

# TUESDAY, 10 AUGUST 2021

---

## ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS

### Estimate Committee Members

Mr SR King (Chair)  
Mr LL Millar  
Mr CE Boyce  
Ms JC Pugh  
Ms JR Howard  
Mr TJ Watts

---

### Members in Attendance

Mr DF Crisafulli  
Mr SJ Minnikin (virtual)  
Ms FS Simpson  
Mr MC Berkman  
Mr RI Katter (virtual)  
Dr A MacMahon  
Mr PT Weir

---

### In Attendance

Hon. MC Bailey, Minister for Transport and Main Roads  
Ms T Van Alphen, Chief of Staff  
Mr F Gibson, Policy Advisor  
**Department of Transport and Main Roads**  
Mr N Scales, Director-General  
**Cross River Rail Delivery Authority**  
Mr G Newton, Chief Executive Officer  
**Gladstone Ports Corporation Limited**  
Mr P Heagney Acting Chief Executive Officer  
**Queensland Rail Limited**  
Mr N Easy, Chief Executive Officer

---

**The committee met at 9.00 am.**



**CHAIR:** I declare this estimates hearing of the Transport and Resources Committee open. I would like to begin today by acknowledging that we are meeting on custodial land of the oldest living civilisation in the world. I pay my respects to the Jagera and Turrbal people and their elders past and present.

I am Shane King, the member for Kurwongbah and chair of the committee. Mr Lachlan Millar MP, member for Gregory, is the deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Mr Colin Boyce MP, member for Callide; Ms Jess Pugh MP, member for Mount Ommaney; Mr Trevor Watts MP, member for Toowoomba North; and Ms Jennifer Howard MP, member for Ipswich, who is replacing the member for Mundingburra for today's proceedings.

The committee has granted leave for a number of non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today. Other members may seek leave over the course of the proceedings. The following non-committee members have sought and been granted leave to participate in the hearing in accordance with standing orders: the member for Broadwater, who is with us at the moment; the member for Toowoomba South; the member for Kawana; the member for Maroochydore; the member for Chatsworth, who has joined us on video; the member for Condamine; the member for Everton; the member for Buderim; the member for Scenic Rim; the member for Mirani; the member for Maiwar; the member for South Brisbane; and the member for Traeger. These members may appear either in person or via videoconference.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2021—

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair: can I seek clarification on whether Les Walker, the member for Mundingburra, is still a member of this committee or not? The parliamentary website still lists him as a member. I have copies of that here. I seek clarification on whether he is still in fact a member of this committee?

**CHAIR:** Yes, he is, because the membership has not been changed by the House. The House has not sat to make any changes. As I have said to you—

**Mr WATTS:** Given that he is still a member of this committee—

**CHAIR:** I am speaking.

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair: given that he is still a member of this committee, can you confirm that he is still getting the privileges and the pay that come with being a member of this committee and that he has not in fact resigned from his post?

**CHAIR:** No, I cannot confirm that at this stage, but I will get that information—

**Mr WATTS:** But he is a member of the committee and he is still getting paid for being a member of this committee although he is not here today.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair—

**CHAIR:** I am going to pull this up. We are here to discuss estimates.

**Mr WATTS:** It does not seem like much of a punishment for poor behaviour. He should resign from his position.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: the honourable member for Toowoomba North continually interrupts the chair against standing orders.

**CHAIR:** I understand that, Minister. Thank you. In dealing with this, I am going to continue and rule your point of order out. This could be discussed at a later stage.

**Mr WATTS:** Chair, the Premier announced that he would no longer be a member of the committee. I have copies of a press release here that says that.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair—

**Mr WATTS:** Either he is getting paid for being a member of this committee—

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: this is a stunt—a total stunt.

**Mr WATTS:**—and not here or he is not getting paid.

**CHAIR:** Member, enough!

**Mr BAILEY:** This is a ridiculous stunt.

**CHAIR:** Enough! Do not start with this. You have made your point. Your point has been taken. I have said that we can deal with this later. You have no further point of order. Minister, your point of order was along those lines?

**Mr BAILEY:** It was.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I will continue now.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Chair: when you say you are going to clarify, will it be clarified this morning? Will it be clarified today? When are you going to clarify this?

**CHAIR:** At the moment I am chairing this meeting and have little time to clarify it, but I am sure that it will be clarified during the course of the day.

**Mr MILLAR:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** We will get that information as we can. I am not promising you anything. I am saying that I will do my best to clarify that during the day. I will continue—

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair: the composition of this committee is fundamentally important. There has been an announcement by the Premier that the member for Mundingburra is no longer a member of this committee, yet he is still listed as a member of this committee. For these proceedings to proceed, we need to understand—

**CHAIR:** Member for Toowoomba North—

**Mr WATTS:**—who is a committee member and who is not a committee member.

**CHAIR:** I will pull you up there, Member for Toowoomba North. Stop talking over me. Were you listening to me when I said we have a member replacing the member for Mundingburra for today's proceedings? Let's continue with today's proceedings. This is a not a good way to start them, by the way. We will clarify it, as I have said.

**Mr WATTS:** Having a member paid for being here who is not here is not a good way to start.

**CHAIR:** Member, stop talking over me. If you wish to waste time today on this when we are here to question the Appropriation Bill, I think that is a very poor representation from you.

**Mr WATTS:** The composition of this committee is not a waste of time.

**CHAIR:** I am going to continue. Your point of order is ruled out. I will ask for no further conversation on that. Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2021 and the budget estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee.

The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. Certain staff who are assisting witnesses here today have been permitted to use their mobile phones for this purpose. I do ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode.

In line with the COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline issued by the Chief Health Officer, I remind everyone to maintain social distancing while in this chamber. Face masks are to be worn at all times and removed only to speak during the proceedings. The COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline is available from the secretariat.

As a result of current public health orders, some members and witnesses will be participating via videoconference today. This 'hybrid model' is a first for estimates hearings in Queensland. We are the pioneers. This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: transport and main roads from 9 am to 11 am and 11.15 am to 1 pm; energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2 pm to 3.30 pm; public works and procurement from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm; and resources from 5.30 pm to 7 pm and 7.15 pm to 8.15 pm.

I would like to thank the Clerk's office, the secretariat and all staff for the preparation work you have done so that we can continue to have estimates hearings in these trying times. It is much appreciated by the committee. I am sure I speak on behalf of the whole committee.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads until 1 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 11 am to 11.15 am.

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

I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully 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, officials and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of transport and main roads open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Chair, committee members, other members and officials. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather and offer my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

It continues to be an honour to serve Queenslanders as the Minister for Transport and Main Roads at a time when we are transforming our state's infrastructure. We have a surging population due to our strong economic management, and our management of the COVID pandemic has meant that we are in a good position. We have acted on the health advice. We have not attacked it and undermined it like the opposition has consistently. I note the member for Toowoomba North and the member for Broadwater here today.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's COVID-19 economic recovery plan is working: our unemployment rate is the lowest in 12 years at 5.1 per cent. Since the depths of the pandemic, Queensland has created 300,000 jobs—around 30 per cent of all jobs nationwide. When lockdown stopped construction in Sydney, Queensland's infrastructure boom rolled on. That boom is supported by another record road and transport investment program under this Labor government of \$27.5 billion over the next four years. That investment is needed because Queensland's world-leading health response has made us the place to be, with 88 per cent of net migration in the country heading here over the next few years.

Queensland now sets its sights on making history with the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic games. Hosting the world's largest sporting event is a once-in-a-generation privilege and prosperity opportunity. The globe will be focused on our state in a way we have never before experienced, and we will be ready. Olympic celebrations will be assisted by world-class public transport services like Cross River Rail. The fact that the Palaszczuk Labor government started work on Cross River Rail was a persuasive feature of Queensland's successful Olympic bid, which was so well led by the Premier. Cross River Rail is 100 per cent funded by the Palaszczuk Labor government despite the protests of the opposition, which cut it when they were in power. They promised to cut it a second time only a few years ago. Cross River Rail is on time and on budget, as was confirmed by the independent Queensland Audit Office a number of months ago. The \$6.88 billion overall cost for the project has been clearly and consistently reported in successive budgets since 2019. That figure consists of the state's capital contribution of \$5.4 billion and a \$1.5 billion financial contribution from the private sector. Cross River Rail will unlock the inner city rail bottleneck, reducing South-East Queensland rail journey times and enabling the delivery of other rail network expansion projects.

We have also kept Queensland's ports in public hands. They were about to be sold off when we were elected and we stopped that from happening. We continue to invest in them in Townsville and Cairns, and \$17.5 billion of our record investment program will be delivered outside the metropolitan area. Labor will: complete the \$1 billion Gympie bypass on the Bruce Highway; fix the Haughton River flood plain south of Townsville, which is to open this year; and keep sealing the PDR road up through Cape York to Weipa. Labor will: finish the Smithfield bypass in Cairns; build the billion dollar Rockhampton Ring Road; deliver a single public transport system for all Queenslanders for the very first time; and support the rollout of zero-emission buses. Labor will increase funding for Bruce Highway upgrades and take trucks off the Bruce by investing in the inland freight route from Charters Towers to the border via Roma. Labor will progress faster rail between Logan, the Gold Coast and Brisbane and north to the Sunshine Coast, where we will fix the Mooloolah river interchange bottleneck. Labor has completed two major M1 upgrades already and is delivering two much larger ones worth nearly \$2 billion to ease bus congestion between the Gold Coast and Brisbane. Only Labor will build the second M1 and get more Gold Coast Light Rail done, including building the next stage to Burleigh, with early works underway. Labor continues to support cycling and pedestrians, with \$252 million being invested in active transport projects over the next four years.

Today we ask Queenslanders to have their say on our 10-year vision on public transport as part of our creating better connections strategy. Rather than make public transport decisions without community consultation, we want Queenslanders to be part of it. Creating better connections will also

look at how we accelerate our transition to zero-emission transport solutions—something more critical than ever following the IPCC's report overnight which says we could reach a 1.5 degree increase in global warming by 2030, only nine years away. Together these projects and initiatives aim to see Queenslanders spend less time in traffic and enjoy safer, better connected roads and public transport services. It also means that Queensland workers and businesses have greater economic opportunities through procurement rules that put locals first. We are ensuring our investments deliver better local content and more secure and safer work, meaning better productivity onsite. More training and apprenticeship opportunities will help build our local capacity so we are well-placed to keep delivering critical infrastructure over the next decade leading to the Olympics. Only Labor delivers on quality infrastructure for Queensland's future.

Labor will continue to invest in jobs and infrastructure so that when we do stride onto the world stage in 2032 we will show the globe what can be achieved when we work together and invest in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We have received some advice on the previous question from the member for Toowoomba North. Mr Walker remains a member of the committee. If Mr Walker is to be removed, it will require a resolution of the House to remove him and appoint another member. The House is not scheduled to sit until 31 August. In the meantime, under standing order 196 a member may resign from the committee in writing to the Speaker and such resignation is effective from receipt by the Speaker. It is not something we can deal with here so we will put that to bed right now. You may bring it up in the House if it is a concern.

**Mr WATTS:** Just to clarify, Chair, we have not received a resignation and he continues to be paid and have the privileges of this committee; is that correct?

**CHAIR:** I do not accept resignations from members. You will have to take it up with the Clerk's office or the Speaker's office to find out if there has been a resignation. That is not something we can deal with today so I am putting it to bed now. There will be no further questions on that. I cannot be any clearer: it requires a resolution of the House. This is your time. I am going to go to the member for Gregory to start the questions.

**Mr MILLAR:** I defer to the Leader of the Opposition, Chair.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** My first question is to Mr Newton. Mr Newton, can you confirm the full construction cost of Cross River Rail from all sources across all different departments to administer the project?

**Mr Newton:** I thank the honourable member for the question. In answering that question I need to be quite specific about where the source is referenced in the budget. If I refer to Budget Paper No. 2, page 5, there is reference there to the costs associated with the capital component for Cross River Rail, also Budget Paper No. 3, page 6, and Budget Paper No. 3, page 126. That is the context in which I will answer the question.

The state's capital contribution to Cross River Rail is \$5.4 billion. Under the PPP arrangement there is a further \$1.5 billion contributed by the private sector as part of that. That is reflective of what has been presented in budgets since 2017 and still continues to be the case as we speak.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** My question is to Mr Scales. Mr Scales, are there other funding contributions from the department for nearby works to assist it?

**Mr Scales:** Before I begin my response I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we are gathering today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and any First Nations people who may be watching online.

I thank the honourable member for the question. There are areas on the network that were taking the opportunity, and a good example is Clapham Yards. We are turning that into a stabling facility with some maintenance as well. The issue there is whilst we have experts on the ground, constructors on the ground, we have taken the opportunity to convert that into a stabling yard which will be required going forward. That budget is outside of what Mr Newton has just said, but it is something that we would want to do anyway. It is something that has been on the stocks at least five times in the past, so it made sense to construct that while we are undertaking the work for Cross River Rail. It is something that is needed for the function of the network in any event.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I have a further question to Mr Scales. What is the total capital cost of additional works as part of Cross River Rail over and above that \$5.4 billion plus the contribution from the private sector, which is closer to \$7 billion as I read it?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The contribution on the PPP is in the budget papers. It reflects a change to accounting practices where we are required to account for all PPP contributions. You will see the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing in there. You will see, for example, GoldLinQ, which is also a PPP; therefore, Cross River Rail falls into that. There are also other issues like our new generation ticketing system which is for the benefit of the whole network including Cross River Rail, so aggregating everything out would be difficult at this point because it is stuff that we would be doing anyway for the benefit of the network.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** What about an estimate, an approximate amount?

**CHAIR:** You are allowed a question, of course, but not hypotheticals. I will give you some leeway on that.

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I would not like to speculate at this point because Cross River Rail is a multi-year program. It opens in 2025, so to speculate at this point I do not think would help the committee. I do not want to guess.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I have a further question to the director-general. Based on those things you have already outlined, just those couple, we are talking about running into the hundreds of millions rather than the fives and 10s; is that a fair comment?

**Mr Scales:** If you take Clapham Yard I can give you an exact number on that, and if you take the new generation ticketing project I can give you an exact number on that, but you would have to spread it across the whole network because there would be benefits not only to the rail network but the bus network, the ferry network, the tram network and, quite pleasingly, outside of the south-east corner as well because it will have benefits to areas outside of SEQ. I am not avoiding the question; I am just saying I cannot give you a precise number and I would not like to speculate at this point in time, if that helps.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I am going to go back to Mr Newton but I will take that as a most likely. Mr Newton, could you please advise the expected month and year when the first passengers will use Cross River Rail?

**Mr Newton:** As we have discussed and as has been reported quite widely, the primary construction that is underway at the moment is progressing and we are on time with that. The forecast completion for that is in 2024 and the intent is that that work would be completed. Once that work is completed, then we go through an extensive testing and commissioning phase. The rolling stock would be tested without passengers in the system. That is to test the signalling system, the ETCS, that is being rolled out. I guess this is part of the process. There is a requirement to go through the safety checking, the driver training checking—all of those things need to be put into place. It is really as a result of that process that you get to a point where you are able to start operating it.

A lesson learnt from overseas is that this is the sort of thing you do not want to rush because it is a real safety issue and you need to make sure you get through that. The forecast has been 2025 and that really is a function of when construction is completed, those testing and commissioning works are undertaken and then the safety regulator deems the operation to be safe. That is why we are forecasting 2025.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** With that in mind, I have a question to the minister. Minister, during the recent Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games bid presentation to the IOC in Tokyo, the Premier said about Cross River Rail that, 'The \$5 billion project is under construction and will be finished by 2024.' Given delivery of infrastructure is a key legacy of the games, can you confirm that this commitment on the world stage can be honoured?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. This is a project that was cut by the government that he was a cabinet member in so it would not have happened if the LNP were in power—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** So no.

**Mr BAILEY:** And, indeed, in 2017 they promised to cut it again. We would never have the Olympic Games without the Cross River Rail. Let us be very clear about this. The member for Broadwater is grasping at straws if he is trying to quote some—

**Mr MILLAR:** Relevance.

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question.

**Mr BAILEY:** press conference where the Premier did not mention a decimal point. It is a pretty pathetic foray into this issue. We know that this project, which has created thousands of jobs and will transform our transport system, would only happen under this government because it was cut by the

LNP, which the honourable member was a cabinet minister in. It will transform our system. There are a whole range of elements to it that are very exciting. You look at the engineering. It will cut travel times. It will take people right into the middle of the city for the first time. It will dissect the CBD, link up with busway, link up with Roma Street. At the moment it is creating about 2,500 jobs on site at a time when people really need that. We have had the courage and the foresight to back this project after it was cut by the Newman government, amongst many cuts I might add.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** They are not travelling on it in 2024, are they?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for his interjection, but we have made it very clear that it will open in 2025. The construction will complete in 2024. We have got plenty of time for testing. That is one of the major learnings out of the Redcliffe line in 2016—that is, to give the people building it a lot of time to do all of the testing without pressure to ensure that it is done thoroughly. That is a learning that we have incorporated in it. The bottleneck, the middle of the rail system, would continue if the honourable member for Broadwater had got his way.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I believe you have answered the question.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** What is your point of order?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** No. I said I thank the minister—

**CHAIR:** Sorry, I heard a point of order. Member for Chatsworth, do you have a point of order?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Yes, Chair. It is in relation to 118 and relevance. The minister keeps going back to the LNP when in government. This is now the third term of the current administration. The question was quite specific. I ask you to rule on the point of relevance.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Member. I am going to see how the day goes with going back. In previous estimates, we have gone back considerably further than that. I will bring the minister back to the current question.

**Mr BAILEY:** Can I close specifically to the question. There was a financial audit report by the Queensland Audit Office only months ago. This is an independent Audit Office which had no issues with this project and considered that it was on time and on budget. They are independent of government. For the member for Broadwater and the member for Chatsworth to be alleging otherwise, when the independent Audit Office has been looking over this project with a fine toothcomb and cannot find any issue with it—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** But I have got your media release saying 2024.

**Mr BAILEY:** It shows exactly where this—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Cross River Rail would be ready in—

**CHAIR:** Member for Broadwater!

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** We only have to go—

**CHAIR:** Member for Broadwater! This is a committee proceeding, not a debate out in the street. I will ask you to wait until the minister has finished and then feel free to ask more questions. Minister, have you finished?

**Mr BAILEY:** The independent Audit Office looked at this only months ago and said there was no issue with this project. They are not part of the government. They are independent from us. They looked over it with a fine toothcomb. I look forward to them continuing to look at this project because they have got integrity and authority, unlike the opposition who have undermined this project every step of the way.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff who have enabled me to partake in today's proceedings via Zoom. I give a big shout-out through the chair to the magnificent support staff. Thank you for that. My first question is to Mr Newton in relation to Cross River Rail. I want to be very clear given the fact that this is the government's signature infrastructure project. Mr Newton, QTRIP now lists a number of projects, such as the Clapham stabling yards, subject to a recent request for project change to the Coordinator-General, that are all actually part of the Cross River Rail project but sit outside the Cross River Rail \$6.888 billion budget. When you include all of these QTRIP projects, could you please define what is the total capital cost of Cross River Rail?

**CHAIR:** Mr Newton, you have been asked a very similar question so I will give you some latitude in the answering of that.

**Mr Newton:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As I previously outlined and as is outlined in budget papers 2 and 3, that identifies the capital contribution by the state towards Cross River Rail. I refer to Mr Scales's answer to a question prior in this committee in relation to that but I am happy to expand a bit more on that. While the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority is focusing on the core project, which is Cross River Rail and the four underground stations and the surface stations as outlined in the budget papers themselves, we are also obviously in the process of delivering a whole bunch of work in similar proximity—works that were already forecast in the Transport and Main Roads and QR system. It just made sense as part of the delivery model. I refer the honourable member to when we worked together doing the Betterment projects—the notion that while you were in the area you would do enhancements that were already required as part of the project.

The delivery authority has undertaken a number of these projects, and you have referred to a couple in relation to the pipeline, as did Mr Scales as part of his answer. These complementary works are identified under those programs. You referred to QTRIP and you referred to the QR budget as well, which are also outlined in the budget papers. I point out that a lot of these complementary works were identified in the rail strategy for South-East Queensland in 2010, the *Queensland Rail—Projects Pipeline Report* dated 2016 and the *South East Queensland's Rail Horizon* dated March 2016. All of these were prior to the commitment to Cross River Rail. As they have been in Budget Paper No. 3 page 124 and page 127, that identifies them as being under the QR project.

They include projects in that list that you were referring to, such as the Breakfast Creek bridge. That bridge has been on the agenda for replacement. In fact I think the piers in that project date back into the early 1900s and it has been identified as a rail bridge to be replaced. We are doing work at Mayne Yard North and the replacement of that bridge is proximate to that so therefore it provided an opportunity. In relation to things like the Fairfield to Salisbury stations, as part of Cross River Rail's core project we were going to in some places add a new third platform or enhance a third platform.

It just made sense while we were there to do the accessibility upgrades that were forecast as part of the \$357 million station upgrade program. Because we are in the neighbourhood, we are doing that work and we would be spending the lion's share on putting in that accessibility, it made sense to elevate those platforms so there is not a step gap and to tie those together. Similarly, in relation to things like Clapham Yard as it was forecast, we are doing work in the area of Moorooka so therefore we would tie that in there.

To come back to the point about the RfPC, we are the delivery agency on behalf of TMR or QR in those spaces. Through arrangements with the department, we are in the process of delivering those. As the delivery agency, we then administer the request for project change.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** That is around \$532 million extra when you add it all up, correct?

**CHAIR:** Member, I am looking at the time. I will allow a quick question. Do you have one more quick question on that line of questioning?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My question is: it is about a half a billion dollars of extra costs?

**Mr Newton:** I have not got the sum total there, but they are outlined in the budget papers.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair, there is a clear imputation in that question.

**CHAIR:** I was going to allow you to go to that. Member, for clarification, I think the director-general would like to add to that as well.

**Mr Scales:** In answer to the honourable member's question, Mr Crisafulli, one of the reasons the Coordinator-General did include design refinements to Clapham Yard was—it after public consultation. We then added an additional two stabling roads, bringing the total to 29 stabling roads and reconfigured the track layout. We raised the stabling yard by about 240,000 square cubic metres of material to get flood resistance. We put two existing rail bridges across Moolabin Creek. We also looked at the Moorooka station. We took the opportunity with feedback from the public consultation to actually get a better outcome. I am just answering the question. That is why the Coordinator-General was involved.

**CHAIR:** We will go to government questioning for a while. I think we have fleshed that one out fairly well. I have a question for the minister.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** There will be further questions on Cross River Rail, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Certainly. We will ask the CEO for Cross River Rail to stay?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Yes, please.

**CHAIR:** Can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's record investment in roads and transport projects outlined in Budget Paper No. 3 will mean for economic recovery and job creation? Minister, are you aware of any alternative approaches?



**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the chair for the question because this is our sixth record transport and roads budget, a \$27½ billion commitment over four years, 24,000 jobs and \$17½ billion of that is outside the metropolitan area, with 15,500-plus direct regional jobs. QTRIP delivers an \$883 million boost to the Bruce Highway with our priorities including four-laning the Tiaro bypass and capacity upgrades between Gladstone and Rocky and north of Townsville. The boost takes the Bruce Highway upgrade program to a \$13 billion commitment over 15 years, delivering jobs and economic opportunities up and down the state.

We are also delivering on our commitment to upgrade the inland freight route—some call it a second Bruce Highway—a \$500 million investment, boosting efficiency and safety for truckies and for communities up and down the Bruce Highway. There is no greater example of confidence in Queensland at the moment in terms of infrastructure than our successful bid for the 2032 Olympic Games. These games will help transform the state in a much bigger way than Expo did more than 30 years ago.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to delivering projects locally with a local benefits test applied to procurements and a focus on working with social enterprises to support disadvantaged Queenslanders. Regional suppliers make up 64 per cent of TMR suppliers and 20 per cent of its overall spend. This represents a 10 per cent increase in regional suppliers in the 2020-21 financial year. This means that in 2020-21, TMR purchased goods and services from 2,864 regional suppliers, contributing over \$2.3 billion directly into local regional economies. On average, Queensland suppliers have consistently won TMR contracts at a rate of 90 per cent since 2016. For the 2020-21 financial year TMR has incorporated a range of local, social and innovative procurement objectives across activities in 987 contracts with an awarded value of \$565 million. Over the last year, TMR has awarded nearly 70 significant contracts where their procurements have included a local benefits test or have included the use of local contractors, manufacturers or Indigenous suppliers.

Key investments across the state include: \$2.1 billion for the Gateway Motorway and Bruce Highway upgrades in northern Brisbane; the billion dollar Rockhampton ring-road; the billion dollar Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3 from Broadbeach to Burleigh; the billion dollar M1 upgrade from Varsity Lakes to Tugun—and of course not a dollar was spent on the M1 under the previous government—the billion dollar Bruce Highway Gympie bypass; and \$932 million on the Bruce at Caloundra Road to Sunshine Motorway, which is almost complete. We are building trains in Maryborough, not overseas—and they will be disability compliant—with a \$600 million commitment; the Warrego gets \$543 million with the Mooloolah River interchange also getting a \$320 million commitment; Cairns Western Arterial Road, \$3 million; Mount Isa to Rockhampton corridor, \$237 million; Cape York, the same figure; and the Walkerston bypass, \$150 million, another significant project.

I am pleased to advise the committee that it is not just the government members who are happy to talk up the work of the Palaszczuk Labor government, but opposition members are also talking up our achievements on social media. The member for Maroochydore has taken to Facebook a number of times to congratulate the Palaszczuk government on our commitment to building the Mooloolah River interchange. I thank her for that. There was no work done on this—not even a business case started—under the previous government. It is good to see that she is pleased with our investment on the Sunshine Coast where we have two fantastic new members there in Caloundra and Nicklin.

Of course, we had the member for Burleigh lauding the Palaszczuk government's commitment to electric vehicles. Thanks to our government's work building the Queensland electric vehicle superhighway, people can have confidence in EVs—and there he is with the Works for Queensland sign charging his car. That is fantastic to see. Of course, we have the member for Bonney also who was a big supporter of light rail apparently. He is pictured with a surfboard in his office, which was built in stage 2—before he was even elected. Somehow he has got hold of one of the surfboards. Light rail is a great Labor achievement on the Gold Coast. It is good to see that some local LNP MPs are trying to crowd in on some of the credit even though it has been funded by this government.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, with reference to pages 29 to 33 of the SDS, can the minister provide an update to the committee on Queensland's largest infrastructure project Cross River Rail, including what benefits are expected for commuters throughout South-East Queensland?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question and I thank her for her support of transport infrastructure. She has been very active in that space, particularly on the Sumners Road interchange, which we all love. It was delivered six months early. What a fantastic project!

As the member has rightly pointed out, Cross River Rail is Queensland's largest infrastructure project and it is going to transform how many South-East Queensland commuters travel to and from and through Brisbane. As I mentioned before, it was a \$5.4 billion capital project—the cost as agreed

by the independent Audit Office. I might say that I trust their view a lot more than the opposition. It is pumping more than \$4 million a day into the economy at the moment through wages. You only have to see on social media how much is being done. The tunnels are now more than half done, which is very exciting to see. We have entered our second year of construction and work is underway now at about 14 worksites across Brisbane. A total of 2,900 workers and more than 1,350 suppliers and subcontractors have benefited from the project. What we are seeing now is that the boring machines are going up to 30 metres a day and we are seeing 25,000 precast concrete segments being laid as it progresses, all manufactured locally at Wacol, all of them unique. Technology is incredible. They are so precise that they lock together. It is fantastic technology.

Roma Street will be a big interchange between two rail lines and the busway, integrated with a future Olympic site. More than 46,000 commuters a day will go through there. It will be a very active part of the CBD by the time we finish this project. We have also finalised the scheme for the Roma Street priority development area, which presents exciting opportunities not just for transport but for the local area as well.

The priority development area covers 32 hectares of land around the new underground station, including 11 hectares of publicly accessible open space, with the Roma Street parklands being protected permanently. We are also expanding those 11 hectares by another two additional hectares of park and open space around new residential buildings that will include social and affordable housing. The area also includes provision for a new world-class arena that will be the home of entertainment right in our CBD. New cycling-pedestrian paths will be built through the precinct connecting to the new indoor arena built to host, of course, the Olympic and the Paralympic Games.

The Gold Coast is one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia, set to grow by 350,000 people over the next 25 years, heading up towards a million people. That is why the Palaszczuk Labor government member has promised three new stations on the Gold Coast to be delivered as part of this project to significantly boost their access to a heavy rail system. In October 2019 we announced those locations: Pimpama, Helensvale North and Merrimac. I can inform the committee that the station at Helensvale North is set to be named 'Hope Island' based on strong and consistent local community feedback. The next round of community consultations is expected to take place in late August when the station's detailed designs are released for public feedback. Community consultation on the design for Pimpama station recently concluded, and residents will be able to have their say on the Merrimac station later in the year as well.

In terms of Cross River Rail, the suggestion by certain members here today that Queensland Rail—which always has a substantial capital budget—should somehow ignore a massive project like Cross River Rail is just an absurdity. Can you imagine if Queensland Rail had just said, 'Well, nothing to do with us. We are not going to consider Cross River Rail in terms of the network'? It is an absurdity. Of course Queensland Rail works together to integrate such a huge project—a new, full underground line—into the South-East Queensland rail system for the very first time. As the CEO of Cross River Rail outlined before, a range of these projects have been in the budget papers since 2019-2020 and going back to studies to 2010. I am not sure what honourable members have been doing in previous committees.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Be up-front with taxpayers!

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, you will have the opportunity to ask questions.

**Mr BAILEY:** These were in the budget last year and the year before and they have been in studies going back to 2010. The idea that Queensland Rail should ignore the Cross River Rail project and do nothing in relation to it just shows how little about public transport the opposition knows.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Did you have another question, member for Mount Ommaney?

**Ms PUGH:** Yes, thank you Chair. With reference to the capital allocations for the rolling stock expansion project outlined in budget paper 3, can the minister outline how the Palaszczuk government's strong investment in Queensland's rail manufacturing industry will support our economic recovery by investing in regional jobs and businesses? I should mention that I lived in Maryborough as a little girl for a while. This is an issue that is close to my heart.

**Mr BAILEY:** Hear, hear. Thank you, member. For the first time in nearly a decade, Queenslanders will again be building Queensland trains in the member's old home town of Maryborough, a city with a rich rail history. These trains will be manufactured and locally built, creating long-term, stable, manufacturing jobs in our state. I pay tribute to the member for Maryborough and my assistant minister—I will not mention him by name as per the standing orders—as he does an enormous job. It

is his hard work in conjunction with this government that has saved the economic lifeblood of Maryborough, because it was under threat. If the Newman government had been re-elected, we would have seen more trains ordered overseas—probably not disability compliant—and that work not going to Maryborough. We are very proud to support Maryborough. I am very proud to support and work with the member for Maryborough, my assistant minister, who does an enormously great job on this front.

We support regional rail manufacturing. Our economic recovery plan locks in a billion dollar pipeline of train manufacturing works to be delivered in regional Queensland. To provide for expected increases in rail patronage over the next 10 years, the existing train fleet will need to expand. We have made a \$600 million election commitment for 20 new six-car passenger trains to be manufactured in Queensland by Queensland workers and we are now are a step closer to delivering that. Three leading train manufacturers—Alstom, CAF and Downer Rail—have been short-listed to manufacture the new fleet following an extensive expression-of-interest process. We have also guaranteed that any future order for additional trains to meet future demand will be also built here in Queensland in Maryborough. This next generation of Queensland trains is anticipated to support 690 jobs. These trains will be built in a purpose-built manufacturing facility in Maryborough to support local jobs and regional supply chains.

In May this year, I had the pleasure of taking the iconic *Spirit of the Outback* from Roma Street to Barcaldine with the Premier and the ministers for health and energy. It is a fantastic rail journey across our state through Central Queensland, and I recommend it to anybody. That is why the government has committed \$1 million for a business case to build replacement carriages and upgrade the iconic *Westlander*, *Inlander* and the *Spirit of the Outback* long-distance services in our state.

The Palaszczuk government will also bring rail supply chain jobs back to Rockhampton. Rockhampton also has a great history of rail and will be included as part of a regional supply chain. Negotiations began last year to secure the land to establish a rail maintenance, manufacturing and logistics centre. This commitment adds to our other commitments to regional rail jobs which include \$2½ million to upgrade the Queensland Rail Portsmith rail maintenance facility in Cairns. We have also committed to maintain Queensland Rail's maintenance depot in Townsville which supports 234 local jobs. We are also growing work at the Redbank Workshops in Ipswich which I was very happy to visit with the member for Bundamba and the assistant minister recently. Quite frankly, the LNP has an appalling record when it comes to manufacturing in Queensland. We saw its cut-price deal in building trains overseas that were not disability compliant. It is costing us \$335 million to rectify those trains that were ordered at a time—

**Mr MILLAR:** The government sold Queensland Rail.

**CHAIR:** Member, please do not interject.

**Mr BAILEY:**—when the member for Broadwater was a part of the Newman government as was the member for Chatsworth. The botch-ups in rail, whether it is cutting drivers, ordering trains from overseas that were not disability compliant, it is a stark record—

**Mr MILLAR:** You sold Queensland Rail.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is a stark record.

**CHAIR:** Member for Gregory. That is enough. The member for Chatsworth, do you have a point of order?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I did, Mr Chair. Simply put—relevance.

**Mr BAILEY:** The truth hurts.

**CHAIR:** It is our question. I believe the minister is answering. Have you completed?

**Mr BAILEY:** I was simply saying the question was about rail manufacturing.

**Mr MILLAR:** You sold Queensland Rail.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is the truth that we are going to be manufacturing trains in Queensland and that is factual. It is a fact to say that the previous government ordered them from overseas.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Gregory, your interjections are not being taken by the minister. Someone complained a minute ago about 'going back to the previous government'. You have just gone back further. I said it would happen; it has happened.

**Mr BAILEY:** That is my answer.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for those answers, Minister. I think we are going back to Cross River Rail. We will go back to the opposition. Member for Broadwater?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I have a question of the director-general. Regarding Coomera Connector, has a contractor been appointed as yet?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. In this committee last year, when answering questions about the Coomera Connector, I made it clear that it was going to be handled in stages. We have been out to tender for Stage 1 North, Shipper Drive to Helensvale Road. It is an incredibly complicated piece of work. There is a new crossing over the Coomera River. Saltwater Creek has a structure. The alignment goes very close to what was, until the minister just announced it, Helensvale North train station, now Hope Island train station. We are continuing to work with our colleagues in the federal department on EPBC approvals because there are Ramsar wetlands and also flora and fauna to take care of. We have two bids that are in and being evaluated. We are doing a lot of work on fencing. You will see a lot of work on the alignment on geotech which will help the successful contractor who is doing a design and construct contract.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Chair, I believe the answer is, 'No, not yet.'

**CHAIR:** Member for Broadwater, you are not answering the question; the director-general is.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** The director-general has answered the question. It has not been let as yet.

**CHAIR:** But he is providing some context around it. Were you finished your answer?

**Mr Scales:** I wanted just to add a bit further detail which will be helpful to the committee. Once we have those final numbers, they will plug into the business case. The business case will go off to the federal government, which will do a PPR, and then we will draw down the money which is beyond the forwards at the moment.

The Coomera Connector is an election commitment from the government at \$1.533 billion. As I said at this committee last year the answer is that we are 'in train'. Phase 1, or Stage 1 North as we call it, Shipper Drive to Helensvale Road, has been out to tender and the tenders are in. It is an incredibly complicated part of that new road that we are building. We will plug it into the business case and then off we go, if that helps.

**CHAIR:** I thought we were going back to Cross River Rail. My apologies if I did say that.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Scales, at last year's estimates you said regarding the Coomera Connector opening date—

... end to end mid 2024, but it is progressively from that point till 2025.

I note that in the QTRIP budget 41 per cent of the budget will not be spent until 2025-26. With almost half the money beyond 2025, what is the reason for the delay that will impact the lifestyle and the safety of residents living on the Gold Coast?

**Mr Scales:** I have just attempted to answer that. Once we have the actual numbers we require for stage 1, we will talk to our colleagues in the federal government and bring the money forward. It is not unusual for this to happen. We do progress things without the cash flows being in the budget.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: the question contains a non-fact. The fact is that QTRIP does not say that the majority of the funds go beyond 2025 at all. I have the QTRIP document right here. The member is misleading this committee to suggest that and he should apologise.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** It is 41 per cent, I actually quoted the percentage.

**CHAIR:** Member for Broadwater?

**Mr MILLAR:** Was it a point of order?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Chairman, with respect, I actually quoted the exact percentage.

**CHAIR:** Member for Broadwater, I have taken the minister's point of order, but you had asked the question and the director-general was answering the question.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** You will have time to question that later, but the director-general was answering the question.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Thank you.

**Mr Scales:** I think I had got there, unless there are any supplementary questions from the member for Broadwater.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydhore?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Good morning, everybody. My question is to the director-general, Mr Neil Scales. Could you please explain why there is a \$10.5 million underspend on the Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The Beerburrum to Nambour rail project is obviously quite complicated. It has support from both federal and state governments. As I have just explained partially in the response to the member for Broadwater, cash flows can change. We have a \$550.8 million allocation towards this project, including \$160.8 million from Queensland government. When we say 'underspend', the money will be spent. It is probably a matter of timing, because there is an incredible amount of planning that goes into this sort of work. We have land to take into account. There is the biodiversity conservation act to take into account. There is the EPBC submission to take into account.

**Mr BAILEY:** We are waiting for federal approvals I think, aren't we?

**CHAIR:** I was just going to ask for a clarification. I have got a thing with acronyms. For the benefit of the committee, what is EPBC?

**Mr Scales:** It is the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, sorry, Chair.

**CHAIR:** No, that is okay.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Further to that question, Mr Scales, in the 2021-22 QTRIP budget there has been a reduction from \$61.7 million in last year's budget to \$29.4 million in this QTRIP budget. Could you advise why there is another substantial reduction?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. It is not a reduction; it reflects the stage of the project. As members will be aware, QTRIP is an incredibly complicated collection of projects. The cash flows move around as we get more detail or as we deliver more things on the network. It is not a reduction; it is just a reprofiling of the cash flow, if that helps the honourable member.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Further to that, Mr Scales, when will this rail project be completed?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The project is in train—sorry, I shouldn't say that. The project is progressing. I am not going to speculate on it at this point because, as you have seen from the two questions you have just asked, the end point depends on so many different factors. I am not avoiding question; I am just not prepared to speculate.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Further to that, Mr Scales, the website says '2024'. Given that the rollout of the expenditure has been delayed, are you saying that it will be beyond 2024, which is the date which is on the website?

**Mr Scales:** No.

**CHAIR:** Member, I would just like to say for the future, the director-general has explained the reasons for it, but you have asked that question. I was stopping before the answer, but I think the question was answered before I got through it. Did you have a further question?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Yes. It is reasonable for me to refer to the website, Mr Chair. Mr Scales, the website says the project will be completed by 2024. Is this project going to be completed in 2024?

**Mr Scales:** That is our intention but, as I said in the earlier answers, it depends on a whole range of factors in terms of what we are trying to achieve.

**CHAIR:** Did the minister have anything to add to that?

**Ms SIMPSON:** That is inappropriate, Mr Chair I was not talking to the minister; I was asking the director-general. That is contrary to your standing orders.

**Mr BAILEY:** We are waiting for federal approvals. The member may not wish to know that—

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The member for Maroochydore has just complained about that, so I was going to cease that anyway. Is that what your point of order was referring to?

**Mr MILLAR:** Yes, under 1(a), 1(d)—

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Gregory.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** A question, if I may, to Mr Scales. Good morning to you, Mr Scales.

**Mr Scales:** Good morning. This is really weird not being able to see you in front of me, member for Chatsworth.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Some people would say that you are very fortunate, then! I want to talk about the Coomera Connector, if I may. I just want to talk about the fact that if a person is looking at the Coomera Connector page on the TMR website they will see images of a six-lane road and they will see an animated concept of a six-lane road—based on your website, then, obviously people will be expecting just that, a six-lane road—however, it has been revealed recently that some sections of the road will actually only be four lanes. In the interests of transparency, will you commit to publishing the full project plan and show exactly where the four-lane, as opposed to six-lane, sections are?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Stage 1 will be built for six lanes, but some sections beyond that may only need four lanes to begin with. We will be guided by what the industry can come back with, but the intention is to make sure that we build redundancy into it, so we can expand if we need to in the future. Some lanes where there are structures in stage 1, where we are going across Saltwater Creek and Coomera River, are obviously designed for six lanes. Beyond that, we will be seeing what the industry can provide for six-laning going forward. It depends on the exact section, but it also depends on what we can get back from the industry. The intention, as you will have seen from the fly-through, is: if we are building a structure like a bridge, it just makes no sense at all to put four lanes on a bridge when it might have to expand to six going forward.

The normal road after that will depend on a whole range of factors—proximity of the rail line, geotech issues—but the intention is to have it expandable to six lanes. Again, we are speculating. These are design and construct contracts and the consortia that are bidding may well come back with that sort of formation in any event. They know exactly what we need. They know exactly what the growth forecasts are. That is the intent. As I think I said before, member for Chatsworth, this is an election commitment, so it is something that we run with now. Going back to the member for Broadwater, who is now not in the chamber, that is why we have not let the contract yet. We have the two bidders' proposals in, which we are evaluating, but you are right: the structures have six lanes.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, you are speaking about the actual contractors or the successful contractor for this project. Will the successful contractor for the Coomera Connector be required to comply or be measured against the best practice industry conditions or the Department of Transport and Main Roads civil construction projects document regarding best practice?

**Mr Scales:** We are looking and the government is looking to maximise public value to deliver greater social, economic and environmental outcomes from anything that we build now and in the future. While the transport infrastructure pipeline is growing and will keep growing, as the minister said, for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, we are using best practice industry conditions to do a number of things. Firstly, we want to change the culture. Members may be aware that the rate of suicide in male apprentices in the industry is quite high. It is not a diverse industry at all and what BPIC will do is strengthen our ability to actually change the culture within the construction industry. A diverse workforce, as I think we know, performs much better than a non-diverse workforce.

We are building in key result areas and those key result areas are in three parts. Basically, we are looking for quality local jobs. That is the first key area. The second is safer workplaces, use of local supplies and manufacturers and sustainability outcomes. The third bit is optimising project delivery. These will be supported by performance measures. We already have a collaborative procurement task force in place with an engagement charter. It is also looking at Buy Queensland. I have gone around the houses, but the answer is yes. This is a government policy and we will be implementing best practice industry conditions on that.

I just want to add one thing. If you look at the great work that we have done on the Peninsula Developmental Road, originally five or six years ago—or maybe longer now—the PDR projects were let purely on cost. What we have done now is we have put KRAs in—key result areas in—so it is 70 per cent on cost and 30 per cent on the KRAs. Nobody really agreed with the KRAs at first, but they have actually driven really good outcomes for the Peninsula Developmental Road and I have no doubt that the same thing will happen here.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, obviously you have a final quick question on that line of questioning?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I want to actually go to the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3 project. I want to talk about major projects and—

**CHAIR:** I am just mindful of the time. Do you have a whole session on that or did you have a further question on the—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, with Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3, has the contract been signed with John Holland for the main construction works for stage 3?

**Mr Scales:** On stage 3, the business case for this was produced in 2018. I am just going to give you some context before I get to the nub of the question. Since 2018 there have been a lot of light rail projects that have not met their expectations. The Parramatta light rail is one and the light rail in George Street in Sydney is another, so the industry is now pricing in risk in a totally different way. Firstly, we started in 2018 on this journey and since then we have had a couple of major deviations on light rail which means that John Holland and other people are pricing this sort of work in a very different way. We have also had COVID-19, which has not just disrupted this project but has disrupted a whole lot of other projects. So the answer—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** So the answer to my question please, Mr Scales—

**Mr Scales:** I am getting to the answer, because it is complex. This is a PPP contract and they take time to come to fruition, so the answer is that we have not signed on the dotted line yet but we have awarded an \$80 million pre-works contract which is underway at the moment which is part of the main contract to start moving underground services—gas, water, electric and telecom—out of the way of the swept path of the tram, and that project is part of the \$1.1 billion project. So we are getting there. COVID-19 has disrupted not just this project but many others. I think the business case was done before COVID and before a couple of other light rail projects in Australia have not gone the way people have expected, so the contract was priced in risk in a totally different way.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** It was an election commitment last year that the contract was awarded and construction was imminent. Now, nine months later, you have just said that the contract has not been signed, so how would you explain this?

**CHAIR:** Member, the director-general is answering your question. I understand you want a bit of clarity. I will ask you to please finish answering the question, Director-General.

**Mr Scales:** Thank you for the supplementary question. COVID-19 has disrupted everything, so I think that is one of the major issues that has stopped us getting on with it. The second point, as I said, is we have contractors pricing anything with rail or light rail in particular with a different risk profile, but we actually signed the contract in June to do all the early works. So the early works package, which is \$80 million, is now underway. We have not signed on the dotted line—I cannot get away from that—with John Holland, but we are proceeding with the project.

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Hold that thought, member for Chatsworth. We will now move to government questions for a while.

**Ms HOWARD:** My question is to the minister. With reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements and the Queensland government's objective of growing our regions, how does the 2021 QTRIP invest in road infrastructure and job creation in Queensland?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for Ipswich for her question and welcome her here today. It is great to see you here as a great advocate for Ipswich while also having a strong interest in regional Queensland. As the most decentralised state, the Palaszczuk government is very committed to supporting our regions and of course we have very strong regional representation, which has been significantly boosted since the last election in fact with the member for Hervey Bay, the member for Bundaberg and two new members on the Sunshine Coast. That is a real endorsement I think of us backing regional Queenslanders.

Our sixth record road and transport budget is worth \$27½ billion over four years and is \$600 million more than the previous record QTRIP in the 2020 budget brought down last year. The majority of that investment is outside the metropolitan area worth \$17½ billion. That is supporting more than 15½ thousand jobs. Of course that includes roads, rail, marine, public transport and active transport infrastructure. We are growing rapidly because we handled the pandemic in a world-leading way. We understood that protecting people's health was also the best thing to protect our economy and jobs. That is why we have been so hardline on that. That is why we have led the way—not with the support of the LNP of course—but we have held the line and we have been world leading in this regard.

The funding we have includes the Rockhampton Ringroad worth more than a billion dollars—that is coming; the Cairns southern access on the Bruce at Edmonton and Gordonvale, which is well and truly underway supporting 466 Far North Queensland jobs and worth nearly half a billion dollars; the Townsville Ringroad stage 5 is underway and is another commitment to Townsville and North Queensland with nearly 400 jobs and worth \$230 million; the Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road and Pialba-Burrum Heads Road intersection worth \$44 million thanks to the hard work of the member for Maryborough and my assistant minister; and \$500 million going to the inland freight route.

We are providing a strong pipeline of investment over the next four years, with the Bruce Highway being a priority with \$883 million in additional joint funding to support our plan to target upgrades between Gladstone and Rockhampton. New funding locks in \$13 billion in joint funding to continue upgrading priority sections, with 2½ thousand jobs as a result of it across Queensland. To give you an idea of our Bruce Highway commitment, there are 154 projects—I will say that again: 154 projects—currently in delivery, 48 in construction on the Bruce, 70 in design, lining up the next series of them, and 36 in planning. So there is a real pipeline there and a commitment in the long term as well as in the short term. This is on top of more than 380 Bruce Highway projects that we have completed already, so that shows the sort of level of commitment.

The inland freight route is a really important part of our regional economy in terms of developing it. Diverting trucks off the Bruce Highway with a stronger inland freight route will not only improve efficiency for truckies and our economy but also mean better safety for regional communities. Many of the mayors that I met when I was out in Roma a couple of months ago are very supportive of the inland freight route. They understand how important it is to their communities. It will reduce travel times for truckies from Far North Queensland to Melbourne by between four and five hours once many of those upgrades are done and to Sydney by over an hour. The Queensland Trucking Association has called for the inland freight route. The RACQ has also called for it, and I thank them for their advocacy. We have been working very well with them to get it done. It is a very visionary commitment.

Another key element of our economic recovery plan is last year's commitment of almost \$1.3 billion in new and accelerated funding to boost the economy. There are four stimulus packages. I have been getting very positive feedback from mayors all over Queensland about how much roadwork is underway from Barcaldine to Longreach down to Roma and the border—it has been a very good spread. There was \$185 million that went into the jointly funded Roads of Strategic Importance stimulus package—180 direct jobs in regional Queensland. There was a \$400 million Palaszczuk Labor government state funding injection under our unite and recover plan—430 direct jobs there. The third package was a \$415 million jointly funded stimulus package for shovel-ready road upgrade projects and smaller works across the state. This initiative is estimated to support 670 direct jobs over the life of the program. There was a \$290 million jointly funded road safety program, tranche 1, which will see safety programs delivered on state highways and arterial roads across Queensland that is estimated to support on average 950 direct jobs over the life of the program.

I pay tribute to the former deputy prime minister who worked very well with us on this. I am very sorry to see him lose his position. He certainly did not deserve that. He worked very well with our commitment to stimulating the economy in regional Queensland. There are 190 stimulus projects across Queensland; 130 of those projects are underway right now and 29 have already been completed. I think that is an outstanding outcome. There is plenty coming in through the pipeline. Virtually all of them are in regional Queensland. I have a map here. It is so large it is hard to fit it on an A4 page. I have copies here for every member of the committee.

**CHAIR:** Minister, no props.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is not a prop.

**CHAIR:** Minister, please, no props. Do you have a smaller version?

**Mr BAILEY:** There is a copy for each member of the committee.

**CHAIR:** Are you seeking leave to table that?

**Mr BAILEY:** I would absolutely like to table it, yes indeed, and provide copies to the members.

**CHAIR:** Can you table a smaller version of it?

**Mr BAILEY:** We can table a smaller version, but there are big ones for the electorate offices of all the members here. I know the member for Gregory will be keen to have it in his electorate office to show how much we are doing.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. If any member wishes to have a copy the minister's office will provide a copy after the estimates hearing today.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am sure the member for Toowoomba North would be keen, as well as the member for Callide.

**CHAIR:** I will seek leave before we can table it.

**Mr BAILEY:** Nearly 95 per cent of the projects under these four packages are outside the metropolitan area.



**CHAIR:** Just hold on for a second. Leave is granted to table that document. I will grab one to look at. It is exciting stuff.

**Mr BAILEY:** We are investing in QTRIP more than 50 per cent more in infrastructure than the previous government. We remember all the cuts under the Newman government: \$1.6 billion in cuts and RoadTek gutted. This is not an historical thing. It was only last year that the costings of the opposition showed that they were planning on raiding \$700 million to pay for a second-rate M1 proposal they had which was only six kilometres long. Projects they were looking to cut were things like the Monto Mount Perry Road sealing project, the Lawrie Street upgrade in Rockhampton, the Proserpine Shute Harbour Road in Whitsunday.

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Member, please, no interjections.

**Mr BAILEY:** They were exposed just before the election as cutting regional roads to pay for a second M1 on the Gold Coast. In that light I would like to table for the benefit of the committee a news report.

**CHAIR:** Are you seeking leave to table that?

**Mr BAILEY:** I am seeking leave to table this news report in relation to that. 'End of the road for traffic relief plan as road corridor quietly scrapped', 25 April, 2014, *Gold Coast Bulletin*. It is when the LNP blocked the second M1.

**CHAIR:** Do you have copies for everyone?

**Mr BAILEY:** I have a copy here. It is a clean copy so I am happy to provide that. We did not even have a corridor for the second M1 when we were elected. We gazetted all three sections of that, 43 kilometres of road in record time, and we have secured \$1.5 billion in joint funding for the second M1, of which we will see over \$115 million go out this year. For the opposition who blocked this road when they were in power to now whinge that we are not doing enough, when there is \$1.5 billion flowing on a 43-kilometre corridor, 16 kilometres in the first section, secured and gazetted in record time by this government and funding from the federal government landed—it will be the biggest road project ever on the Gold Coast—for the LNP to be having a whinge because it all was not built yesterday is pretty pathetic.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Ipswich, do you have another question?

**Ms HOWARD:** Regarding the road safety performance standards set out in the Service Delivery Statements, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's approach is to improving road safety?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for this very serious question. I can say that road safety is one of the things that I take absolute highest priority on in terms of policy in my portfolio. I, like many Queenslanders, have lost a loved one on the roads and everything that we do needs to continue to up the level of safety on our roads. In 2020 we tragically lost 277 lives on Queensland roads. So far this year it has been 167 lives lost, 16 more than this time last year. In fact, that stat is probably a few days old now. It is actually a bit higher than that, which is a real concern. These are people who will be missed, who will leave a huge hole in people's lives. We have to minimise and eliminate this with every fibre of our being. The impacts are immeasurable.

In this year's budget we have increased funding to targeted road safety initiatives to almost \$1.7 billion. This funding will go towards upgrading roads with high crash records, education and awareness campaigns and funding for community groups to get the message across in local communities. Sometimes people do not want to hear from the government, but they might hear from the local community group and give them more credibility. We have to work in lots of different ways. That is why we also work with some of our partners like Queensland Cricket. It is good to see those different organisations working with us for road safety.

Unfortunately we see too much of the fatal five—speeding, driver fatigue, drink and drug driving, distracted driving and driving without a seatbelt—as major contributing causes to most of the fatalities and often it is more than one at the same time. That is why from 26 July we have started rolling out Australian-first seatbelt and mobile phone detection cameras. They are on Queensland roads right now. Using your phone while you are driving is the equivalent of driving with a 0.07 to 0.1 blood alcohol level. The research is very clear about that. It is the drink driving of this era. It impacts on many people on our roads. With fines now of over \$1,000 and four demerit points for distracted driving we are sending a very clear message to Queenslanders that this behaviour has to stop. I am very proud to have

proposed that. It is not popular with everybody, but it is going to be effective. I can also advise the committee that on the first day of operation our cameras detected 366 drivers using their mobile phones, driving distracted, and 51 people not wearing seatbelts. That was on the first day. It is a big problem out there. We have to deal with this and we are dealing with this. They are putting other people's lives as well as their own lives at risk. We all have to be ready for that unpredictable moment that is inevitably going to be happening when we drive. It is completely unacceptable.

We are also about to roll out a suite of drink driving reforms, the most substantial since the introduction of random breath testing. Drink driving costs the community on average \$741 million each year and these reforms will help offenders identify techniques to separate their drinking from their driving. All drink driving offenders will be required to complete a first-of-its-kind online education and intervention program before they can reapply for their driver licence. That acknowledges that there is a more than average proportion of people who have a drinking problem who are getting into this and we have to help them with it. Repeat drink drivers, regardless of their blood alcohol content, will have to undertake an intensive multisection education program as a mandatory requirement to complete the Alcohol Ignition Interlock Program. Our Alcohol Ignition Interlock Program will also become a performance based program where offenders cannot remove the interlock until they have demonstrated they have separated drinking and driving for a sustained period. When these reforms are implemented later this year, again Queensland will be an Australian and world leader in drink driving prevention policy and education.

During the 2020 state election the Palaszczuk government made a commitment to undertake a policy review, considering legislative and regulatory amendments to better protect roadside workers who do a wonderful job. It is a tough job. TMR is undertaking this review which will examine road rules, driver education and road safety campaigns as well as engineering solutions. The review is currently in the consultation phase and the outcomes of the review are expected to be known at the end of this year.

Finally, just for the benefit of members, I can advise the committee that my department has been working very hard at developing the next road safety strategy and road safety action plan. The Palaszczuk government has delivered over 136 of the key road safety initiatives under the current strategy and 22 of the initiatives from the current action plan. Our new road safety strategy and road safety action plan will focus on a safe-systems approach to road safety in Queensland, delivering holistic solutions. Chair and member, of course road safety is everyone's responsibility. We can all play a role in this in our own lives as well as from government. I urge every Queenslanders watching this today to do their part with their family, their friends and their work mates and to speak up for road safety. It may save somebody's life. It might save the speaker's life. We all have to do more on this front.

I am very proud that on 1 November the cameras for distracted driving and seatbelts will become active. They will be random. They will move around regularly. They will be targeting areas where there are very bad road safety records. People will be surprised to see the kinds of roads they are on because it will not just be the Bruce Highway or the M1. They will be on all kinds of roads. People who are doing the wrong thing are going to get quite a nasty surprise and, hopefully, that will make them drive safer.

**CHAIR:** Minister, you sought to table a document. Is leave granted? Leave is granted. We will now return to non-government questions.

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the director-general, Mr Neil Scales. When the legislation for the personalised transport ombudsman was passed in 2019, the minister said that the position would be in place by March 2020. The whole thing has now been cancelled but not before \$430,000 has been spent on an office fit-out and separated IT systems. Mr Scales, what will this fully fitted out office now be used for?

**Mr Scales:** The government decided to repeal the Personalised Transport Ombudsman Act 2019 and the Transport and Resources Committee agreed that the repeal was appropriate. That followed the review of the role of the personalised transport ombudsman to determine whether it would still provide the predictive benefits to the personal transport industry following the impact of COVID-19, which has affected all our lives. The review found that the industry had concerns about the addition of another layer of regulation and compliance—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Scales, what will this fully fitted out office—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Well it is reasonable, Mr Chair—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, allow me to speak—

**Ms SIMPSON:**—for me to direct the director-general to the question—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, please do not make me warn you. Please do not talk over me. The director-general is answering your question. We have previously had a committee hearing where this question was asked as well. I do not know if you have seen that.

**Ms SIMPSON:** This is an estimates hearing, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** I understand that. It is the same question. The director-general is answering the question. Allow him to finish his answer before you ask your next question. I am quite happy for you to ask your question, but let us let him finish.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Chair, we do not need a long preamble to answer the question. Time is short.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Scales, what will this fully fitted out office be used for?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, the director-general was answering the question. He will be allowed to complete. Minister, did you have a point of order?

**Mr BAILEY:** Yes, Chair. The honourable member for Maroochydore is here at the privilege of the committee—

**CHAIR:** I understand that.

**Mr BAILEY:** She is continually interjecting and interrupting, against standing orders.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is really unacceptable.

**CHAIR:** I will continue chairing.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Chair, under standing order 118 on relevance. The question was very direct: what is happening with the office now? It is a direct question.

**CHAIR:** I think it was a good question, member, and I was very interested to hear the answer.

**Mr MILLAR:** If I can finish my point of order, please, Mr Chair. I do not think we need the preamble. We have a finite amount of time for the opposition.

**CHAIR:** We have until one o'clock and you are wasting your time now.

**Mr MILLAR:** Can we just get straight to the question?

**CHAIR:** The director-general will continue answering the question, please.

**Mr Scales:** I think it is important that people have the context.

**CHAIR:** I agree.

**Mr Scales:** I am just trying to help the committee with that. Going to the exact nub of the point, approximately \$430,000 was spent to establish the office of the personalised transport ombudsman. An ombudsman's work is obviously very confidential so it could not be in one of our existing buildings. We secured office accommodation, in Albert Street I think, at a cost of \$115,000. The information technology cost of \$211,000 was there to make sure that it had secure communications. There was a communications planning cost of \$57,000. Do not forget the recruitment costs because we had to go far and wide to get a suitable person for this. There were other legal costs and asset depreciation of \$14,000. To say that the office is \$430,000 is just not correct.

The bottom line on this one is that it to be a secure location away from our own office locations. It had to have correct information technology costs. It had to have strategic communications planning and recruitment costs. The total office accommodation costs were \$115,000. It has obviously desks and chairs and all of that sort of stuff that we will re-use. The IT costs are sunk. The strategic communications planning, we had to tell the industry what we were doing, and other costs including legal costs again were the costs of setting that up.

We are in an age of radical uncertainty. Nobody could actually predict that COVID-19 would happen. At the time when this was set up—and I execute what government tell me to execute so we executed setting the office up and then obviously COVID-19 has changed all of our lives. But to say \$430,000 is on an office, it has those five components, if that helps the member.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Are there any ongoing lease costs?

**Mr Scales:** No, there are no ongoing lease costs. We are out.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Scales, the minister initially promised that the ombudsman would be appointed by March 2020. Had the department or minister selected the person who would fill the role prior to the initiative being put on hold when COVID hit?

**Mr Scales:** We had certainly commenced the recruitment process and we had got down to a preferred candidate.

**Ms SIMPSON:** How much cost had the process of the recruitment incurred?

**Mr Scales:** I refer back to my previous answer: the recruitment costs were \$33,000.

**Ms SIMPSON:** What was the all-out cost of the personalised transport ombudsman, from the recruitment process through to the leasing and other costs? How much was the cumulative cost?

**Mr Scales:** It was \$430,000, as I have just said.

**CHAIR:** The figure you quoted earlier, yes.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I have a question to Mr Scales in relation to regional airfares and the price tracking tool. Mr Scales, the minister announced on 29 July 2020 that TransLink were developing a price tracking tool for regional airfares. Where is it?

**Mr Scales:** We did have a very close look at a price tracking tool but regional airfares are subject to market conditions, are also subject to a lot of changes on fuel and we have been opening and shutting borders as the member for Chatsworth and committee members obviously are aware. The issue with the price tracking tool was basically that we could not keep up with what was happening in the marketplace. The issue really was one where we could not actually get it to do anything that would have been useful to people on the ground. The reason for that is because the prices are in the private domain and borders were closing and opening really quickly, and then we found that airlines were actually not carrying anybody or carrying full or going to charter. The price tracking tool that we intended to do would have been of very little use to anyone, if that helps.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I completely concur. How much has the department spent on this initiative to date?

**Mr Scales:** It was done by staff so the staff costs would have been just absorbed.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Do you have any proximate idea of those absorbed staff costs?

**CHAIR:** I will allow the question, but there is a hypothetical in there. Director-General, do you have any figures?

**Mr Scales:** I cannot break it out, member for Chatsworth. We have 9½ thousand staff over 100 locations in the department. The TransLinkians would have been doing a lot of this work with others in the department, so I could not break it down.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, will it be delivered or scrapped completely now? Will it be delivered or even post COVID will it still be scrapped?

**Mr Scales:** Currently we regulate seven air service routes across regional Queensland so provide subsidised air routes to 23 regional communities, which have been a bit of a lifeline certainly in current circumstances. We have released a public open market tender for the provision of those currently regulated regional air routes, which expires on 31 December 2021.

When we get to a position of normality, member for Chatsworth, whatever that is, I am sure we will look at it again because it is of customer benefit if we can get that far. To quote Churchill, I do not think this is the beginning of the end. I think it is the end of the beginning. We are going to be in turbulent times for a long time to come. Basically, we will return to it when things stabilise. Look what happened yesterday with the bubble across the border which just got burst, basically. When we get to a stable point, member for Chatsworth, we will probably have a look at it again, if it is valuable to the consumer.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, it was announced in April that digital driver's licences would be rolled out in Queensland after a successful trial. The minister recently was unable to provide any milestones for the project. My question specifically is when exactly will Queenslanders get a digital licence?

**Mr Scales:** We had a successful trial on the coast from 24 March to 30 September 2020. I think you are referring to the fact that the Fraser Coast residents and businesses who participated in the pilot continue to use that app. We had about 780 participants. The response on that is we are looking at how we move forward, the deployment of the digital licence beyond the pilot locations. It is something again that has been affected by COVID-19, so we have a lot of good work that we have done. We have got a lot of good data from the pilot. As to speculating on when we would be rolling this out, member for Chatsworth, I cannot give you a date because there are so many other things going on.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** We have talked about the personalised transport ombudsman; that has been scrapped—a 180-degree turn. We have talked about the regional airfare price tracking tool going nowhere. We still do not know when digital driver's licences will be rolled out. Minister, we have highlighted three cases here where a press release has not been followed up by action. Minister, do you accept responsibility for non-delivery?

**CHAIR:** I will just ask you to rephrase that. I will allow the question, but you have chucked quite a few imputations and everything in there. We will allow the minister to answer. I just warn you for future. It is a pretty inflammatory question. Minister?

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you, Chair. I thank the honourable member for the very loaded question with imputations. A major event has happened, to inform the member, since March 2020 and it is called the COVID global pandemic. It has had a big impact on a lot of things. The member may have missed this.

To just go through a number of things here in the question, the personalised transport ombudsman—we saw the impact of COVID on the personalised transport industry was severe. The industry said to us, 'Do we really need this ombudsman?' We did a review, because we work with industry. When we did the review, there were other ways of achieving the goals that cost less money that had less of a burden on personalised transport, so we did it.

To be quite frank—the opposition has raised a few questions here about the finances—we have saved 90 per cent of the allocation for the ombudsman of \$5 million over three years. We have saved that. It seems to be that the opposition is advocating for more red tape for the personalised transport industry. It is an extraordinary position for the opposition to be in. I am incredulous, Chair.

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am allowing the minister some leeway here. It was quite an inflammatory question. I will ask the member for Gregory to stop interjections as well.

**Mr BAILEY:** I was speaking directly to the question. Let me quote the CEO of the Taxi Council of Queensland, Blair Davies, who commended the state government on its decision to prioritise reducing regulatory burden for the industry. Mr Davies said—

Utilising the Government's existing dispute resolutions and TCQ's experience in mediation makes much more sense than adding another layer of bureaucracy for the personalised transport sector. It just has to be a more efficient process ... We thank the Minister for taking on board TCQ's advice that Queensland taxi licence holders could not afford to pay the industry levy this year.

A last direct quote here from the of CEO of the Taxi Council of Queensland—

The past twelve months have been very tough for taxi licence holders and so this decision that will save them \$405 per licence is very much appreciated.

We work with industry. The LNP seem to be proposing more red tape for the industry—very strange for them to be in that position.

**Mr WATTS:** It is a matter of being accountable for the money spent.

**Ms Simpson** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Can we please stop the interjections? The minister is answering the question. Minister, noting it was an inflammatory question, but could you please—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is inflammatory response! Ridiculous!

**CHAIR:** Member!

**Mr BAILEY:** There were two parts to the question. The digital licence app: while there has been a global pandemic, we have been focused on ensuring Queenslanders are safe. Seven deaths in Queensland; 4.3 million deaths worldwide. We have been very successful at doing so, but the global pandemic has had an impact on a range of things. The trials for the digital licence have been promising. It is under consideration for government in terms of ensuring it progresses right across the state. We obviously see the great advantages in it. Of course, the pandemic has been the priority in terms of dealing with things. We can hear the grumbling and the groaning from those in opposition about various things, but that is the reality.

The other part of the question was the aviation issue. The honourable member for Chatsworth might have noticed that aviation has changed considerably during the global pandemic. Of course we will consider further the issue of tracking airfares, but at the moment I do not think that is something, given how limited air services are due to the pandemic, we will get back to, but we are making sure that communities have air services. We have the Local Fare Scheme which was cut by the previous

government, restored by us, so that people are subsidised to go to remote locations up in the Cape. That is something we are very proud of and we continued in the budget to ensure people are not paying inordinate airfares.

You can put your fingers in your ear and pretend the pandemic is not real, but it is real and it has had an impact on all three of these issues.

**CHAIR:** Thank you Minister for that answer. We will now go to government questions. I call the member for Mount Ommaney.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, with reference to Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister outline to the committee how the Palaszczuk government's record roads and transport budget has helped to secure the 2032 Olympics and plans for transport over the next 10 years?

**Mr BAILEY:** Just before I answer the question, I inform the committee that I have just been informed that the federal approvals for the Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade have actually just come through. I am sure the member for Maroochydore will be pleased to hear that her colleagues in Canberra have done that. That is something we have been seeking for quite some time now—most of this year.

In relation to the question asked, I join many Queenslanders in celebrating an historic achievement there where the Premier had secured the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games for Queensland. We saw Queenslanders lead the way as part of the Olympic team, and we will lead the way in terms of providing the best Olympic and Paralympic Games ever produced.

Our public transport system and major road connections were crucial not just for the growing population, and accelerating growing population as a result of our very strong management of the global pandemic, but it is a key element to our successful bid to the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I can assure the member that transport infrastructure required for the Olympics will first and foremost be designed with the needs of Queensland's growing population in mind. We are already in a strong position with the \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail project which the Independent Audit Office has ticked off on recently as having no issues with. The new Albert Street station will be very popular very quickly. Those people who have to come in and often get out at South Brisbane and South Bank and walk across the river on a hot summer morning are going to love getting out in an air-conditioned Albert Street station, I can tell you. It is going to be fantastic. They will be able to change on the Cleveland line easily at Boggo Road, get off the busway and get on the new Cross River Rail air-conditioned underground line. It is going to be absolutely awesome.

Thousands of Olympic spectators will be able to board the train and arrive at the stadium under three minutes from Albert Street. That is not just good for the Olympics; it is fantastic for any AFL or cricket fan. We put on as many buses as we can, but everyone knows getting out of the Gabba is hard with buses. With 900 people per train every couple of minutes moving after an AFL game or after the Big Bash, it is going to be awesome. It is going to be fantastic long before the Olympics happen. That is what we are committed to.

It is not just Cross River Rail. We have substantial infrastructure commitments that will also help us in terms of the Olympic bid. We already have the Eastern TransitWay under construction and the Northern TransitWay as well. The Gold Coast Light Rail extension to Burleigh will be a huge benefit to the Gold Coast. There was no progression of light rail under the previous government. This government is getting stage 3 done.

We did not even have a business case completed when we came into office to upgrade the Sunshine Coast rail line because of the ineffectiveness of Sunshine Coast veteran MPs. Now we have more than half a billion dollars of funding committed to the Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade, which will include duplicating the line from Beerwah to Beerburrum. Now that we have the approvals through this morning—great news—we will be able to progress that. It would have been nice if some of those Sunshine Coast LNP MPs had lobbied their own members in Canberra. We might have got that through a little earlier.

We also have a commitment to the Coomera Connector, or the second M1. We did not even have a corridor for that when we were elected. I have covered that pretty well to date. We are getting on with it. The QTRIP allocations are substantial. It is going to be the biggest road project—even bigger than the billion dollar M1 upgrade at the moment between Varsity Lakes to Tugun that is happening under this government. We certainly have not made the same mistake of our predecessors when they did not spend a single new dollar on the M1 in three years.

With smart ticketing you will have the same public transport system—smart phone, smart watch, credit card, debit card—right across the state. Whether you are from Cairns, Rocky, the Gold Coast or wherever, it will be the same system right across the state under this government. It will be well and truly in place nearly a decade before the Olympics. That is not just good for Queenslanders but also great for tourists who come here. When they go up to the reef and come down for the Olympics, it will be the same system. It will be very handy and very user-friendly.

We are also releasing today the Creating Better Connections for Queenslanders—a 10-year plan for transport that sets out our priorities and key initiatives for public transport across Queensland. It outlines our significant investment in passenger transport. It is coming together to deliver customer and community benefits. Creating Better Connections for Queenslanders sets an exciting vision for the future of passenger transport that focuses on getting the fundamentals right for customers—reliable, safe and accessible services. As the recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 continue and congestion grows—we have seen people leave the public transport system and drive—it is important that we are talking to Queenslanders about the benefits of passenger transport and our plans for improving services into the future.

**Ms HOWARD:** In relation to Queensland's COVID-19 economic recovery plan budget update, can the minister advise the committee what the Palaszczuk government has done to prevent the civil construction sector shutting down as a result of COVID-19? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for her interest in our economic recovery and our management of the COVID pandemic. You have been a very active part of this government's response to it. Since the start of the pandemic, the Palaszczuk Labor government has been listening to expert health advice from our Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, and acting on it. We knew from the beginning that the best health outcome was the best economic outcome. They were tied together. Most people understand that. We needed strong leadership.

The Prime Minister, the federal government and the opposition piled on here last June for a whole month saying, 'Open the borders. Open the borders.' The Premier held the line, and thank God she did because it protected our economy. It protected Queenslanders. It is that sort of strong leadership and foresight that avoided many deaths in Queensland. That is what authentic leadership is.

While work sites across Australia and across the world shut down last year and construction sites in Sydney are closed right now, we have been able to keep our civil construction sector working by working together. I wish I had a dollar for every phone call I have had with industry because we have been in touch with them regularly, finding out what they need and working out how to protect people and how to keep things going safely. I want to thank everybody in the different industries I have worked with—civil construction, transport infrastructure, personalised transport—for working with us through such an unprecedented time. No-one could have predicted it. Everyone has worked really well together, and I thank them for that.

Not one TMR work site closed during the pandemic because we had COVID-safe plans in place, because the safety of our workers was our first priority. We were able to accelerate project delivery in the end and delivered \$764 million worth of works ahead of schedule for the financial year 2020-21. That is three-quarters of a billion dollars ahead of schedule. We have also been hard at work delivering our four stimulus programs worth almost \$1.3 billion which I outlined before. There are 29 completed already and 130 under construction. Thank you to all the mayors for their very positive feedback. We have been able to do a lot of sealing out there. We are spending more than \$100 million specifically on sealing dirt roads for the first time. This is a great opportunity to accelerate that in the biggest road network in Australia.

If civil construction had shut down in Queensland because of COVID, the economic impact would have been severe. I have received advice that if construction on Cross River Rail, for instance, had shut down for three months it would have cost about \$1.5 billion. That is just one of hundreds of projects across Queensland. If we had been forced to shut down, it would have cost billions and billions of dollars. There would have been a lot of hardship for workers and people right across Queensland. We knew from the start that a strong health response was key to looking after people's economic health as well.

We certainly were not listening to the opposition who called for the borders to be open 64 different times at least. In fact, the current Leader of the Opposition is on record as parroting the Prime Minister's lines about equating our world-leading response to having a 'doona over your head and sucking your thumb in the corner'.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Chair: under standing order 118 on relevance, the minister seems to be getting off track.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am answering the question.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for the point of order. I am enjoying the answer but I will caution the minister to stay relevant to the topic.

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you, Chair, for your guidance. The question mentions shutting down as a result of COVID-19. I am certainly answering specifically the question. What I am saying is that for those who characterise our world-leading COVID response as tantamount to putting a 'doona over your head and sucking your thumb in the corner'—

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister.

**Mr BAILEY:**—it is absolutely reckless and irresponsible. That is the member for Broadwater.

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair: just for clarity, the government did open the border.

**Mr BAILEY:** This is a debating point.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order. Minister, can you move on?

**Mr BAILEY:** Certainly. I am addressing the COVID part of the question. I thank the member for Toowoomba North for his interjection because he was found to be not conforming to the rules under COVID—

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will move on instead of arguing.

**Mr WATTS:** I resigned when I did something wrong, unlike your member—

**CHAIR:** Member for Toowoomba North, that is it for the interjections. Minister, can you move on from that?

**Mr BAILEY:** Certainly. We saw other members also advocate to not listen to the health advice. We saw the member for Burleigh put up billboards—

**Mr MILLAR:** Again—

**Mr BAILEY:** This is relevant to the question.

**CHAIR:** Member, there was an element in the question about COVID-19.

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am chairing this hearing. Minister, I will ask you to move on. We understand COVID-19 and what has happened with other members. We will move on with the answer.

**Mr BAILEY:** The Queensland model to protect the civil construction industry and the economy broadly is seeing 88 per cent of net migration coming to Queensland. Why? Because we handled the COVID pandemic as well as anybody in the world. We did not abuse our health officers as punch drunk bureaucrats, as some members of the opposition did. We backed them in and we acted on their advice. It was not always popular but it was the right thing to do. It protected people's lives. It protected people's jobs. That is what authentic real leadership is about.

**Mr WATTS:** Punch drunk member—

**CHAIR:** No more interjections, member for Toowoomba North.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am very proud to work with a strong Premier; a strong Deputy Premier, who was the health minister for a lot of it; and our Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, who will be the next Governor—a real hero of Queensland. I am in awe of their leadership. I am pleased to work with them. You know what you are going to get with them. They will always act on the health advice. It is an issue of science, and we understood that from day one.

**Ms HOWARD:** This issue is important to a lot of Queenslanders, in particular my two parliamentary colleagues the member for Lytton and the member for Redlands. I refer to page 1 of the SDS and the government's objective of supporting jobs and protecting the environment. Can the minister update the committee on work done by the Palaszczuk government to clean up our waterways of derelict vessels and support jobs in the maritime sector?

**CHAIR:** Minister, as much as it is a very important topic, I would like to get some crossbench questions in before the break, so if you can answer that briefly.

**Mr BAILEY:** Certainly. Queensland's coastline is not only the most beautiful coastline in the world but an incredible asset. We want to protect and enhance it. One of the things I understood in my first term as minister responsible was that we had a lot of derelict vessels all over the coastline that boaties



and the community wanted to see cleaned up. While we could do a little bit here and there it was clear that we needed a specific program, so I instituted the War on Wrecks program. We have also established a Maritime Jobs Taskforce. I acknowledge the excellent leadership of the member for Redlands, who has been the chair of our War on Wrecks task force working with industry on this, also Maritime Safety Queensland, the Gold Coast Waterways Authority and local VMS and contractors who have done a fantastic job.

Our successful War on Wrecks program has seen the removal of more than 800 vessels from Queensland waters as part of a four-year, \$20 million program. Thanks to all of the task force members who have done such a great job we have 843 fewer derelict and abandoned vessels in our waterways from Burleigh up to Hayman Island. MSQ has thrown its weight behind the campaign. Demonstrating it can get the job done, working with local and state government agencies they identified a further 150 vessels across the state classified as derelict and about 177 more at risk of deteriorating. MSQ has been getting involved proactively in this space and, we hope, getting good outcomes. It is pleasing to see the task force intervention resulted in 102 vessels being pre-emptively removed by their owners in the 2020-21 financial year. They are trying to get ahead of the curve here and that is good. I expect the task force to progress towards achieving a long-term vision where owners are able to take responsibility for the entire life cycle of their vessels and all Queenslanders can enjoy cleaner, safer seas.

The point I want to make is that most boaties are incredibly responsible. We are talking about a minority here but they have a big impact. We want to keep our waterways environmentally pristine, and this is a great program to achieve that. It has also been a reliable source of work for Gold Coast marine businesses. Every salvage project is a job creator and these marine businesses, many on the Gold Coast and other places, use local hire equipment, bobcats and machinery and scrap yards to dismantle those boats.

**CHAIR:** Can I ask you to please wrap up, Minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** The Maritime Jobs Taskforce was part of the question, but I will come back to that.

**CHAIR:** You might be able to come back to that. Thank you, Minister; we know it is a great initiative. I now welcome the member for Traeger via videoconference and the member for Maiwar, who is in the room. I will go to the member for Traeger for a question.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, an issue was raised by the north-west councils with regard to the 55 local councils that perform RMPC contracts. Can the minister commit to working with councils to resolve the legal uncertainty stemming from a Supreme Court case that ruled out any use of third-party contractors—which is akin to privatising the workforce—that is typically undertaken by local councils?

**Mr BAILEY:** I am very committed to working with mayors and local governments across the board. They do a fantastic job in an incredible diversity of jurisdictions across Queensland. You get some very spread-out, small-population areas and of course you have the major councils on the coastline as well. I am certainly happy to look into that for the honourable member. I think our relationship with local government generally is very positive.

In terms of our road construction out there, with stimulus there is a lot of work going on at the moment. We have tried to ensure that local jobs are the priority through local government. Some of the local governments have said, 'We don't have the capacity to get these couple of road projects done,' so they have contracted the work to get it done. It is a matter for local governments to make that choice. I respect the fact that they are across what capacity and resources they have, and of course their own workforce is fully committed. Those contractors are still local people who have mortgages and need incomes too, so it is good to see them being pragmatic about getting the road stimulus projects done. I undertake to the member that I will be working with local government as positively as I have in the past.

**Mr KATTER:** I have one last quick question. I am not sure if this question should be directed to the DG or if there is someone from air services there. Being mindful of subsidies and costs on tenders to regulated air routes in the gulf, can the DG or perhaps air services confirm that Danny Foster, a former employee of subsidiary Rex Airlines, was employed by TMR following the commencement of this route and then elevated to the position of monitoring air performances on those gulf regulated routes?

**Mr Scales:** Danny Foster is embedded in our TransLink division. He has nothing to do with regulated air routes, if that helps. He is fully out of the air business industry.

**Mr KATTER:** No, sorry, I meant formerly.

**Mr Scales:** Formerly? I do not know what his career history was. I know he came from the airlines, but he is now doing things for me on the European Train Control System.

**Mr KATTER:** To be clear, the question was when. My understanding is that he initially worked there years ago. He was formerly employed by TMR to monitor the air services program.

**CHAIR:** Member, is that to do with this year's expenditure?

**Mr KATTER:** Well, it is insofar as the tender is coming up for the gulf regulated routes and the performance of those will form part of the decision-making that builds into the budget as a cost for those regulated routes.

**CHAIR:** DG, can you answer that quickly.

**Mr Scales:** I do not think Mr Foster is involved in the air side of it at all. He is now on the rail side. I cannot comment on his career. I cannot even remember that far back. As far as individual employees are concerned, we have 9,500 employees. I think the answer is that he is not involved in the determination of the air contract going forward. Does that help, member for Traeger?

**Mr KATTER:** Not really. I can put another question through parliament.

**CHAIR:** We might leave it at that, member. You are missed on this committee, by the way, member for Traeger. You were a very valuable contributor last term.

**Mr BERKMAN:** My first question is to the director-general. On pages 53 and 54 the new SEQ Regional Transport Plan shows the long-term plan for public transport out to 2041. It includes new high-frequency bus routes between Bardon and Toowong and others in my electorate. The question is: should we expect to see those new routes delivered as part of the SEQ Bus Network Review, which is set to start in 2022?

**Mr Scales:** As the minister outlined earlier today, the creating better connections consultation program is now out. It has a 10-year horizon. It has five key priorities and 20 initiatives. We are asking the population about what we are doing with the transport network, so it is embedded in that. There will be an opportunity to comment on that within the consultation process, but I cannot really speculate on what may or may not happen that far in advance.

**Mr BERKMAN:** This is a question relevant to both mine and the minister's electorate but I will put it to the DG again. Director-General, now that the Tennyson tennis centre will be an Olympic venue and there are major residential developments in Yeerongpilly and Indooroopilly going on at the moment, and with Cross River Rail opening soon, is the department considering re-opening the Tennyson train line between Yeerongpilly and Corinda?

**Mr Scales:** The answer is no.

**Mr BERKMAN:** In that light, I will ask another question, if I might, Chair.

**CHAIR:** We have time for one more quick question.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am happy to add to that answer. Can I just say that the people who use the Tennyson tennis centre use the Yeerongpilly station. You suggest that they would need a Tennyson line to get there, but they already have a heavy rail station nearby that will also benefit from the Cross River Rail project. The Yeerongpilly Green development, the tennis centre and the existing residential area is very well served by heavy rail right now and it will be even better with Cross River Rail.

**CHAIR:** Member, we have got one more minute if you have a really quick question because these times are set by the House.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Director-General, the \$112 million Active Transport Investment Program that was outlined in the Cycling Action Plan 2019-2022 looks to have expired a month ago at the end of the 2020-21 financial year. What is the budget allocation for that Active Transport Investment Program this year and across the next four years?


**Mr Scales:** The Cycling and Walking Strategy is well-known. I am saying that the—

**CHAIR:** Director-General, we are going to have to be very brief with the answer.

**Mr Scales:** We are now investing a record \$252 million over the next four years.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The committee will now have a break. This hearing will resume at 11.15 am with the continued examination of the estimates for the portfolio of transport and main roads.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.00 am to 11.15 am.**

 **CHAIR:** The hearing is resumed. I welcome back the minister and officials. The committee will continue its examination of the estimates for the transport and main roads portfolio. Minister, I understand you have a quick clarification to make.

**Mr BAILEY:** Yes. I just want to clarify the information I got through before that I passed onto the committee. The approvals that have been given for Beerburrum to Nambour are in fact some early works, not the substantial, from the federal government. That involves two park-and-rides there that can proceed without the environmental approvals, but the major works still do require federal government environmental approval which we are still seeking. I just wanted to clarify that for the committee.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. We will now go to non-government questions.

**Mr MILLAR:** I refer to the member for Chatsworth.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** May I speak to a representative from the Gladstone Ports Corporation?

**Mr Heagney:** I am here in my capacity as acting chief executive officer of the Gladstone Ports Corporation. If I may, I would like to pay my respects to the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who may be on the link.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Heagney, you were previously appointed to the board in October 2020. Are you still a board member?

**Mr Heagney:** That is correct.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** How long do you expect to be acting in this role?

**Mr Heagney:** I was appointed as a non-executive director of Gladstone Ports Corporation on 1 October—I commenced as a non-executive director on 1 October 2020. A board resolution was passed by a majority of the directors of the Gladstone Ports Corporation on 22 July which appointed me as the acting CEO of the Gladstone Ports Corporation. The resignation of the interim CEO on that date necessitated my appointment. It is not clear at this stage how long I will be in the acting role for. Anything beyond six months needs the approval of the shareholding ministers. We will at some time in the near future be going through a new recruitment process to recruit a permanent chief executive officer.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Back on 4 May this year, Mr Colin Cassidy was appointed as the interim CEO. Can you please explain why he is not here today?

**Mr Heagney:** Mr Cassidy resigned as the interim CEO of Gladstone Ports Corporation on 21 July.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Just for a bit of clarity, how many CEOs, interim CEOs or acting CEOs has the Gladstone Ports Corporation had in the last year?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: I just seek clarification. We are here to examine the 2021-22 budget. I am just wondering how this trip down memory lane is relevant to the budgetary allocations for the current financial year.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your point of order, Minister. I will allow some leeway in the answer, but I provide a bit of guidance to the member for Chatsworth on why we are here.

**Mr Heagney:** I am here in my capacity obviously as acting chief executive officer. I am the second acting chief executive officer since I have been a director on the board. During that time we also had an interim chief executive officer.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Heagney, I am really appreciative of your time today. Could you please outline what impacts this level of disruption has had on the organisation?

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, can you rephrase that question please? There is a fair bit of imputation in that.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My question goes to the heart of prudent financial management, with the obvious disruption in relation to the financial performance of the Gladstone Ports Corporation over the last period of time.

**CHAIR:** The interim CEO is here to answer questions on the workings under his capacity in that. I will ask him to answer that question as to how things are going as best he can.

**Mr Heagney:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The reality is that this year the Gladstone Ports Corporation will post a record dividend. The port is operating exceptionally well. Last month we had the most coal throughput since December 2020 so the business itself is actually moving on and progressing particularly well.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I appreciate that. Minister, on 28 July 2020 the chairman of the Gladstone Ports Corporation wrote to you seeking support for the appointment of Mr Craig Walker to the role of CEO. Why didn't you support the board's unanimous recommendation?

**CHAIR:** Minister, I will allow the question but there may be some in-confidence things in there. Obviously, you will answer it to the best of your ability.

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question and this question can only be asked because the Palaszczuk Labor government kept the Gladstone port in public hands. I welcome discussing the Gladstone Ports Corporation any time because it is operating in the public interest and that is really good to see. I understand the board have made various recommendations. I have a legislative role there, as do other shareholding ministers. We will always make decisions in the interests of the Gladstone Ports Corporation. I do understand the independent watchdog is looking at a number of things in relation to the ports, so I think it would be inappropriate of me to comment further.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I have a further question of the minister. The board resolution for the appointment says, 'Mr Craig Walker has been acting in the position since December 2018 with demonstrated and exemplary performance as evidenced by his individual performance and development plan'—his IPD—'and the corporation's record results.' Minister, if a person is displaying exemplary performance, there must be non-performance related reasons for your objections. May I ask what they were?

**CHAIR:** Minister, I once again give you leeway.

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As I have already outlined and as has already been said by the chair of the CCC, they are looking at a number of matters in relation to GPC and its operations. For me to pre-empt or give roaming commentary—

**CHAIR:** Do not go there in relation to the CCC dealings.

**Mr BAILEY:**—while matters are being looked at I think would be inappropriate.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, there is a clear indication that if there is something going on—and I was not aware of that—in relation to the CCC, we do not want to touch on that at all.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Of course not.

**CHAIR:** Do you have any questions?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I do, Mr Chair, and thank you for your guidance. I acknowledge that the minister does have a lot of history with the CCC.

**CHAIR:** Member—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My question again is to the minister. Correspondence between the Gladstone Ports Corporation and shareholding ministers—and obviously you are one of them—was recently released via the RTI process. Were you consulted prior to the release of these documents and, if so, did your office or you object to this release?

**CHAIR:** Minister, once again, if this has anything to do with an ongoing investigation, I ask you to tread carefully.

**Mr BAILEY:** I refer the member to my previous answer broadly. Also I point out to him that there is an RTI process in place. It is the same RTI process that was in place when he was the assistant minister for public transport under former premier Campbell Newman. These decisions are made by independent RTI officers who are independent from government.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Chair, I have a question again in relation to government boards and the performance of the bottom line as it relates to the budget. I have a question to Mr Scales, if I may. Mr Scales, during the night of Monday, 28 June, the government issued a media release to announce that Owen Doogan had been appointed as a board member of the North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation. Coincidentally, the announcement was made on the eve of a COVID lockdown. I know that you are a very straight shooter, Mr Scales, but a cynic may think that the timing was to avoid scrutiny. I just want to be sure. Let's use this as an opportunity to demonstrate that everything was aboveboard. When was the vacant position advertised through the government's website for board vacancies?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The Government Owned Corporations Act 1993 requires shareholding ministers for the appointment of any board. I have no direct knowledge of Mr Doogan's appointment. Basically if there is a vacancy on any of the GOCs, firstly, there is a list held by DPC. The Treasury will look at nominations from that and do the necessary checks. Then it will go into a procedure where we may or may not get involved as a department. At the end of the day it is a matter for the GOC itself to make a recommendation to the two shareholding ministers and then it goes on to the Governor in Council. Then the Governor in Council will make that determination. As far as Mr Doogan is concerned, the department would not have been involved in any detail on that appointment, if that answers your question.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I assume from that answer that you do not know how many applications were received for that role?

**Mr Scales:** No. It would be a matter for the GOC to do that under their act. Because they are a government owned corporation, you have to have probity checks and everything else in place. As a department, we will get involved if we are asked to, but normally it is a matter for the GOCs. It is the same as our colleagues in Queensland Rail; they have their own act as well. Basically, they will recruit in the manner I have suggested. There is a list that the DPC hold. Suitable candidates are moved forward depending on what skill set is required by that government owned corporation or separate statutory body. Candidates are then chosen for interview by the GOC itself and then the process will evolve from there.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, I have a further question. If you know this, can you outline Mr Doogan's previous experience in the private sector in any company similar to Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation? Are you aware of his past work experience?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair. This is a Treasury led process. I suggest that, given it is a Treasury led process, this is a matter that should have been asked during the Treasurer's estimates a couple of weeks ago.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I can ask the shareholding minister through the chair I believe.

**CHAIR:** Hang on, I am taking the minister's point of order. I will allow the question. If the director-general has an answer to that I will allow it. Thank you for that. I was not aware of that.

**Mr Scales:** Mr Doogan is known to me as a member of a particular union. Queensland Treasury, as the minister said, take the lead on this process. I have no idea what Mr Doogan's antecedence or his career path would have been. He could have been a pilot for all I know I suppose. I do not know. That is a marine pilot, not an airline pilot. Basically, his CV would have been submitted to Treasury and Treasury would have made the determination. Then it would have gone to the GOC for review as well. I am sorry I cannot help you on that. My knowledge of Mr Doogan is only so long as I have been here in this great state and this great country.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, we suggest you ask a question of the Treasurer in the House about the appointment if it was Treasury led. Do you have any other questions?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I will certainly take that advice on board, Mr Chair, and thank you for your assistance in that regard. I have one final question to Mr Scales if I may in relation to appointments as it relates to fiscal prudence. Mr Scales, I note that Mr Doogan was the state secretary of the RTBU until recently. As a union they have donated \$125,000 to the Labor Party since 2019. Given that the minister is a shareholding treasurer, as the chair has correctly announced, and also a member of the Labor Party, from your perspective as a director-general, how does this perceived—

**CHAIR:** Sorry, member, you are seeking an opinion there. We have to rule that question out of order. You are seeking an opinion. I allowed that question because of that line, but we have gone over time and we are now going to go to government questions. You were seeking an opinion there; I have to rule that out of order. We will now go to the member for Ipswich—sorry the member for Mount Ommaney.

**Ms PUGH:** I know we look similar. It is exciting to have two women on the committee for once! My question is to the minister. With reference to Budget Paper 3, can the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government's record spend on transport infrastructure will benefit all public transport users across Queensland? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for her question and her support for public transport. It is well known. Thanks to this government, we are seeing Cross River Rail happen. We are seeing light rail happen on the Gold Coast. We are seeing cooperation with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in terms of a mass transit solution for the very strongly growing Sunshine Coast. Of course, we are rolling out smart ticketing—a unified smartwatch, smartphone, debit card, credit card system—for the whole of Queensland for the very first time.

That is in stark contrast to the record of the previous government, which cut Cross River Rail, ordered trains from overseas that were not disability compliant, cut 48 drivers from Queensland Rail and did not start the training of any new drivers in 2014. They predicted that it would take 36 years to restore the timetable but we restored it six weeks later. We also saw members opposite suggest that we proceed with the new Dutton station, which would have disconnected effectively the Cleveland line and the Gold Coast-Beenleigh line, meaning people would have to walk about nine minutes from station

to station. Clearly, members opposite do not understand public transport. We saw big cuts in roads and transport in the previous government. Even to this day, people like the member for Burleigh suggest that within five or 10 years public transport will be obsolete. How bizarre.

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order: we are talking about the budget—not a history lesson.

**CHAIR:** I am sorry, member for Toowoomba North, but it was you guys who went back into history earlier. I will ask the minister to skip over the history as much as possible. I will allow the minister to make comparisons between what we are doing and previous budgets but I ask that you be as less inflammatory as you can. I understand that in some of their questions non-government members have been inflammatory so I will allow a little bit of leeway, but we are not here to fight or argue; we are here to answer questions.

**Mr BAILEY:** I certainly take your guidance, Chair. Our commitment to light rail on the Gold Coast is absolutely resolute and well known, working with other levels of government. That contrasts with very recent comments—not historical comments; these are fresh out of the *Gold Coast Bulletin*—suggesting that public transportation would be obsolete within five to 10 years. They are in the bizarre kind of land. ‘Do not take the train; take the plane. Get an A-320, it is faster and better,’ said the member for Burleigh. Apparently we are taking jetliners now instead of trains! Bizarre.

Of course, we have done a multimodal study to run the light rail past Burleigh, the most logical place. Our independent consultancy found that the least disruption would be down the Gold Coast Highway, but we know that the member for Burleigh wants to see stage 4 run past his brewery and head inland. It is very sad to see. While we are doing a coordinated public transport plan across the state, particularly on the Gold Coast, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast, we are seeing suggestions of members of parliament that are not in the public interest. That should be highlighted. I have not seen the member for Chatsworth stand up with the member for Burleigh too often, because I think he has been warned off going down there as the member for Burleigh dictates policy down there—not the shadow minister.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** I know where your point of order is going and I have just issued a caution.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order: standing order 118, relevance. I know the minister has a lot of fascinations with the member for Burleigh, but just stick to the issues.

**CHAIR:** Actually, I am quite interested in the answer. I am just cautioning the minister to be less inflammatory.

**Mr BAILEY:** I take your guidance, Chair. We are investing at record levels in public transport, whether it is smart ticketing, light rail, heavy rail with Cross River Rail or Sunshine Coast rail duplication in working with the council on the Sunshine Coast. It is about coordinated, coherent, different modes of transport public transport coming together, including the M1 on the southern Gold Coast. That is how we go about things. We do not come up with uncoordinated proposals that make no sense. I can assure all members of the committee that public transport will be here in five, 10, 15 years and for a long time to come.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. I believe the member for Ipswich had a question about the M1.

**Ms HOWARD:** I do. Thank you very much, Mr Chair. My question is of the minister. Regarding the capital allocations to projects on the M1 and the second M1 as set out in Budget Paper 3, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government’s plan is for the M1 and second M1? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches? My daughter has just moved to the Gold Coast, so I need to know this.

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you, member for Ipswich. I am happy to talk about the M1 and the second M1 every single day. I absolutely love to see so much going on down there. Anybody who travels to the Gold Coast on the M1 can see how much work is underway. It is a \$749 million upgrade. In terms of the second upgrade around the merge, the landscape has changed massively with added lanes, improving interchanges and active transport. It is an awesome project. As you go down to the Gold Coast, you see the interchanges work underway. Heavy construction has started at exit 41, which is fantastic to see. We also have funding lined up for exit 49 and we are advancing the planning on interchanges at 45 and 38. That hugely booming and growing area is putting pressure on those old interchanges and they need to have their capacity increased.

That is not even mentioning the billion dollar upgrade of the M1 from Varsity Lakes to Tugun where, again, for anyone driving through there, the landscape has changed massively. We have finished the Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes section—fantastic. Traffic is flowing there beautifully. When

we do the southern section of the M1 from Varsity Lakes to Tugun, that will mean a much faster travel time on the M1. That will take pressure off the old Gold Coast Highway which then will allow the future capacity for light rail at a post-Burleigh stage. It is a very coherent plan. We are not making the same mistakes of the Newman government where not one new dollar went on the M1 in three whole years. We are investing. We are not making those same sorts of mistakes.

Of course, we already have done the exit 57 interchange, which is going extremely well, despite the doomsaying of the member for Theodore and a few others present today. Exit 54 is also going very well—built under the Palaszczuk Labor government.

I am happy to report some very interesting things. Sustainability is a really important part of such a big portfolio as TMR. All three packages of the 10-kilometre upgrade from Tugun and Varsity Lakes have been awarded a design category leading rating by the Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia. The project includes three Australian-first innovations, including trial of a new pavement rubblisation method that involves cracking the existing concrete road surface and testing the remnants for use as road base on the same site as part of the new motorway lanes. This method of road construction reduces waste material removal costs and also lowers overall carbon impacts by reducing the need to move it off site. The upgrade is setting a very high standard to inspire the next generation of road builders to continue to create sustainable projects.

Of course, we also see lots of local supply chains benefit from these M1 upgrades. Businesses such as Lantrak have a lot of trucks that move around. There are 30 trucks onsite, moving 250,000 cubic metres of earth. Seventy-nine per cent of local businesses are used on the contract, with 2,892 workers inducted onsite and more than 900,000 hours worked. It is a huge scale. It is this Labor government that has invested in the Gold Coast. We did not see anything happen in the previous government. Even though we hear a lot of talking down there, it is actually this government that is doing the walking to get the infrastructure and the jobs going.

The member asked about the second M1. We gazetted all three sections of this huge 43-kilometre corridor after it had been blocked by the previous government—and I have tabled that report from 2014—and we seen \$1½ billion in joint funding allocated as part of the stimulus projects last year. In record time, we are seeing massive amounts of work being done after it was blocked by the LNP when in government.

Members opposite can talk about the second M1 Coomera Connector all they like. When we look at QTRIP, there are big, chunky allocations growing over the next couple of years. That means jobs; that means progress. There would have been zero kilometres and zero jobs under the LNP, because they did not want it progressed. They did not want it in the city plan on the Gold Coast. They did not want it in the regional plan. This was well reported at the time. There were massive mistakes by the member for Broadwater, who was then the member for Mundingburra in North Queensland, and by the member for Chatsworth under the previous government.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, Minister, were you seeking leave to table a document?

**Mr BAILEY:** No. That is my answer, thank you.

**Ms PUGH:** With reference to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements and Transport and Main Roads' objective to deliver an integrated transport network that is accessible to everybody, including mums with prams like myself and, of course, people with a disability, can the minister update the committee on the Palaszczuk government's commitment to provide transport options for all Queenslanders?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for her question and I absolutely acknowledge the importance of mobility and accessibility for parents with prams, for people with disabilities and for senior citizens. They need access to transport. I am very pleased to say that that is exactly what this government is doing. Almost 20 per cent of Queenslanders have a disability. That is one in five people. That is something we need to remember when we plan for the future with transport infrastructure. People are also living longer. At 65 years of age, Australians can expect to live half of their remaining years with some level of disability, so we have to be thinking about senior citizens as well.

We are seeing a commitment of \$500 million towards train station upgrades at various locations including: Albion, Auchenflower, Banyo, Buranda, Cannon Hill, all the stations from Fairfield to Salisbury, Lindum, Morningside, South Bank, Wooloowin, Bundamba, East Ipswich, Burpengary and Dakabin. It is quite a list.

**CHAIR:** Yay!

**Mr BAILEY:** I acknowledge the cheering from the chair of the committee, who I know has been a big advocate for Dakabin in particular.

**CHAIR:** My Riverway Drive!

**Mr BAILEY:** These accessibility upgrades generally deliver new footbridges with lifts, so that people do not need to use the stairs, and platform-raising, making it easy to get straight into the carriage. You do not have that big step up for people. Other project features include: accessible toilets, hearing-aid loops, tactile floor and platform services, lighting upgrades, improved CCTV and wayfinding signage and, new bicycle enclosures. They also include work on the new rectified NGR trains that we have been fixing with Queensland workers in Maryborough. I am pleased to say that, because we work with John Boston school and Griffith University, they have been made best practice for people with disabilities—not just people with wheelchairs. When you use the cubicle in them and you cannot hear, there is actually a visual cue if there is a problem. These are audio tactile so that blind people can read the signs. All of the accessibility requirements have been put in there, because we worked collaboratively with the disability sector. It was really good. It is not just the stations; it is the trains as well. We are very pleased to do that work. It really should have been done in the first place when they were ordered.

There are major upgrades on the track at two of our busiest stations—South Bank and Auchenflower. South Bank is a key destination, of course, for that inner-city area and will be for the Olympics and the Paralympics. There is a \$24 million upgrade there for a full-length raised platform, providing easier and safe access for people. We will also be installing new lighting, CCTV and new platform seating to improve customer comfort. Construction will start later this year and is expected to be completed by early 2023. Recently, it was awesome to see a new pedestrian overbridge being installed with the help of a 700-tonne crane at Auchenflower station. Over the next six months, crews will install the stairs and lifts connecting the bridge to each platform. The bridge will create an accessible path through the station precinct and, of course, to the Wesley Hospital, which is well used by people.

Since 2015, accessibility upgrades have been completed at Nambour, Dinmore, Graceville in my electorate of Miller, Alderley, Newmarket, Strathpine, Morayfield and Boondall stations. I give a shout-out to all the workers working on the Yeronga station upgrade at the moment. There is a lot happening there and my constituents in Yeronga are very happy to see that upgrade as part of the Cross River Rail project.

As a government, we have launched a \$51 million program over the next four years for regional station upgrades as part of the 2021-22 state budget. Rockhampton, Maryborough West and Bundaberg will be the first stations in line to receive accessibility and customer experience improvements. I give a big shout-out to our new member for Bundaberg, our very effective member for Maryborough and, of course, our members for Rockhampton and Keppel, who have been strong advocates of these upgrades. They are doing a great job. As part of the Cross River Rail project, we are certainly getting a lot done.

In relation to the Queensland Accessible Transport Advisory Council, which we formed, we announced it as a new independent accessible transport advisory council to give strategic policy and technical accessibility advice. It is chaired by retired District Court judge Michael Forde. The council is now in place and advises the government on building better accessibility in transport. I thank all the members from all the different disability sectors who sit on that committee and give us their expertise. That is the sort of thing government needs to be ahead of before we design things, to make sure we are including everybody in the design. We have a chair, a TMR representative, a QR representative and seven independent members. Their first meeting was on 30 April this year and they are doing a terrific job. We never want to see the repetition of trains being ordered that are not disability compliant.

In closing on disability parking reforms, I was pleased to introduce changes to the parking scheme in the last term. For too long, people with vision loss were not offered the same protection offered to people with mobility impairment, despite their having significant mobility restrictions. Under that, they became eligible for disability parking permits for the first time. We also got a lot tougher on those people using disability parking spots when they are not entitled to them. It really infuriates me, to be quite frank. We doubled the fine, to \$533.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Well done to the previous member for Bundaberg. Well done.

**Mr BAILEY:** To be quite frank, it is good to see a lot of local governments working with us on that one as well. We want only people who are entitled to use disability parks to use them. They need them for their basic services, and we want to support them all the way.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. As the former chair of that committee, of which the member for Callide was a member, I am very familiar with that legislation, so thank you. We will now go to non-government questions.



**Mr WATTS:** My question is to the minister. With the announcement of the Paralympics and the Olympics, could the minister outline any expenditure that will be allocated to fast rail and passenger rail to Toowoomba, including any outcomes from the federal government money into the business case?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The successful bid, led by the Premier, to secure the Olympic and Paralympic Games is only a couple of weeks old, as you can appreciate. Now that the Premier has served her fortnight in quarantine, we no doubt will begin a process of working with other levels of government in terms of the Olympic and Paralympic infrastructure task. We have 11 years to deliver it, but we will need to collaborate very well to ensure that we have all the infrastructure in place. I am confident that we will, but it will be a large collaboration process. It is a fifty-fifty model with state and federal, but we would certainly like to see councils contributing as well. I think the honourable member asked specifically about the Toowoomba rail line?

**Mr WATTS:** Passenger rail and fast rail to Toowoomba as per the federal government's funding.

**Mr BAILEY:** Yes. I understand there is \$15 million already allocated by the federal government to look into passenger rail between Toowoomba and Brisbane. Under the inland rail bilateral agreement, both state and federal governments are partnering to deliver the Toowoomba to Brisbane passenger rail strategic business case to determine the need, timing and potential solutions for passenger rail requirements in the Toowoomba to Brisbane corridor. The delivery of inland rail between Gowrie and Calvert provides an opportunity for the introduction of improved passenger rail services between Toowoomba and Brisbane by sharing the new rail infrastructure for passenger services.

The Australian government has committed \$15 million to progress the planning for this project, with \$2½ million towards the initial strategic business case. TMR is working with the Australian government's infrastructure agency to coordinate and oversee this planning as part of its in-kind contribution toward the project. This work will inform government on whether to proceed to a detailed business case.

The project will consider the need for faster rail services. However, just to be clear, it is not a faster rail business case under the National Faster Rail Agency's faster rail agenda. Transport and Main Roads has commenced engagement with key stakeholders including local governments, Queensland Rail and the Australian Rail Track Corporation and engagement with local governments, which are obviously a critical part of these investigations into that. I recently met with the Mayor of Toowoomba, Paul Antonio, to talk about a range of these matters and we are certainly committed to working with the council up there.

**CHAIR:** Member for Toowoomba North, did you have a further question? If not, member for Gregory?

**Mr MILLAR:** I defer to Steve Minnikin, the member for Chatsworth.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, I am keen to hear your question, but I have to say that the committee has been remarking on your cars in the background. It is a lovely backdrop and we are all enjoying it.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** If only they were one-to-one scale. Mr Scales, I note the QTRIP forecast spend of \$4.666 billion for road maintenance over the four-year program. How much is forecast to be spent in the 2021-22 financial year?

**Mr Scales:** It is probably about a billion dollars or thereabouts. Overall in the forwards, as you say, it is \$4.66 billion. I round that up to \$4.67 billion, because I think it \$4.666 billion.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Correct.

**Mr Scales:** For year 1, it would be about a billion.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, last year QTRIP had a spend of \$4.4 billion—obviously \$1.1 billion a year. We know that the level of funding covers about 51 per cent of the maintenance need. Based on an average spend of \$1.166 billion, that means that this budget is only funding about 53.6 per cent of the need, so that means obviously more potholes, more damaged signs, dodgy bridges et cetera. What is the impact in relation to only having that amount of funding?

**Mr Scales:** I do not think we have any dodgy bridges. We look at—

**CHAIR:** I was going to suggest that there was a bit of an inference there.

**Mr Scales:** We look at our bridge structures quite carefully at least once a year, and bear in mind that a lot of our bridges were built a long time ago now. In terms of the asset maintenance ratio that you are talking about, we have taken a number of actions to make sure that we are spending the money wisely. I do not think we will underspend; it is just a number that you are quoting. If you think about what I said last year to the committee where I told the committee about the vehicle that we had that operates

at line speed with lasers on it to measure roughness and rutting on the road, we have now with the Australian Road Research Board commissioned a second vehicle that will start next year, and this one has a better laser on it. It also has ground-penetrating radar. The whole purpose of that is to make sure that we are keeping a close eye on the asset.

The minister also mentioned the fact that we have \$1.3 billion worth of stimulus, so there is \$185 million jointly funded with ROSI—that is, Roads of Strategic Importance—\$440 million under Unite and Recover, \$416 million for network safety and resilience and \$290 million for the road safety tranche 1. It is not just the money we are spending with the \$4.66 billion; there is other moneys as well.

In terms of what we are trying to do with the interventions that we are doing from a technical point of view, I regaled the committee last time about EME2, which is a French hard-wearing surface that takes 25 per cent less greenhouse gases to put down. We have foamed bitumen which, in the event of inundation, stays where it is and does not come away with water. We are also looking at using crumbed rubber. We are also looking at using glass, so there is a really clever way we are doing this. We are partnering with the Australian Road Research Board, ARRB, and the National Asset Centre of Excellence, which is here in Queensland. We are using technology. We are using the two iPAVE machines, which are the intelligent pavement machines that we have—the two trucks that will roam around our network. We are doing lots and lots and lots of inspections. One of the questions from the member for Traeger earlier referred to the councils and the road asset maintenance contracts that we have with them, so we are relying on councils as well to do a lot of our road maintenance. There is also the TIDS program, the \$70 million for the 17 regional roads and transport groups which I keep a very close eye on.

We are looking at a whole range of issues to make sure that the asset that we have—which is 33,367 kilometres, all the major structures and the major bridges—is maintained in the best possible way. I am really pleased that we have \$4.67 billion because each year, member for Chatsworth, we are winding it up. We have a whole range of things. You have intelligent pavement assessment, you have lots of inspections, you have eyes and ears through the 17 regional roads and transport groups, you have the \$1.3 billion worth of stimulus and then on top of that of course you have QTRIP, which is a massive investment.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, if we can just talk about that a bit further, because you make a good point. In an Auditor-General's report a few years ago, the *Integrated transport planning* report, it said that there was a billion dollar backlog specifically for bridge and culvert renewable, so we are talking bridges and culverts now. It also said—

There are significant structural issues across the network which have the potential to impact on road user safety and heavy vehicle accessibility.

Mr Scales, given the limited amount of funding provided in the budget for bridge and culvert rehabilitation specifically, can you advise the net change and the number of bridges and culverts that will have a reduced load limit due to structural or other issues identified by the department?

**Mr Scales:** That actual report goes back to 2017.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Correct.

**Mr Scales:** After that we had 178 operational and intervention bridges on the state controlled freight network, so 178. That number has now reduced to 162 due to strengthening, replacement or reassessment. A really good example of that is the Vines Creek Bridges—the only access to Mackay—where we originally had centre operation only of the two bridges and then we completely replaced the bridges. Of those 162 bridges, 27 require interventions such as operational restrictions, strengthening, rehabilitation or replacement. Another good example there is the Barron River Bridge, which has a 50.5 tonne limit but you have to go on the centre of the bridge and we are rehabilitating the bridge underneath. Of those 162, 135 bridges can continue to support existing operations.

My advice, member, is that operational bridges do not pose an immediate safety risk and are being managed and we will make sure that operational use of those bridges is not compromised. I cannot give you a number—I cannot break it out—but I can break out, as I said I would at the last committee meeting, what the backlog is in terms of a monetary value if you wish.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you, Mr Scales. Just going back to the Barron River Bridge, which you have raised, that has been, as you say, restricted to single-lane use one way only for many months. In fact, I have had a couple of on-site meetings up there. It has been reported that the current lane restrictions will be in place only until September of this year. Can you confirm that that is in fact the case?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the member for the supplementary. We have had the traffic restrictions in place for a while—I am saying at least October 2021, not September—while we continue our investigations. The bridge limit still remains at 50.5 tonnes, so we can still get vehicles across it. It is a bridge with a particular type of construction that we do not use anymore. It was about—and I am guessing now and I should not really do that—1972, I think, construction. The average delay on the bridge with single operation is less than two minutes and what we do in peak times is we put manual control in, so it is not just relying on a time signal. At this point I would like to thank all affected residents and motorists for their patience while we work it out.

The bridge is safe. It still has the load limit of 50.5 tonnes. It is operating in the centre of the bridge. We have traffic light control and manual control in the peak and we are spending \$2.1 million on planning to see if we can get a really solid solution for that.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Another quick question about bridges, if I may, through the chair, to Mr Scales. QTRIP obviously lists the major projects undertaken by the department. Some of the entries include the Hales Siding Road bridge rehabilitation for \$500,000, the South Townsville Road bridge rehabilitation for \$5 million and the Dan Lynch Bridge strengthening for \$800,000. Mr Scales, can you advise why a significantly larger project like the Captain Cook Bridge rehabilitation at \$26 million has not been included?

**Mr Scales:** I thank the honourable member for the question. On the Captain Cook Bridge we are replacing the bearings on that and we are doing very well. The bridge was built in 1972 and that work is underway. As you say, it is \$26 million. It may appear in another part of the budget. I cannot help you with that. It is underway. It is doing really well. On the approaches on the other side—I am pointing out the window for the people online—we have done all the joints adjacent to Queen's Wharf so we do not have to go back and do the maintenance in the future.

If you are travelling on the Captain Cook Bridge you will see the two temporary work platforms there. We have installed them to work underneath the bridge. About a year ago on 25 June I went under the bridge myself and had a look. What I am getting to is I think it is a really good project. It is replacing the bearings. The maintenance activities will continue until the end of 2021. You are absolutely right on the figure. Where the figure appears I do not know.

The other bridges that you have mentioned are the ones we have yet to get round to and rehabilitate. As you say, we have 178 operational bridges that needed some sort of intervention. That has reduced to 162, and 27, and you have included some of those, have got either operational restrictions, like Barron River Bridge strengthening, rehab or replacement. We are progressing in a really careful and considered manner, member, and we will get to them all eventually, I guess.

**CHAIR:** I am aware of the time, member for Chatsworth. Did you have another quick question on this line of questioning?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I do. Thank you very much for your professionalism as usual. I have a very simple question in relation to the Captain Cook Bridge: is it safe?

**Mr Scales:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** That was a very quick question. Thank you. I have a question to the minister regarding capital allocations to projects in the Moreton Bay region. Can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's plan is regarding roads and transport in the region I live in and whether you are aware of any other alternatives?

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you very much, Chair. I acknowledge your very keen interest in infrastructure upgrades, particularly road upgrades, in your local patch. I am very pleased to work with you and other Moreton Bay members to ensure that our infrastructure keeps pace with the population growth in that Moreton Bay region, which is very strong. We have our record investment over the next four years, \$27.5 billion. We will invest \$2.9 billion of that in the Moreton Bay region and on the Sunshine Coast, supporting more than 2,500 local jobs. Our investment includes our government's \$2.1 billion congestion-busting road plan for Moreton Bay commuters. The job-boosting plan is looking at a new arterial road, informally dubbed the Moreton Connector, to be built between Dohles Rocks Road at Murrumba Downs, which I know you are very familiar with, and Anzac Avenue at Mango Hill. It would also deliver upgrades to the Gateway Motorway, Gympie Road and the Bruce Highway, including new ramps at Dohles Rocks Road and a new bridge over the Pine River to increase capacity there.

This plan will mean Queenslanders can spend less time in traffic and more time with their family and their loved ones. When built the Moreton Connector will reduce travel times for locals in the region. It will take local traffic off the Bruce Highway making local journeys easier so people do not have to get

on and off the Bruce Highway to go somewhere local, and make the Bruce Highway less congested as a result. It will also allow Griffin residents easy access to North Lakes and bring hundreds of jobs to the local economy which will be appreciated.

The Gateway Motorway, Bruce Highway and Gympie Road collectively carry 310,000 vehicles a day. That is 100,000 more vehicles a day than on the busiest section of the M1, so it will have a big impact. It is clear a plan is needed there for new roads and major upgrades. We cannot simply add more cars to the Bruce Highway without adding alternative routes.

Under the LNP's disastrous plan, new ramps would be built by themselves at Dohles Rocks Road without any new routes or extra capacity. My department looked at the ramp-only idea and carried out traffic modelling to show what the impact would be. The modelling showed building the ramps without doing other works to take local traffic off the Bruce would make congestion worse as far back as the Deception Bay Road interchange in the morning peak and extend congestion as far back as Bracken Ridge and Linkfield Road in the afternoon peak. Under the LNP's plan for the morning peak, an additional 12 minutes would be added to travel time and in the afternoon peak even worse—17 additional minutes would be added to travel time, adding nearly half an hour to people's average commute.

I asked Transport and Main Roads to brief local LNP politicians who even when advised of this modelling did not seem to care. Simply building the ramps as the LNP had planned would be a disaster for every Bruce Highway motorist and every resident in the Moreton Bay region. That is why our comprehensive plan to build a new arterial road, a new bridge over the Pine River and upgrade the surrounding road network as well as the ramps is the only way forward.

We continue to work with the Moreton Bay council and the mayor and the federal government to progress our vision for the region and deliver the infrastructure. We are also delivering \$29 million to improve accessibility at Burpengary station. Works are well underway at Dakabin station as well to deliver an accessibility upgrade. These works also include a multistorey parking facility that will replace the existing Thompson Road car park. Detailed planning is also underway for the Narangba park-and-ride. Chair, you have been a very strong advocate for these and also the Petrie roundabout. There is a \$30 million commitment there. There is a new university going in. You have been ahead of the curve. We have that commitment flowing. That will be very much appreciated by your constituents and many of the other constituents in the seats around you. I look forward to working further with you and other Moreton Bay members, for instance, the members for Murrumba, Pine Rivers, Bancroft, Redcliffe, for better outcomes for constituents.

**CHAIR:** And Morayfield and Pumicestone as well.

**Mr BAILEY:** Indeed.

**CHAIR:** Can we move a little bit further north and outline the Palaszczuk government's record investment in roads and rail on the Sunshine Coast. Can you advise how that will support local business and jobs?

**Mr BAILEY:** Thanks so much for the question. The Sunshine Coast is a very important sector. It is the third largest city in Queensland. We are seeing massive population growth there, and why would that not be the case. It is a beautiful environment. We have to make sure the transport infrastructure keeps pace with that. It has been great to spend time up there with the new members for Nicklin and Caloundra who are doing a wonderful job representing their constituencies. I am in regular contact with them. Their passion for getting things done for their local community is exemplary. We are seeing a record QTRIP, and \$2.9 billion of that jointly funded road transport investment over four years is going to the Sunshine Coast.

More than 550,000 people are expected to be living on the Sunshine Coast in the next 20 years. Only this government is delivering the critical infrastructure needed for the future. We have secured, after doing the business case—we did not even have a business case completed or even started for the Mooloolah River Interchange when we were elected. We have completed that and we have now secured \$320 million in joint funding from the Palaszczuk Labor government and the Commonwealth for the Mooloolah River Interchange to transform major roads on the Sunshine Coast in that pivotal area. It will be worth 290 jobs. We have plans to duplicate a key 10-kilometre section of the Sunshine Motorway from the David Low Way interchange to north of Yandina Coolum Road. These additional lanes will improve safety and congestion and mean locals and businesses who rely on the motorway will spend less time stuck in traffic.

The Palaszczuk government also has a \$35 million investment in the new 11.6-kilometre Bells Creek Arterial between Caloundra Road and the Bruce Highway. I have been very happy to visit it on multiple occasions with the new member for Caloundra. It should open in late 2022. We accelerated this because of the growth and that has been incredibly popular and well received by people in the Caloundra electorate and elsewhere. It will take a lot of pressure off Caloundra Road too. There is over \$18 million in joint funding for a new intersection on Nicklin Way. We have started works on the six-laning project on the Bruce Highway between Steve Irwin Way and the Bribie Island turn off. Six-laning the Bruce Highway is something that everybody wants to see.

This is on top of an over \$900 million project between Caloundra Road and the Sunshine Motorway that is almost complete. Most of it has been opened progressively. It is a fantastic project for a local road network so local constituents do not have to get on and off a major motorway. Active transport is in there as well. It is an innovative design. It is fantastic. On top of the \$1 billion that is going into the Gympie bypass on the Bruce Highway, we also have a new interchange at the Deception Bay Road interchange. That is not to forget the Maroochydore Road and Mons Road interchange project, which is a very big one a bit north of there. That is not a small one either. There are a lot of jobs there and a lot of progress being made. Of course, we have committed over half a billion dollars in joint funding for the Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade, with 333 jobs. That is going to be incredibly welcomed as well.

That is in stark contrast to the plan by the LNP in the last election to cut funding on the Sunshine Coast and regional Queensland roads to pay for their very small version of the second M1, which was only six kilometres long and less than half the government's proposal. Those secret cuts would have seen money cut from the Beckmans Road interchange, Ridgewood Road at Caloundra and Six Mile Creek—\$18 million cut there. We would have seen a cut of \$18 million to the Steve Irwin Way and a \$19 million cut to the D'Aguilar Highway. I was surprised to see that coming from the LNP. That the member for Glass House was supporting a cut to the D'Aguilar Highway was very disappointing. They also tried to mislead with the Bruce Highway hoax. That was a \$33 billion plan that in the end had only \$50 million allocated to it.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order: relevance.

**CHAIR:** Actually it was my question and I did ask for alternative approaches. Minister, I will ask you once again to be less inflammatory. Member for Gregory, that was more of an interjection than a point of order. Minister, continue unless you have finished.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am simply covering all the major points on the Sunshine Coast. They are investments in jobs and infrastructure, not cuts which were proposed in the LNP costings in October last year. They are still trying to cut infrastructure on the Sunshine Coast. It was in their costings—revealed. We build, they cut.

**CHAIR:** I am happy to hear about the new road through Bells Creek to Caloundra. That will be amazing. Member for Mount Ommaney?

**Ms PUGH:** My question is on Cross River Rail. Minister, earlier you touched on the distance from the South Bank station into the city. I did that walk many times when I worked at Restaurant Two. Right outside the restaurant was a sign that said that the closest train station was a kilometre away so I know Cross River Rail will be very welcomed by many city businesses and residents. I refer to Budget Paper No. 3 and the updates provided about the congestion-busting Cross River Rail project. I would like the minister to update us on the tunnelling progress on that project.

**Mr BAILEY:** Member, you are right to identify this as being a transformational project. This has been the year of tunnelling with the massive tunnel-boring machines. They are 1,350 tonnes and 165 metres long. Think of one-and-a-half football fields and add a bit and that is the kind of scale that they are. I am very pleased to see that we have two of them working together, near each other. The technology and the precision is incredible. It does my head in, to be quite frank, how they can get it so precise. I am not an engineer, but the engineers do an incredible job with this sort of technology.

Of course, we named the two tunnel boring machines after two groundbreaking women, Else Shepherd and Merle Thornton. It is a bit of a tradition to name those sorts of digging machines. A couple of months ago we saw them pass through the Albert Street station box after going under the river and under the Botanical Gardens from Woollongabba. I am really pleased that I can announce today, to let the committee and the public know, that the Cross River Rail tunnelling project reached a major milestone last Friday when we saw tunnel boring machine Else break through into the Roma Street station box. That is just awesome to see. Of course, we will see Merle follow behind. She is a little behind Else, but they are both going very well.

**CHAIR:** Is it a race, Minister?

**Mr BAILEY:** They are going very well. I think there is a bigger race and that might be the vaccination rollout. The machines are doing their job and doing it really well. Workers had the chance to see it break through the rock into the massive cavern that one day, of course, will house the Roma Street underground train station. It happened during lockdown so only a limited number of people could be down there. It is a fantastic achievement for the Cross River Rail project. I acknowledge the hard work and the efforts of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority team, all the workers onsite and the contractors who do so much great work. I look forward to going down at some point myself. When I was there a few months ago the progress was already pretty epic. It will be even more so to see a big tunnel boring machine arrive, having burrowed its way through a lot of rock underneath the feet of Brisbane residents. I am also advised that tunnel boring machine Merle is not far behind and is expected to arrive at Roma Street within weeks.

As I said in my opening address, we have seen construction sites in the city grind to a halt due to the pandemic but Cross River Rail has continued on incredibly well. There are now more than 2,900 workers currently helping us deliver that major project. I know it has been a tough time for South-East Queensland during the lockdown but Cross River Rail crews have been working hard and doing well. Additional safety measures were put in place in terms of managing COVID, including segregated work teams with work zones to ensure work can continue.

When trains start running through the twin tunnels in 2025, more than 7,700 workers, including 450 trainees and apprentices, will be able to say that they have had a hand in building this transformational project that will redefine how people can move around the city. The twin tunnels stretch more than 2½ kilometres from Woolloongabba through to Roma Street. Of course, Roma Street will be really key as an Olympic venue. You will be able to get off at the busway or from either rail line and there you are, bang! You are right there on the Brisbane line and, of course, you can be on the northern busway as well.

Those are the major points. It is an historic achievement. I will keep people informed when the next TBM arrives. We look forward to Merle breaking through as well. This project is going very well.

**CHAIR:** Minister, as a committee we are looking forward to visiting when we can.

**Mr BAILEY:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** We will go to the member for Gregory.

**Mr MILLAR:** I defer to the member for Chatsworth.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I would like to ask some questions of Mr Easy from Queensland Rail. Last year at estimates in relation to signals passed at danger or SPADs you said—

We have seen a slight increase in the SPADs over the last two months, but I am also very pleased to report that in November that rate has dropped again.

According to information on the Queensland Rail website, the rate in October was 1.94 and in November 2020 the rate was 2.04. In fact, it did not go down, it went up. At the time of the hearing last year on 11 December, had you been provided with the November data that was subsequently published on the Queensland Rail website?

**Mr Easy:** Obviously that question and my answer were at a point in time. The data that is released on the Queensland Rail website is published after the end of each month. The figures are transparent. They are publicly published for all to see and at the time there was a reduction of the SPADs. The figures at the end of the month did result in an increase, so my answer was correct at the time.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** When you became aware the information that you provided to the committee was incorrect, because of the reasons you have just said, what steps did you take to correct the record, Mr Easy?

**Mr Easy:** I believe my answer was correct at the time I gave it.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Easy, in relation to recent SPAD data, are you confident that you are able to answer these questions or should they be referred to someone else? Are you happy to answer these questions?

**CHAIR:** Member, just be cautious. Is that seeking an opinion? Mr Easy, answer if you can.

**Mr Easy:** I am happy to take your questions.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** The May SPAD rate is 2.27 versus 1.75 for the same time as last year. This is the ninth month in a row that SPADs have been higher than last year's number. How is this feeding into rail safety, Mr Easy?

**Mr Easy:** Perhaps if I could just remind the committee that a SPAD is a signal passed at danger where a train enters a section of track without authority. We have come off a very low number of SPADs on the network and, in fact, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau report that was released on the incident at signal ME45 acknowledged that the rate of SPADs on the Queensland Rail network is in fact very low and that the number of signals passed per SPAD is 36,000 signals. While the number has increased from the period you talked about and it is on the back of some very low numbers of SPADs on our network, we still are comparable with industry and other operators around Australia. We have had acknowledgement from the regulator that the rates are indeed quite low. It is also a reflection that with the controls we have in place, ultimately the injection of new technology such as the European train control system which is being undertaken will have a significant impact on the elimination of SPADs where that investment occurs on the network. I think this is an acknowledgement of where we are at in terms of safety on our network. We have a very safe network, and we will continue to focus on a reduction of those signals passed at danger over time.

**CHAIR:** I would just like to say thanks for clarifying the acronym. I appreciate it.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Easy, in some circumstances, where trains do not stop at stations they are scheduled to stop at, it is referred to as skipped stations. In February of this year, there was a large spike in skipped stations. In May of this year, we are above 100 for the month again. Can you please advise the cause of this phenomena of skipped stations?

**Mr Easy:** The specific circumstances attached to those periods you are talking about, I am not sure I can answer that in detail, but what I can say is that there are a number of reasons that cause trains to skip past stations. A very good example of that is when we have a medical incident on the network. We do have unfortunately times where customers have a medical episode. Our attention there is again on the safety, care and the welfare of those customers. During those times we may decide to skip stations. That means that the customer can be detrained from the train. We can have the Ambulance Service attend them and take care of them. There are many, many reasons that lead to skipped stations on our network.

If I refer to the percentage of skipped services over the last financial year, it was 0.26 per cent, and if I compare that with the previous year, it is 0.23 per cent. What we are seeing is a very low number of skipped stations that occur on our network. The circumstances where it does occur are varied. As I said, medical incidents is one of those. We make those decisions very sparingly because when that does occur, there is a disruption to our customers, and we try to minimise that.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I appreciate that, Mr Easy, thank you. You have raised a very good point in relation to medical necessities which is absolutely acceptable and to be applauded. Can you just elaborate on what some of the other reasons might be for skipped stations in a bit more detail?

**Mr Easy:** As I said, medical emergency is one reason. There may be a delay on the network as a result of another train. As you can imagine, we have many customers being carried on our trains, albeit that during the COVID pandemic we have seen a significant reduction. But at times we make decisions to move the maximum number of customers to their destinations. There are varied reasons that can lead to that circumstance.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Chair, may I ask another couple of questions to Mr Easy, this time in relation to the Cross River Rail project, please?

**CHAIR:** Certainly.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Based on the existing infrastructure and enhancements plan as part of the Cross River Rail project, was the original promise of a train from Cleveland every 5 ½ minutes achievable?

**Mr Easy:** I cannot comment specifically on the promise you are referring to. Perhaps I could seek guidance from the chair as to the question to me.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, I was discussing something. Was it about timing of Cross River Rail? Sorry, I missed the question.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair, I think the question is a hypothetical.

**CHAIR:** Can I ask you to rephrase the question, member for Chatsworth, please?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** It was in relation to information that was published in government literature at the time. It was also in relation to a two-minute average during peak on the Gold Coast Beenleigh line. Mr Easy, during the development of the Cross River Rail business case, was Queensland Rail

consulted about the frequency commitments to the various passenger lines? Did Queensland Rail point out that it was not physically possible to deliver what was being promised, for example, on the Cleveland line?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: this is about the to 2021-22 budget. The honourable member is going back a long way here. It is clearly not related to the budgetary estimated measures here.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your point of order.

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Can I just deal with one point of order at a time, please, member for Toowoomba North?

**Mr WATTS:** This is relevant to that point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Minister, thank you for your point of order. I was just going to say to the member for Chatsworth can you tie it to this year's estimates that we are currently going through?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I take my lead of wanting to revisit history from the minister himself. He seems to have a bit of a penchant as a thespian of revisiting the past. I will move on.

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order from the member for Toowoomba North.

**Mr WATTS:** My point of order is quite specific. This year's budget is all about making sure the commitments that the government have made are met. This was a commitment the government made in writing to the people of Queensland and therefore if that is not achievable in this budget, the minister and Mr Easy should outline that.

**CHAIR:** Are we talking about this year's budget? I believe we were talking about the past there. Thank you, member for Toowoomba North, I believe the member for Chatsworth was asking a question. You are wasting his time.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Mr Easy, what is the current capacity of the inner city rail network in the morning peak? How many trains per hour can travel through the CBD currently?

**CHAIR:** I understand the question. There are several lines there. Mr Easy, I will give you latitude to answer that question.

**Mr Easy:** Obviously the capacity of the network varies across and depending whereabouts on the network you are talking about. I think the best way for me to answer the question in terms of Cross River Rail is to say that the service plan that ultimately will be developed for Cross River Rail will identify the timetable, the services, the frequency and the stopping patterns. That service plan will be developed prior to the commissioning of Cross River Rail and will be published and made available to customers. That is the best place that I would refer to in terms of what the service pattern will look like when that project is commissioned and opened.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, did that help illuminate your question?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** A further question of Mr Easy: that work has not yet been discussed at length with the Cross River Rail Authority. Is Queensland Rail actually talking with the Cross River Rail Authority about the end needs, as the end user, with the passengers in mind?

**CHAIR:** There were a few questions there, member for Chatsworth.

**Mr Easy:** Of course we talk very regularly with our colleagues at Cross River Rail Delivery Authority and with the Department of Transport and Main Roads. We work very closely, we talk regularly, we are very engaged and we are very involved in the successful delivery of that project.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** In relation to Cross River Rail, we hear the Premier say \$5 billion, the minister \$5.4 billion and plus, plus, plus, plus add another bit here, bit there, et cetera—whatever it is at, the reality is that it is a signature infrastructure project for the Palaszczuk Labor government; everyone at least acknowledges that. Mr Easy, again, given that this is a multibillion-dollar project, from a Queensland Rail perspective, in between now and 2025, how many trains per hour will be able to travel through the CBD once Cross River Rail opens? There must be at least some idea, surely?

**CHAIR:** Mr Easy, I understand Cross River Rail are not here to confer with, but if you have an answer, you can give whichever answer you choose.

**Mr Easy:** Yes, the delivery authority would be best placed to answer the details with respect to that. Clearly, the communication, the advice, is that that will enable 24 trains per hour on the network.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Just to be clear, that was 24?

**Mr Easy:** That is right.



**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Easy, the Cross River Rail request for project change 11 submission says—

Further design work has been carried out in relation to the final configuration of Clapham Yard, in response to the technical requirements of key stakeholders (Queensland Rail and the Department of Transport and Main Roads), to improve the operational efficiency of Clapham Yard.

Can you please advise what those technical requirements are, when they were provided to the CRRDA and why they were not provided to the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority prior to the awarding of a contract?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: this question seems to be more for the delivery authority rather than for Queensland Rail?

**CHAIR:** That is why I was saying to Mr Easy that if he can answer that question do so. We probably do have a partial answer. The director-general would also like to furnish an answer. Whether Mr Easy or the director-general—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Or Mr Newton.

**Mr Scales:** I partially answered this before on Clapham Yard. Part of the changes were to include another two stabling roads. There was also the increase in the level of the stabling roads to meet Queensland Rail's flood immunity. I think to answer the question directed to Mr Easy which went to the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority and then to the Coordinator-General is that those changes were built into the design to make it more flood resilient. I think I mentioned that in an earlier answer to Mr Crisafulli.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** That part you did, Mr Scales.

**Mr Scales:** I think that is what it is. It is the QR flood resilience that was built in. That went through the Coordinator-General and then came back as an approved change. Mr Easy would have been aware of the flood resilience because it is something that we try to build in on the network. For the benefit of the committee, if we are building any roads in Queensland we try to do a one-in-100-year design. We are building them for future flood resilience. It is no different on the rail. At Clapham Yard we decided to raise the tracks. I think that is where the member for Chatsworth may be going. I hope I have helped clarify that.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Easy, are you aware of any analysis completed by Queensland Rail and others about the impact of increased service frequency in relation to key open level crossings across the rail network—so the impact of open level crossings in relation to increased service frequency?

**Mr Easy:** Ultimately, that impact will be determined by the service plan. The service plan, as outlined in response to your previous question, is a matter that is under development and will be worked through with both the delivery authority and Transport and Main Roads, and that will be published prior to commissioning of the project. That is obviously over four years away, so there is some time to develop the service plan.

**CHAIR:** Member, did you want the director-general to add to that?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Yes, if he can. I would appreciate that.

**Mr Scales:** Thank you for the direction. To the member for Chatsworth's point on level crossings, we are looking at removing those at Beams Road, Carseldine; Boundary Road, Coopers Plains; and Lindum station. We have been very successful on Telegraph Road in taking the road over the rail.

These are complicated projects because they need all three levels of government acting in concert. If you take Beams Road, for example, the road is owned by BCC. The rail is in the control of Mr Easy. Because of the 25,000-volt AC overhead lines, the road has to go quite a distance to have safe passage. Those three individual crossings have support from all levels of government—from the local authority, from the state and also from our federal colleagues. If that helps, there is work on that.

Just to further amplify that point, the department has looked at 65 level crossings. We are looking at how we might ameliorate the effects of the barriers being down. Also, on the Kuraby to Beenleigh and Beerburum to Nambour lines, there are level crossings on those two lines. Once we have enhanced those two lines we will look at what we can do with those level crossings as well.

There is a plan. We have taken the three major ones first—Beams Road, Boundary Road and Lindum station. All three levels of government are acting in concert. That is just to amplify what Mr Easy was saying. The other point is that when Cross River Rail opens the plan will be available at that point in time.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Scales, in last year's QTRIP, there was a project listed called 'rail level crossing planning funding commitment', with \$2 million to be spent in 2021-22. What is the status of that as we sit here today?

**Mr Scales:** This is the 65 level crossings that we have assessed. The next stage of the program is to say which ones can be taken out easily—obviously low-hanging fruit first. That is in addition to those three major projects I have already mentioned and also in addition to the Kuraby to Beenleigh and Beerburum to Nambour lines.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Why has it been removed from this year's QTRIP as a line item?

**Mr Scales:** I think we are concentrating on those three major ones first—Beams Road, Boundary Road and Lindum. Because they are very complicated, we are concentrating on those first.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to government questions.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, we are seeing a lot more electric vehicles on the road—and I am very excited to be one of them. Can you outline any steps that the government is taking to reduce transport emissions? Are there any future plans to partner with industry to reduce emissions in the transport sector?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for her question and congratulate her on moving to a zero-emission vehicle. That is fantastic news and that is what we need to do. We have already been very committed in this space. I think people are very aware that I have made a lot of commentary backing the need to transition to electric vehicles and zero-emission vehicles in response to the impacts of climate change. The release of the IPPC report overnight where they have basically accelerated their projections—we are looking at a 1½-degree increase in global temperatures within the next decade, in nine years—shows even more the need to take climate change seriously and for governments to respond with effective policy to move into cleaner forms of energy.

As part of that, we certainly have a very strong record on that. We had the first electric vehicle super highway in Australia. It is still, I understand, the longest electric vehicle super highway in the world. We are the first state to have an electric vehicle strategy. We have already put in 31 charging stations, worth \$5.3 million, up and down the coast and out to Toowoomba.

We have added to that in this year's budget with another 18 sites—\$2.75 million—for stage 3 of the electric vehicle super highway. This will allow people with electric vehicles to go outback and charge up out there. I think that is really positive for outback tourism. As we come out of the pandemic and we get international tourism back, increasingly every year we will have more and more people from overseas wanting to drive only electric vehicles on their travels and they will want to see the outback. We are getting ahead of that before they arrive. Mount Isa, Emerald and Longreach are some of those locations that will benefit. We will have an electric vehicle super highway of almost 3,800 kilometres long. Two border crossing sites—Goondiwindi and Stanthorpe—will also join the electric vehicle revolution.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is partnering with Yurika to deliver the latest phase which will use 75-kilowatt Tritium fast chargers manufactured right here in Queensland, in Brisbane, in Murarrie. We were very happy to support Tritium with Advance Queensland grant funding early in our first term because we could see how effective they were, and they are now exporting to more than 30 countries. They are a great success story and a great partnership. We love working with them.

People have to have confidence they can charge up, and that is what expanding the network is about. As of 1 July this year we have 5,266 full battery electric vehicles and 1,441 plug-in hybrid EVs registered in Queensland. That includes cars, buses, motorbikes and scooters. It represents an 86 per cent increase in full battery EVs registered in the previous 12 months—which is heartening, but we want to see more—while over the same period plug-in hybrid registrations increased by 30 per cent. This is off a low base. Quite frankly, we need the federal government to take this issue seriously. We have to get the pricepoint of electric vehicles down so they are on par. Once we are able to do that, which is what most other developed countries have done, electric vehicles go out the door like hotcakes. But not here in Australia, because the Morrison government has refused to take on any leadership role in terms of transitioning the transport sector, which is really the next big sector to move into clean energy.

We are seeing big advances in the stationary sector with renewable energy, including solar and wind. We need the transport sector to boom. We have been doing what we can from a state point of view in terms of infrastructure and advocacy, but the best thing is a national approach. The failure to implement a national approach has seen different states taking on the leadership role in the absence of a Morrison government that is not interested in doing anything about climate change.

I note the recent moves by New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria to move towards road user charges for electric vehicles, although it was encouraging to see New South Wales recognise that road user charges can end up as a disincentive and they have pushed that off well into the future. I

believe that South Australia has also put some of their dates back. The last thing we want to do is send out the wrong signals that there will be barriers to people purchasing electric vehicles. We want them to accelerate, not decelerate, sales. The Palaszczuk state Labor government in Queensland has no plans to introduce a road user charge for electric vehicles. We want to see momentum move first, with electric vehicle sales inexorable and unstoppable before ever considering some kind of reform like that. Let's hope it is sooner than we expect, but without federal leadership it is difficult.

The transport sector contributes about 13 per cent to Queensland's total emissions and is the second-largest single emitter behind stationary energy, or fossil fuels, used in electricity generation. Actions to quickly and easily reduce transport emissions are needed and required with a shift towards clean energy vehicles. My department is leading in this regard—in partnership with the Department of Energy and Public Works—with a new Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy, building on work we have done over the last four years. From a recent online survey about the ZEV strategy we received 4,530 responses and more than 140 written submissions. There is a lot of interest in the community. The strategy is a collaborative whole-of-Queensland effort. We want to accelerate the transition of our vehicle fleet from petrol to electric, which of course then creates a second-hand electric vehicle car market that provides people who may not be able to afford a new car with a second-hand car to get into the market. That is what we want to see. Getting those government fleets happening and cars circulating into the economy is exactly what we need to see, and that is why we are doing it.

Just to close, electric buses are really important. The amount of time buses spend on the road compared to private motor vehicles is much, much more. The need for them to be zero emission is really important in terms of airshed and emissions. By 2030 every new urban bus that is added to the fleet across Queensland will have zero emissions. Moving towards a more sustainable fleet in Queensland will also assist in one of the key objectives for the Olympics and Paralympics. Sustainability is a key value of the Olympic movement, so they are supported. We want to decarbonise our transport sector.

There will be plenty of opportunities to supercharge our local manufacturing capabilities; for example, one of our local Gold Coast businesses at BusTech is already partnering with the Palaszczuk state government to build 10 new electric buses for Clarks Logan City Bus Service. In April we achieved the first fully electric bus route: the route 587 TransLink network in Yarrabilba. On the same day Transdev introduced its battery electric bus in the Redland Bay-Capalaba area. That bus is powered by energy generated from solar panels stored in Tesla batteries. I can report that it has driven more than 18,000 kilometres, proving very popular with both passengers and drivers. In 2022, next year, Sunbus will introduce five electric buses into their fleet on the Sunshine Coast and another five buses into Cairns. In Mackay we are partnering with Mackay Transit Coaches to trial two buses fuelled with bioethanol produced locally in Sarina. We are also in early discussions to trial Hydrogen Taskforce fuel cell buses in Queensland.

I think you can see that our commitment is very strong. I know that the member is very supportive of this. It is an area where the rest of the world is making great strides. Australia is lagging behind, just like we are lagging behind on the vaccine rollout, just like we are lagging behind on fit-for-purpose quarantine.

**Ms PUGH:** Can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's record investment in roads and transport projects, as outlined in Budget Paper No. 3, will mean for residents in Brisbane? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mr BAILEY:** We have a record QTRIP budget. It includes the Cross River Rail project, which will unlock the bottleneck at the core of the transport network. Let's be realistic here—this is something that has been left out of previous questions—there is a global pandemic that has ravaged the patronage of not just our public transport network but public transport networks across the whole country and across the world. Because people want to minimise their risk, understandably they are being very cautious about this. What we need to do is keep building the infrastructure of the future. People will come back, but they won't necessarily come back in the exact form as they were before the pandemic. It will look different and we will need to manage that, but to ignore the impacts of the pandemic in terms of future service levels is quite irresponsible and reckless.

When we plan for Cross River Rail service levels going forward, the fact is that we are down 30 per cent on our patronage and we do not know at what rate people will come back. We will be encouraging and we will have strategies for that, but Cross River Rail is four years away from opening. At this point we need to rebuild confidence in the public transport system. One thing we will not do is

cut the project, as the opposition promised to do many times, and we will not stop building trains here in Queensland. That will all continue because it is good policy. People will come back, and we have to provide for those people.

Not only are we building Cross River Rail but we are building more active transport, which has seen a real spurt in interest. People are taking it up as part of the pandemic. There are more bike lanes, more veloways and more bikeways not just individually, as we have been doing, but also as part of big road projects. It has been very important.

**Ms PUGH:** Which ones in particular?

**Mr BAILEY:** At the Sumner Road interchange we ensured that we grade-separated the cycleway and the interchange as part of the design. We are doing bikeways, for instance, along the Ipswich Motorway, the M1, the Gateway Arterial North and the Bruce Highway upgrade south of Cairns. Those sorts of things are absolutely necessary. Active transport is a fundamental part of our transport system. Construction will begin early in 2022 for the Centenary Motorway—which I know is something dear to your heart—at Jindalee to improve traffic flow and ease congestion in the Mount Ommaney electorate and beyond. The project does include active transport improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. I can say that I have cycled over the current bridge a number of times. It is pretty basic when it comes to active transport. It certainly does not meet current best practice standards. That will be rectified and there will be general traffic improvements as well. We have done the work to get the new Centenary Bridge project ready, and I thank the member for Mount Ommaney for her vehement advocacy on this. It is great to work with you on it. Community consultation will start in the coming months.

This is in addition to the Sumners Road interchange—or should I say the Len Waters overpass—which was delivered six months ahead of schedule by the Palaszczuk Labor government. That project was sadly cut by the previous government, but we got it done and it is now completed. The Ipswich Motorway has been upgraded and opened; it is going very well. We added a southern connection there and I think everyone is very, very happy with that. I know that the member was very supportive of that as well. I think I will round out my answer there.

**CHAIR:** I thank the minister for that. I would like to welcome the member for South Brisbane. I invite you to ask a question or two if you have some, which you do otherwise you would not be here.

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is for the director-general. In preparing for the South East Queensland City Deal and for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, what consideration has the government given to co-funding the green bridges that are proposed from West End to Toowong and West End to St Lucia by the Brisbane City Council?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: the City Deal comes under the Deputy Premier's portfolio, not under this portfolio.

**CHAIR:** Member for South Brisbane, I will ask if you can rephrase it to the department of transport.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Sure. What consideration has the government given to co-funding the green bridges proposed from West End to Toowong and West End to St Lucia?

**Mr Scales:** Those projects are Brisbane City Council and nothing to do with the department.

**Dr MacMAHON:** So there are no plans to co-fund those projects, as the Brisbane City Council have expressed that they will require state assistance for those projects to go ahead?

**Mr Scales:** As my minister pointed out, city deals are not under my control. I am sorry that I cannot really assist the member further than that.

**Dr MacMAHON:** To continue on, now that the 2032 Olympic Games have been locked in, what work has the government undertaken to progress the Gold CityGlider service proposed by the Brisbane City Council running from Hamilton to Woolloongabba?

**Mr Scales:** As far as the planning being undertaken for the bid, a lot of that is actually in the public domain and so are the corridors. I hope the committee is aware that there are three athletes villages proposed. Fortunately, we have got 85 per cent of the venues already available so the planning will continue apace now that we have been very successful in winning that bid. As to the Gold CityGlider, I have got no specific information on that which I can help the committee with today. As the planning unfolds, it will not be just CityGliders; it is also the investment work we are making in light rail, it is the investment on Cross River Rail, it is the investment moving forward to make sure we are ready for the games. I suppose one of the fortunate things is we are 11 years away so there is a long time to get ready. As to that specific project, I am not aware of any progress we have made in relation to the Olympics.

**Dr MacMAHON:** During one of the earlier estimates hearings in the Education, Employment and Training Committee, we heard that 188 improvement notices have been issued to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland in relation to the Cross River Rail sites. Do you have any information on what these 188 improvement notices relate to?

**CHAIR:** Member, I just point out that that is probably for the Cross River Rail authority. The director-general may be able to give an answer. If not, we can get the Cross River Rail authority back.

**Mr Scales:** I think the detail would be with my colleague Mr Newton. I cannot really guess. I have seen what has been around, but I think Mr Newton would have a more comprehensive answer.

**CHAIR:** We will attempt to get Mr Newton in here. While we do that, does the member for South Brisbane have any more questions for the minister or director-general? Mr Newton has arrived. Welcome back, Mr Newton. The member for South Brisbane has a quick question for you.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Would you like me to repeat the question?

**CHAIR:** I am mindful of the time, but yes.

**Dr MacMAHON:** During one of the earlier estimates hearings, we learnt that there were 188 improvement notices issued by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland at the Cross River Rail site. I am just wondering what these relate to.

**Mr Newton:** There have been a range of improvement notices issued by the regulator in relation to the project. In this calendar year, there have been 38 issued, of which 25 are improvement notices. The reference to the whole-of-life of project was there. Pleasingly, we have seen an improvement in the way in which the project has progressed with time. In this calendar year, 2021, we have seen 38 overall notices issued, and of those 25 were improvement notices.

In relation to the background to those notices and what they relate to, it really does vary and it depends on the nature of where the project is up to at the point in time. Early on, there was a lot of access/egress. For the benefit of the committee, it is when you come onto site and safe passage along the site. Then there are other things like scaffolding and plant and equipment. Those sorts of things are where improvement notices are issued. It is really a variety of things that they pick up as we go. I should point out that an improvement notice is essentially where there is a contravention to how things are being conducted on site as far as the regulator is concerned. It allows for an immediate remedy or rectification, so it is considered the lowest level of infringement.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Is any of that information publicly available?

**Mr Newton:** I am not sure. I think the regulator does publish it but that is really a question for how they publish that.

**CHAIR:** Workplace Health and Safety Queensland would—

**Mr Newton:** Yes, I would have to beg the committee's forgiveness there. I think that is a question for the regulator.

**CHAIR:** Do you have any further questions?

**Dr MacMAHON:** Yes. With regards to the Woolloongabba station site, we understand there are four dust-monitoring units that are measuring dust there. Which one of those is also measuring silica levels in particular? What are the silica levels coming out of those dust-monitoring units?

**Mr Newton:** In relation to the Woolloongabba site and with all other sites, there are dust-monitoring stations proximate to the site. There are stations to the north, the south, the east and the west of the site as well as ongoing monitoring that goes on onsite. Those monitoring stations are checked regularly. There is a project hygienist that goes onto site and does on-spot checking as well. It is really the combination of those that pick up the dust level on site. In recent times, there were some complaints within the site from one of the subcontractors. That was in June that there was a complaint. The regulator came onto site and the regulator responded with—

WHSQ received a dust related complaint on 22 June 2021, we investigated the complaint including having one of our hygienists visit the site who undertook specific enquiries around the controls and readings.

There was no non compliances identified in relation to this particular matter.

There was a further complaint on 27 July. Workplace Health and Safety went out onto site and again did not identify any issues that concerned them in relation to the dust on site. In fact I think at a previous estimates hearing there was a reference that some of the perceived dust may well have been actual spray that is being used as suppressant on the conveyor belt to keep the dust levels down. While it looks like a mist, it may not actually be dust; it is actually water spray.

**Dr MacMAHON:** To confirm that—

**CHAIR:** Sadly, we are out of time. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed estimates for the portfolio of Minister for Transport and Main Roads has expired. Minister, on behalf of the committee, I thank you, the directors-general and all of the officials for your attendance. Minister, would you like to give a quick thanks, not a speech?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank everybody on the committee, particularly the parliamentary committee staff. It is a very intense time of year so thank you to everybody for all of their work. I also thank all of the people who have appeared, as well as all of those who have been ready to appear but have not had to appear. There is always an enormous amount of work that goes into the estimates process every year, and I want to thank everybody for such dedication and commitment. I also say a special thanks to my own ministerial staff, including my chief of staff and all of my staff who have been working long and hard through a delayed process. I thank them for all of their hard work and wish everybody the best. That is another estimates done.

**CHAIR:** I hope next time we can be back to some sense of normality. The committee will now take a break. The hearing will resume at 2 pm for the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.**

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

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

Ms M Hallam, Chief of Staff

**Department of Energy and Public Works**


Mr J Purtill, Director-General

Ms S Jolly, Acting Deputy Director-General, Energy Division

**Queensland Building and Construction Commission**

Mr B Bassett, Commissioner

---

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement until 5.15 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the minister's portfolio as follows: energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2 pm to 3.30 pm, and public works and procurement from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm.

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

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. Certain staff who are assisting witnesses here today have been permitted to use their mobile phones for this purpose. I do ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode.

In line with the COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline issued by the Chief Health Officer, I remind everyone to maintain social distancing while in this chamber. Face masks are to be worn at all times and removed only to speak during the proceedings. The COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline is available from the secretariat. Some members and witnesses will be participating via videoconference today.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of energy, renewables and hydrogen, and public works and procurement 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 de BRENNI:** Thank you very much, Chair, members of the committee and parliamentary staff. It has been eight months since we last gathered in parliament for estimates. While the world continues to grapple with the global health pandemic, the Palaszczuk government's focus remains on delivering Queensland's economic recovery plan. It is our plan to put Queenslanders first, our plan to create Queensland jobs and our plan to deliver prosperity for generations of Queenslanders to come. Empowering that plan is Queensland's cheaper, cleaner energy; our robust construction industry; and a sophisticated approach to the investment of taxpayer funds.

I would like to outline the 2020-21 budget reaffirmations of our commitment to Queensland's continuing role as a renewable energy superpower: \$22 million to progress Borumba pumped hydro-electricity; \$144.9 million for CleanCo's Karara Wind Farm; \$40 million to unlock the northern renewable energy zone and its cornerstone project, the Kaban wind farm; \$39 million for grid connected batteries in Townsville, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Toowoomba; and a \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund. In addition to that, our government will invest a record \$2.24 billion in job-creating capital works. This includes maintenance upgrades of our state's publicly owned generation, transmission and distribution assets. It is these assets that will bring cleaner, cheaper energy into homes and businesses across the state.

We know it is more than the Queensland sun and wind that is in demand. In decades to come the world will be looking for at least 500 million tonnes of hydrogen each year. Here in Queensland the heavy transport sector will be supported to decarbonise with a new emissions-free fuel made by Queenslanders in the form of renewable Queensland hydrogen. We will make sure Queenslanders get decent, secure jobs supplying that renewable hydrogen. That is why we are investing \$20 million to deliver the Hydrogen Training Centre of Excellence in Beenleigh as well as the Pinkenba Renewable Energy Training Facility, delivering a pipeline of skilled Queenslanders ready to build and operate the energy infrastructure that a growing industrial state needs. Under the Palaszczuk government, delivering new energy infrastructure is exactly what we are doing.

Today I can announce that Queensland's publicly owned generator CleanCo will progress plans to design a future energy and hydrogen precinct at Swanbank. We are putting \$1.5 million on the table to develop a concept level design exploring options for hydrogen production, onsite solar farm, modification of the existing gas power station to support blending of hydrogen and the possibility of hydrogen refuelling facilities. We know there is a lot of community interest in the future use of Swanbank, and our government is committed to working with stakeholders and industry to support the economic development of the region. A precinct like this would bring more jobs and more industries through cleaner, cheaper energy. In Queensland we are using our state owned energy assets to achieve our decarbonisation targets. That sends a clear message to our neighbours and trading partners that Queensland has the skills, the technology and the innovation and we are using it to power domestic demand and our global competitiveness in renewable energy.

From day one of the pandemic we have worked together with industry and unions to keep Queensland's \$45 billion building and construction industry open. With 240,000 Queensland workers relying on the industry, we simply cannot afford to take any chances because we have seen what the alternative is. The Sydney construction lockdown is costing New South Wales at least \$1 billion a week. We do not want to see Queenslanders have to down tools and construction sites close.

However, Queensland tradies are up against more than just COVID-19. The Morrison government's ill-considered and inadequate COVID stimulus package has created a profitless boom for many builders, an overcooked market and soaring prices for homeowners and renters. We are in lockstep with the industry peak bodies in supporting them through these problems caused by the Morrison government—a government that has failed on vaccines and quarantine and whose stimulus package misses every key legacy opportunity one could think of. We will continue to step in where the LNP has stepped out. We will support Queensland tradies, including the free dispute resolution process for the residential sector for homeowners and builders, for as long as necessary. We will not stop there.

Finally, we want Queenslanders to build with confidence and peace of mind, knowing that there are protections in place should things go wrong. Since 1977 the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme has provided that protection. Today I can announce the Palaszczuk government will work with industry and homeowners to undertake a public review of the Home Warranty Scheme. It is important to make sure the scheme remains contemporary and responsive to new and emerging types of homes and buildings. That is what we want to hear from Queenslanders: about their experiences and what changes we could make. Today we have released an online survey on the Home Warranty Scheme and we will follow that up with a detailed consultation paper. A series of roadshows and online consultation sessions will follow to ensure everyone gets to have their say.

A home is often one of the largest investments Queenslanders will make and it is imperative that the scheme protects these investments and gives Queenslanders the confidence to build. Equally important is ensuring a level playing field for Queensland tradies.

Through you, Chair, I would be happy to take the committee's questions on these key issues and any other matters relevant to the appropriation bills.

**CHAIR:** The committee will commence the examination of the estimates for the energy, renewables and hydrogen portfolio areas. I call the member for Gregory.



**Mr MILLAR:** I defer to the member for Condamine and the shadow minister.

**Mr WEIR:** In relation to the renewables and hydrogen fund, can the minister advise what percentage of Queensland's electricity will be generated from renewables in 2022, 2024, 2026, 2028 and 2030?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for Condamine for the question. Perhaps the best way to answer that question is to work from the conclusion of the decade. We have announced that, by 2030, 50 per cent of electricity generation will be from renewable resources in Queensland. In terms of the pathway to get there, it is not a completely linear pathway and the investment and construction phases of various projects can be described as 'lumpy'. The trajectory will move but it will continue to move in an upward direction until we achieve the target of 50 per cent by 2030. I point out for the member for Condamine and the committee members that we have already secured \$9.9 billion of investment in large-scale renewable energy in Queensland since 2015. That has supported 7,000 jobs and represents a tripling of the large-scale renewable energy generation. Importantly, I am sure the members for Condamine, Toowoomba and other regional areas of Queensland would be pleased to hear that the vast majority of those construction jobs are in the regions.

As I mentioned, we have ensured that we will deliver 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. We currently have 32 large-scale solar farms and three wind farms operational. In total, 44 large-scale renewable energy projects have commenced operations, become financially committed or are under construction. This year, 2021—if you want a baseline, member for Condamine—Queensland supplied—

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair: the question was quite specific about the amount of hydrogen being generated, and that does not seem to be in the answer.

**Ms PUGH:** Point of order, Chair: that was not the question I heard.

**CHAIR:** There were certain dates and timelines about renewable energy. It was not about hydrogen. There is no point of order, member for Toowoomba North.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Perhaps if I can refer the committee to their question asked on 9 July specifically in relation to this matter to which we responded. I am happy to quote from the answer. I think this goes to the heart of the member for Condamine's inquiry. It states—

The SDS Target/Estimate of 22 per cent for 2021-22 is ... based on the forecast supply of electricity from renewable energy sources and the electricity consumed in Queensland.

It went on to say—

Renewable generation forecasts include estimates of rooftop solar installations and the commissioning schedules of previously committed large-scale renewable energy projects. The timing of project commissioning is uncertain ...

There are a number of variables that go along with that in terms of approvals processes, the securing of supplies and equipment not only from manufacturers that originate here in Queensland and Australia but also from some overseas components. That makes the timing of project commissioning somewhat uncertain. The level of renewable generation is also subject to variance due to network constraints and sometimes price events curtailing actual production volumes.

What is absolutely clear is that we will achieve our target. The member referred to the historic investment that the Palaszczuk government announced, which was the Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund—a \$2 billion fund to support the publicly owned generators in Queensland to invest in renewable energy to ensure that we deliver on the target by 2030 and ensure that we continue to see public ownership of the electricity network in Queensland which has stood us in good stead to date.

**Mr WEIR:** Given that the future looks 'uncertain' and 'lumpy', how was the figure of a \$1.5 billion fund arrived at?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for the question. The member would be aware of the pre-existing \$500 million commitment. This comes off the back of a renewable energy investment blackout when the member for Condamine's party was in power in Queensland. There were no new large-scale renewable energy projects delivered during that period. That put Queensland somewhat behind for three years. We would be a long way ahead of where we are today if there had been any appetite from the Liberal National Party in Queensland around supporting renewable energy.

I can assure the member for Condamine that the \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund—and I thank the member for Condamine for his interest in this, because I know that in his region there are exceptionally good solar and wind resources that are being developed—

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair: standing order 118 on relevance. The question was: how was the figure of \$1.5 billion derived?

**CHAIR:** I believe the minister is getting to that.

**Mr MILLAR:** Can we get to that?

**CHAIR:** Yes. I just said that I believe the minister is getting to that.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you very much, Chair. I will continue to help the member for Condamine understand how the renewable energy and hydrogen fund works. It is designed to ensure that the publicly owned generators can invest in commercial renewable projects. It is also designed as a very strong signal—

**Mr WEIR:** On a point of order, would the minister be able to advise if there are any KPIs around that \$1.5 billion and what they would be?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Absolutely. The KPIs are the achievement of the Queensland renewable energy target and our emissions reduction targets. They are a pretty clear and definitive key performance indicator for all of these funds. The purpose of identifying \$2 billion as the amount is that that is an adequate amount to continue to see an investment trajectory by the publicly owned generators here in Queensland but also to signal to the renewable energy investment community that Queensland is serious about reaching our renewable energy targets. Queensland, unlike the nation, has set an emissions reduction target as well. One of the things that would significantly benefit further job-creating investment in Queensland would be the identification of an emissions reduction target by the Australian government. The \$2 billion fund, coupled with our investment in the renewable energy zones—government-led projects will deliver continued investment in our renewable energy zones—will help us achieve the renewable energy target and will deliver on our emissions reduction target as well.

**Mr WEIR:** How often will GOCs accessing this fund be audited by the department to ensure that the funds are being used with whatever terms are laid out for securing that funding?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I am hopeful that the member for Condamine is not alleging any sort of malfeasance or misappropriation of funds by any statutory authorities. To even suggest that for some reason the government owned corporations—which are led by independent boards, are heavily regulated by the Australian Energy Regulator, are subject to the scrutiny of this process and are subject to the oversight of the Queensland parliament, my office and a range of accounting and professional standards—might not be investing those funds in accordance with the terms and conditions is completely outrageous.

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Mr Chair: there was no imputation. It was a simple question: how often will they be audited? Government departments are all audited.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your point of order.

**Mr WATTS:** I do not understand how any imputations were in that question at all.

**CHAIR:** Member for Toowoomba North, the minister is answering the question. You might not like the answer, but you can take a question several ways. You obviously heard the question differently, as you did earlier when we were talking—

**Mr WATTS:** The minister has implied an imputation. There was no imputation in that question at all.

**CHAIR:** Member for Toowoomba North, I am speaking at the moment. Minister, had you completed your answer?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, I think it is worth expanding on this, because the imputation in the questions being put by members of the opposition is that Queensland's publicly owned generators are somehow unaccountable.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I think I am entitled to defend those government owned corporations.

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order, but I think I know where the point of order is going. Minister, I think the member for Condamine, or one of the members, said that they did not intend an imputation, so we will carry on with the questions if you have finished that answer.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Well, Chair, I think I should address the question.

**Mr WATTS:** We would like that.

**CHAIR:** Members, you are wasting your own time by interjecting constantly.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I am very happy to address the question, because those opposite should know that the highest standards of accountability and transparency are established in the National Electricity Market and the same goes for other Queensland owned corporations. In fact, I and my colleague the shareholding minister established very specific mandates for the government owned corporations which they are required to report against. All of the government owned corporations report to us on a quarterly basis. They are professionally audited and they provide annual reports, just as every other statutory authority does. It would be fair to say that the framework for ensuring the accountability of funds—be they taxpayer funds, private citizens' funds or private investors' funds—in the electricity market is probably second to none of any sector anywhere in this country.

**Mr WEIR:** Continuing on with the accountability of public funds, which was my previous question, Minister: what is the expected rate of return in relation to the allocation of these funds?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member—

**CHAIR:** That is seeking an opinion, but the minister can answer.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The expected rates of return, as I am sure the member for Condamine would understand, would depend upon the prices being secured in the market. We know that, depending on the time of day, weather conditions and the behaviour of consumers, the demand and supply of electricity changes on a frequent basis. In fact, at the moment settlement is achieved in the market on a five-minute basis. It is difficult to determine. As the chair has rightly pointed out, they would be hypothetical, but we have stipulated that the investment proposals must demonstrate commercial value. The fund will consider investment proposals that support renewable energy—whether that is solar, wind, pumped hydro-electricity storage or hydrogen—but they must be investment proposals that demonstrate commercial value, and that investment must create new and ongoing employment opportunities in Queensland, consistent with the government's Buy Queensland procurement policy. I can reassure the member for Condamine and the rest of the committee that the returns will vary depending on the nature of investments brought forward by government owned corporations for consideration through the fund, but they must demonstrate real commercial value.

**Mr WEIR:** What has been assessed as the reduction in power prices for Queensland consumers as a result of this fund?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for Condamine for the question. I will take the opportunity to remind those opposite that under the policies of the LNP power prices escalated by 43 per cent in Queensland. I cannot think of a worse method to dampen investment and job creation than to impose upon consumers and businesses the sort of electricity price increases that those in the LNP delivered.

Our record speaks for itself. In the last four years, power prices in North Queensland decreased by 17 per cent. In 2020 in Queensland, the average calendar year spot prices were the lowest in the National Electricity Market. The average prices per kilowatt in Queensland on 1 May continue to be amongst the lowest anywhere in the nation. They are forecast based on our investment and trajectory of growing levels of renewable energy generation here in Queensland. They are forecast by the Australian Energy Market Commission to reduce by 14.2 per cent over the period from 2020 to 2023. I think that is a fairly strong indicator of where electricity prices are going, that they are trending downwards. It is Queensland's growing diversity, our investment in solar, wind and pumped hydro-electricity and the public ownership of our generators, our transmission and our distribution network that is delivering those reductions in prices, which is good for jobs here in Queensland, good for investment and good for business.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We will now go to government questions.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, it is great to hear that hydrogen is going to play such an important role in decarbonising the transport industry and support local manufacturing here in Queensland. I was particularly excited to hear about some activity in Swanbank. Your assistant minister and I share that suburb. Will you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is working on a domestic hydrogen market for transport in Queensland?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for Ipswich for that important question. It is a great honour to be present at this committee hearing today as, in fact, the world's first Minister for Hydrogen. I think it is fair to say that in Queensland we have a terrific combination of abundant renewable energy and ownership of our energy assets that really does put us in the box seat to develop a world-leading hydrogen industry.

Much has been said about the potential to export renewable hydrogen around the world. We are committed to developing this job-creating sector. Just as important is the role that hydrogen can play in decarbonising our transport and other emissions-intensive industries here in Queensland. As Minister

for Hydrogen, I want to see our domestic market develop to support more and more decent and secure jobs for Queenslanders. I think that decarbonising our transport sector will go a long way towards achieving our emissions reduction targets. I think most Queenslanders prefer that our buses, trains, ferries and trucks are powered by Queensland energy. Hydrogen will play a critical role in achieving that, and it is something that industry is getting behind.

I recently had the opportunity and met with two businesses in the transport sector. I met with Ampol and a smaller business, Emerald Coaches. Both represent important parts of the industry and both have announced plans to decarbonise and move to hydrogen production. The Palaszczuk government is firmly focused on supporting these businesses and others to achieve their hydrogen ambitions. In doing so, we want to ensure that our publicly owned businesses are front and centre. That is why today I can announce that our newest government owned generator is taking that step.

Publicly owned CleanCo will be investing an initial \$1.5 million towards the development of the future energy and hydrogen precinct at the Swanbank Power Station. This project is designed to explore options for hydrogen production facilities, renewable energy developments and the potential to support hydrogen-gas blending and refuelling. If anyone has visited Swanbank before—as I have had the opportunity to do; I am sure the member for Ipswich has been there many times—they will understand that its location and terrific connectivity to industry means it sits at an incredibly unique nexus of potential resource, water and transport corridors. A precinct like this will demonstrate that in Queensland we are using our state owned energy assets to enable energy transformation and achieve our decarbonisation targets. It also provides an opportunity to ensure long-term job growth and security for the region and support more economic development. I know that this is something the assistant minister is very excited about and that he will play an important role in helping to deliver.

CleanCo will be engaging with the local community and industries so that the value of Swanbank is shared right across the community—I think that is important—and of course this would not have been possible if Queenslanders did not own their assets. We know that if the LNP had their way they would have sold off Swanbank after closing it down. Whilst we see a Liberal National Party in Australia remain beholden to fossil fuels of the past and obsessed with outrageously expensive nuclear, in stark contrast the Palaszczuk government will act and for this government the opportunity that hydrogen presents is not a pipedream; it is a very real chance to transform industry, a very real chance to create thousands of jobs and a very real pathway to decarbonise Queensland.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, at the last estimates hearing in December you announced the large interest the government has received for its renewable energy zones. Are you able to provide the committee with an update of the rollout of the REZs?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you for the question, member for Mount Ommaney, and this may also assist the member for Condamine in his queries about the pathway to achieving the renewable energy target and understanding how we will get there. In December, as the member referred to, I outlined the very strong interest the Palaszczuk government received for our renewable energy zones. In fact, we received expressions of interest from 192 projects representing over 60 gigawatts of energy generation. That is built off the back of a strong record of kick-starting the renewables industry in Queensland—as I mentioned earlier, 44 projects worth \$9.9 billion of investment secured for Queensland. Once all projects in construction or financially committed are completed, we will have more than 9,200 megawatts of renewable energy capacity here in Queensland. Let us remember that our current entire generation in Queensland stands at just under 20,000 megawatts.

We are taking it to the next step with the rollout of our northern, central and southern renewable energy zones. The Premier announced the first stage of the Northern Queensland renewable energy zone back in May with the announcement of the Kaban green power hub project, which is a 157-megawatt wind farm located south-west of Cairns. The Palaszczuk government came to the table with the \$40 million in network upgrades to secure the Kaban project and the jobs that it will bring after the Morrison government historically vetoed the project. In fact, I think it is notable that the first time the Commonwealth used its veto powers under the NAIF was to veto a renewable energy project. Importantly, the Kaban project will also be part of our newest generator's portfolio.

Today I can update the committee that CleanCo has finalised its agreement with Neoen and will now purchase 100 per cent of the renewable energy generated by the Kaban project. Under this new agreement, CleanCo will control the bidding and dispatch of the wind farm into the grid when generation commences. This is the first time that a Queensland government owned corporation has negotiated dispatch control as part of an offtake and it demonstrates the innovative ways our publicly owned businesses are responding to what are rapidly changing market dynamics. This is a real win for

Queenslanders. It means the full 157 megawatts of energy generated by that wind farm will be used as part of CleanCo's low-emissions generating portfolio to place continued downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices.

I wanted to inform the committee that engagement with industry and local communities will continue throughout 2021 on approaches to community benefits and the model for delivering our renewable energy zones, including through engagement with the Ministerial Energy Council. I am also pleased to inform the committee today that I am launching a consultation paper on the local benefits of renewable energy zones for community feedback. The survey is online and it will be open until 30 September this year. It is about ensuring that the Queensland renewable energy zones are developed in a way that maximises community benefits and in a way that maximises economic outcomes for regional communities. This will be the first time in Australia's history that communities have been able to have their say on how renewable projects and their energy infrastructure within a renewable energy zone are developed in a way that benefits them, their families and their communities.

Recently a framework for the development of renewable energy zones was completed by state, territory and Commonwealth ministers as recommended by the Energy Security Board and the consultation paper that I am launching today is consistent with that framework. The paper outlines the proposed principles for engagement for sharing benefits with communities in delivering local jobs and it is also about delivering local procurement in the delivery of those projects in renewable energy zones, and I think that is particularly exciting for businesses in regional Queensland. The process will seek to understand what local communities, small business, local manufacturers and the renewables and hydrogen project developers view as critical in the development of the zones and how to deliver lasting, meaningful benefits for communities.

We want to ensure that community views and genuine local benefits are really front and centre and that they are key to framing how we develop the renewable energy zones. This is one of the first of three stages in the development of our zones. For members' interest, a technical paper will also be launched later in the year for the next two stages for feedback from industry and other energy stakeholders on the framework for the renewable energy zones in their design and then finally in how you get access to them. It is all about delivering on our commitment to creating jobs in new and existing industries while also supporting those industries to decarbonise, and to do that we are going to need that cheap and clean energy delivered through our renewable energy zones. It is estimated that the Queensland economy will require around three times the amount of energy by around 2030—in the next decade or so—to ensure that we can decarbonise existing industries and continue to grow our economy. So we need to triple the amount of energy generated in Queensland in coming decades and renewable energy zones are our pathway to delivering that increased generation, and of course the job opportunities for Queenslanders will be a priority.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, as you would be aware, energy storage is going to play an important and critical role in our future energy system as we grow the amount of renewables. Can you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting and investing in storage for the network?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Our government's commitment to renewable energy, as I mentioned earlier, has seen the level of electricity provided by renewable resources triple from seven per cent in 2016 to over 20 per cent today. As the government increases the level of renewable energy, it will need investment in energy storage as part of a diverse future energy system, so we are supporting and we are investing in projects that will grow the storage capacity of our network. The centrepiece of that storage investment is a commitment of \$22 million for a detailed design and cost analysis for a one-gigawatt, 24-hour pumped hydro facility at Borumba Dam.

As members know, pumped hydro can provide dispatchable, reliable generation that complements renewables and will play an important role as we progress to the renewable energy target of 50 per cent by 2030. A pumped hydro facility at Borumba Dam would be a multibillion-dollar construction project that has the potential to leverage billions more in clean energy investment and support thousands of jobs, and I am pleased to announce that today we reach another milestone in respect of the Borumba Dam project. Today we have released a call for tender for technical and engineering advisers to help the detailed design and cost analysis that provide important advice to government about the project.

This is nation-building infrastructure and I welcome Queensland companies to visit the Powerlink website to register their interest. The pumped hydro systems will use reservoirs to store bulk energy over several days, weeks or even seasonally and the qualities of pumped hydro make it a very ideal

technology to harness the benefits of Queensland's wind and solar. So by switching on during the day, as members, I am sure, would know, pumped hydro can soak up customers' excess rooftop solar—a topical issue currently—and redistribute it back into the grid when energy demand is high.

Queensland's government owned corporations are also investing in some large-scale battery solutions as well which will provide additional storage. Opportunities like this will be critical to ensure that small-scale renewables continue to provide cheaper, cleaner electricity to Queensland customers while also benefiting our system as a whole. In that respect, Energy Queensland is focused on delivering network connected batteries, having installed an eight-megawatt-hour battery at Bohle Plains in Townsville, and is expanding its capacity, commencing a trial of five network connected batteries in Hervey Bay, in Bundaberg, in Townsville, in Yeppoon and of course in Toowoomba. These batteries will collectively store up to 40 megawatt hours of rooftop solar energy, helping to balance our daytime supply with our evening peak demand.

Powerlink is also working closely with Vena Energy to support the Wandoan South battery energy storage system project scheduled to commence commercial operation later this year. This \$120 million 100-megawatt project will be the largest battery connected to Queensland's transmission network.

Finally, Powerlink is also investigating the broader application and benefits of large-scale battery storage systems within its network and is currently undertaking an expression of interest process to identify opportunities. Just before I conclude, I also want to mention a couple of others: Stanwell is also completing front-end engineering design for a 150-megawatt battery to be located at Tarong Power Station providing 300 megawatt hours of storage: up to two hours backup. They are using Tarong Power Station as a potential site for that battery storage. That enables us to capitalise on the existing land, capitalise on the existing knowhow and skills of that workforce and, of course, the connection infrastructure in the region. Those investments in storage by our government and by our government owned corporations will see us achieve the 50 per cent target and take us well past that and, of course, it demonstrates something that I think is critically important in this space nationally and internationally, which is clear leadership for the delivery of renewable energy, emissions reduction and our plan to create jobs for Queenslanders.

**Mr MILLAR:** I refer to the third dot point on page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements that refers to the community cabinet meeting in Longreach in May this year. Minister, one of the issues discussed with ministers, directors-general and advisers during the community cabinet was funding for the Barcaldine renewable energy zone being developed through a joint venture. With the announcement of the industry partnership program in the state budget, what progress is the government making on supporting the next stage of this project?

**CHAIR:** I am just looking at page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements. I cannot see it there. It is to do with the budget though.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I was busy looking at point 3 which is about regional and community cabinet meetings. If the member could restate the question.

**CHAIR:** I was looking for the point of reference as well.

**Mr MILLAR:** I refer to the community cabinet meeting in Longreach in May this year. One of the issues discussed with ministers, directors-general and advisers during that cabinet meeting was funding for the Barcaldine renewable energy zone being developed through a joint venture. With the announcement of the industry partnership program in the state budget, what progress is the government making on supporting the next stage of this project?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for Gregory for the question. It was terrific to be in Longreach and Barcaldine to visit that proposed site which I did with the project proponents and the local mayor to get a thorough understanding of what is proposed there. This is a unique proposal that develops an entire precinct around renewable energy generation but then also immediately on site there it is offtake as well for production of a range of agricultural and resources commodities.

In terms of the industry partnerships program, that is not a program administered by the Department of Energy and Public Works and so that question would need to be referred to the Minister for State Development, but I can assure the member for Gregory that all proponents that come forward to government with reasonable proposals that stack up on that key performance indicator of commerciality that assists the government towards delivering our renewable energy target and our emissions reduction targets are considered. That project is in stages of preliminary concept design work and we encourage the project proponents to continue to talk with state development around access to that fund and, of course, continue to talk to the Department of Energy and Public Works around other partnerships that they might deliver with us.

I think what the various components of that project really did underscore is that there is a depth of confidence in Queensland around a decarbonised future for electricity and there is a depth of confidence around Queensland as a renewable energy leader, both in our nation and globally as well. In the next I think couple of years we will see many projects like that emerge and move into the operational phases. I am very happy to continue to support the development of those projects. In relation to the particular fund I would need to seek some engagement with another department.

**Mr MILLAR:** I defer now to the shadow minister and the member for Condamine.

**Mr WEIR:** You talked about the batteries that are needed for the transition. How many batteries would be required to support a 50 per cent target and what is the end-of-life plan for these batteries?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for the question. Again it is quite hypothetical because a 50 per cent target will depend on how much demand there is for electricity at the time and so to define how much electricity is going to be required in 2030 all I can do is provide estimates. For example, if all vehicles in Queensland stopped consuming petrol and diesel and they were all charged at one time there is an expectation that that would require 20 gigawatt hours of electricity. We are currently generating in Queensland at peak, when you include all of the thermal generation, the wind, the solar, large scale, small scale, the pumped hydro, all of the gas, we are getting close to 20 gigawatts now and so one would imagine if we had a demand at any particular time for 60 gigawatts of electricity and you wanted half of that to come from renewable energy then you would need a capacity in storage of 30 gigawatts. It is pretty simple maths. There are a range of battery technologies though.

The biggest battery technology that I have spent quite a bit of time talking about today is pumped hydro. The Borumba pumped hydro, which is a proposal for a one gigawatt 24 hour storage facility, would play a significant role. That would be generational infrastructure that would have an operating life of at least a century. In that case the decommissioning plans for that would not be developed any time in the next 50 to 75 years and we envisage that to ensure that we are able to provide firming for the massive influx of large-scale renewable solar and, of course, renewable wind generation sources, that Queensland is likely to need several pumped hydro-electric facilities at least the scale of the Borumba project, all of which would be similar to the life cycle of the Wivenhoe pumped storage which is currently operating, which goes for over 100 years.

**Mr WEIR:** Chair, I have a point of order on relevance. The question was the end of life for lithium or other batteries. I know about the hydro. Water is fine. It is the other batteries.

**CHAIR:** There were two components to the question. One was a presumption on having enough storage, how much would be enough, and I believe the minister is getting to the second part.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I think I have dealt with how much storage you would require if you wanted to take half of your electricity demand needs from a battery. In terms of the recycling, I think there is a terrific opportunity for Queensland, just as we have done with recycling of other products. If you think about the recycling of cans and bottles that have been led by this government here in Queensland, billions of those have been recycled. We have set up a very successful renewable economy in that space. I think that there is a real opportunity for us to consider the recycled industry for renewables components. We know that the end of life of those batteries is dependent upon how hard you use them, how often they are used, how quickly they are charged and how quickly the energy that they store is dispensed. Different types of batteries obviously have different types of life as well.

One of the critical things is making sure that we can recover as much of the rare earth minerals used in the batteries for redeployment. If we are able to design a recovery and re-use system, that could provide significant job opportunities for businesses here in Queensland. It is precisely why, a few weeks ago now, the Premier commissioned the development of an energy plan in Queensland to consider this issue. Other matters that are to be considered in the energy plan are about how we ensure that as much of those batteries are manufactured here in Queensland and that as much of the content of those batteries is derived from Queensland as well.

What we are developing is an entire value chain around energy here in Queensland. It is incredibly important that we ensure that there is an end-to-end process. The energy plan that myself and colleague ministers are working on currently will consider those opportunities and the expectations of consumers to ensure that there is a resource recovery and recycling approach to renewable energy. We expect to deliver that plan in the course of the next year or so. It will also outline how we ensure that we increase manufacturing generally. One of the best things that we can do to reindustrialise our nation is to grow manufacturing in Queensland by delivering cheaper cleaner electricity. I look forward to the support of all members on that process.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, since the incident at Callide Power Station, the price of wholesale electricity has been up to 10 times higher than since before the incident. Can you tell me when those increased costs will be passed back on to consumers?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Members would be aware that the National Electricity Market operates on a 24-hour basis and the prices of electricity change at any point in time, dependent on demand and supply. Of course, on the evening the incident occurred at Callide Unit C4 we know that there were significant outages across the state. We worked closely with all generators in Queensland, with the support of the Australian Energy Market Operator, to restart supply. We also reached out to Queensland consumers and asked them to do as much as they possibly could to curtail their demand to keep prices low.

On that evening I think you mentioned prices escalating 10 times what they were before the incident. Of course, there is a price cap at \$15,000 a megawatt. They went back down very quickly for precisely the reasons that I want to outline. The government initiated the operation of the pumped storage facility at Wivenhoe. We started Swanbank E gas-fired power station to provide supply into the grid. 5,600 megalitres flowed through Wivenhoe that day and it was public ownership that restored prices to a reasonable level.

I sought advice in relation to the net impacts on Queensland consumers in relation to that event. That event, in terms of those prices, could have easily occurred as a result of a heat wave in the middle of summer or a cold spell in the middle of winter when electricity demand is significant. Escalated prices can occur at any time. If you look at the distribution of prices across the course of a year, what the duration of that event did was insignificant enough that, on the advice provided to me and that I have reported publicly in the media on a number of occasions, it would have no net impact on consumers' electricity prices. Again I want to thank the workforce at Callide who have been working diligently and very constructively to return Callide to service. I also thank all of the other GOCs for stepping in to increase their supply and get the grid back online.

**CHAIR:** Being a former Powerlink worker, I am sure they appreciate your thanks, Minister.

**Mr WEIR:** While on Callide, Minister, have the insurers agreed to pay the entire amount for those repairs? Have you received any indication whether that will have an ongoing impact on insurance premiums or the sector more broadly?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I think embarking on and engaging in discussions around a range of investigations that are currently underway or speculating on the outcome of those investigations, including the investigations that are underway by the insurers, is premature and reasonably unhelpful. I think it would be of benefit to the committee, through you, Chair, if I outlined what is actually underway in respect of those matters, if that is helpful for the member for Condamine?

**Mr WEIR:** Briefly—very briefly. We are out of time.

**Mr de BRENNI:** A number of investigations into the incident are underway to understand the causes and the outcomes of that event. There are some fairly complex investigations being taken with due care. As I said, it is important to allow them to run their course with integrity.

You will know that CS Energy has engaged a forensic engineer, Dr Sean Brady, to lead an independent investigation and a review of the incident that occurred at CS on 25 May 2021. The scope of that will be broad in nature and it will look at technical and organisational factors. Dr Brady has been given authority to expand his scope based on progressive findings. As I indicated in response to a question without notice in the parliament some time ago, the Australian Energy Market Operator will also conduct an investigation. Members will know that the AEMO is required to report on a review of operating incidents under the National Electricity Rules. They will have a number of stages to their reports.

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, in addition to those investigations, workplace health and safety will be conducting their own investigations. I think it is important to mention that it is only through the incredible efforts of the team at Callide that no-one has injured on the day. I cannot stress enough how appreciative we all are of the quick response of that workforce. It is a real testament to their skills and dedication.

In respect of the insurer's assessment of that, the time frames for that are a matter for the insurer. I am sure they will work methodically through their consideration and will make a determination and provide advice to the owners of that asset in due course.

**CHAIR:** Electricity workers are rock stars. I agree with you on that, Minister. Member for Condamine, did you have another question?



**Mr WEIR:** Yes. Anthony Albanese was recently quoted as saying that no new coal-fired power stations will be built in Australia under a government he leads. Is that also the Queensland government's position?

**CHAIR:** I question if it is relevant to the budget.

**Mr WEIR:** It is to the review of Callide.

**CHAIR:** I will not block the question. Minister, I will give you plenty of leeway in answering that one. It is a little bit of a political question.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Mr Albanese's comments are on record. I would remind the members opposite what the Prime Minister said about new coal-fired power stations anywhere. When Prime Minister Scott Morrison was the Treasurer, he said, 'New, cheap coal is a myth.' So not only does Anthony Albanese not support a coal-fired power station, neither does Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

Given that there is declining demand for thermal generation, shareholders of major companies in Australia have declared that they want to see low-emissions electricity use by their companies. A new coal-fired power station in Queensland would mean that another coal-fired power station would need to close. In answering the question through you, Chair, the response to that and a decision to build a new coal-fired power station would fundamentally include a decision to close an existing coal-fired power station. I invite advice from the member for Condamine or any of the members of the LNP to suggest to the government which coal-fired power station they would prefer to see closed and which jobs they would prefer to see go if a new coal-fired power station was opened.

**Mr WEIR:** We don't want to close coal-fired power stations.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Through you, Chair, you cannot open a new coal-fired power station without determining which other one to close. It is a fact of the market. We have made it very clear that the Palaszczuk government believes that the workers in our existing coal-fired power stations provide an incredibly valuable resource to the National Electricity Market. At no time in Queensland's history has it ever been clearer than on the night of 25 May when the Callide outage caused an outage of other coal-fired generators. In fact, the Energy Security Board has recently indicated for ministers' consideration just how important those coal-fired generators will be in the delivery of essential system services to support intermittent renewable resources coming online in an even more significant way. Clearly, to ensure that we deliver cheaper, cleaner, more reliable electricity in Queensland, two things need to happen: we need to support more renewable energy associated with storage as well, and we need to support our existing workforce to continue to provide thermal generation and those essential system services.

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

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, there has been a lot of commentary about how hydrogen presents an opportunity to decarbonise our industries and create jobs. How is the Palaszczuk government providing the skills and training to enable a future hydrogen workforce to meet this opportunity?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Hydrogen presents an incredible opportunity in Queensland to create jobs and decarbonise our economy. It goes without saying, but it is worth reflecting on that some of our best assets in this state are our highly skilled, our highly motivated and our employment-ready workforce. Queensland is home to internationally recognised universities, internationally recognised skills training institutes and we are fortunate that our lifestyle here in Queensland is instrumental in retaining our highly skilled workers. This competitive advantage has helped Queensland to develop the local capability and supply chains that underpin our global liquefied natural gas export industry that we are familiar with, and we fundamentally believe that we can do it again with renewable hydrogen.

Developing that workforce starts with investing in skills and training. As one of the first states in the country to release a hydrogen strategy—we did that in 2019—Queensland is already ahead of the game. Our government is taking action to develop the skills and supply chain to establish a thriving hydrogen production export industry. Our industry strategy 2019-2024 is focused on developing Queensland's hydrogen industry to create jobs, including investing in four training centres that would upskill a hydrogen workforce.

We are investing in the following: \$20 million towards stage 2 of the Queensland Apprenticeships Centre at Beenleigh; \$10.6 million for a hydrogen and renewable energy training facility at Bohle TAFE campus in Townsville; \$17 million towards the Pinkenba Renewable Energy Training Facility; and \$2 million investment to upgrade training facilities at Gladstone High School.

We are also supporting hydrogen research and development. Just last month I visited Queensland's first hydrogen refuelling station at the Redlands Research Facility which is also home to the Queensland University of Technology's hydrogen production research. While there, I had the opportunity to refuel one of the government's five brand new hydrogen fuel cell cars that will use renewable hydrogen produced on site by the Queensland University of Technology. They are our five Hyundai Nexo hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

It is also about developing local capability because that is how we will position Queensland in a multibillion-dollar industry. Our government is focused on developing it in regional areas as well, particularly around our ports and those associated industrial clusters. That is why today, members, I am pleased to announce a partnership between our publicly owned CS Energy and Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise to increase local participation in the hydrogen industry.

Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise and CS are collaborating on a new online supplier portal. That portal will map the capability and potential of local businesses to support a hydrogen supply chain. So this online tool will provide really valuable information on local capability and identify opportunities for local businesses in the supply chain. That allows them to upskill, as well as attract new organisations to that region. It is a six-month project, members, which will complement CS Energy's joint feasibility study with IHI Corporation, Japan on the establishment of a hydrogen demonstration plant next to Kogan Creek Power Station near Chinchilla. This is yet another example of how publicly owned energy generators are working with communities to capture Queensland's share of a once-in-a-generation renewable hydrogen opportunity.

**CHAIR:** There has been a lot of commentary about how the Morrison government has failed to plan for our energy future. It has caused uncertainty for businesses and households. I noticed today that the Prime Minister said there is no blank cheque on zero carbon emissions target and he refuses to set a net zero by 2050. How is the Palaszczuk government going to address this uncertainty and plan for our energy future?

**Mr de BRENNI:** This is an incredibly important question, Chair, particularly off the back of the global reports that have been released today. As the chair would be no doubt aware, our energy system is one built on some important key principles. They are public ownership, reliability and affordability. They underpin our system in Queensland. As we continue to head towards our 50 per cent renewable energy target, electricity in Queensland is becoming cheaper and cleaner.

The next 10 years will be absolutely critical to ensure that our energy system continues to deliver for Queenslanders, that it continues to drive economic activity, investment and job growth, and continues to build on our strengths for a prosperous future. That is why, as members may be aware, the Premier announced at the Townsville Energy Jobs Forum that our government will begin the development of an energy plan. The Premier has commissioned work across government, in collaboration with ministers to develop a plan that will ensure Queensland is creating jobs for a sustainable and affordable energy future, one that benefits Queensland communities, workers and our economy. That is why we kicked off the development of our plan with the \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund that we discussed earlier. That is direct investment in our publicly owned energy businesses to build their renewable and hydrogen portfolios and create jobs.

We will work closely with industry in the community in the development of the energy plan and we will chart a clear pathway for the future of our energy system. We will outline how we will achieve our renewable energy target. We will plan renewable energy zones and associated economic precincts. We will begin the reindustrialisation of our economy in this nation with zero emissions energy and technologies from Queensland. We will kickstart a Queensland hydrogen sector for domestic and future exports. We will deliver a clear plan that will create certainty for Queensland businesses and households. One of the most critical parts of the energy plan will be the on-shoring of local manufacturing of renewable and hydrogen components.

I think Queenslanders want a future where our energy is made by Queenslanders for Queenslanders, and renewable energy and hydrogen present an opportunity to grow local manufacturing jobs and develop a true value chain to become a renewable energy and hydrogen superpower.

Our plan will support the development of locally made renewable and hydrogen components and provide a guaranteed pipeline of work. Importantly, we will do this as part of our Buy Queensland procurement approach, which will prioritise local businesses in that value chain—those with ethical practice including those that deliver decent, secure jobs; manage health and safe workplaces; manage supply chains; and optimise local benefits. It will be a plan focused on jobs, a plan focused on cheaper and cleaner energy.

**CHAIR:** I want to expand on that. I appreciate your answer. Queenslanders have continually rejected asset sales of their public energy system. You know how passionate I am about that. Can you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting public ownership, particularly in the renewable space?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The Palaszczuk government is quite proud of our record of maintaining energy assets in the hands of Queensland citizens. We are proud of the fact that we stopped the sell-off of our generation, distribution and transmission assets. We are proud that we ensure that we work in the interests of Queenslanders, not of overseas boardrooms.

Of course we are committed to maintaining a level of public ownership of generation while we grow the scale of renewables powering our community. That is why, as I mentioned, on 10 June the Premier announced the \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund. That additional investment makes the 2021-22 budget a record energy budget. What that does is reflect the important role that our government owned generators will play in transforming Queensland's energy network.

Those businesses are already at the forefront of the delivery of cheaper and cleaner energy in Queensland. For instance, our newest generator, CleanCo, is supporting over a thousand megawatts of 'firmed' renewables with the construction of the Karara Wind Farm and commitment to other off-take agreements with more on the way. Stanwell has partnered with the Clarke Creek Wind Farm to pump 348 megawatts of clean wind energy into our grid. CS Energy has deals to supply 362 megawatts of renewables to Queensland homes and businesses, and Energy Queensland is investing in their own five local network batteries to support the increased uptake of rooftop solar.

As we continue to power towards our renewable energy target, we want to see more of those projects owned and operated by Queenslanders. That is exactly what the \$2 billion fund is designed to do. It will enable our energy businesses to invest directly in more publicly owned renewable and hydrogen projects. It will focus on proposals that meet the key objectives and expectations of government to create new and ongoing decent and secure jobs and support local manufacturing of renewable and hydrogen components.

Businesses have already submitted a diverse range of investment opportunities. They are currently under evaluation. We will move quickly to support projects that are ready to go. That is our commitment to public ownership and our commitment to public ownership delivering cheaper and cleaner energy.

It is unfortunate that that cannot be said about the opposition. They continue to wander around Queensland calling renewables a fantasy, pushing expensive and dangerous nuclear technologies. The Leader of the Opposition called for us to end investment in the network and complained about Queenslanders receiving the benefits of our publicly owned businesses. They have long harboured plans to sell off our assets. You can guarantee that, if given the opportunity, they would do it in a heartbeat because it is in their DNA.

**Mr Millar:** You're the one who sold assets.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, hydrogen provides an opportunity for Queensland to harness renewable energy and create thousands of jobs. Will you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting the development of the hydrogen supply chain and the creation of a locally manufactured hydrogen industry?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Since releasing the Hydrogen Industry Strategy in 2019, our government has been firmly focused on developing a local hydrogen supply chain here in Queensland. I think we are fortunate because we have all the elements required to build a successful industry and meet what are emerging hydrogen demands of our export trading partners like Japan, Korea and the EU where hydrogen is a critical part of their zero-emissions energy futures. We have a well-developed LNG industry that shipped over 22 million tonnes of LNG around the world in 2020. We did that in the middle of a global pandemic. We have publicly owned state ports that are close to our Asian markets where international hydrogen demand is expected to emerge first and where we have strong trading partnerships, particularly with Japan and Korea.

Queenslanders are known as a highly skilled workforce. We are investing nearly \$50 million to support education and training and skills development in hydrogen. We are proud also to be pro business, with a supportive policy and regulatory regime and a strong focus on innovation. To deliver Queensland's vision for a renewable hydrogen sector, I recently established the Queensland Hydrogen Taskforce, chaired by Professor Peta Ashworth OAM. The task force is delivering critical advice to government on regulatory and planning issues and working with industry across the hydrogen supply and demand chain to assist in accelerating industry growth in Queensland.

We have invested more than \$60 million as part of our Hydrogen Industry Strategy. Through the Hydrogen Industry Development Fund our investment has already benefited four renewable hydrogen projects with an estimated project value of over \$37 million across the heavy industry, transport and tourism sectors. As mentioned earlier, we have also boosted the Renewable Energy Fund to a \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund allowing GOCs to increase their ownership of commercial projects, as well as supporting infrastructure in partnership with the private sector. A key focus going forward is the opportunity for Queensland businesses to be front and centre of the hydrogen supply chain, from things like manufacturing components for wind or solar energy generation that would be used to produce renewable hydrogen through to the hydrogen production facilities themselves.

In June this year, publicly owned Stanwell Corporation secured land for its proposed 3,000-megawatt green hydrogen electrolysis facility in Central Queensland. Stanwell is partnering with Japan's largest domestic hydrogen supplier, Iwatani Corporation, to develop this project to produce renewable hydrogen for export to Japan and use in local Gladstone industries. We estimate this project could generate \$4.2 billion in hydrogen exports and \$10 billion in value for the Queensland economy. More importantly, it would create more than 5,000 jobs for regional Queenslanders—5,000 extra jobs for regional Queensland.

This project and our other hydrogen commitments demonstrate that our government is firmly focused on getting the policy settings, skills development and industry attraction measures right to grow Queensland's hydrogen industry and of course deliver jobs for Queenslanders.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, as you referred to earlier, regional households suffered under the Newman government when they faced 43 per cent increases in their power prices. How has the Palaszczuk government acted on this and provided price relief for regional families?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I have good news—good news in particular for regional Queensland households and families. For the fourth year in a row regional retail electricity prices have been reduced. This is a direct result of actions taken by our government to put downward pressure on both network and wholesale energy costs. Thanks to the Palaszczuk government, regional Queenslanders will save even more on their electricity accounts with renewables driving the biggest reduction in regional household electricity bills in more than 16 years.

The Queensland Competition Authority's final regulated electricity price determination for 2021-22 confirmed that typical regional households will see reductions of 7.3 per cent this year. That is \$101 off their annual 2020-21 electricity accounts. Over the past four years retail accounts for typical regional households have gone down. They have been reduced by 17 per cent. Prices for regional households are currently lower than the default market offer set for South-East Queensland. An affordable, reliable energy supplier underpins our economic recovery, and these reductions are further proof renewables are playing a central role in electricity affordability. The trend is heading in the right direction, with the Australian Energy Market Commission forecasting a 14 per cent reduction over three years.

We have a strong record of delivering cheaper and cleaner energy to Queensland households—a record built on a range of support packages provided to those households. As part of the Queensland record energy budget this year, we will once again deliver over \$230 million in energy and gas rebates for pensioners and Queensland seniors, we will deliver another \$50 asset ownership dividend topping up our COVID-19 rebates of \$200 for households last year, and we will invest around \$500 million as part of the community service obligation to keep prices low in regional Queensland and ensure that no-one pays more than the default market offer in the south-east. These are direct investments in Queensland families and direct investments in households.

Unfortunately, the LNP continues to be focused on lining the pocket of private overseas companies instead of supporting Queenslanders. Their so-called policy on electricity prices was to open up the community service obligation to private companies. That was a taxpayer funded subsidy of multibillion dollar proportion to overseas companies—

**Mr Millar:** So you don't believe in competition in regional Queensland?

**Mr de BRENNI:** A plan that would do nothing to lower power prices; a plan that would in fact increase them. To address the member for Gregory's interjection, their plan would in fact increase electricity costs. The Queensland Productivity Commission found that the LNP's plan would cost taxpayers \$768 million and not deliver any noticeable savings for customers. With a record of 43 per cent increases in prices, it is clear the LNP would do anything to support their mates at the big end of town, including making regional Queenslanders pay more for their electricity.

**CHAIR:** The member for Condamine has one last question before we go to the crossbench.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, in relation to the 50 per cent target by 2030, can the minister advise why work on a 10-year plan has only just now commenced, why \$1.5 billion was allocated before a plan was commenced and what date we can expect to see the plan?

**CHAIR:** We have already answered this question but the minister might just refresh us.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for Condamine for his interest in the plan. I will remind members that the fund to which the member refers is now the \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund. The interest and proposals being brought forward by government owned corporations in relation to that fund will help inform the plan, just as interest in the Queensland Renewable Energy Zones brought forward by a range of investors will help inform the plan. A range of measures will be outlined in that plan. We need to ensure that, as I mentioned, the plan outlines a clear pathway to the 50 per cent renewable energy target and our emissions reduction target. Developing that plan will be a comprehensive piece of work to ensure that not only does it get to us those targets of 2030 but it continues to put downward pressure on electricity prices. We want to ensure that it develops a comprehensive value chain—everything from component manufacturing here in Queensland to renewable Hydrogen Taskforce manufacturing and a range of other initiatives—to ensure we continue to see prosperity for Queenslanders, so we continue to see economic growth, and so we continue to see that the record growth in jobs we have seen under the Palaszczuk government's leadership since 2015 continues to be supported by cheaper, cleaner energy.

I can assure the member for Condamine, who is clearly keenly interested in renewables and the Hydrogen Taskforce—and I thank him for that interest—that at an appropriate time, once government has given full consideration to ensuring that we deliver a pathway for what is a profound period of economic transformation for our state and we play our role in leading the decarbonisation of a range of sectors but also supporting the decarbonisation of the agendas of a number of global trading partners, as soon as we have given full consideration to all of those matters we will release that plan. I am certainly happy to provide the member for Condamine with a briefing at that time.

**CHAIR:** We now welcome the member for South Brisbane.

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is for the director-general. A feature of many apartment blocks in South Brisbane and elsewhere is embedded networks which deny residents the ability to access the usual electricity tariffs available to others. When will the government bring embedded networks into the jurisdiction of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland so these customers have access to the same dispute resolution options as other residents?

**Mr Purtill:** As part of its deliberations the former COAG Energy Council has been looking at a range of embedded network related issues. There has been ongoing work at the national level for some time. The issue you are raising around that, particularly when you haven't got an individual meter, you also see with, for example, the inability to access rooftop solar PV in the same way. We are definitely alive to that as an issue. There is regulation at the state level which is consistent, I hope, across jurisdictions to start to address some of the issues around embedded networks.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I can provide some further guidance on that. The question relates to supporting electricity consumers whose supply exists within an embedded network in apartment buildings, manufactured parks, caravan parks et cetera in terms of bringing them under the remit of the Ombudsman. We are committed to doing that. Government is finalising a regulatory impact statement. That process has some obligations around ensuring that the regulatory impact process meets the threshold the community expects around effective consultation. I want to assure the member that that process is underway. The regulatory impact statement process is nearing finalisation and will be released soon.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Is there a time line associated with that?

**CHAIR:** This committee will probably get that when it comes through so we will be well-versed on it.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I can assure the member that it is a priority for government and we are working as quickly as we can towards that. As soon as the regulatory impact statement is approved then we will progress.

**CHAIR:** We welcome the member for Maiwar and his question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I have a question first of all to the DG. Last estimates the minister confirmed that government policy is to maintain majority public ownership in the electricity generation sector as we transition to clean energy. It was confirmed that the current percentage of public ownership in December last year was 65.7 per cent. First of all, can you give us an updated figure? What is the current percentage of public ownership?

**Mr Purtill:** When we were asked last year it was 65.7. It was based the 2019-20 year. The value related to the percentage of energy produced as opposed to nameplate generation capacity. In 2020-21 the figure was 66 per cent, so effectively the same.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Is that a comparable figure given the differentiation between nameplate value and actual generation?

**Mr Purtill:** They are. They are both based on gigawatt hours of generation for the period.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Can I just confirm that the policy will only prevent that percentage of public ownership dropping below 50 per cent; is that correct?

**CHAIR:** That is more of a policy question. You might have to go to the minister. Director-General, you can answer that as best you can.

**Mr Purtill:** Chair, I think your guidance is appropriate. I think it is a question for the minister.

**CHAIR:** It is a policy question. It is best referred to the minister. Bearing in mind the time, if you want to ask another question of the director-general and not the minister.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Yes, I am keen to ask another question. I am happy to move on unless the minister has a very quick response.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Our commitment is on the public record to maintain majority public ownership of generation in Queensland. The response that the director-general gave in respect of the level of generation that has remained publicly owned—at 66 per cent—is the same as last year. If the member has been listening to the previous questions, the significant investment through the Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund will continue to support publicly owned renewables. We certainly have a policy, in stark contrast to the LNP, where we will not be selling those assets.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. Member for Maiwar, we have one minute if you have a really quick question and there is a really quick answer.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will make it very quick. Director-General, with reference to the relatively frequent unplanned outages occurring at government owned coal and gas-fired power stations and the fact as set out in budget paper 2 that profits are set to disappear within a year or two, what work is the department doing to prepare to support workers at those power stations if they do ultimately end up having to close early?

**Mr Purtill:** I am not 100 per cent sure of the relevance to this portfolio. It is probably more an industrial matter, but I can certainly assure you that as part of the energy plan, for example, we are looking at a whole raft of issues that are not just around, if you like, the pure portfolio responsibilities of Minister de Brenni but right across government—all of the issues that might emanate out of developing up what would be the blueprint for the next 10 years for the energy plan.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The committee will now take a break. The hearing will resume at 3.45 pm with the estimates for the public works and procurement portfolio areas. Thank you everyone for your time.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm.**



**CHAIR:** The hearing is resumed. I welcome back the minister and officials. The committee will now examine the estimates for the public works and procurement portfolio areas. I welcome the member for Everton to the room and I call the member for Everton for a question.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, I have some questions about the QBCC. In the last 12 months, a swathe of senior staff at the QBCC have left including two assistant commissioners and senior directors, and most recently the commissioner announced that he is leaving. Is this a sign that senior staff have lost confidence in you and the board that you appointed?

**Ms PUGH:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** No, you do not need a point of order. We really did not start well. You are asking for an opinion there. Can you rephrase that into a better form? We have been going really well today.

**Mr MANDER:** I will not do the preamble again. I think you have got the gist of the question. Have the staff left because they have lost confidence in you and your board?

**Ms PUGH:** That is the bad part of the question.

**CHAIR:** I will not ask you to rephrase it again. Minister, you can answer it, if you can.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I am not surprised by the member for Everton's course of action here today. What I can inform the committee is that staff turnover at the Queensland Building and Construction Commission is in the range of the broader public sector. As members would be aware, that data is

maintained. Staff turnover is 13.95 per cent. The average turnover in the broader sector is 13.79 per cent. Here is the thing that might be of most interest to the committee. The turnover for permanent staff at the QBCC—which is all of those positions which the member for Everton referred to—is half that of the broader public sector.

In the 2020 Working for Queensland survey, the overall participation rate of the QBCC was amongst the highest of any government agency, at 97 per cent in 2019. Staff reported an 86 per cent positive or neutral rating, which is an improvement of four per cent from the previous year. It would not surprise any of the committee members that the member for Everton's question is based on an incorrect assumption of the circumstances. The facts do not reflect the imputations or the hypothesis in the member for Everton's question.

My final remark in relation to this question seeking my opinion is that those individuals have secured senior positions within the industry and a range of other senior positions. To suggest that the development of public servants or employees of statutory authorities to the point where they become incredibly attractive to other employers and then are secured often at far greater rates of remuneration is somehow an indictment on the organisation is just fanciful. We will not be holding Queenslanders back if they develop the skills and attributes that make them attractive to other organisations. To conclude my remarks, the answer to the member for Everton is no, and it will not surprise the committee that the basis of the question is inaccurate as well.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, there is speculation that the current chair of the QBCC is about to stand down and be replaced by CFMEU official and notorious law-breaker Jade Ingham. Can you confirm that this is the case?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for the question. I am sure Jade Ingham is delighted to hear your question today. I would recommend to all members of parliament that when they are considering important matters like the leadership of important authorities like the Queensland Building and Construction Commission they do not take their advice necessarily from clips they might read out of a newspaper. The board appointments of the commission, like all other statutory authorities, are matters for the cabinet of the day. Cabinet will consider the appointments to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission at the conclusion of the current round of appointments. No consideration has been given to any earlier time frames than what cabinet has already concluded in respect of the existing board. I think the board has been doing a terrific job and let me explain why.

**Mr MANDER:** No. Point of order on relevance: it was a specific question about an appointment. I am not interested in how the board operates generally. I have asked specifically about a board appointment of the chair.

**CHAIR:** Member, you did. The question was a little bit inflammatory and I am giving the minister a little bit of leeway. For the benefit of the rest of the committee, we are interested in the answer but if you could keep it brief, Minister.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair. It would seem absurd that there would be a question seeking to somehow inflame some speculation that the member for Everton has invented that there are some moves afoot in relation to the board when the board and the organisation are performing incredibly well. Let me explain some key statistics. There are more licensees in Queensland now than there ever has been. There are—

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order, Minister.

**Mr MILLAR:** It is under standing order 118 and relevance. Usually just a yes or no answer is what is required. We do not need a whole—

**CHAIR:** We do not need you to explain what is required in an answer. The minister is answering the question. I ask you to conclude your answer, please, Minister.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I will conclude by saying there are more licensees in Queensland than there ever has been. There are more building works happening now in Queensland than there ever has been. There are less building disputes, there are less defects and there is less non-payment or late payment than there ever has been in Queensland's history. I want to thank the leadership of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission for delivering that.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, Mr Ingham has been fined \$30,000 for shutting down two major construction sites in 2018 and is a known protagonist in many building disputes. Will you guarantee law-abiding Queenslanders that he will never be appointed chair of the building regulator?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I have already explained the processes for how government appoints representatives and directors to boards. I know it has been a long time since the member for Everton has had to consider appointments to boards of statutory authorities. At the appropriate time government will consider those matters. There is no suggestion that there is any early consideration of any changes to the QBCC board because, quite frankly, they are performing the functions that are expected of them.

I want to make this remark to the member for Everton. When the Palaszczuk government came to office in 2015 there were widespread—it was almost unanimous across industry—concerns about the operation of the QBCC. Builders were dissatisfied, subbies were dissatisfied, tradies were dissatisfied, suppliers were dissatisfied, homeowners were dissatisfied and—

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order.

**Mr MILLAR:** It is under standing order 118 again, relevance. It was a pretty direct question. We are giving him some leeway.

**CHAIR:** These points of order are becoming a little bit frivolous, member. I am giving the minister some leeway. It is a very inflammatory line of questioning and I am giving the minister a little bit of leeway to answer the question. I will, once again, ask you to conclude your answer, Minister.

**Mr de BRENNI:** There were widespread concerns raised with me about the operations of the QBCC and its leadership when the Palaszczuk government took office. Today the QBCC is well respected. It is well respected by builders, by subcontractors, by tradies and by consumers. That is evidenced by the record number of building approvals, the record low rates of disputes and record low rates of defects as well.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, what ministerial interventions have you made regarding QBCC matters or decisions during your time as minister?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I do not intervene in any decisions of the commission.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, have any of your ministerial staff made any interventions into QBCC matters or decisions during your time as minister?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I am not sure where the member for Everton seeks to be going with this line of questioning that I fail to see has any relevance to the appropriation—

**Mr MANDER:** Yes or no? It is easy.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Member for Everton, you have spent the last 10 minutes complaining about the relevance of my responses. I think I am at liberty to query the relevance of your question. It is an ordinary practice of parliamentary procedure. You have been here long enough; you should know that.

**Mr MANDER:** Have you or your staff intervened in decisions of the QBCC? Yes or no, Minister?

**CHAIR:** Member, you have asked your question. I am allowing the minister to answer.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The answer is no.

**Mr MANDER:** I have a question to the commissioner. Commissioner, has the minister or his staff ever directed you to take certain action on the QBCC matter?

**Mr Bassett:** The answer is no.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, how often do your staff sit in on a QBCC operational meeting which might relate to a QBCC complaint?

**Ms HOWARD:** Point of order, Mr Chair. The question from the member has no relation to the budget papers or the estimates.

**CHAIR:** I am seeing where the member is going with this and I will allow the minister leeway to answer the question. I do not really see how relevant it is.

**Mr MANDER:** SDS page 27 talks about the service standards for the QBCC's perception of fairness in decision-making.

**CHAIR:** Okay. You can pretty well find anything you want, but I am going to allow the minister leeway in answering the question.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I have addressed this matter a number of times in the Legislative Assembly chamber in questions from the member for Everton and the member for Burleigh. I can categorically assure the committee that operational decisions of the commission are a matter for its officers. Neither the board nor my office nor anyone else has any involvement in those matters. Of course, decisions



that are publicly relevant that prompt consideration of policy matters often become matters for the parliament. However, in respect of individual cases, there is no role for anybody on the board of the commission or myself or my office in any circumstance.

**CHAIR:** Member, I notice that there is a clear imputation in your line of questioning. I will allow you to continue, but we will see how we go.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you, Mr Chair. I have a question to the commissioner. In relation to the Groupline builders case on the Gold Coast—and I am sure you are aware of it—I believe that the QBCC lost a number of court cases related to the enforcement action it took in this dispute. What amount has the QBCC allocated for contingent liabilities in this year's accounts in relation to the loss of the legal case?

**Mr Bassett:** I thank the member for the question. The answer is none.

**Mr MANDER:** Could you explain why that is the case, Commissioner?

**Mr Bassett:** Part of being a risk based regulator means that a regulator does not simply take on the easy cases; a regulator takes on those cases that are most important. I understand that the member is talking about the Kirra Vista matter, or the Groupline matter. That was a matter that had a significant safety issue in it. As a result of that, we actually did take significant legal actions in that respect. We did seek to test the law in respect of that. The fact of the matter is that the only costs we have incurred in respect of that matter are those costs in respect of the specific matters that were before the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal. The specific response to the member's question is: no, we have not put any contingent liabilities in place because we were very comfortable with the steps that we took.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, we are running out of time. If you have another question on that line, just a quick question to finish off.

**Mr MANDER:** I might just ask one further question on that in this segment, if I may. Commissioner, there were no costs for damages against the QBCC in that case at all?

**Mr Bassett:** I thank the member for the question. The QBCC had to pay costs to the Groupline entity in respect of its legal costs, but if the member is questioning whether or not there are any punitive costs or anything that we have been asked to pay the answer is no.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Everton. We will now go to government questions. I have a question for the minister. More and more Queenslanders are choosing to build or renovate their own homes, thanks to the Palaszczuk government's economic recovery plan. What action is the Queensland government taking to ensure that Queenslanders can build with confidence?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for the question. As members know, Queensland's economic recovery is well underway. Building approvals for homes are up 49.5 per cent on this time last year, meaning more Queenslanders are making the biggest investment decision of their lives—building or renovating their homes. It is important that Queenslanders can build with confidence and peace of mind, knowing there are protections in place should things go wrong. Since 1977, the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme has provided that protection, acting as a safety net for home owners left with unfinished or defective construction work.

In 2020-21, 168,468 Queenslanders were provided this safety net under the scheme. Whilst the number of claims in the last year is quite low, at just 1,537, every single one of those home owners has poured their life savings into building and they should be supported as much as possible. A payout under the scheme supports home owners to get their projects finished or rectified if a licensed contractor fails to do so, with the building regulator able to take recovery action against those contractors at fault.

To ensure the scheme maximises consumer protections, today I announce that the Palaszczuk government will conduct a review to strengthen the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme. We are delivering on our commitment, outlined in the 2017 Queensland Building Plan, that the Home Warranty Scheme will be known for certainty, equity, fairness and transparency. We are delivering on our election commitment to work with industry to provide the best possible outcomes to home owners and licensed contractors.

As part of the review, Queenslanders can have their say via an online survey that is now live. We want to hear from consumers and builders about how we can further enhance the scheme. The learnings from this survey will be used to develop an information paper that is intended to be released later this year. I have asked my department to consult far and wide on these proposals. Depending on COVID-19 restrictions, information sessions around Queensland are planned to start next month.

A subcommittee of my Ministerial Construction Council will be established to lead this work, which will investigate ways to improve the scheme under six key themes: comprehensive, contemporary coverage; adequate and flexible compensation limits; affordable, risk based premiums; effective and efficient processes; empowered consumers; and a modern, responsive scheme. Our review will consider whether it is appropriate to have premiums based on a licensed contractor's track record, too. We will explore the benefits of this price signal implemented through scheme premiums that benefits licensed contractors with a good industry track record.

Of course, it is also important to consider where and how Queenslanders are living. More and more people are calling high-rise apartments home, with the current scheme only covering buildings up to three storeys high. We are all well aware, I am sure, of the problems facing New South Wales with buildings like the Opal complex. We want to look at how situations like that should be dealt with here in Queensland.

Some of the settings in the current scheme were last looked at in 1999. It is important that the scheme be contemporary and fit for purpose. We want to look at whether prefabricated homes constructed off site should be covered; the amount on insurance cover available; increasing time limits for home owners to lodge; whether a licensed contractor's track record should be easily identified and available to the public and the best way for it to be presented; whether associated types of work such as painting are adequately covered; and whether the scheme effectively works alongside other consumer protections. We will be looking to hear from consumers' and builders' experiences.

One area I am particularly interested on hearing from Queenslanders is whether the existing dispute resolution processes may be causing some problems. Following this consultation, the subcommittee will review the feedback and prepare a report with recommendations for further potential reforms. I can assure Queenslanders that the subcommittee will have expert members from industry and community. Nominations have been sought from across the construction sector. We are seeking other experts from the insurance, legal, development and community sectors to participate as well. As I said in closing the remarks on that question, construction or renovation of a home can often represent the greatest single investment a Queenslanders makes. Protecting this investment and providing the confidence to sign on the dotted line is vital to Queensland's ongoing economic recovery.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, the Palaszczuk government always sets very high standards when it comes to safety in the building and construction industry. Will you advise the committee how the government is upholding these standards and ensuring the safety of Queenslanders through the introduction of new fire protection and system frameworks?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for the question. The member is correct. Events around the world, including the Grenfell Tower fire in London, highlight how important it is to effectively regulate fire protection work in the built environment. The national *Building confidence* report also emphasised the need for a strong fire safety regulatory framework. A strong framework includes everything from building design, construction and certification to fire protection systems, their design and maintenance and the skills of those licensees required to maintain them.

On 1 May this year, the government introduced a modernised, rationalised and fit-for-purpose fire protection licensing framework which sought to improve the standard of fire protection by ensuring licensees have the necessary competencies and skills to carry out this critical work. These reforms were industry led and based on extensive consultation going back to 2015. At that time, initial work was undertaken by the QBCC's fire protection working group, which included a cross-section of representatives from the fire protection, building, plumbing, electrical and insurance sectors and, importantly, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

In 2017, following extensive statewide consultation as part of the Queensland Building Plan, our government committed to investigating a rationalised licensing framework. In 2019, our Ministerial Construction Council established a subcommittee to finalise the work of the fire protection working group and give advice and recommendations. These were later endorsed by the broader Ministerial Construction Council. Importantly, the reforms reduce the administrative burden placed on licensees by streamlining classes of licences—they have gone from 25 to 12—and reducing the number of licence classes, from 57 to 40. The framework also clarified or updated scopes of work, definitions and technical qualifications. Most licensees do not need to do anything and automatically transitioned to the new licence classes on 1 May this year. However, the MCC subcommittee recommended more comprehensive competency requirements for particular licence categories. Some licensees may require upskilling or a demonstration of skills as a result.

Transitional arrangements have been put in place to support existing licensees through the changes, giving them to time to obtain a relevant qualification, seek recognition of prior learning, enrol in a course or engage tradespeople with the appropriate competencies. Additional transitional arrangements have been put in place in response to some industry concerns. They include in respect of hydrant and hose reels inspect and test licences. We have extended the transitional period for six months to allow licensees time to consider further learning, particularly if they wish to perform duties now covered by the water based fire system stream install and maintain licence. This means that to perform the annual inspect and test on pumped hydrant systems, in accordance with Australian Standard 1851—that is the type of fire protection system that exists here in Parliament House and is a quite complex system—you now require a licence reflecting a standard of competence that you can also demonstrate through recognition of prior learning or units of competency gained through a registered training organisation.

Those licensees who previously performed those tasks who do not intend to apply for the additional licence can still continue to perform all of the functions they previously did on non-complex systems, including the six-monthly routine service schedules as outlined in Australian Standard 1851. The building commission has been contacting affected licensees and working to ensure industry is ready to implement these important reforms and this work will ensure appropriate standards are maintained or enhanced while supporting the industry through the transition.

Finally, I can further advise the committee that the subcommittee will also undertake further work to improve the regulatory framework by considering how to address the number of reported defects arising from routine maintenance inspections of fire protection equipment and the level of compliance of building occupiers in rectifying identified defects, because it is critical that building occupants have confidence that the buildings in which they work, live and play are safe and fit for purpose.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, referring to the increasing amount of activity happening in the building and construction industry with more subbies and tradies at work, how is the Palaszczuk government ensuring that they get paid in full, on time, every time?

**Mr de BRENNI:** We are supporting the 240,000 Queenslanders in the construction industry through our \$52.2 billion four-year capital works program, and I want to acknowledge the strong leadership of the Premier and the Chief Health Officer who have seen our construction industry stay open while other states have had to close theirs. I mentioned earlier that the construction industry close-down in New South Wales is currently costing that state's economy around a billion dollars each and every week. It is also vitally important that whilst Queensland's industry remains open subbies and tradies get paid for the work they do and they get paid in full, on time, every time. After all, it is only fair, because ensuring they are paid on time in full every time will be critical to Queensland's economic recovery. We would not accept it if a nurse or a police officer or a firefighter did not get paid for the work they do and I am confident when I say that Queenslanders would agree it should not be any different for the men and women who go to work every day on our construction sites.

Since 2017, and supported by this year's budget as well, the Palaszczuk government will continue to lead the nation with our security of payment reforms first introduced under the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Act. They include stronger minimum financial requirements for licensing, new offences for avoiding contractual obligations, a new offence for failing to pay eligible retention amounts, improvements to adjudication processes, requiring head contractors to provide supporting statements, introducing payment holding requests and giving head contractors the ability to place a charge over property for an adjudicated amount.

In 2018 Queensland was the first jurisdiction to require project bank accounts and following a review the Building Industry Fairness Reforms Implementation and Evaluation Panel made recommendations to improve protections, manage the financial transition and simplify the framework.

I can report to the committee that on 1 March this year a new streamlined trust account framework commenced for eligible Queensland government building construction contracts valued between \$1 million and \$10 million. The modified framework will remove principle oversight of trust accounts, instead providing the Queensland Building and Construction Commission with the compliance and enforcement powers. It will require just one project trust account per eligible contract—a great streamlining initiative. It will require contractors to only establish one retention trust account for all cash retentions held and remove the disputed funds trust account. From 1 July 2021 the new framework applies to all eligible hospital and health service contracts valued at over \$1 million and from 1 January 2022 trust accounts expand to eligible private sector, local government, statutory authority and government owned corporation contracts valued at \$10 million or more.

During that period the number of moneys owed complaints in Queensland has also halved. In 2018 the number of moneys owed complaints in Queensland was running at 1,395 complaints. In the previous year to 30 June, it was 729—that is, in 2020-21. The approximate number of contractor insolvencies in Queensland is the lowest it has been in nearly a decade and since the introduction of project bank accounts we have seen 352 project bank account contracts awarded, with 259 of these having reached practical completion and a value exceeding \$1.27 billion. All of this signals a stronger, more sustainable sector—a sector where subcontractors can be confident that they will be paid for the work they do and where a contractor can have confidence to build their business. This is important work following the previous government's abandonment of the construction industry and I note that members opposite sat silent as the Palaszczuk government delivered our nation-leading reforms. It is clear that only the Palaszczuk government can be trusted to ensure that tradies in Queensland are paid for the work they do.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, the Palaszczuk government has committed to ensuring that all Queenslanders have access to safe, secure and sustainable housing. Will you advise the committee how the Palaszczuk government is delivering accessible housing that is safe and secure for older Queenslanders and for those living with disability?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I think it is an expectation of all Australians that housing should be designed to accommodate all people, regardless of their age or if they have a disability. Finding a suitable home to rent or buy though can be incredibly challenging for the 3.8 million seniors and around 4.4 million Australians living with a disability. Small things that most of us probably take for granted around our homes—things that we do not even notice—make getting around for some of those individuals an insurmountable challenge. Things as simple as a step at your front door can be a challenge for many elderly Queenslanders. That is why the Queensland Building Plan adopted by our government and industry in 2017 promoted a national approach to introducing accessibility standards for new homes and apartments. In April 2021 this commitment was delivered when a majority of building ministers nationally agreed to include a minimum accessibility standard for new housing in the National Construction Code. These technical provisions meet the silver standard of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines and include features that include at least one step-free entrance door, wider internal doors and corridors and a toilet on the ground level or on entry level.

I want to make this really clear to the committee: this does not mean that new homes will somehow resemble disabled amenity in a public building at all, and I think to suggest so is an insult to every architect and designer in this state. It also will not mean that construction costs will go through the roof either as—

**Mr MANDER:** That is not what industry says.

**CHAIR:** Member!

**Mr de BRENNI:** It will not mean that construction costs will go through the roof either, as those opposed to the reforms will claim. In fact, the Australian Building Codes Board estimates that these features would be an insignificant cost up-front and, if anything at all, would be significantly reduced compared to the almost 20 times cost to retrofit. By not having to retrofit, I am advised that these reforms could save home owners around \$58,000, but of course the cost to society through inequity, demands on social housing and homelessness and family dislocation are far, far greater. Any decent building designer or architect can incorporate the basic but meaningful features, and many already do. They have been incorporated into new motels and hotels since 2011 in order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. There will of course be some sensible exemptions for building scenarios such as on steep blocks and designs like the iconic Queenslanders built on stilts, for example, and my department has met with key industry stakeholders to discuss those necessary exemptions to ensure the appropriate transition time frames and best practice design are put in place. It is important with our ageing population and critical that Queensland's housing stock is designed to support the future needs of Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will now return to non-government questions. I assume we are going to the member for Everton.

**Mr MILLAR:** Yes, we are, Chair.

**Mr MANDER:** I have a question for the commissioner of the QBCC. Commissioner, how many active tribunal and court cases is the QBCC currently involved in and what costs are associated with those actions in the last financial year?

**Mr Bassett:** I will go to the second part of the member's question first. The QBCC has a number of instances where we are assisting the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal make a decision as a result of appeals that have either been made by various licensees or home owners. I will just get the specific stats for the member. I do not have in front of me but will attempt to get it by the end of the session today the response to the first part of the member's question with regard to how many.

In respect of legal costs, the amounts that we spent—that is, the QBCC spent—in the financial year 2020-21 on external legal and barrister fees, which are rounded to the nearest \$1,000, is \$3,854,000. Those fees will include legal firms that are engaged by the commission to undertake a broad range of legal work. This does include the provision of advice to support both the regulatory and wider operational needs of the organisation and the conduct of a range of civil proceedings such as those before the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

**Mr MANDER:** Commissioner, could you advise what the figure was for the previous year?

**Mr Bassett:** I thank the member for the question. For the financial year 2019-20, the external legal and barrister fees, rounded to the nearest \$1,000, is \$3,286,000.

**Mr MANDER:** Commissioner, just referring to page 26 of the SDS where it looks at total FTEs, I just want to get clarification on this. There is an estimated figure in 2020-21 of 526 staff. The question on notice along a similar line came back with 513.49. I assume the latter figure is the now confirmed figure whereas the first figure was the estimated figure; would that be a correct assumption?

**Mr Bassett:** Just so I do not mislead the committee, member, could I ask you to step me through it? There are quite a lot of stats there. I want to make sure I get it right.

**Mr MANDER:** Sure. On page 26 of the SDS it has a total FTE for 2020-21 estimated actual 526. Then there was a question on notice about staffing. I think it was question NG06, and the staffing there for 2020-21 is 513.49, which seems to be a very precise figure so I am assuming that is the accurate figure; is that right?

**Mr Bassett:** The actual budgeted number of FTEs for the 2020-21 year is actually 561. Obviously there might be some fluctuation from time to time. The specific response to the member's question is yes, that is correct.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, in that SDS we are referring to there, page 26, there are 561 staff that are estimated to be in the QBCC at the end of this financial year. That is actually, compared to the figures in 2015-16, a 40 per cent increase in staff of the QBCC over the last six years. Could you justify that increase of numbers, particularly considering, I would think, that the Public Service growth increase has been around 15 per cent?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I mentioned before that there are 45 per cent more buildings being constructed in Queensland than there were in the previous year. The government has also delivered many reforms under the Queensland Building Plan that members would be familiar with. We have approved increases to staffing of the building commission to support the delivery of important functions designed to keep Queenslanders safe and to maintain investor confidence here in Queensland, including important work around nonconforming building products. That has been a significant function of the commission in cooperation with the Department of Energy and Public Works and, of course, with licensees. We have asked the Building and Construction Commission to play a significant role in supporting our security-of-payment reforms.

The member would have heard in the government question just a moment ago that we are transferring oversight of the project trust account framework from the government to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. There are more licensees in Queensland today than there ever has been. There are more homes and buildings being constructed than there ever has been. There are more occupational licensees than there ever has been. I think it is clear that for the success of the Queensland building industry, one that is absolutely thriving at the moment, in which many Queenslanders look forward to a safe and secure job in that industry, it is critical that we support that through an effective building regulatory authority.

The Queensland Building and Construction Commission is the lead building regulatory authority in the nation. The reforms that it is responsible for administering and regulating, be they in building products, around licensing, around security of payments, are nation leading and are based on recommendations of reports and investigations commissioned nationally by building ministers, including the Commonwealth. The commission has been internationally recognised by the inquiry into the Grenfell tragedy as the pre-eminent regulator of the building industry. That is why investors come to

build here in Queensland. That is why Queensland tradies are safe. That is why insolvencies in the Queensland building industry are at record lows. It is why payment disputes are at record lows. To deliver those results the increase in the staff at the commission is entirely justifiable, yes.

**Mr MANDER:** We will move from an area where jobs have increased to an area where jobs will be going and that is in the fire licensing sector. I have questions to the director-general. Director-general, what research was conducted to assess the impact of the changes that the minister has made to the fire licensing sector on small fire protection businesses?

**Mr Purtil:** My understanding of the process since I have been involved in this portfolio agency is there has been a continuation of widespread consultation across all interested sectors. That has included a range of different peak bodies across the board, and that consultation continues at the moment as well. Although I am sure you are probably more aware than I am of the longer history of that work initiating back to 2015, in May 2019 the Ministerial Construction Council hosted by the minister established the fire protection licensing compliance subcommittee and that constituted a range of representatives from across interested industry groups, air-conditioning and mechanical contractors, a whole host of interested parties, and that work continues on and is integrated into their BIFOLA work, the building industry fairness and other legislation amendment legislation, which implemented new changes and that iterative process continues.

In September of 2020, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation brought in fire protection licensing amendments and the process continues on. There has been a broad range of consultation over that period of time and I think all stakeholders, I hope, have been afforded the opportunity to provide input into that process, and that continues.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you, Director-General. I cannot agree with that, but thank you for the answer. Minister, you have been inundated, as I have been and as I think every member of this committee has been, with inquiries from people from small fire protection companies who believe that their futures are at risk because of your legislation. Your changes are forcing experienced QBCC licensees in their fifties and sixties to start apprenticeships despite the fact that they have done this job competently and without incident for decades. Why would you not make the transition period the same time as it takes for these people to upgrade their skills?

**Mr de BRENNI:** With the Chair's indulgence, it might be helpful for me to provide a slightly elongated answer to this and just answer it once. I am sure that the member for Everton, based on his previous form in and around the parliamentary precinct, would like to ask a number of questions about this but I want to provide—

**Mr MANDER:** The small businesses want me to ask questions, Minister; the people who believe that their jobs are at risk.

**CHAIR:** Member, I understand that and you have already asked your question. I was listening to the minister's previous answer, which I think went some way towards answering this.

**Mr MANDER:** Mr Chair, I do not appreciate the inference from the minister.

**CHAIR:** That is understood, member for Everton, but you have had a fair few inferences in your questions and I have let those go as well. Tit for tat. Minister?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, I was recalling the fact that, during a condolence motion in the Legislative Assembly, the member for Everton initiated a rally outside the parliament—

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair: it is completely irrelevant.

**Mr MANDER:** I find that offensive. It is not funny, member for Mount Ommaney.

**Mr de BRENNI:** It is what happened, member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** I heard you give a bit of a cackle.

**CHAIR:** Member, stop that right now. Who had the first point of order? Member for Toowoomba North, what is your point of order?

**Mr WATTS:** I think that the proceedings of the House at some point in history are irrelevant to the answer to this question.

**CHAIR:** That is your point of order, thank you. Who had the next point of order? Member for Everton?

**Mr MANDER:** I did not. I just had a—

**CHAIR:** You just had a spray. We will not have any more of those. We will move on from what happened in the House that day. I think we are all aware of what happened.

**Ms PUGH:** I have a point of order, Chair. I am offended by the member's comments and I want them withdrawn.

**Mr MANDER:** I withdraw.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I think we are back on deck and we can continue with the minister's answer.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Under the previous fire protection framework, licensees with a certificate II could perform unrestricted inspect-and-test activities on any kind of fire hydrant or hose reel systems. On 1 May 2021 those licensees transitioned to an amalgamated install-and-maintain licence. This broadened their former scope of work in some respects. However, a different qualification and skill set with increased technical experience is now needed to work on pumped systems and to carry out the annual inspection and testing of fire hydrant systems. I remind members that that is the type of fire protection system that protects this building, including the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council chambers. In response to industry feedback, prior to commencement additional transitional arrangements have been put in place—I can confirm they have been put in place—to support existing licensees. The scope of work for the former hydrant and hose reel inspect-and-test licence class was extended by six months.

**Mr MANDER:** It takes three years to get a qualification.

**CHAIR:** Member, please stop the interjections. The minister is answering your question.

**Mr de BRENNI:** This means that licensees can continue carrying out their former scope of work until 1 November 2021 when they will fully transition to the new fire protection licensing framework. To continue working on pumped systems from 1 November 2021, licensees will need an install-and-maintain licence under the new water-based fire systems stream. As I mentioned earlier, that is a stream that was designed in consultation with the industry over the course of five years, including with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. The qualification requirement for this licence is to hold a certificate III in fire protection.

During the six-month transition period, we have ensured that licensees have a range of options to demonstrate their competencies. This is particularly important for those licensees who have been working in the profession for some time. They can access recognition of prior learning to complete the certificate III in full or in part—any registered training organisation that offers the certificate III can also facilitate recognition of prior learning and I understand there are currently three RTOs doing so in Queensland; or they can enrol in a certificate III—an employee can carry out fire protection work as an apprentice without a licence, which is a longstanding provision of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991, section 42C(3)(c); or they could consider adjustments to their business model. A certificate III in fire protection is a nationally recognised qualification that reflects the qualified role of a person installing, testing, maintaining through routine service and repairing a range of fire protection systems.

I want to explain to the committee the types of competencies that industry has decided are appropriate for holding this licence: to be able to complete a functional water flow proving the load test on water-based fire suppression systems; verification that complex water-based fire suppression system equipment functions as designed for class 2 to 9 buildings greater than 5,000 square metres; perform water pressure testing on water-based fire suppression systems to establish the integrity of the system; and, importantly, conduct routine servicing to maintain and repair fire hydrant and hose reel installations in accordance with Australian Standard 1851. As I mentioned earlier, that standard is caught up through legislation.

For large complex systems, licensees can be dealing with tonnes of water discharged within minutes. If a system fails during a test and the licensee lacks the skills and knowledge to respond, that can result in catastrophic damage to the hydrant system—

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, they have done it for decades without incident.

**CHAIR:** Member, can you stop your interjections, please. The minister is answering your question. I am quite interested in the answer.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Fire hydrants and fire protection systems are the most significant weapons in a firefighter's arsenal should a fire break out. The risks of substandard work to life, safety and property further underpin the need for licensees who work on those systems to be suitably qualified. It is important to remember that the changes to the fire protection licensing framework, including the technical qualifications, are the result, as I said, of five years work. A draft framework, as the DG mentioned, was developed in consultation with a group and was circulated for public feedback during the Queensland Building Plan roadshows in 2017. We have listened to the concerns of licensees. I

have met with those licensees. Those licensees specifically requested a six-month extension to the transition framework and we agreed with that request and made a six-month extension to that framework. Ultimately, the new framework is modern, it is rationalised, it is fit for purpose and it will improve the standard of fire protection work in Queensland by ensuring licensees have the necessary competencies and skills.

**CHAIR:** To round off, I was going to give you one more question but I think that was a pretty fulsome answer. Let us see where you go with the question.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, let us be honest: you have introduced these laws to shut down small business and benefit large unionised workforces. That is why they are pounding the doors of electorate offices, saying that they want a change. They are not happy. Despite what you are saying, they are not happy because they believe their businesses will be forced to shut.

**CHAIR:** Member, is there a question?

**Mr MANDER:** I have finished, thank you.

**CHAIR:** So you just wanted to make a lengthy statement. We will now move to government questions and the member for Ipswich.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, recent consumer surveys have found that up to 54 per cent of Queenslanders will look to purchase an electric vehicle for their next car. Will you outline how the Palaszczuk government is leading the way on electric vehicles and supporting the development of this industry through the electrification of the government vehicle fleet?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The Palaszczuk government is determined to be a national leader in many things and that includes developing clean energy transport solutions. Understanding that the electric vehicle revolution was coming, in 2017 we took the initial steps to prepare Queensland for the uptake of EVs, with the Future is Electric: Queensland's Electric Vehicle Strategy. A year later we released the QFleet Electric Vehicle Transition Strategy to plan for the decarbonisation of the government fleet. Incidentally, just last month we celebrated the 30th anniversary of QFleet and QFleet's first general manager, Les Clarence, told me that since day 1 QFleet has always planned for the lowest possible emissions fleet. Queensland was the first jurisdiction to hire an environmental manager. That move helped negotiate the import of the first hybrid cars in 1999, months before they came onto the Australian market.

None of that would have been possible, of course, if the Borbidge LNP government had sold off QFleet, because we know that sales of publicly owned institutions are in their DNA. One of the Beattie government's first cabinet decisions was to save QFleet. In 2008 they even set an emissions target for QFleet—something that the Prime Minister of this nation still refuses to do. Under the Palaszczuk government the number of EVs has doubled year on year in the government fleet since 2018. I can report to the committee that right now there are 100 EVs being driven by our palliative care nurses, our TAFE teachers and our other frontline staff delivering vital services to Queenslanders.

I can also report there are a further 24 EVs on order, putting us well on track to meet our target of 144 by year's end. When you compare QFleet's annual 100 per cent year-on-year increase to EVs to the national uptake of a mere 2.7 per cent, it is clear which government is doing the heavy lifting in transport decarbonisation. Our fleet currently includes EV models from Hyundai, Nissan, MG, Renault, Mitsubishi and Tesla, with more models to be added as they become available to the Australian market.

The increasing numbers of electric vehicles in the government fleet also means that after two to three years of service, the vehicles will be replaced and go directly to QFleet's public auctions. There, Queenslanders have the opportunity to purchase a good quality, well maintained electric vehicle at an affordable price.

Queenslanders who upgrade to electric vehicles can also take advantage of the Queensland Electric Super Highway, the world's longest electric super highway in a single state. There are now 31 fast-charging sites already in operation, strategically located between Coolangatta and Port Douglas, all using renewable energy. We are continuing to add to Queensland's Electric Super Highway and I want to acknowledge the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for investing a further \$2.75 million to boost the number of charging stations to 49, almost doubling the length of the Electric Super Highway to 3,800 kilometres, the longest EV highway in a single state in the world.

A QFleet car recently completed a return journey from Brisbane to Cairns using the Electric Super Highway. Hyundai Kona completed the journey without a hitch and the total charging cost for the 3,999 kilometres of the journey was only \$107.

The next phase of the Electric Super Highway will provide an additional 18 charging stations enabling Queenslanders to confidently drive their EVs to more regional and rural locations. Sites being considered include Barcaldine, Charleville, Emerald, Goondiwindi, Mount Isa and Winton.



Queenslanders expect governments to lead by example and that is exactly what we are doing. We are leading here in Queensland on the national policy debate when it comes to transitioning to electric vehicles, in the absence of any federal leadership or policies from the LNP. I want to reflect on the history of QFleet. In fact, it was the LNP who stripped QFleet of its three EVs in 2012—actually disposed of them. Not just driving with the handbrake on; in fact, the LNP were driving in reverse when it came to electric vehicles.

It does not get much worse than the Morrison government. They are a government with its fingers in its ears. Volkswagen has just warned that Australia's regulatory backwardness is seeing us become an automotive Third World. Bloomberg lists Australia's efforts to decarbonise road and transport as some of the worst in the developed world. The Australia Institute says the Morrison government refuses to lead in any meaningful way, leaving more Australians locked out of the electric car market. It seems that not only does the pm not hold a hose, he does not hold an EV charger either.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, I know that that we are all thinking of the people of Cairns this week with their lockdown and we know that they have been hit particularly hard by the global pandemic. They are continuing to suffer while the Morrison government fails to deliver on the vaccines and the quarantines that Queenslanders need. Can you please outline how the Palaszczuk government and your department is supporting the Cairns economic recovery?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I think we all understand just how tough the Cairns community and economy is doing right at the moment. We are all thinking of our friends in the Far North in their second day of lockdown to stop the spread of the Delta strain of COVID. Even before this latest outbreak, Cairns businesses were feeling the loss of an estimated 800,000 international tourists who normally visit each year. That represents a billion-dollar hit to the Cairns economy. To make matters worse, the reckless end of JobKeeper on 28 March just rubs salt into the wound of tourism communities. Unlike the Morrison government, we did not and we will not turn our back on Cairns in the Far North. We now see half of our nation in lockdown because of the Morrison government's failure to vaccinate and quarantine Australians.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair: what is the relevance of this? He is talking about vaccines.

**CHAIR:** We are talking about Cairns and tourism and how it will help. I believe the question is relevant. You went to federal stuff before. It is a question from us, not from you.

**Mr MILLAR:** I thought he was the minister for public works.

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, member, we are talking about Cairns and if you had listened to the question, you would understand the relevance.

**Mr de BRENNI:** It is clear to all Australians that the Prime Minister had two jobs—vaccine and quarantine—and he has failed at both of them. He has failed at both of them because he puts the welfare of himself first and humans last.

In stark contrast, this Labor government will always put Queenslanders first, put people first. In fact, we are backing Far North Queenslanders by delivering the bigger, better Cairns Convention Centre. It is a major focus of the Palaszczuk government's COVID-19 economic recovery plan since December. I have had the opportunity to inspect the site three times. I can confirm our government's \$176 million investment is delivering and delivering big for Cairns locals. There is a 606-strong local workforce. There are 63 local trade packages awarded. Our Buy Queensland procurement approach has done exactly what it is supposed to do, and that is to create and support decent local jobs.

For example, I got the chance to meet Leanne and Anthony Dunlea who are owners of a great local tiling company known as Only Floors. They doubled their workforce when they were awarded the contract to lay 4,000 square metres of tiles around the centre. Their first-year apprentice, Blake, is one of 49 to start their careers on this signature project so far. That is something of which we are incredibly proud.

Members, you know what else is important to our approach to major projects? Just like Blake, every one of the 600 local workers on the Cairns Convention Centre site has rightfully earned good quality wages and conditions afforded to them by our best-practice principles. As a result of decent wages, Blake has earned through our best-practice principles under our Buy Queensland procurement policy, he is able to return much of that money to his local economy. That is a win for his local retail and hospitality outlets.

We have also smashed the 10 per cent local workforce target of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders by achieving 11 per cent. I acknowledge local Indigenous companies like InterGLAZE who supplied all the internal metal work, things like balustrades and handrails.

The good news is that the refurbishment phase has already been completed and the Cairns Convention Centre reopened its doors on 12 May. Since then, it has played host to the likes of the Australian Banana Industry Congress, Ten Tenors and Professional Bull Riders International. We have got the functions and events market back on its feet in North Queensland, pumping vital dollars into the local economy, and all the while construction continues on the 10,500 square metre expansion.

As the expansion works ramp up, there will be even more opportunities for Cairns businesses and local workers right through until its completion in 2022. There will be a large undercover tropically planted forecourt and expanded main entry lobby, a 410-seat lecture space, three 120-seat meeting rooms, and a new exhibition space for up to 30 display booths. I can advise that just last month, the 24 metre tower crane went up to help the project soar to new heights. It is truly a project being built by locals for locals at a time when they need it most.

I conclude my answer by again letting everyone in Cairns and Yarrabah know that we are thinking of them. I know that they are stepping up, as Queenslanders always do, to get tested, to stay home and to stay safe.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, we have seen the horrible impacts that combustible cladding can have around the world. Will you update the committee on the steps the Palaszczuk government is taking to keep Queenslanders safe in their homes and workplaces?

**Mr de BRENNI:** All Queenslanders have the right to feel safe and secure in their environments where they work, live and visit. I mentioned before the terrible Grenfell Tower tragedy where 72 people lost their lives due to a fire fuelled by combustible cladding. More recently, we saw as well the 12-storey unit tower collapse in Miami, Florida, with the current death toll standing at 98. The dangers of non-conforming building products and inadequate design and construction cannot be understated because, unfortunately, the consequences of those often kill people.

We take our responsibility to keeping Queenslanders safe extremely seriously. That is why our building regulator proactively inspected 1,187 construction sites last financial year. I acknowledge the work of the commission in ensuring that is the case. It is also why in 2017 our government passed chain of responsibility laws in parliament to hold all participants in the supply chain accountable for the standards of products used in our built environment.

One of the products we focused on was combustible cladding for which the Grenfell Tower inquiry recognised the Palaszczuk government as the global leader in addressing. When the issue of combustible cladding hit home, we had already acted quickly. Our government is already progressively rectifying government buildings that require it. I can report to the committee that, as at 30 June 2021, 79 per cent of our buildings have already been rectified, cleared or in the process of rectification. To support private building owners to make their property safe, we established the Safer Buildings combustible cladding checklist to help them identify whether their building may potentially have combustible cladding.

I can provide an update to the committee on the progress of the Safer Buildings program. As at 26 July, over 17,700 buildings have been cleared with no cladding fire risk; 1,291 remain going through the process; and it has been identified that 846 will require some form of rectification and may require interim mitigation. I want to acknowledge and thank all of the building owners who have been working cooperatively with our government and the building commission through this process.

While we know the scale of the problem is limited in Queensland, we are taking action to ensure it remains that way. We have taken nation-leading action to ban combustible cladding being used. In 2019 we introduced a ban on the use of OCP products to 30 per cent on any buildings. These bans ensure products are not used in construction, keeping Queensland tradies safe. We have worked in partnership with the University of Queensland to develop a comprehensive cladding materials library. In the interests of safety, we are sharing that information as widely as possible.

I conclude by comparing the number of buildings investigated in Queensland. In Queensland, over 19,900 buildings have been investigated through the Safer Buildings program. In Victoria, just 2,227 buildings have been dealt with through their scope. That is a terrific job by the regulator and building owners here in Queensland.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, the Palaszczuk government has made strong commitments about ensuring taxpayer money supports Queensland workers and Queensland businesses. Can you please update the committee on how the government is ensuring that government investment achieves this commitment?

**Mr de BRENNI:** We always put Queenslanders and Queensland jobs first. Our Buy Queensland procurement approach has ensured that the government's significant investment in goods and services supports as many local jobs and businesses as possible. Since the launch of Buy Queensland in 2017,

over \$36 billion has been invested with more than 57,990 Queensland businesses, and over 81 per cent of government suppliers are now based in Queensland. There is little doubt that our Buy Queensland strategy has worked hand in hand with the Palaszczuk government's COVID-19 economic recovery plan, a plan that is working.

The latest ABS labour force figures show Queensland's unemployment rate is the lowest in 12 years. Under our government, 354,100 Queensland jobs have been created. That is 101,600 more than the pre-COVID figures. Domestic economic growth in Queensland has outstripped the rest of Australia, with state final demand up three per cent from March 2020. From July to December last year, 28.5 per cent of government investment was with Queensland's small and medium enterprises, exceeding our target of 25 per cent. That puts \$2.6 billion back into the pockets of Queensland businesses. We are driving these outcomes through our Queensland procurement policy using local benefits tests, looking at value for money more holistically, taking into account not just cost and non-cost factors but also looking at economic, environmental and social objectives.

The Buy Queensland approach was also recently enhanced to reinforce the focus on local workforces supporting Queensland food and beverage by strengthening the Buy Queensland first food and beverage commitment and referring government buyers through to the food and beverage supply network to help identify suppliers and support Queensland farmers. Buy Queensland is also reinforced by a strong compliance approach to ensure a level playing field where government suppliers and agencies meet their commitments under the Queensland procurement policy.

Additional resources announced in this year's budget will significantly enhance our compliance approach to elevate levels of audits and investigations. Our compliance branch will be made up of 28 officers to continue to improve levels of compliance and as a result improve the quality of jobs and safety of workplaces through Buy Queensland. The data collected from audits, investigations and complaints also informs guidance material and policy development, enabling continuous improvement and compliance with the Queensland procurement policy and delivery of the Buy Queensland approach.

**Ms HOWARD:** Minister, we have talked a lot about the booming construction industry in Queensland. I am certainly seeing it a lot out my way in the Ripley Valley. Are you able to update the committee on what measures the government is taking to ensure the financial viability of the construction industry?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The member is right: there is a vibrant construction industry in all parts of Queensland, but it is important now more than ever to ensure that the tradies performing that work are paid for the work they do. They need to know that the builder they work for is able to pay them. That is why we reversed the reckless changes made by the LNP and reintroduced mandatory financial reporting for Queensland's licensed contractors.

The QBCC now has a direct line of sight to companies that may be in trouble and not able to pay their subbies or suppliers. In 2018, the minimum financial requirements for licensing became the strongest regulatory package of its kind in Australia. We reinstated annual reporting. Larger licensees must now notify earlier if assets decrease. There are stricter accountancy standards and clarity about the assets that can be included in the assessments. Since January 2019, the net tangible asset positions of large licensees in Queensland have increased by approximately \$1.3 billion. That is \$1.3 billion back on the balance sheets of Queensland businesses. The number of moneys owed complaints received by the QBCC has decreased from 1,395 in 2018 to half that—729—in 2021.

In 2020-21, \$3.9 million was recovered for creditors through the moneys owed complaints process. The number of current and former licensees that entered into a form of insolvency has reached its lowest point in seven years. In 2021, it dropped down to 103. That is a very strong result for the sector, down from 375 when the Palaszczuk government came to office in 2015.

The industry is overwhelmingly doing the right thing, with reported compliance for category 4 to 7 licensees at 100 per cent and 99 per cent for category 1 to 3 licensees. Self-certifying class 1 and 2 licensees have responded strongly as well to the reporting obligations, with 83 per cent of licensees meeting their obligations. Those who have not provided their information have been reminded on several occasions of their reporting obligation that consequences of not reporting can include licence cancellation, and education materials around new minimum financial requirements and licensing are available to support industry.

I mentioned earlier that the new project trust account framework will be commencing. The total value of project bank accounts now stands at \$1.27 billion. There are already 37 project trust accounts underway and 18 retention trust accounts, with a total value of open trust accounts growing at now \$144 million.

Looking forward, government will continue to support industry through the pandemic by implementing a range of initiatives including fast-tracking payments on government projects, continuing to implement the Queensland Building Plan and priority reforms, and establishing a collaborative industry government working group to raise awareness of potential supply chain issues and develop solutions.

It is no wonder that building approvals in this state are up 49.5 per cent on this time last year. There are more building companies in Queensland right now than ever before and, importantly and positively, that equals more jobs for Queensland tradies.

**CHAIR:** We will now return to non-government questions. Member for Gregory, how do you want to direct traffic?

**Mr MILLAR:** I defer to the member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, has your department done any financial modelling on the impact of best practice principles on the increased cost to government infrastructure projects?

**Mr Purtill:** Depending on exactly what you mean by financial modelling, I think the answer would be no.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, what would Queensland taxpayers save if your policy of best practice principles was not mandated for the construction of vital Olympic Games infrastructure?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The inferences in the member's question, Chair, are once again inaccurate. The member is making assumptions that companies that might seek to partner with the Queensland government under the delivery of critical infrastructure do not ordinarily meet best practice principles. All our best practice principles do is set a minimum threshold. There are many companies that already provide those sorts of conditions to their workforce. We feel that setting that minimum threshold ensures that critical infrastructure delivers value for money for Queenslanders.

Best practice principles led to the employment of apprentice Blake, who was the young tiler who got his start on the Cairns Convention Centre. I think all Queenslanders would prefer to see significant government projects give an opportunity to kids like Blake. It is best practice principles that have set a target of 10 per cent employment on the Cairns Convention Centre, for instance. I think all Queenslanders are incredibly supportive of opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and young apprentices. I am unsure why the LNP has a problem with that.

It ensures that our workplace health and safety standards are of the best possible standard. It ensures that local companies in the communities in which those infrastructure projects are delivered are the preferred tenderers for those projects. Particularly in regional Queensland, I think that all Queenslanders and people living in those communities would expect our government to invest in that way. That is how our best practice principles work.

Our conditions make sure that tradies across Queensland get a fair go. They set a benchmark and a threshold. They are not about unnecessarily increasing costs. We are very proud of our significant infrastructure investment pipeline. We are proud that Queensland's economy is recovering from the COVID pandemic. It has continued to grow. Unemployment continues to reduce, and the establishment of best practice principles on our major infrastructure projects has delivered those outcomes.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, you do not concede that best practice principles increase the construction costs of government infrastructure projects?

**CHAIR:** That is a bit theoretical and hypothetical. Minister, feel free to answer in any way you want.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The best practice principles, as I have mentioned and outlined, ensure that there are high standards of workplace health and safety. I query whether or not the member supports safe, secure jobs for Queenslanders. The best practice principles ensure that Queensland businesses, those in regional areas particularly, benefit from our infrastructure. I am confused as to whether or not the LNP has some sort of problem with that. I am confused about whether the member does or does not support training for tradies, retaining quality workers and delivering infrastructure right across Queensland. We do not apologise for delivering jobs and economic activity for Queenslanders. We do not apologise for ensuring that our investment in infrastructure supports some of the most important projects happening in regional communities in particular, for example, the Cairns Convention Centre. We do not apologise for ensuring that workers like young Blake get a decent wage, returning that wage to his local retail and hospitality sectors and other parts of the local economy.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, after championing best practice principles do you receive a standing ovation at every CFMEU meeting you attend?

**CHAIR:** Member, come on. Do you have a real question?

**Mr MANDER:** That is a real question. This is a policy that has benefitted the trade union movement, particularly the CFMEU. The minister must be regarded as a champion of the union movement.

**CHAIR:** Have a think about what you just said. Do you really want an answer to that question? I am pretty sure I know what the answer is going to be. With the inference and everything that you have put in that question, Minister, you are at liberty to answer.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair. Members of our government regularly receive standing ovations from working people, whether they be in the construction industry or in any other industry. I have seen it many times. I have seen the Premier, the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier—

**Mr MANDER:** You do not receive it in the building industry.

**CHAIR:** Member, you asked a question and you left it open. It is an own goal. Continue, Minister.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Universally across the Palaszczuk ministry I have seen ministers receive ovations and applause for the policy initiatives that have kept Queenslanders safe, kept our economy strong and kept Queenslanders in jobs. I can assure the member for Everton that there are no standing ovations anywhere in this state for any of the policies he has ever espoused.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, there is time for another question. Can you make it a question regarding the budget?

**Mr MANDER:** I am just going to quickly go to the buildings codes issue. Minister, have you considered a more targeted approach such as grants or rebates to those home builders who want accessible housing standards rather than putting an imposition on every new home builder?

**Mr de BRENNI:** It does not surprise me that the LNP does not support reform that delivers a community that is inclusive; they do not support reforms that provide accessibility for people with a disability; they do not support reforms that provide dignity for elderly Queenslanders. It does not surprise me at all. A majority of state and territory building ministers considered their regulatory impact assessment of this—

**Mr MANDER:** A majority?

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, can you please stop your continual interjections. It has been a long day. It is going to be longer. We are nearing the end of this session. Use your 'inside voice' for a minute.

**Mr de BRENNI:** What detractors like the member for Everton fail to understand is that this life-changing reform goes to social, ethical and human rights benefits and more than just cost. What is hard to quantify is the dignity that all ageing Queenslanders will live with through these important reforms. What is also clear is that the voluntary approach was a conclusive failure. Despite an aspirational target for all new housing to be accessible, today only five to 10 per cent of new housing is accessible. Finding a suitable rental home or home to purchase is incredibly challenging for the 3.8 million seniors in our nation and 4.4 million Australians with mobility related disability. Let the record show that the member for Everton, a representative of the LNP and shadow minister, does not support accessible housing for 3.8 million seniors and 4.4 million Australians.

**Mr MANDER:** That is not true.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The upfront inclusion of these features I mentioned is significantly cheaper than imposing a retrofit at some 20 times the cost. Member for Everton, don't just take my word for it. I would like to reflect on other supporters of this initiative. I want to quote from a letter that states—

Council remains committed to delivering our vision for a city which is inclusive and accessible for all members of our community.

As part of this commitment, Council has incentivised the delivery of accessible housing ... This incentive offers a financial payment, equal to 33% of the infrastructure charges calculated by Council, for development meeting Gold or Platinum Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.

I am looking forward to hearing the outcome of the Australian Building Codes Board's review and I support amendments to the National Construction Code to mandate accessibility requirements for all dwellings to a minimum of the Gold/Silver level in the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.

...

Yours sincerely

Adrian Schrinner

**LORD MAYOR**

I welcome the Lord Mayor's recognition that whilst his council has considered targeted financial payments he is instead looking forward to amendments to the National Construction Code for the purpose of mandating accessibility. That is what will happen. That is supported by Australians. I am very confident that Australian architects and designers can deliver a high quality product without the imposition of significant costs.

**CHAIR:** We will now move to crossbench questioning.

**Mr WATTS:** Chair, while we do the COVID changeover could I ask if Mr Bassett has received the number that he was going to get for us or whether that should go on notice?

**CHAIR:** He was going to do that at the end of the session, but I am happy to do it now.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I understand the commissioner has that information.

**CHAIR:** Mr Bassett, if you could just quickly give us the number.

**Mr Bassett:** I can confirm that the QBCC current tribunal active cases are as follows: 326 current review proceedings in QCAT in which QBCC is a party; 15 appeal proceedings in what is called QCATA in which the QBCC is a party; and one disciplinary proceeding in QCAT in which the QBCC is a party.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Commissioner. Member for Maiwar, welcome. There is not much time, but if you could please ask your question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will put this one to the director-general. We have already heard from the minister a bit about combustible cladding and what is going on in that space, but I have a question specifically on fire safety risk assessments of buildings in Queensland to determine whether cladding is deemed combustible under the building regulation. What is the government's rationale for requiring AS1530.1, which is component testing only, rather than the more comprehensive and recent Australian Standard 5113 for full-scale testing of all components together as they would be used in the built environment?

**Mr Purtill:** I will confess that once you started to cite the Australian standards it made me deflect to my deputy director-general of building, if that is all right.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Yes.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Through you, Chair, this is a question that has been dealt with in correspondence with many members of this House. It is an incredibly technical question. The procedures for technical questions in relation to policy matters dating back to decisions a couple of years ago would mean this would more appropriately be dealt with by a question on notice. To go to the—

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am happy for the question to be taken on notice.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I just want to make the point, Chair, that in consideration of the appropriation bills I fail to see how there is anything in the appropriation bills that impacts on a framework for fire inspections and testings—

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. With the time we have left, I suggest the member could ask a question on notice in the House on that one. Do you have another question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will put another question to the director-general, although the acting director-general seemed willing to take that one, but I will move on. In conducting fire safety risk assessments of cladding in government owned assets—including, for example, the PA Hospital and the Queensland Children's Hospital—has that more recent AS5113 testing standard been applied?

**Mr Atkins:** I do not have an answer for that. I would have to take that on notice.

**CHAIR:** The minister would have to take anything on notice.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The investigations into the PA Hospital happened several years ago, and there is nothing in either the previous budget or this budget related to the member's question. I am certainly happy to engage with the member in relation to the rollout of the remainder of the Safer Buildings program. Investigations into the locations that he specifically asked about and the standards applied at that time are not matters that pertain to the current Appropriation Bill.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for the clarification, Minister. There is time for one more quick question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** We will try again. A couple of months ago the *Courier-Mail* reported a QBCC audit and investigation into glass balustrades that was finalised in 2019 but had not yet been released. My question is to the minister this time. Minister, will you release that report so Queenslanders can properly understand the QBCC's recommendations and the potential risks posed by glass balustrades in their homes?

**CHAIR:** Minister, in answering that, be cognisant that we are out of time so if you could be brief.

**Mr de BRENNI:** In response to the question, the commission conducts regular investigations into nonconforming building products. There would have to be, speaking generally, dozens of nonconforming building product investigations at any one time into a range of building products, including glass balustrades and a range of other components, be they electrical, roofing, plumbing et cetera. If there is a decision of the commission in its functions that requires builders to take a particular type of action, then the commission provides that information to the building industry by way of regular communiques. Action in respect of that will be communicated to the industry at the appropriate time and that happens on a regular basis.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed estimates of expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement has expired. Minister, on behalf of the committee, I thank you, the directors-general and officials for your attendance. Do you want to say a few words of thanks?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, in the interests of time, I want to thank you, the committee members and the visiting MPs for the interest they have shown in my portfolio areas. I do genuinely extend the invitation, if they are willing or interested to do so, to continue to engage with us in relation to any of my portfolio areas following the estimates hearing. I acknowledge that, for members of the committee and parliament, preparing for estimates is a significant undertaking. I would like to thank the director-general and his team, the entire Department of Energy and Public Works, the relevant Queensland publicly owned energy company representatives that have joined us today, the commissioner of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and of course my ministerial office. Finally of course I thank the ever-important and outstanding parliamentary staff.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The committee will now take a break. The hearing will resume at 5.30 pm for examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Resources.

**Proceedings suspended from 5.15 pm to 5.30 pm.**

## ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—RESOURCES

### In Attendance

Hon. SJ Stewart, Minister for Resources

Mr B Murphy, Chief of Staff

#### Department of Resources

Mr M Kaiser, Director-General

Mr S Ferris, Deputy Director-General, Georesources

Mr W Kearnan, Deputy Director-General, Lands


Ms Katrina Platt, Chief Finance Officer and Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Operations, Business and Corporate Partnership

#### GasFields Commission Queensland

Mr W Squire, Acting Chief Executive Officer

#### Resources Safety & Health Queensland

Mr M Stone, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio of the Minister for Resources until 8.15 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 7 pm to 7.15 pm. I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. Certain staff who are assisting witnesses here today have been permitted to use their mobile phones for this purpose. I do ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode. In line with the COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline issued by the Chief Health Officer, I remind everyone to maintain social distancing while in this chamber. Face masks are to be worn at all times and removed only to speak during the proceedings. The COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline is available from the secretariat.

Some members and witnesses will be participating via videoconference. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of resources open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Mr STEWART:** Thank you, Chair, and members of the committee. I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I am joined here today by my chief of staff, Brett Murphy; my director-general, Mike Kaiser; my deputy director-generals, Shaun Ferris and Wally Kearnan; acting deputy director-general, Chantal Llorca; and chief finance officer, Katrina Platt. We also have the Chief Executive Officer of Resources Safety & Health Queensland, Mark Stone; acting Chief Executive Officer of the GasFields Commission, Warwick Squire; and Land Access Ombudsman, Jane Pires.

The resource industry has been a key pillar throughout Queensland's history and continues to underpin our economy. This sector has shown how important it is throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic and has continued to thrive and grow during a very turbulent 18 months. It has kept



Queenslanders employed and supported Queensland businesses. It is a key part of Queensland's economic recovery plan and right now it directly supports 76,000 people in work and supports more than 15,200 businesses. It generates billions of dollars in royalties, which allows us to invest in our nurses, doctors, police officers, teachers, hospitals, roads, schools and other infrastructure.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the resource sector, particularly throughout the past 18 months including during the recent snap lockdown in the south-east corner, Townsville and, of course, now Cairns. The collaboration between the industry, government and health authorities has meant the resource sector has continued to operate, making a vital contribution to our economy. This collaboration is best highlighted by the fact that there has not been one single case of COVID-19 amongst the Queensland mining workforce.

To set up a strong vision for the sector, the Palaszczuk government is investing more than \$42 million into Queensland's resource sector and lands program as part of the 2021-22 state budget. This investment in a range of programs will continue to support the resource industry and allow Queensland to continue its resource led recovery through exploration grants, initiatives and mine rehab programs. We will continue to help explorers discover new economy minerals which are crucial for a renewable technology such as electric vehicles and batteries. This is important in supporting the exploration industry and it is vital for funding new deposits and developing potential new projects, which means more royalties, more exports and more jobs for Queenslanders.

The gas sector is also a crucial part of the resource sector, which is why this government continues to look at new opportunities to open up more areas. In June we announced the initial concept phase of the \$5 million Bowen Basin pipeline study, which is now underway. This work is continuing and will investigate a potential pipeline and infrastructure to improve the delivery of Bowen gas to the domestic and export markets.

Let me be very clear. Queensland has done the heavy lifting on east coast gas and we will continue to do so. A strong resource sector means a strong Queensland, but we cannot, and will not, rest on our laurels, which is why a key part of my work as Minister for Resources is developing the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan. The Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan is about working with industry, the regions and communities to set a shared vision for the future of the sector. It is about examining the challenges and opportunities for the sector into the future. That is why we have held a range of consultation sessions throughout regional Queensland.

We are also providing relief in other areas of my portfolio for those who are doing it tough during these difficult times. In the 2021-22 budget, we will deliver \$3.2 million in land rent rebates to support landholders who are still struggling with drought. Queensland's drought-affected farmers need all the help they can get and these rebates will help ease some of the pressure they are facing. In addition to this, drought declared landholders will be granted a hardship deferral for required rent payments. This is real, on-the-ground support for another key part of Queensland's economy.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work done by members of the independent Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry into the explosion at Grosvenor Mine. I support the work of the board they have done to identify improvements within Queensland's coalmining industry. This includes highlighting factors which put production targets ahead of safety. What happened at Grosvenor underground coalmine was never acceptable. We will consult with workers' representatives and industry to continually improve systems to ensure workers' safety.

I would like to thank the chair and the committee members for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to questions from members.

**CHAIR:** The committee will commence with the examination of the estimates for the resources portfolio area.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, has there been any noncompliance by CSG companies over the last two years, and have all noncompliance issues been investigated?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question because, as I highlighted in my opening address this afternoon, the gas industry plays a key part of our economy. As you know in your part of the world, it is certainly a major employer in that area. We know that for our resource sector, it needs to stack up environmentally, it needs to stack up financially and it needs to stack up socially. We know that when it comes to gas fields and any of our resource sector, we work within the coexistence framework which balances the rights and interests of resource companies with that of the landholders, minimises and manages environmental impacts and benefits the people of Queensland.

I am aware that Arrow Energy has been operating a domestic gas business in the Western Downs region since 2004 and is currently actively engaging with the host communities in the Surat Gas Project. While some landholders in parts of the Surat Gas Project will have a familiarity with coal seam gas development, there are other landholders in the project area who have had limited or no previous interaction with the coal seam gas industry.

In early May this year, I personally visited the Kupunn area near Dalby to meet with landholders to hear firsthand their concern regarding regulatory compliance. I take these landholder concerns very seriously. A robust regulatory framework exists for resource activities, including the petroleum and gas sector, which is administered across different agencies and independent entities. Importantly, there are clear areas of jurisdiction that are supported by established operational processes and procedures. These support the efficient, effective and collaborative management of the regulatory framework.

With regard to the regulation of the petroleum and gas sector, my department is the custodian of geoscience knowledge and data for the state and plays a crucial role in the management of tenures and of the land access framework. Through a dedicated engagement and compliance unit, my department delivers targeted, proactive engagement on issues relating to resource activities in Queensland and provides a valuable inquiry and complaints management process. My department's compliance role for the petroleum and gas sector centres on tenure management and land access which is delivered via a range of tools and strategies, including engagement through to enforcement. In contrast, the function of the Office of the Land Access Ombudsman centres on the provision of free and independent dispute resolution services for landholders and resource companies on existing conduct and compensation agreements.

The GasFields Commission Queensland provides an important oversight role, focusing on managing and improving the sustainable coexistence of landholders, regional communities and the onshore gas industry in Queensland. A vital part of the commission's role includes providing oversight by reviewing the effectiveness of government entities and implementing regulatory frameworks that relate to the onshore gas industry. The Department of Environment and Science also has a vital function in regulating the environmental management of the sector, while our colleagues in the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning administer the Regional Planning Interests Act.

The Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate within the independent Resources Safety & Health Queensland regulates safety and the petroleum and gas sector. The Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment, another independent statutory body, plays a crucial role in understanding evidence based, independent, scientific assessment of cumulative groundwater impacts from resource operations which includes subsidence. Again, this is through a robust regulatory framework that is administered through risk based and collaborative management across clear regulatory functions. There are necessarily a number of entities involved to provide the expertise required; however, there is also close collaboration amongst these entities. The collaboration arrangements have recently been made even stronger following the Queensland Audit Office audit of CSG regulation.

Since August 2020 there have been 120 contacts. Of the 72 inquiries, 67 have been resolved. Of the 56 complaints, 52 have been resolved. Proactive engagement in education activities is an important part of this compliance approach. These activities provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the regulatory framework with industry, resource communities and landholders and to clarify compliance roles and responsibilities. Being responsive to inquiries and complaints is another key aspect of my department's role as regulator. A single point of contact has been established through the utilisation of a hotline and an email account managed by a dedicated engagement and compliance unit.

**Mr WEIR:** Just on that, what communication has been made to CSG companies in relation to any changes to the notice-of-entry template?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question. This is something that we certainly have been working on, particularly with Arrow Energy. We have been out to the area, as I said already, engaging with and listening to the communities. I understand there is landholder interest regarding Arrow Energy's entry notices in the Surat Gas Project. As I said, I take these landholder concerns seriously. Through my department's engagement and compliance unit, we remain committed to effectively providing information and responses to inquiries and complaints received from landholders and community members, independently facilitating landholder-company discussions, and participating or leading any investigations. The CEO of Arrow Energy recently met with us and we had the opportunity to raise and discuss the concerns that stakeholders raised with us. The CEO acknowledged to us that they have not met their own expectations around effective communications and procedures

with stakeholders. The CEO has assured me that they have rectified their procedures and are looking at building positive relationships with all stakeholders in an effort to create an effective coexistence framework.

Arrow Energy's CEO has provided me and the department with an overview of the commitments to the Surat Basin landholders, indicating what they have done in the past six months and what they propose to do in the future. This includes what Arrow Energy refers to as its 'commitments to Surat Basin landholders plan', which includes a notices of entry approach, including: provided for all historical deviated wells beneath properties, includes map, deed poll, subsidence baseline pack, notice of intent to drill and code of practice for construction and abandonment of bores to be provided where landholder agreements are not in place.

Since taking on the portfolio, my department has worked extensively with Arrow Energy to improve its procedures and communications with stakeholders. Arrow Energy has responded to all our suggestions and assistance for implementation and improvement. The department's engagement and compliance unit is leading our operational meetings across multiple agencies to ensure consistent messaging and a coordinated approach to landholder inquiries and concerns. The unit also provides a dedicated email and phone service for landholder inquiries and concerns to resource activities and has facilitated independent conferences between concerned landholders and Arrow Energy to progress discussions and help improve underlying relations and communications. The resource sector operates within a coexistence framework that balances the rights and interests of the resource companies with those of landholders, minimises and manages environmental impacts and benefits the people of Queensland. That is how my department operates and that is our expectation of stakeholders in the Surat Basin, but I refer to my deputy director-general, Mr Shaun Ferris, to extend.

**Mr WATTS:** Point of order, Chair: the question was not asked of the deputy director-general.

**CHAIR:** The minister can refer to his director-general or deputy director-general.

**Mr WATTS:** If each answer is going to be 15 minutes long, it is going to be a short session.

**CHAIR:** Member, come on. Do not start that now.

**Mr Ferris:** Can I clarify the aspect of the question?

**Mr WEIR:** I think the minister has answered my question. I am happy to go to the next question.

**CHAIR:** We will do that. By the way, member for Toowoomba North, the answers were not 15 minutes long. There is plenty of time left.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Okay, but you are wasting the member for Condamine's time.

**Mr MILLAR:** Mr Chair, you have been very reasonable with timing here. You have done a very good job. It is just that the answers are going longer and longer. We only have a finite amount of time to ask so many questions so we just ask that they be shortened up a little bit, if that is okay.

**CHAIR:** The point of order was not to me. I will ask the minister to take that on notice and we will go back to the member for Condamine, who has just lost a minute and a half.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, how much agricultural land has been subject to a 'dial before you dig' notice on that tenure of Arrow and can farmers continue to perform their normal operations such as tillage and cultivation without being noncompliant with legislation under a 'dial before you dig' notice?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member—

**CHAIR:** Sorry to interrupt, Minister, but there were two questions there. Members need to understand that the two questions may take some time to answer, but thank you, member for Condamine.

**Mr STEWART:** This particular aspect came up during our discussions with Arrow Energy's CEO where they thought that they were, with all of the best intentions, implementing 'dial before you dig' to assist landholders to understand what is actually below the surface of their farms. What they did not realise at the time was that if you clicked on 'dial before you dig' up popped a little dialogue box that said, 'Now that you know that this is underground, all of the liabilities remain with you.' In the words of Arrow Energy's CEO, it was an own goal. They have now rectified that where liability does not relate back to the landholder and they have communicated that back directly to the landholders.

**CHAIR:** Member for Condamine, did that answer your question?

**Mr WEIR:** Yes, but just for clarity on that, that does not impede on the normal day-to-day operations by those landowners as far as tilling their soil, for fencing, for irrigation drones and so forth?

**Mr STEWART:** The ‘dial before you dig’ was a strategy that Arrow Energy had decided to implement to assist landholders. They realised that that was not the case. What they wanted to do was to inform landholders of particularly directional drilling underneath their property to assist them to be able to continue to perform their roles. It was part of their communications strategy, but I will defer to the Deputy Director-General, Shaun Ferris, if he would like to add any further comments to mine.

**Mr Ferris:** Thank you, Minister. The minister is correct. Arrow Energy took a best practice approach to ensuring that all landholders, particularly in the Surat Basin, were aware of circumstances where there may be infrastructure below their property and in doing so through the ‘dial before you dig’ process there was an automatically generated legal clause that sat behind that notification in the first instance. We have been advised by Arrow Energy that they have subsequently gone to the ‘dial before you dig’ entity to clarify that an updated set of clauses do not put legal liability for impacts or activities on those landholders who have a notification come up as part of the ‘dial before you dig’ process.

**Mr WEIR:** With regard to the work of Arrow Energy, has that been assessed as preliminary or advanced?

**Mr STEWART:** Because there are differing components to that, is there a specific aspect of this you would like us to respond to or just in general?

**Mr WEIR:** How has the department assessed that work?

**Mr STEWART:** I will defer to my Deputy Director-General, Shaun Ferris, who will be able to respond.

**Mr Ferris:** In circumstances where an activity is being carried out or proposed to be carried out on a person’s land, it falls into one of two categories—either preliminary or advanced. In circumstances where the activity has a greater than minor impact on the land on which the activity is to be carried out, then it would fall into a category of advanced. We promote companies such as Arrow—all petroleum and gas companies in fact—to take a proactive approach to engaging with landholders to ensure that landholders understand the activities that are to be carried out on their property. Where there is a difference of view between landholders in terms of whether it is an advanced or preliminary activity, then that is something we would promote again for landholders to engage in the first instance with the petroleum and gas companies.

**Mr WEIR:** I would probably then go to the role of the GasFields Commission during this whole episode. How involved has the GasFields Commission been and what has their role been?

**Mr STEWART:** As I said in one of my earlier responses, earlier this year—in fact, in May—the GasFields Commission as a statutory independent body invited me, along with a number of their membership, to meet with a number of landowners and landholders. We had a shed meeting out at Kupunn on probably the coldest day I think I have ever experienced in my life. It was about six degrees and blowing a gale. The whole idea with that was that the GasFields Commission had set that up so I could hear for myself the concerns and the issues raised by some of those landholders. The GasFields Commission works very closely with landholders, with industry and with community. They are like an independent umpire, but I will defer to Warwick Squire, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the GasFields Commission Queensland. He may be able to detail for you the extensive work that they have been doing with Arrow Energy and landholders in that particular part of the Southern Downs.

**Mr Squire:** The GasFields Commission has been very active in relation to engaging with landholders in the footprint of the Surat gas project. As you are probably aware, the GasFields Commission’s fundamental role is around seeking to promote coexistence between the gas sector and landholders in regional communities. About 12 months ago we started to hear some concerns coming out of those communities in the Dalby district around the Surat gas project and the commission proactively set up a stakeholder advisory group called the Surat Stakeholder Advisory Group at that time. That was set up with a bunch of local landholders and local community leaders, local government and agricultural peak body representatives and the purpose of the group was to really engage with those communities. As the minister mentioned earlier, some of the landholders in the area probably did not have experience with gas like some other parts of the state. I guess the group was set up to promote information exchange but also be an ear to the ground to understand the concerns that landholders were having with the impending development of gas in their area.

That group has met five times over the last 12 months and has been really pivotal in identifying a lot of the issues that we are discussing here at the moment and bringing them to the attention of the commission and the commission has likewise brought them to the attention of peak bodies, ministers and relevant other stakeholder bodies. Some of the issues that we have heard landholders express

concerns about relate to subsidence, deviated wells under neighbouring properties, the Regional Planning Interests Act, protection of agricultural land, public liability insurance and compliance. These are the things that the commission has been utilising this group to identify and take to relevant authorities. We are taking these concerns very seriously and we have seen a lot of work emerge to address those concerns in terms of some of the things that we have talked about today such as the position on preliminary and advanced activities. That is work that is continuing, so we will continue to engage with those stakeholders out there and bring those concerns to government as an independent entity and work ourselves to clarify issues and work with companies like Arrow and other gas companies to clarify regulatory frameworks and statutory obligations. That is the role that we have been playing and we will continue to play that role as the commission.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to government questions.

**Ms HOWARD:** My question is to the minister, and I refer to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can the minister please update the committee on the management of coexistence of agriculture and gas in regional communities?

**Mr STEWART:** The resource sector operates within a coexistence framework. It balances the rights and interests of resource companies with that of landholders, minimises and manages environmental impacts and benefits the people of Queensland. I specifically want to address the current engagement of Arrow Energy with the host communities in the Surat gas project. I have personally been out to the area engaging with and listening to these communities. I understand that there is landholder interest regarding this gas project.

On my trip out there in May the concerns I heard related to public liability insurance, groundwater resources, land access, potential effects of subsidence on water flow and interactions with the Regional Planning Interests Act for priority agricultural areas. I listened to the landholders and I take these landholders' concerns seriously. Following my face-to-face meeting with landholders I asked my department to work with other agencies to consider opportunities to enhance the coexistence framework and ensure key matters of community interest are, in fact, addressed. Clear and accessible information is critical for effective coexistence and I asked my department to develop additional guidance material, clarify any objections that the resource company has and the rights afforded to landholders and I can tell you that this has been delivered. I seek leave to table the fact sheet that we have provided to those landholders for you and the committee.

**CHAIR:** Do you have copies for all the committee members?

**Mr Stewart:** We certainly do.

**CHAIR:** Continue on and we will seek leave to table these.

**Mr Stewart:** There are also established operational processes and procedures in place that support my department in working collaboratively with other government departments and agencies and independent entities. The GasFields Commission Queensland and the Land Access Ombudsman, who are here with me today, provide valuable targeted information sessions to communities and industry. These are critical frameworks that help lessen the impacts on landholders seeking information or raising concerns. My department's dedicated engagement and compliance unit remain committed to effectively providing information and responses to inquiries and complaints received from landholders and community members, independently facilitating landholder and company discussions and participating or leading any investigations. For the benefit of the committee, the resource community infoline can be contacted on 137107 or email [resources.information@resources.qld.gov.au](mailto:resources.information@resources.qld.gov.au).

My office, my department and I regularly engage with Arrow Energy about the Surat gas project. Let me be very clear: Arrow Energy has not met community or government expectations with some of its recent activity relating to the Surat gas project. I recently spoke with Arrow Energy CEO, Cecile Wake, and reiterated the ongoing requirement to work with landholders and address their concerns. My office and department has also established regular communications to make sure future activities meet the expected standards. Arrow has committed to me to undertake additional measures, including working with the independent Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment to establish a framework for baseline monitoring of ground subsidence, six-monthly lidar data updates provided to landholders who have a deviated well under their property to monitor subsidence, providing landholders who have a deviated well with an insurance deed poll to indemnify them for public liability, a voluntary engagement with landholders who have a deviated well and commitment to cover any future compensatable acts and improved area wide planning to minimise potential impacts on current and future farm operations.

The Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment is also undertaking research to unpack past ground subsidence impacts and make predictions of future impacts. I also thank the working group led by the GasFields Commission Queensland for delivering an agreed indemnity clause to ensure public

liability insurance coverage on farms currently hosting coal seam gas activities in partnership with the gas, insurance and agricultural sectors. I encourage all parties to continue to work together to resolve these issues, but want to reiterate that my team and I are here to assist where we possibly can.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to the member for Mount Ommaney. Firstly, I will seek leave to table that document. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Ms PUGH:** Minister, in reference to page 1 of the SDS. Can the minister please advise what actions the Palaszczuk government and Resources Safety and Health Queensland have undertaken in response to the board of inquiry?

**Mr STEWART:** As the member is aware, the board of inquiry has now finalised its public hearings and report. A total of 65 recommendations have been made to industry, workers representatives and to the regulator. I welcome these recommendations. As I said in parliament, the board's final report makes for some disturbing reading about the consequences of placing coal production ahead of safety, about failing to recognise the gravity of precursor incidents and the failure to properly account for and report them both internally and to the regulator.

In making its findings and recommendations regarding production and safety bonuses, the board highlighted what appears to me to be a potentially significant factor which can drive behaviours that put production targets ahead of safety of workers. Today I repeat my call on industry to fully investigate the extent and nature of how bonus schemes can drive behaviours that potentially put production targets ahead of the safety of workers. When I received the board's first report last year I wrote to the coalmining industry through its peak body, the Queensland Resources Council. In my letter I asked the industry to develop and share with me its action plan for progressing the board's recommendations as the first step in providing assurance to communities about the industry's commitment to sustainable, enhanced safety in the mining sector. In support of that work, I also asked the independent Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health to assist industry to develop its action plan as well as oversee delivery of recommendations made to the Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee which the commissioner chairs.

The QRC has provided me with the industry's plan and has committed to providing me with quarterly updates about its progress. Resources Safety and Health Queensland continues to provide me with fortnightly updates on the progress of recommendations directed towards the regulator. I note that the board endorsed improvements already underway by the independent regulator, Resources Safety and Health Queensland, and recommended that it continue to progress this work. RSHQ has been working with the Public Service Commission to develop a revised remuneration scheme in line with the board's recommendation to ensure that it can attract and retain suitably qualified persons and incentivise inspectors to study to obtain a first class certificate of competency. I am pleased to see RSHQ's proactive move to establish a program to support inspectors to study for their first class certificate of competency. An initial cohort of four inspectors has been confirmed and a program developed with Simtars will commence in October this year with a planned completion date of December 2022.

In addition to this, I have initiated an industry wide safety reset similar to the activity undertaken across the mining and quarrying sector in 2019, only this time the reset will also include the petroleum and gas and explosives industry, meaning all resource sector workers across the state will participate. As in 2019, inspectors and other agency staff from RSHQ will be in attendance at a number of resets across the state. While the 2019 reset was triggered by a series of workplace deaths, the 2021 reset will focus on one of the principal findings from both the board of inquiry and the Brady fatality review. I am committed to safety and health in the resources industry and so it is my expectation that industry continually checks itself and makes a genuine and serious commitment to the safety of all its workers.

Regarding the Grosvenor incident, I have also been advised that the Queensland Mines Inspectorate has completed its investigation into the nature and cause, considered over 90,000 pieces of evidence and has today referred its report and brief of evidence to the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor for consideration of potential charges.

**CHAIR:** Can you please advise the committee what action the government is taking to ensure Queensland's commodities are going to more markets?

**Mr STEWART:** My department is working in collaboration with Trade and Investment Queensland to promote Queensland's mineral supply and investment opportunities to European markets in particular. The work is being coordinated through Trade and Investment Queensland's trade

commissioner for Europe, Linda Apelt, and her team with particular focus on new economy minerals. Queensland has not traditionally focused on European markets for mineral supply, with past focus centred on North Asia in particular—China, Korea and Japan—and North America capital markets.

Trade and Investment Queensland, Europe, are promoting Queensland's energy credentials with green hydrogen on the one hand and new economy minerals, especially those used in electrification, on the other hand. To date, engagements have been held via online delivery with government and industry groups in France, Germany and the Netherlands. And no, Mr Chair, I have not been on the plane to go over there to present myself. I have saved a lot of money.

Those engagements have been well supported by the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and by ambassadorial representatives in particular. The engagement program will also extend to the City of London, although a new approach will be used to work in collaboration with both South Australia and Western Australia in the delivery of that event. That collaborative approach is seen as removing confusion that may otherwise arise in explaining jurisdictional differences and to better present Australia's overall offering and key advantages of jurisdictions, for example, lithium in Western Australia and vanadium in Queensland.

The European market engagement recognises the very large commercial opportunities offered by the shift to renewable energy, driving demand for minerals used in electric vehicles in particular. Also, European laws and customer/consumer sentiment favour sources of supply that demonstrate responsible, ethical and sustainable credentials, where Queensland has a very strong track record. The engagement work is designed to open up new high-value and long-term markets and to draw inward investment to help establish new supply chains and value-adding infrastructure.

The initial objective of the engagement program is to build awareness and understanding of the Queensland operating environment, to create opportunity identifying mechanisms and to support more investment in these strategically important minerals. It would be in part as a result of the trade relationships we have built today that Queensland resource companies will be able to supply the minerals of the future, to secure investment from these important European markets.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you please advise the committee what potential the Bowen pipeline has to lower Queensland's emissions and to increase our gas supply?

**Mr STEWART:** As I have already highlighted today, gas is already a critical enabler for Queensland's economy in terms of royalties and direct jobs in the industry as well as the jobs it enables in the manufacturing sector. Gas reserves in the Bowen Basin were first defined in the mid-1990s. Since then, a lack of infrastructure has continued to be one of the critical obstacles in bringing this gas to market.

As part of Queensland's economic recovery plan, the government committed to invest \$5 million in a study that will investigate the opportunities for a gas transmission pipeline to connect gas reserves in the Bowen Basin in Central Queensland to the east coast gas market and export markets. One of the study's aims is to examine new opportunities to utilise fugitive emissions from the coalmines of the Bowen Basin. This will bring additional gas to market and assist in Queensland's transition to a low carbon economy.

Fugitive emissions are one of Queensland's fastest growing sources of greenhouse gases, increasing from two per cent in 1990 to around 11 per cent of the state's total emissions in 2019. The fugitive emissions profile of individual mines varies, with some being particularly emissions intensive. This poses challenges in terms of the coal industry's growing contribution to Queensland's greenhouse gas emissions but also presents opportunities to explore ways to capture gas that may otherwise be wasted and instead utilise it to the benefit of Queensland's economy by firming renewable energy and providing fuel and feedstock to Queensland's manufacturers. The first phase of this work is a concept study to identify key initiatives that merit further detailed investigation. This concept study commenced in June of this year.

The department has met with current tenure holders in the Bowen Basin, the pipeline industry and peak source industry bodies to ensure a detailed understanding of the industry's perspective on potential opportunities and challenges for the resources industry in the Bowen Basin. My department is also working with the Commonwealth government to ensure the best value is added from their gas-led recovery initiatives, particularly in relation to their North Bowen and Galilee body of work. I am pleased that the Commonwealth has responded to the Premier's call for matched funding by providing an additional \$5 million to contribute to this important body of work. We will continue to work closely with the Commonwealth to align gas-led recovery initiatives.

We know that additional gas infrastructure will support the development of new sources of supply, leading to more affordable gas and supporting more jobs across our critical supply chain and industries. Increased gas supply will also assist in firming the electricity grid, allowing the introduction of greater volumes of renewable energy and adding downward pressure to gas market pricing. This initiative is just another example of our commitment to supplying new economic activity in our regions and of Queensland leading the nation when it comes to gas policy.

**Ms PUGH:** I have a question about stock routes. I know that is an issue that is of interest to a lot of members of the committee. I recall at the last estimates it was a topic of great excitement. I refer to page 3 of the SDS. Can the minister please explain the actions the government is taking to effectively manage stock routes across Queensland?

**Mr STEWART:** I know that this is close to the heart of the member for Gregory because he asked me this question during estimates last year. As part of the Queensland government's commitment to Queensland's stock route network, my department released the Queensland Stock Route Network Management Strategy in March of this year. This strategy is the result of extensive consultation with stakeholders and the community. It details actions to ensure that the network is managed for the responsible use of travelling stock while supporting the inherent natural and cultural values of the network.

The focus of the Stock Route Network Management Strategy is to coordinate the multiple uses of the stock route network and its multiple stakeholders. A stakeholder working group is being formed to oversee the implementation of the strategy. In addition, a review of the effectiveness of the existing Stock Route Management Regulation is near completion. The feedback received through the initial public discussion paper released in April 2019, and followed by workshops and meetings, has been used to develop a suite of changes to legislation. Final public comment on these changes is being sought with the release of the public discussion paper on 15 July this year covering provisions for a new regulation, associated changes to the Stock Route Management Act and to a nature conservation regulation.

The Premier took the cabinet to Longreach and it was there that I met with a number of mayors who told me that stock routes needed to be addressed. I took their concerns on board and I returned to Longreach on 15 July to launch the strategy because I know how important this network is for those out there. This is also a great example of why the Palaszczuk government's community cabinets are so important.

I encourage all interested people to go onto the department's website, read the paper and provide feedback before 3 September. I am pleased to note that in the first week alone since the papers release, over 1,000 people visited the website—member for Gregory, I am sure that you visited that site many times—with many participating in the survey and quick poll.

Palaszczuk government funding is also contributing to provide direct financial support to local government as the day-to-day managers of the stock route network. In 2021, my department is expected to allocate approximately \$800,000 in capital funding. In addition, approximately \$140,000 will be allocated for maintenance projects at stock route water facilities across the state to ensure their safety and efficient operation. The funding supports assets and maintenance activities including new water tanks, water troughs, dam repairs and dam desilting. It also supports the safe operation of those facilities. For example, many water facilities are progressively being replaced with modern solar pumps and solar panels to provide adequate water for stock. Only the Palaszczuk government can be trusted to sustainably manage our stock route network.

**CHAIR:** We will go back to the member for Condamine and non-government questions.

**Mr WEIR:** Thank you for this document. I will ask for a bit of clarity around one issue because it has been a massive issue out in that Nandi area and that is around the directional drilling. Adjoining land owners are concerned about directional bores underneath infrastructure such as houses, dams, or somewhere they might be going to put down an irrigation bore in the future. Do they have the right to object to where these directional drill holes are going to go?

**Mr STEWART:** This is why we went out to Kupunn and listened to some key people out there around their concerns about directional drilling, particularly when it is not on their property but the directional drilling runs underneath their property. The concerns that you have highlighted to me are the concerns that they highlighted to me when I was out there as well. As I have already said, I really take these issues very seriously.



To be clear, for directional drilling under a person's property where there is no infrastructure or activity occurring on the surface, we expect landholders to receive a formal notice of entry. Should these activities lead to a more-than-minor impact on a landholder's business or land-use activities, compensation would also be required.

We have communicated the government's requirements to the gas industry and they are aware of their responsibilities under the land access framework and government's expectations around best practice engagement with landholders, including the importance of engaging early and in advance of these activities.

I will refer to my Deputy Director-General Shaun Ferris who will be able to provide some further details around what I have added.

**Mr Ferris:** As the minister has tabled the guideline that we will be placing on our website, we, through this fact sheet, encourage companies to engage before they issue a notice of entry. A notice of entry is just a statutory tool to give a notice of intent to enter the land, whether that is the surface of the land or below land. In the case of directional drilling, for example, sometimes it is tens of metres, sometimes hundreds of metres below the surface of the land that that activity will be carried out. Through our co-existence framework, we encourage companies to engage extremely early with landholders so that jointly between landholders and the petroleum and gas companies well prior to the notice of entry being issued, that if there are any surface infrastructure that exists or future surface infrastructure activities that might be undertaken by the landholder, that those sorts of considerations or those matters can be taken into account by petroleum and gas companies.

We have seen a number of examples in our dealings with both community stakeholders, landholders, and petroleum and gas companies where those engagements carried out on the ground with landholders have resulted in changes to plans of development by petroleum and gas companies, relocating sometimes drill pads, sometimes relocating the location of the directional drill activities, even in the case of surface infrastructure, relocating roads and other pipeline network infrastructure that might be put in place by the petroleum and gas companies. From our perspective, that co-existence framework really starts at the early conversations that occur between petroleum and gas companies and landholders.

**Mr WATTS:** Can I ask for clarification? I want to confirm that it is not compulsory, that it is a recommendation?

**Mr Ferris:** Correct. The compulsory aspect is the notice of entry. Through this fact sheet and through all of the engagement that we carry out on the ground—and I know my colleagues from the GasFields Commission also are very strong in this approach—it is encouraging companies to engage extremely early in their planning of their development and planning of surface infrastructure because that ultimately results in a far better outcome in terms of lessening impact or a better outcome in terms of the activities that are being carried out by the landholder.

**CHAIR:** Just for clarity as well—and I allowed the question—usually for a deputy director-general, you would ask the question through the minister.

**Mr WATTS:** Sorry.

**CHAIR:** I allowed that latitude because it was important that you got that information.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, given the recent events that have taken place out in that Nandi area, how is that area designated under the statutory regional plans? Is that recognised as strategic cropping land by the department? What guidelines or protections does that put over strategic cropping land under the statutory regional plans?

**Mr STEWART:** As we have highlighted several times through today, it is about developing that co-existence framework, about working together where we ensure that the agricultural land is just as important for the economic benefit and social foundation of rural communities as what the gas will do as well. It is absolutely critical that we get this right.

My department provides the strategic cropping land trigger maps via an online portal. The trigger map is a starting point for identifying strategic cropping land. This portal allows a client to request a strategic cropping land trigger map for their property and it is emailed to them free of charge. All resource activities proposed on the strategic cropping area must obtain a regional interest developmental approval unless they are exempt.

The Regional Planning Interests Act provides an assessment process to assess each proposed resource activity on its own merits. All applications are made to and received by the Chief Executive, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. Applications for resource activities in the strategic cropping area are referred to my department for advice and technical assessment.

In deciding the application, the Chief Executive of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning must consider all properly made submissions. The decision may, one, provide all or part of the application and grant a regional interest development approval; two, include conditions on the approval; or, three, refuse the application.

In 2019 the Queensland Auditor-General undertook a performance audit of the regulation of coal seam gas activities and recommended that the GasFields Commission Queensland review the adequacy of the assessment process identified under the Regional Planning Interests Act. The commission agreed to this recommendation and has made significant progress in the undertaking of that review. I refer to Warwick Squire, the Chief Executive Officer of the GasFields Commission Queensland to extend.

**Mr Squire:** You rightly point out that the Auditor-General recommended that the commission undertake a review of the Regional Planning Interests Act in that particular report. The commission has made some significant progress in undertaking that review. Just a couple of points of clarity around the review itself: we are focusing on the priority agricultural area and strategic cropping area interaction of that particular act as it relates to gas infrastructure. The act is quite broad in nature and the commission's jurisdiction is a bit narrower, so we are focusing on that gas and agricultural land interface. We are really looking at the assessment processes associated with the act, the effectiveness of implementation of the Regional Planning Interests Act and its assessment processes, the exemptions that are contained in the act and the land-use classification associated with priority agricultural areas and strategic cropping areas.

The commission released a discussion paper in March this year for four weeks of targeted consultation with key stakeholder bodies. We distributed it to 31 individuals and bodies and we received 21 submissions as a result of that consultation process. The commission is currently going through those submissions, analysing those to reach findings, and we will make recommendations to government in early September.

**Mr WEIR:** Given that, would those recommendations then be open to public feedback on those recommendations before they are implemented, if it needs a change of legislation?

**Mr STEWART:** It could be a little bit of a hypothetical question. We do not know what those recommendations look like yet, so I think we will wait until we see that report and then we will consider those recommendations when we receive them.

**Mr WEIR:** In relation to strategic cropping land and statutory regional plans, there is an emerging issue in some of our agricultural areas—in particular, the Central Highlands—regarding solar projects being built on prime agricultural land. Under statutory regional plans, does that come under the guidelines? Is there any intention to amend anything, because it is emerging as a serious issue?

**Mr STEWART:** I have not encountered anything in relation to solar coming across my desk.

**Mr MILLAR:** Just for clarification, there is a solar farm built on the Emerald irrigation area. It was built about three years ago on the Emerald irrigation area where there are drains and irrigation. It is on prime agricultural land.

**Mr STEWART:** That is something that would come under planning. It will not be in my portfolio. You would have to ask the Deputy Premier.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, can you advise how much has been included in the budget in relation to third-party consultants and contractors in the drafting of the resources industry development plan?

**Mr STEWART:** The resources industry development plan is a baby of mine. It is something we have been working on quite extensively. This was an election commitment by the Palaszczuk government to develop a forward-looking strategic plan or vision for the next 30 years of the resources sector. This is going to be important work because we know that more than 76,000 Queenslanders are employed by the sector and over the last decade the sector has contributed more than \$30 billion in royalties. As you know, that pays for our schools, our hospitals, our police, our teachers and our doctors and nurses.

We know that global trends will change the resources sector into the future. There is absolute certainty around that. We are seeing that happen right now. While demand for our world-class coal and gas will continue for some time, the global transition to a low carbon economy and a focus on renewables means that we also need to make that transition. That is what this plan will do. We have done a lot of consultation. We have been out to a whole range of communities. I refer to my director-general, Mike Kaiser, who will be able to provide the specifics around your question.

**Mr Kaiser:** As the minister said, this is a plan for the resources sector for the coming 30 years. It is absolutely critical, therefore, that we base the plan on a solid evidentiary basis. We have sought professional advice in respect of that in a number of areas. We have engaged contractors to give us a view about what the global megatrends will be over that time frame that might impact on the resources sector.

You asked about prices too. That work around which we engage Deloitte will cost in the vicinity of \$284,000. We engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to do important business process mapping work which will cost in the vicinity of \$250,000. That is work that will cover the Department of Resources, the Department of Environment and Science and the Coordinator-General. We are trying to look at the end-to-end process that resource entities need to go through in order to get mines or resource activity approved and to look at ways that can be improved upon. That is a key obligation that we have, and it is something that the Queensland resources sector constantly raises with us and has done its own work on. That work started from a basis of the work that the Queensland Resources Council provided for us.

KPMG were engaged to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the collaborative exploration initiative which was a recommendation to us. We also engaged Rowland to assist us with the regional communication and consultations which cost in the order of \$237,000.

I would say that none of this was funded from an additional request from consolidated revenue or the Treasury. These are all resources that we found from within the department by reorganising our priorities. I want to stress again that this is a plan, as the minister said, which sets the resources sector up for a 30-year period. We felt it was absolutely essential that we get professional advice through these contractors in order to make sure that the plan is based on the very best of evidence.

**Mr WEIR:** That is curious, because, as you know, there was a question on notice about consultants and they said there was nothing in the budget for consultancy. So this is coming out of another area of the department?

**Mr Kaiser:** They are defined as contractors, but you will see that there is no hesitation in giving you the amounts of the expenditure or the people that we have engaged with. There is no attempt to hide this. They are defined though as contractors, not consultants.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, given that there are sometimes conflicting interests in resources, why isn't the department of environment and the department of agriculture involved in the panel that is putting this resources plan together?

**Mr STEWART:** As I have said, this is a 30-year plan looking at resources and the impact of resources. Where do we need to go? What is going to happen in the next five years, the next 15 years and the next 30 years? What is in it for our kids who are sitting in our classrooms today? What does their future look like, particularly in the resources sector? What are the key things that are impacting upon our ability to trade internationally and what do those markets look like?

As you have rightly highlighted, what are some of those factors that contribute to the environmental impacts and the processes associated with that, as well as the agricultural impacts? As you have highlighted today through a number of your questions, when it comes to the gas fields, we need to make sure that there is co-existence. We need to make sure that we get this balance right.

While we have this consultation process happening in communities and with our industry, we also have a consultation process and a committee made up of intergovernmental departments, particularly the directors-general and deputy directors-general. I will hand over to my director-general who will be able to outline specifically the membership of that committee.

**Mr Kaiser:** We do involve the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Department of Environment and Science in that interdepartmental committee that the minister referred to. The membership is Agriculture, State Development, Trade and Investment Queensland, Treasury, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Environment and Science. I do not think I have missed anyone. That is a keenly attended monthly forum from across relevant agencies in government who are helping to guide and shape the resources industry development plan, as the minister said.

We have also established two significant consultation groups—one with industry and unions, and one with a range of other stakeholders including agricultural stakeholders and environmental stakeholders. We are genuinely seeking input from across the board on this plan. The minister has made the point to me, and he has made the point publicly on a number of occasions, that this is a plan that has to endure for a 30-year period. We are sincere in our efforts to try to engage all stakeholders and take into account the widest possible range of views in order to develop the very best plan for the resources sector for Queensland.

**Mr WEIR:** In response to a question on notice regarding mine approvals, I note that the department has approved 82 mining leases in 2020-21. How many of those have been approved by the Department of Environment and Science?

**CHAIR:** Would that question be for you to answer, Minister?

**Mr STEWART:** We know how strong the resources sector is and how dependent, as I have already said, 76,000 workers are on that industry. I will refer to my deputy director-general, Shaun Ferris, who may be able to provide further detail.

**Mr Ferris:** In relation to all of the tenure we grant in terms of a mining or petroleum lease, one of the prerequisites for us to provide a recommendation for the minister to consider is that an environmental authority has been granted. In all of those circumstances where we are granting a petroleum lease or a mining lease the Department of Environment and Science has approved the project and granted an environmental authority. That is a prerequisite before the minister can turn his or her mind—in our case, his mind—to the grant of the mining or petroleum lease.

**Mr WEIR:** That would be all approved?

**Mr Ferris:** It would be 100 per cent.

**CHAIR:** We will now turn to government questions.

**Ms HOWARD:** My question is to the minister. I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can the minister please advise the committee what contribution the Queensland mining industry provides to the state and what the government is doing to support the sector?

**Mr STEWART:** Queensland's mining industry is the largest of all industries in our state and is the driving force behind Queensland's economic recovery, as no doubt you are aware. During the year ending June 2020 the mining industry accounted for 11.7 per cent of Queensland's economy, which was the largest share of any of our state's industries in that year. Queensland's mining sector also accounts for a massive share of investment in state exports to the world and is a significant employer. During the 12 months to March 2021 the mining industry attracted more than \$8.3 billion in private capital expenditure and accounted for 35 per cent of private capital expenditure in Queensland over that 12-month period. The mining sector attracted a further \$705 million in exploration expenditure during the 12 months to March 2021, up more than 22 per cent on the previous year. This demonstrates strong confidence in the future of Queensland's resource sector at a time when exploration expenditure is contracting in most other states and territories, including Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The resource sector is the backbone of Queensland's economy and provides substantial benefits for many of our regional communities. For example, member for Ipswich, I was recently out at Roma. I remember Roma back in the early days when I used to drive through there on my way back from Springsure to Brisbane. It was a small town. On our recent visit we had the opportunity to talk to a lot of people. They talked about how the gas industry has rejuvenated their town. There are a lot of businesses now that are supported by that gas industry. Kids who are sitting in classrooms at Roma—I think it is the state college out there—know they have a future in their town, and that is exactly what this is about. It is about making sure that our regional towns and communities can continue to thrive. There is no excuse for those kids to leave town and not return, because they can get jobs there. They can go and study at university, but they can come back as professionals and continue to work in those communities. That is what the people of Roma told me.

Queensland's resource sector generated \$42.2 billion in export revenue for the state over the 12 months to May 2021, accounting for 77 per cent of our merchandise exports over that period. This included: \$21 billion in export earnings from high-quality metallurgical coal used in steel production; \$9.5 billion in liquefied natural gas exports; and \$10 billion in minerals exports. Queensland's Treasury estimates that resources generated \$2.5 billion in royalty revenue for the state in 2020-21. This revenue for Queensland will be used on Queensland's roads, schools, hospitals and police. It helps boost key capital infrastructure spending—like the stadium in Townsville where we hosted State of Origin this year—and improves the wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

**Ms Pugh** interjected.

**Mr STEWART:** Yes, let's not talk about the result. Even though the COVID induced economic downturn put a dent in Queensland's economic earnings and royalty revenue, the sector has kept the state's economy going throughout the downturn and is leading the recovery in jobs.

On average, during the 2020-21 financial year Queensland's mining sector employed 76,000 workers, up 17 per cent on the previous year. That is the highest 12-month average number of people employed in Queensland mining in over six years. The Queensland mining industry directly employs

more than 29,000 people in the coalmining industry; more than 20,000 people in minerals mining and quarrying; more than 19,500 people in exploration; and more than 6,500 people in oil and gas extraction. Thousands more people are employed indirectly by mining and Queensland's resource sector more generally throughout the many businesses that support and depend upon our mining communities.

My government, the Palaszczuk government, is committed to a robust energy future for all Queenslanders, and we are committed to growing jobs and delivering billions of dollars for our economy.

**Ms PUGH:** My question is to the minister. Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you please provide an update on the work of the Explosives Inspectorate in keeping Queenslanders safe?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for her question and note her interest in the regulatory activities of the Explosives Inspectorate. Resource Safety and Health Queensland administers the resource safety and health legislation that applies to the mining and quarrying, petroleum and gas, and explosives industry. RSHQ is a risk based regulator. That means its compliance and enforcement activities focus on the things that can seriously hurt people in the resources sector. As part of this the regulator conducts inspections, detailed audits and investigations of incidents and complaints. It uses the findings from these activities to not only inform enforcement actions but to educate and support industry in meeting their obligations to protect workers' safety and health by publishing alerts, bulletins and reports and holding forums to share and promote safety information. Each inspectorate has a compliance program that deliberately changes over time to reflect industry activities, safety and health performance and emerging risks.

Queensland is the largest user of explosives in Australia, consuming about 1.5 million tonnes each year and accounting for approximately 40 per cent of all explosives in the nation. Most explosives are used in the mining and quarrying industry but also industries such as manufacturing and construction, demolition, lifesaving, signalling devices for maritime industries and the oil and gas industries. In the financial year 2020-21 the Explosives Inspectorate focused on underground blasting, the transport of explosives, the sea and air import of explosives and illegal fireworks.

Amendments to the Explosives Act 1999 returned the obligation for determining the suitability of persons to government as well as harmonising Queensland's security clearance processes with those of other jurisdictions. Further, it strengthens security controls by enabling the continuous monitoring of security card holders by the Queensland Police Service. In addition, a new explosives drivers license is in place to ensure that, consistent with all other states, only competent persons may transport explosives. The new licence has supported the safe transport of nearly two million tonnes of explosives across Queensland.

**Ms HOWARD:** My question is to the minister. I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can the minister please advise what the government is doing to support lower emissions mineral extraction?

**Mr STEWART:** Mr Chair, I am sure that you have all seen or heard reports of the growing demand for global investors, customers and consumers of mineral supply to be responsible, ethical and sustainable. Officers from my department hear that call very loudly in their dealings in their work to establish new markets for our minerals in Europe, where the European Green Deal is being set in legislation. My departmental officers also hear the calls from across Queensland as part of our consultations for the development of the Resource Industry Development Plan, and we hear those calls and support those companies that are proactively working towards meeting them. In parallel, we are undertaking works to the same purpose.

In industry, I give the example of EQ Resources which are recommercialising the former abandoned tungsten mine at Mount Carbine in north-east Queensland. EQ Resources are using advanced ore sorting technology to optimise recovery of valuable tungsten ore from waste ore. Their technology sourced from their German partner Cronimet is allowing them to reprocess waste stockpiles to create value from waste.

In another example, the Geological Survey of Queensland, within the Department of Resources, is working with the Japanese government resource security agency to examine the potential for recovery of cobalt from tailings at the former Gunpowder Mine in north-west Queensland. This work is being conducted in collaboration with the University of Queensland—we were actually out there today—which are developing world-leading capability in assessing mechanisms to recover value from mine tailings and waste material. The scope of work underway between the Geological Survey of Queensland and the University of Queensland is not limited to tailings but also trialling other novel mechanisms to concentrate and recover minerals.

Works in progress include hyperaccumulators, which are plants to concentrate specific minerals for later harvest and mineral recovery in a process deemed phytomining. Phytomining is also being trialled with in-demand rare earth elements, again using plants with specific characteristics to preferentially collect rare earths from the earth upon which they grow. Just this morning, as I said, I visited the University of Queensland Sustainable Minerals Institute at St Lucia to see the fantastic work researchers are doing in this space.

The joint study between UQ and the Palaszczuk government is seeing potentially hyperaccumulator plants being grown in samples of mine tailings brought all the way from places like Mount Isa to see if this technique has a twofold benefit—one, extracting minerals from the ground like nickel, cobalt and zinc in a way that could have commercial applications and, two, helping in rehabilitation of the land by extracting these metals from tailings dams. This use of biological agents includes the use of bacteria in a process termed bioleaching to extract minerals from ore. These alternate extraction techniques offer means to radically reduce the environmental footprint of mining and mineral resource recovery. Biomining also offers a broad range of tools to use for other applications, such as clean-up of contaminated sites and broadened economic development opportunities for regional communities.

Alternate extraction studies in the trial form a key part of the new economy minerals initiative being delivered by the Geological Survey of Queensland. Alternate extraction minerals to recover them from primary or secondary ores fits well in the concept of the circular economy which seeks to reduce waste and extend the value of materials already recovered. One of the plants that they were using was the macadamia nut. It is extracted into the leaves but the nut is still edible without any traces within the nut itself.

**CHAIR:** I will go to the member for Ipswich for a quick question because I am going to give the crossbench member a question at the end.

**Ms HOWARD:** My question is to the minister and I refer to page 3 of the SDS. Can the minister please update the committee on the government's management of leases on Queensland's islands?

**Mr STEWART:** No-one in this place is under any illusion that the past year and a half have brought some very testing times not only for our state but across the globe. COVID-19 has increased the challenges for many of us and many of our tourism partners, and that includes for many tourism leaseholders across the east coast of Queensland.

My office fields inquiries from lessees from across the state asking for support to ensure that they can achieve the desired purpose of their lease. The Palaszczuk government takes these inquiries for assistance very seriously. Where lessees owe substantial rental arrears to the state, the Department of Resources works with the lessees with the aim of resolving their debt, particularly in a timely manner. This is vital so we are best placed for a booming tourism industry once we navigate the ongoing challenges of the global pandemic.

My department waived tens of millions of dollars in state land rent as part of the Palaszczuk government's \$11 billion COVID recovery plan which helped support businesses during this global pandemic and helped industries, including tourism, bounce back even stronger. I also note that Queensland was the first jurisdiction to announce business support measures for affected businesses, including tourism businesses. The Palaszczuk government is committed to seeing suitable tourism development on Queensland islands. This includes on Great Keppel Island. Although the recent transfer application for the leases to Altum Property was unsuccessful, my department will continue to work with fellow departments and GKI Resort towards delivering on this commitment. My department is also aware of concerns related to head leases and subleases relationships on Keswick Island.

**CHAIR:** I welcome the member for Maiwar and his questions.

**Mr BERKMAN:** We are all well aware that yesterday the IPCC published their Sixth Assessment Report which shows what an extraordinary and urgent task we have if we are to maintain a safe climate. This comes on top of International Energy Agency analysis showing that net zero emissions by 2050 requires no new coalmines or expansions and no new gas projects beyond this year. My question first of all is to the director-general. Is this analysis, particularly from the IEA, considered in departmental decisions to issue any new tenure but particularly new leases for fossil fuel projects in Queensland?

**Mr Kaiser:** I thank the member for the question. Before I answer it, could I add to an answer I provided earlier around the composition of that interdepartmental committee on the Resources Industry Development Plan. I want to be complete in my answer. There are an additional three directors-general on that IDC—the directors-general covering the department that covers Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander partnerships, the department of training and the Department of Energy and Public Works. I did not want to leave them out because my colleagues are working like beavers to get this plan done and I would hate to not complete that. Could you repeat the question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** Is the IEA analysis in particular considered in departmental decisions to issue any new tenure but particularly new leases for fossil fuel projects in Queensland?

**Mr Kaiser:** By the time this department considers a mining lease, an application or a proponent has already received an environmental authority so we would expect those environmental considerations to have been picked up then by either the Department of Environment and Science or through Commonwealth processes.

**Mr BERKMAN:** The IEA analysis basically shows the trajectory which requires no new coal or gas. It is really much more a question of the energy market analysis internationally saying that these new projects cannot get up if we are going to achieve net zero by 2050. Putting aside the EA assessment process, does your department consider that kind of analysis in issuing any new mining lease?

**Mr Kaiser:** There is nothing in the act against which we judge mining leases which would take that into consideration. Those sorts of considerations, if they are relevant, are expected to be taken into consideration in the delivery of an environmental authority.

**Mr BERKMAN:** To the minister then, if I might turn to you briefly. As you know, I understand we are the biggest global exporter of thermal coal and LNG in the world, and the IEA and IPCC are telling us that that needs to stop as soon as possible if we are going to keep a safe climate for our kids and grandkids and keep it under 1.5 degrees warming. Minister, do you or the government have any plan to stop approvals of coal and gas in line with recommendations from the IEA and IPCC, or is the plan to simply pretend that those emissions will not affect the global climate because exports are someone else's problem?

**CHAIR:** Member, you were going so well and then you put that last bit on your question. Minister, I will ask you to answer the first bit of the question, and I will give you leeway to do whatever you want with the second bit of the question.


**Mr STEWART:** I note that the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, was released on 9 August. I also note the statement from the UN secretary on the IPCC report. There is some strong language around OECD countries phasing out coal projects by 2030 and that fossil fuel exploration and production should be ended. I would point out that the issues relating to climate change fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs. Any questions relating to climate change should be directed to Minister Scanlon.

Having said that, this government has long held the position that we support coal projects as long as they stack up financially, environmentally and socially. The coal industry has made a key contribution to the success and prosperity of Queensland, and I am confident that we will be a coal exporter for many years to come. It is pertinent for me to say that around 85 per cent of our coal exports in our coalmines is metallurgical coal which is used for, as you know, the production of steel. This means coalmining and jobs will be part of our economy now and for the foreseeable future and the royalties from coal will continue to fund our vital public services and infrastructure such as our hospitals, schools and roads.

However, this government also takes climate change very seriously. We recently launched our Queensland Climate Action Plan which includes a commitment to deliver a 50 per cent Renewable Energy Target by 2030 and a 30 per cent emissions reduction below 2005 levels by 2030. It also commits us to reach zero net emissions by 2050.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I allowed you to finish. We went over time a little bit. The committee will now take a break. The hearing will resume at 7.15 pm continuing with the estimates for the resources portfolio area.

**Proceedings suspended from 7.01 pm to 7.15 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** The hearing is resumed. Welcome back, Minister, and officials. The committee will now continue to examine the estimates for the resources area. I call the member for Maiwar.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I have a question, this time regarding four authorities to prospect held by Blue Energy and Origin Energy in the Lake Eyre Basin, specifically ATP656, 657, 658 and 660. This relates to my question on notice No. 131, which confirms that they have not collected any seismic data. I will put the question to the DG given the technicality. Given Blue Energy's failure to comply with the work

program and specifically that requirement to undertake at least 520 kilometres of seismic survey, how is it that they have still been allowed to submit applications for petroleum production leases for those ATPs, especially in such a sensitive environment as that is?

**Mr Kaiser:** On 30 July Origin Energy and Blue Energy jointly applied for 11 petroleum leases over four authorities to prospect held solely by Blue Energy. I understand that those proposed leases are located near Windorah and overlay in part the Channel Country's strategic environmental area, which forms part of the Lake Eyre Basin. These are complex matters in nature and my department continues to discuss those with the companies and assess those applications.

**Mr BERKMAN:** It is clear that they have not met the requirements of the work program and yet they are progressing through this process. I understand that there is a lot of complexity to this regime, but if you are not meeting the requirements of an authority to prospect, how can you be allowed to proceed to even make applications to start extraction activities?

**Mr Kaiser:** I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

**Mr BOYCE:** My question is to the minister in relation to aerial satellite mapping and late payments. Minister, when will the next Statewide Landcover and Trees Study be released?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question regarding SLATS. The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study, or SLATS as it is commonly referred to, is one of the tools my department uses to monitor tree clearing in Queensland. The study produced by the Department of Environment and Science relies on satellite imagery processing and analysis to detect and map clearing. Historically, vegetation clearing rates have been reported based on this analysis.

The next SLATS reporting is due to be finalised this year and will include enhancements to improve monitoring and reporting of vegetation clearing and regrowth of vegetation. The enhanced SLATS program responds to feedback from stakeholders such as AgForce who have reasonably argued that it is important that future SLATS reporting includes both clearing and tree regrowth data. The first reporting to incorporate the enhancements will be for the 2018-19 period.

This reporting will give my department more detailed information on the extent of the state's woody vegetation including estimates of age and density. This will provide an important baseline for future monitoring and reporting by the Department of Environment and Science. My department will continue to work with the Department of Environment and Science to deliver this report.

**Mr BOYCE:** I note from contract disclosure that several million dollars has been spent with companies that are headquartered outside Queensland to provide satellite imagery and aerial mapping. Could the minister explain how this is compliant with the Buy Local procurement guidelines?

**Mr STEWART:** I will refer to Mr Wally Kearnan, who wears several hats, the Valuer-General and Deputy Director-General of the Department of Resources.

**Mr Kearnan:** That would require some detailed response. I think we will have to take that on notice in relation to what contracts specifically we have signed.

**Ms PUGH:** Just a point of clarification, Chair, are we actually talking about the government's Buy Queensland policy, which is an official procurement policy, versus Buy Local, which is more of an advertising campaign? I am wanting to clarify that with the member for Callide.

**Mr BOYCE:** It is the Buy Local procurement guidelines from the Queensland government. Apparently all of these satellite imagery aerial mapping contracts are outside the state.

**CHAIR:** Okay—

**Mr STEWART:** I wish to clarify, thanks, Mr Chair, because it is only the minister, as you are aware, who can actually take the question on notice.

**CHAIR:** That is what I was just going to say, Minister.

**Mr STEWART:** We will endeavour to respond with that information by the end of this session around that data. It may not necessarily directly relate to my portfolio. As I said, this is work that is done through the Department of Environment and Science. They may be the ones who will be able to respond to that. It may not be my portfolio responsibility. I wish to clarify that. We are not taking that question on notice.

**CHAIR:** You are the one who decides whether or not to take it on notice.

**Mr BOYCE:** I note that in quarter No. 3 of financial year 2020-21, 14 per cent of payments to small businesses by the department were paid late. Could the minister inform us why they were paid late and why they were on average paid 41 days late?



**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question. I will refer to Katrina Platt, who is the Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Resources to supply that information for you.

**Ms Platt:** I probably cannot get the details around specifics on why they were paid late, but we are putting in place some processes to make sure that they go as quickly as possible and that we pay as many small businesses on time. I also add that none of the businesses that were paid late have claimed an interest payment from that for which they would have been eligible.

**CHAIR:** Member for Callide, do you have any follow-ups on that?

**Mr MILLAR:** Can the minister take that question on notice about why they were paid late?

**CHAIR:** It will be up to the minister about whether or not he takes that on notice.

**Mr STEWART:** I will not be taking that on notice. The chief financial officer has provided a response.

**CHAIR:** The answer has been given to your satisfaction?

**Mr STEWART:** Absolutely.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair: we have not been given an explanation of why they were paid late. I am asking if an answer concerning why they were paid late could be taken on notice and given back to the committee.

**Mr STEWART:** As I said, the chief financial officer has provided an explanation about those small businesses and has said that they did not claim the interest in terms of those late payments. I think she has adequately answered the question. The member may not like the answer, but we have provided an answer.

**CHAIR:** That is the answer you have been given.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, given that the Isaac Plains expansion has been approved, why is Acland stage 3 still not approved? Given the number of jobs being lost in Acland, can you advise if your department will expedite the approval process?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question. The government has been very open and transparent on New Acland. I have been clear that the government committed to letting the court run its process. I cannot state it any clearer. The High Court made its decision to send the matter back to the Land Court. Like many Queenslanders, I hope that this can soon be resolved once and for all. I thank the member for the question. I have met with the CEO of New Hope Group, Reinhold Schmidt, and have reiterated to Mr Schmidt the government's position. As the committee would be aware, the Palaszczuk government has a strong record in supporting and advancing the resource industry. Since taking office, my government has supported more than \$21 billion of investment in resource projects and created more than 8,000 jobs in the mining and gas sector. Recently, Queensland Resources Council chief executive Mr Ian Macfarlane said that there were now more jobs in the Queensland resources sector than ever before.

**Mr WATTS:** Not at Oakey.

**Mr STEWART:** This is testament to the strong action the government took to keep the sector open and operating, particularly during COVID. We are also developing our resource industry plan to ensure a continued pipeline of investment and jobs. It is the Palaszczuk government which will continue to support the resource sector as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Mr WEIR:** I put it to the minister that other mines have had legal action pending and have been approved.

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question. What you will find, if you look into it, is that the Land Court did not approve—sorry, I will correct that. The Land Court made a recommendation that the mining lease not be granted. That was through New Acland. In terms of the Olive Downs mine, for example, the Land Court recommended the granting of that mining lease. There is an inherent difference between the two.

**Mr WATTS:** One was apprehended bias.

**CHAIR:** Member, please, the minister is answering the question. The question was in regard to other mining leases. The minister is answering the question.

**Mr WATTS:** The minister's statement is factually incorrect. The Land Court's judgement was thrown out through apprehended bias.

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question. If you think it is incorrect, write to the Speaker about it. The minister is answering the question.

**Mr STEWART:** I will respond to the member for Toowoomba North. I think that is in relation to the High Court and the appeal through the High Court in terms of apprehended bias. The Land Court still has not recommended approval of the mining lease. That has not changed. Our position has not changed around that. We have communicated that at every opportunity. It remains the same.

**CHAIR:** I have heard it ventilated many times. Member for Condamine?

**Mr WEIR:** Of the coalmines that have been approved by the Palaszczuk government, how many have been thermal coal mines such as Acland?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question because, as I have said here tonight already, the resources sector is a strong sector. We ensure that, when granting our mining leases, those applications stack up environmentally, socially and financially. I reiterate this because it is an important point: under the Palaszczuk government's watch, \$21 billion has been invested or committed to resource projects, creating around 8,000 jobs. It is worth tens of billions of dollars. Since Labor came to government in Queensland in 2015, we have granted 71 mining leases across 38 coal projects, which includes 12 metallurgical coal projects, 12 thermal coal projects and 14 projects that target a mix of thermal and metallurgical coal.

As I said to the member for Maiwar, around 85 per cent of coalmines in Queensland are metallurgical coal. Some of them will in fact largely target metallurgical coal, and there will be some thermal coal in there as well. That is the 14 I have highlighted. Member for Condamine, I have an extensive list here. If I were to read that out, it would chew up five minutes of your time. I am more than happy to provide that to you. Some mines largely target metallurgical coal and thermal coal is a by-product; it is not a targeted element. I reiterate that we have approved 12 metallurgical coal projects, 12 thermal coal projects and 14 that are mixed thermal and metallurgical coal projects.

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

**Ms PUGH:** I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Minister, can you please update the committee on the Geological Survey of Queensland's online freely accessible data initiative?

**Mr STEWART:** This is an absolute favourite of mine. We certainly live in a digital era in a time of increasing volumes of data and information on the one hand and of an expectation by users for our data to be more readily, easily and freely accessible. That is a huge task for my government involving moving us from old legacy items of the 20th century vintage to new systems of modern design and function. Last year I advised the committee that we did just that with our all-important geoscience data portal—the entire store of Queensland's exploration and geoscience information, and it was for free.

In August 2020 the Geological Survey of Queensland with the Department of Resources launched two new data platforms—the GSQ Lodgement Portal for industry to report data to us and the GSQ Open Data Portal for users to find, access and use that data. In technology terms, the data platforms are known as data lakes—and, no, you cannot swim in those lakes—which represent the storage of large and diverse volumes of data in a way that enables easy search and free access. The most fundamental advantage of the data lakes design is enabling linked data where queries can then be used to focus on specific topics—for example, every occurrence of vanadium in Queensland or in a defined area or in association with some other feature.

These data platforms allow, for the first time in the 150-year history of the Geological Survey of Queensland, to make all of the data they hold available—and it is free. To highlight the change that that represents, in the past only about two per cent of our geoscience data was publicly available whereas now 100 per cent of our non-confidential data is available, and you know why. If I was to express the volume of downloads in the currency of music and music streaming since the GSQ Open Data Portal went live in August last year, it would equate to more than 26 years of nonstop listening or roughly four million songs. So for the member for Callide, that is a lot of Slim Dusty or, for the member for Gregory, that is a bucketload of Johnny Cash—but, as you know, it does not require cash because our data portal is free.

As expected, we are seeing strong use of the new system, particularly by industry explorers using that data to help make new discoveries. The Lodgement and Open Data portals have set up Queensland with a world-leading data ecosystem. We are fielding inquiries from other Australian and overseas jurisdictions as well as affiliated agencies within the Queensland government to extend or replicate the capabilities provided by the new system, and that is great news. That recognition by other jurisdictions reflects our success in bringing Queensland's geoscience systems to the forefront of the digital era, and it is free.

**Ms PUGH:** On page 1 of the SDS a key government commitment was to deliver the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan. Can the minister please update the committee on the development of this plan?

**Mr STEWART:** Queensland's resource sector keeps Queenslanders in jobs and our economy strong. More than 76,000 Queenslanders are employed by the sector and over the last decade the sector has contributed to more than \$30 billion in royalties, and that is money that, as you know, goes to schools and hospitals, our police officers, schoolteachers, doctors and nurses. More than figures though, the sector supports Aboriginal communities. It is not an exaggeration to say that towns can literally be created because of a mine, and I have to tell you that Mount Isa is absolutely a perfect example, as is Weipa, as you know, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Paraburdoo.

**Mr STEWART:** Paraburdoo. The value of this sector to Queensland is undeniable and cannot be overstated. However, we know that global trends will change the resource sector into the future. While demand for our world-class coal and gas will continue for some time, the global transition to a lower carbon economy and a focus on renewables means that we also need to transition. That is why this government committed at the 2020 election to deliver a Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan. The plan will set out a shared vision for the future of the resource sector and include a range of actions and initiatives to realise that vision.

Having this shared vision is absolutely important. Every Queenslanders is impacted by the resource sector—from the people who work in the sector to the communities and other sectors that live with mining operations to the First Nations groups whose lands have operations on them to academics who devote careers to unlock new opportunities like we saw today at the University of Queensland. That is why we have invited all Queenslanders to help shape the future of Queensland's resource industry plan. This plan will set out a vision for the resource sector's future and include a range of actions and initiatives to realise this vision. In late April this year we launched consultation on the plan's development, giving all Queenslanders an opportunity to help shape the future of the Queensland resource industry. We undertook seven regional workshops in Mount Isa, Chinchilla, Rockhampton, Townsville, Mackay, Brisbane and Moranbah to hear the ideas and issues in these communities in terms of how we can grow this sector into the future. We also ran an online workshop with workers.

There was also an online engagement website with discussion forums, surveys and the ability for Queenslanders to make submissions. Submissions on the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan closed at the end of June. Our 'Have your say' website had significant success, with around 9½ thousand visits during the consultation period. The survey was launched on the same website to seek views across a whole range of topics related to the industry and was completed by 209 people, which was significantly higher than our original estimation. In addition, our questions and conversation starters on the website resulted in more than 400 contributions from a range of people across Queensland, none of which have been overly negative or critical. Rather, they have been made up of constructive feedback and suggestions for genuine consideration.

A social media and regionally targeted radio advertising campaign that ran across regional locations was also successful in driving a significant number of people to the site. As a direct result of the social media campaign, we have had a reach of almost 634,000 people across the mining communities and First Nations audiences we were targeting. Pleasingly, we have heard great ideas from industry, workers and those communities. This will help us develop a plan that will create more growth, jobs and investment in our state resources sector. I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who have participated in developing the plan and providing their views. My department is working across government to consider these submissions and views.

We will be releasing the draft Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan later this year for consultation. I look forward to continuing to work with the resources sector, the workers and communities on finalising the plan and implementing the actions.

**CHAIR:** Can you please explain to the committee what is being done to assist landholders who have had an increase in their rural land valuations?

**Mr STEWART:** The Palaszczuk government continues to recognise the importance of the state's rural industry and our economy through a range of support measures. My department administers more than 11,000 leases issued for primary production under the Land Act. The rent on these leases will vary depending on the rental evaluation assessed for the property. The Valuer-General is an independent statutory role and is responsible for assessing the rental valuation of leased land. In recent valuation cycles there have been a number of large increases in rural land valuations. This is because under the Palaszczuk government agriculture is booming in Queensland. This is great news for regional economies.

To provide protection against large rental increases as a result of significant increases in valuations, a cap is applied to primary production or category 11 leases. The capping ensures that any rent increase does not exceed 10 per cent of the previous year's rent. In addition to the capping of rent, my department fully defers the payment of the annual rent for primary production leases in drought declared areas of the state. Due to continuing drought conditions it is recognised that when a drought declaration is revoked many leaseholders will take considerable time to recover. For this reason the government introduced new legislation in 2018 allowing primary production leaseholders recently coming out of drought the option of paying off their deferred rent over a five-year period with no penalty interest.

Through the Queensland government drought assistance package my department also provides a rent rebate of up to 18 per cent of the annual rent to eligible primary production leaseholders. For primary producers in areas impacted by other natural disasters, such as floods or cyclones, their rent is also regularly deferred. In response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, primary production leaseholders had their annual rent waived from 1 April 2020 until 31 December 2020. The Palaszczuk government will always stand up and support regional Queenslanders in their time of need.

**Ms HOWARD:** I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Will the minister update the committee on steps it has taken to implement Queensland's strong domestic gas supply policy?

**Mr STEWART:** Ensuring sufficient supply of natural gas for both our domestic and export markets is vital to our ongoing economic prosperity. Although the Australian Energy Market Operator's 2021 Gas Statement of Opportunities projects there is sufficient gas supply until at least 2026, this is contingent on a range of assumptions. Gas is a critical enabler for Queensland's economy in terms of royalties, direct jobs in the industry, as well as the jobs it enables in the manufacturing sector and, as such, securing future supplies is a key priority. Queensland leads the nation when it comes to gas policy. The Queensland government continues to do the heavy lifting in relation to Australian domestic gas supply. Our approach to releasing land for domestic gas supply is working well. Not only are we increasing domestic gas supply, but our policy is encouraging greater diversity of suppliers and increased competition.

In March 2018, Senex was awarded the first Australian market supply condition tenure to ensure gas from that tenure is supplied only to the Australian market and not exported. Senex is now supplying gas to the east coast market for production of electricity and everyday consumer products such as bricks and beverage bottles. Its customers include CSR Building Products, Orora, Visy Glass, Alinta Energy, CleanCo Queensland and Southern Oil Refining. Queensland's strong commitment to increasing gas supply is benefiting gas users across the east coast market.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's latest gas inquiry interim report found gas prices have fallen across the east coast. In recent weeks, however, several gas pricing hubs have reported higher than normal prices. This is typical in a market and transitory. The government is putting in place mechanisms to increase gas supply which is the only sustainable way to ensure competitive gas prices. The Queensland government is thriving to do even more to increase gas supply. We understand the importance of connecting gas reserves in the Bowen Basin to domestic and export markets. This is why we committed \$5 million for a gas infrastructure study which could lead to the Bowen Basin becoming Queensland's next gas frontier. All the while we continue to release land for gas exploration and production dedicated to the Australian domestic market.

**Mr WEIR:** My first question is around the Mines Rehabilitation Commissioner. Could the minister tell us where that recruitment process is at or has the decision already been made, as we are hearing a senior Labor figure is to take on that role?

**CHAIR:** There is a bit of an imputation or an assumption in that question.

**Mr STEWART:** And a hypothetical.

**CHAIR:** I will give you much discretion with your answer.

**Mr STEWART:** This is not a responsibility of my portfolio, it is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Science.

**Mr WEIR:** I will go to the NRM groups. Would the minister be able to detail the programs that have been allocated funding in these year's budget and would that hopefully include the \$5 million that was initially promised by the minister for agriculture for the control of prickly acacia?

**CHAIR:** I can sense the passion coming from the member.

**Mr STEWART:** This is something the member for Gregory is very passionate about. Recently when I was out in your patch, as you are probably aware, I caught up with the group out there looking at prickly acacia because I wanted to get my head around it. I cannot comment about the agriculture minister's promise, but the Natural Resources Investment Program 2018-2022 is the Queensland government's flagship \$60 million statewide natural resources management program that continues to deliver programs under a regional community model to generate jobs, improve soil health, enhance vegetation condition and deliver outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef. The \$16.1 million allocated in this year's budget continues this investment to complete projects from South-West Queensland to the tip of Queensland and the Torres Strait and all regions of Queensland in between. This investment has further leveraged hundreds of millions of dollars of federal and landholder investment, generating jobs across regional Queensland.

Regional natural resources management bodies work with the state and Commonwealth governments, agricultural organisations, environmental conservation groups, local community groups, researchers and others to coordinate and align management activities around local priorities within regions. The Natural Resources Investment Program has funded projects directly contributing to the government's priorities in Queensland's economic recovery plan, backing small businesses, building Queensland and growing our regions. The Natural Resources Investment Program delivery model ensures that the projects are driven by regional natural resources management bodies, their regional priorities and specifically builds capacity in regional, rural and remote communities, including First Nations communities. As a result of strong governance and a focus on continuous improvement, regional capacity building and the measurement of outcomes, the Natural Resources Investment Program has demonstrated success in building stable and resilient landscapes and facilitates effective regional management of Queensland's natural assets.

Partnership and collaboration are an essential part of the Natural Resources Investment Program and have resulted in better coordination of project tasks, a more integrated approach and more strategic long-term outcomes. My department has robust systems in place to ensure the efficient and effective use of Queensland government funding in a first for Australia through the Natural Resources Investment Program Statewide Indicator Framework and Logic and we can now measure how the state's investment has improved Queensland's natural assets.

**Mr MILLAR:** Can I seek clarification, Mr Chair? The question was, has the minister advocated to the minister for agriculture for the prickly acacia funding that was promised over 12 months ago? This is important.

**CHAIR:** Member, I understand you want that clarification, but the question did come from the member for Condamine and then you interjected with a question. Minister, are you willing to take that question?

**Mr STEWART:** I am willing to take that.

**CHAIR:** I am just going to bring it back under control a bit.

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question because I know how important it is. I saw that firsthand when I was at Longreach listening to people. In fact, when we were out there again recently to launch our stock routes program I also heard from them about prickly acacia. This is something that I have actually spoken to the minister for agriculture about, but it does not lie within my estimates or my budget. I know you are very passionate about it. Having learnt for myself the importance of it and the work that is being done, I will give you this assurance: I will again speak to the minister for agriculture.

**Mr MILLAR:** Tell him to get the chequebook out.

**CHAIR:** You are speaking to the farmers' friend about it and we are all happy.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, you talked about the islands earlier and I was pleased to hear some of those comments. In relation to Keswick Island, what actions are available to the department to ensure that the head lessee completes the jetty?

**Mr STEWART:** With your indulgence, Mr Chair, I will come back to the member for Callide who asked about SLATS. I will answer that and then go on.

**CHAIR:** Certainly.

**Mr STEWART:** In reference to the earlier question pertaining to satellite imagery providers, SLATS uses satellite imagery. I am advised that there are no Queensland based satellite service providers and, as such, it is not possible to use local suppliers. Should the situation change, I am sure that the Department of Environment and Science would consider purchasing locally, noting our government is actively supporting the growth of Queensland's space sector.

Member for Condamine, the Keswick Island development consists of two leases with a total area of approximately 140 hectares. The main island lease provides for the development of hotels, residential units and houses, and associated infrastructure. The lease over the adjoining area of water provides for a marina, a jetty and other marine infrastructure. The remaining approximately 380 hectares of island forms part of the South Cumberland Islands National Park.

In 2019, the headleases were purchased by China Bloom, Hong Kong, from the previous owner, Keswick Developments. Residents have private sublease arrangements with the head lessee to build and reside on the island. There are approximately 130 subleases over the island and 20 to 25 have houses constructed on them. The dispute on Keswick Island between the head lessee and the sublessees is both long running and complex. While the current head lessee purchased the leases in 2019, an effective working relationship has not existed between the head lessee and the sublessees for many years. In December 2020, an inspection of the island was conducted in response to several issues raised by some sublessees. A number of matters were raised with the head lessee following that inspection. My department continues to work with the head lessee to ensure these conditions are being complied with and all activities are being conducted in accordance with the terms of the lease.

Several issues were raised through the media, including foreign ownership, access to and from the island and the provision of services. The majority of these issues raised are private matters between the head lessee and the sublessees. Foreign ownership and investment is a matter for which the Commonwealth government is accountable. The Queensland government is not involved in these considerations when providing consent to transfer leases under the Land Act. I am also aware that some sublessees have not met the requirements contained within their sublease agreements, including payments of levies and requirements to build within a specific period.

In 2019 the Land Act was amended to provide improved dispute resolution mechanisms for issues raised between head lessees and sublessees. For some time my department has provided advice to both parties that they have legal rights to initiate dispute resolution procedures under their sublease agreement and the Land Act. To date my department is not aware that the parties have initiated these formal proceedings.

**Mr WEIR:** Just to be clear, there is no resolution on the jetty? It is very important on that island.

**CHAIR:** I understand that and I believe that is what the minister just said. Do you wish to clarify further, Minister?

**Mr STEWART:** My department found that there were no substantial breaches of the lease conditions other than the inadequacy of access to the island via the temporary boat ramp. The lessee has been instructed to rectify this matter and comply with the conditions of the lease. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that our islands remain pristine places for residents and visitors alike and we are committed to working with all head lessees and sublessees to deliver that.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, you talked about the complexity of Keswick and it is not alone. We have a number of islands that have some complex issues. Is there any provision in the budget to do an inquiry into the management of the islands off the Queensland coast, because there are some very complex and pressing issues?

**Mr STEWART:** Yes and I have been to several of those in a previous life, so to speak. Queensland's tourism sector has been hit particularly hard by COVID-19 travel restrictions. The Queensland government assisted operating tourism island lessees across our state during this emergency by waiving land rent for 12 months from 1 April to 31 March this year. My office fields inquiries from lessees across the state asking for support to ensure that they can achieve the desired purpose of their leases. We take those inquiries for assistance very seriously. Where lessees owe substantial rental arrears to the state, the Department of Resources works with the lessee with the aim of resolving their debt in a timely manner. Action to address noncompliance with Land Act lease conditions other than for rental arrears requires lengthy processes involving the Land Court. In the first instance my department works to resolve those noncompliance issues outside the court processes.

When it comes to the Great Keppel Island land leases, the Palaszczuk government is committed to seeing tourism development on Great Keppel Island. Although the recent transfer application for the leases to Altum Property Group was unsuccessful, my department will continue to work with fellow departments and GKI Resort towards achieving this commitment. In recognition of the significant local, regional and state benefits associated with supporting tourism on the Capricorn Coast, the Queensland government has committed \$30 million through the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport towards the construction of common user infrastructure on Great Keppel Island for the benefit of business, residents and visitors alike. As I have said, when it comes to Keswick we have certainly worked with the head lessee and the sublessees to resolve those issues.

**CHAIR:** Member, did you have another question on that line before we go back to government questions?

**Mr WEIR:** Not on that line.

**CHAIR:** We will have more one more quick question.

**Mr WEIR:** The minister spoke at some length about the board of inquiry into the Grosvenor incident. One thing that was highlighted was the inspectorate. How many full-time equivalent mining inspectors do we have and are there any vacancies still to be filled?

**Mr STEWART:** There is no doubt that the incident in May of last year certainly rocked the coalmining industry as well as the resources industry. I am aware that there are currently 47 inspectors. We are still looking at filling those vacancies. As you can imagine, whenever we get those inspectors involved with RSHQ, the mines see that they are certainly a very valued commodity and poach them from us. I will refer to Mr Mark Stone, the Chief Executive Officer of Resources Safety & Health Queensland, to give you some further detail about the processes that they are undertaking to ensure that we can not only fill those vacancies but also look at processes to recruit new inspectors and retain them in those particular roles.

**Mr Stone:** The minister is correct. Today there are 27 coalmine inspectors and, combined with the 20 mineral mines inquiries, that gives 47 in total. We are currently recruiting for three further mining inspectors. That process is underway and we hope to complete it this calendar year. The minister also briefly mentioned the work we are doing internally to help build capacity, and I can provide some basic detail on that if you are interested.

**Mr WEIR:** The remuneration of those people was obviously raised. The minister talked about training for new inspectors to go in. Does that mean the existing inspectors also are going to go through another training regime?

**Mr Stone:** Absolutely. There are two levels of training. There is the ongoing professional development training that all inspectors undertake—technical, professional, ethics, code of conduct and investigation skills. The Chief Inspector of Coal Mines made specific reference during the board of inquiry to a cohort of four inspectors who possessed either a second class certificate or a third class certificate of competency. Those inspectors are undergoing an intensive training program developed with Simtars. Over the course of the next year and a half, they will be upskilled. They need to take an exam, but hopefully they will be first class certificate holders in underground coalmining. As some of their time will be taken upskilling, part of the intent of getting the next inspectors in and working with the Public Service Commission is the whole model then shifts to attracting and retaining a small cohort of highly skilled inspectors within a broader group.

**Ms PUGH:** With reference to page 1 of the SDS, can the minister please advise what work is being done regarding occupational dust lung diseases in Queensland?

**Mr STEWART:** The health of Queensland's miners remain a priority for this government. The Palaszczuk government has a strong record of protecting the health and safety of workers and we are leading the way nationally in responding to and supporting workers suffering from occupational dust lung disease, including coal workers' pneumoconiosis and silicosis. I am very proud of our response to the mine dust lung disease, including more protective dust limits, lower levels of dust exposure, stronger reporting requirements for monitoring and enhanced health surveillance.

Mr Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the former minister, Dr Anthony Lynham, the minister for natural resources, mines and energy, for his work in this particular space. He was very passionate around this, and I thank him for his work. We are ensuring we continue that work as well.

On 5 December 2019, an Auditor-General's report was tabled that assessed how effective the public sector has implemented independent recommendations addressing mine dust lung disease. The report found that important progress has been made in implementing the recommendations, the health and safety of coalmine workers has been improved and the risk of disease reduced.

Substantial reforms have been delivered to improve miners' health, including mandatory reporting to the regulator of mine dust lung disease and periodic dust monitoring results, both of which are published on RSHQ's website; a register of qualified and experienced doctors, spirometry practices, X-ray imaging clinics and X-ray B-readers approved by RSHQ; a clinical pathway guideline to promote consistency in the referral and diagnosis of disease; a training program for doctors undertaking health assessments; new spirometry and chest X-ray imaging standards; information for workers, including online videos on a dedicated website, Miners' Health Matters, and pocketbook guides with orders taken

from over 58,000 copies; and finally, audit programs including clinical audit of spirometry and X-ray quality, administrative functions of the scheme, plus a CT scan review by international and local radiologists ensuring doctors act appropriately to investigate abnormal results.

As I indicated during last year's estimates process, government has actioned the 68 recommendations of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee Report No. 2, in accordance with the government response to the report tabled in the House in September 2017.

Further reforms have since been progressed, including the introduction of the Mine Dust Health Support Service, a collaboration between the Office of Industrial Relations, WorkCover Queensland and Resources Safety and Health Queensland in March 2020, providing confidential support and guidance for former and current mine quarry workers regarding free respiratory screening, counselling, compensation and community support; mandatory respiratory health surveillance for mineral mines and quarry workers introduced on 1 September 2020; the engagement of Heart of Australia to build a mobile health unit, a 26 metre B-Double configuration, a world-first, combining onboard audiometry, spirometry, chest X-ray, high-resolution computed tomography scans, laboratory lung function testing, protective equipment fit testing, as well as general health and wellbeing services to remote and regional coal, mineral mine and quarry workers—I think it is really important to get that piece of kit out into those areas that need it the most; and the release of ResHealth in January 2021, the final phase of transitioning the coalmine workers' health scheme to a digital platform which will be progressively rolled out to industry over the next 12 months.

We are committed to continuous improvement which is why we have not only established standards for medical examinations under the scheme and require doctors to undergo specific training and apply for accreditation and registration, but also we have progressed a substantial suite of audits over the last 18 months to check the quality of spirometry, X-rays and CT scans as well as medical provider administrative obligations under the scheme so that coalmine workers may feel confident that they are receiving and will continue to receive quality medical screening.

**Ms HOWARD:** I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can the minister advise the committee on what initiatives the Palaszczuk government is implementing to support North and North-West Queensland?

**Mr STEWART:** The Queensland government is committed to a prosperous future for the North West Minerals Province and the Townsville region. The North West Minerals Province is one of the world's richest mineral producing regions and has delivered significant economic benefits to Queensland. There are opportunities in traditional metals like copper, lead and zinc in the regions. I quickly add that now that we have the 2032 Olympics, there is a great opportunity for the gold, silver and bronze medals to be made from the minerals that come from the north and North West Minerals province. There are also great opportunities in the new economy minerals like cobalt, vanadium and rare earth elements which are gold in themselves which are critical for the manufacture of low-emissions technologies.

The North West Minerals Province can capitalise on this growing demand for new economy minerals. The government expects to see continued development of mines and growth in exports as well as local mineral processing and manufacturing. Maintaining Queensland's local mineral processing capability will allow us to leverage that capability to develop value-adding industries around new-economy minerals, creating jobs not only for the new economy minerals sector but also in the mining equipment, technology and services and advanced manufacturing sectors.

The Townsville Regional Recovery Action Plan announced last year supports the continued operation of the Mount Isa Mines copper smelter. This financial support underpins more than 1,000 manufacturing jobs in North Queensland, including 350 jobs at the Mt Isa Mines smelter itself, 220 jobs at the Townsville copper refinery and 520 jobs at Incitec Pivot's operations in North Queensland.

Investing in the Mount Isa Mines copper smelter is money well spent because it positions the North West Minerals Province and Townsville region for future growth in localised processing. The support for the smelter will complement investments we are making in exploration and infrastructure to unlock the potential of the north-west and north-east minerals provinces.

With regard to exploration, round 5 of the Collaborative Exploration Initiative extension opened on 21 April 2021. Individual grants of up to \$200,000 were made available with no requirement for direct funding by the applicant. The total funding available for round 5 is \$2.5 million. The final reports for round 5 are due to my department by the end of May 2022, and the data from the reports will become publicly available in December 2022 via the department's open data portal to encourage further exploration and mining investments in the region because it is free.



With regard to infrastructure, the Townsville Regional Recovery Action Plan includes \$50 million on the Mount Isa line to bolster freight movements between the Port of Townsville and the North West Minerals Province to get our valuable resources from the north to the market. This plan includes \$16.1 million in 2020-21 out of a \$53.3 million total spend for new cranes and upgrading the cargo terminal and roads at the Port of Townsville to help our resources sector access export markets.

The Queensland government is also supporting the CopperString 2.0 project, which will not only create hundreds of jobs during construction but will also provide cheaper, reliable power for the North West Minerals Province. This is expected to support operating mines and encourage investment in new mines and mineral processing facilities in the region.

Queensland's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will need to leverage our existing strengths like our world-class minerals and processing sector. This government is committed to growing this sector into the future and welcoming the jobs and investment this will bring for all Queenslanders.

**Ms PUGH:** I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Can the minister update the committee on the government's abandoned mines program and how this program benefits Queenslanders?

**Mr STEWART:** My department will play a leading role in Queensland's ongoing resource-led recovery which will include \$15.8 million over the next two years to address the management and mitigation of significant public safety, health and environmental risks at abandoned mine sites.

In 2021-22, this funding includes \$5.2 million for the plugging of abandonment of legacy wells at the former Linc Energy site at Hopelands as wells are released by the Department of Environment and Science from ongoing prosecution of the former operators of that site; \$3.5 million for stage 2 of remediation works at the Collingwood tin abandoned mine site which includes dewatering, capping and revegetation of a tailings dam, reshaping and decontamination of a processing area and other works as agreed with the traditional owners; \$1.5 million for ongoing care and maintenance works at abandoned mine sites including Baal Gammon, Wolfram Camp and Mount Morgan; and \$1.1 million to complete assessments of contamination and remediation options at a former coal tar processing site.

This new funding builds on my department's work to manage risk at abandoned mines in line with the Queensland government's abandoned mines management policy. It also supports the government's resources sector financial assurance framework reforms. My department released the risk management prioritisation framework for abandoned mines management and remediation work in March this year, delivering on the state's commitment to publish a formal decision-making process for abandoned mines.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for the consideration of proposed estimates of expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Resources has expired. Thank you, Minister, Director-General and officials, for your attendance. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and the visiting members who participated in the hearing. Minister, would you like to say a few words?

**Mr STEWART:** Can I answer a previous question from the member for Maiwar about production leases? The applications to which he referred to are being made under the Petroleum Act 1923. Compliance with a work program is not relevant to the criteria under that act.

Before we close, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the staff of the Department of Resources, Resources Safety and Health Queensland, the GasFields Commission and the Land Access Ombudsman for the tremendous amount of work that has gone into preparing for these hearings. I am extremely grateful for your tireless commitment and dedication.

To my director-general, Mike Kaiser, and to my deputy directors-general Wally Kearnan, Shaun Ferris, Chantel Llorca and their team, I thank you for your leadership and boundless knowledge of this portfolio.

I acknowledge the members of the committee and thank you for all your questions. I would also like to thank the parliamentary staff, Hansard and the attendants for their work as well on what has been a very long day.

I would especially like to thank my team; namely, Brett Murphy, Talbot Speechley, Stephanie Kameric, Kyle Walker, Chris Lees and Bryce Heaton. They have worked hard to ensure this minister is up to speed on every aspect of this important and wide-reaching portfolio, on issues that impact people from Bamaga to Birdsville and all of the places in between. I thank them for their help in carrying out this government's vision for the people of Queensland.

My sincere thanks to you as well, Chair, for facilitating this exhaustive estimates process. To everyone, goodnight and, again, thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, I would also like to thank Hansard and the parliamentary broadcast staff, our secretariat and all other parliamentary staff for their assistance today, particularly in these conditions that we have been in over the past period. I declare this hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 8.15 pm.**