

## THURSDAY, 12 AUGUST 2021

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### ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE— ATTORNEY-GENERAL; JUSTICE; WOMEN; THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

#### Estimate Committee Members

Mr PS Russo (Chair)  
Mrs LJ Gerber  
Ms SL Bolton (virtual)  
Ms JM Bush  
Mr JE Hunt  
Mr AC Powell

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#### Members in Attendance

Mr TJ Nicholls  
Ms FS Simpson  
Dr A MacMahon  
Ms AJ Camm  
Mr JP Bleijie  
Mr MC Berkman  
Mr DR Last  
Mr RI Katter

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#### In Attendance

Hon. SM Fentiman, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Ms L Fraser Hardy, Chief of Staff

#### **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**

Mr D Mackie, Director-General

Ms C Scott, Chief Financial Officer, Financial Services Branch, Corporate Services

#### **Crime and Corruption Commission**

Mr A MacSporran QC, Chairperson

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#### The committee met at 9.00 am.



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

I am Peter Russo, the member for Toohey and chair of the committee; Mrs Laura Gerber, the member for Currumbin, is deputy chair. The other committee members are: Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa, who is appearing via Zoom; Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; Mr Jason

Hunt, the member for Caloundra; and Mr Andrew Powell, the member for Glass House. 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.

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 the broadcast of proceedings are available from the committee 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 committee secretariat. As a result of current public health orders, some members and witnesses will be participating via videoconference today.

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: justice and Attorney-General from 9 am to 12.45; police from 1.30 to 2.45; Corrective Services from 3 pm to 4 pm; and Fire and Emergency Services from 4.15 to 5.15.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill for the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence until 12.45. The committee will suspend proceedings during this time for a short break between 10.30 and 10.45. As determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the Attorney-General's portfolio as follows: justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies from 9 am to 10.30 am; and justice and Attorney-General from 10.45 to 12.45. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the areas, as was agreed to by the House.

Visiting members present who may attend either in person or via videoconference are: David Crisafulli MP, the member for Broadwater; Tim Nicholls MP, the member for Clayfield; and Fiona Simpson MP, the member for Maroochydore. 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 preamble, argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. On behalf of the committee I welcome the Attorney-General, the director-general, officials and members of the public who are watching the broadcast. For the benefit of Hansard I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Attorney-General or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Attorney-General, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than six minutes in total across both of your sessions today.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning, committee members. I am pleased to address the committee today on our significant and broad reform program being delivered to contribute to keeping Queenslanders safe and fostering a fairer and more inclusive society.

Can I start by thanking the heads of jurisdiction, particularly the Chief Justice, for responding so rapidly to the most recent lockdown to ensure Queenslanders continue to have access to justice. Audio and video links in courts and allowing various documents to be signed and witnessed electronically by video link were just a few of the temporary measures government used in the first wave of COVID that were used again during this lockdown. That is why we are currently working on making some of these measures more permanent. It was our recent investment of \$7.4 million to expand and upgrade existing audiovisual capacity in the justice system, including videoconferencing and in-custody appearances, which allowed the legal system to respond so well to the most recent lockdown.

COVID-19 has also had a significant impact on travellers right across Australia. Border closures have kept us safe, but this has resulted in an unprecedented demand for assistance from government from Queensland consumers. The Office of Fair Trading has received a 21 per cent increase compared to the previous financial year. We processed a record 17,482 complaints, 1,400 of which related to COVID-19. Last financial year we also achieved the largest amount of redress to consumers, worth over \$9.5 million, through conciliation investigations and court ordered compensation.

We have invested a further \$13 million over four years to strengthen access to justice for Queenslanders. Our investment in justice includes an additional \$7 million for QCAT, one of our busiest jurisdictions, almost \$5 million for coronial services and the implementation of reforms in response to the 2018 Queensland Audit Office report. There is also a further \$1.4 million this year to support the coronial investigation and inquest into the tragic deaths of Hannah Clarke and her three children, and we will establish a second coronial registrar within the Coroners Court of Queensland. We have also asked the Sentencing Advisory Council to review the sentencing of offenders convicted of serious violent offences.

We are implementing initiatives to enhance support for First Nations Queenslanders applying for a working with children check to address barriers. We are helping victims of crime with \$4 million over four years for Victim Assist Queensland to continue to provide timely financial assistance to victims of crime and their families.

The Palaszczuk government's commitment to advancing gender equality and respect for women and girls across the state is as strong as ever. Our current Queensland Women's Strategy has helped us make significant progress towards gender equality. I can announce that work has begun on the new strategy and we are engaging with government agencies, industry and Queensland women and girls to ensure this new strategy finds solutions to the ongoing impacts created by this pandemic as well as continuing to look at ways to eliminate the harassment of women in the workplace, broader society and to address the gender pay gap.

We have invested more than any previous Queensland government to change attitudes, integrate services and strengthen justice responses to domestic and family violence. During the pandemic service providers saw an increase in demand. We were swift to respond with an immediate funding boost of \$7.5 million. This budget continues to take action with an additional \$30 million over the next four years to ensure women get the support they need when they come forward. Women's safety is a key priority of the Palaszczuk government, with an investment of more than \$155 million in tackling violence against women. We have established the Women's Justice and Safety Taskforce to conduct a wideranging review into the experience of women in Queensland's criminal justice system and how best to legislate against coercive control.

Modernising our laws is front and centre of our justice agenda. We have committed to updating the Property Law Act. We have established a Community Titles Legislation Working Group. We have committed to reforming and modernising the Trusts Act and modernising our births, deaths and marriages laws. Later this year, we will be introducing shield laws to better protect Queenslanders who come forward with important information. Finally, we are also committed to protecting Queenslanders financially, and that is why today I introduced an options paper to look at ways to look at transparency regulation in the funeral industry, protecting Queenslanders when they are at their most vulnerable. I look forward to continuing this progress as detailed in the 2021-22 state budget to help ensure safer and fairer communities for all Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** I call the deputy chair and member for Currumbin.

**Mrs GERBER:** I hand over to the member for Clayfield, the shadow Attorney-General.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Mr Chair, committee and Attorney-General. I agree with you in relation to the operation of the courts over the COVID lockdown. That is a good thing to see. My first question is to Mr MacSporran. Mr MacSporran, welcome. It has been a little while since we have had this opportunity. This morning there are widespread media reports that the CCC has announced an investigation where it will be zeroing in on public resources being used for non-public purposes—from departments, government owned corporations, the hiring of mates or family members and those sorts of things. In light of that and in light of your anticipated work over that period, do you have a view on, for example, the Premier's use of \$560,000 to conduct polling in those circumstances and whether that is an appropriate use of resources or whether in fact that might be money being used for a side hustle?

**Ms BUSH:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** You are seeking an opinion.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I might reframe it. In view of the announcement that you have made about the appropriate use of resources, would the use of public money to conduct polling be a matter that you would consider investigating, if that were to be used for purposes other than for the public purpose?

**Mr MacSporran:** I think the difficulty with such a question is that it is completely hypothetical. If we received a complaint, we would be required naturally enough to assess it and, if it revealed evidence of a threshold of corrupt conduct, to investigate it. I do not think it is productive for me here today to speculate on what might be coming our way or not. What we have said is that we have a very clear corruption audit plan for 2021 to 2023, which you have seen published this week, which indicates our program of work for the next two years, including some of the matters that you have just spoken of.

There is no doubt that we have seen things in the intel reports we get, in the information we receive, in media reports and so forth that raise issues about these topics. That is why we flag them—to have a look at them to see whether there is evidence of corruption, misbehaviour, misconduct, whatever—and then we will be in a position to expose it, act on it and do what is appropriate. I think the simple answer is that that is a program of work we flagged for the reasons you suggest generally. What that might result in, we do not yet know.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Because a complaint has not been made in relation to that particular matter?

**Mr MacSporran:** We do not necessarily need a complaint.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But there may be others as well, because previously you had raised the issues around your concern around lobbyists—

**Mr MacSporran:** Absolutely.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** And their closeness to elected representatives or parties.

**Mr MacSporran:** Yes. All of those things are in the public domain. We are looking at those things. Where they go will be a matter of the evidence and information we receive.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I might ask another question. In relation to the Logan City Council matter, people were charged I think in April 2019, if memory serves me correctly. The mayor and seven councillors were charged with criminal offences. After that charge, those charges were withdrawn by the DPP and substitute charges were subsequently laid in relation to them, and then the prosecution was withdrawn, I understand, prior to the matter going to trial on the day of trial. Quite a significant amount of resources of the CCC would have gone into that particular investigation. Does the CCC keep a record or understand how much time was spent in it? Obviously, there are time sheets, recording sheets and those sorts of things. How much money do you estimate was spent on that investigation? Are you able to give the committee a figure in relation to that spend?

**Mr MacSporran:** I cannot give you a figure off the top of my head but I can indicate clearly, as is obvious, that because of the length of the investigation and the resources that were deployed it would be a significant cost. I can take that on notice if you like. I do not know if we can produce the figure as quickly as might be required. It could be established, but it was a significant amount of money clearly.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That would be great if you would not mind taking it on notice.

**Mr MacSporran:** Certainly.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If I can ask that it be taken on notice, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Only the Attorney can take a question on notice.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Madam Attorney, Mr MacSporran has indicated he is able to do that.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy with that. That is fine.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Another matter is in relation to the Moreton Bay Regional Council and charges laid in August 2019 against a councillor and a property developer in relation to actions up there regarding rezoning of land and various other things. It was reported on 9 August that the DPP will withdraw those charges and they will not be proceeded with. Again, that has been two years since that matter was brought on. Do you have a view on the withdrawal of those charges and again the costs incurred to your organisation in conducting obviously the investigations leading up to those charges being laid? Do you have a view around why those charges were dropped?

**CHAIR:** You are seeking an opinion. Do you want to rephrase the question?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Very much so. Charges have been dropped against Mr Raedel. Are you aware of the reasons why the DPP dropped those charges? Do those reasons accord with the CCC's view of the charges? What cost is likely to have been incurred by the CCC in carrying out those investigations?

**Mr MacSporran:** I just need to place in context this Logan matter and, if you like, the Moreton Bay matter. It is important to understand that the CCC is an investigatory agency firstly. We have lawyers at the agency who oversee investigations and ultimately a number of lawyers, including myself, who oversee the ultimate progress of an investigation and the referral of a matter at an appropriate time to a police officer who is seconded to the commission to satisfy himself or herself as to whether there is evidence sufficient to charge an individual at the end of what might be, as it was in these cases, an extensive investigation. Those processes were followed according to our normal processes in both of those matters.

In the case of Logan, the matter was handed over to a police officer who then exercised his discretion to establish under the protocol whether there was, firstly, sufficient evidence to charge each of the individuals who were charged—that is, was there a prima facie case made out in respect of each element of the offence? He determined that there was but we apply an additional test—that is, is it in the public interest to actually charge and launch a prosecution? That public interest test involves whether there are reasonable prospects of the matter going full term and resulting in a successful prosecution.

Applying that test, lawyers within the commission, including myself, gave it to the police officer. He determined that there was a prima facie case and that there were reasonable prospects on the test that he is mandated to apply. The charge is then laid. It then becomes a matter whether the brief of evidence, once compiled fully, is handed over to the independent prosecutor, the DPP. Once that is done, it is a matter entirely for the Director of Public Prosecutions as to whether the matter proceeds. The Director of Public Prosecutions applies the same test we do. It is under their own protocol—that is, is there a prima facie case, firstly, and if so are there reasonable prospects of a conviction being obtained, that is, a successful prosecution?

In the Logan matter, in relation to the eight individuals including the former mayor and the seven councillors who were charged with one count of fraud, the DPP clearly accepted our view, the officer's view who charged, that there were reasonable prospects and the matter went to committal. It was only halfway through the committal that the DPP determined on their independent assessment of the committal evidence as it then stood—and this was a number of days into committal, and bear in mind the committal process is where the evidence obtained is tested for its reliability, veracity and so forth. At that stage, with their carriage of it and their control of it, they decided that there were no longer sufficient prospects of success to continue. Out of a courtesy to us they had told us their view and gave us the opportunity to make submissions to them, which we did. We disagreed with their assessment that there were no longer reasonable prospects. They maintained their view that there were no prospects continuing and withdrew the charges. That is their decision. We are disappointed from our end because it is a huge undertaking carefully done and certainly done in good faith. We are disappointed but we accept, as we must, the decision of the independent prosecutor. That is where it is at.

In the Moreton Bay matter, a similar process was followed: evidence was gathered and assessments were made by lawyers within the commission right to the top. Then the police officer exercised their discretion to charge, which happened, and it was handed over. In the case of Moreton Bay, the director's office determined before committal that there was insufficient evidence in their view. We disagreed. We were given the opportunity to try to convince them otherwise—unsuccessfully. That is their decision. We are not critical; that is the system we work under, and appropriately so. That prosecution failed.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I understand that and I understand the prosecutorial guidelines. That is a lot of time and resources for the commission to put into it for effectively a nil result. I guess in those circumstances the people who have been charged perhaps feel aggrieved in respect of their loss of reputation and, in the Logan council case, their loss of positions with the whole council being dismissed. There is quite a bit there.

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, member for Clayfield. This is not a point—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Do you want me to get to a question?

**CHAIR:** No, when you are speaking you do not need to have a mask on.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sorry.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is a very nice mask.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I will report that to my daughter, thank you. Given that you rely on police who are seconded to the commission to proffer charges—although you yourself hold a prosecutorial authority if I understand previous—

**Mr MacSporran:** Thanks for the query. I think the confusion—when I first went to the bar a long, long time ago I came from the DPP. It was not the DPP then, but it was the prosecution section anyway. When I came from there I had a commission to prosecute. I retained that because I did work that was briefed out by the office to me. However, I do not retain, to my knowledge, an actual commission to prosecute and I would not be prosecuting as the chairman of the CCC, anyway, you might be confident to hear.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You rely on the police seconded to you to exercise their residual powers that they hold as police officers to charge?

**Mr MacSporran:** Yes. They come to us as police officers. They retain their police powers. Of course, every time an individual is charged, a police officer has to exercise their independent discretion to make that decision. That happens every time a person is charged arising out of an investigation conducted by the CCC. It is not the lawyers at the commission who charge people. We simply have an overview and a robust system of checks and balances before it gets to a police officer to exercise the discretion, if you like.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It leads to the question then: is there a process for earlier liaison with the DPP prior to the laying of those charges that might be worthwhile pursuing to avoid the circumstances that we have seen in recent times of charges not proceeding after lengthy investigations? That obviously takes up DPP resources, court resources as well as your resources and the resources of either Legal Aid or private funds in order to defend those cases.

**Mr MacSporran:** I think you need to place all of these in context. These two matters, Logan and Moreton Bay, are really outliers, if you like. They are exceptions to what normally has been happening. We have had a fairly good success rate in matters that we charge and hand over. These matters are at the high end of complexity. The law is difficult. There is no doubt there can be improvements in the system in terms of how the DPP and the CCC liaise and operate. At the end of the day it is a very difficult problem to solve when you simply hand something over and you lose control of it, albeit with the courtesy of having input if there is a decision to be made adverse to what your expectations are. It is a difficult situation. There will be ways that we can look at how those interrelationships might be improved; I accept that. We will just have to see. As you know, our oversight committee has proposed and is calling an inquiry—there will be an inquiry into Logan.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am aware of that.

**Mr MacSporran:** That is the venue where these things will be teased out. I am looking forward to the opportunity to tease these things out and transparently and accountably see how we can improve this system.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** On 16 July in estimates the DG of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet advised that questions concerning inquiries into the appointment of Mr Frankie Carroll as Under Treasurer and the then DG of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Mr Dave Stewart, should be directed to the CCC. Can I ask what progress has been made with this inquiry, if I can use that word, or assessment? Is it complete? Have findings been presented to any body including the government and has there been any response in respect of any of those findings?

**Mr MacSporran:** I am not at liberty to discuss that at all.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In the sense of what stage it is at or whether it is actually under investigation? It has been publicly announced that it is under investigation.

**CHAIR:** Member for Clayfield, the chairperson has answered the question.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Yes, and I am asking another question in relation to the reasons why you are unable to discuss that.

**Mr MacSporran:** I understand the interest in this matter fully, but I am unable to answer that question further. I am not at liberty to discuss that matter at all.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** All right. I will now turn to some other matters that you have been discussing. In terms of Privacy Awareness Week in May, you made some comments regarding access to citizens' private data, and I know from previous discussions that that has been an ongoing focus of yours for many years. What steps have you taken or do you propose to take to assist in the education of members of the Queensland Public Service—I think police has been an area of focus as well—and the wider Public Service to reduce those abuses?

**Mr MacSporran:** The whole issue of misuse of information in the public sector is, as you say, a very topical one. It has been for years. We have had a focus on it. I think it is fair to say that whilst you can do a lot to mitigate the risk by having an IT solution to increase security of access and so forth to

prevent misuse, you have to balance that against the need to share information. You cannot have a security system that will completely prevent you sharing information because sharing information is extremely important, as I am sure you appreciate. Fundamentally, I say this. The real issue in access to confidential information and misuse is a behavioural one; it is cultural. People who have access and are trusted to use that wisely and prudently regularly abuse that privilege, so fundamentally it is a cultural question. The way to approach it is rather than use a big stick with enforcement, try to educate, get people on board to understand the dangers of misuse. Simply, early reporting of any misuse is a big step in the right direction. It is an ongoing program of work basically.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I will just go back to the Moreton Bay Regional Council matter and the cost of your investigation. Is that in a similar vein to the Logan City Council? Is that something you believe you would be able to find for us and, through the Attorney-General if she is prepared to take it on notice, respond back to the committee on?

**Mr MacSporran:** Yes, I am sure the figures can be obtained. I suspect, however, that that will not be a straightforward exercise because it will be many parts—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It does not have to be back by one o'clock this afternoon; that is for sure.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Attorney; thank you Mr MacSporran.

**Mr MacSporran:** I do not know for a fact but would suspect that the Moreton one was less expensive than Logan, simply because of the time it took and so forth.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I appreciate that. Finally—because time is limited—going back to the unauthorised use of data, you have previously said that it has resulted in courts imposing sanctions that do not reflect the seriousness of this conduct, as you see it, and that the courts do not appear to regard this sort of conduct as seriously as we do. Have you initiated any discussions about amending the legislation regarding the penalties that are currently available? Do you see that as a necessary step, or are the existing penalties sufficient? Is it that you just do not like the decision that the courts have given you, which is 50 per cent of all people who turn up in court?

**Mr MacSporran:** Yes, thank you for the question. I suppose the simplest way to answer it is this: the maximum penalties available are sufficient; there is no doubt about that. As I have said in the past publicly, we are disappointed with some of the court outcomes. It is just a fact that the courts necessarily are slow to move to meet, on occasions, public expectations.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So it is the courts.

**Mr MacSporran:** So is the courts. It happens on occasions. That is a fact of life. Sentencing regimes can be adjusted with data and a concerted attempt to raise sanctions, but a far simpler solution it seems to me is to deal with the matter at a local behavioural disciplinary way, which is to send a much stronger message in a much more timely way regarding the seriousness of the misconduct.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I think you said that in the PCCC public hearings a couple of weeks ago.

**Mr MacSporran:** Yes, I did.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Turning to something that I have been interested in, as you know, for a long time; that is, the CCC's case management system and the deployment of technology. Has that system been deployed and has it been deployed on budget, or have there been, as there were last year, variations to the budget? I refer to the Nexus system.

**Mr MacSporran:** Thank you for the question. Deployment of the new management system was expected this year—early 2021, but it has been delayed due to the identification of intolerable security vulnerabilities that require rectification by the vendor. These vulnerabilities are in their base product and were detected by our penetration testing of the system. We are committed, as we should be, to implementing a system which is responsive to our needs and does not present any security concerns. The vendor has again extended the time they require in order to remediate significant security issues which they say will extend the time the system might go live—I say 'might'—to May 2022.

This is clearly unacceptable to the CCC. So, on 4 August this year, the CCC issued the vendor with a notice of suspension under the contract. The notice applies for 20 days, during which time the CCC is considering its options to terminate under the contract. We have consistently advised our oversight committee that we will not implement a system that is not fit for purpose and presents security concerns. We hold a significant volume of protected information and will not compromise any of that, nor should we. If the software implementation does not proceed, which looks very likely at this stage, the CCC's broader program of work related to this project has, in any event, produced the following

results which are of operational value and will provide a future benefit. Those programs that have been produced are: an operating model; an operational framework; an operations manual; 25 documented work flows; reference data including 148 data fields and over 1,000 business values; common data model; security model for operational data; extensive data capture sheets; DevOps template and test cases and plans; case management templates; and a case management system operating model amongst others.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you. Without wishing to be rude, what is the cost?

**Mr MacSporran:** I was coming to that. You will be delighted to hear.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Terrific, that is good. I was being rude! I guess the question is: will it be recovered, or are those costs necessarily thrown away?

**Mr MacSporran:** The work in progress cost of the management system asset reported in the CCC's financial statements as at 30 June this year is \$2.43 million. This comprises: \$700,396 paid to the vendor; and internal system testing costs of \$908,639, with the balance being costs of project management, data migration, business analysis and some hardware, for instance server upgrades purchased in 2018. As you have heard me say, we have issued a notice of suspension. That goes for 20 days and the matter is in that frame. I am unable to answer your question directly about the cost and the loss of any at this stage, but that will be a matter that will be finalised in due course obviously.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You would presumably plan or have an expectation to say, 'Do not proceed, the matter is not going to go ahead, we make provision for this amount' or 'We must take action to recover this amount.' Do you have the detail?

**Mr MacSporran:** I cannot give you that detail. As I say, the matter is at that stage where we just issued on 4 August, if I remember correctly, the notice of suspension and so forth. That matter is now sitting there. We will get legal advice and move forward as we go.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It is fair to say that you do not yet know what the full liability, the full cost or the prospects of recovery of that cost are likely to be?

**Mr MacSporran:** That would be a fair assessment probably.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am glad.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I hand over to the member for Maroochydore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everyone. Mr MacSporran, I refer to an RTI application made to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission seeking a request of the invoices in order to identify the total cost of legal representations. Specifically, I refer to an email from a senior RTI officer within the QBCC who commented—

If this were to go to the OIC, more information would be released than what I have decided.

My question is: is the CCC currently investigating this or any other matters involving RTI officers?

**Mr MacSporran:** Thank you for the question. I think that is probably impossibly broad for me to answer, frankly.

**Ms SIMPSON:** In regard to the specific question of whether an email from a senior RTI officer within QBCC indicating that, 'If this were to go to the OIC, more information would be released than what I have decided', is this matter being investigated by the CCC and would that be acceptable behaviour of an RTI officer?

**Mr MacSporran:** The short answer is that I do not know whether it is being investigated. I am not immediately familiar with the matter you talk of. That would not be surprising necessarily. Really, I am unable to comment on your hypothetical, frankly.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Anyway, we will follow that one up because there is an email in respect of that matter and RTI officers. Are you aware of any other investigations into RTI officers?

**Mr MacSporran:** Can I ask for some more detail about the one you talk about? Is the QBCC the one you are talking about where you say you made an RTI application itself?

**Ms SIMPSON:** I did not make the RTI application, but it has been made and there is an email that has been received by the person who made it. There is a copy of an email to look at the matter of determination. The QBCC email from the RTI officer said that if more information was available it would be released. I am happy to pass that on to my colleagues to seek to table that.

**Mr MacSporran:** Can I comment on that for a moment, please? I know something of the one you are speaking of. If it is the one that I think it is, I think we are about to—if we have not already—write back to you in response to the matter. There is an RTI application made and then a referral to us



by your office, if that is what happened. It is the fact that it seems from what I understand that you did not go through the RTI process to appeal the refusal to release the documents or whatever. Until that is done, it is difficult to see how we would have jurisdiction over the matter. I do not know if that is the one you are referring to, frankly.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I accept that this has to be looked at by the CCC but the circumstances, as I understand, is that a subsequent RTI found an email where the Right to Information officer had an internal discussion advising that there would be more documents released if this matter went to the OIC. This was an internal discussion about their obligations and it was acknowledged on face value that they should have released more documents, but that they were relying on people to seek that under external review than to actually release it.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, can you get to your question, please?

**Ms SIMPSON:** I am happy for the matter to be investigated, but the circumstances are slightly different than being a matter of relying upon external review.

**Mr MacSporran:** I am sorry to interrupt, Ms Simpson. I am happy for these matters to come to us for us to assess and properly deal with them. I don't know that I can assist you, by your statements here today, and try and have me resolve the problems that you seem to think exist. The CCC is very happy to take on board any information that you have to see what, if anything, there is in it.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I thank you for that. The context was certainly about the independence of RTI officers in the pursuit of their statutory roles. I have a question in regard to last year's estimates where you confirmed that allegations concerning the former Lord Mayor of Brisbane Jim Soorley and Minister Bailey were under consideration by the CCC. Is this matter still ongoing?

**Mr MacSporran:** It is an operational matter, which I am not prepared to comment on here.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Is the matter under investigation?

**Mr MacSporran:** It is an operational matter.

**CHAIR:** The question has been answered, member for Maroochydore. Member for Noosa, do you have a question?

**Ms BOLTON:** Yes, I do, Chair. My question is to the Attorney-General. Can the Attorney-General advise on how complaints regarding independent bodies, including the Ombudsman with this portfolio, are dealt with? What funding within this budget has been made available for these investigations?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Certainly, the principal function of the Queensland ombudsman is to investigate the administrative actions of agencies. The Ombudsman supports transparency and accountability. For complaints made for staff, other than the Queensland Ombudsman, there are internal procedures that facilitate more senior staff members reviewing a matter. If allegations of corruption are made against the Queensland Ombudsman, those allegations can be independently investigated by the CCC.

Under the Ombudsman Act 2011, the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's functions are to monitor and review the performance of the Ombudsman and report to the Assembly on any matter concerning the Ombudsman, its functions, or the performance of its functions that the committee considers should be drawn to the Assembly's attention. That is always an option for the committee. It examines each annual report tabled in the Assembly under the act and, if appropriate, comments about any aspect of the report and reports to the Assembly any changes to the function, structures and procedures of the Office of the Ombudsman. That is the current process to review a decision if a complaint is made against the Ombudsman. If complaints are made about staff in the Ombudsman's office, obviously the Ombudsman can deal with that matter.

**Ms BOLTON:** Regarding funding, is there separate funding set aside for those investigations Attorney-General?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** That funding comes within the annual budget for the Ombudsman for any of the complaints that they investigate. The office budget is obviously in the SDS, the Office of the Information Commissioner has a \$7.3 million budget and the Ombudsman budget I can just get to you in a moment. The Ombudsman office appropriation revenue is \$8 million.

**CHAIR:** Member for South Brisbane, you have a question?

**Dr MacMAHON:** Yes, thank you, Chair. My question is for the Director-General. How many applications to QCAT for guardianship and/or administration were made by NDIS service providers in the last 12 months? Are you able to break this figure down by service provider?

**Mr Mackie:** Thank you for your question, member. For that level of detail, with the permission of the Attorney-General, I will take that question on notice.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to take that on notice, yes.

**CHAIR:** We are getting to the end of this period of questioning. Member for Noosa, do you have another question?

**Ms BOLTON:** Chair, no. It was more just verifying the \$8 million that the Attorney-General just mentioned, that that was—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes, member for Noosa, that covers investigations.

**CHAIR:** Member for South Brisbane, this will be the last question.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Attorney-General, in light of recent reports that women and children fleeing domestic violence in Queensland have spent years in refuges and other crisis accommodation because of chronic shortages of secure long-term housing, can you tell us how many Queenslanders are in such situations?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Clearly, we know that housing is one of the big challenges facing victims of domestic and family violence. Almost a quarter of Queenslanders who have sought housing assistance were escaping domestic and family violence. In this year's budget, \$160.9 million is being invested to provide housing, support and specialist homeless services to vulnerable people, including older women who are the fastest growing group of homeless people in this country.

Over the next four years, the government is providing \$20 million to expand domestic and family violence support services and \$20 million for homelessness initiatives, including through head leases, crisis housing and supports. I am very proud that our government, since coming into government in 2015, has funded seven new domestic and family violence shelters in Queensland. They are the first government-funded shelters in over 20 years.

I have been working very closely with Minister Enoch. We have convened a domestic and family violence housing group to address the need for housing pathways for the domestic and family violence sector. As you would know, the Queensland government established the \$1 billion housing investment fund in this year's budget, which is a long-term fund to drive new supply to support current and future housing needs. We have a range of programs underway in terms of delivering new social housing—flexible assistance packages to help people access safe housing and Helping Hand Headleases that help women and children who are displaced from their homes. We provide brokerage for domestic and family violence services to access home, safety and security upgrades and new technologies that support women's safety plans and the affordable housing for women experiencing domestic and family violence initiative. This delivers flexible assistance to women and children by integrating rental housing assistance delivered through community housing providers and domestic and family violence specialist mobile support services.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Thank you, Minister. So no data on people who have been in long-term crisis accommodation, based on your answer?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** In terms of Queenslanders facing homelessness or housing shortages, it is probably a question best directed to the Minister for Housing. In terms of the support that the Office for Women and Violence Prevention provides, we work very closely with housing. We are responsible for the policy and for refuges. As I have said, we have supported seven new refuges for women and children escaping violence. We have seen a huge increase, and it has been a dedicated strategy to increase the use of our ouster orders in domestic violence orders. They have increased from 34.5 per cent to over 50 per cent. Where it is safe to do so, it is much better for women and children to remain in the home. In this year's budget we have delivered \$155 million towards women in violence prevention, including \$34.3 million in women's shelters, mobile incentive-based support services.

**CHAIR:** This will be the last question for non-government members.

**Mrs GERBER:** Mr MacSporran, I just want to follow up on the success rate that you talked about previously. In relation to the matters investigated by the CCC and referred to an independent prosecutorial authority, what is the success rate of those investigations turning up with a successful prosecution?

**Mr MacSporran:** If you just bear with me a moment, in 2020-21 we continued to reduce corruption for the benefit of the Queensland community by investigating and uncovering the most serious and systemic cases of alleged corruption within the Queensland public sector, and we used all

of our powers of course and put people before the court. In that same year the prosecution decided not to pursue charges relating to 15 defendants. That is 15 of a total of 25 in that year, so the percentage of failed is high but let us put it in context. Of the 15, seven of those were Logan. If you count the mayor, who still faces charges, it would have been eight, so over half of those failed ones were from Logan.

Of the remaining ones, there was Flaxton—the prison officers project. Three defendants there had their charges discontinued following a decision by the DPP over questions of dishonesty and credibility issues with the witnesses being prisoners. I am saying these are the failed ones to show these are the only failed ones; that is the point I am making. In Operation Turnover, which was the QFES job, two defendants had their charges discontinued after charges laid by us. The basis there was that the main offender, who had agreed to plead guilty and cooperate and give evidence against others, really failed to come up to proof, so there was no point pursuing the other defendants and they were discontinued. In Windage there were two people whose charges failed and there were a further three in a different operation called Acrid. Generally speaking, in corruption the rest of them were successful. Do you want me to detail the crime prosecutions as well? They were much more successful again.

**Mrs GERBER:** The question was very particular in relation to the prosecutions that are referred to an independent prosecutorial authority, so thank you for the answer.

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

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, with regard to page 50 of the SDS, can you advise how the Palaszczuk government has continued to deliver safe elections despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Certainly the pandemic has presented some unique challenges for the delivery of services to Queensland, elections included. During the pandemic elections have been particularly vital in ensuring we maintain the continuity of public administration so that governments can make decisions to protect the health and safety of Queenslanders. Since the declaration of the COVID-19 emergency, the Electoral Commission of Queensland has delivered two statewide elections for almost 3.4 million electors as well as 10 local government by-elections and one state by-election, and all elections have been delivered with strict COVID-safe controls. The ECQ was one of the first electoral management bodies globally that was required to deliver an election during the pandemic and many of the practices adopted in March 2020 have become established best practice.

The ECQ has worked closely with health authorities to incorporate public health protections as part of its planning for all elections. COVID-safe plans in polling places require frequent cleaning of surfaces, hand sanitisation and hygiene practices, physical distancing, capacity for voters to bring in their own pen and pencil and, more recently, the use of the Check In Qld app. In addition for the state general election, the delivery model was significantly adapted with expanded hours and locations for early voting and major increases in capacity for postal voting and telephone voting.

To facilitate COVID-safe arrangements, the Queensland parliament legislated to provide additional regulatory flexibility in the conduct of elections during the COVID emergency period. Under special provisions of the Electoral Act 1992 and the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, there is capacity to change electoral time frames, expand the use of postal voting, issue directions about distributing how-to-vote cards or conducting scrutineering, and expand eligibility for telephone voting. I can advise the committee that the ECQ has made the protection of public health a paramount consideration in planning for elections and these measures have ensured that Queenslanders have been able to continue to exercise their democratic rights during the pandemic to vote safely in Queensland elections.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, with respect to page 2 of the SDS, can you update the committee on how the government continues to promote fair and inclusive communities in Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Ensuring our laws protect and promote equality for Queenslanders is an important priority for the Palaszczuk government. In April 2021 I formally requested the Queensland Human Rights Commission to undertake a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 to consider whether any reforms are needed to update the act to best protect and promote equality, non-discrimination and the realisation of human rights. The Palaszczuk government has committed \$219,000 to support the commission to conduct the review and the commission must provide a report to me by 30 June 2022.

It has been 30 years since the Anti-Discrimination Act was passed by state parliament and this anniversary is a timely opportunity to conduct a holistic review of the act to ensure it provides protections that reflect the expectations of Queenslanders today. The review will consider the protected attributes covered by the act, including whether additional attributes need to be introduced, and if the existing

definitions of protected attributes need to be updated to reflect current understandings of discrimination. The independent commission will also take into account Australian and international best practice in the area and the compatibility of the act with Queensland's Human Rights Act. It will also consider work by the Palaszczuk government to implement recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission's Respect@Work sexual harassment national inquiry report. This is a report that the Sex Discrimination Commissioner provided to the former federal attorney-general in January 2020. The federal government finally responded to this piece of work when they released their road map in April 2021.

As part of the Queensland government's review of the Anti-Discrimination Act, I have also asked the commission to specifically consider the need to adopt a more positive approach to eliminating discrimination in Queensland. This includes requiring employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. I would encourage all stakeholders to access the commission's website for more information about how they can contribute their views to this important piece of work.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, regarding your portfolio's responsibility of regulating political donations, can you please outline what the government has done to reduce the influence of developers and increase public confidence in political donations, and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Palaszczuk government is incredibly proud of our track record on electoral donation laws and it is because of the Palaszczuk government that Queensland now has some of the strongest electoral laws in the country. Not only have we implemented real-time donation disclosure and reduced the threshold for reporting donations to \$1,000 down from over \$12,000; we have also taken strong action to ban donations from property developers—all measures that I note the opposition opposed. This is in stark contrast to the Commonwealth government where donations under \$14,300 are not disclosed. I note, however, that the federal National Party has donated \$52,000 in the last financial year to the LNP—the largest donation made to the LNP in an election year. We do not know where that money comes from, but we do know that the National Party federally still accepts money from big tobacco and of course Clive Palmer's Minerology Pty Ltd.

I also note that the Greens, while outlining that they are big on not accepting money from organisations linked to gambling, very happily accepted a \$100,000 donation in 2019-20 and another \$50,000 last financial year from professional gambler Duncan Turpie. I wonder what members of the 'doing politics differently' party would feel knowing that they have only won a second seat on the back of LNP preferences and from the proceeds of gambling. Queenslanders absolutely deserve to know where money which has been raised by political parties has come from, which is why the Palaszczuk government is proud to have reformed electoral donation schemes here in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** With reference to page 30 of the SDS, could you advise the committee what Legal Aid is doing to support vulnerable Queenslanders?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The government is committed to ensuring that all Queenslanders have access to justice. Legal Aid Queensland's work to support vulnerable Queenslanders through legal assistance plays a vital role in this area. Legal Aid does this by delivering a variety of services across all areas of law and is able to help Queenslanders with their legal problems that range from criminal, family and civil law, domestic and family violence matters, consumer rights, National Disability Insurance Scheme matters, Social Security and Commonwealth benefits matters, antidiscrimination issues and Defence Force veteran matters. Additionally, a range of free preventative and early intervention services, such as community legal education and legal information, legal advice and duty lawyer services, are available to all Queenslanders.

For the most vulnerable clients, Legal Aid's client assistance service provides a client focused service which assists them to access legal help. Staff can problem-solve any issues clients may have by spending time helping the client to understand policies, procedures and processes, ensuring the client understands what their next steps are and what needs to be done to complete those steps, reminding clients of legal advice appointments and following up with them if they have not yet submitted their application forms, monitoring their grant of aid application in case further legal help is needed and including case workers and carers in conversations and agreed next steps with the client's consent.

Legal Aid services are provided statewide to meet the legal needs of all Queenslanders, including those living in remote, rural and regional areas, through a network of 13 regional offices and in partnership with preferred supplier law firms and the community legal sector. Legal Aid continues to deliver quality frontline legal assistance in a cost effective way with a focus on improving services to all vulnerable clients, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, responding to the legal needs

of people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering legal assistance services to people affected by natural disasters when they occur. The Palaszczuk government acknowledges the work of all Legal Aid employees and thanks them for their commitment to delivering quality and cost-effective legal assistance services to vulnerable Queenslanders.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, with regard to page 69 of the SDS, could you please advise the committee about some of the recent successes the Public Trustee has had in assisting vulnerable Queenslanders?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Public Trustee delivers trustee, estate and administration services that make a positive difference in the lives of our most vulnerable Queenslanders. The Public Trustee does not receive funding from the government and has taken steps this financial year to provide immediate fee relief for customers. The Public Trustee is expected to deliver an operating surplus of approximately \$2.2 million for 2020-21, a \$10.2 million improvement on the published estimated actual result of a deficit of \$8 million. Whilst these are preliminary, unaudited figures, this significant improvement reflects the hard work by the Public Trustee staff during the past year to implement a new investment strategy that has driven much higher investment returns and the delivery of improvement initiatives under budget. This result demonstrates the Public Trustee's responsive financial strategies and effective cost management, enabling the Public Trustee to continue to fund its operations and support customers and Queenslanders by providing generous fee rebates and free wills under its community service obligations policies.

The Public Trustee will continue to progress positive and responsible initiatives to ensure a sustainable, modern and customer centric organisation that is committed to maintaining a safe workplace. The sale of heritage listed property 9 Leopard Street, Kangaroo Point for \$12.75 million earlier this year is an example of the positive outcomes the Public Trustee achieves on behalf of its customers. The Public Trustee has recently introduced a financial independence pathway to assist financial management customers to greater financial autonomy over a period and achieve independence from administration where possible. Eight customers have been assisted to achieve financial independence since the program began and many more customers across the state are currently engaging with the program with a view to also achieving financial independence. The Public Trustee manages around \$160 million for four charitable trusts that provide significant support for education purposes and charitable organisations assisting Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** With reference to page 62 of the SDS, can you advise what the Queensland Ombudsman is doing to support Queenslanders?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman supports Queenslanders by striving to be an agent of positive change for fair and accountable public administration in Queensland. Under the Ombudsman Act 2001, the office helps Queenslanders by giving people a timely, effective and independent way to have administration actions of public sector agencies investigated. Their investigative scope extends beyond state government departments and agencies to local councils and also public universities. The office also works preventatively by providing education and advice to public sector officers to improve the quality of decision-making and administrative practice in public sector agencies. As the oversight agency for the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010, the ombudsman performs an advisory role in the management of public interest disclosures, monitors trends and reviews how they are managed in public sector agencies. When investigating complaints the ombudsman may make recommendations to rectify unlawful, unfair or unjust decisions and improve administrative practice.

*Casebook 2020* was a new publication from the office this year containing a sample of the outcomes that the ombudsman achieved for Queenslanders through investigations. 'Ombudsman insights' in the casebook noted issues such as the importance of providing clear reasons for decisions, conducting genuine reviews of decisions and keeping records. Some of the ways that the Queensland Ombudsman has supported Queenslanders recently include improvement in the management of prisoners' personal property, refunded tuition fees for university students, improved public information being provided by agencies such as the State Penalties and Enforcement Register and the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, and improvement to several local council processes such as dealing with claims for compensation from falling trees, managing stock route permits and management of debts.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 30 of the SDS, can you advise the committee on Legal Aid Queensland's provision of duty lawyer services?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Palaszczuk government is proud to support Legal Aid Queensland's work in providing duty lawyer services and legal advice to vulnerable Queenslanders. Through the pandemic Legal Aid Queensland has continued to provide these critical services with the help of remote

accessibility technology such as video and telephone conferencing. Through adapting to the needs of the courts and clients, Legal Aid Queensland has ensured that vulnerable Queenslanders have had access to justice despite the difficult circumstances experienced as a consequence of COVID-19.

Legal Aid Queensland provides duty lawyer services across the state and has delivered more than 121,000 sessions during 2020-21. That exceeded the services in the previous year by 22.6 per cent, an increase in 22,000 sessions. The duty lawyer service included nearly 29,000 sessions to help people experiencing domestic and family violence, more than 90,000 sessions about criminal law matters, almost 900 sessions relating to child protection, more than 800 sessions for Family Law matters and nearly 400 sessions at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Legal Aid Queensland's legal advice and task assistance services can be accessed by telephone, by video conference or face-to-face at Legal Aid offices and at designated outreach service locations across Queensland.

During the 2020-21 financial year, Legal Aid Queensland delivered more than 44,000 legal advice and task assistance services, an increase of over 7,000, or 20 per cent, from the previous year. The Palaszczuk government acknowledges the important work Legal Aid Queensland staff and preferred supplier firms do every week in providing duty lawyer and legal advice services to vulnerable Queenslanders, particularly during the pandemic. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the frontline staff from Legal Aid Queensland for providing these services during the pandemic.

**Ms BUSH:** Coming back again to the Public Trustee, with regard this time to page 70 of the SDS, can you outline how the Public Trustee is improving its services for customers?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Public Trustee launched its Customers First agenda last year. The Customers First agenda is based on Queensland's important human rights reforms in becoming a more modern, socially and financially responsible service that values human rights, puts the customer first and continues to imbed greater levels of trust, transparency and engagement with the Public Trustee. Benefits are already being delivered for the Public Trustee's customers. That includes the development of a suite of easy English materials; a review of the complaints management policy and procedures, including a newly designed customer complaints form; the release of a fees and charges ready reckoner, complemented by case studies and an online fee estimator for deceased estates; the establishment of an Australian first for public trustees, an independent customer advocate office to provide customers with a voice within the Public Trustee; and the recent development of the Financial Independence Pathway program to assist financial management customers to increase their financial literacy.

The Customers First agenda has been guided by two external reference groups with representatives from key customer stakeholder organisations and Queensland government agencies. These internal working groups—products and services, trust and transparency, people and culture, and financial services—have developed and implemented evidence based action plans as part of the Customers First agenda. The release of a Customers First Strategy 2021-26 is the next stage of the agenda. This strategy takes the ethos of putting customers first and puts it into tangible actions and deliverables that the Public Trustee will commit to over the next five years.

I thank the hardworking and dedicated staff of the Public Trustee who continue to work hard. They worked incredibly hard during the pandemic. Having visited some of the offices I know that they experienced a huge increase in calls from customers and they did a fantastic job.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, with reference to page 30 of the SDS, could you please advise the committee on Legal Aid Queensland's current education programs?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Palaszczuk government is proud of Legal Aid Queensland's Community Legal Education program, which is an integral part of the services they provide. The program aims to improve community members' understanding of the law and their legal rights, reduce litigation and costs to the justice system and help community members and stakeholders to understand Legal Aid's services and how to access them. The program involves working with priority groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and networks, to improve awareness and access to specialist services such as child protection. The organisation provides legal information sessions, webinars and podcasts for community members and community health and education workers on topics such as understanding insurance claims, mortgage repossession, buying a car, domestic and family violence and how to manage debt. Legal Aid Queensland also participates in community events such as Homeless Connect finance fairs and NAIDOC Week, and provides web based legal information, fact sheets, legal information guides and digital resources about different legal topics.

To extend the reach of their community legal education work, Legal Aid Queensland coordinates and administers the Community Legal Education Collaboration Fund that is funded by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Now in its eleventh year, the fund resources collaborative initiatives

and partnerships between community legal centres, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, regional legal assistance forums and specialist forums to educate priority communities across Queensland. In 2021-22, six funded projects will share \$100,000 in grants to deliver community legal activities and resources to help people in detention with disabilities, families and advocates, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, school aged young people in regional and remote areas, older people and people who have experienced coercive control. The Palaszczuk government acknowledges the work of Legal Aid Queensland's Community Legal Education program and its commitment to delivering quality and cost-effective legal assistance services to vulnerable Queenslanders.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 35 of the SDS, can you update the committee on the engagement and the work of the Queensland Information Commissioner?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Office of the Information Commissioner plays a crucial role in Queensland's integrity framework. I thank the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner and their staff for the work that they have done over the past year. The Office of the Information Commissioner has continued to provide an outstanding service to the community amidst increasing demand in the context of the COVID pandemic. Their functions extend across both right to information and information privacy roles.

In 2019-20, the Office the Information Commissioner responded to a record 5,684 queries from agencies and Queenslanders. It has also had an important role in receiving and considering increasingly complex privacy complaints: 96 complaints in 2019-20. Importantly, the Office of the Information Commissioner provides independent merits review of decisions under the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Information Privacy Act 2009. In 2019-20, 787 external review applications were made. They also promote and raise community awareness about privacy through Privacy Awareness Week, which is held each year with a different theme.

I strongly encourage agencies to consult with the Office of the Information Commissioner on their privacy proposals as soon as possible to achieve privacy by design. Impressively, they have provided advice on initiatives and schemes involving the sharing of personal information, such as video footage and health records, 264 times. The Office of the Information Commissioner also provides submissions and feedback on privacy aspects of legislative reforms. This includes camera detected offences, the digital licence app and the use of body worn cameras and CCTV in youth detention centres. The organisation works tirelessly with international and national information access and privacy networks. Once again, I thank the Office of the Information Commissioner for its hard work and dedication, which makes it easier for agencies to support transparency, accountability and public trust across Queensland.

Before the next question, the chair of the CCC can come back with an answer to a question asked earlier in the session.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr MacSporran:** The first question on notice I should repeat into the record—

In relation to the Logan City Council matter, people were charged in April 2019, including the mayor and several councillors, with criminal charges. The charges were withdrawn by the DPP and subsequent charges were laid. The prosecution was then withdrawn prior to trial. A significant amount of resources was spent on this matter. Does the CCC keep a record of the resources used and can you give the committee a figure that was spent on the investigation?

The answer is in the following terms: on the cost of the investigation into seven Logan City councillors and former mayor being charged with fraud, the investigation into the Logan City Council was extensive. It extended beyond the charging of seven councillors and the mayor with fraud in relation to the termination of the CEO. It also involved investigation into other matters involving the mayor. Those matters continue before the courts. The CCC team involved in investigating the Logan City Council matters included a number of seconded police officers, lawyers, intelligence staff and forensic computing experts. At the same time as investigating this matter, those officers are also involved in assisting with other investigations. It is obvious, therefore, from the above that it is not possible to provide a figure on the cost of the investigation of the seven councillors and former mayor as a separate line item.

The second question on notice was in the following terms—

Can you advise the cost of the investigation of the Moreton Bay Regional Council matter?

The answer is as follows: the investigation was extensive. It extended beyond charges relating to Mr Raedel and Mr Murphy. It also involved investigation into other matters, including matters involving the former mayor of the Moreton Bay Regional Council—that is Mr Sutherland—and those matters continue before the courts. The CCC team involved in investigating Moreton Bay Regional Council

matters included a number of seconded police officers, civilian investigators, lawyers, intelligence staff and forensic computing experts. At the same time as investigating this matter, those officers were also involved in assisting with other investigations. Again, therefore, it is not possible to provide a figure on the cost of this investigation.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, people in my electorate have a very strong interest in the rights and interests of children and young people so I have a question regarding the Queensland Family and Child Commission. In regards to page 40 of the SDS, can you update the committee on any educational programs currently available under the Queensland Family and Child Commission?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Palaszczuk government's commitment to strengthening families and keeping children safe continues to grow through the Queensland Family and Child Commission's community education and engagement initiatives. The QFCC provides local-level targeted community education to help families and communities understand and fulfil their responsibility to protect and care for children.

More than 8,000 Queensland children and young people shared their views on their communities, their hopes and dreams and the issues that are important to them as part of the commission's Growing Up in Queensland 2020 project. Their collective voice was captured in the *Voices of Hope: Growing Up in Queensland 2020* report which was released in April of this year. This rich data has been shared and is being used across the child and family support sector, including by Children's Health Queensland who will incorporate it into their population health intelligence dashboard.

Young people's voices were further amplified with the expansion of the 25-member Youth Advisory Council across Queensland. The model was adapted to reach a wider range of young people from across Queensland through its critical friend network initiative. These youth advocates are involved in a range of projects and consultations including the Queensland government's Speak Out series and the QFCC's youth mental health hackathon, as well as formal QFCC submissions.

The stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families continue to be celebrated through the Deadly Digi Yarns project, a component of the broader Families are First initiative. To date, the stories of 45 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Queensland have been shared as a celebration of the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. Reducing stigma and normalising parenting challenges continues to be a QFCC focus through Talking Families, a strengths based parent engagement initiative, fostering stronger parent-to-parent, parent-to-school and school-to-community relationships. Talking Families has now more than 175 schools and services signed onto the program.

The QFCC's Out of the Dark Steering Committee was also reconvened in February 2021 in response to concerning trends of online child sexual exploitation. Key stakeholders include Queensland Police, the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation, Bravehearts, yourtown, Education Queensland and the national eSafety Commissioner. I thank the QFCC for their continued work in educating Queenslanders in relation to these important issues.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, with reference to page 69 of the SDS, can you please advise what the Public Trustee is doing to promote Wills Week?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I can. The annual Wills Week community education program is being hosted by the Public Trustee again from 23-29 August. The Public Trustee will partner with the Queensland Law Society for Wills Week. The theme for the 2021 Wills Week is 'Wishes Change'. The week will highlight the importance of updating and/or creating a valid will, especially alongside major life events such as getting married, having a child or changes to assets.

Wills Week is just one of a number of community education programs administered by the Public Trustee. The Public Trustee's reinvigorated community education approach works to improve the efficacy of Queenslanders having financial protections in place and building the confidence to plan their and their families' future. Throughout Wills Week, Queenslanders will have the opportunity to engage in a number of events and activities right across the state. The events promote early reflections on advance life planning for people at all stages of life and encourage Queenslanders to reflect on the legacies they hope to leave behind. We know that fostering conversations about advance life planning supports Queenslanders in taking action. Actioning advance life planning provides peace of mind and is vital in preventing financial fraud and financial elder abuse.

Advance life planning is a whole-of-life process. It starts with early reflections in younger years. It moves to capturing changing wishes as life circumstances change. It leads to active conversations with loved ones about advance life planning documents and about their wishes for the future. Through Wills Week engagements, Queenslanders will have an opportunity to increase awareness and be empowered to take action with advance life planning processes and decisions.



I encourage Queenslanders to prioritise advance life planning through Wills Week and start vital conversations with their loved ones about the legacy they hope to leave behind. Queenslanders can access these services through their local solicitors or they can reach out to the Public Trustee for information and advice. The Public Trustee promotes freedom of choice in will-making services. Queenslanders can use the Queensland Law Society's Find a Solicitor function to locate a local solicitor in their area who can provide these important services.

I thank the Public Trustee for the work they already do through their ongoing community education programs. Together we are educating and supporting Queenslanders to take vital action to protect their legacy.

**Mr Mackie:** Excuse me, Chair, is it possible to give a return on a question on notice I took earlier from the member for South Brisbane? I understand she is not here. The question was around the number of applications made to QCAT for guardianship with a breakdown of service providers and any other further breakdown of details. Unfortunately, the system cannot report on service provider or breakdown, but I can inform the member for South Brisbane that there were 14,376 guardianship matter lodgements in 2021.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Director-General.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, we all have elderly friends or relatives that we want to look after in their advancing years, and we want to make sure that everything that can be done for them is done for them. The idea that something harmful or abusive could happen to them is abhorrent to everyone—I think I could speak for everyone in that regard. Would you be able to outline what the Public Guardian is doing to prevent elder abuse?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Queensland's independent Public Guardian does play a critical role in safeguarding vulnerable Queenslanders from elder abuse. The Public Guardian has legislative powers to protect the rights and interests of older Queenslanders with impaired decision-making capacity. Impaired decision-making capacity can make an older person much more vulnerable to abuse and impact their ability to seek help. The Public Guardian performs valuable functions to support them. That includes acting as a last-resort formal decision-maker. When appointed, the Public Guardian can make decisions together with an older person about their personal matters, like accessing support services or moving into residential aged care.


The Public Guardian can also make decisions about health related issues to ensure the older person's wellbeing. The Queensland Public Guardian has strong investigation powers into allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation and inadequate or inappropriate decision-making arrangements relating to older people with impaired decision-making capacity. Its investigative work often identifies and addresses situations where an older person's assets are being misused, their care needs are not being met, they are being kept isolated or subjected to other forms of coercive control. The focus of these investigations is the protection and wellbeing of the older person, but the Public Guardian may also refer matters to the appropriate authority, such as the Queensland Police Service.

The Public Guardian also administers a community visitor program for Queenslanders with impaired decision-making capacity who live at certain residential facilities. Community visitors act as an independent set of eyes and ears. They play an important role in identifying abuse which may otherwise remain undetected in residential settings. Research has predicted that by the year 2036, elder abuse will increase by 25 per cent in Queensland, and the work of the Public Guardian is a fundamental part of our efforts to stop elder abuse.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us how we all have a part to play in protecting vulnerable older people in our community. I want to thank everyone who was part of our Care Army. Everyone should know the signs of elder abuse and how to seek the support that is available so victims know they are never alone.

**CHAIR:** That brings to a conclusion this part of the estimates hearing. I would like to thank the Attorney-General, the chairperson of the CCC and the other statutory officers for their attendance today. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 10.45 am with the continued examination of the estimates for the Justice and Attorney-General portfolio area.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.28 am to 10.46 am.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Attorney-General and officials. The committee will continue its examination of the estimates for the Justice and Attorney-General portfolio area. I will hand over to the deputy chair, the member for Currumbin.

**Mrs GERBER:** I will hand over to the member for Clayfield, the shadow Attorney-General.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, the government has conducted secret sentiment polling by Ipsos polling last year. Have you seen or been briefed on that polling?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have not seen the polling or been briefed on it.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** As chief law officer for the government advising cabinet on legal matters, did you agree to keeping the results of that polling secret?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Premier has made public comments on that. That research, I understand, was conducted by her department and that is a matter for the Premier.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Your advice or that of your department has not been sought in respect of that?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** What I can say is that obviously the RTI Act falls under my portfolio. We have very good professional, independent RTI teams that make decisions about what is and is not disclosed, and individuals can make those applications.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In your role as chief law officer, have you been asked for your advice in relation to that in order to provide that to cabinet or to any other party in government?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, are any of the funds in your ministerial office supplied to positions in a digital team reporting to the Premier's office, as has been reported in today's *Courier-Mail*? If so, can you tell the committee how much and how many FTEs that is likely to cover?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** What I can say is that ministerial office budgets are administered under the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. That should most rightly be a question put to the DPC. I can, however, tell you that one of my ministerial staff works for the government digital media unit.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, this question relates to a matter that was quite significant in the public eye a little while ago—that is, the needles in strawberries case, you might recall. In September 2018, an accused worker was employed at a strawberry farm. On 15 June 2020, a committal hearing was undertaken. On 14 July 2021, the charges were dropped in the District Court. That was following legal evidence and some other issues obviously. From the date of the arrest of the accused until the case was dropped by the DPP was 20 months. Do you have any sense of the cost to the DPP of that prosecution? It must have taken up considerable resources to end up being dropped on the day of court?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The purpose of a committal hearing is to determine whether or not there is sufficient evidence to proceed to court. The DPP act independently and they have made that decision. I do not have before me how much money they spent on preparing that material for committal.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I appreciate the role of the committal process. This matter was dropped after two days of preliminary hearings, not from the committal process. It was after the committal but prior to the matter going to trial. Is it possible for the DPP to provide—if you do not have it here, I am happy for you to take the question on notice—the costs incurred in prosecuting that matter up until the date that the DPP withdrew the charges?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am not sure it is possible, but I am happy to take the question on notice and get some advice from the DPP.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I appreciate that. In relation to the Logan City Council matter and also the Moreton Bay Regional councillor Mr Raedel and the property developer involved there, again, considerable costs would have been involved—each of those matters I think going for two years. There was also a change in the charges against seven Moreton Bay councillors—so not the eight including the mayor, but the seven not including the mayor. Are you or the DPP able to provide details of the costs of each of those prosecutions? In relation to each of those, is the DPP able to advise or are you aware as Attorney as to why those matters were decided not to be proceeded with? We do not have any detail as to why those matters were not proceeded with—simply that the charges were withdrawn.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Again, the DPP makes an independent assessment—I am sure the chair of the CCC made this point earlier today—as to the evidence in committal and made the determination that there was a low prospect of success, which is why they withdraw the charges. I do not have before me what costs were involved in preparing that prosecution from the DPP. I am happy to seek advice about whether or not that can be provided. I note that obviously the inquiry into the Logan City Council charges is now being looked at by the PCCC.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I fully acknowledge that prosecutions can be, and are, discontinued at any time. That is a decision for the DPP; however, there are reasons why that might be the case, whether that is lack of evidence, lack of credibility of witnesses and those sorts of things. These matters are high-profile and important to the business community. Tens of millions of dollars were lost for the strawberry farming

community and it was of considerable concern to the public, so that is the reasoning behind those questions and for them. Can you tell us if you or your department is making inquiries about what steps the DPP is taking to ensure a more robust assessment process occurs to ensure that prosecutions, particularly in these high-profile cases, can be taken to completion? Is there a better process?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As outlined by the chair of the CCC, I think both the DPP and the CCC would say that we can always improve our processes. In the matter involving the Logan City Council the DPP made an assessment to pursue the matter and, as a result of evidence before the court in committal, determined that there was a low prospect of success.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Are there steps taken to say, 'Have we got the best process?' before we get to that stage? Because reputations are damaged and costs are incurred. It was detrimental to both the CCC and the defendants in those matters.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Absolutely. I would say that the Director of Public Prosecutions is always looking at how they can improve their processes and work with the CCC.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Another matter—and again this is a matter I did raise with Mr MacSporran—are you aware of any reports with respect to the appointment of Mr Frankie Carroll to the position of Under Treasurer?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No, I am not.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If I can turn to a couple of questions in relation to funding for Legal Aid. The SDS at page 30 indicates that Legal Aid will receive about \$12 million less in 2021-22 than it did in 2020-21. What is the justification for reducing that funding, and how is it anticipated Legal Aid Queensland will manage the reduction? What measures will be applied to address the consequential reduction in the delivery of services, if any?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Legal Aid continues to manage its finances well and closely monitors the service delivery impacts of COVID. In 2020-21 Legal Aid does expect a return of budgetary pressure against recurrent funding levels as Commonwealth funding reverts back to exclude the 2020-21 one-off supplementary legal assistance funding of \$4.49 million and \$1.312 million respectively for COVID-19 and bushfire assistance.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It will receive about \$12 million less, you have detailed there, just shy of \$6.5 million. Will Legal Aid be able to continue to deliver the services? Presumably the demand for services will continue, at least at the same level, if not grow, and it will need to continue to provide those services. Will it be forced to adjust its delivery of services or the number of services it can deliver?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am advised that Legal Aid Queensland continues to manage its finances well. They are forecasting an estimated actual operating surplus for the year and they will continue to provide the services, many of which I outlined in the previous session, around duty lawyer services supporting vulnerable Queenslanders, particularly the education services that are so important.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In effect, receiving \$12 million less, six of which you indicate is as a result of the Commonwealth, that is \$6 million less from this government to Legal Aid, but they will continue to deliver the same services at the same level as 2021?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to take some further advice on that. I note that the CEO of Legal Aid is no longer with us to answer some of these questions.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** No. Time conspires against us, unfortunately.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** All I have in front of me, obviously, is the Commonwealth funding that is reverting back, but I am happy to get some further information about the \$6 million differential.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Again, I am sorry that the Legal Aid Commissioner is not here and able to answer these questions as well, hence the questions to you. Has the Legal Aid Commission made representations to you about increasing the scale of fees payable to Legal Aid private practitioners, given that the scale is now currently about 50 per cent of applicable court scales throughout the system?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have discussed this matter with Legal Aid. Legal Aid continues to ensure that the fees for specialist reports and private solicitors and barristers is in accordance with the funding that they receive. They have a very good track record and relationships with private firms and members of the private bar. It is a budgetary measure they are looking at. The Legal Aid board has been briefed on this matter. We will continue to work with Legal Aid to look at the scale of fees and charges for specialist reports and solicitors and barristers. As I said, they manage within their current budget well and they continue to provide those services. I want to thank a number of Queensland law firms who do Legal Aid work and support Legal Aid and the important work they do.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, do you know when Legal Aid rates for private solicitors and barristers and specialist reports were last increased?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Sorry, I will just get that.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** For criminal matters, I should specify.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I will just get that for you.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** My apologies.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** In the past, where financially able Legal Aid Queensland does increase fees payable to service providers. They usually do that by the ABS Consumer Price Index, the Brisbane-specific index. In July 2011, some time ago, the hourly fee paid by Legal Aid Queensland increased from \$200 to \$250. In 2018 the hourly fee increased to \$261, so 2018 was the last rate increase.

Despite the challenges, as I said, Legal Aid Queensland and its network of preferred supplier legal firms, barristers and other service providers continues to provide legal assistance. I would say it is an issue that Legal Aid, the department and I are aware of. At this time Legal Aid continues to manage that issue. For expensive criminal matters Legal Aid Queensland pays hourly fee scales of \$115 per hour for solicitors and \$192 per hour for barristers. The Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association continue to raise the issue with me, and we will continue to work with Legal Aid on this matter.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In that sense then, has there been a decline in the number of private practitioners who are prepared to be part of the Legal Aid preferred panel? Are there fewer practitioners applying, noting I think that there is currently a round open at the moment for people wishing to apply to put themselves on that panel?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am not advised that there has been a withdrawal of firms in relation to fees but I am happy to follow that up with the CEO. I will take that on notice and come back towards the end of the session.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In terms of answering that, would you be able to take the number of people, say, from 2018 to the current process up to 30 June 2021?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am absolutely happy to get that information from Legal Aid about the number of firms and barristers that do legal aid work now compared to 2018, noting there may be a range of reasons why firms decide to no longer do Legal Aid work.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sure. Another issue, and I think you touched on it in part of your answer, is of course in the criminal jurisdiction often times it is necessary to engage a psychiatrist or a psychologist to provide specialist reports to the courts. How does Legal Aid measure its capacity to engage private psychiatrists and psychologists? Is there a difficulty in engaging those psychiatrists and psychologists because of the fees? How does Legal Aid manage its funding for those services? For example, the DPP pays a higher rate than Legal Aid does for the engagement of those types of specialists.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The fees for professional services—such as medical specialists, psychologists, medical practitioners, social workers and sometimes even property arbitration—are all covered within the scale of fees for Legal Aid Queensland. They also have fees for other disbursements—for example, travel and accommodation—that is also covered in the scale of fees. It is an extensive scale of fees. It covers a wide range of solicitor and counsel activities, incorporating case preparation, court time and many other attendances. Some fees are based upon an hourly rate. Other fees are fixed rates—for example, through a grant of legal aid to a client. The scale of fees is approved by the Legal Aid Queensland Board and is set subject to the overall available funding envelope that the entity operates within. Again, it has not come to me that they are having trouble getting specialist reports, although I note more generally the issue of the scale of fees has been raised with me and it is something that we are working with Legal Aid on.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Is that a concern to you that the fees have not increased and that anecdotally the reports are that it is more difficult to attract private practitioners, throwing more work back on to the Legal Aid officers to do it?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I think all government agencies and statutory bodies, given COVID-19 fiscal constraints, are doing the very best they can with their funding envelope. I am very heartened by the advice that I get from the CEO of Legal Aid and the board that they continue to provide such a critical service to Queensland. Of course our community legal services and Legal Aid are funded through the Commonwealth and the state government, and I will continue to work with Legal Aid to make sure they have the funding they need to provide this valuable service to vulnerable Queenslanders.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In relation to some matters regarding the Coroners Court, which has been a matter that we have been pursuing, in a question on notice earlier this year, you advised that temporary funding would be provided for the second coronial registrar, as you have mentioned this morning. Do you anticipate that that funding will be on a permanent basis, bearing in mind that, unless legislative changes are made to the responsibility of the Coroners Court, it is difficult to see the level of work reducing, given the number of referrals there and the list that is awaiting determination?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I would also say that the coronial system has undergone a significant period of reform and renewal since the 2018 Queensland Audit Office report. There have been a number of changes to how the Coroners Court operates. The Queensland Audit Office recommendations looked at four priority areas, including a more efficient and sustainable coronial system. I am happy to advise that the total funding for the Coroners Court of Queensland provided in this budget is \$2.776 million. That includes \$1 million of recurrent funding and seven permanent FTEs for the Coroners Court to maintain those reform improvements, and then there is a series of one-off funding. There is \$1.42 million in one-off funding to support the investigation and inquest into the deaths of Hannah Clarke and her three children; \$0.143 million and one temporary FTE to continue the enhanced contract management of government undertakers, with the department to report back to government at the end of this year following an evaluation of that role; and \$0.2 million for the CCQ to develop materials for staff about building resilience and managing vicarious trauma.

There are a number of one-off bits of funding and then that \$1 million ongoing to support the work that has been done there—particularly around establishing processes to ensure families receive adequate and timely information, and ensuring that staff are appropriately trained, particularly trauma informed approach to dealing with families and to triage matters and provide better case management. There has been a lot of work done at the Coroners Court, and I am pleased we are able to continue that with continued funding and then one-off funding for special inquiries.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Page 5 of the SDS shows the estimated actual measure of effectiveness for the Coroners Court. Backlogs of greater than 24 months is the measure. That measure for 2020-21 increased to nearly 16 per cent against a target of five per cent. An equivalent measure for criminal matters before the Magistrates Court remains steady at 10.5 per cent. Firstly, that number is quite high compared to the target. Is there a reason for the measure for the Coroners Court getting worse but the Magistrates Court not moving for 2021?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As you can see from the note there, there are a lot of factors outside the Coroners Court's influence. The coroners rely on a number of other agencies to provide reports—including autopsy, toxicology and police investigation reports—and they await outcomes of other investigative processes. Sometimes there are a lot of Workplace Health and Safety investigations and they are required to await outcomes of criminal proceedings before proceeding to inquest, so they have a lot less control than the Magistrates Court really to work and reduce that backlog. The Coroners Court are well aware of this. Partner agencies are working together on strategies to reduce the backlog, but so much of it is really outside their direct control. I have to say that I take my hat off to the Chief Magistrate and the team who have done an incredible job of reducing that COVID backlog at the Magistrates Court.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In light of that and the estimated actual measure there, will you reconsider your position in relation to the appointment of an additional coroner to help address that backlog and to clear up those that are not delayed by reasons outside the Coroners Court's control?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Again, in relation to resourcing for the court, I would rely on the advice from the heads of jurisdiction, the Chief Magistrate. I also meet with the Coroner. As I have said, in this year's budget, we have additional recurrent funding, one-off funding for specific inquests and funding for training. I am very confident that they will get through this backlog. As I said, there are strategies now in place across agencies to try to improve that measure, but I will always rely on the advice from the heads of jurisdiction on resourcing.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So do you expect that target to reduce to the estimated figure?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I would love to be able to say yes or no.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** And we would love you to be able to give it to us as well. That is the whole point of the question.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I guess we will have to wait and see what the next 12 months brings.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** There has been a lot of discussion both in the parliament and in the community about the government's commitment to retaining the current laws in relation to the age of criminal responsibility. Can you reaffirm here today that no changes will be introduced in Queensland, irrespective of the decisions of other states or policymaking organs of your organisation?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Premier and I have been very clear that there are no plans to raise the age here in Queensland. However, Queensland is participating in discussions that are happening nationally. The matter is on the agenda of the Meeting of Attorneys-General. There is a working group set up to look at this issue. We will continue to monitor those discussions and be part of those discussions, but at this stage Queensland has no plans to raise the age of minimum criminal responsibility.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Generally, then, capital expenditure for this year is down by just under \$4 million in the budget papers. It was \$38.4 million last year and it is \$34.7 million this year. The total departmental budget is going from \$32.8 million to \$19.7 million in 2021-22. That is a decline of about 40 per cent. Can you outline the reasons for this?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am pleased to say it is because we have completed a range of projects, and it is predominantly due to the completion of the Queensland courthouses capital works project in 2021. That was minor works of about \$8 million. There was a reduction in recording and transcription services. Obviously, with COVID, fewer matters came before the courts so there was a reduction there of \$1.898 million. There was also completion of the implementation of the online blue card application system, which I am very proud of.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Obviously, you support the protocol for judicial appointments in Queensland as outlined on the department's website?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I refer to the appointment of Magistrate Eoin Mac Giolla Ri on 21 June 2021. Is this the same Mr Mac Giolla Ri who was thanked by the chairman of this committee, the member for Toohey, in his maiden speech for his assistance to the Labor Party in winning the seat at the 2015 election, and does this fall within the judicial protocols?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. As the member well knows, in accordance with the judicial protocol, an independent group puts forward relevant nominees to me after people express an interest after positions are advertised and from that list of nominees I then make a selection and appoint an individual to the court. I have not read the member for Toohey's maiden speech. I am sorry, member for Toohey. I will have to get on to that! His Honour's appointment was warmly received by the Chief Magistrate. I have been inundated, I have to say, by members of the profession warmly congratulating His Honour on his appointment to Mount Isa. The courtroom was as full as it could have been given COVID restrictions at his welcoming ceremony. He will be an asset to the court in Mount Isa.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Do you think that should be part of the judicial protocol in relation to those previous relationships?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is a matter for the independent judicial protocol body to put forward professional nominees. I follow the protocol, and he will be an asset to the court.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But you set the protocol.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The protocol is there. People express an interest. It is very transparent. A panel meets and puts forward nominees and from that I select an appropriate nominee in consultation with the heads of jurisdiction as well.

**Ms CAMM:** Good morning to the committee and also, Attorney. I would like to touch on the national partnership of the COVID-19 domestic and family violence response funding. The state received approximately \$25.6 million that was allocated by the Scott Morrison federal government in response to COVID-19 and domestic and family violence. The state government contributed only \$7.5 million, representing 29 per cent of the federal government's contribution. Attorney, in comparison, your Victorian counterparts committed \$20 million, which equates to 65 per cent. My question is: why did services and victims of domestic and family violence in Queensland receive less support from this government than the Victorian government comparatively?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Since we came into government, since 2015, and implemented all of the recommendations from *Not now, not ever*, we have seen a significant increase in funding to our domestic and family violence and sexual assault services. We had KPMG do an audit of funding for our services and they received quite a significant increase in 2016. However, I want to acknowledge that they have been under pressure.

We know that during COVID one in 10 Australian women in a relationship experienced domestic and family violence, with two-thirds of them saying that the violence started or became worse as a result of COVID. We were very pleased that the federal government responded with their \$25 million. Of course, the Queensland government provided that extra \$7.5 million in additional funding. In this year's

budget we have made that recurrent funding for the next four years; \$30 million over four years will be provided to support our frontline services and ensure that victims and survivors are getting the support they need to be safe, secure and well.

As you will have seen from the question on notice, a significant number of organisations received additional funding. There was a number of grant programs. There was a huge boost to the 24-hour statewide crisis service that was provided by the Queensland government of \$1½ million; \$1.7 million for crisis accommodation, including transitioning women to alternative accommodation and to help with the demand on shelters; \$3.8 million to enhance specialist domestic and sexual violence services; and half a million dollars to support a new awareness campaign. That allocation was informed by weekly ministerial online meetings with the former minister and the sector to provide real-time information on impacts, issues and need associated with delivering services during the pandemic. We worked very closely with the sector and responded to their needs and what they needed to keep women safe.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, do you recognise, though, as outlined by both the Premier and many ministers, that our state has seen a significant population influx from our southern counterparts and that also is weighing heavily on service demand? While you have outlined a number of grants, it still does not answer the question as to why Queensland only contributed 29 per cent in terms of a contribution when fellow counterparts contributed almost 65 per cent. Less than half was this state's contribution compared to Victoria's when we have seen, by the government's own admission, significant population growth. Also we have the challenges—and do you recognise the challenges—of regional and remote service delivery across this state?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The answer is of course I do. Just recently I convened a Teams meeting of frontline service workers from right across Queensland. We had representatives from Weipa, the member's area and the Torres Strait. I am hearing directly from frontline workers about the pressures they are facing. Again, I would say we listened to the sector; we provided additional funding; we worked with the Commonwealth to get the national partnership agreement in place; and we have continued to provide that additional funding, now over four years, so the service has certainty.

Again I would say, going back, we have invested a significant amount of funding since we came into government. Queensland was the first jurisdiction to have a specialist domestic and family violence court. We have now rolled those out to several locations. We have invested in high-risk teams and integrated service responses. We have had over a 100 per cent increase in perpetrator intervention programs. We have Respectful Relationships in our schools. We have community awareness campaigns. We have set up a prevention council very ably led by wonderful community members and service providers. We are absolutely committed to doing all we can to tackle domestic and family violence. Everyone in the community has a role to play. Certainly we work very closely with the sector. We know that they are under pressure from population growth but also from wage increases under national awards and superannuation increases. We are working with the sector to make sure they have the supports they need and we are working with Queensland Treasury to ensure that these services are sustainable.

I would also say that because of the national conversation that we are having about women's safety with women like Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins coming forward we have seen many more women for the first time reach out for help, and that is a really good thing. We are working with the sector to make sure they are there to support them.

We are also doing a whole lot of work around building the capability of the sector with our WorkUP project. We know that finding specialist counsellors to work in perpetrator intervention services is difficult. There is a whole lot of work going on around setting standards, making sure we have defined outcomes and making sure we have the staff we need so that these organisations can do the wonderful work they do. I take my hat off to them for the work they have done during COVID. They have worked incredibly hard.

**Ms CAMM:** I share those views of the sector. Along with you, they do work exceptionally hard. It was certainly advocated to me at the Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network meeting in Mount Isa that I attended. Did you attend that meeting earlier in the year that they hosted post COVID?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No. If you attended, you would know that I sent my apologies to that meeting.

**Ms CAMM:** As part of that stakeholder engagement it has been raised by many services across the state when negotiating their core funding—and I know many services are entering into five-year service agreement negotiations currently or are reviewing those agreements—that some of those the figures have not changed in five years. So they are negotiating service agreements for the same figure as five years ago inclusive only of CPI for the next five years. Some services are looking at service

agreements over a 10-year period that have the same value of core funding. Why is the government not recognising the increased demand on these services, and you just outlined the challenges they have of retention and attraction of staff, supervisory costs and EAPs that they currently have to fund themselves? What is the government doing and addressing in relation to increasing core service delivery funding to ensure these services remain sustainable?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. That is why we have outlined the \$30 million in this year's budget. That \$7½ million increase that went to services to help them manage the demand will continue for the next four years. That is a significant increase for services. I meet regularly with the sector. We are in discussions about making sure that their services are sustainable given the overheads that we have discussed. I will continue to work with them to make sure that they have the support they need. That COVID-19 money of \$7½ million went to all funded services, including sexual assault services, and we will continue to work with them—obviously. We are still in negotiations with the Commonwealth about the next round of national partnership funding, but that will also be a huge relief to our services. As I said, they do a huge job. We absolutely accept that they are under pressure, and we will keep working closely with them. As I said, we have met with them and Treasury officials to make sure that they are getting the funding they need, given that they are experiencing this increase in demand because of COVID and because of the national conversation that we are having.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, you outlined the \$7.5 million additional that went to services. Many services reported that the department only notified them of that extension of funding in the last week of the financial year when many services had already let go of staff. Do you find that an acceptable standard of service when we are dealing with services already under pressure and already in a challenging position to retain and attract staff?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. The member will be aware that I announced that additional funding before the budget was handed down in June. We did let services know that that money was coming. Obviously, as someone who has sat on the committee of a sexual assault services for a decade, it is sometimes unfortunate that staff will take on board other opportunities where there is longer term funding. I absolutely understand that. We did give services as much notice as we could so that they could implement that in their planning. I personally met with many of them well before the budget to let them know that that is what we were working on.

**Ms CAMM:** A question to the Director-General: in relation to the notification of that funding to services directly, is it an acceptable standard of service that some services were notified in the last week of the financial year formally via a phone call that they had retained funding to be able to keep staff on?

**CHAIR:** Before you answer that, Director-General, on my hearing of the question it is asking for an opinion.

**Ms CAMM:** Would you like me to reframe the question?

**CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**Ms CAMM:** Is it a standard service of the department to notify services at a very late stage via a phone call rather than in writing several weeks after a ministerial announcement? What is the time frame of an acceptable notification as part of your department's protocol to notify services that have existing service agreements that they have an extension of funding?

**Mr Mackie:** I thank the member for the question. Under normal circumstances we have a number of NGOs not just in the domestic and family violence sector but also community legal centres and Victim Assist Queensland that provide support. A lot of them have volunteer bases. We understand very much that they like to have a longer term plan in place for their funding so that they can pay rent, pay their staff and keep and retain them. Under a normal circumstance, we would try to do that with as long a lead-in time frame as we possibly could. The COVID environment was just a little bit different in the context that a lot of decisions were being made simultaneously not just in relation to that but other measures that we were trying to assist business with. In my space, that was pubs, clubs, hotels and a whole range of others.

To the heart of your question, we would love to give them as much warning as we possibly can about funding continuing. The COVID environment was a little bit of an emergent environment in doing that, but the other answer to that is that \$7.5 million is now guaranteed for the next four years. They understand that it is coming ahead of time. There is also a review that we would like to do before the end of this financial year around the whole funding package that goes out to those service providers. We will build in all of those issues that you have already raised in your first couple of questions about funding above CPI and notification about certainty of funding into those discussions as we go forward.



**Ms CAMM:** A subsequent question to the Director-General: the introduction of practice principles which has been widely welcomed across the sector—and I also am supportive of that framework—has also contributed greatly to the administrative cost, the compliance and the regulatory nature that that has now brought to the 17 services across our state. As part of the review of funding, will the department be taking into account as part of the core funding the increased cost to services that they are now having to undertake due to the compliance nature of the practice standards to ensure that there is a consideration of increase of funding to meet that higher standard of service delivery?

**Mr Mackie:** Absolutely, we would take that into consideration as part of the review. Again, with all NGOs not just in the domestic and family violence sector but in other sectors that we look after, we know they are a frontline, grassroots, service delivery agency and that is what they need to be doing. We do not like to give them overheads of administration et cetera to take away from that. At the same time, when we are providing grants or contracts with any NGO, we obviously still need to have that governance around reporting because it is taxpayers' money. We try to streamline and minimise that as much as possible. As part of that review that I was talking about before to the end of the year, all things are on the table to have a conversation around that. We are also reviewing with them counting rules in terms of their reporting as well to try to get some greater streamlining and understanding about what is the best information to have not—not just to have information for the sake of having it.

**Ms CAMM:** To the Attorney: I am informed by stakeholders, in particular around women refuge—and I know the member for South Brisbane asked some questions earlier in the first session—that women and children fleeing domestic and family violence in Queensland are spending beyond six months and sometimes longer in refuge and other crisis accommodation due to the chronic shortage of secure, long-term housing and accessible housing options. You have been in government for 6½ years. What is the government doing to deliver long-term housing options? What is the government doing as part of that approach to ensure children in refuges have access to quality education, health care and extracurricular opportunity?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Of course, as I said earlier, I am very proud that the Palaszczuk government has invested in seven new domestic and family violence refuges, the first new government refuges in over 20 years. I know that the former LNP government did not spend one dollar on any refuges and, in fact, cut funding from domestic and family violence services. However, we do know that because of the increased demand that we were seeing we need to make sure that when women and children come forward they do have safe access and a safe place to live. I meet regularly with the refuges. Minister Enoch and I have convened a domestic and family violence and housing group roundtable not only to meet with refuges but domestic and family violence services and housing providers to make sure that there is an integrated response when it comes to providing shelter for women and children escaping violence.

I am very pleased that, out of the \$155 million this financial year, \$34.3 million will be invested in women's shelters, mobile and centre-based support services. There are 322 places of accommodation per night available through 53 funded shelters and through 42 organisations. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, this year's budget had a huge investment in housing and affordable housing. I am very pleased that \$160 million is being invested to provide housing support and specialist homelessness person services to vulnerable persons, including older women and those experiencing domestic and family violence. There is a dedicated \$20 million to expand domestic and family violence support services and \$20 million for homelessness initiatives, including through head leases, crisis housing and supports. We know it is a continued pressure on the system, but I also note that most refuges now have a dedicated children's counsellor who works with children. We know that the impacts of domestic and family violence on children are a huge focus of the next national plan to prevent violence against women and children.

We have some fantastic programs in place that work with young men as they transition from childhood to adolescence—so really trying to get some early intervention programs in place. Our ReNew Program, for example, works with young men and their attitudes towards their mothers. If we can break the cycle between children who have experienced violence, before they go on to continue that cycle of violence, we will be able to prevent many other families experiencing violence. That is a key focus of ours; to support those children particularly when they are in refuge or with their mothers escaping violence. We will continue to have that focus.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, I note in your response that the LNP government was in power for three years. You have been in power for twice as long as that and have only just convened—

**CHAIR:** This is not a place to debate the issue.

**Ms CAMM:** It was raised by the Attorney, Chair.

**Mr Powell:** It is stating a fact; not debating an issue.

**Ms CAMM:** I am just reiterating that, because it feeds into the question I have.

**CHAIR:** Firstly, do not argue with me. Get to your question please.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you, Chair. Attorney, why has it taken 6½ years to convene a housing and domestic violence roundtable? I also refer to the question on notice asked where there has been no timeframe or deadline set for outcomes of the roundtable. Can you please expand upon the goals and the outcomes and if there is a set deadline for what is to be achieved?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are working with the sector to improve the intersect between what happens in housing and domestic and family violence. I make no apologies for getting the relevant players in the room to look at how we can improve the experience for women and children. Since 2015, we have implemented all of the recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report. A lot of that had to do with crisis shelters, funding refuges, making sure that ouster orders were more prevalent in DVOs in which, as I said earlier, there was a significant increase. We need to make sure that we continue to work with the Commonwealth in the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes project, which invests in technology to make sure that women can stay at home where it is safe to do so.

In the latest work with the sector around DV and housing, we have recognised that it is an increasing pressure. This is why the government has invested so heavily in this year's budget. I make no apologies for pulling people together to look at what more we can do. That is what governments should do. Yes, I note the LNP was in government for only three years, but the list of organisations that suffered during that time—the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service lost \$85,000—

**Mrs GERBER:** Point of order, Mr Chair—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Alcohol and Drug Foundation Queensland, the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Centre on the Gold Coast lost \$50,000—

**CHAIR:** Attorney, can you just give me one second? What is your point of order?

**Mrs GERBER:** The point of order is around relevance. The question was around a timeline for delivery and why it has taken six years for a roundtable to be convened.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order. Attorney, do you have any more to say?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** My point is: we have recognised that there is additional pressure, particularly because of COVID. This is one of the latest strategies that we are working on. Let us not forget, the record of this government since 2015 in implementing those recommendations and in establishing the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce to legislate against coercive control. This is a government that absolutely wants to eliminate domestic and family violence, and I am very proud of our track record, particularly when compared to that of the LNP government.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, I have a question that has been raised by a number of women around the legitimate barrier for women wanting to access pet-friendly refuges. I am aware that the state government does have some programs. I refer to the New South Wales \$500,000 one-off grants program for refuge and animal shelters. Victoria invests over \$1.3 million. Will the state government consider growing its initiative to ensure that women, and particularly families, are not limited by their access due to the fact that they care for their family pets that play a critical role in times of trauma?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Absolutely! I was very proud as Queensland's first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence to help fund a project between DV Connect and the RSPCA, which is still going today. If women are in need of a safe place to stay and they have pets, we will find them an appropriate place to stay. The RSPCA will make sure that their pets are cared for and, where possible, that their pets can stay with them.

I recently visited a DV service in the Redlands with Kim Richards where we talked about a wonderful case where an individual was supported into refuge from one of the islands with a large dog. It was a wonderful outcome. We managed to get her to safety. She has really turned her life around and the RSPCA cared for her pet for two weeks while she was in refuge. Now we have found her affordable housing and the pet is with her. We absolutely have fantastic programs in place. I am very proud that the government has supported that initiative. DV Connect will work very closely with the RSPCA, and I want to thank them for coming on board. It is a wonderful initiative and I am very happy to provide a further briefing for the member.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you. The last question was around that it costs the RSPCA around \$150,000 to fund pets in crisis; how much is the state government contributing to that program?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to get the member some more information.

**Mrs GERBER:** Is that taken on notice, Mr Chair, or is that at the end of the session?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I will try and get that before the end of the session, but of course, we do fund the RSPCA. It is a wonderful program and we will continue to provide funding to DV Connect.

**Ms BOLTON:** My question is to the Attorney-General and I am just going on from the questions from the member for Whitsunday. I acknowledge that the three services here on the Sunshine Coast that provide outreach to Noosa for domestic and family violence and there has been an additional \$131,000. Unfortunately, that has not been enough. At the moment, we are urgently doing fundraising to provide extra counselling hours. What I am seeking is specifics: with that \$30 million over the next four years, what increase will there be for those outreach services for Noosa?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I know the member is incredibly passionate about making sure women and children in her community are supported. Over \$4.7 million was allocated to the Sunshine Coast region for domestic, family and sexual violence support services. How those services get delivered for clients in Noosa is worked out between the client and the service provider. Sometimes the service provider will come to the client and other times it is safer for the client to access the service outside of the local community. We have over \$1.4 million for domestic and family violence counselling for those services. One and a half million dollars for court support services, including for the Noosa Magistrates Court. That program runs over \$500,000 for perpetrator intervention programs. There is \$200,000 to support a more integrated domestic and family violence service on the Sunshine Coast; \$1.2 million for refuges on the Sunshine Coast; \$1 million for sexual violence counselling and \$200,000 for children's domestic violence counselling. I am very happy to continue to work with the member for Noosa on the additional \$30 million that was announced and the increase to those services. I am also very happy to continue with the member for Noosa and update her as our negotiations progress with the federal government on the national partnerships funding.

**Ms BOLTON:** To follow on from the response to question No.1 regarding the services with the brokerage funding made mention of the fact that the brokerage funding is allocated to accommodation services. My question was concerning children. I know you just said that there is dedicated children's counselling now but, for those particular brokerage funded services, the accommodation refuges and houses that are funded—the children individually—do they get funding packages? I know that it is flexible with the parent but, previously, we really struggled to get extra funding for children. Is there, or is there not, extra funding per child?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Really, that is up to the individual service that is supporting the women and the children. I have met with a number of services that use their brokerage funds for a number of different things. Sometimes they do use it for the children. It may be for new school uniforms to get the kids into a new school. When I visited one of the services in Cairns they actually used brokerage funds to help pay for a young apprentice's tools so that she could get back into employment, so it really depends on the service. They can use those brokerage funds really for whatever is needed to support women and children to help rebuild their lives after experiencing violence.

**CHAIR:** I welcome the member for Maiwar to the hearing and understand you have a question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will direct my first question to the Attorney. It was February this year, I think, that you committed to refer to the Queensland Law Reform Commission the issue of a framework for decriminalising sex work. We are now in August and I understand the matter has not been referred. Can you tell us why that commitment has not yet been met and when do you expect the matter will be referred to the QLRC?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I expect the referral to be made very shortly. We have been undertaking a range of consultation with the sector and government agencies in developing the terms of reference.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Wonderful. Attorney, does the government support laws that prohibit misleading political advertising?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am always happy to look at law reform in this area. I note in my discussions with the Law Society and Bar Association it is not one of the key issues for reform. I note that we have a very heavy reform agenda in relation to our election commitments. However, I am always happy to be kept informed about developments in this area.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Just following on from that, Director-General, is there any work happening in the department on that front around truth in political advertising?

**Mr Mackie:** No, we are not particularly proactively doing anything in that space. Obviously we take our pause from what the government policy needs to be over the forward agenda.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Of course. Attorney-General, in light of media reports earlier this year that the body corporate and community management commissioner's office had experienced a 33 per cent spike in complaints to adjudicate in the five years up to September last year, what consideration has the government given to the adequacy of funding for the office for the commission to perform its role?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** More and more Queenslanders are living in units and apartments and it is a really important area that we are focused on, and of course there is a whole range of legislative reform in this area. We have established a community titles working group to work through many of these issues.

In relation to the body corporate community management office, despite significant increases in demand, I have to say that the office has done a tremendous job. They have actually minimised delays to clients by reviewing their internal processes and by taking a proactive approach to community engagement, so really parties are better assisted to manage issues without the need for dispute resolution. The office achieved a clearance rate of 97 per cent in 2019-20.

For 2021 to May this year, notwithstanding COVID and a whole lot of challenges, they achieved a clearance rate of 93 per cent which is only slightly below their target of 95 per cent, so they have done a tremendous job. They have found really good ways of working. They are very efficient and I want to take the opportunity to thank the body corporate community management office. They finalised a record 1,644 applications and I note that the office will surpass this record again this financial year. They have a high quality of dispute services. Over 80 per cent of clients recommend the conciliation process and less than 0.5 per cent of adjudicators' orders are overturned or altered on appeal. So, yes, they are busy, but they are managing to do a really great job within their existing resources, and for that I thank them.

**CHAIR:** Member for Noosa, do you have any questions?

**Ms BOLTON:** No, I am all good thanks, Chair.

**Mrs GERBER:** One final question, Mr Chair, if that is okay. I will hand over to the member for Whitsunday.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney-General, Townsville is experiencing a crime crisis and also a domestic violence crisis. The latest figures show that Townsville has had over 4,030—

**Ms BUSH:** Point of order, Chair: I am just seeking your direction on some of these questions from the member for Whitsunday. They are quite lengthy, some of them are borderline irrelevant and quite subjective.

**CHAIR:** Could you limit your preamble please and get to the question, member for Whitsunday?

**Ms CAMM:** Thanks, Chair. I will quote some stats which I think would help the Attorney-General in being able to get context around the question. Townsville has had over 4,000 charges lodged for contraventions of domestic violence orders in 2020-21 which represents a 68 per cent change compared to the previous year. What specific measures will be undertaken by your department and other departments to respond to these alarming statistics in Townsville?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have had the pleasure of meeting with the domestic and family violence service in Townsville. They do an incredible job and have reported to me, like most services, a huge increase in demand, as we have discussed today, around COVID but also the national conversation that we are having. I am also very pleased that Townsville is one of the locations where we have our specialist domestic and family violence court and that means that they are very well placed to make sure that domestic and family violence victims are respected. There are wonderful supports in place at those courts and I will continue to work with the wonderful organisations in Townsville around making sure that they have the funding that they need. It was wonderful to visit the courts up there and hear directly from some of the magistrates, and we will continue to monitor the demand.

The reality is that we are seeing an increase in domestic and family violence rates across the state. In fact, Logan and Beenleigh is probably our busiest DV court and part of that is because of the awareness that we have raised around domestic and family violence. As I said, women are being inspired to come forward because there are courageous women sharing their stories. Obviously government has to respond and make sure that our wonderful hardworking frontline services are equipped to support them and our courts are equipped to support them, but we also need everyone in the community to be standing up and calling out these attitudes that underpin the cycle of violence. I am very proud of the work that the prevention council has been doing in that space. We have our own

advertising campaigns to try and shift attitudes. As I said, the work that we are doing in our schools around Respectful Relationships and partnering with Our Watch has to be the most powerful tool we have to prevent this violence.

I was lucky enough to recently visit Eagleby South State School with the member for Macalister to sit in on some of their Respectful Relationships curriculum. There was one session working with young women about what respectful relationships mean. I think that is how we are going to really shift the tide in the alarming numbers that we are seeing of domestic and family violence being reported. I know that Townsville, like many communities across the state, is experiencing an increase in domestic and family violence and I just would encourage the community of Townsville to do what they can to be good bystanders and to find out what you can do if your friends or family are experiencing domestic and family violence and learn about what coercive control is. The more we can get the message out that domestic and family violence is not just physical violence will help, and people, if they feel supported, will come forward and hopefully as a community we can start to see a decline in these alarming rates.

**CHAIR:** It is now time to go to government members.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Before you move on, Chair, I just want to get back to the member for Whitsunday, who asked about pets in crisis funding. We have provided the RSPCA with \$100,000 for that program and the ongoing funding for that program is supported through the funding to DVConnect. I am actually visiting the RSPCA to get an update on the program next week, so I would be happy to provide an update to the member.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you, Attorney.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, the visibility of women in public places is something of great importance. With reference to page 12 of the SDS, can you inform the committee what steps you are taking to promote better representation of women in public places?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have always said that you cannot be what you cannot see, and that is why our government absolutely supports greater representation of women and girls in our public spaces. Last year inspiring young schoolgirl Malia Knox, who is actually a constituent of the member for Maiwar, presented an e-petition with the help of the member for Maiwar to the Queensland parliament. She has started this phenomenal campaign, the FemaleFaces4PublicPlaces campaign, highlighting the lack of representation of women and girls in our public spaces. Malia told us, 'With barely any statues, pictures and plaques of women in Queensland, young girls like me don't have any strong role models to look up to; I can't be what I can't see.'

The Palaszczuk government responded by making amendment to the Queensland Government Framework for Considering Proposals to Establish Memorials and Monuments of Significance in March of this year. This was to ensure that submissions for proposed monuments or memorials on state government land include consideration of inclusion and diversity principles. While this is an opportunity to build on the government's already strong record in relation to gender equality, we cannot do this alone. Queensland is home to some incredible trailblazing women and girls: Abigail Allwood, who is not only the first female but also the first Australian principal investigator on a NASA Mars mission; and I think everyone would know the name of Ash Barty, our No. 1 tennis star who hails from Ipswich. Making sure that young Queensland girls have inspiring role models and are reminded of the achievements and accomplishments of other successful women and girls is so important. That is why I recently wrote to all mayors across Queensland to highlight this issue and to draw their attention to upcoming funding opportunities available through my department.

The Gambling Community Benefit Fund, Queensland's largest one-off grants program, provides grants of up to \$35,000 for community and not-for-profit groups as well as local councils to deliver projects that benefit their local communities. From next year we will be offering one round every year, with grants of up to \$100,000, for larger scale initiatives. I have met with the Gambling Community Benefit Fund Committee and I was really pleased to hear that they have a focus on gender equality and domestic and family violence prevention, particularly reaching more rural and remote communities through the fund. We encourage organisations who are looking for funding for a project which focuses on gender equality, domestic and family violence prevention or in a rural and remote community to apply for the fund. Round 111 is currently open and will close later this month.

The Investing in Queensland Women grant program will support community groups across Queensland to deliver initiatives that align with the Queensland government's strategic priorities for women and girls. Together we can deliver practical steps that will demonstrate we are making a positive difference to the lives of women and girls and embracing gender equality in Queensland.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you advise how the Palaszczuk government is assisting the artisan liquor industry to grow and thrive to create Queensland jobs?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I can. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create a challenging environment for the artisan liquor industry but the industry has remained incredibly resilient. Temporary measures have been introduced to help Queensland artisan liquor producers respond to and recover from COVID-19, including tax deferrals and refunds, liquor licence fee waivers, takeaway liquor authorities, business grants, low interest loans and energy rebates. The Palaszczuk government is also committed to supporting our craft brewers and distillers to grow their businesses in the long term and create more jobs for Queenslanders.

It is fantastic to see there has already been 120 applications from Queensland craft brewers and distillers for our new artisan producer liquor licence since April this year. I am also excited to advise that 25 of these applications are for new licences from brand new producers applying to join this growing sector of the liquor industry. A great example of a brand new Australian producer entering the market off the back of our new liquor licence is the Spirit Collective in Hervey Bay. I am advised the Spirit Collective applied for a new artisan producer liquor licence and is close to launching new gin and rum products. The authorisations under the new licence allow producers to showcase their products at promotional events and I understand the Spirit Collective may look to attend upcoming local events such as the Food n Groove and the seafood festival. This is a great example of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to creating Queensland jobs and our economic recovery plan in action.

In addition to allowing producers to sell their products and samples at events and markets, the new licence also allows producers to sell their own product as takeaway and online. To further promote the flavours and tastes of Queensland's innovative brewers, distillers and winemakers, the licence will allow for the sale of other Queensland producers' artisan liquor products for on-premises consumption, including Queensland wines. Given our local distillers and brewers have the capability to support other local producers, it is one way we are helping the entire industry to thrive.

These changes streamline the liquor licensing process, remove barriers, create market access and expand opportunities for our producers. The Queensland president of the Australian Distillers Association and co-owner of Grandad Jack's distillery, David Ridden, said that while it is still early days, he is already finding it beneficial for business and employment. Mr Ridden said that as the Queensland ADA president he has spoken with distillers across the state who are looking to expand into other regional towns and cities to operate in more than one location. He says—

Artisan distilleries provide an experience which is beneficial for tourism. In fact, our industry has a big focus on domestic-based tourism and the export market, and with benefits of the new licence, I believe we will see some outstanding growth over the next two years.

Craft brewers employ more than 1,700 people and contribute an estimated \$62 million annually to Queensland's economy and the figure is expected to grow to over \$100 million by 2024.

I have some updates on questions asked by the member for Clayfield earlier in the session. In relation to the needles in strawberry case, in September 2018 an accused worker was charged, with a committal hearing in June 2020. On 14 July 2021 the charges were dropped in the District Court, 20 months after the date of the arrest. The question was can the DPP provide information about the costs incurred in prosecuting the matter. I am advised that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions does not capture information in relation to costs per specific prosecution so I am not able to provide this information.

In relation to a similar question about the costs incurred in the DPP's work on the Moreton Bay and Logan City Council matters, again I am advised that the DPP does not capture information in relation to costs per specific prosecution so I cannot answer the question any further.

**CHAIR:** With reference to page 7 of the SDS, can you update the committee on what this government is doing to assist QCAT with additional resources?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** QCAT is one of our busiest jurisdictions. The number of matters before QCAT has been increasing over the past few years. Can I take the opportunity to thank the hardworking members and staff of QCAT for their dedicated work during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has added challenges resulting in backlogs and a reduction in clearance rates. That is why the Palaszczuk government has provided QCAT with an additional \$7 million and four registry FTEs over two years in this year's budget. QCAT will use this funding to focus on registry improvements and respond to the significant increase in demand and also address COVID-19 backlogs. This is on top of the 2019-20 budget which provided QCAT with \$14.37 million over five years to address workload pressures and increased demand because of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, with \$1.277 million over four

years and \$0.311 million ongoing. The funding will help QCAT deliver on its mandate to resolve disputes and review decisions for Queenslanders in an accessible, fair, just, economical, informal and quick manner.

Some of the areas which have shown an increase in demand include a nine per cent increase in originating applications since 2009-10, a five per cent increase in guardianship matter lodgements from 2019-20 and a 60 per cent increase since 2009-10 when QCAT commenced, an 11 per cent increase in children's matters compared to 2019-20 and a 35 per cent increase in general administrative review matters compared to 2019-20. The more than 60,000 Queenslanders who access QCAT each year can expect to see improvements in backlogs, clearance rates and service delivery as a result of this funding.

While I am speaking about QCAT I would like to take the opportunity to thank the president of QCAT, the honourable Justice Daubney, for his commitment to QCAT and the work he has achieved there. I have accepted the resignation of His Honour as president and he has advised that he will retire later this year.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 10 of the SDS, can you provide an update on what funding government is providing to frontline services to support women and families experiencing violence?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I know he is a key advocate for supporting the services in his local community that do so much to support women and children. Women's safety is a key priority for our government, with an investment of more than \$155 million in eliminating violence against women from our community. We know that our services have been stretched to the limit over the past two years. Demand on services has increased as a result of COVID, as I have said earlier, but also with brave women like Brittany Higgins and our Australian of the Year, Grace Tame, leading women all over the country to march and speak up, use their voice to come forward with their own stories and reach out for help. That is why we have boosted funding with the additional \$30 million to frontline services to help them manage this demand.

The funding could not come soon enough to services that have also seen a dramatic increase. It allows providers to have certainty and stability over the next four years to better support Queensland women and girls when they need help. Over the past 12 months to two years, most organisations have reported increases ranging from five per cent to up 157 per cent. Just this year during January and March, when compared to the same period, one organisation reported a 98 per cent increase in the number of young women receiving specialist sexual assault counselling.

The Palaszczuk government is providing this record investment because we know how important access to services is to women across Queensland. Recently I visited the Redlands office of the Centre for Women and Co. with the hardworking member for Redlands. The manager there, Jen, told me how, through COVID funding, they were able to employ Grace to do case management for their high-risk clients and engage with the Redlands integrated service responses. They do incredible work supporting women across the Redlands and providing them with access to specialist DV services and counselling. I also had the opportunity to visit the Centre Against Sexual Violence and see their new Redlands centre. On top of the specialist counselling and support they provide to survivors of sexual violence, they also work with local schools to educate young people on consent and respectful relationships. I would like to thank them for their incredible work and their strong advocacy.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, with regards to page 9 of the SDS, are you able to outline how the Queensland government has responded to COVID-19 and travel related consumer issues?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** COVID-19 and the various travel restrictions that have been in place for both international and state borders have had a significant impact on consumers across Queensland. In the last financial year the Office of Fair Trading has been busy processing over 17,400 complaints, which was a 21 per cent increase from the previous year, with COVID related inquiries making up 1,400 complaints, the majority of which relate to travel.

Most consumers who contacted the Office of Fair Trading sought help with refunds or credits for their already booked holidays that were cancelled due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions. They were residents like Margaret from Meridan Plains, who purchased a European travel package from a travel agent, including a cruise and flights. The consumer lodged a complaint with the Office of Fair Trading, seeking assistance to obtain a refund for the flight portion of the package and, I am happy to report, the OFT was able to negotiate a refund for her. Several months later the consumer contacted the travel agent seeking a refund of the cruise component of the package on compassionate grounds. The travel agent was only willing to offer a credit and the consumer lodged a second complaint with the OFT. The Office of Fair Trading took up the matter on the consumer's behalf, including obtaining

medical documentation. As a result of the intervention on behalf of the consumer, the cruise company agreed to refund the consumer \$3,739. The consumer was delighted with the result as she believed she had lost that money.

Graham from Maroochydore had booked several international flights with three different airlines via a travel agent and those flights were subsequently cancelled by the airlines due to COVID-19. The travel agent advised the fares would be refunded within 12 weeks. After 20 weeks the consumer had still not received any refunds and contacted the agent. However, the travel agent told the consumer they would just have to be patient. Graham lodged a complaint with the OFT and the agency took up the matter with the individual airlines. As a result, Graham received a full refund for the flights of \$19,659.

Sadly, however, for many consumers the Australian Consumer Law was not written with COVID-19 in mind. Consumer advocacy group Choice recently published the improving consumer confidence in Australian travel report. The report contains seven recommendations to provide greater clarity, consistency and fairness for Australian travellers who cannot get the travel service they paid for due to circumstances outside of their control. It draws upon the experiences of 4,443 online survey responses for consumers provided to Choice earlier this year. Recently I met with choice CEO Alan Kirkland and I support their push to reform Australian Consumer Law. I hope to see the Commonwealth come on board so that consumers right across Australia are better protected during these difficult times.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, with reference to page 10 of the SDS, can you update the committee on the work of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I would be delighted to. We know that so many women face barriers when they come forward to disclose violence committed against them. The Palaszczuk government is committed to building on the reforms from *Not now, not ever* to improve the experiences of women in the criminal justice system and look at how to best legislate against coercive control. That is why I was delighted to announce, with the Premier, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, led by the Hon. Margaret McMurdo AC. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce will look into possible future areas of reform, including attitudinal change, prevention, service response and legislative amendments. It is all about gearing the system to intervene earlier and save women's lives.

Already the task force has received over 600 submissions from survivors, frontline workers, family members and the wider community. They have also conducted consultation on the Gold Coast, out in Mount Isa and up to the Torres Strait. The recent pandemic has delayed further consultation in Townsville and Palm Island but they will continue where possible to consult widely across the community. They have also now released two discussion papers, one looking at different options to legislate against coercive control and another to look at key themes to focus on for the second report into women's experience of the criminal justice system.

I would like to thank all of the incredibly brave women who have come forward to share their experiences. One woman wrote in her submission—

There were no laws of coercive control and I could not explain to the people around me so I could not know how to explain it to police.

I want her and all of the countless survivors who have come forward to know that we hear you and we believe you. I want to acknowledge the work of the countless brave survivors who have used their voice to call for change—people like Hannah Clarke's parents, Sue and Lloyd, who have used their heartbreaking tragedy to educate Queenslanders on the dangerous behaviours of coercive control. This year here in Queensland we have been reminded of those failings with the tragic deaths of women such as Doreen Langham, Kelly Wilkinson, and Lordy Ramadan. I look forward to receiving the task force's first report on coercive control in October, with the second report on women's experiences of the criminal justice system in March next year.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, my question is in regard to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. Can you update the committee on changes for the fund and how community organisations will benefit from those changes?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are investing in our local communities right across the state. Our gambling—

**Mr Bleijie:** This is a tough one, hey? This will be a hard one. More for Labor electorates.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Like you guys can talk.

**Mr Bleijie:** We reform—

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, Attorney-General, can you give me a second? Please keep it down to a dull roar.



**Mr Bleijie:** I will take my mask off when I interject; is that better?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is only since the member for Kawana has joined the committee, Chair, it seems—

**Mr Bleijie:** I just came to say hello to all my old friends.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am sure they are delighted to see you.

**Mr Bleijie:** They are.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are investing in local communities right across the state. Our Gambling Community Benefit Fund has reached more than \$1 billion in grants over the past 27 years. Thanks to those grants we have supported local sporting clubs to upgrade their facilities and buy new equipment, and enabled P&Cs to install shade sails and new playgrounds in our local schools. We have supported thousands of not-for-profit organisations to continue their fantastic work in the community.

The fund has changed significantly since its inception in 1994 and is now Queensland's largest one-off grant funding program, supporting thousands of organisations each year with grants of up to \$35,000. Following the success of the fund's 25-year anniversary commemorative round and after consultation with a range of community groups, I am pleased to say that there will be several changes to the fund next year. The fund will be moving to four rounds each year, but one of those funds will be a super round offering grants of up to \$100,000. Previously, we had a commemorative round with grants of up to \$100,000 that supported fantastic projects across the state, including \$100,000 for the Children's Hospital Foundation to purchase a 3D stationary camera for paediatric head and facial surgeries and \$100,000 for the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association to purchase a new rescue vessel based at Masig Island to better manage the difficult weather and sea conditions in the Torres Strait. The other three rounds will continue offering grants of up to \$35,000.

This super round provides a unique opportunity for our community and not-for-profit organisations to make an even greater impact on their local communities. I encourage community groups to start thinking big and apply for one of those grants when they open for applications so that they can fund larger scale projects. The independent committee and I hope those bigger grants will reach parts of the community that have in the past been underrepresented as fund recipients, including regional and remote communities.

I am also happy to share with the committee that successful recipients were around 109 which I announced last week. More than \$10.7 million will go to over 460 community organisations, including almost \$35,000 to DV Safe Phone, an organisation which donates safe phones to charities and community organisations. In the last 12 months, the organisation has donated over 800 phones to victims of domestic, family and sexual violence. Another grant worth \$35,000 is going to the Weipa Running Festival for a new running track that will help local children and youth athletes in developing their sporting abilities.

I would encourage community organisations, local sporting clubs, not-for-profits and local governments across the state to think about how they could use one of our grants to benefit their local community.

**CHAIR:** Before I go to the member for Cooper, this is the second time I have asked people on the other side to keep it quiet.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney-General, I would be interested in hearing from you—and I am sure there might be others here that would benefit from hearing from you—on how the Women on Boards initiative is improving the representation of women, and is the Attorney aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We know that gender equality leads to better social and economic outcomes for all, but it can only be achieved when women and men across all parts of the community work together. The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of supporting women into positions of leadership, and ensuring that the views and experiences of women are incorporated at Queensland's highest levels. I am pleased to report that we exceeded our target of 50 per cent representation of women on Queensland government boards by 2020 and we are in fact currently sitting at 54 per cent. Reports from Grattan and McKinsey have quantified the opportunity costs of not having women in leadership roles and the benefits in terms of financial performance, innovation and governance.

Research from Deloitte Access Economics found that gender parity on Queensland boards will deliver \$87 million in productivity gains without any additional workers or hours worked. Setting our Women on Boards target was sensible, economic policy. The Palaszczuk government believes in setting targets and quotas to achieve gender equality, and I would like to encourage everyone to look at the research from Deloitte.

It is interesting to see the LNP's approach to quotas. The member for Maroochydore and the women's arm of the Queensland LNP recently launched a campaign against gender quotas. We have the Leader of the Opposition staking his leadership on getting more women and candidates from diverse backgrounds now into safe seats, however I wonder where we have heard this before. Scott Morrison said that the candidate for Bowman would be a woman, yet the Queensland LNP selected the only man out of a field of five for the seat of Bowman, and the current member for Bowman is now refusing to admit he has done anything wrong. This is just more talk, it seems, from the Leader of the Opposition. We heard time and time again from the former leader of the opposition, the member for Nanango, that she wanted to see more women in the LNP, yet here we are still with only six LNP members women. Why won't the LNP finally introduce quotas for women MPs?

Interestingly, I see that LNP has quotas for the leadership of their political wing. They have a quota for a metro vice-president and a quota for a regional-rural vice-president. If you can have a quota for the regions and a quota for the city, why can you not have a quota for women in parliament? Is it any wonder that Australian women are abandoning the LNP in droves?

A poll published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* showed support for the LNP by women had dropped from 41 per cent to 37 per cent since the 2019 election. This is because clearly the LNP are out of touch with women, they are not listening to women and, more than ever, women need strong leadership. I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government leading by example.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, with reference to page 12 of the SDS, can you inform the committee on how the Queensland government is implementing recommendations of the *Respect@Work* report?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I can. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring people are safe at work and free from harassment of all kinds. The *Respect@Work: sexual harassment national inquiry* report, developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission, was released in March 2020 and provided recommendations to address sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. The Palaszczuk government welcomed the Commonwealth government's long overdue response to the report earlier this year and notes that the majority of recommendations relate to the Commonwealth's jurisdiction. I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk government has been taking swift action in relation to the recommendations directed to state governments.

Since the release of the report, the Palaszczuk government committed to a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. We have committed to undertaking an independent review of the Industrial Relations Act 2016, including investigating protections for workers, subject to sexual harassment under the act. We are also exploring arrangements to establish a sexual harassment referral office. We will investigate the development of a code of practice that would apply to workplaces with the aim of preventing sexual harassment at work. We will be establishing the new position of a special commissioner, diversity and equity, with a work program including a focus of current public sector employment arrangements and conditions of employment to address gender based disparities.

The Palaszczuk government has long recognised that all forms of gender based violence and discrimination, including sexual harassment, are inextricably linked to gender inequality. As the *Respect@Work* report acknowledges, Queensland has in place a gender equality strategy that recognises the gendered drivers of violence against women, and that is our Queensland women strategy. We have also committed to delivering a new Queensland women's strategy this year.

The 2021-22 budget also continued funding the Working Women's Centre with a boost of \$780,000 in funding. We know how vital it is to support not-for-profit organisations like the Working Women's centres to ensure Queensland women's economic security is supported. As well as this, women get the important advice and support they need if they are affected by discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

We once again call on the Commonwealth to work with states and territories to deliver better outcomes for women across the board as outlined in *Respect@Work*. The Palaszczuk government will continue to prioritise action in this area, including participating in relevant intergovernmental forums, tasked with progressing implementation of these recommendations.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you outline how the government is improving price transparency in the funeral industry to protect vulnerable consumers, please?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Palaszczuk government has listened to Queensland consumers and the consumer rights advocacy group, Choice, who have been calling for better up-front funeral pricing information. We know that arranging a funeral can be a difficult and an emotionally fuelled task for Queenslanders, one that they are faced with when they are at their most vulnerable. It is a task that is

made even harder for customers when they have not been given the up-front information on funeral costs and products. Many consumers want to be able to quickly review funeral goods and services prices online prior to engaging a funeral director. Even a modest funeral can be expensive. The average cost of cremation has been estimated at \$4,000, while a burial can reach as high as \$15,000. As there can be significant price differences, depending on how a consumer wants to tailor their loved one's funeral, itemised up-front pricing provides better information for consumers. My office has received an overwhelming amount of correspondence from consumers who want clearer, up-front pricing, and they are not alone. A large group of businesses also want to see change in this space.

The New South Wales government has taken the first steps in this space and has developed an information standard requiring up-front prices on the website of a funeral director's business and in each place of business. New South Wales' regulatory impact statement determined this option did not impose a significant cost to business and was balanced by a likely increase in price transparency for customers.

I am releasing an options paper today to seek the broader views of the Queensland community. The aim of this paper is to better understand Queensland's views on the development of regulation under the Fair Trading Act consistent with the New South Wales requirements. As some national and interstate funeral directors operate across borders, this option is unlikely to result in additional cost to business. I welcome submissions from business, consumers and interested parties on their preferred option so we can consider the best way to protect Queenslanders. The options paper is available on the Get Involved and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General websites. This is the first step in reforming the funeral industry and it will give Queenslanders a fair go at a time when they are most in need.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, would you please update the committee on how the Queensland government is supporting Queensland women to exercise their reproductive choices and access appropriate support, and if the Attorney is aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Palaszczuk government is proud of our record to support women's reproductive choices. Government has decriminalised termination of pregnancy giving women control over their health. In 2021-22, Children by Choice received \$686,000 in funding. That included domestic violence counselling, prevention, capacity building and awareness raising, as well as women's health and wellbeing support.

A woman making a decision to end a pregnancy should be a decision made by herself and her doctor, not by politicians who do not believe in a woman's right to choose. However, it is disappointing that those opposite have not taken the opportunity to criticise their own federal colleague who is on a dangerous crusade to limit a woman's choice.

I wonder whether or not those opposite will condemn the federal member for Dawson for his dangerous, nonsensical private member's bill. Not content to spread mistruths around wearing masks and lockdowns it seems, the member for Dawson's proposed private member's bill will overturn clinical guidelines here in Queensland and will force doctors to provide medical treatment to babies born alive following a termination or face penalties of up to \$440,000.

Once again, women who require late-term abortions are being demonised. Cate Grindlay, who is Marie Stopes Australia's Executive Director of Nursing and Clinical Services, says the bill is based on a myth that describes a clinical situation that does not exist—that is, that women are offered medication to end the life before delivery but in some cases the babies are delivered alive for medical or personal reasons and then given palliative care. This is a dangerous bill perpetuating disgusting lies and misinformation about late-term abortions.

The overwhelming majority of reasons why women need late-term abortion is that the foetus had lethal or significant abnormalities and a birth poses a risk to the mother. These are usually wanted children. The member for Dawson has said that this medical treatment must be provided even if it is a 'fruitless exercise'. A 'fruitless exercise'—women and families making agonising decisions, painful and emotionally fraught decisions, decisions that they have made in consultation with their medical practitioner! Decisions women make about their bodies need to be made by women. I urge those opposite to condemn the member for Dawson's dangerous proposed bill.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, with reference to page 8 of the SDS, will you update the committee on the government's commitment to consider shield laws for journalists in Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We know how important shield laws are to protecting journalists but also to protecting Queenslanders who come forward with important information. A free, independent and effective media is crucial for a strong democracy. Consulting with key stakeholders was a crucial part

of considering shield laws here in Queensland. We wanted to give everyone an opportunity to have their say. I have met with and listened to key stakeholders like media representatives and the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance on this important issue. They all told me that these laws are critical in protecting Queenslanders.

With their valuable feedback and as part of an extensive consultation process on delivering shield laws for Queensland, the discussion paper *Shielding confidential sources: balancing the public's right to know and the court's need to know* was developed. The discussion paper asked questions of key stakeholders in a Queensland context because we want to deliver laws that are in line with our state's jurisdiction. For example, who should be defined as a journalist? What is a source? What the nature of a shield will do? Does the shield apply to all court processes—for example, issuing warrants?

Written submissions were received from a range of stakeholders including media organisations, academics, legal stakeholders and human rights organisations. We also received important feedback from community members through responses to the online survey.

A wide range of views is important to ensure we get the right approach for Queensland. Laws must strike the right balance between a journalist's obligation to maintain the confidentiality of a source and the ability for the court to have access to all relevant information in the interests of justice. I thank all stakeholders and community members for their time and participation in the consultation process. Stakeholder feedback is currently under careful and detailed consideration. I look forward to introducing a bill containing a shield law framework for Queensland later this year.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can you outline how this government is supporting Queensland women and girls to participate in sporting activities including the 2020 gloriously successful Tokyo Olympics and the future 2032 equally glorious and potentially magnificent Brisbane Olympics?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have been so proud to cheer on Queensland's elite sportswomen competing in Tokyo and watching their success—Queensland athletes like Kaylee McKeown from the Sunshine Coast, who grabbed the gold medals in the 100-metre backstroke, 200-metre backstroke and the four by 100-metre medley; Ariarne Titmus, who won gold in both the 400-metre and 200-metre freestyle; Cate Campbell, who brought home gold in both the four by 100-metre medley and the four by 100-metre freestyle relay; Ipswich's very own Wimbledon champion and world No. 1 tennis player Ash Barty, who is also an Olympic bronze medallist; and Matilda defender Clare Polkinghorne, who has put women's football on the map. They have all been such an inspiration for women and girls across the country.

Of the 486 athletes competing for Australia in Tokyo, 128 are from Queensland and impressively more than half of these Queensland athletes—70—are female. The Queensland government has been honoured to support our athletes. We contributed \$600,000 towards preparing, outfitting and sending our team to the 2020 games, held in 2021. Queenslanders selected for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games also received \$2,700 from the Queensland government.

I am also proud of this government's track record of investing in support for women and girls to participate in community sport, to excel in elite sport and to broaden the horizon of Queensland girls everywhere. The government prioritised Get in the Game funding to develop facilities for females across the state. This has ranged from \$500,000 to Football Queensland FNQ to construct change rooms to support female participation in football at Manunda to \$366,000 to fund Logan City Netball Association to upgrade existing amenities buildings to support further female participation in Woodridge and a whole host of similar grants right across Queensland. Similarly, this government's investment in elite sport facilities has continued to attract major sporting events and show us all that women can do anything.

Hosting the Olympics and having the world's best athletes right here in Brisbane is the ultimate demonstration that dreams come true, and we know that every elite champion started somewhere. We are supporting young Queenslanders to participate in sport and recreational activity through the FairPlay vouchers, which help reduce financial barriers for families. The Community Use of Schools and Active Schools initiative will see schools and clubs benefit from sporting infrastructure and new staff dedicated to reducing the administrative burden.

We have also worked with the Queensland Olympic council to arrange Olympians to visit schools and communities to share the Olympic ideals and inspire the next generation under the Olympics Unleashed program. We have also allocated \$470,000 annually for two years towards the program, with Olympians visiting schools throughout Queensland, many in remote communities in the far north-west and Central Queensland. Under the Activate! Queensland Strategy, we will invest \$1.3 billion over

10 years to improve opportunities for Queenslanders to participate in physical activity and provide our female athletes, coaches and leaders with pathways of high-performance sport to encourage equity and success.

We have also signed partnerships with six key sporting bodies to deliver a more flexible range of sporting opportunities for our communities. This will boost sporting participation rates of women and girls, as well as people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and other underrepresented groups. It will also importantly drive equal pay for our incredible sportswomen.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the commitment to keep communities safe, can you update the committee on how the government is supporting people to respond to domestic and family violence?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We all have a role to play in ending domestic and family violence in the community. We know that so many Queenslanders want to do more. They want to do more to stop violence against women but they want to know how to help someone in need. Speaking to the loved ones of victims of violence, they tell me how they often felt powerless and confused about what they should do when they know or suspect someone they love is a victim of domestic and family violence. How do we intervene? How do you start a conversation? What do you do if you begin to suspect that you are being isolated from your loved ones? These are all challenging questions and they are questions that are all too common.

That is why the Palaszczuk government has partnered with the Griffith University MATE Bystander Program and Telstra to make it easier for Queenslanders to access vital information needed to support a friend or family member experiencing domestic and family violence. This app will make it easier for Queenslanders to recognise the signs of an abusive relationship, including coercive control, and assist them to respond earlier and appropriately to what can usually be a very complex and difficult situation. The app will also provide helpful information and refer users to resources and services. It will work as a guide to help a bystander do simple, appropriate things like check in with their friend to offer support now or whenever they need it, because we know that sometimes even the smallest gesture or action can be powerful. I am pleased to say that work to develop the app well underway and is expected to be complete by the end of the year. Queenslanders have been out in force saying 'enough is enough'. Together as a community we are determined to not let domestic violence happen to our friends, families and loved ones. This app will be a valuable tool in enabling Queenslanders to play their part and be active bystanders.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 10 of the SDS, could you please update the committee on how the Queensland government is supporting Queensland women and girls through the Investing in Queensland Women's Grants Program?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The government continues to invest in programs and services for women and girls to advance gender equality. In 2020 we launched the Investing in Queensland Women's Grant Program to support community groups and organisations in their efforts to raise awareness and address the important issues faced by women and girls. Under the inaugural round of the grant program 32 organisations across Queensland shared in funding of \$270,000 to deliver initiatives. The Allison Baden-Clay Foundation was one of our successful applicants in round 1. It has allowed the recipients to run their Hockey Says STICK IT to DV initiative. Hockey Says STICK IT to DV is a program made up of educational workshops for hockey coaches and hockey committee members in Ipswich to recognise and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence in their sporting community.

Advancing gender equality and respect for women and girls is at the core of this grant program, which was first launched in February this year. We know that women have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases they have been more vulnerable to domestic and family violence and have been hit hard economically. The grant program will help the Queensland community continue to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of women and girls as we recover from COVID-19. Beyond DV has also received a grant to bring awareness to the signs of coercive control. We Need to Talk sees Sue Clarke and Beyond DV talk to teenage girls and their mums about what a healthy relationship looks like and how to identify coercive control at a young age. Sue and Lloyd Clarke have been instrumental in raising awareness of coercive control in the community after they tragically lost their beautiful daughter Hannah and three grandchildren last year.

Some of the other successful applicants under round 1 include initiatives that will: build the financial security of farm businesswomen through business and transition planning; develop resources to help communities and workplaces recognise and respond to the experiences of domestic and family violence for LGBTIQ people; and establish coding clubs as safe spaces for girls to learn about

computing and engage in STEM. We know that women have been particularly impacted by COVID-19, placing them at greater risk of long-term vulnerability and hardship. We also know that domestic and family violence is linked to gender inequality, especially economic insecurity. The grant program will help the Queensland community continue to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of women and girls, but importantly this grant program will create a fairer, safer and more equal Queensland. Round 2 has just closed and I am looking forward to announcing the successful recipients very soon.

Chair, before the next question I have an answer in relation to funding for Legal Aid. The member for Clayfield asked about a reduction in funding. I can provide the committee with information that the reduction of approximately \$12 million in budgeted funding from 2020-21 to 2021-22 primarily relates to one-off Commonwealth funding that was received in 2020-21 but not continued. The reduction relates to both Legal Aid Queensland and community legal centre funding. The reduced budgeted funding for Legal Aid Queensland is primarily associated with COVID-19 legal assistance of \$5.2 million and bushfire legal assistance of \$1.3 million. Legal Aid Queensland continues to plan and deliver services in the most cost-effective way within its funding envelope moving forward. The remaining portion of the \$12 million reduction is funding primarily related to \$5.9 million reduced Commonwealth community legal centre funding, again this being one-off funding received in 2020-21 in response to COVID-19 impacts.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Attorney. With reference to page 5 of the SDS, can you please advise the committee of any increase to funding for the Coroners Court?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Queensland's coronial system has undergone significant reform in response to the 2019 Queensland Audit Office report *Delivering coronial services*. To support this work, in the previous state budget we provided additional funding of \$3.9 million over four years, including eight full-time-equivalent positions in the court. A further \$0.963 million was allocated in this year's budget to continue the implementation of reforms through to 30 June 2021. The additional funding enabled the establishment of a trial second coronial registrar and cross-agency team to more effectively triage apparent natural causes of deaths reported to the Coroners Court of Queensland. The second coronial registrar has been successful in reducing matters coming into the coronial system, alleviating demand pressures and enabling coroners to focus on more complex matters. As part of this year's budget we have allocated recurrent funding and permanent FTEs for seven positions at the Coroners Court. These positions and funding will ensure the long-term sustainability of critical reforms implemented over several years to strengthen our coronial system.

In addition, a further \$1.422 million was allocated to the department in 2021-22 to support the coronial investigation and inquest into the deaths of Hannah Clarke and her three children. The funding provides administrative, legal and judicial resources for the investigation and inquest. It will be complemented by a \$200,000 investment in vicarious trauma prevention for staff working in the Coroners Court. I want to acknowledge the Queensland coroners, coronial registrars and coronial staff who work tirelessly to ensure that deaths are investigated rigorously and families are appropriately supported during the coronial process.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you provide an update regarding the Palaszczuk government's consideration of the Queensland University of Technology's Property Law Review, please?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Queensland University of Technology made many, many, many recommendations—230 recommendations, in fact—to modernise the Property Law Act, with the overarching recommendation that the act be completely replaced with a new act. The review covered a wide range of areas, including a review of the Property Law Act, seller disclosure and body corporate issues—such as lot entitlements, by-laws, debt recovery, termination of community titles schemes and procedural issues for bodies corporate. I am pleased to advise that we have committed to modernise the Property Law Act and a new act will be introduced. Targeted stakeholder consultation work was started prior to the last state election. Further consultation is underway and we are hoping to have an exposure draft of a proposed bill early next year. On this time line, I am expecting the introduction of a bill later next year.

In March the department conducted a consultation round table with key property and legal industry stakeholders to discuss QUT's recommendation relating to seller disclosure. Further targeted consultation is due to occur between October and December this year, with public consultation on an exposure draft to commence in April next year.

New regulation models under the Body Corporate and Community Management Act commenced on 1 March this year. The new regulations include a range of reforms which implement many of the recommendations made by QUT: to streamline and modernise body corporate procedures; reduce body corporate costs; and enhance protections for unit owners, including facilitating better use of technology for sharing information and conducting meetings—including facilitating electronic voting and attendance—and requiring body corporate managers to disclose benefits they receive and expect to receive in relation to contracts entered by the body corporate.

Separately the government implemented legislation to assist bodies corporate to address and manage challenges and issues for community titles as a result of the COVID pandemic. Those include permitting bodies corporate to close common areas and preventing bodies corporate from charging penalty interest on unpaid levies.

As part of our ongoing work to improve body corporate legislation, we have established the Community Titles Legislation Working Group to consider a range of important body corporate issues in stages, including the regulation of body corporate managers, management rights, bullying and harassment in community titles schemes. To date, the working group have met twice to discuss a range of these issues. Without pre-empting the advice of the working group, the first tranche of changes to the regulatory framework may be introduced next year. We are committed to working closely with the working group and listening to stakeholders about issues facing the sector.

**CHAIR:** We are now coming to the end of the allocated time for the committee's examination of estimates for the justice and Attorney-General portfolio areas. I understand there may be one question still outstanding.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes. This is in relation to data about the number of firms engaged by Legal Aid Queensland. I am advised by Legal Aid Queensland that in the time available they have been unable to collate that data. However, I am happy to take that question on notice.

**CHAIR:** In relation to questions on notice, the committee has resolved that answers to questions taken on notice must be provided to the committee secretariat by 5 pm on Monday, 16 August 2021. If there is a need, the exact wording of the question can be obtained from the transcript which will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website within approximately two hours. Attorney-General, is there anything else you would like to add before we end this session?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Chair, I want to thank you, the secretariat and committee members. I thank all of the parliamentary support staff. I cannot imagine that running estimates in a pandemic is particularly easy, so thank you so much for all of your hard work and for making sure we are all following the health directives, we are appropriately socially spaced and there is plenty of hand sanitiser. Thank you to the parliamentary staff.

I thank my director-general, David Mackie, and his deputies, Victoria, Leanne and Jenny, and Kylie from the Office for Women. I thank all of the support staff from the department—Corynne, Paula, Vanessa, Roger and Peter. I thank all of the heads of statutory bodies who made themselves available. There is quite a group of them in the room next door, although once again Alan MacSporran stole the show. I also want to thank in particular the Public Trustee who made himself available by video link.

**Mr POWELL:** And sat attentively the whole time.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** He has been in home quarantine and this is his last day. I have to tell you that he was really hoping for a question. This is his big social outing of the last two weeks and he will be very disappointed that he did not get a question today.

**Mr POWELL:** Not even a Dixer!

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I know. We should have thought of that—a big thank you to the Public Trustee who made himself available. I also give a big thank you to my ministerial staff—my chief of staff, Laura Fraser Hardy, and my team of Michael, Olivia, Alisha, Justin, Joshua, Phoenix, Penni, Inga, Chanelle, Jacqueline and Alice. They have done a tremendous job.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Attorney, and all of the officers for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 1.30 with examination of estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.43 pm to 1.31 pm.**

**ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE—POLICE AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES; FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES****In Attendance**

Hon. MT Ryan, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

Ms E McIntyre, Chief of Staff

**Queensland Police Service**

Ms K Carroll, Commissioner

Mr D Smith, Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Corporate Services

M T Linford, Deputy Commissioner, Crime Counter-Terrorism and Specialist Operations

**Queensland Corrective Services**

Mr P Stewart APM, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner

Mr S Scougall, Chief of Staff, Office of the Commissioner


Ms S Newman, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Community Corrections and Specialist Operations

**Queensland Fire and Emergency Services**

Mr G Leach, Commissioner

Mr A Stevenson, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Chief Strategy Officer

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 **CHAIR:** This afternoon the committee will examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2020-21 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services until 5.15 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings during this time for two breaks, between 2.45 pm and 3 pm and between 4 pm and 4.15 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the minister's portfolios as follows: police from 1.30 pm to 2.45 pm, corrective services from 3 pm to 4 pm and fire and emergency services from 4.15 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 following non-committee members have sought and been granted leave to participate: Dale Last, member for Burdekin, and Jarrod Bleijie, member for Kawana. I remind those present this afternoon that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard.

Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure that 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. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcast 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. However, I do ask all present 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 committee secretariat. Some members and witnesses will be participating via videoconference today.



On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, commissioner, officials and members of the public who are watching the broadcast. 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 commissioner. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of police 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. After that we will continue with some questions.

**Mr RYAN:** Good afternoon, committee. Good afternoon to the people joining us on the online link and also the people of Queensland who are tuning in. It is always good to have people watching. Chair, I will start on a sad note. Sadly, since we last met in this place, a brave and dedicated member of the Queensland Police Service was tragically killed while he was doing his job keeping us all safe. Senior Constable Dave Masters will be missed, but he will always be remembered and honoured. I pass on my sincere condolences again to his wife, Sharon, and son, Jack, and to Dave's family, friends and colleagues. It is certainly with honour he served.

I will now turn to budget estimates. These are historic times for the Queensland Police Service. The Queensland Police Service is going through an unprecedented period of reform, underpinned by yet another record budget, a massive infrastructure program and the biggest investment in police personnel in three decades. It will mean a Police Service that is bigger, more efficient, better resourced and more agile than ever before. These advances are certainly timely. The pandemic has demonstrated like never before the key role the Queensland Police Service plays in maintaining public safety and supporting government administration. As we meet here today, there are police officers on our borders, in our airports and in our quarantine hotels keeping the community safe.

The Queensland Police Service is world-class and that is without dispute. One of the reasons for that is the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement. There is continuous work being done to improve the capacity of each officer to deliver even better responses to the community. It is about using those 12,000-plus police in the most efficient way possible to deliver even better outcomes for the community, and this government is backing the police. This year is yet another record police budget—over \$2.8 billion. A \$300 million capital works infrastructure pipeline is delivering new and upgraded facilities right across the state and, importantly, supporting local construction jobs in the regions. Then there is the historic investment of more than 2,000 extra police personnel, one of the biggest investments of its type ever.

The government is also providing police with the laws they need to keep the community safe. I am told by police themselves that the presumption against bail for recidivist youth offenders is having an impact already, even in places like Townsville. Wandering laws—giving police the power to use electronic detection devices to search for knives—are proving successful in the trial on the Gold Coast. The reverse onus for hooning drivers has literally turned things on their head. Now for the first time anywhere in Australia, it is up to the owner of a vehicle caught hooning to prove to police that they were not the driver or else face the consequences. Today, here at parliament, I have announced the government's intention to create a new offence targeting people who seriously injure or kill a police dog or horse. The need for this change was clearly illustrated by a case last year when police dog Kaos was stabbed by two offenders.

What is clear is that the Palaszczuk government is leading the nation on many legislative fronts. Queensland has among some of the strongest laws in the nation in relation to dangerous sex offenders, organised crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs and hoons. As I mentioned earlier, the Queensland Police Service is absolutely committed to continuous improvement. One area is in relation to domestic and family violence. The Queensland Police Service is absolutely dedicated to enhancing its response and capacity to better support those who are experiencing domestic and family violence. Proactive policing initiatives in this area include, in a national first, a new online domestic violence reporting tool for people to report non-life-threatening matters; specialist police domestic and family violence coordinators across the state including embedding these specialist officers in the Police Communications Centre; police vulnerable persons units and high-risk teams; and improved access to frontline technology with mobile QLITE devices now enabled with police protection notices to be issued where they are needed when they are needed.

I will say it again—the Queensland Police Service is world-class. It has embraced a modern policing philosophy based on mobility and agility. That is why this record budget is supporting the delivery of mobile police beats across the state. These police stations on wheels are an important component of the future of policing. It is about deploying these police facilities and their personnel where

they are needed when they are needed. Having seen them in action in locations around the state, I can attest to the extremely positive feedback from members of the community. It is all part of a broader picture of investment and resourcing that is delivering a bigger, better resourced, more agile, more efficient and more capable Police Service than ever before. To all members of the Queensland Police Service, both sworn and unsworn, I say a heartfelt thank you for keeping your community safe, for keeping Queenslanders safe.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Deputy Chair?

**Mrs GERBER:** Thank you, Mr Chair. I will hand over to the member for Burdekin.

**Mr LAST:** On behalf of the opposition, can I also extend my condolences to the family of Senior Constable Dave Masters; indeed, a tragic loss. My first question is to the commissioner. I refer to the priority in the budget highlights of the youth justice five-point plan. What was the rate of youth reoffending as at 30 June 2021?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Sorry, member. For clarification, when you mean 'rate', do you mean of the state or for particular areas?

**Mr LAST:** No, the state.

**Mr RYAN:** Chair, I will refer the member to the SDS. The data he is referring to—

**Mr Bleijie:** The question was not to you.

**Mrs GERBER:** A point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Everyone, just—

**Commissioner Carroll:** Sorry, I am just trying to get across exactly whether it is in the SDS, because there is the percentage of proceedings where young offenders were offered and accepted as a diversion option, proportion of young offenders—

**Mr RYAN:** Is that what the member is asking? It was not clear in the question.

**Mr LAST:** The rate of youth reoffending. How many youths as at 30 June would fall into the category of having committed a further offence, so reoffended?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I will get the current rate for you. I am just not 100 per cent sure if it is this 70.3 per cent.

**Mr LAST:** Do you want to come back to that question?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Yes, please.

**Mrs GERBER:** Taking it on notice?

**Mr RYAN:** No.

**CHAIR:** No. Hang on a minute. Let me run the proceedings. The commissioner has indicated that she will come back to it.

**Commissioner Carroll:** I just have to be quite precise as to how I answer that. When you look at the proportion of young offenders who have another charged offence within 12 months of initial finalisation for a proven offence, it is 70.3 per cent. But is that exactly answering what you are asking? I am just making sure that I get that correct.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you. Commissioner, having regard to the youth justice five-point plan, have you received any feedback from operational police officers with regards to making juvenile offenders eligible for the charge of breach of bail?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Certainly, there has been a lot of discussion about breach of bail over the years; in fact, we often get feedback about many ways to look at those issues. Obviously, the policy decision sits around presumption against bail if you are committing obviously offences whilst on bail as a part of the five-point plan. In recent times we have found quite a bit of success in terms of the five-point plan, particularly in your area of Townsville. If you do not mind, bear with me. I will just talk about some of the very good work that has been done in that area, particularly with the co-responder model with youth justice. That now exists in eight areas, and we have two teams in Townsville. From 2019 to 2021, there has been an extraordinary reduction of offences against the person, minus 24; and for offences against property, minus 17. I do believe that, within the areas that we have co-responder models and the five-point plan, we are having some very good impact.

**Mr LAST:** Taking that one step further, when will you release the finding of the reviews into the Rapid Action Patrol group and the Townsville Stronger Community Action group?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I purposely, with Director-General Deidre Mulkerin, did that review. Initially, I started it with Director-General Bob Gee because we went up to have a look at what was happening in Townsville. We have a review into that. I have considered it and it is with government for further consideration. Obviously it is up to government when that will be released. That review was done some months ago. Much has been put in place since that review.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, when can we expect to see the results of that review?

**Mr RYAN:** The government is considering all reviews that are done. There are processes in place. The important thing to note here is that there is a broad sweep of interventions and actions which are already in place and which are, given conversations and feedback I have with officers on the ground, particularly in Townsville, having some impact. The five-point plan along with the recent legislation changes are having a significant impact. Obviously there are things happening already which are having a significant impact around not only ensuring that those young people who—

**Mr LAST:** A point of order, Mr Chair.

**Mr RYAN:** No.

**Mr LAST:** It was a very specific question: when can we expect the results of the review to be tabled?

**CHAIR:** Minister, there is no point of order. Could you continue, please?

**Mr RYAN:** Certainly. The question around youth justice is a very important one. I would have thought the member would want to hear about everything happening in that space.

**Mr LAST:** No. We want to know when the review is being tabled.

**CHAIR:** Please, I have already made my order. Allow the minister to finish answering the question.

**Mr RYAN:** There is a lot of good work being done there. Certainly, the feedback from police in Townsville is that the presumption against bail is having its desired effect. More of those serious recidivist offenders are in custody for longer, which is having an impact on crime and criminal offending rates not only there in Townsville but across the state. The co-responder model is having a big impact when it comes to prevention in intervention. Interestingly, I was talking to one of our police prosecutors in Townsville recently about the dedicated police prosecutor in the youth justice space achieving good outcomes, better quality bail applications—

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

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

**Mr LAST:** I reiterate my previous comment in that I am asking: when will the review be released? I know the minister finds all this interesting, but I want to know what date.

**Mr RYAN:** Well, you should find it interesting too; it is about community safety.

**CHAIR:** May I just ask the members and the minister not to engage in cross banter. There is no point of order. I will allow the minister to answer the question.

**Mr POWELL:** I am sorry, Mr Chair, point of order: if the minister wants to provide more detail on a question that has not been asked by the opposition, he has Dorothy Dixers in a short while where he can continue on. He has answered the question. He is not going to provide the review. Let us move on to the next question.

**Mr RYAN:** No, that is not what I said.

**CHAIR:** Please, I have already made a direction to allow the minister to answer the question. Can we refrain from interrupting him? Continue.

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, Chair. We take this matter very seriously. Not only have we taken action already, but as a government of review, consensus and community consultation we obviously always look at what we are doing to see if we can do it better. We will consider any reviews that are done in the youth justice space and take appropriate action. If changes need to be made, obviously changes will be made.

I promise that I will finish on this note, because I do want to talk about timelines, reviews and announcements. It was on 8 January this year where the member for Burdekin said that he would release the LNP's youth justice crime plan within six months. In fact, the *Townsville Bulletin* article states—

LNP tight-lipped on plan to combat crime. Opposition spokesperson for police Dale Last says his party wants to 'get it right'.

He said he will announce it within six months. Member for Burdekin, you are late.

**Mr Bleijie:** Where is yours mate?

**Mr RYAN:** No, our plan is the five-point plan. I have just gone through some of the results already.

**Mrs Gerber:** When are you going to release it under the actual questions?

**Mr RYAN:** I have gone through some of the results already.

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, Minister. We have to keep these proceedings orderly. I ask you again to stop your interjections and allow the minister to finish answering the question.

**Mr POWELL:** Point of order! Mr Chair: there was provocation in that instance.

**CHAIR:** I have already made my direction in relation to the behaviour of the committee.

**Mr RYAN:** If the member for Burdekin wants to be serious about this issue, he has to keep his commitments, and he hasn't. He has been tight-lipped on it; he said he would release it within six months. It is late and all you can think about is that they do not take this issue seriously. Member for Burdekin, you do not have much credibility on this. If you cannot even get your plan out within six months, you have no basis to be asking questions about what we are doing.

**Mrs GERBER:** Point of order, Mr Chair: there are implementations in that and it is not relevant to the question. We have allowed this to go on. Can we move on to actual questions?

**CHAIR:** Can we have the next question, please?

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to page 3 of the Service Area Objectives; specifically, property security offences. What was the value of property and vehicles stolen in Townsville by juvenile offenders in the 2020-21 financial year?

**Mr RYAN:** Point of order: that is irrelevant to these proceedings. I cannot see how it all relates to the expenditure of the Queensland Police Service.

**CHAIR:** Minister, if you could just allow me a moment. Would you like to rephrase the question in relation to the number of vehicles—the value may be difficult to quantify?

**Mr LAST:** It is directly relevant to the next question I am going to ask.

**Mr Ryan:** It has to be relevant to estimates; it cannot be relevant to the next question.

**Mr LAST:** It is relevant. I think Queenslanders have a right to know how many vehicles—the value of those vehicles and the value of the property—are being stolen in their communities.

**CHAIR:** Before you answer that, Commissioner, there may be issues in relation to identifying individual values of vehicles but, again, can I just remind everyone that this is an estimates hearings in relation to the appropriation bill, the expenditure. Can we just be conscious of that when we are asking our questions, please?

**Commissioner Carroll:** We will have to have some time, and I do not know if I am going to be able to answer that question. It is extraordinarily difficult to work out the values of each vehicle and what damage was done in terms of cost.

**Mr LAST:** Are you happy to take it on notice?

**Commissioner Carroll:** We will have to take that on notice.

**CHAIR:** Slow down. The only person who can take a question on notice is the minister.

**Mr RYAN:** I will not be taking it on notice. Under the standing orders—I am just getting the exact standing order—we can decline to answer a question that is too difficult to answer, which would—

**CHAIR:** We do not need the standing order.

**Mr RYAN:**—impose an unreasonable burden on the agency to answer.

**CHAIR:** We do not need the standing order. Can you just move on to the next question?

**Mr RYAN:** I have been told by the Commissioner that it is impossible to answer, because how could you possibly find the value of every single vehicle?

**CHAIR:** Can you ask the next question please?

**Mrs GERBER:** May I hand over to the member for Kawana for the next question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Commissioner, when did you first become aware that the QPS was losing the Caloundra watch house facility and that it was being transferred to Youth Justice for a youth remand centre?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I would have to find out the exact date. It would have to be some months ago, but I do not know the exact date.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Could you get back to us before the end of the session, Commissioner?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I will try. I do not know if I can. I would have to go back through emails and notices, so I might have to get back to you.

**Mrs GERBER:** It sounds like something that could be taken on notice.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Maybe the minister will take that on notice, it is a pretty relevant question to Caloundra and youth justice—will the minister take that on notice?

**Mr RYAN:** No. Look if we don't have—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. I do not want commentary minister. If you are not taking it on notice, you are not interested in going on.

**CHAIR:** Can we stop the grandstanding and arguing across each other?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order!

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I am talking. I will get to your point of order in a second.

**Mr RYAN:** Chair—

**CHAIR:** Let me finish. Now, I understand that the minister has said that he will not take that question on notice.

**Mr RYAN:** Now—at the moment. No, but I am happy, if we cannot answer it by the end of the session I will take it on notice then. That is all I am saying. So, if we cannot come back by the end of the session, we will take it on notice.

**CHAIR:** What is your point of order, member for Kawana?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am moving on to my next question, Mr Chair. Minister, the Labor government has announced, supported by the member for Caloundra, the closure of the Caloundra police watch house, and this facility will be transferred to youth justice for a youth remand centre. The location of the current watch house is in Gregson Place, a one-way street beside a child care centre, a school, a funeral home, a courthouse and police station. It backs onto a hospital, an RSL and a retirement village across the road.

**Ms BUSH:** Point of order, Chair—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, during the election Labor promised Caloundra a new police station and more police resources, and yet it is only delivering a youth remand centre. Does the minister support the closure of the Caloundra watch house in place of a youth remand centre?

**Mr RYAN:** The Caloundra watch house is currently a place of detention. With this transition, it will remain a place of detention. When you have stronger laws around putting more young offenders in custody, you need capacity to put those young people in custody. This is one part of increasing capacity for detention space for young people, one of a number—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Next to a school.

**CHAIR:** Please allow the minister to answer the question.

**Mr RYAN:** It is currently a place of detention.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** A watch house is different to a jail.

**Mr RYAN:** It is a place of detention.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Not for young offenders it's not!

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, young offenders can be held in a watch house.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** But they are not. It is your policy not to hold young offenders in watch houses. You changed the rule 12 months ago, Minister.

**Mr RYAN:** There are young people held in watch houses all the time.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Really? Against your own policy?

**Mr RYAN:** No. There are young people held in watch houses all the time as part of normal processing that goes along with the arrest of that young person—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** *Four Corners* will be interested in that.

**Mr RYAN:** It is general practice; it is not a secret.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** But it is Labor government policy not to have children in watch houses and you have just submitted to this committee that they are held in watch houses?

**Mr RYAN:** That is incorrect.

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, Minister. Can you not argue? This is not a place for debate. Please stop the debate.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I agree; just getting to the truth Mr Chair and we are not getting the truth.

**CHAIR:** Do not argue with me, member for Kawana.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am not, but I will have a say on this committee, Mr Chair, like every other—

**CHAIR:** May I remind the member for Kawana, you are here at the invitation of the committee and that invitation can be withdrawn at any time. Minister, I interrupted you, I am not sure whether you had more to add.

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, absolutely. It is normal practice for young people to be held in watch houses for a short period of time. That has always been the practice. In fact, there are six young people in custody in watch houses right now for short periods. That is for general processing. They get arrested, they go to the watch house pending their first court appearance. If the court chooses to remand them in custody they go back to the watch house pending transfer to a detention centre. That is what always happens.

There are two young people in the Cairns watch house right now; there is one in the Brisbane watch house; there is one in the Pine Rivers watch house; one at the Maroochydore watch house; one in the Mackay watch house; one in the Mount Isa watch house. They have all been in there for only a short time, but that is the usual practice. You get arrested, go to the watch house, go to court. If you are remanded, you go back to the watch house and then you are transferred to the detention centre. For the member to say that the Caloundra watch house has not been a place of detention for young people is incorrect. That would have happened from time to time.

**Mrs GERBER:** Mr Chair, I will hand over to the member for Burdekin for a further question.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to page 2 of the SDS and specifically staffing and the recent finding by the Hon. Justice Boddice—and I have some copies here of his judgement—against you, the commissioner. They found you failed to act lawfully when appointing 26 police to the Senior Executive Service level of inspector. Do you intend to set aside those appointments and undertake the selection process again?

**CHAIR:** Commissioner, before you answer that question: member for Burdekin, can you satisfy the committee that that is not something that is still before an appeal court?

**Mr LAST:** The decision has been handed down.

**Mrs GERBER:** It has been made.

**Mr LAST:** I am happy to table the decision.

**Mrs GERBER:** There is no appeal process. It is a judicial review. The sub judice rule is not offended.

**CHAIR:** No, I just wanted to check. I understand, Commissioner, that the matter is—

**Commissioner Carroll:** Yes. Member, I will give you a fulsome answer on that. In November 2019 the Queensland Police Service conducted an internal recruitment process to identify potential appointments to positions at the rank of inspector of police. Short-listing and assessment centres were outsourced to Hudson and a panel selected a number of people who were recommended for interview. These interviews were conducted and obviously police officers were appointed to various rank of inspector. In July 2020 the commissioners for police reviews recommended that the commissioner set aside the appointments of those officers. However, I sought independent legal advice from two QCs and I confirmed the decision of the panel and did not follow the commissioners for police service reviews' recommendations on that legal advice.

Judicial proceedings were commenced by an unsuccessful applicant seeking various declarations and orders and efforts to settle the proceedings without litigation by parties were unsuccessful. Despite the inabilities of the parties to resolve the proceedings without litigation, the commissioner had already commenced a review of the selection process in consultation with respective unions. The judicial review proceeded to trial where the court confirmed that the failure of the panel to assess merit to a particular police officer position as opposed to generically appoint to a rank was an error in law. With regard to past practices, myself and many others were appointed to a rank and then offered a position. What the court found is that section 5 of the act says that police officer positions should be advertised and that we should be appointing people to a position. There was no direction by the court to vacate those positions. It was actually done in good faith and on good advice. This practice

has been in place for some 20 years and that is how even I and many of my colleagues were actually promoted. However, having regard to the legal advice, which is administrative law obviously, we are now working with the unions to make sure that any future promotions are actually to police officer positions rather than to a rank and then allocated to a position.

**Mr LAST:** So those appointments will not be overturned?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Those appointments will stand.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, can you confirm then that one of the successful applicants under that scheme was a Mr Simon Tayler, who was a Labor candidate in the seat of Mount Isa in the 2015 Queensland election? I have copies here, Mr Chair, that I am happy to table.

**Commissioner Carroll:** I can confirm that Simon Tayler was one of the selected members—that is correct—promoted to the rank of inspector.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, the Queensland Police Service strategic review, the Greenfield review, states that the current computer-aided dispatch system contract expires in June 2022. Commissioner, where is the funding in the budget for a new CAD system?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I will comment broadly about CAD before we go to government to have the discussion. We are having discussion amongst a number of agencies—myself, QFES and QAS—in relation to what the future of CAD looks like. There are many ways of doing CAD business, and I need to explain this before we talk about budget. You can have one platform and a number of agencies work on that platform or you can have an individual platform—an individual CAD. We are in the middle of those discussions at the moment, the reason being that I think many people think that QFES, QAS and QPS have very similar businesses and we can all use the same CAD. We cannot and we are about to make a decision with those two other agencies as to whether we go alone in our own CAD systems, but those decisions have not been made yet. Why I am telling you that is because it will be very different in respect of what we seek in terms of budget.

**Mr LAST:** Given that the Victorian government paid \$42 million for their system last financial year, do you have any idea of the anticipated cost of Queensland's new system?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I do not have an anticipated cost because it will vary depending on how we progress with this with the other agencies, but I can confidently say that CAD systems are quite expensive. Depending on the design and the technology, they are quite substantial in terms of budget.

**Mr LAST:** The Greenfield review says that the current system is considered a legacy system. Are you happy that we are now using an outdated and unsupported system given that it is a legacy system?

**Commissioner Carroll:** The system is still supported, but we recognise that we need a new CAD system. We recognise that in the future there is a lot of new technology out there and we need to do business very differently. We certainly recognise that. Whilst it is a legacy, it certainly does not mean that it is not functional. It is very functional, but certainly the future is very different in terms of CAD.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Commissioner.

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

**Ms BOLTON:** Yes. Minister, with the continued increase in dangerous driving and extreme behaviours along Teewah Beach as well as crimes in our community, will any of the additional just over 2,000 police personnel be placed either in Cooloola or Noosa to address this urgent situation?

**Mr RYAN:** I recognise your strong advocacy, firstly, for your community about road safety, particularly dangerous driving in those areas that you have highlighted. You have some, for want of a better description, idiots who race up and down the beach and also go through those national park areas causing all sorts of grief for other residents and people who want to visit those special places, so I acknowledge your efforts in that advocacy. I also acknowledge the recent efforts of the Queensland Police Service which has had a number of successful operations using the new high-tech equipment that the Queensland Police Service has been provided around detecting hooning to support convictions and to support the issue of infringement notices like our new high-tech cameras which have the long-range lenses and also drones. We are using drones now to covertly and overtly monitor people who are engaging in hooning behaviour. That is important because it complements the new reverse onus laws that we have where the owner of the vehicle can be deemed to be the driver unless they can prove otherwise. That is a bit of a game changer and already I am hearing from police about how that is assisting them with apprehending those offenders who are committing those particular hooning offences.

When it comes to police resources, I will pass to the commissioner because I do respect that it is her decision about where policing resources are allocated and when. However, we are supporting the Police Commissioner with extra resources. In fact, we are one year into our five-year commitment around an extra 2,025 police personnel and for your area, which is the North Coast Region, there is a minimum extra 150 police who will be deployed to the North Coast Region. Commissioner, I will pass over to you to talk a bit more about how you make decisions about allocating resources.

**Commissioner Carroll:** Member, a sincere thank you for your question. I think the minister has probably adequately answered it, but certainly there is growth for each region—150—and some of that will come to your part of the world at Noosa. We look at demand obviously of crime, demographics, growth areas, so it will be different in each region and, in fact, it may be different for Caloundra and Noosa into the future. But I can say you are well resourced certainly in terms of QLITE devices, body worn videos, the covert cameras that the minister was speaking about in terms of that offending behaviour. We have very good science now that looks at demand. In the next three, four years there will be definitely an increase of resources, in particular staff numbers, in the North Coast area.

**CHAIR:** Does the member for Traeger have a question?

**Mr KATTER:** Do we have someone from Weapons Licensing there, Mr Chair?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Chair, we have someone from Weapons Licensing and we also have the deputy commissioner.

**CHAIR:** Would the member for Traeger mind if we went to the member for Maiwar while the person that you have requested is brought into the room?

**Mr RYAN:** Point of order, Chair, while we get that organised. Whilst I will obviously support getting a fulsome answer for the member for Traeger, I note that the standing orders provide the question must be of me or the commissioner, not of anyone else, unless we choose to call that person forward. I might be able to provide the member with a better answer.

**CHAIR:** Member for Traeger, would you like to put your question to the minister or the commissioner?

**Mr KATTER:** I understand that. That is more than reasonable. Perhaps I will put the question directly to you, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Could I clarify that you would like to put your question to the minister or the commissioner?

**Mr KATTER:** The minister, please. Minister, will you acknowledge the significant rise in ratio of applications for firearm renewals for approved versus not approved within the last 12 months?

**Mr RYAN:** The last data that I had we provided in a response, and I think it was a response to your colleague, the member for Hinchinbrook, but I will get the exact detail in a moment. The information that I have is that we have not seen a significant increase in the data around the matter you refer to, but I am happy to invite Deputy Commissioner Linford to confirm that. She is the deputy commissioner in charge of the weapons licensing area and she can provide that extra detail and confirmation.

**Deputy Commissioner Linford:** What I can tell you is that on average roughly each week we get around just under 1,800 different types of applications and that is made up of new licence applications, renewal applications and permits to acquire. COVID has shown some increase in some of those applications and it is not unique just to weapons applications. We have seen that in terms of jet skis, for instance, we have seen that in terms of other things that people have been spending their money on since they have not been able to travel. We have seen an increase in those applications, not significant increases but certainly some increases.

**Mr KATTER:** Following on from that, Minister, there have been reports to me that issues that were never issues before on a fit-and-proper person test in the second part of the act are now appearing, and you may confirm this through the deputy commissioner. Are you saying that there has been no change in attitude towards that fit-and-proper person test that has triggered the rise in rejection?

**Mr RYAN:** I have my weapons advisory forum and engage, as you know, very regularly with stakeholders and we have a very good working relationship, very open and frank relationship, around talking through issues that stakeholders face and the industry more broadly. Yes, this has been raised a couple of times following the audit report and there have been, of course, some collaborative efforts around making sure the framework has certainty, and that was something that stakeholders have raised—they want certainty from the framework—but also making sure that decision-making is transparent and accountable.



I will in a couple of moments ask the deputy commissioner to add a bit more to that, but I did just want to come back to the question on notice that I was referring to before around the data. Apologies to the member for Hinchinbrook, it was actually the member for Mirani and it was question on notice No. 329 of 2021 where there was a question asked about the appeals relating to weapons licensing matters. The appeals, those lodged in 2021, are 87 so not an extraordinary number and, as the deputy commissioner confirmed, consistent with previous years, but, Deputy Commissioner, I will ask you to add a little bit more around those processes around deciding weapons licences.

**Deputy Commissioner Linford:** The QAO report did come back with 13 recommendations for us to look at. As a consequence of that I have set up a steering committee to oversee different activities that we can do to implement and address the concerns that were raised in the QAO report. That includes including a weapons licensing advisory group. We have three prominent members from the firearms community who sit on that committee and are there specifically to help advise us and work through the activities we will do to address the QAO report. One of those is around fit-and-proper person. The QAO recommendations really asked us to focus on three things, that is who can access firearms—that is the fit-and-proper person test—monitoring and compliance and then looking at the regulatory framework for dealers and firearm movements.

In terms of fit-and-proper person, we have not made any significant changes about that. Basically, our customer service officers who work in Weapons Licensing have a matrix which they have always had that gives them some sort of consistent basis on which to make decisions around who was a fit-and-proper person. They then refer that on to an authorising officer who will then check the recommendations that they have made and make a determination as to whether or not that person should be provided that weapons licence. We have not seen a big change in that, but I do have in front of me, if it is helpful, numbers of revocations that have occurred since we have had this matrix in place and the guidelines that we have in place for our weapons licensing people.

**CHAIR:** Member for Traeger, is that the information you want, because I am conscious of time?

**Mr KATTER:** Definitely, if that is available to me.

**Mr RYAN:** For the sake of time as well, I am happy to arrange a meeting with the member for Traeger and the deputy commissioner at a future time if that helps.

**CHAIR:** I will let the deputy commissioner finish her answer. Sorry to interrupt.

**Deputy Commissioner Linford:** Revocations, for example, I have the figures in front of me until 26 July of this year so I can tell you for this year we have had 421 revocations to that point. In 2020 it was 627, in 2019 it was 564, in 2018 it was 524. So it is not a significant jump but, yes, there has been some increase, but not extensive, and I think that shows that we really are doing that balance between what is in the community interest to keep the community safe and taking into account those recommendations of the Queensland Audit Office report.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I have a question for the commissioner in relation to the *Legal observer report: policing of the land forces protests*. I have a copy here, but I understand you have been provided a copy of that report; is that correct?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I have been given a brief of the report, but I do not have the full report.

**Mr BERKMAN:** You have not read it, but you have been briefed?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Yes.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Commissioner, what have been the outcomes of any investigation into the complaints arising from the policing at Land Forces, as highlighted in this report?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Member, can you just bear with me?

**Mr BERKMAN:** While that is being considered, I will seek leave to table a copy of this report. I have additional copies.

**CHAIR:** We will have to deal with the tabling of the report during the break.

**Mr BERKMAN:** That is no problem at all.

**Mr RYAN:** Chair, while some information is being looked up to answer that question, the commissioner was going to come back to some of the questions that the member for Burdekin asked.

**CHAIR:** Certainly.

**Mr RYAN:** There are about three questions that we can answer.

**Commissioner Carroll:** There were a couple of questions that I had to come back on. First of all, when was I initially notified about the use of the watch house in Caloundra? We were specifically notified by Youth Justice on 17 June re the Caloundra watch house. This was following officer-level

consideration for a period of about 12 months. A formal approach, after those officer-level conversations, was made to the QPS on 27 April 2021 and there was a site visit on 19 May 2021. Hopefully that answers that question.

The next answer is for the member for Burdekin. We have tried to do a little bit of work in this space because I know this question came up before. We cannot give a value of property as to the amount of damage that was caused to various vehicles et cetera. It is very difficult for us to estimate the value of cars et cetera.

**Mr LAST:** But that figure would be documented on a QP9.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burdekin, allow the commissioner to answer the question without interrupting.

**Commissioner Carroll:** Not in all cases. It depends what the situation is. On QP9s we can ask for restitution et cetera. I do not know if it would give you an accurate answer in relation to what you are asking.

**Mr RYAN:** The other question was the first question about the youth justice data.

**Mr LAST:** And the reoffending.

**Commissioner Carroll:** On the last question, youth reoffending data is actually held by Youth Justice in terms of youth offending. It is held by them. We can either ask them or it can be referred to Youth Justice.

**CHAIR:** Commissioner, I do not think there is a need. You have answered the question fulsomely. Member for Maiwar, I am not sure where we were at. Are we waiting for something?

**Mr BERKMAN:** The question I asked that the commissioner was looking for information on was—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar, unless the question is ready to be answered, I am going to go to government questions and then come back to you once there is an indication that the answer is available.

**Commissioner Carroll:** Member, the answer is available.

**Ms BOLTON:** Mr Chair, am I able to ask my other question, please? It can be taken on notice for speed.

**CHAIR:** Member for Noosa, please ask your question, but this will be the last question other than coming back to the member for Maiwar.

**Ms BOLTON:** My question is to the minister in response to question on notice No. 11, referring to the increase in the state budget for the SES of seven per cent. How much of that seven per cent will be dedicated to training initiatives for minimal training requirements? We have volunteers who make up part of that 32 per cent but did not meet those requirements last year. They missed out and they really want to get that training. How much of the seven per cent will be dedicated to that?

**Mr RYAN:** It is an increase, but in the interests of time I am happy to answer that question in the QFES section later on.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, Sandy. I will answer it later.

**CHAIR:** I will now hand over to the member for Cooper to ask a question.

**Ms BUSH:** I refer to actions the Queensland Police Service is taking to protect children from predators and predatory behaviours. Will the minister please update the committee on the combined efforts of the Queensland Police Service, including members of Taskforce Argos, in protecting and saving the lives of children in Queensland and around the world?

**Mr RYAN:** This is a very important topic and quite topical. It is one where the Queensland Police Service actually leads the world and has a global impact. Certainly we see that manifest in the calibre of the investigators who make up the Queensland Police Service Crime and Intelligence Command's Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, which includes the world-famous Taskforce Argos. Those specialist officers are responsible for the investigation of organised paedophilia and child sex exploitation.

I am advised that in the last financial year detectives from Taskforce Argos, supported by their colleagues across the organisation, arrested 51 offenders on 401 charges and assisted with the removal of 18 children from harm. Taskforce Argos has referred 540 files for investigation within Queensland and other interstate and international jurisdictions. The Taskforce Argos team includes two

highly regarded and internationally recognised experts. They work with a team that identifies the child victims in images seized from offenders. It is an extraordinary job. You can imagine how confronting analysing those images would be. Those victim identification specialists have contributed to the identification, location and removal of 774 children nationally and internationally from potentially harmful situations by investigating seized data from over 150 million media files. Their operations have been highly successful.

Just this week a successful investigation concluded in the arrest of a suspected prolific child sex abuser in Guatemala. That investigation was supported by Interpol. Think about that for a moment. We all love Queensland. We all think Queensland is an exceptional place. That members of the Queensland Police Service are involved in investigations with Interpol that led to the arrest of a sex offender in Guatemala is quite extraordinary. I am advised our detectives had combed through a substantial amount of child sex abuse material produced by that single offender over a 10-year period. Taskforce Argos investigators had been monitoring that offender and new evidence uncovered by Taskforce Argos led to the identification of the location of the child sex offender.

In addition, as part of an operation called Operation Walwa, detectives from the Crime and Intelligence Command, including from the Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group and local child protection investigation units, executed search warrants across Queensland recently to track down people who were paying to access child abuse material online. That led to five offenders being arrested on 30 charges. Detectives from Taskforce Argos also identified a male person posting concerning online images of a five-year-old girl. That offender lives in Germany. Taskforce Argos tracked him down and he was arrested by German authorities. He was convicted and sentenced over the sexual abuse of two girls aged three and five.

Taskforce Argos is making a very real difference here and around the world. As I said, it must be confronting work and the effort and contribution of those detectives and the entire team should be acknowledged. It also builds on our very strong laws around child sex offenders—laws that were backed in with extra funding. I note that the tough laws that we introduced only a couple of years ago—with a funding boost of more than \$27 million for more monitoring and more enforcement of offenders who are on the Child Protection Offender Registry—has actually led to additional offenders being identified, arrested and charged. In fact, since these new laws came in a few years ago with the extra funding, 210 child sex offenders have been charged with 647 offences. Also complementing those tough laws were the offender prohibition orders where police, if necessary, can seek orders from the court that impose greater obligations and greater restrictions on child sex offenders.

I note as well the boost that the Commissioner announced with me last year around the number of specialist personnel, the Child Protection Offender Register coordinators, essentially doubling the number, going from 22 to 41. I am very pleased that the vast majority of those are in place, and all of them will be in place by the end of this year. We also supported them with a boost of an extra 15 police vehicles—I know that was important to you, Commissioner—to support those Child Protection Offender Register coordinators with those extra vehicles. All in all, this shows our strong commitment to keeping some of the most vulnerable Queenslanders safe, some of the most vulnerable people in the world safe, and that is our children.

To highlight the outstanding work of the Queensland Police Service, particularly those specialists within the Crime and Intelligence Command and Taskforce Argos, I seek leave to table a recent newspaper article outlining some of their good work.

**CHAIR:** Any applications to have documents tabled will have to be done in the break.

**Ms BUSH:** Commissioner, will you please advise what policing actions are being taken to better protect and support victims of sexual violence?

**Commissioner Carroll:** The Queensland Police Service, as you know, will always protect the victim, put their needs first and foremost and condemn the perpetrators of sexual violence. That is why the QPS is delivering victim-centric support for victims of domestic violence. Their needs and concerns come first. In a first for Queensland, the QPS has developed a sexual violence response strategy 2021-2023. The strategy is in its finalisation stage. Its aim is to empower the community and to reduce harm through proactive engagement, education, and by providing enhanced access to victim support services. Police are also developing an online sexual assault reporting form as an alternate avenue for victims to report sexual violence.

For the past 12 months, which was also new in the state of Queensland, we have had dedicated police sexual liaison officers working in both Townsville and Logan. An evaluation of that has found that to be truly successful so that now will be rolled out to other parts of the state.

In other policing initiatives to protect and support victims, the QPS has partnered with the University of Queensland in the delivery of a trauma-informed training program to assist police in their dealings with victims of sexual assault. An overarching sexual violence prevention working group is in place to lead and inform the overall police response to sexual violence. A joint steering committee with police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions assesses and identifies key issues to ensure successful prosecutions.

Police investigators work closely with non-government agencies and academic experts to ensure they continue to receive victim-centric training to better protect and better support victims through the criminal justice process.

There is a lot of work being done in this area and we are extraordinarily passionate about it. The most important aspect for the future is that it really is about the victim and that victim-centric approach.

**Mr HUNT:** Commissioner, could you please outline the policing infrastructure and resources underway and planned for my local community in the electorate of Caloundra to meet and maintain safety?

**Mr POWELL:** Point of order, Chair: he could just read the media release that was put out about 10 minutes ago to save us all time.

**CHAIR:** Member for Glass House.

**Mr HUNT:** Chair, I will proceed with the question.

**CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**Mr POWELL:** It has quotes from him in it.

**CHAIR:** Member for Glass House, I ask you to stop being disruptive. Member for Caloundra, please repeat the question.

**Mr HUNT:** Commissioner, could you please outline the policing infrastructure and resources underway and planned for my local community in the electorate of Caloundra to meet and maintain community safety?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I had the pleasure of being in Caloundra just a couple of weeks ago to talk to the staff, but I also took the opportunity to go into the southern Caloundra area to get a brief on the growth in that area particularly over the next few years. The approved strength of police division servicing Caloundra is 59. In addition to police servicing the divisions, there is always the support of people at the district level and central functions, such as Criminal Investigation Branch, Child Protection and Investigation Unit, Road Policing and Police Prosecutions. There will be a gradual increase in that area and it is planned that we will increase staffing by five police officers in 2021-22, and a further five in 2022-23.

The resources in that part of the world are 362 QLITE devices, 406 body worn video devices, 250 new model Tasers, 79 vehicles which are owned by the district, and five vessels. The area is also serviced by a new mobile police beat; we call it our police station on wheels. It is flexible, it is agile and it addresses issues of crime where we need to have it. It really is a new and modern way of doing business. The Baringa area and areas south of Caloundra, as we know, are growing rapidly and this mobile police beat will give it better capability and capacity to engage with the local community. As the Sunshine Coast continues to grow, we will constantly evaluate the success of this strategy and get feedback from both our people and the community.

The resourcing and development model is scheduled to be reviewed in September-October 2021 as part of our service realignment program. You would have noticed some benefits from that hopefully already with the new Sunshine Coast region, which I have instigated from 1 July. That has already brought a lot more attention and focus to policing issues in that area.

As a part of the government's commitment to the \$300 million police infrastructure pipeline, there is a plan for a new police facility to be constructed at Caloundra South—the Aura area which I just visited recently. We have already started that piece of work in earnest. In fact, although the road is not quite there yet in terms of infrastructure, we have already looked at where that will be built with our partner agencies. I have asked that the due date for that to be brought forward as well, so construction of the new facility is currently expected to be completed by mid 2024.

**CHAIR:** Before we move on—I am conscious of time—are we able to answer the member for Maiwar's question?

**Mr RYAN:** The Commissioner does not have the information at the moment. If we cannot answer it by the end of the day, I am happy to take it on notice and we will come back to you.

**CHAIR:** Again, I am conscious of time. We have time for possibly one more question, with seven minutes left. I understand the minister would like to make a closing statement. No? I ask the member for Caloundra to ask the next question, please.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, given the covert nature of certain aspects of policing, particularly in relation to outlaw motorcycle and counterterrorism, will the minister please outline how the Queensland Police Service undertakes these tasks in keeping with the legislation?

**Mr RYAN:** You are right: some of these investigations are very complicated and involve significant skill and expertise—very specialised skill. Obviously some of those investigations require quite extraordinary powers—assumed identities and controlled operations. These are things which you often see in Hollywood movies about police being undercover, but they are things that are happening here in Queensland and for the right reasons—to target some of the most serious criminals in our community and to get the evidence required so that we can bring them before the court and get successful convictions and put them in jail for a long time. Police here in Queensland take and use those extraordinary powers very seriously, respectfully and lawfully. It is always very important to have those checks and balances in place. The police are very serious about using these laws appropriately.

Rightly, with checks and balances, there will be from time to time the need to have transparency around the use of those powers. Every year the Police Service is required to provide a report to me which then I need to table in parliament. This report that I will be tabling today—I will seek leave to table it—provides a summary of the grant of authorities required to acquire or use an assumed identity for the purpose of an investigation or intelligence gathering in relation to criminal activity.

I am pleased to say that the report provided to me shows that there is no material that should be excluded from the report pursuant to the act. The report contains the number of authorities granted, a general description of the activities undertaken by authorised persons, the number of applications refused and a statement about whether or not any fraud or other unlawful activity was identified by an audit or any other information relating to authorities, assumed identities or the administration of the legislation.

What the report does not contain—and it is important for me to highlight this—as you would expect and as the public would reasonably expect, is any information that could endanger one of our officer's lives, the safety of our officers or prejudice an investigation that might still be ongoing or undermine any potential successful prosecution. Chair, I understand you may need to deal with this in the break, but I seek leave to table the annual report for assumed identity authorisation and use.

**Commissioner Carroll:** Chair, can I correct the record on the sexual offence reporting where I indicated that police are developing an online sexual assault reporting form? It actually has been developed. I just wanted to correct the record. It has been extraordinarily successful. As of 31 May 2021, Policelink have recorded a total of 1,061 sexual assault reports—739 by phone and 322 online.

**CHAIR:** There may be questions that were taken on notice.


**Mr RYAN:** Not that I am aware of, Chair. The only one that I think is outstanding is the question from the member for Maiwar. I have made an undertaking that if I cannot answer it by the end of this session I will try to do so by the end of the day.

**CHAIR:** You did say that, Minister. Is there anything that you would like to say in the last minute, Minister, before we close this session?

**Mr RYAN:** I will take the opportunity to thank the Queensland Police Service broadly for their work every day to keep the community safe. It is a huge organisation—over 12,000 sworn officers and many thousands of unsworn officers who support community safety every single day. There is also a lot of work that goes into the preparation for estimates. I thank the commissioner and her office, the deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners who have been working very hard but also specifically those from the Queensland Police Service estimates team—Inspector Tania Nelson, Margaret Cameron, director Belinda Dryden and acting executive Paul Friedman. I thank them for their efforts and commend them for the great work that they have done.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The hearing will resume at 3 pm with the examination of estimates for the corrective services portfolio area.

**Proceedings suspended from 2.45 pm to 3.00 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Corrective Services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The visiting member is Mr Dale Last, the member for Burdekin. Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement, after which there will be questions?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, Chair. At 12.01 am on 1 July this year Queensland became one of the few jurisdictions in the world to completely transition from privately operated correctional facilities. Following the Crime and Corruption Commission's Taskforce Flaxton report this government determined that eliminating privately operated prisons would reduce corruption risk, protect jobs, support officer safety and bring about better outcomes in the criminal justice system. It was the largest and most complex undertaking in the department's 170-year history and it was successfully achieved—despite the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19—on time and on budget. I am told there is no other example either in Australia or internationally where operational prisons were transitioned from private to public operation at the same time. It is outstanding work by Queensland Corrective Services, particularly the specialist team established to run the project, Operation Certitude, which was superbly led by Deputy Commissioner James Koulouris. I commend Deputy Commissioner Koulouris and his team on their outstanding work.

Jobs, safety and security will receive a significant boost in this \$1 billion plus budget for Queensland Corrective Services. In addition, we are investing \$320 million in the government's second biggest infrastructure project: the new expanded 1,000-bed Southern Queensland Correctional Centre at Gatton. This project will transform the region with more than 400 construction jobs and 500 permanent ongoing jobs when the facility is operational in 2023-24. Capacity will be further boosted with \$8 million this financial year to install additional bunk beds in high-security correctional centres right across Queensland, and \$2.4 million is being allocated for business cases to examine and explore options to meet future capacity needs. This work is important for continued investment in correctional capacity. Measures to support staff safety include ongoing additional training and the rollout of additional safety equipment to ensure Queensland Corrective Services staff remain among the most highly trained and best resourced in Australasia.

The expansion of the Capricornia Correctional Centre is nearing completion. As part of this expansion project QCS is now undertaking a refurbishment of the existing oldest cells to ensure they remain fit for purpose and to extend the life of that infrastructure. Over the coming months as these refurbishments are completed and auxiliary services brought online the prisoner population at Capricornia will increase in a staged and safe manner, as happens with all prison commissionings, with full utilisation realised by the end of this year.

Chair, we will always protect the victims of crime and condemn the perpetrators. When it comes to parole let me be very clear: parole is not an automatic entitlement of prisoners and it never has been. Community safety must always be paramount and must always be prioritised. That is why this government is bringing in tough new laws around parole. Today I can announce extra resourcing for a fifth operating temporary team and the continued operation of a fourth operating temporary team for the patrol board until June next year.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to former commissioner Peter Martin, who retired in July. Commissioner Martin was instrumental in the establishment of Queensland Corrective Services as a stand-alone department—an historic development that is appropriate given the critical role that Corrective Services plays in keeping the community safe. I thank Peter for his service.

I also place on record my congratulations to our new commissioner, Paul Stewart. Commissioner Stewart is a longstanding and respected member of the police and corrections sector, including 10 years as assistant commissioner at the Queensland Police Service and more recently as deputy commissioner of Community Corrections and specialist operations at Queensland Corrective Services. Welcome, Commissioner Stewart.

I also pay tribute to the thousands of Queensland Corrective Services staff who go to work every day to keep their fellow Queenslanders safe and to make Queensland a safer place. Their work is truly inspirational, and we are grateful to all of them for their service.

**CHAIR:** Deputy Chair?

**Mrs GERBER:** Thank you, Chair. I will pass to the member for Glass House, who has the first question.

**Mr POWELL:** Thank you, Mr Chair. My question is to Commissioner Stewart. Commissioner, are there any youth detention facilities, remand facilities or prisons in Queensland that are situated in the main street of a town, particularly a tourist town like Caloundra?

**Mr RYAN:** Point of order, Chair: youth detention centres are obviously within another portfolio area, so I would seek clarity that the commissioner will answer within the portfolio of corrections, which is prisons.

**CHAIR:** Proceed, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. In relation to our facilities, we have 11 high-security facilities around Queensland in various locations: in the north there is Lotus Glen at Mareeba down to Townsville, which is out at Stuart; Capricornia, which is at Etna Creek; Maryborough, which is outside Maryborough; and also Woodford, Wolston, the Brisbane Correctional Centre, Arthur Gorrie now, and a number of prison farms around the state.

**Mr POWELL:** It is fair to say that none of those are in the middle of town?

**Commissioner Stewart:** And Helana Jones, of course, which is one of our facilities in Albion, which is—

**Mr RYAN:** In the middle of town.

**Commissioner Stewart:**—in a suburban area; that is correct. We also have Community Corrections offices around the state, of course, where offenders report which are in suburban areas as well.

**Mrs GERBER:** The member for Burdekin has a question through you, Mr Chair.

**Mr LAST:** My question is to the commissioner. I refer to the capital program, page 2 of the SDS. Commissioner, how many double-up bunk beds will be provided under the \$8 million project?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. The bunk beds are a very critical part of our infrastructure. We have already built 2,000 over recent times. There has been an announcement that we have the \$8 million for bunk beds for this financial year—

**Mr LAST:** So the answer is 2,000?

**Commissioner Stewart:** No, we have built 2,000 already—

**Mr LAST:** How many double-up bunk beds will be provided under the \$8 million?

**CHAIR:** Member for Burdekin, can I ask you to—

**Mr LAST:** I am clarifying the question, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:**—allow the commissioner to finish answering the question. If you then have a follow-up question ask it then, but do not interrupt him while he is answering the question.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Our intention for the money is to build 500 bunk beds, but of course that is a complex matter in relation to how the beds are built and what the infrastructure is like in the existing facilities. The intention is to build a further 500.

**Mr LAST:** Page 2 of the SDS shows an increase of 344 full-time staff this financial year. Are the staff who have transitioned from the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre included in that 344?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I apologise. Could you ask the question again from the date?

**Mr LAST:** The SDS shows an increase of 344 full-time equivalent staff this financial year. Are the staff who have transitioned from the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre included in that number of 344?

**Commissioner Stewart:** That would be correct, yes. The number of staff who have transitioned from Southern Queensland would be included in that.

**Mr LAST:** Just to clarify, there is really only an additional 104 staff?

**Commissioner Stewart:** That would be for this financial year at this point in time, but of course that changes over the financial year in relation to assistance, in relation to double-up funding that may come in and FTE over the period of the next 12 months.

**Mr RYAN:** Commissioner, is it worth explaining how the double-up funding actually is scaled—

**Mrs GERBER:** Point of order, Chair.

**Mr LAST:** You do not get to ask questions.

**Mr RYAN:** No, it is about staffing.

**Mr LAST:** You will have your chance.

**CHAIR:** Can we move on to the next question?

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, given that only 136 new custodial corrections officers graduated in the 2020-21 financial year, how do you intend to train those staff this year, given the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Can I start by saying what a wonderful job the people out at the Queensland Corrective Services Academy do and the amount of training they put through and what they have been able to achieve during the COVID period. They have been able to adapt their training measures to be able to work with the COVID environment and to be able to continue on with all of our tactical training and the training that we are doing. We will be able to meet any of the requirements or targets for training our custodial officers.

The other thing is that we train our officers throughout the state at all of the centres. We have training courses and graduations so we are able to train fundamentally at 11 centres throughout the state and also at the academy if we require it. We have significant contingency and capacity to be able to deliver on the requirements of training our custodial officers.

I did not have the opportunity to say this before, but can I acknowledge the excellent work of our custodial officers who work in a very complex and dynamic environment every day for Queenslanders, keeping the community safe and keeping our centres safe. They do an excellent and remarkable job.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to page 1 of the SDS which states that the vision of Queensland Corrective Services is to enhance the safety of Queenslanders. At the last estimates hearing, your predecessor advised that there were 40 recommendations of the Sofronoff review that were still in progress. Can you advise whether any of those 40 recommendations have since been fully implemented and if so which ones?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes. The Sofronoff review, the Queensland Parole System Review, is one of the very important programs of work that our organisation has been working on. At the moment, we have closed 53 recommendations in relation to the Sofronoff review. We have delivered a significant body of work, including the establishment of the Parole Board and including an offender management framework. We are working currently on an end-to-end case management program, the case management unit. We have piloted the first case management unit in Townsville. We have also established a specialised clinical services area which addresses high-harm and high-need people. We have enhanced our re-entry programs. We have also enhanced our alcohol and other drug programs and also a whole raft of matters.

In relation to the recommendations, if I may, as I said we have closed 53, which leaves 36 recommendations. Of those 36 recommendations, 16 are substantially completed and very close to being completed. We are working with other agencies and partners in relation to the others. I can go through any of the recommendations—

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Commissioner. Can I ask if recommendation 81 is complete?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Recommendation 81 states—

Queensland Corrective Services and the Parole Board should implement strong systems and accountability measures to ensure that information is available to the Victims Register to provide to victims at the earliest opportunity.

It is in progress. There is work that has been done. The recommendation will be considered complete when there has been an internal review into the systems and accountability measures. We have done a lot of work obviously with the Parole Board Queensland and with the victims register. We have made enhancements to the victims register over the last years, including the ability for victims of domestic and family violence to be able to register on the victims register.

**Mr LAST:** Do you have a time frame for when that recommendation will be finalised?

**Commissioner Stewart:** The time frame in relation to this body of work will be that we will report by 30 June next year on all of the actions and activities in relation to the QPSR program.

**Mr LAST:** What about recommendation 84? Is that complete?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Recommendation 84 states—

The Assessment and Parole Unit should liaise with Queensland Police Service and investigate whether an offender had a DVO at the time of, or around the time of, entering custody. If an offender has been the subject of a DVO as a respondent or a perpetrator, the Parole Unit must—

Then it lists a range of things. This is another piece of work that is in progress. This is part of the work around the case management unit that we are working through the pilot in Townsville. Can I add to that though that we have done a significant amount of work in relation to domestic and family violence within the organisation and our response to that. We have a project running at the moment within the QPSR that is going to bring domestic and family violence order information into the QCS—something which we have not had before. We will be obtaining that information from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.



**Mrs GERBER:** May I ask a follow-up question to the time frame that you just gave and seek a point of clarity. You have just said that there is a time frame for which you can report but there is no time frame for completion. Is that correct?

**Commissioner Stewart:** At this time we aim to complete the QPSR program, all the recommendations that we can, by 30 June next year. That was the program that we were funded for for that period of time. There will be difficulty in completing all of the elements of it because they are multiagency elements, but we will continue to report on those that we close and we will continue to do everything towards that—

**Mrs GERBER:** With the aim to complete those by 30 June?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, given that one of the government's objectives on page 1 of the SDS is backing our frontline services, could you advise the anticipated cost of the Capricornia Correctional Centre workplace culture review?

**Commissioner Stewart:** At this point, we have announced that we will be doing a cultural review. At the moment that is in the market so I would not be in a position to be able to provide what the funding will be for that because we are still in the process of going to the market in order to achieve that.

**Mr LAST:** Were the results of the review into the Townsville Correctional Centre distributed to other centres and were senior departmental staff with relevant responsibility provided with copies of that review?

**Commissioner Stewart:** The Townsville review was provided back to the Townsville Correctional Centre. Out of that, a number of the recommendations that were made have been recommended—the vast number of them that were provided back to the general manager. The review for Townsville was announced in 2020 and the workplace review was conducted into the Townsville Correctional Centre. Again, the findings of the review were released in June 2020 and identified issues impacting the workplace culture of the Townsville correctional complex. A total of 18 recommendations were made relating to a range of actions to improve communication at the complex, transparency of decision-making and leadership development.

Nearly 30 actions were recommended to address officers' concerns about the culture at the complex. Apart from the finalisation of a small number of actions being implemented centrally by the QCS Academy and People Capability, all of these have been finalised. Actions taken include providing improved stability to the complex with the recruitment to a range of important positions across the leadership group and improved leadership; and development and training to better support officers. QCS continue to support staff throughout this process of change.

I add in relation to that it is not just about the Townsville centre—we did a lot of good work in relation to that and we will look at Capricornia—but it is the culture of the whole of our organisation. We continue to support our people through a whole range of processes from our People Capability Command. That includes a range of support processes that are provided to people after critical incidents and a range of processes that we will look at, including peer support for people into the future. Under Corrections 2030, which was the vision that Commissioner Martin established some years ago, the key principles fundamentally are around safety, empowerment, excellence, respect as a key principle in relation to our organisation, and accountability. We are working across the organisation and continuing to support our people across a whole range of cultural matters.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to page 3 of the SDS, which shows that the rate of every category of assault in Queensland's prisons in 2020-21 was more than triple the target. What are you doing to reduce the rates of prisoner-on-staff assaults in Queensland prisons?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. This is one area that we take extremely seriously. As I said before, Corrections 2030 fundamentally is around safety as our single and most important priority as well as the others.

In relation to safety, there is a range of things that we have done and are doing within the organisation. This includes the introduction of a new operating model in relation to operational tactics and skills that we are introducing over the next period. We had an officer safety review that we conducted to ensure that we were doing everything within the organisation to ensure the safety of our officers on the front line. As a result of the officer safety review, we have introduced the new model that we have adopted based on New Zealand and we will be rolling that out over the next period. It is a model that introduces de-escalation and engagement as well as tactical command and control. That is something that we are doing.

As an organisation we have also rolled out OC spray individually to all our prison officers in the men's system. That is something we did not have previously. We have rolled out OC spray as one of the tactical options for our people. There are also load-bearing vests; each of our officers are provided with a load-bearing vest in order to store the accoutrements they have as well as body worn cameras. We have introduced body worn cameras to assist our officers in relation to the work they do, particularly with respect to any evidence that is required to be captured in relation to anything.

From our point of view, in relation to assaults, we do everything we can to keep our centres safe, to keep all our facilities safe and the community safe. That is one of the significant areas that we focus on. No assault is acceptable. The other things that we do relate to the behaviour of prisoners in our custody. They can be breached. Of course, any assaults are referred to the Corrective Services Investigation Unit and they are investigated. Obviously if there are charges that can be laid, they will be laid. We can segregate prisoners. As I said, we can also put people on safety orders and do a whole range of things in relation to safety.

Again, I recognise the work that our people do every day out there in a very complex and dynamic environment in relation to safety. From our point of view we aim to have no assaults. In the environment that we work in with the cohort of people that we have in our custody—again, potentially people with cognitive disorders and a whole range of medical conditions—we do everything we can to ensure the safety of the centre and the safety of our officers.

**Mr LAST:** Since you have rolled out OC sprays, on how many occasions have they been used?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I do not have that information. We are in the process of establishing a mechanism to ensure that we record every presentation and every use of OC spray.

**Mr LAST:** Of the assaults that have occurred on your staff, how many at this point are unsolved or unfinalised?

**Commissioner Stewart:** In relation to every assault?

**Mr LAST:** Yes, on your staff.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Every assault that reaches the criminal threshold is reported to the Corrective Services Investigation Unit. They make a determination as to whether or not there is sufficient evidence to present that to the courts. They would have the information in relation to investigations and being in a position potentially to—

**Mr LAST:** How many of those assault matters have not been proceeded with?

**Mr RYAN:** That would be a question for the CSIU, which is in the Queensland Police Service.

**Mr LAST:** Well—

**Mr RYAN:** That is data which is not held by Queensland Corrective Services because the Corrective Services Investigation Unit is a unit within the police.

**Mr LAST:** You would have access to that information, Commissioner?

**Commissioner Stewart:** That is a matter for the Queensland Police Service. The Corrective Services Investigation Unit would hold that information.

**Mr RYAN:** This is important because it is about staff safety. Queensland Corrective Services refers all of those matters to the police, to the Corrective Services Investigation Unit, for investigation.

**Mr LAST:** Assaults are serious matters.

**Mr RYAN:** All of those matters are referred.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to staffing levels on page 2 of the SDS. How many vacancies are there currently for correctional supervisors, broken down by centre?

**Commissioner Stewart:** We have a range of vacancies across the state in relation to all positions at times obviously. We have a number of people who leave the organisation for a range of reasons. We do everything we can to fill vacancies, particularly on the front line, as quickly as we can. In terms of any vacancies on the front line that do come up, we immediately advertise those and seek to fill those positions.

In relation to supervisors specifically, Minister, that would be something that potentially we may be able to get before the end of the session through our People Capability Area. I do not have the details in relation to the specific number of supervisors across the organisation.

**Mr LAST:** We will see if we can get that before the end of today's session. Commissioner, I refer to the department's objective of safer correctional environments on page 1 of the SDS. Former Capricornia Correctional Centre employee Pat Misztal has alleged via the media that officers were

directed to ignore drug related incidents, breaches were dismissed and protocols were not adhered to. Commissioner, do our prisons have sufficient resources to enforce restrictions on illicit drugs, and what actions are taken against prisoners who do not comply with those restrictions?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Drugs are a very serious matter for us in relation to correctional centres. Any contraband obviously is a significant issue for us. We have zero tolerance in relation to the introduction of drugs and the introduction of contraband. We do a range of things in relation to operations with the Queensland Police Service. In recent times a number of drugs have been seized after attempts to bring drugs into our centres. Together with the Queensland Police Service, again, there was some excellent work. We have random and targeted drug testing of prisoners, searches of cells and prisoner mail, and security checks prior to anyone entering a correctional centre.

As at 30 June 2021 there were 4,394 incidents of contraband discovery within correctional centres. That shows the high level of work that we do in relation to detecting and finding contraband and taking action in relation to it. The Queensland Police Service—again the Corrective Services Investigation Unit—as I said, we have a number of joint investigations in relation to any intelligence that we receive around any contraband or anything that potentially could be introduced.

In relation to our people, Taskforce Flaxton—the Crime and Corruption Commission review into Queensland Corrective Services—provided us with a significant opportunity to make significant improvements in relation to how we address any potential corruption or misconduct issues. We have established a professional standards and governance unit that has excellent investigators and also an intelligence capability. We have also established a legal command to provide support to that whole process in relation to any time there is any evidence of anyone in the organisation not doing the right thing. So between the tactical work that we do in relation to drugs and having the highest possible standards for our people—again acknowledging the work that our people do every day—are matters that we take very seriously. We are very successful at keeping drugs and contraband out of our centres as much as we can.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Commissioner.

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

**Ms BOLTON:** No, Chair. Could that go to the member for Maiwar, please?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar, just before you ask your question, I want to let you know that the document that you wanted tabled has been tabled. Minister, the two documents that you asked to be tabled have also been tabled.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Good afternoon, everyone. I have a question regarding the response to question on notice No. 14 which says that there were 9,954 prisoners but, when we add up the numbers for individual facilities included in that answer, there were only 9,618 built beds in Queensland as at 30 June. Commissioner, can you confirm that that means there are at least 300 more prisoners than beds? Does this mean that those people are forced either to share a bed or sleep on the floor? What does it mean in practice?

**Commissioner Stewart:** We do have a number of people who sleep on mattresses on the floor in our centres. Again, that relates to the excellent work that we have been doing in relation to building bunk beds. Our position is that we do not want any prisoner sleeping on a mattress on the floor. At the moment, because of the high prisoner numbers that we do have, yes it is the case that we have prisoners who are sleeping on mattresses on the floor. However, as we said, over the next number of years and in the past we will have introduced 4,000 new built beds into the system—2,000 bunk beds. When the new centre at Southern Queensland opens in 2024, it will have another 1,004 beds. At the Capricornia Correctional Centre, we have undergone a significant expansion and have built 394 beds that are being commissioned at this moment. Yes, there are prisoners who are required to sleep on mattresses on the floor. Again, we are very careful to ensure that we have appropriate people doing that. In terms of the work that we are doing across bunk beds, built beds and our facilities, we do not want anyone sleeping on the floor.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you. I have a follow-on from that. One of the significant contributors to overcrowding obviously is the 4,000-plus people in prison waiting on a parole decision. I understand that that backlog has worsened even with the addition of the new operational team to consider applications. Minister, when will the KPMG review of this crisis be completed and solutions implemented coming out of that beyond a couple of new teams as mentioned in your earlier answer?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you. I note that the member may have missed what I said in my opening statement where I spoke about an additional resourcing allocation to the parole board continuing the fourth temporary operating team for 12 months and about establishing a fifth operating team. That

additional resourcing and the decision around that is independent of that KPMG report. We are yet to receive that KPMG report. I have not yet received it. I understand that Queensland Corrective Services has not received the final report. When it is received, we will obviously consider it thoroughly. I have a view that, once governments have had a chance to consider reviews thoroughly, we make a public statement about implementing any recommendations that may follow. I cannot yet give a time frame because we have not seen that report, but we are acting independently of that report anyway, noting the capacity pressures on the parole board by continuing that fourth team essentially for another 12 months and by establishing that fifth team.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Chair, with your indulgence, I have one more question?

**CHAIR:** This will be the last question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you, Chair. I have a question in relation to opioid substitution therapy and the program being delivered in collaboration with Queensland Health in Queensland prisons. Commissioner, can you tell me how many new participants are in the opioid institution therapy program from the five prisons that were included in phase 1 of that program?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for that very important question. The opioid substitution treatment program is a program that came out of the QPSR—the Sofronoff work—and is something that has been very successfully rolled out at this point in time. Again, we partner with Queensland Health in relation to that. It is a Queensland Health-led program that we provide support to at this point in time. As you said, it has been rolled out at Brisbane women's, Townsville men's and women's, Lotus Glen, Numinbah and Southern Queensland correctional centres. As at 30 June, 210 prisoners were participating in the program at those sites. The other change in relation to the program has been that long-acting injectables have started to be introduced in relation to it, which is a much safer and more effective way of running the OST program, again, through Queensland Health. We provide our support to them.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I appreciate the response. I am trying to draw out how many participants in the program are new participants in opioid substitution treatments as compared with those who entered prison while participating in one of these programs? Are those programs made available to people who have not had access or who have not been participating outside when they go into prison?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes. It is more a part for Queensland Health in relation to answering that, but we do everything that we can to support people as they come through. In relation to the numbers of people who have been in the program, that would be a matter more for Queensland Health rather than our agency to answer.

**CHAIR:** I now intend to go to government members. Member for Caloundra, can you ask your first question please?

**Mr HUNT:** I start by thanking the Commissioner and, more specifically, the men and women working in our custodial settings and in probation and parole, doing an incredibly challenging job, largely invisible to the public eye, and doing it to a very high standard. I just wanted to put that on the record. I refer to the minister's response to estimates question on notice No. 9. The minister advised that the transition to public-private prisons was one of the largest and most complex tasks undertaken within the department's 170-year history. Minister, can you advise why this was necessary and what benefits it has delivered?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, member. I am very pleased to get into some of the detail. With your indulgence, member, I thought I would close off a couple of issues mentioned previously?

**Mr HUNT:** Certainly.

**Mr RYAN:** The member for Glass House asked about the location of some of our custodial centres. I thought I would provide a little bit more context around that. In Townsville, essentially our four correctional facilities—Townsville men's, Townsville women's and the two low security facilities—are actually located right next to a school, Stuart State School. The school is closed now. It was closed by the Newman government that was going to sell it off, but for—

**Mr Powell:** So there are no kids there.

**Mr RYAN:** Essentially for 100 years that prison has been there and it has been—

**Mr POWELL:** Right, but there are no kids currently attending a school next to a remand centre.

**Mr RYAN:** For many, many, many, many years it was right next to a school. In Rockhampton it is on the highway on the main road. Helana Jones is in the middle of town at Albion and Numinbah is on the main road near a school as well. So we have correctional centres—

**Mr POWELL:** That is a great selling mark to the people of Caloundra. Well done!

**Mr RYAN:** No, I have a lot of confidence in the work that Queensland Corrective Services does around security of facilities and that is shown in its outstanding record of keeping those facilities secure. The last time someone escaped from a high-security facility in Queensland was under a National Party government. Brenden Abbott, the 'Postcard Bandit', escaped from Sir David Longland, so I have great confidence in Queensland Corrective Services. We have facilities right across the state and there has been outstanding work to keep those facilities secure.

Member for Maiwar, I was just going to close off that question from the police session. I am pleased to tell the member for Maiwar that the Queensland Police Service has received the report of the legal observer that outlined generic issues claiming to amount to improper conduct by police at the protest. However, no specific members were capable of being identified as having engaged in conduct that needed to be investigated. However, from the protest there are two separate specific complaints which have been received and these are being investigated, so that should answer the member for Maiwar's question.

Member for Caloundra, now about the exciting stuff about Queensland making history. I think it is not readily recognised by people about the history that Queensland Corrective Services has. It is one of the oldest Queensland government agencies. Its history is about 170 years old.

**Mr POWELL:** We were a prison colony.

**Mr RYAN:** It is quite extraordinary and for us to be able to say that a recent project—a recent initiative—is one of the biggest, most complex, most successful projects in that organisation's history has to be put into context. Obviously we made this decision following commentary from Taskforce Flaxton around how we can reduce corruption risk, how we can enhance custodial officer safety, how we can enhance safety of everyone who comes into the centre—whether they are visitors or support staff or prisoners—how we can get better outcomes and how we can obviously deliver more secure centres. The decision that the government made was to ensure that all prisons were publicly operated, firstly because of those reasons that I just announced but, secondly, because we have extraordinary confidence in Queensland Corrective Services and the many thousands of people who are custodial officers who commit their lives to keeping our communities safe.

This is as much about being evidence based and well informed about making a good policy decision as it is about having confidence in those people to operate those correctional centres, so I am very pleased that the project ran on time and on budget. As part of the transition we welcomed many custodial officers who were already based at those centres into the employment of Queensland Corrective Services. Over 500 transitioned in. Over 200 were recruited and internally transferred. To put that into context, we are talking about more than 700 staff being onboarded. That is the equivalent of a medium sized government department that we were able to transition into Queensland Corrective Services, and of course we are very proud of that record and we are very proud of what we have delivered. We have an absolute commitment to the public operation model and, Jason, I commend you for your previous work as a public servant employed in Queensland Corrective Services and all of your colleagues for the great work that they do.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, with the number of victims of domestic and family violence still seemingly continuing to increase, sometimes with tragic outcomes, what is the government doing to support those victims?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, absolutely. Domestic violence is certainly a scourge on our community and on all communities. It is not a challenge unique to Queensland; it is a challenge right across the nation and right across the world. The government has been very proactive about strengthening laws when it comes to domestic violence offences and increasing interventions to help prevent domestic and family violence, to intervene when people are asking for support and assistance and also to have appropriate interventions when perpetrators are in custody. I know Queensland Corrective Services has been doing a particularly good body of work around this. We have had a number of trials and in a couple of moments I will hand over to Commissioner Stewart, and you might ask Acting Deputy Commissioner Newman to come to the table as well, who has portfolio responsibility for specialist operations, to provide a bit more detail.

**Mr POWELL:** The minister is doing 'choose his own adventure' again.

**Mr RYAN:** Excuse me? Sorry? Was there a point of order?

**Mr POWELL:** No, you would have heard 'point of order' if I had a point of order, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Can we just stop the cross-room banter please? Sorry, Minister; continue.

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you. We are talking about domestic violence and we have people making crude comments and laughing and sniggering.

**Mr POWELL:** Point of order, Mr Chair: I take offence at those comments and ask that the member withdraw them.

**CHAIR:** Minister, could you withdraw please?

**Mr RYAN:** I will withdraw, but I will also ask Hansard later for the recording to see if the microphones picked up what the member said. I suspect he was saying something—

**Mrs GERBER:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** You can deal with that outside of this. Can we just continue please?

**Mr RYAN:** I will give you the opportunity now, member for Glass House, to apologise and withdraw your comment, because I will be checking the Hansard recording.

**CHAIR:** Minister, could you just proceed with your answer please?

**Mr RYAN:** Okay; no, certainly.

**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Mr RYAN:** And I see the member for Currumbin sniggering now as well while I am answering your question about domestic and family violence.

**Mr POWELL:** Point of order, Mr Chair: the minister is verballing the members of the committee.

**Mrs GERBER:** Point of order, Mr Chair: the minister is debating—

**CHAIR:** Hang on a minute. Can everybody just stop it? It is not achieving anything. You are here to ask questions about estimates. Let us focus on the task at hand. Minister, if you could continue.

**Mr RYAN:** I withdraw any comments the members find offensive.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr RYAN:** In the space of what Queensland Corrective Services is doing to support better outcomes for those people who are experiencing domestic and family violence, there are a number of trials and a number of partnerships and programs which Queensland Corrective Services is engaged in. Before handing over to the commissioner, I would just make a note about this. It was about 18 months ago that I was visiting the Maryborough Correctional Centre—because of COVID it would have been two years ago—and I had the opportunity to see some of the work that had been done by custodial officers in engaging in a program with offenders who were in custody around domestic and family violence offences. It was quite extraordinary to see the transition of people's thinking from engagement in that work. It is a program which runs for a number of months. They started off with getting the prisoners to articulate and recognise their offending behaviour and then take the next step about that impact and then the next step about transition. You could actually see through the documentation and the paperwork—it was all de-identified and it was all anonymous—the impact that those expert custodial officers and those program officers were having in changing people's behaviours, changing people's thinking. Obviously the hope is that those offenders, once they are released from custody, go on to be better citizens as a result of those interventions. It was quite extraordinary work. Commissioner Stewart, I am sure you have seen some of that similar work before too.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes, Minister, I have, not only in our custodial centres of course but in community corrections in terms of the work that our community corrections people do, together with the Queensland Police Service and the courts, in relation to domestic and family violence. As I said before as well, we are doing extra work through the QPSR program around domestic and family violence and sharing of information with Justice and Attorney-General's and with the QPS in order to make it safer for people in our communities.

The other thing again to highlight is the victims register and the work that our victims register people do. Indeed, there were 569 new applications on the victims register. Of those, 329 were linked to domestic and family violence. So there has been a significant take up again to help support and protect victims in our community. That is of significant priority for us around domestic and family violence. I would like to ask Acting Deputy Commissioner Sam Newman to come and talk about the perpetrator programs that we have been running and that we will continue with into the future.

**Acting Deputy Commissioner Newman:** Good afternoon. Queensland Corrective Services is committed to the prevention and elimination of domestic and family violence. QCS undertakes activities to hold perpetrators to account and to reduce the risk of future domestic and family violence offending. Through vigorous case management, high-risk teams and evidence based programs the department

aims to reduce reoffending and protect the community. In January 2019, QCS initiated an internally funded 18-month trial of a domestic and family violence perpetrator program, Disrupting Family Violence, at the Woodford, Wolston and Maryborough correctional centres as trial sites. Whilst QCS has previously facilitated programs that include elements focused on addressing domestic and family violence, this was the first perpetrator program focused solely on domestic and family violence to be implemented in a correctional centre setting by QCS. QCS staff were trained by international experts in the area. During the trial, 104 prisoners completed the program and QCS partnered with the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre to offer victim support services to both current and former partners of program participants.

A process evaluation of the pilot was undertaken and QCS is in the final stages of addressing the recommendations of the report. QCS has undertaken work to implement recommended enhancements, including providing enhanced training to program delivery staff, revising assessment tools and guidelines and establishing a dedicated intelligence adviser role to enhance and monitor victim safety. This strategy was implemented on a temporary basis during the trial with the intelligence officer providing great value to program facilitators and I thank her for her efforts in that regard.

The government has also committed funding for a victim advocacy service for the next two financial years as a critical component of the program which provides further support and protections to victims of domestic and family violence. With the announcement of this funding allocation, QCS is on track to recommence delivery of the Disrupting Family Violence program in the Woodford, Wolston and Maryborough correctional centres by the end of the year.

Additionally, QCS is in collaboration with the University of the Sunshine Coast on the development and implementation of a revised culturally sensitive sexual offending program specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male offenders. While focusing on sexual offending, the program attends to the common underlying needs of both sexual and domestic violence such as healthy relationships, problem solving and emotional regulation and trauma. Consistent with the recommendations from the Queensland Parole System Review, this program directly involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the development of the program, ensuring a strong understanding of Indigenous values, concepts and processes to improve rehabilitation outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and protect our communities. QCS is planning to commence a trial of this new program during the financial year at Lotus Glen Correctional Centre. In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to thank and acknowledge all of our dedicated officers across the state who work hard every day to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators to account. Thank you.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, can you please advise what has and is being done to address Queensland's growing prisoner population?

**Mr RYAN:** As a government that builds we have a proud record of investing in custodial capacity in prisons. Since coming to government we have recommissioned Borallon, which is almost 800 beds; we have engaged with the bunk bed program—we have already delivered 2,000 bunk beds and a commitment in this budget for further bunk beds of about 500; we have started construction on Southern Queensland Correctional Centre, a massive facility at Gatton—it will deliver another minimum 1,000 beds; and also the facility at Capricornia is being expanded. It is almost done and once complete will deliver almost 400 extra beds. It is a big number, member for Caloundra, but once all of the construction is complete at Southern Queensland, which is expected to be operational only in a few years time, 2023-24—it will be operational in that financial year—we will have delivered 4,600 beds since coming to government. It is extraordinary.

Of course, we are looking forward to the final commissioning at Capricornia Correctional Centre. There is a unique opportunity, and as a former custodial officer you will understand why this is such a unique opportunity, that as you are able to decant prisoners from the older part of a prison into the newer part of a prison you are actually able to refurbish the older part so that it can have a longer life and obviously be upgraded where appropriate. That is what we are doing at Capricornia. We have actually got the new cells online. Prisoners are moving into those new cells. We are refurbishing the old cells whilst we are still finishing off the construction. There is still a fair bit of construction around kitchen, laundry and staff amenities that naturally you need to increase when you have a bigger prison, because you have more staff, you have more prisoners. That refurbishment work will be completed over the next few months. As that refurbishment work is completed we will have a safe transition of new prisoners into the older cells.

By the end of the year that centre should be at full capacity. That is an extraordinary commitment. More beds are coming online. Obviously there is better capacity through use of technology. One of the things we are looking at at Southern Queensland Correctional Centre is how we can introduce more

technology to be more state of the art, also have more program space to get better rehabilitation outcomes and also having, as has been mentioned publicly before and also I know you are a strong advocate around it, that therapeutic approach to deal with some of the vast challenges and complex needs that some prisoners have. Member, thank you very much for your question. I am sure you are very proud to be part of a government that is a building government and is building more correctional capacity.

I think there was one question we were going to come back to which was about supervisor vacancies. As the commissioner outlined, from time to time in a big organisation—there are over 6,000 positions in Queensland Corrective Services—people retire, people get promoted, people move to different roles and you will have some vacancies. I do not want to be too presumptuous in saying this, but they are quite low, the number of vacancies. Across Queensland there are only 13 vacancies for correctional supervisors: three at Arthur Gorrie—that is a big prison so only three at Arthur Gorrie is not many; one at Brisbane Correctional Centre—that is the old Sir David Longland where Brenden Abbott escaped from during the National Party government; four at Capricornia, which is part of the ramp up with the new staff coming on board as we commission the old cells and the new cells; one at Maryborough; and four at Woodford, which, member for Caloundra, you would know is a massive prison with a big staff so four vacancies there is not very many. Obviously Queensland Corrective Services works very, very hard to go through the proper process around recruitment. It takes time. You have to advertise, you have to interview, all of those things. Supervisor positions are obviously an opportunity for promotion for custodial officers so some of these positions will be obviously hotly contested.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end this session?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, there is. It is just a word of thanks. Thank you, Commissioner, to your office, to Steve Scougall in your office, as well as your team: the deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners who work hard right across the state, whether they are in community corrections or specialist operations in one of our correctional facilities. Not a lot of people appreciate the length and breadth of Queensland Corrective Services. It is one of the few agencies, like the police, like Queensland Health, like Education Queensland, that has a presence in almost every single community in the state no matter how far flung your community may be.

I did want to particularly thank the QCS estimates team who have worked hard. Well done, Danielle Bradbury; great work. Charity Britnell, Sonia Maloberti, Ian Hughes, Fiona Patterson, Tygh Field, Sarah Kluth, Peter Stacey, Chloe Campbell, Clemence Thompson, Elaine Hackett, Tamara Kimber and Deb Kemp, thank you very much for the hard work you have put in.

**CHAIR:** That brings this session to a close. The hearing will resume at 4.15 with the examination of estimates for the fire and emergency services portfolio area. Thank you everybody.

**Proceedings suspended from 4.00 pm to 4.15 pm.**



**CHAIR:** I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Fire and Emergency Services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I welcome Dale Last, the member for Burdekin. Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, I will. I have a message from the Police Commissioner who wanted the record to be corrected in respect of two statements. First, when she was speaking about the police division servicing Caloundra, she should have said the police 'divisions' servicing the Caloundra electorate. The actual police strength of the Caloundra police division is 38. She also wishes to make clear that when she referred to the new Sunshine Coast region she should have said the new 'North Coast' region.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak about Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. This government is supporting Queensland Fire and Emergency Services with an operating budget of more than \$800 million, which is an increase of five per cent on the previous budget once COVID-19 hotel quarantine allowances are accounted for. This includes funding, obviously, for all of the services that make up Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. For instance, the State Emergency Service will receive more than \$21 million, which is a seven per cent increase over last year and includes additional funding to secure life-saving equipment such as defibrillators, protective clothing and flares, while also increasing supports for costs associated with purchasing and maintaining facilities.

In 2021-22, the Rural Fire Service budget is \$58.7 million, which is an increase of \$8 million. I am sure that Justin from the RFBAQ will be sipping his wine right now, celebrating the fact that that increase will of course contribute to more yellow trucks—more rural fire appliances—being constructed



for brigades right across the state. It also includes funding for the continued fuel and maintenance initiative of up to \$3.8 million, land acquisitions for brigade stations, station builds, utility expenses, improvement grants and personal protective equipment and clothing.

The global Queensland Fire and Emergency Services budget will also help support Queensland's economic recovery plan. Part of that is funding for new firefighters. The government has committed to an additional 357 firefighter positions over five years and we are one year into that. Our firefighters are professional in every respect: training, skills, expertise and the equipment they have access to. Queensland is fortunate to have such exceptional people within the ranks of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

The capital works program for this year continues to deliver new and replacement stations and facilities, and includes facilities for Maryborough, Gracemere, Longreach, Rainbow Beach, Rosewood, Loganlea, Mossman, Mount Cotton and Maleny. In addition, more than \$30 million will go to upgrading our Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service appliances and fleet program.

Regarding bushfire mitigation, this government has recognised the potential for the increasing severity of Queensland's bushfire seasons and has approved additional staff positions within the Rural Fire Service focused on bushfire mitigation. From this year, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and its partners, which include other government agencies as well as the community, will now transition to a year-round bushfire mitigation program that extends beyond the traditional Operation Cool Burn period. This means Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and its partners will continue conducting, capturing and recording mitigation activities as part of a 365-day-a-year mitigation program. Obviously this change will enable bushfire mitigation activities to be conducted year round across Queensland and allow greater agility based on varying climatic and seasonal impacts.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services has also recognised the importance of the traditional fire management knowledge of First Nations people and already undertakes training to support an understanding of that knowledge and practice. To enhance that existing work, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is recruiting eight First Nations bushfire safety officers to be located right across the state.

Queensland has access to over 100 call-when-needed aircraft and the National Aerial Firefighting Centre contracted aircraft capable of performing water bombing, airborne coordination, line scanning or intelligence-gathering functions in support of ground crews during bushfires and other emergency events. As the Premier recently announced, Queensland has entered into a co-sharing arrangement with Victoria that will see a large air tanker or LAT remain in Australia year round. The LAT, while in Queensland from 2021-24, will be based at Bundaberg for the duration of Queensland's bushfire seasons. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is acutely aware of the royal commission recommendations regarding the incorporation of a national sovereign LAT aircraft being positioned within Australia year round. While considerations and discussions with the federal government are ongoing, I would like to say that the Queensland and Victorian initiative—this partnership—is just another step towards enhancing the sovereign capability of a national aerial firefighting fleet.

Queensland households will be the safest in the country upon completion of the smoke alarm legislation implementation program. Commencing in 2017, legislative changes require dwellings to have interconnected photoelectric smoke alarms installed in a phased implementation process. The next phase requires dwellings being sold, leased or where an existing lease is renewed to be compliant with the new legislation from 1 January 2022. Already there has been significant media and marketing and community information around the compliance deadline, and also further compliance media and public information will be put into place over the next couple of months.

This government is committed to keeping Queensland children safe. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services strongly believes that the implementation of blue cards is an important step in enhancing protections for children. Ultimately, it is the law that people who, due to their role, have potential for interactions with children are to have a blue card. It is law. I am advised that once the blue card onboarding project for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is completed, all relevant staff and volunteers will have a blue card.

I take this opportunity to thank every single member of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, whether they are in the Rural Fire Service, the Fire and Rescue Service, the State Emergency Service, or a partner agency like Volunteer Marine Rescue, Coast Guard, Surf Life Saving or the many others that we work alongside, for their contribution to community safety and for community service. I thank them.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to the department objectives on page 1 of the SDS, specifically the need for an adaptive fire emergency and disaster service. What is the cost of the recently announced KPMG review of the structure of QFES?

**Commissioner Leach:** The recently announced independent review into Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is a commercial-in-confidence matter—the terms of that contract—and we are the party that is being reviewed. It would not be appropriate for me to talk about that, given that we are the subject of that review.

**Mr LAST:** When will the review be released to the public, Commissioner?

**Commissioner Leach:** Formal government considerations of the terms of the review followed on from an announcement of the review by the minister in December 2020. The review process is subject to terms of reference that have been signed off by cabinet, being administered through a steering committee through the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The review has a determined period which is currently set at eight weeks. KPMG have commenced their deliberations; this is week three of that process.

**Mr LAST:** Can you advise where the funding is for both the review itself and the implementation of any recommendations that may come out of that review?

**Commissioner Leach:** The funding for that review will come out of the QFES corporate budget.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to the budget highlights on page 2 of the SDS, specifically hazard and risk management. With regards to the recent renegotiation of the contract for the large air tanker, can you advise if there have been any amendments to allow Australian based pilots to operate these aircraft?

**Commissioner Leach:** The recent renegotiation of the large air tanker contract is a significant uplift in our capability. The large air tanker is a strategic asset to supplement our air assets here in Queensland and the fact that we now have certainty with a contract for a four-year period is good for us. One of the things that the operator is going to consider, now that the aircraft is going to be in country for that four-year period, operating in both Queensland and Victoria, is for the opportunity to train Australian crew to operate that aircraft.

**Mr LAST:** To clarify, will those Australian crew be trained and available for the upcoming fire season, given that it is rapidly approaching?

**Commissioner Leach:** No. As part of the contract, at this stage the aircraft comes with air crew from Canada and they will operate the aircraft for this season, but my understanding is that it is the intent of the operator to explore the option to have Australian based crew, given that it will be here for the next four years.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, given the estimated actual appropriation revenue for 2020-21, as shown in the SDS on page 5, was more than double the budgeted amount, how will QFES continue to provide the necessary services, given the almost 46 per cent reduction in appropriation revenue budgeted for the current financial year?

**Commissioner Leach:** The 2021-22 QFES budget includes an operating expense budget of \$800.19 million. As you say, that is a \$149.1 million decrease on the 2020-21 estimated actual expenditure. That decrease is due to additional expenditure that QFES incurred during the 2020-21 financial year associated with the administration of the COVID-19 quarantine accommodation arrangements, and also our logistics and border control activities in support of the COVID pandemic. Excluding the COVID-19 related hotel quarantine funding, the operating budget of \$800.19 million represents an increase of \$40.5 million or a five per cent increase on the 2020-21 budget.

**Mr LAST:** Have you been given any additional funding? Given that COVID-19 has continued and we still have quarantine facilities and border controls et cetera, where is that funding come from?

**Commissioner Leach:** The funding for hotel quarantine—QFES, as the administrators of the disaster management arrangements, are supporting Queensland Police in the operation of the State Disaster Coordination Centre, including the booking and management of hotel quarantine. Those costs come through QFES, but they are picked up by Queensland Treasury. So, whilst they sit on our balance sheet momentarily, they are reimbursed by Treasury. The only costs that we would be picking up outside of that would be some of our costs associated with our support to Queensland Police on border control operations, but we are able to absorb them within our operating expenses of QFES.

**Mr LAST:** I refer to the budget highlights on page 2 regarding ongoing funding to implement the recommendations of the IGEM review into the K'gari bushfire. Commissioner, how much funding has been allocated to the facilitation of an annual state level exercise of the Queensland Bushfire Plan which was a key recommendation of the IGEM review?

**Commissioner Leach:** In terms of the K'gari bushfire review, there are a number of actions in that review for us including the development of a K'gari locality specific fire management group and additional training around joint agency incident management. The K'gari review outlined 38 recommendations. QFES is the lead or the co-lead on 20 of those recommendations and we are a support entity on one further recommendation.

The government has provided us additional funding of \$5 million over four years and \$1 million ongoing to implement the recommendations of the review. That funding is to be shared between QFES and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. The funding for QFES is \$625,000 per annum for the next four years. Part of that will be used not only for the management of the K'gari locality specific fire management group but also for enhanced incident management training around broader incident management for QFES.

**Mr LAST:** I refer to the capital program, as mentioned on page 2. Commissioner, what is the average cost of a new urban fire appliance?

**Commissioner Leach:** We have a number of standard urban fire appliances—what we refer to internally as type 2 or type 3 appliances. A type 3 heavy pumper is a standard pumper that we will put into a large urban centre. They are generally a crew cab appliance on a European cab chassis with a Queensland built body on the back with a 4,500 litre per minute pump, carrying a whole range of basic equipment for firefighting and road crash rescue and a range of rescue activities. A fully equipped type 3 pumper is in the range of \$850,000 to \$870,000.

**Mr LAST:** In the 2018-19 budget, the average cost per appliance was \$580,000. In the 2019-20 budget, it was \$750,000. The current budget provides \$18 million and says that will buy 40 new appliances which averages out at \$450,000 per appliance. Can you explain the difference in cost?

**Commissioner Leach:** I might hand over to Acting Deputy Commissioner Adam Stevenson, who heads up that area.

**Acting Deputy Commissioner Stevenson:** I can comment on the total appliances. In terms of the budget for 2021-22, the spend on appliances will be \$30.5 million. That is an increase of over \$16.6 million from the previous year. It is not uncommon for appliance costs to go up and down and the difference in mix of appliances between lights, mediums and heavies to change.

**Mr RYAN:** You are confusing yellow trucks with red trucks.

**Mr LAST:** No. I am not.

**Mr RYAN:** The budget for yellow trucks is \$18 million.

**Mr LAST:** No, I am not. Be patient. I will get to yellow trucks. With regard to a new Rural Fire Service appliance, in 2018-19 it was \$128,000. In 2019-20, it was \$269,000. The budget for 2021-22 is \$12.5 million. How many does that represent?

**Acting Deputy Commissioner Stevenson:** In terms of the budget this year for rural fire appliances, we will be ordering 45 rural fire appliances this year.

**Mr LAST:** Forty-five?

**Acting Deputy Commissioner Stevenson:** Yes, for this current year. That is an increase over the 28 from the previous year. As I said, the costs per appliance are static costs. We are already finding within the purchase model in our plan going forward that with COVID, with delays on cab chassis and with the lack of staff through our Queensland based provider, the cost is going up. As the royal commission recommendations are taken into account, when we strengthen the capacity of those appliances we expect the costs will increase further.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to the budget highlights on page 2 regarding ongoing funding to implement the recommendations of the IGEM review into the K'gari bushfire. As per the IGEM report into that fire, has the interagency protocol for fire management been reviewed? If so, were fiscal protocols agreed to?

**Commissioner Leach:** The review report picked up a number of recommendations. They were predominantly around collaboration around bushfire mitigation planning and incident management and incident management training. In terms of the review that you talk about, we are in the preliminary stages of that work. The locality specific area fire management group on K'gari met for the first time on 24 June 2021. At that meeting the group discussed key agenda items including a draft terms of reference for the operation of that committee. That committee going forward will have responsibilities around the bushfire mapping and risk mapping for K'gari, as well as developing mitigation and prevention activities, along with planning for the response to any fires that might occur on the island.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, I refer to the effectiveness measures on page 3 of the SDS with reference to volunteering for the SES. Given that taxpayers spent almost \$250,000 on the review and your government has now had the report for more than 12 months, when will you release the SES review report and what funding has been allocated to implementing the recommendations?

**Mr RYAN:** We obviously take our support for the State Emergency Service very seriously. We have increased the budget for the State Emergency Service this year by seven per cent. That provides more equipment and a boost to training. Obviously we are working through the SES review. We are very committed to what we can do to better support the SES.

It is a very complicated framework though that exists. It is not solely a Queensland government entity. As all members would know, councils have a big role to play in the delivery of State Emergency Service facilities operational aspects. In many instances, councils provide the infrastructure. In many instances, councils provide the vehicles. It is not as simple as just the state government making a determination here. It is very complicated because we have to work alongside stakeholders like local governments. There is not just one local government; there are 77 local governments—I think it is 77 from memory—that we have to work with. Each local government supports their SES groups and units in different ways. Here in Brisbane there is significant investment—many millions of dollars—but in some small remote council areas the support is different because those councils have less means.

As part of the way forward, obviously there is consideration about how you bring it altogether, how you resource it, how you have a framework that better supports volunteers, as well as builds the SES capability. Part of moving that forward is through the QFES review, because that will relate to structure, that will relate to financing and that will relate to resourcing.

**Mr LAST:** When can we expect to see the review released?

**Mr RYAN:** It has always been my view—and I mentioned it at the Christmas estimates—that once government has had the opportunity to consider reviews government responses to those reviews are made public.

**Mr LAST:** You have had over 12 months. Why are you refusing to release that review?

**Mr RYAN:** I am not refusing to release the review.

**CHAIR:** There is an imputation in that question. Can you rephrase the question or ask your next question?

**Mr LAST:** Minister, the SES review is an important document paid for by Queensland taxpayers. When can we expect to see that review released?

**Mr RYAN:** I have spoken to you about the process and my intention around making public government responses to reviews generally. I said that at the Christmas—

**Mrs GERBER:** The question is: when?

**CHAIR:** Please allow the minister to answer the question. No more interruptions. Minister, continue, please.

**Mr RYAN:** I made it clear that there is a way forward around structure and resourcing. That process is underway. I have also made it clear that there is significant complexity here because the Queensland government is not the only entity that delivers these services. There are dozens and dozens of other stakeholders who have a say in this. To be honest, as was discussed a few years ago at the Local Government Association of Queensland conference, those councils do have very different views. Brisbane City Council's view about what should happen to the SES is very different to what Townsville's view is, very different to the Gold Coast's view, very different to a remote Indigenous council's view. There is significant complexity here. The government is working on a way forward. The QFES independent review supports that.

To make sure it is clear in everyone's mind can I just highlight one thing to essentially make sure the record is clear. In relation to the trucks, member for Burdekin, I think there was a bit of confusion about the numbers and everything. I just wanted to confirm that overall the budget for the fleet program is \$30.5 million, which includes \$12.5 million for yellow trucks, the Rural Fire Service fleet, which is about 45 new appliances. The balance, the \$18 million, is for the red trucks, the Fire and Rescue Service pumpers and appliances.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Minister. Commissioner, at the last estimates hearing you advised that a total of \$35.38 million was available to support marine rescue volunteers, with \$17.383 million for the replacement of vessels. Can you please advise how much of that funding has been spent or allocated?

**Commissioner Leach:** The budget for 2021-22 includes \$17.38 million across the forward estimates—that is 2021-22 through to 2023-24—for the replacement of Volunteer Marine Rescue vessels. The remaining \$18 million is directed towards supporting the transition to an integrated marine rescue service and ongoing operational subsidies to squadrons and flotillas to ensure service continuity in the short term. The fleet sub working group of the integrated marine rescue working group has just recently met, and they are beginning the process to plan and provide advice to the working group regarding the allocation of the \$17.38 million over the four years.

The integrated marine rescue working group has been undertaking a pilot project known as the resource-to-risk assessment. They are visiting each squadron and flotilla to undertake a risk assessment to understand what the boat replacement needs are going to be going forward. They have already met with a number of the flotillas and squadrons, and they will be meeting with the remaining 41 flotillas and squadrons over the coming months to finalise that process. Then there will be a process around determining a number of standard specifications to boats and to begin the boat replacement program.

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

**Ms BOLTON:** Yes, I do, Chair. I had one earlier for the minister which I think he took as a question on notice, but I have a quick one for the commissioner. Further to the member for Burdekin's question regarding the LAT, you said that the operators were exploring options. Is there any further information on that, given the concern when the Fraser Island fires happened?

**Commissioner Leach:** The large air tanker contract means that the aircraft will be on contract for us in Queensland for a period of 84 days beginning in early September for that 84-day period. With the aircraft being in country and transitioning to Victoria, Victoria's bushfire season typically commences after the end of the Queensland season, and there is a period of downtime for the aircraft before it officially starts online with Victoria. So there is an option: if our fire season should run later than it normally does, we can continue to use that aircraft past its contract period.

If you are talking about the crewing of the aircraft, the aircraft will come with air crew from Canada for the initial period here. As I said, during contract negotiations with the provider there was conversation around a willingness by the operator to consider training up Australian crews, given the duration of the aircraft in country here, and how it would be easier to access crew from Australia rather than relying on crew from Canada.

**Ms BOLTON:** The question originally was in relation to not having a replacement crew at the moment; it only comes with the crew from Canada. The member for Burdekin asked if they could be trained up in time for the next fire season, so they would explore options. That is what I was after. Are they saying they are going to find another crew so that if they have to rely on one crew we will not be put in that position?

**Commissioner Leach:** The circumstances around the K'gari fire were that the aircraft was coming to the end of its contracted period last year and the crew was coming up to a mandated rest period in accordance with CASA's requirements. Then, of course, we had the K'gari fire that happened late in our season here and there was a mandated rest period. We were exploring the option to bring a fresh crew out from Canada at the time, but given that our fire season was almost at an end we determined that we would take the rest period and rely on the large air tanker fleet in other parts of Australia to assist us.

Now that we are moving to a different contract where we will share that aircraft with Victoria, obviously the crewing arrangements for the aircraft will be different given the extended period of operation of the aircraft. In addition to the 84 days it will operate here there will be a period of several weeks before the aircraft officially starts in Victoria, and then there will be a contracted period of use in Victoria. Obviously, the crewing requirements to cover the aircraft's usage for that period of time will be quite different to what we had last year for that fixed period. The operators are very aware of the circumstances from last year, and that has been factored into our contract negotiations.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. Minister, regarding my question earlier on the 32 per cent of our SES volunteers who have not had their minimal training requirements, what has been allocated so that we can undertake that? A lot of our volunteers would like to undertake that minimal training.

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you for acknowledging the increase to the SES budget this year. One of the focuses of that increase is to support the training of SES volunteers. I am pleased to say that the year-on-year budget increase for SES training will increase 24 per cent. That is a decent increase, and obviously that will support statewide training requirements. One thing to highlight about the measures

in the SDS is that some people might say, 'Why is the target 65 per cent?' The target is 65 per cent because there is a recognition that in all volunteering workforces—but we have noticed in emergency service volunteering—there is generally a very high turnover because of people's circumstances.

A role like the SES requires people—and full tribute to them; they are extraordinary people—to be available generally at pretty short notice to volunteer during business hours or on weekends. To some extent there is only a small cohort of people whose daily circumstances would fit being able to be a State Emergency Service volunteer. It has been our longstanding experience that there is generally quite a high turnover of SES volunteers each year, but the pleasing thing we see is that there is an extraordinary interest from Queenslanders to volunteer. From memory, the last year we saw over 1,000 people put up their hands to be SES volunteers. Those new people obviously will be recipients of this funding boost and the statewide training requirements that will be enhanced as a result of our funding boost.

**CHAIR:** I now go to the member for South Brisbane.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Commissioner Leach, we have heard some of the details of the arrangement around the LAT between Queensland and Victoria. Will the details of the agreement with Victoria be made public, including things such as what if there is a need for the LAT in both Queensland and Victoria simultaneously?

**Commissioner Leach:** The procurement of the large air tanker is done through the National Aerial Firefighting Centre. NAFC was set up by the Australasian fire authorities council. That is where all fire agencies from jurisdictions across Australia come together to negotiate contracts for our specialist aerial firefighting fleet. The contract arrangements between NAFC and the aircraft operator and involving Queensland and Victoria are obviously commercial-in-confidence because it was a competitive tendering process. I can say that, based on what we learnt from our first year of contract last year, those factors have been considered in the development of the contract for this year to ensure that continuity of supply and to think about the ongoing crewing of this aircraft over this four-year period.

**Dr MacMAHON:** What would happen if there was simultaneous need?

**Commissioner Leach:** There frequently is. Our large air tanker is one of almost 150 aircraft that we use here in Queensland. If you look at the K'gari fire as an example, we had 30-odd aircraft working actively on that fire, including the large air tanker—not only ours, but we requested and received the large air tanker from Rural Fire Service New South Wales to assist. The large air tankers were only used to do strategic firebreak construction or protection of specific assets. The bulk of the work—probably over 90 per cent of the work at that fire—was done by our core when needed aircraft. The LAT is a terrific resource but it is a very specialised resource used sparingly to achieve specific incident management objectives.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Chair, a follow-up, if I may—

**CHAIR:** This will have to be the last question.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Sure. What is the current allocated budget for leasing of the LAT under this new agreement?

**Commissioner Leach:** The funding for the large air tanker includes more than \$15 million over five years—that is commencing in the 2020-21 financial year—and \$3.1 million in ongoing support costs. That is the global funding for the aircraft.

**CHAIR:** We now go to the member for Cooper for the next question.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and QFES's vision to create and sustain a safe and resilient Queensland in the face of fires, emergencies and disasters, would you please update the committee on the rollout of photoelectric smoke alarms as per the legislative changes?

**Mr RYAN:** Thanks, member for Cooper, for your interest in this. I foreshadowed it in my opening remarks but it is such an important piece of work and Queensland is the leader on this. In 2017 when we brought in this new legislation, it was about saving lives. Already we are seeing the rollout of these better quality smoke alarms, these interconnected smoke alarms, which will ultimately protect households and the people who live within them. We have been deliberate though, acknowledging that there is some work to be done. It can be DIY, do-it-yourself, but I know that some people may want to get an electrician in to assist.

All new houses now have a requirement to have these new photoelectric interconnected smoke alarms. It is quite extraordinary how they work. If smoke is detected in one room, all of them go off because they are interconnected—all of them—so the entire household gets woken up. The requirement around where they are located—in hallways, in bedrooms—ensures that the alert gets to the people who need to hear it as quickly as possible.

We are working across the state to highlight the importance of the next tranche which starts from 1 January 2022. This relates to leased residential properties and houses that are for sale. I am very pleased that we have got a great working relationship with the REIQ, and I want to refer to some of the comments that Antonia Mercorella mentioned recently. She has been visiting her members right across the state because obviously key partners in this are real estate agents who manage rental properties—they can help get the message out to landlords and tenants—and also those who work as part of the sales process because they can talk to vendors about the requirements come 1 January, like what they do around pool fences and electric safety switches. All of those things are very important. This is something that people have been aware of for almost five years. Antonia said—

Smoke alarm compliance is an important aspect of property management in Queensland real estate, in particular as the deadline for adherence to new legislative requirements fast approaches.

With only a handful of months left before every rental property must comply, make no mistake—there will be no extension to the deadline. Now isn't the time to compromise on compliance—be ready by 1 January, 2022 or lose the right to rent your property.

It is a very blunt and frank message, but I do appreciate what Antonia and the REIQ have done to help highlight this.

The government is also engaged in a public awareness campaign. We have recently had some advertising through a variety of mediums highlighting people's requirement to comply. In the next few months, we will also have a further round of advertising. This is something that started in 2017 so it has been around for a while. It has been a long transition period but now is the time for people to get ready and get their interconnected photoelectric smoke alarms—not just because it is law, but the primary reason is that it could save your life and the life of your family and it could save your house. So go out and get it.

**Mr HUNT:** I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Minister, could you please update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is backing frontline emergency services like the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, member for Caloundra. I know you love catching up with your SES volunteers and Rural Fire Service volunteers. I think just recently you handed over a yellow truck, a Rural Fire Service appliance, so it is great to see those new resources and equipment being delivered to the front line of emergency services. We are grateful for every single emergency service volunteer—whether they are in the Rural Fire Service or the State Emergency Service—for what they have done and what they do every single day.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks and just recently, we have increased the State Emergency Service budget this year by almost seven per cent, which is actually a nearly 20 per cent increase since we have come to government. Some of the funds allocated through the SES budget will go towards personal protective and operational equipment, capital grants, subsidies to local government as well as training initiatives.

There are other funding sources and case-by-case examples of support for the State Emergency Service. It was only a few months ago that I was in Townsville and we were handing over some new drones. There is a drone capability which exists within our State Emergency Service. That is extraordinary because they are able to use high-tech cameras to help find people quickly, work alongside the Police Service with mapping accident sites, work alongside the Rural Fire Service to work out where firebreaks should go or do intelligence around where bushfires are.

We were able to hand over some new drones to the Townsville SES groups. Also, on the same day, funding from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority came through for some sandbagging machines for those groups. Across government there is support for agencies like Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and the elements that make it up: the State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service. Just to highlight, that money for the sandbagging machines was \$90,000. That was from the department of communities; apologies to the QRA.

We are also obviously supporting our Rural Fire Service. I know our Rural Fire Service volunteers are very grateful for the investment the government has made around funding the maintenance and ongoing operating costs of the rural fire appliances, the yellow trucks they use: paying for the fuel, paying for the maintenance but also investing in new appliances. We have doubled the budget this year for new appliances. It is up to \$12.5 million this year. We have done the maths. That should get us around 45 yellow trucks this financial year. That is important not only for the front line but also for local jobs because in the past and ongoing we have had local producers of these appliances. We are investing in local jobs and local businesses.

One of the other things I would like to do is acknowledge the great working relationship the government has with all its stakeholder groups. In respect of this question, the Rural Fire Service and our partnership with the RFBAQ, the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland—we have a Rural Fire Service Volunteer Charter. I was very pleased, along with the commissioner and the President of the Rural Fire Brigades Association, Ian Pike, to sign that charter only relatively recently. Because it is of interest to everyone, I would seek the committee's leave to table the Rural Fire Service Volunteer Charter so everyone can see information about our strong partnership with the volunteers who keep our community safe.

**CHAIR:** There will be a delay in tabling that document. The member for Noosa is coming in remotely, so we have to send it to her as well as other committee members.

**Mr POWELL:** Point of order, Mr Chair. Would it be easier if the minister or the department were to put that on their website so everyone could see it there, given the delay that we are going to have in being able to approve that?

**Mr RYAN:** I do not mind the delay. I am happy for the world at large—

**CHAIR:** Can we just see how we go?

**Mr POWELL:** Websites also have the effect of getting to the world at large.

**CHAIR:** No cross-chamber arguments.

**Mr HUNT:** I also acknowledge the Rural Fire Service and particularly the Beerwah branch, where I was recently, Minister, the 'Flamin Fury-us', as they call themselves. They were nice enough to give me a cooked snag and a can of drink the other day when I went out there and handed over that appliance. They are a terrific bunch keeping small fires small and keeping us safe. Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and its objective to back frontline services, could you please update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is backing our marine rescue sector to ensure community safety on our waterways into the future?

**Mr RYAN:** As a coastal member, I know that you have particular interest in this and also you have a great connection with your local marine rescue volunteers. I know they very much appreciate—

**Mr HUNT:** QF4.

**Mr RYAN:** Absolutely. I know they appreciate you and I know you appreciate the good work they do. The government has made a really strong commitment around boosting marine rescue capability in Queensland. We are working closely with stakeholders on this. We have backed it in with money, which is important. We have also made it clear that as part of—to be honest, a lot of other states have already done this. However, as part of enhancing your marine rescue service, you do have to have some certainty, some structure, some clarity around the framework. Part of the recommendations of the Blue Water Review is how you best achieve that.

The government has made it really clear that the direction we are heading in is an integrated single marine rescue service in Queensland. That is complicated work, but it is work that we are committed to doing. We have actually made some really good progress already. One of our election commitments that we made in October—so only 10 months ago—was to establish the working group. The working group has been established. It has been in the field for just under six months now and is also making some great progress about how the reform process needs to work, how the structure is going to work. Over the next six to 12 months or so we will get some real clarity, some real direction, about that and then start the real heavy lifting about how you create and implement that structure.

Like what other states have seen, this is not a quick process. When New South Wales went through this process it took them about 10 years. We are in Queensland; we are better than that. We are certainly aiming to do it much, much quicker than that. As part of that transition, we will obviously support the existing volunteer organisations which provide marine rescue services in Queensland but also continue to invest in the future, which is about the new vessels, the new structure. I am very pleased to see that in last year's budget the money for the vessels was allocated. It is good to see the money is locked in for that. Obviously we will continue to work with stakeholders right across the state.

I have to say Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' engagement at the grass level and up to the peak body level has been exceptional. There is a very dedicated team at Queensland Fire and Emergency Services who support the marine rescue implementation working group but also have the capability and initiative themselves to go out and meet with local flotillas and squadrons. They are having great conversations on the ground. To be honest, there is a lot of excitement around this. People are very keen to work alongside government to deliver this better marine rescue service.



**Ms BUSH:** With regard to page 1 of the SDS and QFES's commitment to community safety, I am interested particularly in the steps that QFES has taken to help keep children safe.

**Mr RYAN:** As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this is a very important program for the protection of the community. It is also the law. The law is clear when it comes to blue cards. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services has been very diligent around the blue card implementation program. Once that program is complete, all relevant employees, officers and volunteers of the organisation must have a blue card and will have a blue card. If someone is to be a member of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services family, where relevant they need the blue card.

Interestingly, this project is already delivering safety outcomes for Queensland children. I am informed that since the project started, 40 applicants who sought to become members of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services organisation had an adverse notice and were not able to get a blue card. Those people cannot be members of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services in roles which have interaction with children. Even if this project stopped one person being in a position which could potentially cause harm to a child, I would say it is a success. Already, I am advised, we have seen 40 people who have had adverse notices; they have not been able to get a blue card.

I commend Queensland Fire and Emergency Services for prioritising child protection. It is everyone's business. It is the law, but it is also about making sure some of the most vulnerable people in our community, our children, are kept safe.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I refer to page 9 of the SDS and the overview of the office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management, which refers to building emergency management capability. Could the minister please advise how this impacts Queensland?

**Mr RYAN:** We are fortunate to have in the complex—he would normally be in the room with us, but he is in the parliamentary precinct—the Inspector-General Emergency Management, Alistair Dawson. In fact, if Alistair is listening he should come in and say something about this. Alistair, of course, is very committed to making sure our emergency services framework in Queensland is world-class. His role, the role of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management, was recognised at the royal commission as gold standard. They made recommendations based on what the IGEM does. They made recommendations that other states need to look at what Queensland does. That is a great compliment to the office and it is also a great compliment to the Queensland disaster management framework which has over many decades matured into something which people really look up to and acknowledge as being of a very high standard, the gold standard in fact.

One of the things the IGEM does around continuous improvement—hello Alistair—is through the standard for disaster management which came into effect on 1 July this year. This standard can be used by all entities in Queensland with a responsibility in disaster management. To ensure it remains contemporary and is easy to understand and apply, the Inspector-General of Emergency Management has recently refined the standard. These refinements were informed by feedback received from the disaster management sector. I know it will disappoint the member for Glass House, but I seek leave to table the Inspector-General of Emergency Management's *Standard of Disaster Management*. I know that you will have to consider it afterwards.

**CHAIR:** Before we move on, in relation to the first document, *Rural Fire Service Volunteer Brigade Charter*, has everyone had a chance to look at it? Member for Noosa, have you had the opportunity?

**Ms BOLTON:** Yes I have, Chair. I am fine, all good.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Leave is granted. There will just be a short delay, Minister, in sorting out the last document you tabled. I understand that there are no outstanding questions.

**Mr RYAN:** I am not aware of that. I would like to hear from the Inspector-General of Emergency Management.

**CHAIR:** There are three minutes in total.

**Mr RYAN:** I promise he will only speak for two.

**CHAIR:** Minister, if you had any closing remarks, I suggest you do them now, please?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, I will do my very quick closing remarks so that the Inspector-General of Emergency Management can have one minute. Thank you, Chair—

**CHAIR:** He may not get one minute, Minister. Could you take your mask off?

**Mr RYAN:** I am sorry, Alistair.

**CHAIR:** It is easier for people to understand—

**Mr RYAN:** It is okay, we will hear from him next year. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, committee. Thank you to the member for Noosa and everyone else who has participated online. Thank you to the people of Queensland who have taken obviously great interest in estimates. I commend them for their interest in government and the parliament.

Of course, there has been a lot of work that has been done for this estimates session for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services but, firstly, I thank the members of the organisation for their day-to-day work, the hard work that they do and also acknowledge the contribution of the commissioner and his team. To the members of the Fire Rescue Service, the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service and our partner agencies, thank you for your contribution. There are obviously people to thank in the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service estimates team and the IGEM estimates team. I thank: Helen Crook; Kathleen Tyler; Vivienne Luxford; Cathy, the DLO in my office; and Andrew—his nickname is ‘Zipper’—the MLO in my office. In the Inspector-General of Emergency Management team, Sarah March, Shannon Finch, Corinne Mulholland and Mike Shapland contributed.

I have just received a message to clarify around SES training. That training measure relates to only one component of training. To clarify, 68 per cent are trained in storm damage but the other 32 per cent, which adds up to 100 per cent, are actually trained in other functions, including land search, road crash rescue, vertical rescue, flood boats, traffic management, agency support, incident management and specialist rescue. I thank the committee for their indulgence about clarifying that matter. I thank Hansard and members of the committee for the good, the bad and the ugly questions. I am sure you will all agree with me that, notwithstanding the nature of the question, the answers were excellent.

**CHAIR:** Thank you to members of the committee and visiting members who have participated in the hearing. On behalf of the committee, I also thank the Hansard staff, the parliamentary broadcasting staff and all the other parliamentary staff for their assistance today. I declare the hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 5.15 pm.**