlier this year, there has been another round of reforms implementing the six recommendations from the coroner's report. Those recommendations and those actions are well underway. Three of the recommendations we have begun and we have completed—the three related to SCAN operations. One of the recommendations related to escalation processes within hospitals and we are working closely with Health on that. The fifth recommendation was about our partnerships with police and we are actively working on that recommendation. The sixth recommendation, as you would be aware, relates to recommendations from the deputy coroner about permanency and stability for children.

Whilst the matter is before the House—the amendments—we of course have undertaken action while awaiting that to happen. At the point of receiving the deputy coroner's report I asked my department to undertake an audit of every child that we are responsible for under the age of three. We began with children under three who are in long-term arrangements to check—to do an audit basically—whether they have the right legal order, whether they are in the right placements and what is our long-term permanent planning for those children. We have completed that part of the audit. We are now working on looking at the care arrangements and the legal arrangements for all children under three.

We have created a new role—the Chief Practitioner role. Dr Meegan Crawford's role is to focus on the question that you asked about practice and obligations and training. Over the next couple of years our key areas of focus, prompted again by the coroner's report and of course the reforms the department has been doing, are really to focus on good quality case work and to focus on the safety of children in our care.

CHAIR: I turn to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: I will put my first question to the director-general. In the answer to question on notice No. 18, paragraph (d) indicates that the department does not keep data about the use of isolation practices in watch houses. The answer suggests that there is very little or no visibility of this and other practices in police watch houses. Is it the case that isolation and certain other practices are more limited or subject to more strict protocols in youth justice facilities than they are in police watch houses?

Ms Mulkerin: I will ask Mr Gee to answer that.

Mr Gee: Yes, they are. I would refer you to the Youth Justice Regulation 2016 specifically section 21 around separations. As I understand your question—if I can seek, through the minister and the chair, clarification—you are interested in separations or isolation?

Mr BERKMAN: Yes, specifically but any other practices. The point that I am effectively seeking clarification on is when kids are detained in watch houses they do not have the same sorts of protections and protocols that exist in those specific youth detention facilities.

CHAIR: Member, we need to be careful there that we are not making an inference. You might wish to rephrase that question.

Mr BERKMAN: I am not clear what the inference is, but I will try again. I am seeking clarification about what additional protections or protocols exist for the treatment of youth detained in youth justice detention centres as opposed to watch houses.

Mr Gee: I would start out by saying that the Human Rights Act is clear and applies to the Minister for Police and the Police Service and watch houses as it does to youth justice. Fundamentally detention is interfering with someone's human rights, and that is a balancing act. I will not speak for the Police Service, but having been a deputy commissioner there are significant—the processes in terms of the Police Service approach to watch houses are all available online. I think the main difference though in terms of a watch house and a youth detention centre plainly is the location and the ability to provide services in one spot particularly outside the south-east corner.

We have a range of programs in place, and I can go through them in depth. They are generally available in our youth justice strategy and action plan. They range from Murri Watch visiting watch houses not just in the south-east corner but in Mount Isa, Palm Island and Mackay—those sorts of things. I would add though that the reform program of this government has been phenomenal over the last few years in terms of investment in behavioural support, particularly clinical psychologists, speech pathologists and the like that are available in a dedicated facility, in a detention centre. I would also point out that watch houses are designed for temporary accommodation only. I think it is fair to say that, other than for a short period during the COVID cluster at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, there has been no young people housed in a watch house on remand other than for normal processing.

I would point out, as the committee could understand, in particularly the Far North and west, normal processing in a place like Mount Isa might mean a young person is in a watch house for a number of nights because it is not practical to take them from Mount Isa into a detention centre and back to Mount Isa inside the week. In terms of a detention centre, all of those services being in one place is the main difference. I hope that answer helps. I could go on and on, Chair.

Mr BERKMAN: It does. I would ask a follow-up question, if I might?

CHAIR: Thank you, former director-general. I now call the member for Nicklin.

Mr SKELTON: Will the minister advise whether the transitional hub run by North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services Limited in Mount Isa is a good investment for the community?

Ms LINARD: The Mount Isa Transitional Hub, the hub, is a \$2.1 million investment over two years that commenced as a pilot in 2019-20 to divert young people from the youth justice system and keep the Mount Isa community safe. The hub operates 24/7 as a culturally informed response by local police and the community to divert young people at risk of offending or reoffending to a safe place during high-risk periods. It offers a safe place where police and longer-term support services can connect with and assist young people at risk of offending. The hub does not provide accommodation. Instead, young people are assisted to find appropriate safe places to stay overnight where required. North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services Limited was contracted to deliver the service from 2019 initially as a pilot.

I would like to acknowledge Father Mick Lowcock OAM, the founder of North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services, an organisation that employs over 70 people, more than 80 per cent of whom are Indigenous. In June this year Father Mick was recognised for his decades of tireless work with Indigenous people in Mount Isa and the north-west by being named a Queensland Great.

This investment in Mount Isa and other programs is reaping results. The latest data shows there has been a 33 per cent drop in the number of offences committed by 10- to 17-year-olds and a 23 per cent drop in the number of young offenders with at least one charged offence in the 12 months to 30 June this year. In raw numbers, since commencement to October 2020 young people have received one service or another from the range provided by the hub over 550 times. The service provider is consistently responsive to the local youth justice service centre, local police and community requests, demonstrating a proactive and flexible approach in meeting the needs of young people and families in the Mount Isa community.

The hub facilitates a number of programs relevant to the needs of their young people, including outback education, with 33 high-risk young people currently enrolled in the School of the Air. Many of these young people, who have significantly low numeracy and literacy levels, are working towards their learning goals and engaging back into mainstream education settings. The value of the hub can be seen through the stories of individual young people. The hub recently supported a 17-year-old to attain his driver's licence. This young person received his first supervised order at the age of 12. Since then

he has had multiple supervised orders and breaches of supervised orders. Through the support of the hub he is working towards getting a job, starting with work experience opportunities, and is on track to turn his life around. This initiative, supported by the whole-of-government Mount Isa Community Connect group, shows that local effort can have an impact.

I am looking forward to visiting Mount Isa as soon as I can in the new year to see the great work the hub is doing in person and, of course, meet Father Mick. I might say that when I was first appointed to this portfolio I called all of the stakeholders. Unsurprisingly, Father Mick could not take my call because he was out in the field with young people. I think that is a testament to who he is as a person; it shows his dedication.

CHAIR: Will the minister advise how her department works to meet the needs of young people who disrupt their placements.

Ms LINARD: As the member is aware, I am unable to comment on individual cases due to confidentiality provisions under the Child Protection Act, but when distressing stories of young people living on the streets come to light I appreciate that the need to preserve privacy can conflict with the community's desire for answers about how families and children are supported. As a result of that privacy obligation the community and the media can never be aware of the full circumstances of any child, nor the full story of what is being done to help them. It is understandable, therefore, that wrong conclusions are frequently drawn. Sadly, wrong conclusions are also often propagated for political gain. I can assure you that the sole focus of my department is the safety and welfare of children and young people in need of protection and care and the protection of their privacy—as any child deserves.

In the past few weeks I visited child safety and youth justice service centres and spoke with staff. I cannot tell you how much admiration I have for these people. They are extraordinary people doing exceptional work. When I hear the story of a young person who chooses to live rough rather than live in their placement my heart goes out to them. The difficult reality is that some young people, for a variety of reasons, cannot or will not go home and choose not to take up offers of other accommodation, be it foster care, kinship care or residential care. Generally, where a child refuses to live with family or carers who are able to protect them, or where a child on a child protection order refuses to remain at a residential service and where they need help to access housing, Child Safety refers them to the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy or appropriate NGOs. When a young person refuses to engage in placement options, support is provided by my department, which can include daily and intensive contact to help them develop support networks.

While everyone is rightly concerned when children are not living in a suitable home or residential care, they have to be willing to live there or they may well run away again and prove even harder to find and support. You can be assured that my department takes every instance of a young person missing from care in these circumstances very seriously. My department has measures to prevent young people in care going missing and protocols in place to act immediately where a child or young person leaves their placement. Child safety staff work with carers, police and other agencies to search for missing children and engage with their safety and support networks. If they cannot be found and there are concerns for their wellbeing, they are reported to police even if they have been missing for only a short time. Daily phone calls are normally made to the young person, if they will take them, to discuss safety needs and options and other appropriate assistance. Once located, that contact is personal if the young person will accept it. A suspected child abuse and neglect team protocol is also activated when a young person is missing and coordinates a multi-agency response.

Once found, the SCAN team addresses the reasons why the child may have gone missing to ensure they continue to be safe and supported. Other youth worker support is available through a variety of agencies to support these young people. My department funds six youth housing and reintegration services plus youth support services through community organisations. The department of housing also funds a range of youth housing and homelessness services, and these services are available for all young people. But those in care can need extra support, so our Next Step Plus initiative for those in care and care leavers aged 15 to 25 helps create housing stability and better adult life opportunities. A young person aged 15 or older, as part of planning for their transition to adulthood, may be referred to the department of housing to help with their housing needs. Other support for young people who refuse a placement includes providing food and clothing vouchers, mobile phone credit and go cards. The wellbeing of children is the highest priority of my department, and they will not turn away any child if it is believed they need to come into care.

Ms LUI: Will the minister advise how many children have benefitted from the Navigate Your Health program and what outcomes have been achieved?

Ms LINARD: Navigate your Health is a fantastic cross-agency initiative being delivered in partnership between my department and Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service. The program works in partnership with general practitioners, Aboriginal medical services, hospitals and other community health centres as required. I am pleased to report that the outcomes of the program have included: addressing unmet health needs; providing consistent health care; increasing accessibility to, and timeliness of, health services; improving immunisation rates; coordinating access to dental care; and improving communication and information sharing within and to the health sector for vulnerable children and young people.

Children subject to an interim or finalised child protection order who are in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive can be referred to the program by child safety staff. Young people aged between 10 and 17 years engaged with youth justice on a community based order can be referred to the program by youth justice staff. The Navigate Your Health model is supported by dedicated nurse navigator positions who take a lead role in supporting children and young people with improved access to health checks, referrals and healthcare coordination support. The program commenced as a pilot in the Brisbane district from January 2018 to December 2019 to improve the health and wellbeing of children in care in the Brisbane district. During the pilot period, 646 children in care were referred to the program. In January 2020 Navigate Your Health expanded to include two additional locations, Logan and Cairns, and young people in contact with the youth justice system.

To date, Children's Health Queensland has permanently allocated 16 nurse navigator FTEs to the program. From January to November 2020, 509 referrals of children and young people to the Navigate your Health program were made—209 of which were for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Outcomes for young people in contact with the youth justice system include addressing their unmet health needs to support education, vocational training, gaining employment and participating in other pro social activities leading to reduced offending or reoffending.

To further illustrate the effect the program is having on families, I am able to share some short case studies. A family of five children aged between four and eight were referred within 10 days of coming into care as a result of domestic violence, parental substance misuse and neglect. When they came into care, they had significant speech and language delays, they were difficult to understand and became frustrated when others could not understand them, and they also complained of pain in their mouth. The nurse navigator arranged for urgent dental treatment which identified multiple cavities and the need for a number of extractions. They had a comprehensive health assessment completed by a general practitioner and were referred to the child development service for speech therapy and for hearing and vision tests. Being part of the program has meant that they have received medical and dental care faster than if a child safety officer had been trying to navigate the complexities of the health system alone.

A child safety service centre was having difficulties making an urgent appointment for a child to see a paediatrician and the child was referred to Navigate your Health. With the health information the nurse navigator was able to gather from child safety, that child had an appointment within one month.

These are just a few of the stories and positive outcomes when our agencies better coordinate service delivery to serve our most vulnerable. I hear stories like this every day and want to acknowledge the outstanding cross-agency work and relationships that exist and are exercised daily with police, health, education and many more. It is truly changing the story for many of these young people.

Mr SKELTON: Will the minister advise how many children with a disability in the child safety system now have an approved NDIS package and what type of supports are they receiving?

Ms LINARD: Supporting children in care who have a disability is a key focus for my department. We know the benefits of accurate assessment, early intervention, specialist therapies and psychosocial supports for children with a disability, and we make sure children and their carers get access to the help they need through NDIS planning. With the commencement of the Commonwealth NDIS, the department undertook modelling that showed between 16 and 20 per cent of children in care would be eligible for NDIS plans and funding.

I am pleased to advise that, as at 15 November this year, 2,556 children and young people in care have been referred to the NDIS. Of these, approximately 1,981 children and young people have approved NDIS plans, and 779 children and young people with approved NDIS plans are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The referral of 2,556 children to the NDIS shows that we are meeting our early modelling referral numbers and ensuring disability support for those who need it.

As at 28 September 2020, the median annual NDIS plan funding for children subject to guardianship or custody to the chief executive was \$24,500. NDIS plans provide a wide range of supports for children with disability: support workers, in-home support and community access; aids and

equipment; assistive technology and home modifications; disability related health supports, including dietician support and seizure alarms; therapeutic supports, including allied health, behaviour support, physical therapies and art, music and equine therapy; living skills; and school leaver employment support for young people transitioning to adulthood.

To give an example of how the NDIS is supporting the disability needs of a young person in care and strengthening her family, I am happy to share the following case study—of course the names have been changed. Rachel is a 16-year-old girl subject to a long-term guardianship to a suitable person child protection order, living with her carer guardians, Shannon and Grant, we will call them. Rachel has autism which impacts her emotional regulation and her relationships, and she is an NDIS participant.

Rachel's care arrangement was at risk of breaking down due to escalating disability needs and reduced access to supports at the beginning of the pandemic. With different routines and regular activities unavailable, Rachel and her carers were struggling. The carers were able to use Rachel's NDIS plan flexibly, and a skilled supports coordinator stepped them through an urgent plan review. A new plan was created that recognised these changes and Rachel's needs. Rachel is now supported to access the community and has access to more therapies, and her carers can access behaviour support. Rachel and her carers have not needed to reach out to child safety since her new NDIS plan. Most importantly, she is still with her carers and they are a family.

CHAIR: Minister, will you please advise of any work youth justice is doing with young people with language difficulties?

Ms LINARD: This was something that my director-general, Robert Gee, alluded to earlier. We know that many of the young people who are repeat offenders often come from incredibly tough backgrounds. Many do not attend school and have undiagnosed health issues, mental illness and substance misuse issues. More than 60 per cent of young people in youth justice also have speech, language and communication difficulties. However, only about five per cent come to youth justice with a formal diagnosis of this.

In addition, more than 50 per cent of young people in youth detention have difficulties with reading and writing and struggle to accurately read written words compared to their peers. It means they have difficulty understanding or communicating with others, expressing themselves or, importantly, understanding interactions in the criminal justice system—that is, their bail conditions. This can have far-reaching implications. It is difficult enough if a young person cannot read. If a young person does not understand what is being said, this makes understanding simple instructions or bail conditions even harder. Where a young person has difficulty speaking, they tend not to ask questions. Communication difficulties can then lead to confrontations, which exacerbate many situations.

Language and communication disorders impact all areas of a young person's life—their social, emotional and behavioural development, and their ability to build meaningful relationships and engage with school or work. Many of these young people also have: hearing and behavioural difficulties; intellectual disabilities; anxiety, depression and other mental health issues; trauma and attachment issues; autism spectrum disorder; foetal alcohol spectrum disorder; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; and substance misuse.

To respond to these issues, the government has introduced support services in the community and in youth detention centres. In Queensland we have the first speech pathologist in Australia to be employed full time by a youth justice department outside of a detention centre. In September 2017 in response to recommendations from the independent review of youth detention centres, speech language pathologists started working in our youth detention centres. The work of the speech and language pathologists includes assessments, modifying documents for young people, training staff, building the knowledge of other agencies and contributing to research so that we can stop young people reoffending. Assessments include clinical assessments and intervention regarding social skills, vocabulary, reading and writing, non-verbal communication, hearing loss support, emotional regulation and swallowing difficulties.

Assistance is also provided for assessments to inform the decision-making in NDIS applications and assistance with identification and diagnosis of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders. To help young people understand processes that impact their lives, speech and language pathologists are modifying more than 50 documents into easy English that young people are expected to read and/or sign consent to. In order to comply with the condition, it is critical young people understand the condition.

On the training front, speech and language pathologists have trained more than 500 youth justice staff statewide on Aboriginal English dialects, how to help young people with low literacy skills and how to connect young people with other services, such as the NDIS and other health services. Important

cross-agency work has included cooperation with Queensland Health, Children's Hospital Queensland and Education Queensland to improve access to audiological testing for young people at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. Expertise and support have been provided to external organisations, including the Queensland Human Rights Commission, child safety staff when they were external, police, courts, Legal Aid Queensland and organisations providing bail support.

An example of how this is changing lives was where a young person in youth detention was planning to find work as a landscaper in the community when he was released. The speech pathologist supported him by: developing a variety of how-to and step-by-step booklets—that is, how to measure a perimeter and how to use a mower; helping with their job application to work as a landscaping labourer; making a glossary of generic landscaping terms with pictures and jargon-free definitions of different gardening tools; and literacy and vocabulary work, such as multiple-word meanings, reading comprehension, and synonyms and antonyms related to landscaping. Feedback from staff and young people tells us that this work is making a difference and Queensland is leading the way for speech language pathology services in youth detention settings. That means hope for these young people of a job and a different future and improved community outcomes.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I now defer to the member for Burnett.

Mr BENNETT: Thank you. Over to the member for Whitsunday.

Ms CAMM: Thank you, member for Burnett and Madam Chair. My question is to the Minister. How do you respond to concerns across the community and sector when \$30.8 million was just spent over three years on a failed program and, in addition, the standalone youth justice department has been disbanded or dissolved?

CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt, member. The question contains an inference where you mention 'failed'. Could you just rephrase that?

Ms CAMM: I do not believe I said the word 'failed', did I? I did. I apologise.

Mr BENNETT: It is hard to escape the conclusion.

Ms CAMM: It is challenging. I do apologise, Madam Chair. Is there a recognition by the government, Minister, that \$30.8 million—

CHAIR: Sorry, member, you are just asking for an opinion of the minister.

Ms CAMM: Okay.

CHAIR: Keep it simple.

Ms CAMM: Some \$30.8 million was invested in bail houses and has resulted in what? What did it result in for the taxpayer?

CHAIR: Thank you, member.

Ms CAMM: Thank you.

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the question, member. It was fortuitous that you came back to this topic, because I can clarify the earlier point—if I may take this opportunity—in that the costs that you were given before do not include the cost for evaluations. Coming back to your question—and I appreciate your ruling, Madam Chair, in respect of the wording—I think it is important to say that it did not fail; the evaluation showed that it did the job it was meant to do. The point here is that it was not cost-effective. The public expect that, when we are spending public funds, we are doing so responsibly and to ensure that those deliver value for money. My department should never be frightened to evaluate programs and to say, 'We can do this better, we can do this more efficiently, we can do this more effectively.' That is what the public expect. That is what I expect of my department. That is what we have delivered in respect of SCAs.

Again I say it did not fail. In regard to outcomes, 77 per cent of the people in those SCAs did not offend while in those SCAs. I know that we can keep going around and around on this point, but I would say any day that we proudly stand by the fact that it was not cost-effective, so we are stopping them. Coming back to the department—

Ms CAMM: But they did not fail, okay.

Ms LINARD: They did not fail; they delivered what they were asked to. For me, that says they did the job that they were required to do. When they were introduced—and I mentioned this earlier, member—there were additional initiatives that came online post SCAs. We do not just put something in place, forget about it and just let it go; we continue to evaluate and look at what we are delivering and say, 'Is this the right mix? Is this delivering what we need to do?', and, in this case, 'Is it the most

cost-effective way to deliver the service?' No, it is not, so we are not going to continue them. I do not think there would be one person in the public who would say, 'Please do, even though you found it is not cost-effective.' I think it is a responsible decision of government, and we stand by it.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Member for Whitsunday?

Ms CANN: Madam Chair, thank you. I will move on actually in the good use of time. Minister, I refer back to the coroner's report in relation to Mason Jett Lee where it was identified that the department would send redacted information to police containing critical information and where the coroner held that it was inappropriate for departmental officers to make decisions about whether information should be redacted in the context. The coroner recommended that procedures and policies for the provision of information to the Queensland Police Service be reviewed to ensure that information held by the department is provided to the QPS upon request in a timely manner. Has the department still been sending redacted information since the inquest report was handed down?

Ms LINARD: I thank the member for the question. First, my department works incredibly closely with the Queensland Police Service, does a wonderful job and has very positive relationships with the Queensland Police Service. In fact, just the other day I was with a senior officer who said to me, 'We really appreciate the relationship we have. We hope that it is perceived as positively from your side as it is from ours.' I said, 'Absolutely, it is.' In regard to the specifics around your question, may I just take a moment as I would like to confer with my director-general? Member, I might refer to my director-general to provide some operational advice about that relationship.

Ms CANN: Thank you. Madam Chair, if I could clarify the question to simplify it, because I am aware of my contextual preamble?

CHAIR: Yes, thank you.

Ms CANN: Is it still a practice to send redacted information to the Queensland Police Service?

CHAIR: Your question was very clear. The preamble was a little bit long, but the question was very clear.

Ms Mulkerin: Child safety staff, as you are aware, are legislatively required to immediately notify QPS regarding information received about alleged harms, actual harms and concerns that we have. We have a process that we have agreed with police about sending that information across on a police referral form. We also have other specific provisions about how we exchange information with each other backwards and forwards. Since the beginning of the year we have been using—it has got a Public Service acronym—the police self-service document retrieval portal. I think in the question on notice we have spelt out how many times we have exchanged information with police backwards and forwards.

The specific reference in the coroner's report related to a warrant that had been executed on the department. It is a very unusual thing that the police execute warrants on child safety. In this last year there were 69 warrants. Warrants are used by police only for very specific purposes, that is, the information mostly about historical abuse matters. Every day across the state we exchange thousands of pieces of information with our colleagues in police. At the operational level, every day we are working with police and we exchange and share information every day. The specific reference in the coroner's report was specifically about the use of warrants.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Member for Whitsunday, do you have a—

Ms CANN: I do have some subsequent questions. Thank you, Madam Chair. This question is to the director-general. I refer to a statement by Queensland Police Union President Ian Leavers—

Child Safety need to step up and work with the police and not flood police ... on Fridays with many notifications which were urgent but haven't been attended to during the week.

I note when asked in the estimates question on notice No. 13 that the department failed to identify the number of urgent notifications that are sent to police late on a Friday afternoon, partly due to the paper nature of that. Is the minister aware of child safety officers flooding police with notifications over a weekend?

CHAIR: Member, sorry to interrupt. I will let the question go, but I just want you to be mindful of using the words 'flooded' and 'failed' because they do contain an inference. Could you try to remove those words? The question was directed to the director-general.

Ms CANN: Are you aware of child safety officers sending notifications over a weekend of a significant nature in number?

CHAIR: Thank you, member.

Ms Mulkerin: Thank you for the question. I am not aware of the volume that is referenced there, but it is fair to say that we do work with our police colleagues every day of the week in hours, out of hours, during business time and on the weekend. The urgency and importance of the information we receive will determine when we provide that information to police or whether we are asking police for assistance. If we receive it early in the morning, we will send it across to police if we need to. If a Friday afternoon is when the request is made and the support is needed, we will send it on a Friday afternoon. I can assure the committee that we are not holding on to work to send till last thing on a Friday afternoon. My frontline colleagues are working every day, and we are working in concert with our police colleagues every day across the state.

Ms CAMM: On the hours worked Monday through to Sunday, I note that the average hours worked by child safety officers on Saturday was significantly lower than the average of every other day—an average of 7.6 hours. On Saturdays it is 1.62 hours. Director-General, what is the reason for the small amount of work of child safety officers on that particular day? That does not look consistent across the week.

Ms Mulkerin: The data as you have called it out is very interesting because, in fact, when I saw the data I made reference to the minister that actually I was worried about the amount of hours worked by my frontline colleagues on a Sunday, because the business hours for child safety officers are during the week. We will work a spread of hours. It does indicate that a lot of my frontline colleagues are actually working overtime on a Sunday. We do provide support out of hours. The after-hours service centre provides support across the state out of hours. If there is a need for someone in a region to go out and support a carer or a child or work with our police colleagues, they get called out. The hours simply reflect that pattern of call-outs. It reflects the ebb and flow of the work over the week.

Ms CAMM: Director-General, will you be delving further into the discrepancy between Saturdays and Sundays as to whether that is a case load or demand issue or whether that is something further in the operational needs of child safety officers?

Ms Mulkerin: I think the question you are asking goes to the demand for our services and the workload of my frontline colleagues and how available we are out of hours. I am worried every day of the week about the workload and the demands on my frontline colleagues. I know from my own experience of having been a frontline worker, I know from speaking with my frontline colleagues and I know from the evidence and research we have that there is a strong correlation between a safe workplace and good quality casework and work with children, families and carers.

My obligation as the head of the organisation is to provide a safe workplace for my colleagues who do extraordinarily complex work, so I am worried every day of the week about our ability to respond in a timely way, in a way that is safe, that we can get out and do the job that we need to do, and worried that we are available when children and families need us. I will be looking at workload, availability and how we respond to the community every day of the week and over the next couple of years, working with my colleagues on how we can make sure we provide not only a safe workplace but also a really responsive service to families who need us.

Mr BERKMAN: Director-General, question on notice 20(e) asked how many children on remand in youth detention centres were held in isolation, but the answer was given as a separation rate per 100 bed nights. Can you translate that answer into a number of children in youth detention facilities who were held in isolation for any length of time?

Ms Mulkerin: I am very happy for my colleague to answer the question.

Mr Gee: By 'isolation' I think you mean separation within a detention centre?

Mr BERKMAN: Yes. That is the way it has been referred to in the response so, yes—the separation rate.

Mr Gee: What separation means is that for a period—whether it is under two hours, up to 12 hours or 24 hours; the regulation is very clear about the approval processes—for the safety of the young person or another, or by their own request, or perhaps if they are ill, they are taken and put into their rooms. I am not sure whether you have been to a detention centre, but their rooms have individual showers and toilets. They have a television, so long as the young person is behaving in the appropriate way. I can inform the committee that in 2019-20 there were nine separations longer than 24 hours and this year so far there have also been nine. I think that is as of this morning.

Mr BERKMAN: The answer to question on notice 20(b) acknowledges that the department has no target for the reduction of children on remand. Director-General, what proportion of youth justice detainees are on remand and how does this compare to remand rates in the adult prison population?

Ms Mulkerin: I will refer that question to my colleague.

Mr Gee: I think off the top of my head—I will confirm it—it is about 86 per cent on an average day, the number of young people in a youth detention centre on remand. I can tell you the number of days, too, if that would help the member and the committee. I think for 2019-20 the average number of days on remand was 30. I point out that remand and the criminal justice system are complex. We are responsible, of course, for providing information to the court in terms of youth justice and the care and custody of young people in the detention centre.

In terms of how courts are administered, with respect I think that is a question for the Attorney. I do take the member's point, though. It is an issue we have worked on considerably. We have invested in a system called RADAR—Risk and Dynamic Assessment Register—so that we can have a better practice for informing the courts. Our court coordinators across all the courts in the state are now working with better information—information and theory based on evidence about providing the best available information to the courts. As well, we have SMART teams expanded across the state—a huge investment. Education, Health, Youth Justice and referral services meet to provide not just information around the care, management and case management of young people but also better information for courts and their legal representatives so that the court can be best informed about making decisions.

I do not want to take up too much of the time of the committee, but the youth justice action plan is very specific. There is a whole range of initiatives there. They are meant to come together as a strategy to make sure that the numbers of young people before the court reduce—that the offending stops—but, as importantly, that the system is as fair as it possibly can be. There were amendments last year to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act such that police are now required as a matter of law to inform a legal service if they are going to question a young person. Funding was provided to Legal Aid and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service. It took what police were doing anyway into a formal process. That has been a great help, particularly in terms of getting representation for young people before they enter the court. I hope that helps the committee.

CHAIR: I welcome the member for Kawana to the committee.

Mr BERKMAN: Turning to the answer to question on notice No. 19, Director-General, can you confirm whether in recent years there has been any industrial agreement affecting staff ratios that has impacted on the number of children that can be detained in youth detention centres?

Ms Mulkerin: I will refer to my colleague.

Mr Gee: Thanks for the question. I think the question and the answer are very specific. There has been no impact. There has been an industrial agreement and there was a decision. In the last enterprise bargaining agreement there is a one-to-four ratio mentioned, but in terms of a security overlay there is absolutely no impact in terms of capacity on staffing and bed numbers.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. Given the brevity of that question, could I ask one further question, Chair?

CHAIR: Sorry, member. We are out of time for non-government questions, but we may come back to you.

Mr BERKMAN: Very important government questions.

Ms LUI: Will the minister advise about progress in recruiting, supporting and valuing foster and kinship carers?

Ms LINARD: Thank you very much, member. Sorry, Chair, but I did not get this in just before, but clearly, member for Maiwar, this is an area of significant concern for you and I know you were desperately trying to get more questions in. I am happy to meet with you post estimates to give you a briefing. It is obviously something vexing you.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. I will certainly take you up on the offer.

Ms LINARD: No trouble.

Mr BLEIJIE: Or give us some more time in estimates.

Ms LINARD: Always a pleasure, member for Kawana.

CHAIR: Order!

Ms LINARD: Thank you, member for Cook—

Mr BLEIJIE: We could go another couple of hours.

CHAIR: Order!

Mr SKELTON: I raise a point of order—disorderly behaviour.

Ms LINARD: Quality time together, Chair. I know the member for Kawana always enjoys quality time together.

Mr BLEIJIE: Love it!

Ms LINARD: But, more importantly, let us return to the member for Cook's important question with regard to our wonderful and valued foster and kinship services and carers. In a difficult and unprecedented year, it has been very heart warming to see more Queensland families open their homes to become carers. Our more than 5½ thousand Queensland foster and kinship carer families are supported by 26 foster and kinship care agencies. These agencies and their staff recruit, train and assess carers, helping them with after-hours on-call support, carer support groups and links to peer support networks. Our carers are supported with fortnightly carer allowances and, for those who need them, high-support needs and complex support needs allowances.

A new feature was included in our Carer Connect app this year to help carers meet out-of-pocket care costs quickly by submitting claims for reimbursement online. This new feature came into its own during our community's response to COVID-19 and allowed service centres to support carers with contactless and fast reimbursements. We are also providing carers with the skills required to respond to the needs of children in their care. Following the successful rollout of the Hope and Healing trauma informed training for residential care workers, we have engaged PeakCare to adapt the framework and training for foster carers and their support workers. This new training is expected to be available from the second half of 2021. I give a very warm thanks to PeakCare, which does an extraordinary job in this area and in the sector generally.

While 2020 has presented unique challenges for carer recruitment, an advertising campaign that ran from July until September this year resulted in a significant increase in expressions of interest. These expressions of interest will drive a new wave of approved carers ready to support children most in need. Already, as at 30 June 2020, the number of carer families across Queensland grew to more than 5,600, up by more than 250, or five per cent, from the same time last year. A social media promotion has also targeted experienced carers who have taken a break to encourage them to return to their caring role.

People from all walks of life become foster carers for a variety of reasons. One couple, Jenna and Rick, wanted to help and encourage other parents who may be struggling by opening their home to vulnerable children. They see themselves as being able to step in and provide love, support and safety until the biological family is ready to step up again. To quote Jenna—

There are so many rewards to being a foster carer and we love seeing the long-term, positive outcomes for children that come into our care. We do this by creating a safe and secure environment within our home for the children to develop and grow.

The expression 'a heart as big as Phar Lap's' refers to the 6.35-kilogram organ that resided in the mighty racehorse's chest. Is this sounding familiar?

Mr SKELTON: Yes.

Ms LINARD: Yes? Good; it was an answer during question time. We use it when we talk about a person's capacity for compassion, for kindness, for bravery and for love. That is a hefty heart—6.35 kilograms. In Queensland we have thousands of foster and kinship carers, each of whom has a heart that outraces and outpaces Phar Lap's every day of the week and I cannot thank them enough. Thank you, member.

Mr SKELTON: Will the minister provide details of the Transition 2 Success program and the restorative justice conferencing program and their outcomes?

Ms LINARD: Thank you, member, for the question. Everything we do in youth justice is focused on community safety and getting kids back on track and back into education or a job. That is why we have invested record funding into programs like Transition 2 Success and restorative justice which have been rolled out across Queensland. Transition 2 Success provides vocational training and support for 15- to 17-year-olds in the youth justice system or at risk of entering the system. More than 550 vocational education certificates have been issued since the program began in 2015 and we have helped more than 125 young people get a job, apprenticeship or traineeship.

We are investing \$28.7 million over four years from 2019-20 for these programs because we know they are helping get kids back into school and education. Our young people get hands-on training, work experience and support to gain and retain employment. At the moment the program is running at 16 sites—Aurukun, Bundaberg, Caboolture, Cairns, Cherbourg, the Cassowary Coast, Gold Coast,

Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Logan, Mount Isa, Redcliffe, Rockhampton, the Sunshine Coast, Townsville and western districts. The remaining sites to be delivered by July 2021 are in Brisbane north and south, Mackay and Toowoomba.

In the 2019-20 financial year, Transition 2 Success partnered with 151 government agencies, NGOs and businesses across Queensland. Importantly, our government also committed funding of \$1.2 million over four years for Transition 2 Success to partner with TAFE Queensland to deliver vocational training to young people in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. An independent evaluation of the Transition 2 Success program also found that 67 per cent of all Transition 2 Success participants who completed a course did not offend or reoffend within 12 months of completing their course. A cost-benefit analysis highlighted that for every \$1 spent on the program the government realises \$2.13 in benefits.

With regard to restorative justice, restorative justice conferencing holds young offenders accountable for their actions and helps them repair the damage they have caused. It gives victims the opportunity to come face to face with young offenders in a supportive environment to explain the impact of their crime while also giving them a say in how they can make amends. We have committed \$27.5 million over four years from 2019-20 to deliver the program across Queensland as part of our record investment in youth justice reform and programs to reduce youth crime. We have made this investment because we know the program is supported by victims of crime and has a positive impact on offenders, reducing reoffending.

Restorative justice conferencing is often a confronting experience for young offenders and for many it is a turning point in their lives. Victims, the offenders' family members, police and other community members are invited to take part in the conference which can result in the young person getting the support they need to get back into education, training or a job. The number of young people who participated in a completed restorative justice conference increased by 14 per cent from 2018-19 to 2019-20—the highest level in eight years. In 2019-20, almost 2½ thousand young people were referred to a restorative justice conference where 2,069 agreements were reached. An evaluation of the program found that 97.1 per cent of conferences resulted in an agreement being reached about restorative actions to be undertaken. The evaluation also found that 77 per cent of young people who completed a conference did not reoffend or the magnitude of their reoffending decreased within six months of their conference and 89 per cent of victims reported being satisfied with the outcome of the conference. Departmental evaluations and data suggest the restorative justice program delivers value for money and we know it works for victims and the majority of young people involved, so I am particularly glad the Palaszczuk government reinstated the program after we came to office in 2015. Thank you, member.

CHAIR: Minister, the SDS identifies that the department will continue to lead and coordinate the Queensland government's participation in the national redress scheme. Will the minister advise what the department is doing to assist Queenslanders to access the scheme and ensure that they have access to support services, redress payments, counselling support and an apology from the responsible institutions?

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Chair. As the new Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I have the privilege of continuing the national redress scheme work of the former minister, the Hon. Di Farmer, who was a passionate advocate for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. I am looking forward to continuing this advocacy and support for redress that meets the needs of survivors.

I am aware that stakeholders continue to raise concerns about the scheme, most significantly about the time taken to process applications and re-traumatisation and impact on survivors. Since taking on the portfolio I have already participated in a Ministers' Redress Scheme Governance Board meeting and look forward to providing a submission on behalf of the Queensland government to the Commonwealth second anniversary review of the scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. I will also be talking with the reviewer on Wednesday.

To date Queensland has received more redress applications than any other jurisdiction. As at 31 October 2020 data for the Queensland government's participation in the scheme includes: almost 1,500 requests for information received, with 1,419 responses submitted, with all requests for information submitted within the required time frame; 860 individual redress applicants having offers made, of which 777 have accepted their offer; 718 people have indicated they would like to access counselling and psychological care, of these 312 relate to people where the abuse occurred in other jurisdictions and/or non-government institutions; 39 people have commenced counselling; 378 people

have indicated they would like to access a direct personal response, of whom 34 people have made contact and 16 direct personal responses have been delivered—and from discussions with my director-general they are incredibly moving experiences. Direct personal responses are survivor led and it is important that we go at the recipient's pace and provide the direct personal response when they are ready.

My department has provided comprehensive training to senior executives across government to ensure the provision of genuine and meaningful direct personal responses. Of concern, people cannot receive redress if the non-government institution responsible is not participating in the scheme. Most major churches and many key institutions have joined. However, there continues to be a small number of Queensland institutions that are still in the process of joining. The department is working closely with the scheme to monitor Queensland institutions' participation. The deadline for institutions to opt into the scheme has been extended to 31 December 2020 and the Queensland government is working to encourage all institutions funded by government to opt in. There has been a strong response from Queensland institutions who have stepped up to their responsibilities and either joined or publicly committed to joining.

Under the scheme survivors can access free and independent advice through legal support services jointly funded by Commonwealth, state and territory governments. Redress support services are funded to provide support before, during and after the application process, including for people in rural and remote areas. Our government also provides counselling and psychological care to redress recipients, an important part of the redress response. We provide a user choice model so that redress recipients have as much choice as possible when deciding on a counsellor. My department also provides direct support to people who cannot locate a suitable counsellor.

To date the National Redress Scheme has undertaken limited public awareness raising activities about the scheme and how to access it, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. My department, however, has undertaken significant engagement and communication work to ensure as many Queenslanders as possible know about the scheme. This has included the dissemination of over 25,000 brochures about the scheme, how to apply and where to go to for support.

In collaboration with the former department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships we have also developed a number of resources to raise awareness about the scheme with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who may have experienced child sexual abuse in Queensland institutions, including on missions and in dormitories. This collaboration resulted in the development of two trauma informed, culturally appropriate, animated videos to raise public awareness about the Queensland government's participation in the scheme. Feedback received from the scheme has indicated that there is more work to be done to ensure that survivors are not further traumatised during access to the scheme.

As minister responsible for redress in Queensland I strongly encourage all non-government institutions to step up to their responsibilities and publicly commit to joining the scheme. I also very much look forward to working with the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce established in September 2018 as a key component of the Queensland government response to the royal commission chaired by Mr Robert Atkinson.

Ms LUI: Minister, your portfolio has a number of key stakeholder bodies and committees providing advice and input. Will you advise how they enrich and add value to the performance of the portfolio?

Ms LINARD: I am very pleased to have this opportunity to share with you some of the many stakeholder bodies and committees that my department draws advice from. Our stakeholders play a significant role in our policy and reform work and we are privileged to be able to draw on the significant insight, expertise and experience that their members contribute. It is important to us that we hear from the voices of those with lived experience to inform how we deliver our services and develop initiatives and programs.

In the child safety portfolio the independent Queensland First Children and Families Board, co-chaired by Professor Boni Robertson and Mr Mick Gooda, was established to guide and oversee the Our Way strategy and its action plans and assist the department with our efforts to end the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system. In 2019-20 the board supported a number of core projects under the Our Way strategy, including development of the second Changing Tracks Action Plan, co-design of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people wellbeing outcomes framework and

co-design of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing strategy to address the impact of intergenerational trauma, grief and loss, violence and abuse experienced by some First Nations children and families. I look forward to working with the board and extend my thanks for their work over the past year. As the new minister I look forward to being guided by the significant experience, cultural authority, knowledge and leadership of its members in the years to come.

I would also like to share with you the ongoing work of the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce which provides advice on the ongoing implementation of reforms arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The task force is chaired by the esteemed Mr Bob Atkinson, a friend to so many, and former police commissioner and royal commissioner. In addition to their advisory role, the task force plays an important role raising awareness about the royal commission and the impact of institutional abuse and has been active around the state at community events and forums, including delivering the first of a series of community forums in Toowoomba this year. In February members of the task force also spoke at the National Indigenous Youth Empowerment Summit in Cairns. In 2019-20 the task force was provided almost \$50,000 in grants for activities that contribute to truth, healing and reconciling the impacts of abuse in Queensland communities, including music therapy workshops for survivors of institutional abuse through Link-Up Queensland and a truth telling creative writing project run by Micah Projects. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the task force for its work and particularly acknowledge the personal contribution of those members with lived experience.

In the multicultural affairs part of my portfolio I am pleased to be guided by the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council. The council was established under the Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 and provides advice to me as minister and my department on the needs and aspirations of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, how to raise awareness of the Multicultural Queensland Charter, developing and implementing multicultural policies and how services and programs can be responsive to the needs of people from CALD backgrounds. The council meets with chief executives of government agencies to explore their progress on actions under the Queensland Multicultural Action Plan and has conducted consultations on important issues facing CALD communities including those impacting people with disability and young people and on issues relating to domestic and family violence and mental health.

Finally, in the youth justice area I would like to highlight the work of the Youth Justice Strategy Reference Group first established in 2018. The reference group includes representatives from peak industry and sporting bodies, including the National Retail Association, QSport, education providers, health and mental health service providers and youth and Indigenous community organisations. It has an important ongoing role to play in ensuring that the Youth Justice Strategy Action Plan delivers solutions that work for all Queensland communities.

It is important to acknowledge that these are just some of the wonderful boards, task forces and committees that support and inform the work of my portfolio. All play a critical role in ensuring that our reform agenda and service delivery are meeting the needs of our children, families, communities and other stakeholders. I take this opportunity to thank all of them for the contribution they have made to date and to again communicate—because I have spoken to many if not all of them to date; I hope I have not left anyone out—that I look forward to working with them, meeting them in person and continuing the important work and reform of this portfolio. Thank you very much.

Ms CAMM: My question is to the director-general. I reference a letter that was sent to your office in September 2020 and also to the office of the Premier and the former minister for child safety that references and describes—

CHAIR: Are you tabling the letter?

Ms CAMM: Can I ask if the director-general is aware of the letter before I table it? I do not need to table it. Has she received the letter?

CHAIR: Sure.

Ms CAMM: That references the impacts of a toxic workplace culture, poor management and excessive caseload that is impacting the safety and wellbeing of staff as well as the safety and protection of vulnerable children in the Moreton Bay region. The letter is dated September 2020. Did you receive this letter?

CHAIR: Director-General, are you aware of that letter?

Ms Mulkerin: I did receive it and I am aware of what you are referencing, yes.

Ms CAMM: Minister, have you been briefed on the contents of that letter?

Ms LINARD: No, I have not been briefed.

Ms CAMM: Director-General, have you received any other complaints by the Moreton Bay region, either through the office or through any other means?

Ms Mulkerin: I am not trying to be difficult; I am trying to understand the question about complaints. Are you referencing other staff complaints or general complaints from clients and communities?

Ms CAMM: I am referencing the staff concerns that were raised as to the caseloads, in particular, and the culture that exists in that office?

Ms Mulkerin: I am aware of other complaints that I have received or that the department has received, yes.

Ms CAMM: Is there an investigation underway to address those complaints?

Ms Mulkerin: There have been a number of complaints that I am aware of that really talk to the same issue, both about some concerns about the leadership and management of the region or specific service centres and then some general concerns about workload.

Ms CAMM: Director-General, is there a current process or investigation underway to address those concerns?

Ms Mulkerin: I would actually have to take that on notice because there have been a couple of complaints. I am not exactly certain and I would not like to mislead the committee about where each of those complaints is up to.

Ms CAMM: Chair, can I ask the minister whether that question can be taken on notice?

Ms LINARD: Of course, I am happy to take it on notice, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Ms CAMM: My question is to the minister and I do appreciate that you are newly appointed, as am I. My question is in regards to the 58 deaths known to Child Safety, of which 14 were as a result of suicide. Will the government establish a policy or implement a departmental process or initiatives to actively address and prevent suicides of children known to Child Safety?

Ms LINARD: I want to take one moment to confer. I am aware of the statistics that you are referring to. It was a question on notice on 2018-19 statistics?

Ms CAMM: Correct.

Ms LINARD: Thank you, member. I did want to confer with the director-general because my recollection is that we absolutely are addressing this issue. Firstly, I acknowledge the issue. It is a deeply concerning issue, whether suicide is in relation to children, young people or adults. But it is particularly moving and difficult, I think, as a community when we see young people who are in such a state of despair that they lose hope and take that action. You cannot help but be moved by that. I see equally that you are as moved as I am.

In regard to suicide of children known to the department, it is a fact that many of the people who are known to the department—most—have been impacted with significant trauma. Many of the factors that bring young people in contact with the department are the very factors that contribute to those sorts of issues and outcomes. Obviously that trauma can result in feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth. Young people are certainly at high risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation and attempts. The department does everything it can, which is the first thing to say, to work with young people and carers and care services, schools, mental health clinicians and anyone in wraparound services who is part of the overall response to that child or young person to try to keep young people well and safe.

Training, practice guidelines and reporting systems are focused around and help with early identification and responses to risk factors. It is absolutely a focus of the department about how we identify those risk factors early and provide services and support to that young person, to re-engage that young person, to make sure that isolation is not an issue contributing to that young person as well. The department supports and works with therapeutic, behavioural and mental health services and supports such as Evolve Therapeutic Services, the Child and Youth Mental Health Service, headspace—I am sure you are aware of the wonderful work of headspace; I have my own headspace in Nundah and they are invaluable—and youth support services. Also the department is working with Health and the Queensland Mental Health Commission, which is leading vital work to reduce suicides. It has been my understanding, Director-General, that it has been a real area of focus for them as well.

We have appointed a practice leader, mental health, who supports staff capability and access to mental health resources. Director-General, did I miss anything? Is there anything that you would like to add to this important area?

Ms Mulkerin: The only comment that I would make beyond the comprehensive answer that the minister has already given is that I have had some discussions with our colleagues in the Queensland Family and Child Commission and the Principal Commissioner, Cheryl Vardon. There is some concern that through COVID we have seen an uptick of young people who are either self-harming or have committed suicide. The last time I spoke to Ms Vardon she was not prepared to declare it as a trend, but it was kind of a watching brief about whether in fact, apart from the factors that the minister has highlighted about the children whom we know and we come into contact with, COVID and the isolation and the distress that has been in the community as a result of COVID might have placed even greater risk for those vulnerable young people. At the moment it is a watching brief for us.

Mr KRAUSE: Minister, welcome. I want to ask you a quick local-member question, if I may, in relation to the Beaudesert Child Safety Service Centre.

Ms LINARD: I thought you were going to ask me a question about Nudgee. I thought you were so interested in my electorate; I love it!

Mr KRAUSE: A few years ago there were plans by one of your predecessors to close the Beaudesert Child Safety Service Centre. I seek your guarantee that that child safety centre will be retained in Beaudesert into the future. I ask you to respond to that question now because it is a very important resource for our Scenic Rim community.

Ms LINARD: I can understand that that would be of concern to any local member. It is a vital service. I am not aware of that history, as you would appreciate and understand. I will take a moment to confer.

My assumption is correct, which is that we are certainly not looking at closing your service or your service centre. I hope that gives you comfort. It is a resource that we want to keep and we are investing in and continuing to invest in for the benefit of children and families in your community.

Ms CAMM: I have a question to the minister. Can you confirm whether or not former director-general Michael Hogan is currently undertaking consultancy work for the department or has formerly undertaken consultancy work for the department?

Ms LINARD: I will confer with my director-general because that information is not immediately available to me. Neither the director-general nor I is aware of any such work but, of course, we would like to ensure that the information we give you is totally correct. We will check. I would imagine we will not be providing you with that answer in approximately seven minutes so we will take it on notice, if we may.

CHAIR: Minister, you are able to come back after the break with that information.

Ms LINARD: Thank you very much. We may do that, member, if we can confirm.

CHAIR: If not, you may take that question on notice. Member for Whitsunday, do you have one more question?

Ms CAMM: I do have one more question in relation to the question that you have taken on notice. If so, what is the value of paid work that has been undertaken?

Ms LINARD: Should there be any work, we will be happy to enlighten you with those details. We will look for that further information.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister and member for Whitsunday. I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr SKELTON: Will the minister outline the government's approach to intervening early to stop offending?

Ms LINARD: Thank you, member. Early intervention, as you would be aware, is a key pillar of our youth justice reform agenda. I know the Treasurer carries around our economic plan; I carry this around in respect of Youth Justice. It is a fantastic report, one well worth reading and, can I say, one full of hope. We need to be changing the tone in talking about youth justice as well. Coupled with keeping children out of court, out of custody and reducing reoffending, this evidence based approach has the best chance of keeping our community safe. Crime prevention takes a committed whole-of-government approach, involving all government agencies, the non-government sector and the broader community. Youth justice is just one part of this much bigger system. Our government is addressing the root causes of crime by investing more than \$332 million in a range of targeted programs and services. We are engaging young people in education and training—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

CHAIR: Order. Sorry Minister. Member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: I just wanted to ensure the minister was not misleading the community. She has to take the \$30.8 million bail houses out of that figure. They have just abolished it.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, can we just move on and allow the minister to continue. She is not taking your interjections, so please cease.

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Chair. I have perfected the art of ignoring the member for Kawana over the past six years. The Palaszczuk government is addressing the root causes of crime by investing more than \$332 million in a range of targeted programs and services. We are engaging young people in education and training, supporting families and parents to address issues contributing to their children's offending, and delivering programs and services that respond to health, disability and mental health issues.

Initiatives targeting the unique circumstances that lead to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children being overrepresented in the system are also being delivered. These initiatives are working. Promisingly, in 2019-20 there was a 23 per cent decrease in the number of young people with a proven offence and nine per cent fewer charged offences compared with 2018-19. The department's target of a five per cent reduction in reoffending rates is on track with a three per cent drop from 2018-19 to 2019-20.

Our major programs include the place based Community Youth Response and Diversion program aims to keep young people out of court and custody, to get back on track with education and training to prevent reoffending. It is available on the Gold Coast and in Ipswich, Cairns, Brisbane, Logan, Moreton and Townsville. It provides alternative education through Flexi Schools and cultural mentoring, a specialist high-risk youth court and integrated case management so families and young people with complex needs get the support they need.

Street CRED is a community youth response and diversion program delivered by the Gold Coast Youth Service. It supports young people in high-risk periods through a coordinated partnership between police, youth justice, child safety, housing and community based service providers. In 2019-20 it received \$120,000 and supported 83 young people and it is funded to operate to 30 June 2023.

Youth Empowered Towards Independence Incorporated delivers a community youth response and diversion service in Cairns for young people engaging in high-risk behaviours where they are diverted to safe places and connected to support services. Between December 2019 and 30 June this year, it supported 64 young people.

Mount Isa youth Transitional Hub, which I spoke of earlier, provides support for young people, giving them a safe place to visit and receive assistance and referrals. It has been an important part of reducing offences there by 33 per cent in 2019-20.

Participation and restorative justice conferencing, also referred to earlier, increased by 14 per cent in 2019-20. We have increased the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services with 33 new youth and family workers who supported 1,688 young people and their families. These services support families and help young people re-engage with kin, schools and communities.

Some 56 young people completed the Framing the Future RESPECT program last financial year, run with police, with 56 per cent increasing their engagement with education, employment or work experience.

Education programs focused on disengaged young people also feature in some community youth response and diversion services, abridging to Flexi School program in Townsville and Ipswich, and alternative education support delivered by the Department of Education in Cairns. These programs have helped 77 young people stay engaged in education. Alternative education and re-engagement programs are delivered by the Department of Education with other agencies, including pathways colleges in Brisbane, Bundamba and Townsville, 17 FlexiSpaces in mainstream high schools for at-risk students, and youth engagement hubs for early school leavers. In 2019, the hubs connected more than 4,500 young people and supported 2,721 to reconnect with education, training and work.

Edmund Rice Australia also delivers 12 flexible learning centres for seven to 12-year-olds who have difficulty accessing mainstream schools. Other education programs target vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, such as the Be well Learn well program delivered in partnership

with Gidgee Healing and Apunipima Cape York Health Council to address behaviour and learning issues for these students in remote state schools. From partnering with education to health, the Navigate your Health program we spoke of earlier, delivered in partnership with Queensland Health, is helping young people find their way through our health system.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister's time has now ceased and this hearing has now ended. It is 5.15 pm.


Ms LINARD: So many more initiatives, Chair, to share with the member of Kawana. Perhaps we could sit down and I will run through every single one of them.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I thank you sincerely for your interjection and for your point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: The best point of order of the day.

CHAIR: It now being 5.15 pm—the member for Kawana is correct—the committee will adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 5.30 pm with the examination of the estimates for the multicultural affairs portfolio.

Proceedings suspended from 5.16 pm to 5.30 pm.

 **CHAIR:** The hearing is resumed. Welcome back, Minister, and officials. I welcome the member for South Brisbane and I welcome back the member for Surfers Paradise. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the multicultural affairs portfolio. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of multicultural affairs open for examination. The question before the chair is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

We will start with non-government questions.

Mr LANGBROEK: I welcome the minister, the director-general and all the senior staff from the multicultural affairs area. With reference to page 99 of the SDS and the Multicultural Action Plan, given that the Human Rights Commissioner was quoted on 13 September as describing racial intolerance as a critical issue in Queensland, what practical actions have resulted from the government's signing up to the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'Racism. It stops with me' campaign?

Ms LINARD: I will, in a moment, ask my executive director, Wayne Briscoe, to make comment. Member, as you can appreciate I have had four weeks in the portfolio. I know he will have additional depth in respect of the conversations that have been had to date in this regard. I am so proud to have multicultural affairs as part of my portfolio, not only because as the member for Nudgee I come from a highly multicultural area but also because the Queensland that I want to live in—and I am sure you want to live in and every Queenslanders I hope wants to live in—is one where everyone is treated equally, but diversity is seen as something that enriches us. Unfortunately, there are those who do not see diversity as something that enriches us; they see it as something which is different between us and divides us.

This portfolio does an extraordinary job—and Wayne will blush—of building cohesion in communities but also of holding the government and all departments to account for valuing that, highlighting that and prioritising that. We do not want racism in Queensland. There is no place for it here. It is not the Queensland my children will be growing up in. We will be continuing to work to ensure that the values of a united and harmonious Queensland are valued. Wayne, could I ask you to make comment specifically in regard to the member's question?

Mr Briscoe: Signing up to the 'Racism. It stops with me' campaign is but one thing our department and the government are doing in relation to trying to address racism across the community. It is a significant issue, as we saw throughout COVID where certain members of the community and certain communities were the subject of very significant racial vilification.

Multicultural affairs in the previous department and now in the new department fairly quickly developed a toolkit for other agencies but also members of our Multicultural Queensland Ambassador Program, which are primarily corporates, to use in any way they could to call out racism and also provide assistance to victims of racism, bystanders but also perpetrators. That toolkit, which is online, in relation to perpetrators, for example, really asks people to think twice before they post inappropriate material or

think twice before saying something inappropriate and bear in mind what the consequences might be to those people or to the broader community of passing on that type of view. We work very closely with the Human Rights Commission in Queensland but also with the Race Discrimination Commissioner at the federal government level. The Race Discrimination Commissioner and his office provided some significant support in developing that toolkit for the department.

We work very closely with our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Where we see the possibility of racism having an impact across the community we act in whatever way we can. That would include, as an example, the response to the Christchurch massacre last year. We saw almost an instantaneously negative impact on Queensland's Muslim community. Our department developed messaging and support messages for our Muslim community but also for our ambassador organisations and other government agencies to send out messages of support to the Muslim community. They were feeling the impact of the hatred of the right-wing attacks in Christchurch. I think we have very particular responses to racism but also do what we can to put out very positive messages of support to our community. Those messages include that racism is never acceptable.

Ms LINARD: I make one final point to ensure the member is aware that the Deputy Premier committed in October that a re-elected Palaszczuk government would refer the Cohesive Communities Coalition's *Serious vilification and hate crime: the need for legislative reform* options paper to the appropriate parliamentary committee for review and consultation. Concerns raised by the coalition obviously deserve recognition and thorough investigation. We look forward to progressing that issue through the democratic parliamentary processes.

Mr LANGBROEK: Minister, your response then leads into my next question with the same reference. In response to multicultural groups' concerns, as expressed by the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner, does the minister plan to meet with the Attorney-General to ensure that race related crimes are adequately prosecuted?

Ms LINARD: Absolutely. There are crossover areas in this portfolio with the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General and I have already had a conversation about a number of those crossover projects. This topic was not one of those we covered off on, but absolutely.

Mr LANGBROEK: The next reference is answer to question on notice No. 6. Minister, could you outline what steps the department took to work with then minister Jones and her department about international students affected by COVID-19?

Ms LINARD: We will find the answer to that question on notice so I can have a quick refresh. I will pass to the executive director to talk to that given I do not have that contextual history. Obviously he was present and I was not when those conversations were happening. I make the point that multicultural affairs did significant work during COVID. Our CALD communities, already vulnerable in many respects, were one of the most vulnerable community groups. When you take language into account and think about the number of public messages and directions that were being received, that was a complication and a further barrier for some of those communities. Executive Director, the department has done an extraordinary job in respect of both funding initiatives and supporting those communities, but could you turn your mind to the specifics of international students?

Mr Briscoe: Yes. We were aware of the issues relating to international students but also other temporary visa holders in Queensland who were not receiving support primarily through the Commonwealth government as Australian citizens and permanent residents were receiving. Our minds were very much turned to the plight of those people.

Very early on, Study Queensland, part of Trade and Investment Queensland, established a working group which operated across government agencies but also with key organisations in the community to identify what were the issues posed for international students and what could be done to support them. One result of that was the significant package that the Queensland government provided to international students. There was also a lot of work happening with Queensland institutions of higher education to provide support, either monetary support or other support through universities and so on.

Also, for Multicultural Affairs, we were in constant contact with organisations who were working on the ground with international students and other temporary visa holders who were in dire need of support. We were providing them with the information of where they might be able to go to for support. That support included, for example, an allocation that the Australian government made through the Australian Red Cross for emergency relief which international students would have been entitled to in certain circumstances.

Yes, we were working very closely with community organisations but also with Study Queensland as chair through that working group. There is still work continuing in relation to supporting international students. The member may be aware of some significant issues in relation to mental health and other issues that have impacted international students as a result of the circumstances they have found themselves in over the last nine months or so.

CHAIR: I call the member for South Brisbane.

Dr MacMAHON: My question is to the director-general. This past week a number of asylum seekers have been released from alternative places of detention including the Kangaroo Point Central Hotel. Is the state government providing support for those asylum seekers who have recently been exited from alternative places of detention or community detention?

Ms Mulkerin: I will ask Mr Briscoe to respond.

Mr Briscoe: Our understanding is that at least one person has been released from the APOD at Kangaroo Point. That is an alternative place of detention run by Home Affairs. All decisions in relation to people held in the APOD are Home Affairs decisions and the minister responsible for Home Affairs. We understand that last week one person was released, provided a small amount of funding and provided a one-way ticket to Melbourne where that person had links. Those links might be family or close associations. We have unconfirmed advice today that one other person may have been released. We are not provided any advance notice of people being released. Obviously we are concerned because it will be up to the state government or community organisations to provide support for those people entering the community.

We have a similar circumstance in relation to people being exited from community detention by Home Affairs again with very, very little or no notice. Those people exit the Home Affairs community detention program—which provides income support, housing and Medicare access—into the community with no income support and no housing after a three-week period but with work rights. They would have had no work rights in community detention.

Through a funding contract we have with Community, an NGO based in Brisbane, and their partner organisations including the Red Cross and others, we have provided over \$4 million over a three-year period to support asylum seekers and refugees in need of support. That service is providing support for people exiting community detention and will do what they can in relation to people being exited from APODs but it is a very difficult situation, particularly with no Commonwealth government support being provided.

Dr MacMAHON: Can I just—

CHAIR: I am sorry, member, we will come back to you. I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr SKELTON: My question is to the minister. Many events and projects funded under the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program had to be postponed this year due to COVID-19. Will the minister please provide an update on this program for 2021?

Ms LINARD: I am pleased to provide an update on this wonderful funding program for the committee. Late last year the previous minister for multicultural affairs announced funding to a total of 165 events to be delivered in 2020, with 21 one of those events receiving funding for the very first time. However, no-one could predict the challenges that we would face this year. It became apparent early in the calendar year that COVID-19 would impact delivery for most of those events.

The then Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs acted swiftly and contacted event organisers to give them the options to postpone their events and hold their funding over to a later date. This was the most efficient way to guarantee the safety of Queenslanders; to take the pressure off community event organisers, many of whom are volunteers; and to protect our investment in these events.

More than 60 events, or 36 per cent, were postponed to a later date beyond the end of June 2020 and some to 2021. As over a third of the planned events anticipated to occur before the end of June were not able to be held this year, the total reported event attendance—which is the key performance indicator for this funding—fell short of the target of one million. If not for COVID-19, the total event attendance would likely have exceeded the attendee target.

I know that for the previous member and for all members of the Queensland government it was encouraging to see a number of organisations rapidly pivot the delivery of their events to online platforms. For example, the online Paniyiri festival in May, Reimagine 2020 presented by Multicultural

Australia during October and the Diwali event I recently attended in November hosted by the Federation of Indian Communities Queensland, who live-streamed their event and all of the wonderful entertainment, as did Hanukkah on Sunday night.

Diverse cultural and religious events help build stronger communities by promoting acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity across cultural groups in the wider community. While COVID-19 has had deep impacts on all Queenslanders, our government will continue to support the events through the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program under COVID-safe measures.

Successful staging of multicultural events in 2021 will further unite all Queenslanders and help us recover from the pandemic. It will also keep us all very busy, as I recently had the pleasure of announcing the successful event funding recipients for the 2020-21 Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program. Combined with the events that were postponed from 2020, we will see a record 211 cultural celebrations staged across Queensland next calendar year. I hope the members of the committee have space left in their diaries to get out and celebrate these events with me.

Ms LUI: Will the minister advise how the Palaszczuk Labor government continues to support multicultural communities in Queensland?

Ms LINARD: The Queensland government is committed to ensuring Queensland is a place where opportunities are maximised and the contribution of all members of society is valued and recognised. That is why our government developed the Multicultural Recognition Act in 2016 with the Multicultural Queensland Charter at its core. The charter is the foundation for promoting an inclusive, harmonious and united community, along with the work of the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council and implementing the Multicultural Policy and Action Plan. We all benefit from diversity in so many ways—in the vibrancy of our communities, in our economic connections with the global community and even in our diverse perspectives that help us create new ideas.

I am pleased to announce today that the Palaszczuk government has committed \$740,000 over three years to boost the number of interpreters who are certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, or NAATI. An interpreter training boost program will be launched in 2021 to support multicultural communities by helping people who speak in-demand languages with their interpreter training and NAATI certification fees. The new program will provide opportunities for up to 100 Queenslanders to gain jobs in the interpreting industry. I am excited that not only will these new interpreters strengthen our government service delivery response and build connections with diverse communities but also 100 Queenslanders from diverse backgrounds will be utilising their bilingual language skills, securing skilled work and strengthening our economic recovery.

Our government continues to support our multicultural communities to build an even better Queensland into the future by investing in the following initiatives: continuing to implement the election commitment to double investment to \$2 million for the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland Program; \$100,000 per annum each over three years to Balonne, Bulloo and Paroo shire councils to strengthen inclusion in their local government areas under the Regional Partnerships Projects initiative; extension of funding agreements of \$2.4 million in 2020-21 with organisations under the Community Action for a Multicultural Society, or CAMS, program to implement coordinated engagement and support of local community leaders; \$1.7 million for the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance program; \$108,000 to the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland for services to multicultural organisations as our state's peak body; \$102,000 to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters; and annual recurrent funding of \$770,000 to implement the Queensland Multicultural Recognition Act 2016, including the work of the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council. Our government has also supported multicultural communities during the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery through a \$900,000 COVID-19 Community Connection support package into areas of greatest need. Our government is committed to ensuring Queensland is a place where opportunities are maximised for all Queenslanders and where the contributions of all members of our community are valued and recognised.

Mr SKELTON: Will the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government is doing to support multicultural communities in the Sunshine Coast and hinterland region?

Ms LINARD: I thank the member for Nicklin for his question. I know his electorate in Nambour on the Sunshine Coast is very important to him. Congratulations on your election. The Palaszczuk government is committed to investing in initiatives that contribute to building a united, harmonious and inclusive Queensland. In 2019-20 funding of more than \$7.3 million was allocated towards programs and initiatives to support multicultural communities throughout the state. This included funding of more

than \$2.37 million to 19 organisations across Queensland under the CAMS program to deliver activities that support greater intercultural connectedness so that Queenslanders from diverse cultural backgrounds can achieve their ambitions for social and economic participation.

On the Sunshine Coast—and close to the member for Nicklin's heart—was our CAMS provider the Nambour Community Centre, which we funded \$75,777 to deliver activities to the diverse local community. As we have learned, multicultural communities have been some of the most vulnerable during COVID-19, but I am pleased to advise the member that the Nambour Community Centre delivered some wonderful outcomes for the community during the COVID pandemic by connecting with the local disaster recovery response group regarding the needs of people from culturally diverse backgrounds and assisting to deliver PPE, masks and food to the members of the community. As part of the \$900,000 Community Connection support package that the former department announced in April of this year, the Nambour Community Centre received additional one-off funding of \$5,000 to enhance their technological capability to support online social networks and connections with members of multicultural communities. Utilising these new funds, the Nambour Community Centre formed a working group to strategically funnel COVID-19 information to one main Facebook page and saw the membership almost double from the beginning of the pandemic to nearly 600 members, mainly from diverse backgrounds residing on the Sunshine Coast. The centre also delivered a number of activities to support intercultural connections, including broadcasting multicultural pop-up stories through community radio and a podcast series.

I would also like to inform the member of the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program, which provides almost \$1.7 million for multicultural events and projects that promote intercultural connections and inclusion, which I spoke about earlier. For the 2020 calendar year two events were funded on the Sunshine Coast: \$10,000 to Festuri, a multicultural celebration to deliver the Festuri Annual Multicultural Festival to showcase and celebrate the cultural diversity of the Sunshine Coast region; and \$5,000 to the Sunshine Coast Multicultural Network to deliver the Harmony Day Festival, which is a joint local council and community initiative to promote harmony on the Sunshine Coast. Unfortunately, both Festuri and the Harmony Day Festival had to be postponed this year because of COVID-19, but I am pleased to say they will be delivered in 2021 and I am sure that you, member for Nicklin, look forward to attending them in March and September next year.

CHAIR: I call the member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: My question references page 99, dot point 1. Will the minister provide details of funding for Gold Coast multicultural groups in this budget?

Ms LINARD: I think that we will need to come back to you, because we should equally have a brief, of course, about the wonderful Gold Coast region. We would be very happy to provide you with that detailed information. Can we come back to you?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes.

CHAIR: Minister, are you taking that on notice?

Ms LINARD: I am depending on my department to see if they can get it in 20 minutes. My executive director is looking very confident, so I am putting him under the pump and giving him approximately 17 minutes. But if we cannot get that information of course I will take it on notice.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question again refers to page 99, dot point 1. I note that the Multicultural Action Plan, on page 5, dot point 7, has an action to ensure translation/interpreter services address customer needs. You have already referred to enhanced funding to make sure there are more interpreters on the way. Queensland Health is the responsible agency, but my question is: how does the interaction work in practice between multicultural affairs advising health or working with health to make sure that people from multicultural backgrounds are able to get those interpretive language services they may need?

Ms LINARD: You are obviously referring to the Queensland Language Services Policy. We as a department lead these discussions across government, not just with Health. The standing offer arrangement is under Health, but the policy requires that all Queensland government agencies provide people who have difficulty communicating in English with fair access to services but that they also report on the use of interpreters. Multicultural affairs continues to engage with other agencies and non-government stakeholders in a range of forums to address language service issues as they arise in accordance with the provisions of that policy. I think it is an important issue, because everyone in Queensland should be able to access government services and we should not assume there are not very significant barriers for people who do have an issue with regard to language. Wayne, do you want to expand on that?

Mr Briscoe: Through the chair, and if the member is okay with this, I would like to talk about our specific experience working with Queensland Health throughout the COVID period. What COVID showed us was that all agencies really need to ensure that their services and programs are available for everyone in Queensland, irrespective of their diversity, so taking into account the full diversity of Queensland, which includes people who have difficulty expressing themselves or understanding English or have no understanding of English. What we found very early on with COVID was that there were some communities in South-East Queensland in particular who were not necessarily getting the messages through media or through printed form and who needed to have that information translated very quickly or provided in other modalities such as video.

We worked very closely with Queensland Health to identify the languages they needed to have their information translated into, and we relied heavily on great organisations like the Queensland African Communities Council, which was able to inform us of the dialects of particular languages where some communities were having difficulty understanding the COVID messages. As we saw in Victoria, it is so important that everyone in the community gets those messages irrespective of their English comprehension. That information went directly to Queensland Health, which worked extremely hard to get those translations done very, very quickly. It was a bit slow to start with, and I think everyone accepts that. It was very difficult to put what could be seen as quite complex information into translated material, but very quickly they were then able to turn translations around within 24 hours. That included over the weekends. One of the outbreaks in South-East Queensland happened over a weekend, and Queensland Health was able to get information out in translated form within 24 hours, which was absolutely fantastic and very well appreciated by the communities involved.

We continue to work very closely with Queensland Health. One thing that we have identified is that the data on language at a state level is not necessarily the data that we should be going for when we are looking at translating our material. The most common languages in Queensland might not reflect what the language needs are of a particular community, so we need to get down to that level. We have set up an online database, Search Diversity Queensland, for anyone to access which will provide information at a community level about the languages spoken in that community—that type of thing—so that should help in the future as well.

Ms LINARD: Member for Surfers Paradise, does that go to your question?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, that is great.

Ms LINARD: I wondered if you were asking about the service delivery model. Obviously, Queensland is the largest user of said services. It owns the standing offer arrangement but departments then access those services. I wondered if we went to your point. Was it when someone needs it and how they access it? Or were you happy with the answer?

Mr LANGBROEK: It was about what has been answered by Mr Briscoe, which is the ongoing relationship between multicultural affairs and those particular departments to make sure that Queenslanders and people who are here can access services as they need them. Thank you.

CHAIR: Does the member for Maiwar have a question?

Mr BERKMAN: I will pass over to the member for South Brisbane.

Dr MacMAHON: My question is for the director-general. Regarding the COVID-19 in the sexual, domestic and family violence sectors grants program, can you advise what proportion of these grants went to specialist organisations supporting CALD communities given the particular impacts of COVID on migrant women?

Ms Mulkerin: I may need to take this on notice. It is a very specific question. I am drawing upon pre machinery of government changes when I was responsible for domestic and family violence and the COVID funding, but it is not relevant to this portfolio—the domestic and family violence funding.

Dr MacMAHON: Is that breakdown available to know—

CHAIR: I am wondering whether we have the right portfolio.

Ms LINARD: I thought it was the Attorney-General.

Ms Mulkerin: Domestic and family violence was the responsibility of this department but it has actually changed and moved to justice.

CHAIR: Member for South Brisbane, it is a different portfolio. I will allow you to ask a second question.

Dr MacMAHON: To clarify, will multicultural affairs have input on any further emergency funding of this kind to make sure that CALD communities are getting the kind of support they need?

Ms Mulkerin: I am not sure whether I am wearing this hat or my prior hat, but when we were working through the domestic and family violence funding we of course consulted really broadly with the sector and with other government agencies. I would assume the same would happen—that our colleagues in justice would reach out and seek the expertise of my colleagues from multicultural affairs.

Ms LINARD: Through you, Chair, I was just passionately saying 'of course'. Of course it is an important issue.

CHAIR: Will the minister please advise what has been achieved under the government's partnership with local governments in supporting welcome and inclusion in regional areas?

Ms LINARD: As we both know, over the years there has been growing interest in migrant and refugee resettlement into regional areas, and councils have a particularly keen interest in building sustainable populations. Now more than ever, regional communities stand to gain from working together to promote economic opportunities in post pandemic recovery and support for vulnerable workforces and industries.

We know that for many migrants the decision to stay and live in a regional community ultimately depends on whether that community is welcoming and ready to embrace new arrivals. That is why the Queensland government has allocated \$900,000—which I spoke of earlier actually in a response to I think a question from the member for Nicklin—over three years to support the Balonne, Bulloo and Paroo shire councils in South-West Queensland, with \$100,000 annually to each council to strengthen welcome and inclusion in their local areas.

The regional partnerships projects are currently in the second year of project implementation, and I hear they are making positive strides. Over the past year, these three councils have been mapping the readiness of their communities to welcome new arrivals. This has involved assessing the capacity of local resources, such as employment, housing, education, health and social services, to provide opportunities for newcomer contributions to community life. Each council has drafted a welcoming strategy which aims to promote and connect people to regional opportunities, advance accessible and inclusive services, foster connections between newcomers and existing residents, and celebrate their local diversity. This process ensures strategies can be implemented based on an informed picture of local community need and regional opportunity.

Councils were guided in the first year of implementation of the regional partnerships projects by the expertise from Welcoming Cities, which as an organisation has had a long relationship with our department on regional settlement and best practice. Welcoming Cities is an NGO and founding member of Welcoming International—a network of more than 200 cities and municipalities across Australia, New Zealand, North America, Germany and the United States supporting local governments and leading practice and innovation in welcoming efforts.

Nine local governments across Queensland are members of Welcoming Cities—Balonne, Bulloo, Paroo, Gladstone, Townsville, Toowoomba, Central Highlands, Brisbane and Livingstone. Learnings captured from the journey of these three multicultural pioneer councils will help inform local plans and actions for other councils across Queensland, particularly where there are ambitions to attract and retain new arrivals in regional recovery. Welcoming Cities work recognises that, of all tiers of government, local councils are uniquely placed to understand the complexity and diversity of their communities.

Planning for welcoming and inclusive communities: guidelines for regional growth—developed through our partnership with Welcoming Cities and the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre—is another example of how the Queensland government is working to support regional councils in preparing for inclusion and growth. The guidelines released by my predecessor in early 2020 assist councils and their communities to plan and assess their readiness to attract, retain and support migrants and refugees to thrive in their communities. Supporting regional communities to embrace welcoming strategies is integral to sustainable regional settlement. We all share the responsibility for ensuring Queenslanders are placed where everyone is welcome, everyone has a sense of belonging and everyone can participate in our economy and community.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolios of children and youth justice and multicultural affairs has expired. I am aware that there were a couple of questions that you hoped to answer or otherwise take on notice. Minister, would you like a couple of minutes to do that?

Ms LINARD: Yes.

CHAIR: Would you like me to walk you through those questions?

Ms LINARD: I am happy to run through my list or for you to guide that process, Chair, whatever works for you.

CHAIR: You go.

Ms LINARD: I know we had a question in regard to remand and I would ask Director-General Bob Gee to respond to that.

Mr Gee: My memory was correct. I confirm the evidence I gave. The average daily number of young people on remand in custody in the state for the year 2019-20 was 86 per cent.

CHAIR: Thank you. The next issue, Minister, was the process for investigations into the complaints raised by staff.

Ms LINARD: The member for Whitsunday raised a number of queries in regard to an email, and I invite Director-General Mulkerin to answer that.

Ms Mulkerin: We have received four complaints. The first is an anonymous letter which has been referred to the CCC, and we are waiting for advice. The second is a referral back from the CCC, and an investigation is currently being conducted. The third is another anonymous complaint. This one was referred to in the question today from the member, and that is currently being assessed by my Professional Standards Unit. The fourth is a letter from a former employee. It is also being assessed by the Professional Standards Unit.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Minister, there was another question in relation to Michael Hogan?

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Chair. The Director-General can also provide an answer to that.

Ms Mulkerin: We have no record of Mr Michael Hogan as a vendor in our finances system. In the intervening time since the question was asked, we have also been in contact directly with Mr Hogan and he has also confirmed that he has no direct contracting with this department.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Finally, funding for the events on the Gold Coast?

Ms LINARD: Yes, I have that information here. Executive director, well done. You have met your KPI of 17 minutes! I can read this into the *Hansard* or, member, would you like me to table it, if I may with the committee's approval, and you can have this piece of paper with funded events. Is that okay, Chair, may I ask permission to table?

CHAIR: Sure.

Mr LANGBROEK: That is fine, thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, you will need to seek leave to table the document.

Ms LINARD: Yes, I am seeking leave, thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. Members, the minister is seeking leave. Is leave granted? Leave is granted. Minister, we actually have time for one more question. Member for Surfers Paradise?

Mr LANGBROEK: Certainly. Thank you, Madam Chair. Last question—the reference is question on notice 6, dot point three. What methods does the department use to raise awareness for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that they may be eligible for services under the Queensland Community Support Scheme, which I know is in communities. However, the Community Support Scheme provides service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and also those culturally and linguistically diverse. How would multicultural affairs use its abilities to advise consumers of their ability to access the Queensland Community Support Scheme?

Ms LINARD: Thank you, member, for the question. It is fair to say—and my executive director, Wayne Briscoe, has spoken about this in a number of different forums and contexts—that a very important part of the work of multicultural affairs is working with communities, and through the different peak multicultural bodies and groups, to ensure that there is awareness of the services available across departments. There are so many projects and programs. As members, it takes a lot of effort to be across all of them. Let us exacerbate that by putting in some of those barriers such as access to computers, being able to go online where a lot of the material is, and language barriers. Multicultural affairs does work with those multicultural peak groups to ensure that language is not a barrier, that information is disseminated. It works closely with them to say, 'What are the needs of your particular community?' They differ across the different communities and localities across Queensland. We need to isolate which programs may be of best assistance to them and work really closely on the ground to make sure that there are not barriers but there is awareness.

Equally, multicultural affairs works with the relevant departments in respect of making sure that they have awareness in regard to, 'Are we communicating with diverse groups across Queensland?' We cannot have one size fits all geographically let alone with different communities. Of course, CALD communities need a lot of consideration in regard to how we more intensively ensure they can access services equally. Multicultural affairs does a lot of work in that regard. The charter obviously requires that all government departments consider their programs, if there are barriers there and how they are communicating, and assist and guide about how they can be done better. Wayne, have I missed any important points that you feel would be of assistance to the member?

Mr Briscoe: No. Possibly just one example, Minister, if that would help?

Ms LINARD: Sure.

Mr Briscoe: Through the chair to the member, part of our department's response to COVID was to fund a position in Australian Red Cross. That position is a connector position, particularly with our CAMS organisations, but more broadly to ensure that messages and including messages about available support are circulated across the community through the Community Action for a Multicultural Society program through to community leaders and others. That is one very recent initiative that we have put in place specifically for COVID, but it will be very relevant as we go into the disaster season as well.

CHAIR: Thank you, Executive Director. Minister, I now invite you to provide some closing statements for approximately two minutes.

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Chair. I would like to put on the record my thanks to you, to the committee members and also to the visiting members for their interest in the portfolios of children, youth justice and multicultural affairs. I would like to acknowledge your secretariat with whom I have had the pleasure of working and know is fabulous, but also parliamentary staff, Hansard—I know how hard all of the parliamentary staff work. I would also like to acknowledge my director-general, Deidre Mulkerin, and again thank my outgoing director-general, Bob Gee; our DDGs Rob Seiler, Kate Connors and Phil Brooks; departmental executives Wayne Briscoe and Arthur O'Brien; the departmental estimates team including Melinda Rabbitt, Leah Goldsworthy, Jo Qualmann, Shauna Dennett, Nic Dwyer, Deeann Copping and Adam Watson; and our CLLO team of Suzie Peterson, Troy Schultz, Leah Andrewartha and Katherine Evans.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my chief of staff, Mike Smith; and my fantastic ministerial team, Bernadette Condren, Johanna Little, Michael Frawley and Brooke Nguyen. I would like to acknowledge, Chair, my department again and say that it has been an incredible four-week introduction to the portfolio. The support that I have received from the leadership of this department but also the people on the ground as I have talked to them has been extraordinary. I acknowledge the work that they do and I thank them. I look forward to working with them for four years. Thank you, members.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the departmental officers. It has been lovely to work with you again. Thank you to members of the committee and visiting members who attended the hearing. Thank you to Hansard and everyone else who has assisted immensely here today. I now declare the hearing closed. Thank you, everyone.

The committee adjourned at 6.16 pm.