

## FRIDAY, 13 AUGUST 2021

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### ESTIMATES—COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE— COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING; DIGITAL ECONOMY; THE ARTS

#### Estimate Committee Members

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

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#### Members in Attendance

Dr A MacMahon  
Ms FS Simpson  
Mr J-PH Langbroek  
Mr TL Mander  
Dr CAC Rowan  
Ms AJ Camm  
Mr JP Bleijie

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#### In Attendance

Hon. LM Enoch, Minister for Communities and Housing, Digital Economy and the Arts  
Ms H Jackson, Chief of Staff  
Mr A Sutherland, Senior Adviser  
**Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy**  
Ms C O'Connor, Director-General  
Ms T Wooley, Deputy Director-General, Housing and Homelessness Services  
Ms K Herring PSM, Deputy Director-General, Arts Queensland  
**State Library of Queensland**  
Ms V McDonald AM, State Librarian and Chief Executive Officer

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#### The committee met at 9.00 am.



**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Community Support and Services Committee now open. I want to begin today's proceedings by respectfully acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I particularly acknowledge the Hon. Leeanne Enoch, member for Algester, as a First Nations woman. I acknowledge Ms Cynthia Lui, the member for Cook, also as a First Nations woman. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

I want to introduce members of the committee. My name is Corrine McMillan. I am the member for Mansfield and chair of this committee. Mr Stephen Bennett, the member for Burnett, is the deputy chair. Other committee members are Mr Michael Berkman, member for Maiwar; Mr Jon Krause,

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

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2021 and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for camera operators in estimates hearings are available from the secretariat. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in this hearing chamber.

In line with the COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guidelines issued by the Chief Health Officer, I remind everyone to maintain social distancing whilst in this hearing chamber. Face masks are to be worn at all times and removed only to speak during the proceedings. The COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guidelines are available from the 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. This means that a very quick changeover between witnesses is required to meet the set schedule. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: communities, housing and digital economy from nine until 10.45; arts from 11 to 11.45; seniors and disability services from 12.30 to 1.45; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, including the Family Responsibilities Commission, from two till 3.15 pm; children and youth justice from 3.30 pm to 5.15 pm; and multicultural affairs from 5.30 to 6.15 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 11.45 am and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 10.45 to 11 am. As was determined by the House, the committee will consider the minister's portfolios as follows: communities, housing and digital economy from nine to 10.45 am and arts from 11 to 11.45 am. 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 in the hearing in accordance with standing orders: Dr Amy MacMahon MP, member for South Brisbane; Stephen Andrew MP, member for Mirani; David Crisafulli MP, member for Broadwater; David Janetzki MP, member for Toowoomba South; Jarrod Bleijie MP, member for Kawana; Fiona Simpson MP, member for Maroochydore; John-Paul Langbroek MP, member for Surfers Paradise; Dr Christian Rowan MP, member for Moggill; Amanda Camm MP, member for Whitsunday; Brent Mickelberg MP, member for Buderim; Tim Nicholls MP, member for Clayfield; Steve Minnikin MP, member for Chatsworth; and Tim Mander MP, member for Everton.

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

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public who are watching the broadcast to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of communities, housing, digital economy and the arts open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Ms ENOCH:** I begin also by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathering today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. In the seven months since I last appeared before you to discuss budget estimates, COVID-19 has continued to have a significant

impact on the lives of Queenslanders. While our state's strong health response to the pandemic means our economic recovery is well and truly underway, my department has been hard at work supporting some of Queensland's most vulnerable people. Just one week ago South-East Queensland again experienced a COVID-induced lockdown affecting 11 local government areas, and that was followed closely by a lockdown in Cairns. Each time Queenslanders go hard and go fast to combat the deadly spread of the Delta strain the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy stepped up to support NGOs, neighbourhood and community centres, homelessness service providers, the arts sector and other government agencies to deliver vital services where they are needed the most.

This department's budget for 2021-22 was developed with the needs of Queenslanders at the forefront of our minds. In 2021-22 funding totalling \$11.3 million has been committed to continue the delivery of information services through Smart Service Queensland. This includes the 134COVID, 13HEALTH and Community Recovery hotlines and the dedicated COVID-19 website, covid-19.qld.gov.au. We have also developed digital products and services such as the Check In Qld app and border pass. With the outstanding support of Queenslanders, the Check In Qld app has seen more than 255 million check-ins recorded, over 179,000 business registrations and over 4.6 million downloads.

In relation to housing, we know that having a safe and affordable home is vital for a person's wellbeing. That is why the Palaszczuk government announced a \$2.9 billion investment in this year's budget to underpin the new Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025. There is \$1.9 billion to fast-track the delivery of social housing, provide support to Queenslanders in need and help end homelessness. It is backed by the establishment of a new \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund to support the commencement of additional homes in partnership with community housing providers, non-government organisations and the private sector. Importantly, 7,400 new social and affordable homes will commence over the next four years for a total of almost 10,000 over the life of our Housing Strategy.

On top of that, we will see 1,000 headleases supported by a \$40 million investment under our Help to Home initiative. The state budget also includes a commitment of \$94.9 million over four years to continue essential services so people can access housing support and sustain their tenancies, including \$20 million over four years to support people experiencing domestic and family violence and a further \$20 million over four years for homelessness initiatives. These services have proved vital in our response to COVID-19 and its broader impacts. The investment in this year's budget and our new action plan are aimed squarely at housing more vulnerable Queenslanders sooner.

In relation to the arts portfolio, since March 2020 our government has committed to more than \$79 million in measures to support the arts sector through the impacts of COVID-19, including the \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package and \$7 million specifically for live music venues. This supports the delivery of Creative Together 2020-2030, our road map to transform and renew Queensland through creativity. With a focus on driving economic outcomes, we are investing in events such as the Queensland Museum's hugely successful World Science Festival. We have reinforced our commitment to regional arts with investment in the Regional Arts Services Network, building on its successes over the past four years, including providing almost 1,200 employment opportunities for artists. As part of our commitment to elevate First Nations arts, the First Nations pathways fund will strengthen the state's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performing artists and companies.

The arts, cultural and creative sectors are key to delivering our plan for economic recovery from COVID-19, each year injecting \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supporting more than 92,000 jobs for Queenslanders. The state budget demonstrates our commitment to supporting Queensland's economic recovery. I am happy to take the committee's questions.

**CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the communities, housing and digital economy portfolios. I now call the member for Burnett, the deputy chair of the committee.

**Mr BENNETT:** I will hand over to Mr Mander.

**Mr MANDER:** My first question is to the director-general. As of 30 June, how many Queenslanders are on the social housing waiting list?

**Ms O'Connor:** As of 30 June, 25,853 households are on the waiting list. They are actually on the register.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, what percentage of those are classified as very high need?

**Ms O'Connor:** 80.5 per cent are classified as very high or high need.

**Mr MANDER:** 80.5 per cent of 25,853. Can you tell me what that equals in numbers?

**Ms O'Connor:** It is 20,814.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, how many additional social housing properties have there been in percentage terms since 2015?

**Ms ENOCH:** As the member would be well aware, when the Palaszczuk government came to office in 2015 we had a net deficit of social housing properties as a result of LNP policies in the previous government. In fact, the net deficit was—

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Madam Chair: the question is very specific. What is the percentage increase in the number of social housing stock since 2015?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Everton. The minister is being responsive. I do believe that she is getting to your answer. Can we cease any interruption and allow the minister to answer your question.

**Ms ENOCH:** I think it is important to remember where we were in 2015. There was a net deficit of social housing properties to the figure of 428 so we had to build back those and, of course, build on top of that. As I have been informed, there is a net increase of 2,183 properties since 2015.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, can you put that in percentage terms?

**Ms ENOCH:** That is a three per cent increase.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, in that same period how many additional social housing properties would there be if the government had increased the social housing stock in line with Queensland population growth?

**Ms ENOCH:** I would imagine that the member for Everton, who had held this portfolio as a minister, would know that that is not how the Social Housing Register works. Obviously the Social Housing Register is an incredibly important tool in being able to provide social housing solutions to Queenslanders and it acts very much as a safety net for Queenslanders. Certainly not every single Queenslander is seeking that safety net from the Social Housing Register. It is about meeting the demand that—

**Mr BENNETT:** Point of order, Madam Chair, under standing order 118: the question was very specific. If the minister does not have the capacity to work that out she could take that question on notice, with all due respect.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. I appreciate your guidance. I would rule that the minister continue with her answer. I believe that should the minister wish to take the question on notice then she will indicate, but as far as I could hear the minister was being responsive to the question. Minister, I would like you to continue with no further interruptions.

**Ms ENOCH:** Obviously, I am making it very clear that the Social Housing Register is about reflecting the need of Queenslanders. When you look at the Social Housing Register it is not simply reflecting the population of the state; it is about addressing the need as it comes forward. The Social Housing Register has been able to ensure that we have been able to deliver over 200,000 housing assistance services to Queenslanders just in the past year. Of course, the investment that we now see from the Palaszczuk government of \$2.9 billion into—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order, Madam Chair, again on relevance: the question was very specific. If the minister is not going to answer it, can we please move on to another question given we have very limited time to ask questions in estimates.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member, for your point of order and your guidance. I have been listening very carefully. The minister is being responsive to the question asked. As I indicated, the minister is quite able to make the decision as to whether she takes that question on notice. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

**Ms ENOCH:** I have answered the question.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, if the level of housing stock had increased with population growth we would have an extra 5,000 houses available for social housing. The figures that the director-general has just provided state alarmingly that in the past two years the number of those in the very high need category has leapt from 8,924 to 20,682. That is more than double the people in the very high need category in the past two years, preCOVID. What do you say to vulnerable Queenslanders about the Queensland government's ability to house our most vulnerable people?

**Ms ENOCH:** For the record, to clarify, the number that the director-general had made clear was with regards to high needs and very high needs, so two classifications. The member for Everton has only classified it as very high needs. That is a point for the record.

I just make clear that in the last financial year alone, we have supported more than 5,749 new households into social housing. 99 per cent of those were in the very high need and high need category. We are a person centred organisation and we take the needs of individuals very seriously. That is why the housing register is such an important tool. We do not remove people from the housing register once they have received housing assistance, like we have seen in other states, or as we had seen in the policies of the former LNP government who had proposed to remove people from the social housing register as soon as they received any kind of housing assistance. Those individuals and households that are on the social housing register also receive other housing assistance to be able to sustain tenancies. In fact, as I have already said, last year alone we saw more than 200,000 housing assistance services provided to Queenslanders on top of the more than 5,749 households that were supported into social housing.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, would you please advise when the last annual eligibility reviews were conducted for existing public housing tenants?

**Ms O'Connor:** We run a very active service system. We are constantly talking to our clients. In fact, on a regular basis there is contact with people on the housing register. We have started to reignite that work after somewhat of a pause during COVID. I can tell you that we have, in recent months, made thousands of phone calls to Queenslanders who are on the register and talked to them about their circumstances; talked to them about what has happened to them and where they are living at the moment. We also know that a number of them have chosen to self-select off the register as a result of those calls because their needs have been met by housing services.

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Chair: I think the director-general has misunderstood my question. I may not have communicated it clearly. I meant the annual eligibility of those actually in social housing at the moment, not those on the register—those actually residing in social housing properties.

**Ms O'Connor:** Thank you for the clarification. People are required to tell us if their circumstances change. Our housing service centres are in constant communication with people who are our tenants and with whom we have regular dealings, so I think it is fair to say that that information is communicated ongoing to us. What we also do is, during COVID, make sure that there is plenty of information going out to social housing tenants and that they have plenty of advice and can contact our housing service centres whenever they need to. It is quite comprehensive.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, could you advise how many public housing tenants are currently paying market rent due to exceeding eligibility parameters?

**Ms O'Connor:** The vast majority of our clients are on fixed incomes and they pay around 25 per cent of those fixed incomes. If somebody exceeds the allowable income, we increase their rent. They tell us. That is part of the process that we use, where they tell us about their change of circumstance. The housing service centres in each area work very closely with clients to make sure that we have that information.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, there are social housing tenants that pay market rent exceeding the 25 per cent of their income because they now fall outside the eligibility parameters. I want to know how many people are in that category.

**Ms O'Connor:** Given the member has asked for very specific information, Chair, I suggest we get that before the end of the session. Is that alright, Minister?

**Ms ENOCH:** Chair, I am absolutely stunned by the member for Everton—

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

**Mr MANDER:** I am not asking for an editorial comment.

**Ms ENOCH:** Is he continuing to demonise people in social housing—

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

**CHAIR:** I will take your point of order. Member for Everton, the director-general has undertaken to take your question under the standing orders.

**Mr MANDER:** Exactly. I am very happy with that.

**CHAIR:** And will return to us before the end of the session.

**Mr MANDER:** I am very happy with that.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I take your point of order and I take your note.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, how much of the \$1.9 billion that the government has committed to social housing construction in this year's budget is new money, money that has never appeared in a previous budget paper?

**Ms O'Connor:** The \$1.908 billion goes across a number of years: \$20 million for domestic and family violence support services, \$20 million for homelessness support services, \$54.88 million to continue essential housing and homelessness services launched under the housing strategy, \$60 million over two years for immediate housing supply, \$160 million of the anticipated returns from the housing—

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Chair: relevance. I am not interested in knowing what the \$1.9 billion is made up of. I want to know how much of that is money that has never been included in previous budget papers. I am trying to determine the true amount of extra money that has been announced by the government.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Everton. With all due respect, I understood the director-general—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Maybe they do not know.

**CHAIR:** Member, I do not appreciate being interrupted as the chair. I understand the director-general is being responsive to the answer. I was listening carefully and intently. Director-General, do you have anything further to offer?

**Ms O'Connor:** Yes, thank you, Chair, because I had not finished. The remaining \$1.593 billion incorporates funding for the accelerated capital works and capital grants program over the next four years.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Director-General. Minister, do you have anything further to add to that question?

**Ms ENOCH:** Yes.

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order—

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, the minister has something further to add.

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order: if the minister speaks it needs to be taken from the government time. My question was directed to the director-general. I am not interested in what the minister has to say about it.

**Ms ENOCH:** What?

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, I will rule as per the standing orders of this parliament. In previous estimates I have been more than fair to non-government time. I will manage non-government time to ensure that you are given adequate time. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Madam Chair: this is contrary to standing orders. I have asked a question directly to the director-general. I am not interested in what anybody else has to say about it. If I want to know what the minister has to say about it, I will ask her a question directly. This is a time-wasting tactic that this government has conducted for the last fortnight.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, my ruling stands. I will manage government and non-government time accordingly. I asked, as did the director-general, whether the minister had anything further to add. Then we will return to the member for Everton to provide adequate time for the non-government to seek clarification around the Appropriation Bill. Minister.

**Ms ENOCH:** Thank you, Chair. In further response to the member for Everton's question as the minister responsible—

**Mr MANDER:** To the director-general.

**Ms ENOCH:** My response to the question from the member for Everton—

**Mr MANDER:** Not interested.

**Ms ENOCH:** The member may not be interested. However—

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, I ask that you cease the interjections.

**Ms ENOCH:** We know that the member for Everton is not interested in having actual conversations about social housing but rather political point scoring.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order on relevance, Madam Chair.

**Ms ENOCH:** However, what I can say is that the \$1.9 billion investment in social housing—

**CHAIR:** Member for Scenic Rim, I acknowledge your point of order on relevance. The sooner we cease interruptions the sooner we can return to non-government questions.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Madam Chair, the point of order is on relevance. The minister has not been asked a question. There can be no relevance because she has not been asked a question. I ask that you move to the next question for the member for Everton.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your guidance, member for Scenic Rim. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

**Ms ENOCH:** Just to support that this is fast-tracking our ability to increase the amount of stock into the social housing system. It is incredibly important. That is why we are fast-tracking it in the way that we are. We came into this portfolio in 2015 with a deficit of 425 social housing dwellings. We had to rebuild those numbers and now fast-track given the current conditions that we see ourselves in post-COVID.

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

**Mr MANDER:** I am happy to wait for the next session.

**Ms ENOCH:** So you have run out of questions.

**CHAIR:** Member for Cook.

**Ms LUI:** Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Can the minister outline the government's investment in social housing in this year's budget?

**Ms ENOCH:** Thank you very much, member for Cook, for the very sensible question. I thank her for that question and for her commitment to social housing in this state. The Queensland government is investing in safe, secure and affordable housing and improving housing and homelessness services to meet the needs of Queenslanders.

The 2021-22 state budget puts people first and focuses on increasing housing supply and housing and homelessness supports across Queensland. In recognition of what is needed for Queensland, the Palaszczuk government is investing \$2.9 billion to increase social and affordable housing and improve the delivery of housing and homelessness services for Queenslanders in need. This is the largest concentrated investment in social housing in Queensland's history.

In this budget \$1.9 billion has been committed over four years for the new Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 to boost housing supply and increase housing and homelessness supports across Queensland. Of this, \$1.8 billion over four years has been committed to increasing the supply of social housing and upgrading the existing social housing property portfolio. It includes \$60 million over two years, with \$30 million in 2021-22 to fast-track immediate social housing projects and initiatives and prepare a pipeline of work for future years.

There is \$94.9 million over four years, with \$23.7 million in 2021-22 to support the housing and homelessness service system and deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders. Of this, \$20 million over four years has been committed to expand domestic and family violence support services, while \$20 million over four years is for homelessness initiatives including through headleases, crisis housing and supports. It also includes \$54.9 million over four years to fund essential continuing services delivered through the first Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2017-2020.

In a first for Queensland, the Palaszczuk government has also established a \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund to drive supply of new social housing, helping to respond to current and future need. Importantly, the Housing Investment Fund provides a vehicle for co-investment in development opportunities and will maximise funding and financing opportunities.

In the current housing market, we are seeing more Queenslanders in need of rental accommodation and an increase in vulnerable people who need housing support. The Palaszczuk government is playing its part, while unfortunately the Morrison government has turned its back on Queenslanders. The federal government's budget this year provides no new funding for social housing and no support for rental affordability. The Morrison government has decided to focus entirely on home ownership and turn its back on vulnerable people who cannot afford to buy a house and are struggling just to pay the rent. Fortunately, for Queenslanders, the Labor government will continue to deliver a range of housing options that support the needs of Queenslanders.

**Mr SKELTON:** Minister, I refer to page 7 of the SDS. How does the budget support housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland?

**Ms ENOCH:** I thank the member for this very important question. The Palaszczuk government is committed to reframing our relationship with First Nations people. That work is reflected in our dedication to progressing a path to treaty or treaties, as well as through our investment in support for First Nations people across government.

The 2021-22 state budget includes more than \$317 million to improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the state. This includes \$212.4 million to improve social housing and deliver housing services in discrete communities. We have also allocated \$45.3 million to improve state owned and managed Indigenous housing across Queensland and \$23.4 million to support private home ownership in remote communities. An additional \$12.2 million has been invested in homelessness responses.

In 2021-22, we will continue to deliver our \$40 million remote interim capital program, which we put in place when the federal LNP government walked away from the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. This program will deliver up to 48 new houses, up to 35 land lots for immediate and future use and 46 extensions to existing homes. Last financial year we received proposals from each of the 17 councils for their respective funding under this program. I am pleased that 15 councils are delivering the program of work through funding agreements, while Aurukun and Cherbourg elected for QBuild to manage the works. I can inform the committee that Pomppuraaw has completed its program, delivering four new homes which now have families living in them.

In 2021-22, the department will also continue to provide ongoing delivery of our \$75 million commitment to support home ownership in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through the Remote Home Ownership Program. Increasing home ownership opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through working with communities and partners is also a key action under the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025.

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 has been backed by a \$24.1 million investment this year and will continue to implement the actions it outlines. We have now delivered a key initiative of this plan with the official launch on 26 May this year of a new peak body for Indigenous community housing—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland. In 2021-22, \$1.6 million is being allocated to support the peak body's work with Indigenous community housing organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils to improve housing outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders.

It is truly disappointing that the federal government has vacated the field when it comes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, leaving the Palaszczuk government to do the heavy lifting. However, First Nations Queenslanders can be assured that this government will continue to support communities across the state to improve housing outcomes.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I have a question for you. I refer to page 2 of the SDS. How is the government responding to the impact that current demands in the housing market are having on social housing?

**Ms ENOCH:** Thank you, Chair, for this incredibly important question. This impacts so many people. The Queensland government is very much taking action to respond to the current housing market conditions which are placing pressure on low and moderate income families. While housing affordability has been an issue for decades, current market conditions are quite exceptional. We are seeing vacancy rates across most local government areas at around one per cent. House prices are booming in response to interstate migration and low interest rates, and all of this is placing pressure on social housing supply.

Under the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 we have increased the supply of social and affordable housing. Since 2017 we have commenced 2,480 social housing homes and 692 affordable homes—exceeding our target—and supported more than 2,200 jobs in the construction industry. We have partnered with the community housing sector to commence 1,121 new social and affordable dwellings valued at \$203.1 million supported by over \$136 million of government investment. Under the housing strategy's first action plan we introduced a range of new private market products and services that have successfully supported 155,601 Queenslanders to access or sustain housing in the 2020-21 financial year. This included an enhancement to our longstanding bond loan program, Bond Loan Plus, and flexible assistance packages for people to support them to access and sustain housing in the private market. The expanded private rental market suite of products and assistance ensured that Queensland renters were well supported through the COVID-19 health crisis with tailored solutions to continue to rent privately. In particular, the emergency COVID-19 rental grant measure provided 3,202 Queensland renters with \$5.2 million of financial assistance to sustain their private rental tenancy.



As I have already said, the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 is supported by \$2.9 billion of investment to boost supply and improve housing and homelessness services statewide. Under the new action plan we have established a \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund to drive new supply to support current and future housing need. Additionally, we are providing \$54.9 million over four years to continue the successful new suite of services introduced under the housing strategy's first action plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of my department, particularly those who turn up every day to assist vulnerable Queenslanders into safe and secure housing. Our statewide net of housing service centres offers person-centred and tailored housing responses as an important frontline service across Queensland's diverse communities. The Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 is about boosting supply, moving towards ending homelessness, supporting vulnerable people and securing a fair and accessible housing system. We share these objectives with our community partners and other government agencies, and we have shared responsibility to work together to improve outcomes for all Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I now call the member for Cook.

**Ms LUI:** I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Can the minister outline the funding in this year's budget for the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025?

**Ms ENOCH:** All Queenslanders deserve a safe place to call home. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, interstate migration, record low vacancy rates and booming housing prices are creating challenges across Queensland's communities. The Palaszczuk government is taking action to address these unprecedented housing market pressures and help more Queenslanders into safe, secure and affordable homes sooner.

Alongside this year's budget we launched the \$1.9 billion Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 to drive Queensland further towards ending homelessness and better responding to housing needs. The new action plan builds upon the successes of the first action plan, supports and complements The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan, and takes us closer to achieving the vision of the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027. At the centre of this action plan is the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative, backed by a \$1.8 billion investment which will commence 7,400 new social and affordable homes by the end of June 2025.

When last in government the LNP and the member for Everton released their plan for housing in Queensland which was based almost entirely on the wholesale giveaway of publicly owned housing stock. In contrast, the Palaszczuk government will fast-track construction and maintenance projects through the QuickStarts Qld program to increase the supply of social housing across the state.

Something I am particularly proud of is the establishment of a new \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund. This fund is a first for Queensland. It will deliver returns that will support increased social and affordable housing development across the state now and into the future, providing certainty for our industry partners and providers. Through our new Help to Home initiative we will improve access to the private rental market by head leasing up to 1,000 properties over two years, providing critical housing with support in priority locations.

We aim to prevent homelessness and support vulnerable people to stay in their homes with \$94.9 million allocated over four years to continue support for the sector and expand it to deliver even better outcomes for Queenslanders. This includes \$20 million for domestic and family violence housing assistance and support along with \$20 million for homelessness initiatives, including head leases and crisis housing and supports. It also includes a further \$54.9 million to fund the continuation of essential housing and homelessness services delivered under the very First Housing Action Plan of the Palaszczuk government.

The Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 will assist vulnerable people to access and sustain housing and improve life outcomes. It will achieve this through: increasing social and affordable housing across the state; better integrated services; support for priority cohorts, including older women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders; and targeted investment to expand domestic and family violence services and enhance homelessness responses.

**Mr SKELTON:** Thank you, Minister, for your comprehensive answers. I refer to page 3 of the SDS and ask: how does the government's capital program in social housing supports jobs for Queenslanders?

**Ms ENOCH:** Jobs and housing have been a very important part of our recovery plan with regard to COVID-19, and we continue that through our record investment in this budget. Since the announcement of the Queensland Housing Strategy in 2017 the Palaszczuk government has

commenced 2,480 social housing homes with an investment of \$690 million. This investment supports more than 2,200 construction industry full-time-equivalent jobs and 692 affordable housing commencements have also been delivered, exceeding our target. This brings the total number of social homes commenced by the Palaszczuk government since July 2015 to 3,766. With the launch of the Palaszczuk government's bold new housing plan, backed by a \$2.9 billion investment we aim to supercharge that effort.

With the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 the Queensland government is acting immediately to address housing needs across the state, delivering new homes through a coordinated and integrated capital program. We will be investing \$1.8 billion to commence 7,400 new social and affordable homes for Queenslanders through a four-year integrated capital investment program and targeted housing solutions across the state. In a first for Queensland, as I have said, we have launched a new \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund to boost housing supply.

As part of the action plan, the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative enables the government to tackle the challenge of increased housing with a strong capital investment and a statewide focus. It provides the opportunity to harness the use of surplus government land and partnerships with the housing sector and other groups to expand investments and enable strategic, place-based responses to housing need. This investment will also support about 4,500 full-time equivalent jobs and it will build upon what we have already built and delivered in recent years.

For example, during the 2020-21 financial year, we successfully completed the \$12.3 million Gold Coast Youth Foyer. This fantastic project will soon be home to 40 young people aged 16 to 25 who are committed to engaging in education, training or work. The Youth Foyer provides pathways for young people to develop the skills needed to achieve independence. The project also supported 36 full-time equivalent industry jobs during construction and many more throughout the building industry supply chain.

Last financial year, the Queensland government and Brisbane Housing Company worked in partnership to complete construction of 30 new affordable housing units in Woolloongabba. These units will assist eligible people seeking affordable housing, as well as providing housing for young people to enable them to access employment and educational outcomes. Our government provided \$5.9 million including land towards this \$10.9 million project which supported 36 full-time equivalent jobs during construction along with many more throughout the building industry supply chain.

Unlike the former LNP government, which oversaw a net decline in public housing, the Palaszczuk government is building a better housing future for Queenslanders by supercharging social housing construction across the state, creating and supporting jobs, and delivering our state's economic recovery.

**CHAIR:** In the fullness of me being able to manage time throughout the day, I now call prematurely the deputy chair and member for Burnett.

**Mr BENNETT:** I hand over to the member for Maroochydore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Director-General, can you advise whether the State Archivist has the independence to write annual reports, or have they been edited or vetoed by departmental bosses?

**Ms O'Connor:** The State Archivist under the act prepares their report.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Have they been edited or altered by departmental bosses?

**Ms O'Connor:** I think the answer to that would be that, if the State Archivist would like assistance from communications teams to lay out and present the report, then that assistance is available, including potentially cleaning up grammatical errors. But the intent of the report is that it comes from the State Archivist.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Director-General, I am told that the former State Archivist's statements in the report in 2018 and 2019 were supposedly either directed to be altered or removed by departmental officials—

**Mr SKELTON:** Point of order, under standing order 115—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It would be nice to be able to actually finish the question before I was interrupted.

**Mr SKELTON:** It is already containing imputations. It is hypothetical.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Nicklin. Whilst I appreciate your guidance, member for Maroochydore, would you mind continuing your question please?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you, Chair. I am told that the former State Archivist's statements in the report in 2018 and 2019 were supposedly either directed to be altered or removed by departmental officials. Is this true?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore—

**Ms ENOCH:** Point of order, Chair—

**CHAIR:** I will just rule on this. Member for Maroochydore, I am very happy for you to rephrase the question, but I am advised by the secretariat that the question is hypothetical—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Actually, it is not, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is in regard to a whistleblower.

**CHAIR:** No. Member for Maroochydore—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is not hypothetical. This is a legitimate question in regard to the integrity of the system. I should not be gagged.

**CHAIR:** Order! Member for Maroochydore, I do not appreciate being undermined as the chair. Secondly, I made a ruling and I was very congenial to ask that you rephrase the question to ensure that it does not contain a hypothetical. If you would like to do that, please proceed.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Director-General, I am told that the former State Archivist's statements in the report in 2018 and 2019 were supposedly directed to be altered or removed by departmental officials. The question is whether this is true. Has there been interference in the State Archivist's role in those reports?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Maroochydore—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Or whether the Director-General is aware of that.

**CHAIR:** Sorry—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is not a hypothetical.

**CHAIR:** No. Member for Maroochydore, I thanked you for the question and I now ask the director-general to respond.

**Ms ENOCH:** Point of order, Chair: the member is referring to a period outside of the appropriation bills that we are currently considering.

**CHAIR:** I acknowledge your point of order, Minister. However, the question did relate to the role of the State Archivist and I ask the member for Maroochydore to rephrase the question to ensure it does not contain hypotheticals and it does relate to this period of appropriation.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you, Chair. Machinery-of-government changes do not remove the government's responsibility to be transparent and accountable and to tell the truth. Director-General, are you aware of any allegations of interference as being a factor in the former State Archivist leaving?

**Ms O'Connor:** The State Archivist chose to return to New Zealand at the conclusion of his contract on 8 March. My experience in the department has been limited to the last eight months, but I can tell you that the way in which the department and Archives interact is very respectful, very cognisant of the roles as expressed under the Public Records Act. There is support for the Archives, and I must say that the staff there do a simply amazing job to support all director-generals and all ministers across government. They also are very, very supportive of a public that wishes to access public records. There is nothing but respect that I have witnessed in terms of those interactions, so I can say that in the preparation of the last annual report I witnessed no interference or direction being given to the State Archivist.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I have a further question. Director-General, I acknowledge that with the machinery of government there is a cutover with the other Director-General and departmental staff. However, Director-General, was the former State Archivist offered to have his contract extended?

**Ms O'Connor:** I am aware that in the lead-up to the conclusion of the contract of the State Archivist there were discussions that were occurring. My interest in this is of course making sure that the archivist's work was completed, so anything that he had on foot I would have liked to have seen concluded before he finished. In order to achieve that, I asked that he be offered an extension to his contract. My understanding at the time was that his lease was finishing midyear. To coincide the dates, the extension was offered to him to June 2021 and he did not take it.

**Ms SIMPSON:** So it was a temporary extension or a very short extension from March to June?

**Ms O'Connor:** Yes. That is what he was offered in order to complete the work that he had on foot, but obviously he was choosing to return to New Zealand and take up employment there.

**Ms SIMPSON:** So it would be correct that he was not offered an extension of his contract beyond June 2021?

**Ms O'Connor:** Chair, I think I was clear that he was offered an extension until June 2021 to complete the work he had on foot.

**CHAIR:** Yes, but he did not accept that extension?

**Ms O'Connor:** No, he did not accept it.

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Director-General. The minister was quoted in the *Courier-Mail* on 11 March 2021 saying, 'Another extension was proposed to Mr Summerell and I was advised by the director-general on 1 March 2021 that this had not been accepted as he had chosen to return to New Zealand.' Is it not misleading to suggest that it is an extension of an actual contract beyond just three months? Would you not accept that that would give the impression of it being an actual extension substantially of the State Archivist's role?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Maroochydore. I am just going to take some advice. As I have considered the advice from the table that the question is seeking an opinion, member for Maroochydore, I ask that you rephrase the question so as to avoid an opinion, please.

**Ms SIMPSON:** The minister's statement was misleading, but I will ask the director-general. I am advised that the departmental—

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

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is misleading.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** It gives an impression that the State Archivist has been offered an extension of his contract—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore—

**Ms SIMPSON:**—not a three-month temporary extension.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, your behaviour and interjections are bordering on being disorderly. Minister, do you have a point of order?

**Ms ENOCH:** Yes, I do, Chair. I find the member for Maroochydore's comments personally offensive and I ask her to withdraw.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, the minister finds your comments personally offensive and I ask that you—

**Ms SIMPSON:** I withdraw. My question is to the director-general. I am advised the department refused to take further action regarding Barbagallo's missing resignation letter. However, the former State Archivist refused to close the matter. I put to you that supposedly the now former State Archivist was being pressured to sign letters closing the matter in his final days and he refused. Is this correct?

**CHAIR:** Member, I am concerned that the question is seeking an opinion of the director-general. I will give you the opportunity to rephrase the question.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I put to the director-general: is it correct that the now former State Archivist was being pressured to sign letters closing the matter of the missing Barbagallo letter in his final days and refused?

**Ms O'Connor:** Chair, can I please return to the previous question, because I want to make this very clear. In terms of the extension of senior executives, if you are offering somebody a new contract, that is very clear; it is a new contract, and they come in terms of three years with an additional two. Sometimes they are referred to as contract renewals. A contract extension is exactly that. I was very clear about what I was offering. I know it was conveyed very clearly to the former State Archivist. I never mislead people in terms of their employment. Can we have that noted first please, Chair, for the record?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Director-General. Director-General, are you happy to proceed to the following question?

**Ms O'Connor:** Yes, if I can just clarify, member, thank you. You are asking in terms of the complaint in relation to the missing resignation letter, if we can paraphrase it like that. I understand that the acting State Archivist had the benefit of all of the research and investigation that was undertaken

by the previous State Archivist. In coming to the conclusion that she did, that was made with all of the benefit of that information, but it turned on the issue of no evidence. That is what I have been informed. I do not interfere in relation to the role of the State Archivist under the act. There are areas under the act where the State Archivist alone has powers and I do not control them. The taking of complaints and the investigation of complaints is that area in particular where the State Archivist must do that. They come to that conclusion on their own. The advice goes out to the people who have raised the issue. I certainly am not aware of any interference or attempt to direct the State Archivist and I cannot imagine there would have been.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, I counsel you that some of your questioning is related to a previous budget. Can we come back to the current budget we are debating today? Member for Maroochydore, do you have further questions?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Absolutely, Madam Chair. There are many more issues in regard to this issue. In fact, more questions arise the more we ask. Director-General, you have acknowledged that the former State Archivist was given an extension of his contract of about three months to finish off outstanding matters. You have then put on the record that the acting State Archivist, who took over in early March when Mr Summerell left, finalised the Barbagallo issue. Was this Barbagallo issue one that any departmental officials had had discussions with the former State Archivist about resolving before he left?

**Ms O'Connor:** I think, Chair, in terms of my offer of an extension to the previous State Archivist, it was to enable him to complete the work that he had on foot. I am very serious about making sure that when people raise complaints with the department there is serious consideration of those complaints and that people are advised as soon as possible about the outcome of those complaint investigations. In terms of discussions with the department, that was the nature of my discussions with the digital economy staff in terms of the future of the State Archivist. Member, I am not aware of anything else.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Can I just clarify the time left in this session, Madam Chairman?

**CHAIR:** Yes, definitely.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Three minutes?

**CHAIR:** Sorry, member, just a moment. Member for Maroochydore, it was three minutes. However, given I took a bit of time there to get back to you, there will now be four minutes.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I will pass to my colleague.

**Mr MANDER:** Director-General, utilising the funds through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, often referred to as NHFIC, this is a great opportunity for state and territory jurisdictions to partner with the community housing sector. Can you advise the value of transactions closed by the Queensland government with NHFIC please?

**Ms O'Connor:** You will be aware in terms of the housing action plans that there are ongoing discussions with the federal government and NHFIC in particular. Minister, do you want to make a comment on this?

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order. Excuse me, the question was directed to the director-general, not to the minister.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Everton. I cannot control the direction of the director-general.

**Mr MANDER:** That is why I made a point of order.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, member for Everton. The director-general did seek counsel from the minister. Minister, do you—

**Mr MANDER:** A point of order, Madam Chair: under the standing orders 181(d), 182(2) and 182 (3), the minister cannot answer a question unless I directly ask her. I have asked the director-general. If the director-general does not want to make any further response, I accept that.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member. Director-General, do you have anything further to add?

**Ms O'Connor:** Thank you, Chair. Given that it relates to a period of time under the first housing action plan, I would like to refer the question to my deputy director-general, Trish Woolley.

**Ms Woolley:** A point of clarification around the intersect with the National Housing Finance Investment Corporation: it is not a vehicle that the Queensland government can directly borrow from. It is available to third parties and community housing providers. In the context of partnering for growth and the arrangements with community housing providers, since November—

**Mr MANDER:** No, thank you. I am not interested in that; I am interested solely in NHFIC. Thank you. I appreciate your going there, but I am not interested in that. One more question, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Everton. I ask that you continue with your question.

**Mr MANDER:** My question is to the Minister. Minister, South Australia has closed \$125 million worth of transactions; Victoria, \$662 million of transactions; New South Wales, nearly \$1.3 billion of transactions with NHFIC; and Queensland has had a paltry \$5 million. Will you explain why Queensland is missing out on this invaluable source of funds?

**Ms ENOCH:** I thank the member for the question. Just to reiterate again for the benefit of the committee, the funding source to which the member for Everton is referring is not one that the Queensland government can borrow from; it is funding that is available to third parties. That is why our work under our Partnering for Growth program is being accelerated as part of our \$2.9 billion—

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, why are community housing providers not getting access to these funds?

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton! I find that quite disorderly. The minister was being—

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, the minister is about to filibuster on material irrelevant to the question. I am not interested in that Partnering for Growth program.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton! I do not need you to tell me how to do my job.

**Mr MANDER:** Community housing organisations and vulnerable Queenslanders are missing out on money from NHFIC.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, I now warn you under the standing orders.

**Mr MANDER:** Millions of dollars.

**CHAIR:** I now warn you under the standing orders, member for Everton. You are to cease the disorderly conduct. The minister was being responsive to your question. Minister, I ask that you respond to the question asked and I expect that you do that without interruption.

**Ms ENOCH:** Thank you, Chair, for your protection and your guidance. Of course, as we have seen from the member for Everton when he was responsible for the housing portfolio under the LNP, his whole premise of leadership was about removing all of the social housing properties—90 per cent in fact—that is what was in their policy—removing all of that and putting that out into the market rather than it being managed by government. That was the position—

**Mr MANDER:** Which is basically what every other state has done. That is why they can get access to this money.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, you have been warned. This is your final warning. The minister is being responsive to your question. Should you choose to interrupt again, I will exit you from the chamber. Minister, would you mind finishing the response, please?

**Ms ENOCH:** Thank you, Chair. Of course, just to reiterate for the committee, the Palaszczuk government is not supportive of the wholesale giveaway of social housing assets in this state. Let me be very clear: one of our key projects, Partnering for Growth, has seen over 1,100 new affordable and social housing properties being built as a result of that partnership. I have had meetings with representatives of NHFIC. They are very interested in dealing with Queensland under our housing investment fund. They are aware that tier 1 and tier 2 providers need to work through contractual arrangements—I am very aware of that—with NHFIC to get deals to work. I can tell you now that our new housing investment fund, the first of its kind in Queensland, is something in which representatives of NHFIC are incredibly interested. Not only do we get to keep our assets in public hands in terms of our housing stock but we also through our Partnering for Growth program and our housing investment fund are able to leverage the funding that is available at the national level.

I tell you what else is missing: this fund is an important one—and, yes, we are working and having conversations with NHFIC about our housing investment fund—but when you have a federal government that is walking away from the National Rental Affordability Scheme, putting at risk nearly 10,000 properties in this state over the next few years, that kind of pressure is absolutely something that everybody needs to put their minds to.

Currently, we have a federal government that had no new money in the latest budget for social housing—not one dollar for social housing in this year's budget—and on top of that vacated the space when it comes to the National Rental Affordability Scheme, seeing 10,000 properties in this state come off that scheme, putting pressure on affordable housing opportunities for vulnerable Queenslanders. That is the contrast that we see here.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. If members have a point of order, please raise that with me. I have a question. I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Minister, can you please advise how the government is helping young people in need of housing support?

**Ms ENOCH:** Thank you very much, Chair, for the question. The Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 commits to a number of key actions to address the needs of vulnerable young people to support them to achieve social and economic independence. These actions will be delivered through an integrated framework of housing with support and will help to facilitate a multiagency service response. They will also deliver the Queensland government's election commitment to develop a youth homelessness policy, including the development of housing models as well as support interventions for young people. Our government will work closely with stakeholders to develop a framework and form, by evidence, frontline voices and lived experiences that deliver housing responses for young people.

Through the new \$1.9 billion action plan, the Queensland government will also continue to grow housing options for young people by leveraging new housing supply through the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative. In 2020-2021, the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy allocated \$36.1 million in homelessness program funding. This was provided to 39 non-government organisations for 61 specialist homelessness services across Queensland to deliver temporary supported accommodation and other support services specifically for young people. The department has also funded the homelessness social benefit bond Youth CONNECT program, a pilot program being delivered by Churches of Christ. It will provide up to 300 additional places of sustainable housing and wraparound support for 15- to 25-year-olds who are exiting or have exited statutory care or custody and are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The pilot program is currently operating in Townsville, Logan, extending down to the Gold Coast, Ipswich and extending out to Toowoomba. The department is also delivering housing for young people at risk of homelessness through the world renowned youth foyer model. This includes expansion of the Logan youth foyer from 22 to 40 units of accommodation. Construction, as I have already announced, of the new Gold Coast youth foyer project was completed on 29 June and will provide 40 units of accommodation, office space, meeting and training rooms and communal areas. To support young people living in public housing into jobs and training, the department does not assess the working income of young people aged 24 years and under. This allows young people to be employed while living at home without their working income being used in rent calculation.

When we have an LNP opposition that continually denigrates vulnerable people living in public housing, I am extremely proud of this government's commitment to ensuring young Queenslanders have secure housing and the support they need to seek and retain work to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

**Ms LUI:** I refer to page 6 of the SDS. Minister, how is the Check In Qld app supporting Queensland's economic recovery from COVID-19?

**Ms ENOCH:** I thank the member for this really important question. We have been reminded in recent weeks of the important role that rapid contact tracing plays in controlling outbreaks of COVID-19. The accuracy of these contact details is critical in preventing further community transmission as quickly as possible. In addition, the check-in app greatly assists businesses to easily comply with public health directions and remain open as we continue Queensland's economic recovery. It enables guests, patrons, customers and staff to check in at venues and have their information securely stored by the Queensland government for contact tracing, if required.

On 1 May 2021, the use of the Check In Qld app was mandated for the hospitality industry. Due to its success in this industry, on 9 July 2021 the mandate was further extended to a range of sectors and businesses including: shopping centres, supermarkets, hair and beauty salons, events at stadiums, theme parks, gyms and universities. Importantly, the Palaszczuk government has ensured that this vital tool is free for customers and for businesses.

Overwhelmingly, the feedback that we have received is that the app is secure, fast and easy to use. Customers can easily add the contact details of guests, which I have done personally, who frequently accompany them—for example family members and friends—to speed up the check-in process or, if you have an older family member that does not have a smartphone for instance. I have done that with some of the members of my family.

Contact details are securely stored in Australia by the Queensland government and are deleted within 56 days. Registration is easy. Many venues have provided feedback on how simple it was to register and to set up the app. The positive participation of businesses and Queenslanders in the implementation and use of the Check In Qld app is absolutely fantastic. Just this week I spoke with staff from Grand Plaza, Browns Plains in my electorate who told me about how successful the rollout of the app has been for them. The total cost of the implementation and service delivery relating to the Check

In Qld app was less than \$450,000 to 30 June 2021. This is in contrast to the Commonwealth's COVIDSafe app where the federal government reportedly spent more than \$6.5 million of taxpayers' money on an app that did little to protect the public. Our Check In Qld app has been a huge success. As I said in my opening statement, we have seen over 179,000 businesses register for the app and more than 4.6 million downloads, which is a fantastic result. I thank all Queenslanders for their enthusiastic use of the app. I encourage everyone to keep up the incredibly good work.

**Mr SKELTON:** I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Will the minister inform the committee about the work Smart Service Queensland is doing to support Queensland's COVID response?

**Ms ENOCH:** I thank the member for Nicklin for the question. Smart Service Queensland continues to play a critical role in the Palaszczuk government's response to COVID-19. Smart Service Queensland, or SSQ, works closely with partner agencies to rapidly prioritise, develop and deliver frontline services. In addition to receiving public inquiries on 13 QGOV, SSQ provides inbound and outbound contact centre services on behalf of agencies. This includes the 134COVID and 13HEALTH phone lines and SSQ has also been delivering quarantine and self-isolation compliance and wellness checks and Queensland border travel restrictions, information and referrals.

In fact, I have had the opportunity to sit in on conversations of some of those self-isolation and quarantine compliance and wellness checks and I can tell you that those who receive those checks are very grateful for the phone call from SSQ staff.

The Palaszczuk government recognise the importance of Smart Service delivering COVID-19 information and services including 134COVID, hotel wellness and the Check In Qld app with \$11.3 million provided for in this year's state budget. There is no doubt that SSQ play a vital role in the government's COVID-19 response by providing the COVID-19 website. For the benefit of *Hansard* that website is [COVID-19.qld.gov.au](https://www.covid-19.qld.gov.au). This website provides an easily accessible portal for Queenslanders to provide important information on contact tracing sites. Queensland's current restrictions, locations of testing centres and information on the Check In Qld app.

More recently, SSQ has supported phone services for the significant demand for COVID-19 vaccinations, particularly since Queensland Health commenced roll-out of dedicated community vaccination centres. It is heartening to see so many thousands of Queenslanders taking advantage of this health service and getting vaccinated to help keep Queenslanders safe. It is disappointing to see the lack of commitment from the Morrison government as seen by their vaccination 'strollout'. Vaccinations are one of our best ways to combat COVID-19. Nevertheless, SSQ will continue to provide fast, effective support that Queenslanders need and help us unite and recover for COVID-19.

**CHAIR:** Minister, on an issue that is very dear and important to my community, I refer to page 5 of the SDS. How is the government addressing social isolation and loneliness in Queensland?

**Ms ENOCH:** I thank the chair and the member for Mansfield for that important question and acknowledge the member's commitment to this very important issue. Again, I acknowledge the importance of this particular issue in the member's community. They have been great supporters of us advancing in this space. The COVID-19 pandemic has been part of the lives of Queenslanders since early 2020 and has irrefutably changed the way we live. It has widespread impacts, particularly on the most vulnerable members of our communities, who are at the greatest risk of experiencing social isolation and loneliness.

Queenslanders including seniors, people with disability and their carers, people with mental illness and young people are the most vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness. For so many people, the pandemic and periods of lockdown prove to be a very solitary experience. In 2020, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that the personal stressor most experienced by Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic was loneliness. In fact, one in five people experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation as a result of the pandemic. That is why the Palaszczuk government is committed to examining the issue of social isolation and loneliness in our communities through the parliamentary inquiry that is currently underway by this committee.

Everyone has a role to play in addressing social isolation and loneliness, including communities, governments, service providers and businesses. I encourage stakeholders, the community and those who engage with frontline support services to provide input into the inquiry. Inviting community participation in this review is just one of the actions our government is taking to address social isolation and loneliness in our communities.

The Palaszczuk government is looking at ways to strengthen and renew our engagement with neighbourhood and community centres and enhance the role they play in social cohesion and addressing social isolation. Through our Care Army, our network of more than 125 neighbourhood and



community centres and various other initiatives, we have been working hard to connect with Queenslanders and make sure they are engaged and included in their communities. This is especially applicable for seniors and vulnerable members of the community.

Our frontline housing and homelessness services work directly with people to ensure that they have the wraparound supports that they need to sustain their tenancies. We have supported people to connect with their communities. Globally, there is a growing awareness and recognition of this problem and the significant effect it has on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of people. Every one of us can play a role in tackling this issue. Of course there is always more to do to support vulnerable Queenslanders, which will be outlined by the findings of this inquiry, I am sure. The inquiry outcomes will help progress the government's essential work in addressing this important issue for Queenslanders. I want to acknowledge the work that the committee is already doing and will be doing with regards to this inquiry.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Burnett and Deputy Chair?

**Mr BENNETT:** I refer to John-Paul Langbroek, the member for Surfers Paradise.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is nice to be here at the committee. I thank the minister, the director-general, Public Service staff and members of the committee for having me here. I have a question for the minister with reference to page 1 of the SDS about community services. Last year we discussed the 15 workers who were going to be connecting the Care Army volunteers into neighbourhood centres, so I wonder if you could advise the committee about the budget for them and the centres that they have actually visited of the 125-plus in Queensland please.

**Ms ENOCH:** Just while that specific information is coming forward, I thank the member for his interest in neighbourhood and community centres given that we all understand how important they are in terms of being able to support communities, particularly during the times that we have been experiencing with regard to COVID-19. There were lessons that we were able to learn through COVID-19, and the work that was brought about by the initiation of the Care Army in particular gave us that insight. The Care Army, now with more than 28,000 Queenslanders who have registered to be part of that network of volunteers, has been a very important part of supporting people across the state. One of the lessons that we learnt from that was that not all neighbourhood and community centres have the capacity to be able to manage the level of volunteers that were coming forward as a result of the Care Army and therefore there have been a couple of things that we have been able to provide.

The election commitment that was made was to provide \$1.7 million for neighbourhood and Care Army connect workers and those 15 positions are currently subject to a procurement process for those neighbourhood centres, and they will be very important aspects to the service delivery of those centres. On top of that in terms of the Care Army mobilisation project, we have also provided funding of \$250,000 to Volunteering Queensland to help us progress that project because we want to continue to see the mobilisation of the Care Army volunteers that we have on the register. That procurement process for those 15 community connect workers is underway currently.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Surfers Paradise. Member for South Brisbane, welcome.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks to everyone present also. Director-General, I note there was a previous question regarding the Social Housing Register with, I believe, 25,853 households as of 30 June 2021. Are you able to break that figure down by individual as well?

**Ms ENOCH:** Point of order, Chair: just to make sure that the record is correct, the member for South Brisbane was referring to 30 June 2021. The director-general referred to 30 June 2020.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Okay; my mistake.

**CHAIR:** Member for South Brisbane, do you have a clarifying question or another question?

**Dr MacMAHON:** May I get the breakdown for 30 June 2020 based on that number of households that has already been stated?

**Ms O'Connor:** Chair, can I just clarify: are we after cohorts? Is that what the member is seeking within—

**Dr MacMAHON:** No, I am after the number of individuals that are on the Social Housing Register as of 30 June 2020.

**Ms O'Connor:** If I can just clarify, we count households on the register. I know that when the data is released people do their own counts in terms of cohorts that they are interested in and classification, but the number that we publish is the households.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Director-General. Member for South Brisbane, do you have another question?

**Dr MacMAHON:** Yes. Director-General, yesterday I asked the Attorney-General about the number of people who were in crisis accommodation long term as a result of DV and I was told that the question would be better directed to this portfolio, so I am hoping you can tell me what is the average amount of time Queenslanders wait in crisis accommodation, both for domestic violence crisis accommodation and more general homelessness crisis accommodation, and how many people are in that accommodation beyond one month?

**Ms O'Connor:** I am just looking for some information to help you with that now, member.

**Dr MacMAHON:** I am happy to place that one on notice.

**Ms O'Connor:** No, I think that we have some information. The advice we have is that, from July 2020 to March 2021, 7,114 clients identified DFV as the main reason for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services. In terms of the number who are waiting for assistance, across the housing service centres the service offer for people who are experiencing domestic and family violence means that they are prioritised for support and we have specialist response teams embedded within the housing service systems to make sure that people's needs are met very quickly. The issue, I think, that was raised was in relation to refuges. We actually do not run the refuges. We have built the refuges, but when people come to us and we take referrals for women, and particularly women with children, experiencing domestic and family violence their needs are met immediately. They can be met with short-term solutions such as hotel accommodation or temporary unit accommodation until we can transition them into something longer term and more stable.

**Dr MacMAHON:** So no data on average wait times?

**Ms O'Connor:** I think that I have just identified—

**Ms ENOCH:** Chair, that was not the question.

**CHAIR:** No, Minister, I appreciate it was not the question.

**Dr MacMAHON:** That was the question.

**CHAIR:** The member for South Brisbane has a little bit of time remaining, so by all means, member for South Brisbane, if you could just clarify that particular question you had, but we are running short of time.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Just to clarify, the question was: what is the average wait time Queenslanders spend in crisis accommodation? But if you do not have that data available I can move on to another question.

**Ms O'Connor:** I think that we expressed that, when people present with DFV, their needs are met and they can be met in a variety of ways. In terms of going into crisis accommodation, we wrap support services around people to make sure they can transition to something more stable as quickly as possible and we try and minimise the time that people spend either in crisis accommodation or indeed in refuges.

**Ms ENOCH:** Just for further clarification, there is question on notice No. 347 that might assist as well. I direct the member to that.

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

**Ms LUI:** I refer to page 5 of the SDS. Will the minister please update the committee on support provided to vulnerable Queenslanders through the Queensland Community Support Scheme?

**Ms ENOCH:** The COVID-19 pandemic has affected so many Queenslanders in ways we might never have imagined some two years ago. Despite the strong health response from all Queenslanders, unfortunately some of the most vulnerable in our community have been amongst the most significantly impacted. That is why the Palaszczuk government is investing \$37.8 million in the Queensland Community Support Scheme this financial year. Today I am pleased to announce that this includes the extension of \$6.38 million to support existing QCSS contracts for a further 12 months. I am advised that 32 providers have already renewed their contracts. In addition to this funding, a more than \$420,000 funding boost this financial year will provide certainty for continuing services supporting First Nations communities.

The QCSS provides services and support to Queenslanders who are under 65, have low-level disability, chronic health or mental health conditions and are ineligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The program supports those Queenslanders to improve their social participation

and undertake regular daytime activities. Even just a small amount of assistance can make a huge contribution to supporting a person's ability to maintain or regain their independence, enhance their ability to remain living in their own home and participate in their local community.

Throughout the pandemic, the vital services provided through the scheme help those in need to undertake regular day-to-day activities and remain connected locally. Some of the essential services enabled by QCSS include in-home support such as personal care, cleaning and preparing meals as well as facilitating connection to the community through shopping assistance, participating in social activities and attending medical appointments. The program supports Queenslanders such as Mary-Ann, who experienced a significant injury falling down some stairs that has prevented her from being able to perform essential tasks such as mopping and sweeping. Thanks to QCSS support, Mary-Ann receives two hours of support per week to assist with cleaning and other supports.

My department advises that this investment will support an estimated 400,000 support hours for vulnerable Queenslanders just like Mary-Ann who might otherwise fall through the cracks. The Palaszczuk government is committed to funding high-quality community services for seniors, people with disability, families, young people and vulnerable Queenslanders.

**Mr SKELTON:** Minister, I apologise if this is a little like a question asked by the member for Southport. I refer to page 5 of the SDS. In addition to capital investment, what operational funding is the government providing for the important work of our neighbourhood and community centres?

**Ms ENOCH:** Neighbourhood and community centres are vital social infrastructure in Queensland communities. The Palaszczuk government recognises the important role those centres play in connecting communities and using their place based expertise to provide social and community services to Queenslanders. That is why we are investing \$19.5 million in our state's network of more than 125 neighbourhood and community centres this financial year. We continue to work with community organisations to identify more opportunities to support the work of our NCCs.

Our commitment to the sector is demonstrated by the fact that the Palaszczuk government has made five election commitments relating to neighbourhood and community centres. Those commitments are part of our efforts to maximise the value of the work of NCCs in their communities and recognise their expertise and local knowledge. We are working with neighbourhood and community centres to help them deliver the best place based outcomes for local communities and residents.


The government is consulting with the neighbourhood and community centres strategic repositioning committee, which has already met twice and is working well. I have met with them on one of those occasions. It is a very impressive group of people who will be helping us reposition neighbourhood and community centres strategically into the future. This approach will ensure that we are working together to ensure that services and investment are going where they are most needed to support Queenslanders, particularly people and families who are vulnerable.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I will interrupt you there in relation to managing time. My apologies. We are almost at the end of the session. A question was taken earlier in relation to market rent. Director-General, could you close that question, please?

**Ms O'Connor:** The question was around market rent. Rent is assessed based on a household's assessable income of 25 per cent. All social housing tenants need to notify us within 28 days if there are changes to their household's income. As of 30 June 2021, 197 households out of 54,431 tenancies are paying market rent.

**CHAIR:** The committee will now adjourn for a break and the hearing will resume at 11 am with the examination of the estimates of the arts portfolio. I request any departmental officers who are not participating in the next session to exit the hearing chamber as quickly as possible as the committee has a very quick changeover period. This will allow the committee to keep to the hearing schedule, for the chamber to be cleaned appropriately and for us to resume in the chamber as per the schedule identified. I thank the minister and her staff.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.44 am to 11.00 am.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the arts portfolio. I call the member for Burnett and Deputy Chair.

**Mr BENNETT:** I defer to the member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, in the last session, your staff were asked a direct question about the number of people on the social housing waiting list as at 30 June 2021—

**CHAIR:** Sorry, member.

**Mr MANDER:** This committee was misled, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton—

**Mr MANDER:** Would you advise how many people are on the social housing register as at 30 June 2021? Queenslanders deserve to know this figure.

**Ms LUI:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Cook. Member for Everton, we have now moved onto the arts section.

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, it is outrageous that that figure was misrepresented in the last session.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member.

**Mr MANDER:** That figure is 14 or 15 months old. Queenslanders deserve to know how many people are on the house social housing register.

**CHAIR:** Member, the last time you were in the chamber during the last session, I had warned you. We have now moved on to the arts section of the estimates hearing. If you have a concern with information that the member has provided, then you are able to write to the Speaker.

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, if the minister had any sense of decency, she would have put this to bed straightaway and just simply advised those numbers. Queenslanders deserve to know.

**CHAIR:** Member, you are under a warning. I now ask that you leave the chamber for a period of one hour.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Everton withdrew from the committee room at 11.02 am.*

**CHAIR:** As I was saying, minister, we will now move onto the session titled 'Arts'. I understand Deputy Chair has deferred to the member for Moggill. I ask the member for Moggill to direct your first question.

**Dr ROWAN:** Thank you, Chair. My thanks to the minister, the director-general and other departmental staff in attendance today. Chair, with reference to SDS, page 1, and the department service objective to support the growth of the arts sector, I want to reference a report of the Australia Institute, titled *Creativity in Crisis: Rebooting Australia's Arts and Entertainment Sector After COVID*. Director-General, the Australia Institute report indicates that support for the arts and entertainment sector by the New South Wales government was \$50 million, by the Victorian state government was \$30 million and by the West Australian government was \$28 million. Director-General, given Queensland provided \$22 million in support, has this met the needs of the arts and entertainment sector here in Queensland throughout the pandemic?

**Ms O'Connor:** I am going to ask my deputy director-general, Kirsten Herring, to respond to that question.

**Ms Herring:** The department has delivered a range of funding measures to support COVID recovery in the arts sector. It dates back to last April-May of 2020 when the pandemic first came along. We worked very hard with the sector to bring forward funding to make sure they were able to have flexibility in how they responded to the sector while we worked through a package of assistance to take to government. We were fortunate to receive funding assistance from the Queensland government of \$22 ½ million. Together with the previous support and a range of other measures that all came together, it has been approximately \$79 million in COVID support.

To the member's question, I do know the report you are referring to and I had a good look at those statistics because to me they seemed slightly out of timing with where the package of assistance came into play. At this point, we are very comfortable where we are at in responding to the sector's needs. The member would be aware we are at 50 per cent capacity in theatres at the moment which is good. Obviously we need that to come back, but the health response for the state has been very strong.

Moving forward, we received \$7 million for live music venue support through this government as a top-up amount, so that takes the \$22 ½ million to \$29 ½ million. Over the last month we have been processing applications for live music because we know that is one that has really been hit hard. We have around \$4 million still left of the \$22 ½ million to allocate over the next three to four months as we work through. We are hoping for an end to the restrictions that we are facing once the vaccination rates come into place.

**Dr ROWAN:** Referencing SDS, page 1, and growth for the arts sector, Director-General, Natalie Bochenski of local pop culture theatre company, Act React, has said that current COVID-19 support grants for small business exclude many in the arts sector who operate as sole traders or contractors

with a small annual turnover and no employees on their payroll. Director-General, what is being done to ensure that all small operators in the arts sector are able to benefit and easily access support programs from within the department?

**Ms ENOCH:** Point of order, Chair: the member is referring to a set of grants that are not within this portfolio; they are with Treasury and small business, as I understand it. However, in terms of the multiple grants that are being made available to the arts sector through either the broader \$79 million that has already been committed or through the targeted \$22.5 million, certainly—I will allow the director-general obviously to answer the question, given that the member has directed it to her specifically, but obviously the grants that are targeted from this portfolio for arts bodies and individuals range from individual artists right through to small and medium sized companies through to supporting our larger home companies.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will ask the director-general to respond to the question. Member for Moggill, did you want to rephrase your question in any way or are you happy for the director-general to respond?

**Dr ROWAN:** I am happy for the director-general to respond. To clarify, in reference to those small operators in the arts sector and what support is being provided via the department, of which the director-general is the—

**Ms O'Connor:** There are many grants that go out in terms of Arts Queensland. The 2021-22 budget funding to the arts sector is \$62.4 million, consisting of grants that are capital grants to the Rockhampton Art Gallery, base funding grants of \$38.976 million and limited life grants of \$19.948 million. There is also limited life funding that goes out in a range of grant forms in terms of the recovery package. In relation to the specifics around the small operators, I will ask Kirsten, the deputy director-general, to speak to that directly.

**Ms Herring:** It is an interesting question because very early on in the pandemic it was very clear that we were facing a challenge for contractors in the sector. The nature of arts employment is such that it is project by project based for a lot of them. You have the ones that were able to get JobKeeper quite quickly, but then it was really clear we had this layer within the arts sector employment that we had to address.

Back in about May we started to pull together what we called the stART grant program which could go direct to independent artists and organisations. They were \$3,000 grants. We worked with the industry bodies and the organisations that were closest to those artists to distribute those grants to make sure they were getting to where they needed to go. As we kept working through then the \$22 ½ million recovery package, we worked out that there would be an opportunity to support not only the small to medium core funded organisations but also the independent organisations that do not receive core funding. We managed to start a program there. We call it Sustain—independent arts organisations. There were 15 applicants and 11 were eligible under that program, to get to the independent artists.

I think it raises a really good point that into the next 12 months, we now have to look at what those impacts will be for those independent artists and keep addressing the fact that they need additional support as we work through the next phase of the recovery package. Thank you.

**Dr ROWAN:** Just to follow on from that question, Deputy Director-General, are you able to inform the committee as to where that work about further support needs is up to?

**Ms Herring:** We are in the process of providing a briefing to the minister now on the framework of how the remaining part of the package will be distributed. I have not had the minister sign off on it yet, but it is part of the framework that there will be an allocation for that part of the sector because it is so needed.

**Dr ROWAN:** Again, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, Minister, Kris Stewart, the Chief Executive Officer of QMusic and the artistic director of the Brisbane Powerhouse has stated that there are a lot of venues and businesses that are going broke slowly because of the impossibilities of earning an income but also because of what it costs to reopen after a lockdown. He has urged that the government consider the introduction of a backed underwriting scheme to lessen uncertainty around the viability of live performances following COVID lockdowns. Minister, is the state government considering adopting this underwriting scheme proposal to assure a degree of economic security for these businesses?

**Ms ENOCH:** Just for accuracy for Hansard, Mr Kris Stewart, who the member for Moggill has referred to, is no longer the artistic director of the Brisbane Powerhouse. He is now the CEO of QMusic. I have met with him just recently to talk through some of the continued issues that we are facing as a result of these necessary restrictions that are being felt right across the country.

As you have already heard from the director-general and the deputy director-general, there was a very discrete package of work committed to under the \$22.5 million Arts and Creative Cultural Recovery Package. On top of that, in this budget there is a further \$7 million to support the live music industry—in particular, live music venues, understanding that continued challenges are being faced by that part of the sector with regard to restrictions and closing and reopening.

We are seeing now many businesses working through business continuity plans to manage the changes that they might face as a result of COVID restrictions. Not only are restrictions in Queensland having some impacts in terms of closing and reopening, particularly as we have just seen through lockdown; but we are also seeing some of the impacts that are happening nationally—and this has been raised by QMusic, and no doubt it is something being reflected in the question from the member for Moggill. QMusic and the music industry have been raising that with me also. When other states have extended lockdowns, as we are seeing currently in New South Wales and as we have seen in Victoria, the impact on those acts being able to travel into our state because they currently exist or are rehearsing in hotspots also impacts on the business continuity of live music venues in Queensland.

That issue really does require a national response. Not all of the acts that come and perform in live music venues in Queensland are all from Queensland. Some of them are obviously from New South Wales and Victoria. We really do need a national response to that very issue to be able to support the live music industry and venues who are trying to showcase these performances and productions from other states.

**Dr ROWAN:** Minister, other states have been looking at government sponsored event cancellation rebates. Will the Queensland government implement an event cancellation rebate scheme here in Queensland for live music venues?

**Ms ENOCH:** I might bring forward the deputy director-general because there are a number of programs in place through our very comprehensive response to the sector. In fact, Queensland was one of the first jurisdictions to move with regard to responding to the COVID pandemic and the impacts on the arts sector. We continue to see that.

Some of the work that has been happening with our major performing arts companies around this very issue—for instance, the work that is happening with QPAC and our Queensland Government Insurance Fund et cetera—has been able to support some of those works. That business continuity piece has been very much part of every board's conversation—the conversations that the department has been having with the boards of our statutory bodies in particular about being able to sustain audiences at 50 per cent or 75 per cent or 100 per cent depending on the kinds of restrictions that we are going to be experiencing into the future.

Obviously Queensland has done a really good job. Right now we have theatres open at 50 per cent seated capacity. That is not happening in Sydney. That is not happening in Melbourne. All going well and if we all do the right thing, hopefully restrictions will be lifted even further next Sunday that will allow us to go back to 100 per cent capacity again and be able to support revenue. In the meantime, that business continuity piece has been something that every board has been working on. I will bring forward the deputy director-general to respond more specifically to your question.

**Ms Herring:** Live Performance Australia has been advocating for a business interruption fund. All states and the federal government have been working together on what the shape and form of such a fund could look like. It is a complex issue, as the minister raised. When you have a movement of acts and tours across states, where the actual lockdown will occur will impact on which state will have to fund where the detriment to the company occurs. Up to this point, we have preferred to work with live music venues and the performing arts companies on a case-by-case basis on supporting them with an immediate cash grant to solve that problem.

I can confirm that with the most unfortunate situation we have been in in the last two weeks where we did have a number of festivals that had to cancel—I will give use as an example: the Australian Festival of Chamber Music in Townsville. I went to Townsville and met with the board and we talked about what the recovery package could look like for them to make sure they are not just getting through this festival but they are actually funded sufficiently to deliver next year's festival which is just as important. It is a reasonable conclusion to say we are working on a case-by-case basis with each venue and each festival as it happens.

**Dr ROWAN:** With reference to page 39 of the SDS and the community objective 'backing small business', I want to ask the director-general about the eight creative business advisers. Have they been selected by Arts Queensland, are they in place and where are they providing services?

**Ms O'Connor:** I am going to get the DDG to respond to that one too.

**Ms Herring:** The Regional Arts Services Network has eight providers across the state that are in place to deliver regional arts when it comes to regional Queensland. The art sector was fortunate to receive funding through the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training for a \$2.5 million skills recovery package for the arts sector. The creative business champions were negotiated directly with the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training as a way to get expert advice not just at a local level but to use these creative business champions as a network across the state to work with small, medium and large organisations and artists affected by the pandemic on how to build skills and capacity and how to access the support that is available not just through the state government but through federal government means as well.

Arts Queensland facilitated the process to recruit the champions, but we did not personally recruit them. We were one member of a panel that oversaw the EOI process. We had a number of other people on the panel who were experts in this area or arts sector representatives who collectively chose the champions who are now delivering that service.

**Dr ROWAN:** Director-General, with reference to the Capital Statement and page 11 in relation to the new performing arts venue at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, is the project on time and on budget?

**Ms O'Connor:** I can say that this is a very big and important project. It is something that is of state importance and I think national importance when it is done. It will be the largest performing arts centre in Australia. We are expecting 300,000 plus visitors per year to attend. The budget as approved is \$175 million. Of course, QPAC is contributing \$25 million of that and the Queensland government is contributing \$150 million.

We are staying within that envelope. I meet regularly with Lendlease, and of course they have signed the guaranteed contract sum for that envelope. The only variation to the time frame that I have been advised of is four days. In terms of any significant variation, I would say that is not significant because weather can take more than that. I have been advised four days. Practical completion will occur. Then I understand from Lendlease and QPAC that there will be a period to test everything and make sure everything is working for performers and the audiences that come in. We are looking at practical completion around 4 January, so we are still on track to have the venue available in 2023. As it comes out of the ground we will also try and recover any time we can in relation to the overall build.

**Ms LUI:** I refer to page 4 of the SDS. Will the minister please update the committee on government initiatives supporting the arts and cultural sector in Queensland given the impacts of COVID-19?

**Ms ENOCH:** The Palaszczuk government is investing in the state's arts and cultural sector to drive economic recovery, strong social outcomes and job creation. In 2021-22 we have committed \$287.6 million to the arts portfolio. The impacts of COVID-19 mean that it is more important than ever before to support the sector. The arts are key to delivering our plan for economic recovery, each year contributing some \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supporting more than 92,000 jobs for Queenslanders. That is why we have committed to more than \$79 million in measures to stabilise and sustain the sector, including the dedicated \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package, to quickly address the immediate needs of the sector.

We have amped up investment in Queensland's live music industry with an additional \$7 million in 2021-22 to support the sustainability of the sector. This new investment in live music recognises the strong economic outcomes the sector delivers in Queensland and acknowledges the continuing impacts of COVID capacity restrictions on the sector. Brisbane's music industry alone is worth an estimated \$428 million to the Queensland economy. The broader recovery package is delivering funding opportunities to strengthen the arts and cultural sector's foundations, drive new creative work and digital programming, employ artists and arts workers, and support the reactivation of venues across Queensland to present COVID-safe audience experiences.

Specifically, the package also supports the First Nations arts sector with investment to grow the Indigenous arts centre network and for the development of new performance works. I was thrilled to recently confirm that, thanks to additional support from QPAC and the Palaszczuk government, Bangarra Dance Theatre's eagerly awaited season of *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert* will perform in Brisbane next week. I am looking forward to seeing that performance. When you think of all of the challenges, to continue a season of that stature here in Queensland is a huge achievement.

In addition, investment across regional Queensland is supporting the development and delivery of arts and cultural activations and driving important cultural tourism and economic outcomes. With a focus on COVID-safe arts activities, the recovery package has supported a range of projects presented

in outdoor and non-traditional settings and invested in the creation and delivery of digital programming. These projects are telling unique stories, engaging audiences and providing ongoing benefits to artists, arts workers and the communities in which they are situated.

The Arts and Cultural Recovery Package is an important down payment on creating together the Queensland government's 10-year road map for arts, culture and creativity to transform and renew Queensland to support our social and economic recovery. Creative Together works to harness the power of our stories and leverage Queensland's distinct arts and culture and world-class artistic capability to connect communities, drive economic and regional development, improve happiness and health and, importantly, stimulate creative thinking to fuel our future.

**Mr SKELTON:** I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Can the minister please update the committee on the range of project based grant programs supporting Queensland's artists and arts and cultural sector and vibrant arts and cultural experiences statewide?

**Ms ENOCH:** The Palaszczuk government is investing in vibrant arts and cultural experiences for Queenslanders in communities statewide and in doing so supporting the ongoing development of a diverse and world-class arts and cultural sector in Queensland. A significant part of the support is project grants for artists and organisations. The cornerstone of the government's investment in arts projects is the Queensland Arts Showcase Program. Since it was created by the Palaszczuk government in 2015, QASP—as it is now known—has supported 560 projects with more than \$20 million.

I am pleased to announce today that this includes more than \$1.35 million towards 33 projects statewide under the most recent QASP fund. Among the latest recipients are: Townsville's TheatreiNQ, which will receive \$49,000 to support their reimagining of the classic Bertolt Brecht play about the rise of evil; \$60,000 to support *Up in the Airlock Season 2*, a series of streamed performances showcasing emerging and established Queensland contemporary music artists; and nearly \$60,000 to support the 2020-21 Wynnum Fringe festival. QASP supported projects are contributing to the delivery of Creative Together, our 10-year road map for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland. I cannot wait to see some of the outcomes from this important investment.

The Palaszczuk government is also continuing our investment in arts and cultural touring through the Touring Queensland Fund and the Touring Queensland Quick Response Fund, which we call TQF. TQF supports the touring of high-quality tour-ready performing artworks and exhibitions to and from regional Queensland communities, including the delivery of arts in education programming in regional schools. TQF Quick provides Queensland based artists, organisations and presenters with grants of up to \$20,000 to support the delivery of touring performances and community engagement activities associated with touring performances or exhibitions.

Since applications opened in February the TQF and the TQF Quick programs have supported 31 applicants with over \$1 million in grant funding. Tours supported by TQF include the forthcoming Queensland regional tour of *Animal Farm*, presented by Brisbane's nationally renowned Shake & Stir theatre co, and Woodfordia's Festival of Small Halls spring tour to a range of locations including Biloela, Charters Towers, Cunnamulla and Toowoomba. Through programs such as TQF and TQF Quick and the Queensland Arts Showcase Program, the Palaszczuk government is supporting our arts and cultural sector to thrive and grow following the devastation that COVID-19 has brought to the sector and helping ensure vibrant arts programming in regional communities.

These are, of course, uncertain times for the sector. My department, through Arts Queensland, will continue to work with artists and organisations impacted by any further COVID-19 interruptions.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I have a question in relation to page 2 of the SDS. Would you update the committee on the government's support for Queensland's live music sector given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Ms ENOCH:** The Queensland government is injecting new money into the state's live music industry to support it through the impacts of COVID-19. We have amped up investment with an additional \$7 million in 2021-22 in recognition of the ongoing impacts of necessary COVID-19 restrictions on our local live music sector.

Live music venues can now access the additional Queensland government support through round 2 of the Live Music Support Program. Given the urgent needs of the sector, I am pleased to advise today that nine venues have already accessed almost \$1 million through this new round, with more venues set to benefit in the coming weeks. Venues approved for funding so far include \$100,000 for Newstead's The Triffid, more than \$32,000 for The Met in Toowoomba and more than \$40,000 for



Mrs J. Rabbits Speakeasy in Woolloongabba. This funding program will continue to back Queensland based live music venues to support their recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, acknowledging that Queensland's live music industry has been one of the hardest hit and faces ongoing challenges.

The Queensland government has worked closely with the live music sector directly and through QMusic, as Queensland's peak body for the sector, to best support the sector to emerge from COVID-19 with strength. This funding will help to offset venue operational costs for eligible venues, as well as programming and artist fees, and builds on previous Queensland government support under the Arts and Cultural Recovery Package which has already provided funding to 30 live music venues across Queensland over the last year alone.

We know our live music industry supports strong economic outcomes in Queensland, with Brisbane's music industry alone worth an estimated \$428 million to the Queensland economy. This investment also reflects the important role of live music venues in incubating new Queensland talent and creating employment opportunities for musicians, technicians and other creators within the broader industry. The industry helps to connect artists, audiences and communities across the state and provides positive social and community outcomes as well as economic benefits that flow on to other industries, including tourism and hospitality.

That is why the Palaszczuk government has committed more than \$11 million to Queensland's live music industry since March 2020 through our range of funding programs and initiatives, including under the government's dedicated Arts and Cultural Recovery Package. The recovery package implemented last year to help sustain the sector during these uncertain times will now deliver almost \$30 million in dedicated support across Queensland's arts and cultural sector. The government remains committed to working with the live music sector as it emerges from the impacts of COVID-19.

**Ms LUI:** I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Will the minister please update the committee on the government's support for arts and cultural destination tourism?

**Ms ENOCH:** As the member knows, Queensland is home to some of the finest arts and cultural experiences in the country. This government continues to invest in arts experiences that generate cultural tourism and economic outcomes. This is especially important as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

We have committed \$9 million over three years to support the Queensland Museum Network's delivery of the popular World Science Festival. As the only World Science Festival held outside of New York, this event has attracted more than 800,000 visitors in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Chinchilla, Townsville and Ipswich and generated more than \$36 million in economic impact for the state. I am excited to see that this festival continues to grow, offering new experiences and innovative ideas and inspiring future generations to consider a career in STEM. We have also seen blockbuster funding of \$6 million over three years from 2022-23 to enable the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art to continue to attract Queensland exclusive internationally significant exhibitions, such as the current exhibition, European Masterpieces from The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This investment builds on the Queensland government's commitment of more than \$20 million in blockbuster funding since 2016.

Blockbuster art exhibitions attract visitors, deliver a vital boost to our economic recovery, create jobs, advance local tourism and present globally significant arts experiences for Queenslanders and interstate visitors. Our blockbuster investment, together with support from Tourism and Events Queensland, for exclusive exhibitions through QAGOMA has generated more than \$97 million in economic impact since 2016.

The Queensland Music Festival, supported by core operational funding of \$1.6 million per annum from the Queensland government, continues to bring music to some of the state's most spectacular remote regions and showcase local artists as part of its new Queensland Music Trails initiative. With additional Queensland government investment of \$250,000, the outback trail linked audiences to the Big Red Bash in Birdsville via Jimbour, Charleville and Quilpie over the past two months. The Queensland Music Festival plans to grow the Music Trails over the coming years to engage new audiences, stimulate economic opportunities and create new jobs in regional Queensland.

The arts are key to delivering our plan for economic recovery, each year contributing \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supporting more than 92,000 jobs for Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk government restored QAGOMA blockbuster funding after it was cut by the Newman LNP government. The eyes of the world will be trained on Queensland when we host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic

Games, and thanks to the Palaszczuk government's investment in Queensland's arts and cultural sector our international visitors will be in the box seat to experience some of the finest arts and cultural experiences on offer.

**CHAIR:** I now ask the member for South Brisbane to ask some questions.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Director-General, we heard earlier about the \$3,000 stART grant program that provides support to independent artists. I understand the program ran in 2020. Will it be open again in 2021, considering the ongoing pressure on artists?

**Ms O'Connor:** I am going to hand to the deputy director-general to answer that question. Chair, can I just correct the record. In her answer, I think the deputy director-general mentioned \$2.5 million for the workers assistance package. It is \$2.2 million.

**Ms Herring:** The stART program ran effectively in 2020. We talked about it previously today. It was spread through a range of organisations across the state to make sure we could actually reach grassroot artists. It did work well. We are in the process of redesigning the last part of the framework for the \$22½ million that we were given by the government. It will be the minister's responsibility to approve that framework.

The challenge with COVID is that it just keeps changing, as you know. Only about three or four weeks ago, we were in a really good space and then all of a sudden we are in a lockdown. We need to make sure we are flexible and agile and able to respond to the needs of the sector. We are developing a framework that will include support for independent artists and independent organisations, but it is up to the minister to approve that framework and that will occur in the next week or so.

**Dr MacMAHON:** As a follow up, I understand that as part of the network that were distributing those funds it included the Regional Arts Services Network. Are there any direct supports available for artists who are outside of those established networks so they can get direct support, rather than being part of networks that are distributing those funds?

**Ms Herring:** Can I just clarify that question. The stART grants were delivered through a range of RASNs but also through organisations like Metro Arts, JUTE and others. QMusic were also a partner for us on the stART grants. The RASN is not an exclusive network for RASN people. It is absolutely a network that can reach any artist and any arts organisation across the state. Through the RASN website, any artist can find a creative business champion to talk about their issues. We take referrals from the RASN network all the time back into us. Obviously, we are the funding partner of RASN. Over 300 people have been supported through the creative business champions network alone already, so I do not think it is exclusive. I know it is not exclusive; it is for all Queenslanders.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Sure. So an artist would have to engage with that network to access those funds.

**Ms Herring:** No. They can always call us directly as Arts Queensland. Our ongoing funding, like our Queensland Arts Showcase Program, is available to all artists—independent or a core funded organisation or a large-scale organisation. We adapted the Queensland Arts Showcase Program funding guidelines to be really responsive to the smaller end of the sector. Up to \$30,000 can be accessed through that grants program and you do not have to match it. It can just be a straight grant. Previously, QASP has always been matched dollar for dollar, so the lower end category of \$30,000 is absolutely targeted at the independent artist end of the sector.

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

**Dr MacMAHON:** Yes. I have one final question to the director-general. How is the department monitoring the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on the sector—live music, theatre, arts and galleries? Is that data being made publicly available?

**Ms O'Connor:** I thank the member for the question. The dialogue between the arts sector and the department is ongoing and quite intense at times in terms of the position that people find themselves in at this very moment. We do acknowledge how tough it has been in that sector. I know that the minister meets regularly with the arts sector. I know that Kirsten is available to the arts sector seven days a week—sometimes very late nights and very early mornings. I can say that the information that comes in is fulsome and we are responding. I think the agility of the government to respond and to make sure that moneys are available to go in—the example would be the recently announced \$7 million for live music support. That is a direct result of hearing about the plight of the sector. I do not know if Kirsten wants to add anything to that because she does convene a variety of meetings and meets with the CEOs on a regular basis as well.

**Ms Herring:** There are five or six industry bodies that are working with us on an ongoing basis, and I will say almost a daily basis, as the director-general acknowledged. There is QMusic, obviously for live music, Stage Queensland for performing arts and performing arts venues, Ausdance for the dance sector in particular—and that includes not just the not-for-profit dance but also the for-profit entities and the dance classes that run through training providers—and Museums and Galleries Queensland, which is the industry body that covers the museum sector right through to the local councils. Then at the national level NAVA, the national arts and visual arts alliance, represents directly to us and we have ongoing dialogue with them.

I must admit I do receive a lot of direct contact from the sector, and that is always very welcome because we are hearing on-the-ground experiences all the time. As I said, it is about agility and adapting to the circumstances at the moment. I would like to actually acknowledge the work of our arts statutory bodies' state leadership—QAGOMA, QPAC and so forth in this space—who are also very connected statewide and providing feedback direct to us at Arts Queensland as we build the next stage of the recovery package.

**CHAIR:** Member for Moggill, do you have a final question? We have a couple of minutes.

**Dr ROWAN:** I do, Chair. It is actually to the State Librarian, Vicki McDonald, but in the interests of time I will ask the director-general the question. Director-General, I reference SDS page 34 and the First 5 Forever program, which is to deliver early literacy foundations to all Queensland children aged zero to five years. I want to inquire as to the specific allocation of funding, how long the program will run for and the evaluation that is going to take place.

**Ms O'Connor:** Chair, I am going to have a very disappointed State Librarian, who is right next door and on her way in. I know she would love to speak to the minister and the member for Moggill.

**CHAIR:** Ms McDonald, welcome. Would you like the question reread?

**Ms McDonald:** Yes, please.

**Dr ROWAN:** With reference to SDS page 34 and the First 5 Forever program, which is to deliver early literacy foundations to all Queensland children aged zero to five years, I want to ask what specific funding is allocated, how long the program will run for and the evaluation framework that is being undertaken?

**Ms McDonald:** As you probably know, First 5 Forever was initiated as a four-year program in 2015; \$5 million per annum was allocated to that program. It was a four-year program and running across those four years we undertook a number of evaluations and received a lot of very positive feedback from local government, parents and other stakeholders. Since that time when the program ran for the four years of the pilot, it has been made a recurrent program, which means that we receive \$5 million in recurrent funding each year. Of that \$5 million, \$3.4 million is provided directly to local government for the delivery of services and activities through the public library network that the local government is providing. The remainder of the funds is provided for statewide programs and activities. We have another \$5 million in the 2021-22 budget to continue that program.

**Dr ROWAN:** Just the evaluation—can I ask how the program is being evaluated?

**Ms McDonald:** Sorry, thank you. As I said, we did undertake some very rigorous evaluation in the first four years of the program. That was undertaken by external bodies and provided positive feedback. Each year we do ask the local government public libraries to provide feedback, and we will also undertake another evaluation within the next 12 to 18 months just to ensure that we continue to get the high satisfaction levels we have received throughout the program.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. It is lovely to have you here. Ladies and gentlemen, the time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolios of communities, housing, digital economy and the arts has now expired. There being no questions on notice, I thank the minister. I thank her departmental officers for their attendance, their professionalism and the way in which they engaged in the hearing today.

The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 12.30 pm with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. I request any departmental officers who are not participating in the next session to exit the hearing chamber as quickly as possible as the committee has a very quick changeover period. This will allow for parliamentary staff to make the appropriate cleaning arrangements. It will also allow the committee to keep to the hearing schedule determined by the Queensland parliament. Thank you.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.46 am to 12.30 pm.**

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

**In Attendance**

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

Ms K Kiss, Chief of Staff


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

Dr C Sarra, Director-General

Ms M Curtis, Associate Director-General

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

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 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 3.15 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 1.45 to 2 pm. As determined by the House, the committee will consider the minister's portfolios as follows: Seniors and Disability Services from 12.30 to 1.45 pm and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, including the Family Responsibilities Commission, from 2 to 3.15 pm. I remind members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during these times specified for the area as agreed to by the House.

The following non-committee members have sought and been granted leave to participate in the hearing in accordance with standing orders: Dr Amy MacMahon MP, member for South Brisbane; Stephen Andrew MP, member for Mirani; David Crisafulli MP, member for Broadwater; David Janetzki MP, member for Toowoomba South; Jarrod Bleijie MP, member for Kawana; Fiona Simpson MP, member for Maroochydore; John-Paul Langbroek MP, member for Surfers Paradise; Dr Christian Rowan MP, member for Moggill; Amanda Camm MP, member for Whitsunday; Brent Mickelberg MP, member for Buderim; Tim Nicholls MP, member for Clayfield; Steve Minnikin MP, member for Chatsworth; and Tim Mander MP, member for Everton.

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

In line with the COVID-safe estimates hearings guideline issued by our Chief Health Officer, I remind everyone to maintain social distancing whilst in this hearing. Face masks are to be worn at all times and removed only to speak during proceedings. The COVID-safe estimates hearings guideline is available from the secretariat. As a result of current public health orders, some members and witnesses will be participating via videoconference today. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public who are watching the broadcast to the hearing. At this point I would like to state that the Community Support and Services Committee had confirmed a booking for an Auslan interpreter for this section of the public hearing program but, following the South-East Queensland lockdown and ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, a replacement Auslan interpreter was unfortunately unable to be secured for today. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves first and the first time that they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we are meeting here today and pay my respects to elders past and present. Joining me today is my director-general, Dr Chris Sarra, my associate director-general, Mary-Anne Curtis, and deputy and assistant directors-general and staff from across my department. I also acknowledge the presence of the independent director of forensic disability, Ms Jenny Lynas, and the two commissioners within my portfolio, Commissioner Tammy Williams from the Family Responsibilities Commission and Commissioner C'Zarke Maza, the new Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa commissioner. Commissioner Maza began his role on 12 July, with his commencement marking a significant milestone in our nation-leading journey to recognise Torres Strait Islander traditional child-rearing practice in legislation. It is a coming together of western law and Torres Strait Islander cultural lore, giving Torres Strait Islander children and their families the same recognition and rights that other Queensland families have.

Since the machinery-of-government changes created the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships on 12 November 2020, we have created new partnerships and strengthened existing relationships to champion change for some of Queensland's most vulnerable. Amid the global pandemic of COVID-19, we have worked differently and effectively in partnerships with councils, communities and Queenslanders across the state to achieve tremendous outcomes given the challenges.

I would like to take the opportunity to share just a few of the many achievements that have occurred within the portfolio in 2021 and what the Palaszczuk government's 2021-22 state budget will continue to deliver for Queenslanders. The Queensland government continues to recognise the important role of seniors in Queensland and is committed to building age-friendly communities that are accessible to everyone. Support for older Queenslanders includes: \$450 million in targeted discounts, fee waivers, rebates and subsidies to support vulnerable Queenslanders, many of whom are older people; an annual investment of \$4.8 million in legal and social support and financial protection services; providing \$800,000 in funding for the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit and Helpline, delivering the elder abuse awareness campaign; and to begin rolling out a series of seniors expos across the state to connect with seniors and Queensland government services.

In our partnerships with people with disability, their families and advocates and the sector, we have continued the annual investment of over \$2 billion in the National Disability Insurance Scheme which is now supporting over 90,000 Queenslanders with annual plans valued at in excess of \$6 billion. We have commenced the full scheme bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland on the NDIS. We have assisted more than 1,600 Queenslanders with disability to gain access to the NDIS through the assessment and referral team. We have extended funding of \$8.1 million to support advocacy services for Queenslanders with a disability for a further two years. We have introduced a new worker-screening system to strengthen the safeguards for people with disability and deliver an online application system that between February and June provided clearances to more than 30,000 Queenslanders to work in NDIS related roles. We coordinated the Queensland government's participation in the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and we took the fight to the Commonwealth on behalf of the disability community on independent assessments—and, Madam Chair, we won.

We are progressing the Path to Treaty in Queensland, one of the strongest reconciliation actions in the state's history. This government's commitment to a \$300 million Path to Treaty Future Fund will provide a strong foundation for the treaty-making process in Queensland. We have committed to the new national agreement on Closing the Gap and invested \$9.3 million over four years to help strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services and are partnering with state representatives of peak bodies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to implement the national agreement. Our Local Thriving Communities reforms that are supporting local leadership, community decision-making and better service delivery outcomes.

We have continued to support hundreds of jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through our youth employment program and we have backed small business by working with First Nations' owned businesses. We are celebrating language, culture and reconciliation through dedicated programs, grants, and policies. Across the board, the Palaszczuk government's budget investment is about delivering the change Queenslanders want to see for the children, families, communities and future generations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the seniors and disability services portfolios. I call now on the member for Burnett and deputy chair for the first question.

**Mr BENNETT:** Thank you, chair. I defer to the member for Surfers Paradise.

**CHAIR:** Welcome member for Surfers Paradise.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I thank the committee for having me as a guest? I welcome the minister, the directors-general and the public service staff and acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. My first question is to the director-general. Can the director-general confirm that the associate director-general is essentially an extra director-general in your department?

**Dr Sarra:** I thank the member for the question. In terms of the specifics of the question, no, it is not just another director-general in the department. She is sitting right here. She is the associate director-general and that is off the back of the notion that there is quite a lot of significant policy work going on in the seniors and disability space. There is quite a significant amount of work occurring in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander space. Earlier, the minister referred to some historic progress around the Meriba Omasker work—that has been some 35 years in the making. Going forward, there is significant treaty work that has been announced and there is lots to be done in that regard. There is Local Thriving Communities reform and various other reforms in the Indigenous space around giving them a voice, so there is lots of work to be done. I think it is appropriate that the department should have an associate director-general to oversee the very important and significant seniors and disabilities work that is ahead of us.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you for that answer. When I look at The Queensland Cabinet and Ministerial Directory, no other department has two directors-general, so why does a department of your size need two directors-general?

**Dr Sarra:** Maybe I did not explain it clearly enough in the first instance. My colleague to my left is the associate director-general. She is not a director-general, I am the director-general of the department; she is the associate director-general.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Director-General, how much of the 2021-22 budget has been used to fund the associate director-general position?

**Dr Sarra:** That is a good question.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Point of order: I think that is a question more directed to the Premier for Department of the Premier and Cabinet for funding of directors-general.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I was going to mention that. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet determine the staffing arrangements for each department, so you might like to rephrase that question member.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you for that answer, Madam Chair. I am happy to ask if I may: have there been any cuts to the seniors portfolio and Disability Connect to fund a second director-general?

**Dr Sarra:** No. The figures, which your line of inquiry went to earlier, will be published in the annual report.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Director-General, have there been cuts to other parts of the department to absorb these costs?

**Dr Sarra:** No.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, how was selection made of who would be director-general, given there are 300-plus staff in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships and 1600-plus in seniors and disability services?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** All director-general appointments are made by the Premier and the director-general from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. In saying that, I very much welcome having an associate director-general. The associate director-general does an excellent job in her role. Whilst we are a small department, we very much punch above our weight. We are one of few departments that has significant overlap with the Commonwealth and with all other states and territories. At times, it does require a director-general, an associate director-general, and also deputy directors-general and assistant directors-general to meet that load. There is a lot of workload, in that we have to deal with the Commonwealth around Queensland's most vulnerable. In answering the question, those appointments are not made by myself nor my team; they are from DPC.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Member, do you have a further question?

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I do. I will move now to the State Disability Plan. Minister, will you advise when there will be a new multiyear State Disability Plan as the previous one expired in 2020 and there was a one-year supplement?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** You are correct. The previous one expired in 2020. Currently, we are working with the Commonwealth on developing the national disability strategy. That work is happening right now. In fact, I was not able to attend the state and territories disability reform ministers meeting today, because we had estimates. My state and territory counterparts and the Commonwealth are probably having these discussions as we speak. We made an agreement that we would focus on the Commonwealth, on the National Disability Strategy; that we would get that one into position first and then state strategies would then fall from that. In doing that, we provided assurance to our sector. I think it was back on 9 August I approved a statement of ongoing commitment and that commitment was released publicly that we would continue ongoing commitment around an All Abilities and State Disabilities Plan.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, I think you said there is preparation now for a new disability service plan because of Commonwealth negotiations beyond 30 June. So at the moment, we do not have a disability service plan?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Currently, what is happening is that state and federal ministers are working through a new national disability strategy. Hopefully, it can be released later this year, but like a number of things that are happening around the country at the moment, COVID-19 is certainly making it very difficult for meetings with lockdowns and so on. Our plan is to release that national disability strategy later this year. From that, the state disability strategies will flow.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, I note that at page 18 of the disability service plan 2021, the Queensland government committed to an 8 per cent disability target for the Queensland public sector workforce by 2022. Will the minister please give an update as to the current figure?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Sure. While that brief is coming, I can say that we are working with all departments across government and the private sector towards getting eight per cent of people with disability into the Queensland government. There has certainly been some restrictions on being able to do that. With COVID, that has been very difficult in the recruitment and retention phase and also with the financial implications of COVID around the public sector workforce. You are right, there is an eight per cent target of employment and we are currently working towards that. We have obviously not reached that milestone yet. I can report that in my department, as at 30 June, we had 4.39 per cent of employees identified as having a disability. Across the Queensland public sector that number is currently 2.83 per cent, dated at March this year. That is the latest information that we have. We still have more work to do, but we have time to do it.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I seek leave to table a copy of page 5 of the Queensland Public Sector Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021-2025, and I have provided copies for the committee and the minister.

**CHAIR:** The member for Surfers Paradise has sought leave to table a document. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, I am sure you are aware of this particular page, but I will give you a chance to see it. Can you explain and confirm that the actual number of people with disability employed has decreased over the previous five years to 2.87 per cent and, as you just said, it has declined even further to 2.83 per cent?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I have not seen this document before, so I can only assume that these figures are correct. The figures are what the figures are, but I also stipulate that this strategy is a Public Service Commissioner strategy, not a strategy of my department. I do not enforce in any way or my department does not enforce in any way how other departments of the Queensland government and the Public Service Commissioner do their role. This is their strategy; these are their numbers.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, with regard to the figures that I referred to, I can promise you that I have taken them straight from the Queensland public sector inclusion and diversity paper. I have not altered anything. I note at page 12 of this document that your department is a lead agency responsible for focused activity to actually get to the target of eight per cent, so I ask: what is the department doing to fulfil this, even though it is a plan of another department within your government?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I might pass over to the director-general to answer that one.

**Dr Sarra:** Increasing the level of access for those with disability into the workforce right across the Queensland public sector is really important. There are some indications through the Working for Queensland survey that the representation of people with disability in the Queensland Public Service workforce may be higher than is currently reported. To better identify employees with disability, a new diversity census is being undertaken across the Queensland Public Service workforce.

I can also inform the committee that my department is in partnership with the Public Service Commission by injecting and sharing resources to pursue this very matter of attracting those who are living with disability to the Public Service and retaining them. That involves some form of advocacy and it will also involve us as a department working across government to get all of us to reflect on the things that we need to do to ensure that those with disability are attracted to and stay in the Public Service.

**CHAIR:** Member, you have time for one more question.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** In that case, I will keep on that same theme. Minister, I refer to pages 18 and 19 of the disability service plan, which has the government's employment related commitments. I ask the minister to confirm whether the employment strategy is mainly based on information sharing and completing surveys as opposed to people getting jobs. Can you confirm that?

**CHAIR:** Member, would it be appropriate for you to table that document for the purpose of assisting the minister, or do you have a copy, Minister?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** No, I do not.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Of course I am happy to table, Madam Chair. It is the disability service plan of the department itself.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member. The member has sought leave to table the document. Minister, do you require some information or a copy of pages 18 and 19?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I would like a copy thanks, Madam Chair, but I am just a bit concerned as to whether the member is asking for an opinion from myself. That is the only thing.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** It is a yes or no answer.

**CHAIR:** Let us deal with this matter first.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes, and I am in no hurry for an answer, Madam Chair. It can go into the next segment if necessary.

**CHAIR:** The member has sought leave to table the document. Is leave granted? Leave is granted from the committee. Member for Surfers Paradise, perhaps if you could succinctly frame your question, avoiding anything pursuant to an opinion, for the minister. Meanwhile, we will get some copies to the minister.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Certainly, Madam Chair. My question then is: can the minister advise the committee how the employment strategy is meant to deliver jobs, as the disability service plan really seems to just have information sharing and completing surveys? Can the minister advise of practical ways of delivering the disability jobs target?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I think that is an easier question to answer. The first thing around surveys is that not every single person has to identify that they have a disability, so we are working in that environment, much like we are with people from faith backgrounds, First Nations and multicultural. It is up to an individual to identify whether or not they live with a disability. It is up to each and every department and it is also up to the public sector commissioner to push for increased recruitment. It is our department's role to assist in that by way of helping to identify people who may be ready to move into particular roles. It is much like what we do within the Indigenous affairs space where we work with stakeholders and we work with individuals to get them into positions.

It is more than a survey. It is about developing partnerships with PSC and other agencies like that. One of the things we find is that, a bit like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, sometimes we have to work a bit harder to encourage and get people ready for those particular roles, but our government is committed to the eight per cent. That is why we have it and we will push towards that. As I said in my opening answer, there have been some significant obstructions to that, and one of those is around the ability for departments to hire right now and with COVID as well.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I am very aware that the attendants have not provided you with pages 18 and 19. However, that will be forthcoming. If you have anything further to add in relation to that question, we will provide time towards the end.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Surfers Paradise. Member for Cook.

**Ms LUI:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you please outline what assistance you are providing to people with disability who are having difficulty accessing the NDIS?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Member for Cook, as you may be aware, the NDIS application process can be complicated and some people can find it very challenging to navigate. Unfortunately, in the lead-up to the commencement of the NDIS full-scheme agreement the Commonwealth fell short in reaching the



agreed transition targets for getting eligible Queenslanders with disability on to the NDIS. The Palaszczuk government negotiated a \$20 million funding agreement with the Commonwealth during the NDIS full-scheme agreement to help Queenslanders with disability to access NDIS and get those supports faster. As part of that funding, our government established the Disability Connect and Outreach program's Assessment and Referral Team, or ART, which improves the ability for access to disability support for Queenslanders with disability. ART supports people living with disability across rural, regional and remote parts of Queensland and I am pleased to advise the committee that this project has helped more than 1,500 Queenslanders access over \$100 million worth of life-changing support through the NDIS.

The ART program provides tailored, wraparound support for Queenslanders with disability to meet their individual needs and it measures its success largely in its partnerships across government with the outreach agencies. An important part of their work includes the connection with QDN, Queenslanders with Disability Network, and its project partners who undertake outreach activities. QDN builds trusted relationships with clients, helping to gather information, and then refers clients to ART for assistance in submitting their NDIS applications. Some Queenslanders have never engaged with government services for their disability so ART helps them navigate the NDIS and access the support that they need—Queenslanders like Elliott.

Elliott is a 10-year-old with multiple cognitive impairments. He lives in a regional community. Previous attempts by Elliott's family to access the NDIS had been unsuccessful as they were unable to source the necessary clinical assessments to provide evidence to the NDIS that met their requirements. ART was able to work with Elliott and his family to identify how NDIS supports could help them gain more independence, engage in education and obtain the necessary therapeutic supports needed for the future. ART was able to facilitate a diagnosis and collate the evidence required and Elliott is now on the NDIS. Elliott's application was approved by the NDIS. That enables him and his family to now connect with local and regional support services for the very first time. His family has advised ART they would not be able to achieve this outcome without their assistance.

We will continue to support people with disability across this state to access the NDIS while this transition funding is underway. However, the Commonwealth needs to step up and create more access pathways that are truly accessible for the people it is intended to support.

**Mr SKELTON:** Minister, with reference to SDS page 2, can you advise the committee what the Palaszczuk government is doing to support older Queenslanders who are subject to abuse? What is the government doing to raise awareness of this shameful practice?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** You are right: it is a shameful practice. Any form of elder abuse is unacceptable. There is no excuse and, just like domestic violence, we all have a role to play in responding to it: families, service providers, communities and all levels of government.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to preventing elder abuse and raising awareness of this issue in our communities through a statewide annual elder abuse awareness campaign, which coincides with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June. This year the campaign theme was 'Together we can stop elder abuse'. It encouraged people to call the Elder Abuse Helpline on 1300651192 or visit the campaign website to find how they can help people experiencing abuse to access the services and support they need. The helpline operates from nine to five, Monday to Friday. Voice messages can be left outside those areas and all calls are returned within one business day. I reject any suggestion that calls to the helpline go unanswered.

Over this term, the Palaszczuk government has committed \$4.8 million per annum, which includes \$1.2 million per annum in new recurrent funding for elder abuse awareness, prevention and intervention, supporting \$605,000 per annum to delivering the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit and \$3.7 million per annum to provide the Seniors Legal and Support Service or SLASS in 11 locations across Queensland to provide social support and legal advice. Services are in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Sunshine Coast, Hervey Bay, Gladstone, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. We have also committed \$400,000 per annum for Seniors Financial Protection Services to provide specialist financial information and advice and another \$100,000 per annum to help fund a scams and fraud awareness helpline.

For the period July 2020 to June 2021, more than 4,200 seniors were assisted by SLASS. Between 1 July 2020 and 31 March of this year, the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit received 2,579 phone calls, including 1,506 notifications of abuse. The most reported concerns in this period were psychological abuse, which was raised in 69 per cent of calls, and financial abuse, which was raised in 68 per cent of calls. Women were the victims of reported abuse in 69 per cent of notifications. Sadly,

almost three-quarters of the reported abuse was perpetrated by sons and daughters and more than 95 per cent of abuse occurred within a family relationship. As I have advised, the Queensland government has committed longer term funding for the existing supports and we will continue to partner with experts like the EAPU to monitor trends and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention activities.

**CHAIR:** Minister, why are Queenslanders with NDIS plans not using all their plan supports and what work is being done to address those concerns?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** The National Disability Insurance Agency or NDIA is responsible for developing the NDIS market and, therefore, plan utilisation for NDIS participants. Despite an increase in registered service providers, some Queenslanders are still unable to access all the supports available in their NDIS plans due to inadequate service availability across all locations and for all support types. Having NDIS providers available to provide services to people with disability in all areas of Queensland is critical to making sure Queenslanders get the supports that they need. It is also critical to ensure that Queensland is getting value for money. After all, we do invest over \$2 billion annually in NDIS. At 30 June 2021 there were 6,056 registered NDIS providers that have all been active in Queensland and they are increasing their service footprint. Current Queensland participants have annualised support funding in their plans of \$6.78 billion. However, on average only 73 per cent of the funding is being used and, unfortunately, plan utilisation is significantly less in remote areas meaning that there is a significant opportunity for providers, including growth in markets and job opportunities.

The Commonwealth government, through the NDIA, is currently implementing market interventions in places such as Cloncurry and is having some success in improving participant access to supports. As minister I am also engaged regularly at the national level through the disability reform ministers' meetings where access to services and market capability are key considerations across all jurisdictions. I can certainly say that we are not alone in that. Other states, particularly the Northern Territory and Western Australia, are having similar issues. We will continue to work with the NDIA and the Commonwealth to ensure market interventions are implemented in regions that require market stimulation.

**Ms LUI:** Minister, I refer to the SDS, page 1. How does the Palaszczuk government provide assistance to older Queenslanders who are confronted with complex legal documents, family agreements, coercion, abuse and other matters?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** This ties in a bit with one of the previous questions. Unfortunately, many older Queenslanders can be very vulnerable to exploitation, scams and abuse in a range of situations, as I mentioned before, through family relationships but also as consumers. Sometimes that happens when transitioning from the family home, which may involve unfamiliar complex legal arrangements and other financial matters that people may not be prepared for. Our government assists when concerns arise. As I mentioned before, we use the Seniors Legal and Support Service, SLASS. They use a multidisciplinary approach. They provide legal service advice, social work support and also case management. Help is available for any seniors in these circumstances. They can call 1300651192 or they can directly contact their local support service in one of the 11 centres that I mentioned before. Our government is investing \$4.2 million per annum on top of the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, which I talked about before, to assist with that legal and social support for Queensland seniors.

As I mentioned before, in 2021 more than 4,200 seniors were assisted by SLASS through case management, advice and support. However, there are many more seniors out there who are victims of fraud. Sometimes they are forced by family members to sign documents that they do not understand. Sometimes that occurs as they move from the family home into nursing homes and the like when their cognitive impairment can be diminished.

A little bit like domestic violence, a lot of this occurs behind closed doors. As a government, we do not have direct insight into what is happening in people's private lives. Sometimes the only way to resolve this is for community members, for neighbours or for other family members to reach out. You can call the helpline, even if it is someone down the street that you are a little bit concerned about, if you see something a bit unusual. As I said before, it is a bit like the messaging around domestic and family violence: the conduct you walk past is the conduct you condone.

I can report that during 2021, 525 financial protection matters were reported and managed. I want to extend an offer to all Queenslanders, as I said before, that if you think something is happening next door or in your house or in your family, please call the line and have a chat to someone.

**CHAIR:** I call the Deputy Chair and Member for Burnett.

**Mr BENNETT:** Thank you, Chair. Member for Surfers Paradise.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** My question comes back to something I was pursuing in the first round of questions. It is at page 8 of the SDS about employee expenses. Can you advise the committee if the associate director's-general fee come out of employee expenses for the department?

**Dr Sarra:** I am assuming that it would be listed in employee expenses, although those tables are representative of two former departments coming together. I will just await confirmation, if that is okay, Minister, from our finance guy, or seek further clarification from my colleagues.

**Mr BENNETT:** Can we take that on notice, Chair, and then come back to it?

**CHAIR:** Member for Burnett, I appreciate that. Member for Surfers Paradise, if it is okay with you, we might move on to the next question.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I want to seek leave to table a query—I have copies—from a constituent on a disability pension about the extra cost of obtaining a phone that will enable the Check In Queensland app. I will explain, before seeking leave to table, that it is a response from the Premier referring the matter to the minister. It is an email from a constituent to me, a response to me from the Premier. Once it is tabled, I would like to ask the question.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member. I want to alert you to one point and it may be that we have to come back to your question. Your tabled documentation does contain the name of the person who has made the complaint to you. I am a little bit concerned about that.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Perhaps we should redact.

**CHAIR:** Yes. Member, if it is okay with you, we will have that redacted and we will give it back to you for checking. You can seek to table it later on if you choose to ask that question.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes, that is fine.

**CHAIR:** We will move onto your next question.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister advise the committee if the Forensic Disability Service has come within the purview of the disability royal commission?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** While I await the details on that, can I clarify the question that whether the FDS came within the purview of the recent royal commission?

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes, which has been extended, so it may not have yet, Minister. I saw there was an answer to a question on notice that it has not been investigated by any other statutory authority apart from the ombudsman, that previous report, so I am really asking whether it was anticipated that it could be in the annual report.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I will get some advice. My advice is that it has not as yet.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** That is fine. Thank you very much. Minister, can you give us an update about the Forensic Disability Service, something about which I have asked before at estimates, with regard to current client numbers, for example?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I am very happy to help you with this. There are two distinct components of the FDS: one is the oversight capacity that the Director of the FDS oversees and then there is the operational capacity. I would like to bring in some of those experts, Madam Chair, to be able to answer it and the committee might then be able to work through those. If it pleases the committee—and I am sure you have a range of questions about the FDS—I ask for Jenny Lynas, the Director of the FDS, to come to the table. While she is on her way, I will elaborate for members of the committee. Her role is around oversight of the Forensic Disability Service. She reports to me, providing annual reports and those sorts of things. For questions around operations of the FDS, we can bring in Assistant Director-General Matthew Lupi who runs that. If you are happy to, Madam Chair, if the committee has questions to Director Lynas, we can run them now, and then we can bring ADG Lupi in and then I can take anything else.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. Member for Surfers Paradise, would you like to direct your question accordingly?

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes, thank you. Welcome, Ms Lynas. Last year I think you were new and so we went to Mr Lupi. It is really just a question through the minister to you about an update about the Forensic Disability Service and current client numbers, please.

**Ms Lynas:** As at 30 June, the FDS was responsible for six clients with five of those being inpatients and one being a community based client. Since that time, a further two clients have now transitioned to community based orders under the management of the authorised mental health service and there are currently four inpatients housed at the service.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Madam Chair, can we come back to the question that the minister and DG were getting an answer from finance about with regard to the remuneration for the associate director-general? I would like to pursue that, depending on the answer, please.

**CHAIR:** I am not sure whether the minister or the director-general has that information yet. Director-General, are you happy to answer that question now?

**Dr Sarra:** Yes, delighted. The figure is included in those expenses.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you, DG. Can you tell us what that figure is, please, for the associate director-general?

**Dr Sarra:** Off the top of my head, no, I cannot tell you. Let me seek further specific advice in relation to that.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Is it appropriate, Madam Chair, to be disclosing wages of senior executives?

**CHAIR:** The question you ask, Minister, is an interesting one. I do come back to the conversation we had earlier in relation to the Premier and Cabinet DG making those decisions. I am a little bit concerned that it is probably more a question for the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Madam Chair, with respect, I would have thought it would appear, even if it is in a band form, in the annual report of the department, and of each department.

**CHAIR:** Member for Surfers Paradise, I might leave it with the minister or the director-general to seek the relevant clarification, keeping in mind the privacy matters in relation to the position. Given there is only one, that person cannot be de-identified. I will leave that in your capable hands to come back to the committee. We will move on to your next question.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I will have a response for the committee before the end of the session. There are a few things I need to check as to whether it is appropriate to hand over.

**CHAIR:** Just being very mindful of Public Service protocol.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Absolutely.

**Mr BENNETT:** Only if it is in the public domain—that is what we are asking. If it is not, that is fine.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, it is really just to get some clarification as to whether there is an allocation to the department from which there has been another salary that has been paid. My question previously was had there been any effect on services and the answer was no. That is where my supplementary question comes from. That is all I am trying to ascertain.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I understand.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister advise of any work that he and the department have done to ensure that Queenslanders with intellectual disability have enhanced access to public mental health services?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** That would be something for the Minister for Health as it is Queensland Health's responsibility to do that work. Through my department, through the NDIS, if there are appropriate referrals for people who have a disability who need access to health then those referrals will be made, but it is the direct responsibility of Queensland Health.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister advise the committee whether the department does any population planning for the needs of people with disability?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Not to my knowledge.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister advise the committee of the work that he and the department have contributed towards the National Disability Employment Strategy?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** That is a Commonwealth strategy. Obviously the Commonwealth government leads that. We will provide any support and assistance and any data sharing as required, but that is a national strategy led by the Commonwealth.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister provide an update as to how many Queenslanders are either in or seeking access to the NDIS? That is something I asked last December. You gave me an updated figure then. I am interested in what the figure is now.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** While that information is coming to hand, I talked before about the assessment and referral teams and the great work they are doing and the number of Queenslanders who would have never found the NDIS if it were not for their work.

As of 30 June, approximately 100,000 Queenslanders were in or seeking access to the NDIS; 92,742 of those have active NDIS plans; 50,138 of those people were receiving funded disability supports for the first time; and 8,787 of them were First Nations Queenslanders receiving support. I am happy if you want to ask specific questions, member for Surfers Paradise.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I think my time has expired.

**CHAIR:** You do have a couple of minutes, Minister, if you can provide the member with as much information as you can.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I am happy to keep going.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, that is fine. I can get that from *Hansard*. You have given me the global figures. With the time left, could I go back to the one where we had to redact it and have done so?

**CHAIR:** Member, we have one minute. Whether you choose to do it now or we can come back to you after—

**Mr LANGBROEK:** If we have time for me to come back, that is fine. I am happy to come back.

**CHAIR:** We will have, yes. Member for Nicklin.

**Mr SKELTON:** Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, what is the Queensland government doing to improve access rates by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in the NDIS?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Before I answer that, I know the member for Surfers Paradise is quite keen to pursue that question around the associate director-general. I have been advised that we can actually disclose the payroll figure. If you are happy, I might ask the ADG. Do you have that information? No. We will get that information, but we are able to disclose that. We will definitely be taking your question on notice and hopefully get back to you before the end of the session on where that funding came from and whether it made any impact on the budget of the department. I will get my team to work on that.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Queensland's unique geography and culture requires planning and dedicated effort to help make NDIS accessible to all those who need it. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants have found accessing the NDIS challenging because of the evidence required and the insurance type assessment processes.

As part of negotiating the NDIS full scheme agreement, as I mentioned before, we secured the \$20 million from the Commonwealth to put the assessment and referral teams on the ground. This is delivering outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders. Although Queensland is performing better than the national average for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing the NDIS, we have a 9.5 per cent average compared to the national average of 6.9 per cent. We are doing better but there is more work to do. As the member would be aware and especially as the member for Cook would be aware, Queensland is a very, very large, diverse landscape.

We know there is need for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers to be providing supports. It is not just a matter of having clients out there on the NDIS. We have to make sure that we have the supports and the businesses and the companies to be able to provide them, particularly in those small towns and remote areas. There are jobs out there right now up for grabs. There is a lot of work happening trying to connect those two together.

Increasing the NDIS participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will not only secure those critical supports but, as I mentioned before, it will potentially create opportunities for businesses and Indigenous businesses to enter the market to deliver culturally appropriate and community appropriate delivered NDIS supports, to drive Indigenous job creation and to stimulate economies across urban, regional and remote communities.

Since February to now, the ART program has achieved 198 First Nations Queenslanders so far to access the NDIS. Of those 198 First Nations Queenslanders, 166 now have NDIS plans. That equates to almost \$12 million worth of disability support. When you think about it, there is now upwards of \$12 million being injected into the Queensland economy that previously was not there. A lot of that will be in areas that really need it the most.

Our disability connect and outreach program will invest \$1.5 million to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals to further develop their capacity to deliver NDIS supports with their local communities. We will ensure that the voices of First Nations people are central

to this work. We will engage them directly and with key organisations and individuals in communities around Queensland to make sure that we can get that right. What we want to try to avoid is the big fly-in fly-out services. Where we can, we would like to see those services provided locally.

The Commonwealth government, however, is responsible for the NDIS. They are responsible for leading the market development for NDIS. We will do what we can to assist them where we are able to but, ultimately, it is the NDIA and their work. I am aware that they are currently doing market interventions in communities such as Doomadgee, Cloncurry, Mornington Island, Palm Island and Woorabinda. I am hearing that there is some early success in how they will get these thin markets moving along. Clearly there is a lot more to do. As I mentioned in answer to an earlier question, we have some similar challenges to Western Australia and the Northern Territory, who are undergoing this. We share a lot of information between the states as to what works and what does not work. All states and territories and the Commonwealth are centrally driven to try to make this work.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. I understand that for the first time this year we will celebrate Queensland Seniors Month rather than Queensland Seniors Week. Can you inform the committee why the celebrations have been expanded and how the planned activities will support Queensland's seniors?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Yes, you are right: for the first time in 61 years we are devoting a whole month to celebrate Queensland seniors. Queensland Seniors Month will occur during the month of October. It will start 1 October, which is the International Day of Older Persons, and on 31 October it will finish with National Grandparents Day. It is a great way to bookend it.

We know that seniors are a growing cohort in our state and they currently account for more than 15 per cent of our population. We have a \$100,000 grants program which has funded 114 individual seniors' celebrations across the state. We believe that seven days is just not long enough to fit in all the activities that older Queenslanders want to do, all the way from the Torres Strait in the north to St George and Roma down in the south-west. Fifty-six of the events are outside the south-east of the state, ensuring that all Queenslanders will have an opportunity to join in on the fun. I was really impressed by the innovative ways that organisations have thought to celebrate older people in their communities. I was heartened to see that across the events the target audience is most diverse, incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, seniors with a disability, carers, LGBTIQ seniors and culturally and linguistically diverse seniors. From health living workshops and historical events and lectures to Lego challenges, singalongs, ukulele and dance extravaganzas, or just getting together to have a scone and a cuppa—

**Mr BENNETT:** Stop it!

**Mr CRAWFORD:**—Queensland seniors are getting into the spirit of things. The member for Burnett is there already! Here is one for you: I did note when I read some of the briefs that the Kandanga Tennis Club, which I believe is in the Gympie area not far from the member for Burnett, is holding something called a pickleball meet-up. I will catch up with you next time, and if you can go we will work out exactly what pickleball is.

**Mr BENNETT:** Let us know the date, Minister.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I cannot wait to work out just what that is. The Sinhala Association of Queensland is holding a presentation of traditional Sri Lankan cuisine and culture. The theme of Seniors Month is 'social connections' and that is what this program will do. October will be a connectfest for older Queenslanders. In Brisbane we are planning two significant events: Ballet for Seniors and B. OLD films. We will partner with the wonderful Queensland Ballet to run two seniors workshops that will be live streamed and hosted on the department's website. The B. OLD film event, with a special screening of 10 short films made by Queensland seniors, will occur on Friday evening, the 1st, the International Day of Older Persons. I definitely want to acknowledge our partner, the Council on the Ageing Queensland, and thank them for their support. October will be a connectfest for seniors.

**Ms LUI:** Minister, in relation to page 1 of the SDS, how is the Queensland government responding to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I know the committee will agree with me that any abuse, neglect or exploitation of people with disability is completely unacceptable. Our government welcomes the Commonwealth's extension of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability reporting date now to 29 September 2023. The disability royal commission is a great opportunity to contribute to better outcomes, enhance quality of life, greater inclusion and accessibility,

and strengthen the protections for Queenslanders living with disability. We established a dedicated disability royal commission coordination team to lead the Queensland government's engagement and response to the disability royal commission.

The Queensland government to date has responded to 86 notices and given evidence at five hearings. Today I believe the commission is holding day 2 of its 15th public hearing here in Brisbane—or they certainly were planning to—to explore issues relating to people with cognitive disability and the criminal justice system and the interface that has with the NDIS. We will continue to cooperate with the commission to the fullest extent possible and we will closely monitor their progress as that inquiry continues. Our government has advocated strongly for the new National Disability Strategy to recognise and respond to the key themes emerging from the disability royal commission's hearings and their publications to ensure the continuation of our work to create inclusive and accessible communities in Queensland. I think the royal commission is a very valuable chance to identify opportunities to improve inclusion and increase safeguards for the one in five Queenslanders who live with a disability.

**CHAIR:** The member for Surfers Paradise has sought leave to table a document. I believe the redactions have been made. Is leave granted? Leave is granted. Minister, we will provide you and members with a copy.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** This question, Minister, is about an elderly constituent of mine who wrote to me about her difficulty being able to afford a smartphone to access the COVID app. We know there are other ways of doing it, but she has arthritic hands and wrists so writing is painful. I sent her to the Premier. The Premier has referred it to you, so my question is: what provision is your department making for seniors and pensioners about this issue?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I am just finishing reading the document.

**CHAIR:** Minister, you do have a little bit of time I have taken from government time.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Firstly, can I say that I have not seen the referral at this stage so this particular case is new to me. As I have not seen that referral from the Premier's office at this stage, with respect to what have we done about this case, we are still waiting for that referral to come. With respect to mobile phones, I am just having a look. This person is a senior—

**Mr LANGBROEK:** She says, 'I am on a disability pension.' She is concerned about the costs. I am happy for the DG, if he has more information, to answer this, Minister. She writes, 'I know you can write your information but I have arthritic hands and wrists.' It is about the problem of people on limited incomes being able to afford phones so they can then use the COVID app. I am sure that across the state there would be many people who feel the same way. The referral from the Premier's office came on 13 July, but I am happy to have the answer on notice if needed.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I am establishing that this constituent is not on the NDIS but is on a Commonwealth disability pension. We are happy to have a look at it and respond back to you. I would have to get my department to do some work to see, but it may be something that actually does not fall within our department's responsibilities, Madam Chair.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** The Premier said that it did.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I am happy to respond back to you.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I understand, Minister. I would have hoped that, given that I got this response a month ago, it was going to be within the department. I think it is an issue that affects a lot of seniors and Queenslanders with disability, specifically those who are income affected, and that it would be an answer that would be relevant to a lot of people.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** If I may, Chair, instead of taking this one on notice—because it is Friday afternoon and we would have to try to turn this one around in hours—if the member for Surfers Paradise is happy, we will get that correspondence from the Premier's office and we will liaise directly back to his electorate office if he is comfortable with that.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** That is appropriate. It does not have to be to me personally, Minister—just a normal response from the department which we would then send to the constituent. That would be great.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** We will have that done.

**Mr BENNETT:** Taking it on notice might be an easier way forward.

**CHAIR:** Yes. I note that the minister will work directly with the member for Surfers Paradise in regards to that constituent.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Minister, does the department monitor how many applications to QCAT for guardianship and/or administration are made by NDIS service providers from year to year?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** We do not have that information to hand. I will get some advice as to whether we can take that on notice and whether that information is available to us. I can advise whether we can take that on notice before the end of this session. We are just concerned as to whether that data exists and we can get our hands on it. At the end of this session, we will say whether we can take that on notice.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Thank you. That sounds great. In answers to questions on notice, it is stated that there were approximately 700 former Disability Services clients who are ineligible for the NDIS, 17 of those people are funded for support through the Continuity of Support Program. Of the remaining approximately 680 former Disability Services clients who are ineligible for both NDIS and the Continuity of Support Program, is the department tracking how many of these cohort receive equivalent support through programs such as the Community Support Scheme or mainstream services?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I will hand that one to the director-general.

**Dr Sarra:** Regarding the Continuity of Support Program, our responsibility is for administering those arrangements to those clients and, as I am sure you are aware, previous clients of state funded Disability Services who are under the age of 65 who are deemed by the NDIA to be ineligible under the NDIS because of disability or residency requirements. We remain committed to ensuring that those clients who require ongoing funded specialist disability supports to maintain wellbeing and prevent hardships are supported. We have committed further funding of \$7.3 million over four years and \$1.8 million ongoing to provide support for former Disability Services clients.

There are currently 17 Queenslanders aged under 65 who are accessing their disability funded support under the Continuity of Support Program. They fall into a range of age groups. Seven of the 17 people being supported are aged between 12 and 40 years, and 10 people are aged between 41 and 60 years. Five of the 17 clients are accessing Continuity of Support because they did not meet disability access requirements for NDIS funded support, and 12 of the 17 clients did not meet the NDIA's residency requirements for the scheme.

**Dr MacMAHON:** For the remaining 680 people who fall outside, is it possible that those people are all over 65, or are there other reasons as to why they might not be in the Continuity of Support Program?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** My understanding is that those would be managed by the Commonwealth under the aged-care system. My data shows that seven of the 17 are between 12 and 40, and 10 are between 41 and 60. I am just trying to see what the others are. We might come back to you before the end of the session on that if you like.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Sure.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I am just conscious of the time. We do have a number of matters that were taken on notice to come back with an answer before the end of the session or later. The first is the question from the member for Surfers Paradise in relation to the salary for the associate director-general. Dr Sarra, do you have an update?

**Dr Sarra:** Yes, I can elaborate on that figure. For 2020-21 it is still subject to audit and will be published in the annual report. The indicative budget for 2021-22 is \$360,000. I can assure the member and all members and I can assure the people of Queensland that she is earning every dollar of that amount. Queenslanders are getting good value for money and more, as I watch my colleague work extremely hard in that role.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, there is a further matter that you are going to follow up with the member directly in relation to his constituent.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Yes.


**CHAIR:** Then there is the last question from the member for South Brisbane. Minister, I am not sure if you have that information yet.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** There are two matters from the member for South Brisbane. In relation to the first question from the member for South Brisbane, I am advised that that is actually through the Public Guardian and we do not monitor that. That would be technically through the Attorney-General's area. That is my response to that. My notes say that we still have to come back in relation to the last question from the member for South Brisbane. I will get some advice from my team as to whether we can pull that information together.



**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Dr MacMahon, the minister will take that last question on notice and provide a response as per the date set out by the committee, which is 5 pm Monday, 16 August 2021. The committee will now adjourn for a short break. The hearing will resume at 2 pm with the examination of the estimates of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships portfolio. I request any departmental officers who are not participating in the next session to exit the hearing chamber as quickly as possible as the committee has a very quick changeover period and we need to allow for cleaning. This will allow the committee to keep to the hearing schedule determined by the House.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.48 pm to 2.00 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** The hearing is resumed. Welcome back, Minister, and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships portfolio. I also welcome Ms Tammy Williams, Commissioner of the Family Responsibilities Commission, to the hearing. I now call the deputy chair and member for Burnett.

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

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I also welcome the people who have come in with this section of the department for this hearing. Minister, could you please advise the committee of the future status of the MOU with the Queensland Resources Council to create more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobs?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Yes, I can. We have offered to have an MOU with the QRC. However, previous MOUs have included funding that goes with that. We have declined to exercise the funding, but we are keen to continue an MOU.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, I think there was \$100,000 from each of the Queensland Resources Council and the government in the previous MOU since 2015?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** It was \$100,000 from the government. I am not sure what it was from their side.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** How many new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobs were created of the goal of 1,000 by 2020 through the partnership with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I will have to get some information from my team as to whether we hold that information or whether that is actually with tourism. I am advised we do not have that information; that is actually managed by the tourism department.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I understood it was similar to the MOU with the Resources Council—the one with the tourism industry—and I am wondering whether the department and the government have any intention to continue it beyond 2021-22.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** With tourism?

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** My understanding is yes.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, can you advise what the department spends to check credentials when Queenslanders claim to be Indigenous?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** That is an interesting question. I might get the DG to elaborate on that.

**Dr Sarra:** The issue of black cladding is an issue of great concern to many in industry, to obviously yourself and to particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities that are trying to forge a way. For those members who may not be familiar with the term, black cladding is a process whereby people are persuaded by things like the QIP, the Indigenous procurement processes we have established. They will kind of partner up. Sometimes these are genuine, quite authentic partnerships in which significant control is shared. Sometimes one has to question the authenticity of that connection, hence the term black cladding. They look like they are black organisations, but when you examine under the surface it is something other than that.

To turn to your specific line of inquiry, the department has some officers who are dedicated to this function of having what we call a Black Business Finder, although I would not pretend it is all the way there. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander businesses register themselves on there. We also utilise the Commonwealth's mechanism that is similar, Supply Nation. These are good for registering businesses. However, when it comes to auditing or the pursuit of whether or not they are authentic partnerships or they are just doing black cladding, we have a very limited resource capacity to pursue that. Having said that, we have seen an increase in the numbers around Indigenous procurement—the dollar spent in that area—so the investment across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses

has increased. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses has increased as well notwithstanding the issue that you quite rightly point to, this notion of black cladding, to ensure that that investment is more authentic.

To give you some specific numbers, during the first three-quarters of the 2020-21 financial year, the Queensland government procured \$231 million from 420 Indigenous businesses, and that included the Queensland government procuring from 72 Indigenous businesses for the first time.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, my next question is still on that issue. It is not so much just about cladding. To be honest, it is a query I got from an article in the *Australian* a few weeks ago about race shifting. It is about the claims of an individual to be Indigenous. I have no queries about whether someone is or not, but I am asking about someone who claims to be Indigenous not to procure business but to procure benefits, and what sort of assessment the government can make and does make to ensure that people who claim they are Indigenous are Indigenous?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** It is a serious issue because if someone is purporting to be someone they are not, that certainly amounts to fraud and a range of things. As a government, we do not, to my knowledge, invest in that space. We rely on the Commonwealth, who essentially hold most of those records through their respective departments about whether someone identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. If someone says to us that they identify, it is my understanding that we take them on face value unless, of course, there is some sort of fraudulent case or something like that.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** That is fine. Thank you for that explanation. Basically the Commonwealth are the ones who make the assessment and if they have made that claim, the state accepts that. That is no problem.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** That is my understanding.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Does the department have any interaction with the department of housing about information received alleging non-Indigenous clients residing in Aboriginal housing? These are the sorts of complaints that I receive in my office. For example, it might be in the Torres Strait.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** No, we do not. If there are examples of that, I think that is a very serious subject. If someone is accessing anything from the Queensland government, whether it is housing or any sort of payments or anything like that and they are being fraudulent, we would need to know about it from you and any other members of parliament who get information like that. If it is housing, it certainly should be sent to the housing minister. When in doubt, I am happy for you to send it through to my office and we can move that along.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you. Minister, will you advise the committee of any state resources to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people suicide rates through increasing cultural connections and engagement? I note an implementation plan just the other day from the Commonwealth that made reference to some of these programs. Can you advise the committee of the state contribution?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** We know that that is obviously a very sensitive issue for many Queenslanders. Some of what the member talks about moves into some of the areas around Closing the Gap and implementation plans from the Commonwealth. States have done similar work in that space. Obviously, we are very committed to ensure that First Nations Queenslanders' mental health and wellbeing are responded to appropriately. That includes things like responding to problematic alcohol and drug abuse and to very much decreasing the rates of suicide.

As a government, we allocate across government \$80.1 million over four years. It is called the Shifting Minds Suicide Prevention Flagship. We have also made a funding allocation of almost \$5.5 million over four years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth mental health with a particular focus on youth suicide prevention. These are government initiatives. I am advised that the Queensland Mental Health Commission is also contributing \$1.5 million to strengthen mental health and wellbeing to respond to problematic alcohol and other drug use and to reduce rates of suicide in remote and discrete communities. There are many other programs and initiatives. I could keep going. Essentially, they are delivered across government. Some of them come from other departments such as the Department of Health.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister advise of his department's enhanced supports provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people applying for a blue card?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Blue cards is a very pertinent question. I was out in the community of Woorabinda a couple of months ago now and noticed a sign up at the school. We had a visit with the principal. The sign concerned a vacancy for two casual positions for teacher aides. When we spoke to

the principal, she said that she was having trouble getting applications for those positions, because once people realise that they had to have a blue card they did not want to apply. There were two casual jobs in one community at one place. I am sure that that would be extrapolated out as well.

When anecdotally we have some conversations in those communities, there is still misunderstanding from many people about what is a disqualifying offence and those sorts of things. Blue cards are managed by JAG, but certainly in respect of how we manage blue cards, particularly in remote communities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in trying to encourage more people to get blue cards, we are involved from two parts of our department—from this part of the portfolio and from disability services. As I mentioned in the last session, we want to encourage people in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remote communities to work in the NDIS space where they will need not only a blue card but worker screening for NDIS which also means quite a bit of paperwork and the like.

There is still work to be done, but that will work will have to be done in collaboration with community. I have already had some conversations with a few mayors about how we could do that. It will have to be very much on-the-ground work. I will need to have some conversations with some of my ministerial peers as well about how we can achieve that. I believe that there is still a lot of confusion, as I said before, amongst many people in remote areas as to what knocks you out from applying for a blue card. Those of us as parliamentarians understand it, because we sit there and go through the legislation. We understand disqualifying offences and everything like that and that getting in a fight at the pub does not necessarily disqualify you from a blue card. That does not seem to be the understanding out there in the field. There is certainly more work that needs to be done in those discrete areas.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I want to come back to the MOU in terms of the resources council. Minister, has there been a departmental or government decision to discontinue the contribution of \$100,000? Was that from this department?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Yes, it was. That was in a letter to the QRC from me.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Were there no perceived benefits from that contribution? It seems like a minor amount of \$100,000 for job creation, but as I understand it that program has been quite successful?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** The Queensland government decision was around the finances. We were happy to continue the MOU. We understand the great work that the QRC does, particularly its members, but we did not want to continue the financial contribution.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Does the minister or his department have any input into the Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund grants awarded by the arts minister?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Not to my knowledge, no.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister advise the committee if Queensland's number of Indigenous 10- to 17-year-olds in detention is declining as per the national figures?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** One of the new 17 Closing the Gap targets is a 30 per cent reduction in incarcerated Indigenous youth across the country and all states and territories over the next 10 years. As a government, we recently established the youth justice cabinet committee where we are aware that our number of incarcerated Indigenous youth is certainly a lot higher than what we would like. That youth justice cabinet committee has been meeting regularly. A core focus of that committee has been about strategies and ways to reduce that number, very much in line with Closing the Gap and our commitments to the Commonwealth. I do not have the latest statistics on that, because that would be held by the next minister appearing before this hearing. It is certainly a lot higher than what government would like.

**CHAIR:** Member you have time for one further question.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I refer to the new \$9 million police station planned for Aurukun. Will the minister advise whether he or his department make representations to ensure local employment opportunities are prioritised, including for apprentices?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** That is obviously a project funded by Police. We will probably have some involvement of procurement which goes through a few other departments. The role that our department has when it comes to procurement around construction, employment and supply in those remote communities is around ensuring that those departments which have that responsibility exercise where they can local decision-making and ensure that they can get a proper read on the local voice from that community.

As a department, we would certainly be requesting of Police and of those other departments that they engage the Aurukun community about the best ways that police station construction will feed into their local economy. That is not just around apprentices; it is around other supplies for the broader community up there. It could even lead to things that are beyond just 'construction'. Police stations in those communities need staff, and what better place to get staff than in those local areas. Ultimately, that is a matter for the police minister and the police commissioner through their construction framework, but we would provide them with any degree of intelligence and support that they need to be able to connect with the right people in the community of Aurukun so that their voices can be heard.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Cook.

**Ms LUI:** I refer to page 2 of the SDS. Can the minister explain how Path to Treaty and the Path to Treaty fund is progressing in Queensland and what the next steps are?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** The Palaszczuk government's commitment to effective reconciliation and truth telling is reflected in our commitment to Path to Treaty. For the first time in Queensland's history, treaty or treaties is a real possibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. We are working to reshape and reframe our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for generations to come.

Last year, the government accepted and accepted in-principle the recommendations made by the Eminent Panel and the Treaty Working Group. Today marks the 12-month anniversary of when the Premier tabled that historic report in Parliament; an emotional day for a number of people. We committed in principle to the establishment of a First Nations Treaty Institute and a truth-telling and a healing process. Establishing a First Nations institute and truth-telling healing process will be important steps towards reconciliation in Queensland.

The truth and healing process will give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice that many have not heard before. For many, this will be an opportunity to share their stories and experiences and to bring about a wider understanding of historical injustices across Queensland that, to this day, have a lasting impact. The role of the treaty institute will be to lead the development of a treaty-making framework. This will pave the way for a fairer and more just future for Queensland, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal opportunity and are supported at all levels and stages in life to realise their potential.

The way in which the truth-telling and healing process and the treaty institute will be developed are currently under consideration by the Treaty Advancement Committee. The Treaty Advancement Committee is undertaking further targeted consultation on how to most effectively establish the treaty institute and the truth and healing process to achieve meaningful outcomes. I want to acknowledge the work of the advancement committee co-chairs Dr Jackie Huggins and Mr Mick Gooda, as well as the advancement committee members—Professor Michael Lavarch AO, Dr Josephine Bourne and Dr Sallyanne Atkinson AO—who have been working hard to ensure that the Path to Treaty continues to progress in Queensland. I look forward to receiving their report later this year.

I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government, a government that is courageous enough to listen to the calls of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who have been advocating for treaty in Queensland over many generations. For the first time in Queensland's history, a significant investment into the future of Path to Treaty has been made. The Palaszczuk government has announced a \$300 million Path to Treaty investment fund as part of the 2021-22 budget.

The returns from the fund will be dedicated to supporting Queensland's Path to Treaty, with the Path to Treaty fund expected to generate returns of approximately \$10 million each year from 2021-22 onwards. The Path to Treaty will have the funds to make long-term, meaningful change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As Path to Treaty continues to progress and the Treaty Advancement Committee report is finalised and provided to government, we will better be able to understand how the funding available through the fund will be used to advance this important work.

Our commitment demonstrated in funding Path to Treaty shows all Queenslanders that Path to Treaty is not just a symbolic gesture. Our investment means that a treaty institute and truth and healing process can be undertaken. This will address the ongoing disadvantage that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience and provides a platform for justice, for equality and an opportunity for future generations. Importantly, as Path to Treaty continues to progress, a greater understanding of Queensland's history and the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be shared.

Through this understanding, the future of Queensland will be fairer and more just and, together, all Queenslanders can be proud to protect, promote and celebrate a culture that spans 65,000 years. Of course, this includes embedding this understanding in the future political landscape of Queensland. Since launching the Path to Treaty on 14 July 2019, we have approached the LNP on at least four separate occasions and asked it to join us in this important work. Again, I implore on the opposition—and I know that the member for Surfers Paradise does have a briefing coming up and I welcome that very much. We want to make sure that all sides of the Queensland parliament in the chambers—the cross-bench, the government and the opposition—are on board to support a Path to Treaty for the better Queensland that we all deserve.

**Mr SKELTON:** Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can you inform the committee of how the Queensland government is working to meet the targets under the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Our government is committed to improving the life outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders. As the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, I am responsible for leading the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This includes the development of a jurisdictional implementation plan in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community stakeholders and my ministerial colleagues.

The new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which commenced on 30 July 2020 after being signed off by all state and territory jurisdictions, sees the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, Australian Local Government Association and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations jointly commit to 17 targets focusing on improved life outcomes, including in education, employment, health and emotional wellbeing, language preservation, housing and lands and waters. Targets include reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice and child safety systems and preventing family violence. Our government has committed \$9.3 million over the next four years to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services to support these reforms and the new agreement. This is on top of the investments made across government to achieve the targets.

What makes this new national agreement different is that self-determination and community-led decision-making has been at the heart of the agreement. We are continuing to work directly with Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies to ensure that a co-designed and community-led approach is taken. Today, I am very proud to report that the Palaszczuk government has finalised its Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, and I seek leave to table that document.

**CHAIR:** The minister is seeking leave to table a document. Minister, if I could just firstly see the document? Is leave granted? Leave is granted. Thank you, Minister. Continue.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Thank you, Chair and committee. Queensland's Implementation Plan has been developed with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coalition and documents how the Queensland government is working to address the priority reforms and socioeconomic targets in the national agreement right across the government. It sets out a plan that reflects the Queensland context and is a base from which we will drive change to further improve outcomes.

It includes the continuation of existing initiatives across government, along with new initiatives, which we are very proud of. For example, when it comes to closing the gap on life expectancy, Queensland Health is developing a Queensland cancer strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to address the inequitable cancer burden experienced.

The implementation plan includes Yarn to Quit, a hotline that provides counselling and support that will assist people to quit smoking, leading to longer and healthier lives. When it comes to supporting children in their year before school, we recognise the link between improved health outcomes, early childhood development and education outcomes and are continuing the Deadly Ears program. To support training and employment opportunities, a First Nations training strategy is being developed to maximise training opportunities that will lead to long-term and secure employment.

In order to curb the unacceptable rates of incarceration and recidivism in the criminal justice system, Queensland Corrective Services is leading a 10-year QCS First Nations strategy that will focus on strategic and operational changes that reduce incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the need to develop stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These are just a few of the initiatives from across the government that are outlined in this implementation plan.

Importantly, the plan includes whole-of-government structural reform to change how we share decision-making with First Nations Queenslanders. For example, we are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and leadership in progressing Local Thriving Communities, a

reformative program which places decision-making in the hands of the community to better achieve service delivery. It includes Path to Treaty, which I spoke about before, the process that considers the establishment of a treaty institute and truth and healing process informed by the voices of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage is not easy. As a nation, we have been working towards this since 2008. While we have seen improvements in many of the original target areas, only two of the original targets were on track. We have reviewed our engagement on closing the gap since 2008. We have acknowledged that we can only achieve the identified targets by working together in genuine partnership and we are investing where it is required to achieve the agreed outcomes. While we know there is a long way to go to reach each of the new targets, the Palaszczuk government remains committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to close the gap. In finalising my comments, I want to acknowledge the work of Ken Wyatt and all ministers across this country. We might come from different political backgrounds, but I can assure the committee that when we come together on closing the gap work we are very much united.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can the minister provide an update on the progress since the Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020—my apologies to our First Nations people present for my pronunciation—was passed and explain what the next steps are?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I can still recall when the Clerk of the Queensland parliament was trying to get the words right when he had to read it out on that historic day—that is, the historic day when the member for Cook, who is sitting beside you, introduced that bill and then I was very humbled and very proud to lead it through its final stages.

As I mentioned before, the commissioner for the Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act is in the chamber today and he is available for the committee if you wish. As you know, it was unanimously passed in the Queensland parliament and received assent on 14 September 2020. The meaning of it is ‘for our children’s children’ and this legislation is now enshrined in Queensland law. Not only will it support those children who have been subject to traditional child-rearing practice in the past; it will also support the coming generations to have access to the rights and supports that those before them did not have.

The act fulfilled the Palaszczuk government’s 2017 election commitment, which I recall was a commitment from the member for Cook and Minister Fentiman—the champion for the Torres Strait—and I can still remember the significant backing that you got from Torres Strait Islander elders and leaders. It fulfils that commitment for an administrative model for legal recognition of something that has been going on for 30,000 years or more. It was a very proud moment for us to be able to act on it and get it moving. I want to acknowledge members of the working party, particularly Ivy Trevallion, Charles Passi and Alastair Nicholson, who advocated for government to recognise this cultural practice. I know that behind the scenes—and the member for Cook would know a number of these people—there were a lot of people who did a lot of work. It was no easy feat to take cultural lore and make it fit into Queensland law. A lot of work was done, and I can recall that work being done last year while the government was under many other challenges with COVID and of course an election on the doorstep as well.

The new law promotes Torres Strait Islander people’s ability to enjoy, maintain, control, protect and develop their distinct cultural rights, including identity and kinship ties, which is very much consistent with the Human Rights Act 2019. The act addresses the longstanding issues faced by Torres Strait Islanders whose legal identity does not reflect their cultural identity and their lived experience. It also upholds the protection of the best interests of the child. It includes appropriate protections for access to information about individual circumstances, consistent with cultural practice. The government has committed more than \$6.6 million to implement the act. We have appointed the commissioner, as I mentioned before, who will be an independent decision-maker. We have established the office of the commissioner for him and his team to work from and we have developed applicant support services, including appropriate access to legal advice and interpreting and translation services as well.

As I mentioned earlier, the commissioner commenced his role in July and is here today for his first estimates hearing, and he is raring to go if the committee has any questions for him. We undertook a national recruitment process. Committee members may remember that a requirement to be the commissioner was that you actually had to be a Torres Strait Islander, which was very powerful indeed, and we look forward to supporting the commissioner as he undertakes this vital work. We know that there are people who have struggled to get driver’s licences because they have had identification

problems. We know that there are children who have missed out on being able to go to representative sport in Cairns and in Brisbane and potentially the Olympics because they have not been able to demonstrate the appropriate identification. I have big expectations for the Torres Strait. The 2032 Olympics is just around the corner and let us get it done. Let us get those identities sorted out and let us get that next generation of Olympians through.

**Ms LUI:** I refer to page 6 of the SDS. Considering the economic impacts COVID-19 has had across Queensland, can the minister elaborate on what is being done to build economic participation in Queensland's Indigenous remote and discrete communities and across Queensland more broadly?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Queensland's economic rebound from COVID-19 has been quite interesting in that it has been almost twice as strong as the Australian average. According to the Palaszczuk government's *COVID-19 fiscal and economic review* published in 2020, when the impacts of COVID-19 hit Queensland our strong health response certainly laid the foundation for our economy to bounce back following restrictions. We know that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Queensland's remote and discrete communities are considered high risk and I have had ongoing engagement with Indigenous mayors and councils, as has the director-general, to ensure that those communities receive the support and the information that they need. We will continue to work together with them and respond to the ongoing health risks and ensure that COVID-19 measures are appropriate and support them in every step as we move through.

I would definitely commend the strong leadership of the mayors in all of the remote communities. It has been a very challenging 18 months for most of them. Nearly all of them were newly elected right about the time that COVID-19 came along so they had to do a lot of work very quickly. Just this week the mayor of Yarrabah had to quickly step up because his community went into a three-day lockdown. This is the first time that a remote Indigenous community has gone into a lockdown under our current arrangements. Mayor Andrews did a fantastic job of leading his community.

While the impacts of COVID-19 continue to be widespread and ever changing, our department has been working to ensure that economic participation in Queensland's remote and discrete communities, and all across Queensland, continues to grow through initiatives that support training, employment and business development. Our Youth Employment Program, for example, supports young people transitioning from school into training and employment. Regional staff from our department work directly with final year students and other qualified people to secure pathways to higher education and training and into employment. The YEP program offers pre-employment activities including resume writing, application and interview preparation and postplacement support. Many of us have grey hair now but we can always remember how terrifying those first job interviews were. If we can help people to prepare through simple things such as writing resumes, conducting an interview or writing a job application, that can go a long way. That is the work that our department helps facilitate through the YEP program.

I will leave that there because I think we are running out of time. I want to thank my department for continuing to deliver that program in a very challenging environment with COVID-19.

**CHAIR:** I turn to the deputy chair and member for Burnett.

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

**Mr LANGBROEK:** My next question is a follow-on from that of the member for Cook in that it is about a specific community and increasing economic participation. Can the minister brief the committee about issues on Mornington Island?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** As the committee may be aware, I was the ministerial champion for Mornington Island until the commencement of the current government. Their ministerial champion now is Minister Scanlon, supported by Assistant Minister Lance McCallum. I spent quite a bit of time on Mornington Island—obviously that was before COVID, as a lot of things are now—working with the previous mayor, the previous council CEO and other elders. The Mornington Island community faces many challenges, but can I say that it is a beautiful place with the most amazing people. It is fair to say that theirs would be our most remote community—if not the most remote then it is one of the most remote. Being in the Gulf, separated from the mainland by water, creates issues for that community as it is a long way to lifelines in Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa.

Having been to that community many times, I have a very good understanding of the challenges that they face. They face many challenges, including a lot of the challenges that most communities share around housing, overcrowding, employment and the like. However, one challenge that creates a very unique situation for Mornington Island is around home-brewing and what that leads to. Anyone

with a bit of medical knowledge knows that ingesting sugar that has not been properly broken down can have a big lead towards diabetic complications. Mayor Yanner has highlighted quite well, not only to Brisbane but also to Canberra, his concerns as a local leader and what he feels is happening to his community on Mornington Island. I very much support him in his push. He got some good focus from all levels of government.

The road out for Mornington Island is not an easy one. We are committed to working with them on reducing the complications and health side effects that come from home-brewing and also the many other issues that they have up there, particularly around economic development. The mayor has some great ideas and we have a role as a department and certainly so too do our champions, Minister Scanlon and the Health DG. We want to see that community thrive.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** From my time there in the past I know that there are a number of issues there. Minister, can you update the committee on whether there will be any funds provided in 2021-22 or subsequent years of the budget for the \$12 million Cherbourg community administration building?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** My understanding is that that is actually being managed through the Deputy Premier's department. It would be the infrastructure portfolio of that department. It is nothing to do with our department. However, similar to the question about the Aurukun police station, if there is anything that our department can do to assist. We can certainly assist with local intelligence.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Can you confirm: also through using the Indigenous Economic Opportunities Plan and the building and construction training policy, which is a policy of government anyway?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** That is right.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Does the department make any contribution to the Clontarf Foundation or assess its outcomes re education and employment?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** My understanding is that that would be Education. We do not make any contribution financially or otherwise to them, but we do very much support them. They do absolutely fantastic work in very challenging environments.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Finally, Minister, can you update the committee as to the progress of delivering 30 houses? I have asked this question before of the former department. Twelve houses had been delivered and were available for ownership by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. The target was 30 by 30 June.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I can update the committee on that one. We managed to get 31. I would not say we smashed the target, but we got to the target that, as you say, was 30.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Director-General, thanks to the minister we have heard some details on the very important work being done by the department with regards to Path to Treaty. Are the actions outlined in the budget dependent on the returns from the Path to Treaty Fund and, since those returns are based on market variability, what impact will that variability have on the Path to Treaty actions, can they be delivered and what are the time frames?

**Dr Sarra:** As the minister mentioned earlier, it is expected to generate returns of approximately \$10 million each year. I want to get the specifics of your question because I do not know that I understood it particularly well.

**Dr MacMAHON:** There is an expected \$10 million, but presumably those returns from the fund are dependent on market variability. So if there is a shortfall, for example, how will the department respond to that, and what will that mean for Path to Treaty activities?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** I am happy to take that one, if you like.

**CHAIR:** Before you do, Minister—member for South Brisbane, this is not your first question that has asked about a number of issues. If you stick to one issue and hopefully we can provide you with the time needed to ask another question. Over to you, minister.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** You are right. Obviously the \$300 million is invested with Treasury and each year we will get a different return, and that return will be dependent on what the market is doing. They have given us obviously some estimations which are hopefully around the \$10 million mark. One of the biggest crystal balls in the world at the moment is: what is the worldwide economy going to look like over the next 10 years? If we had that crystal ball a year ago, we all would have run out and bought real estate, a caravan, a purebred dog and a V8 LandCruiser because they all seem to have gone berserk in price. We will be guided by Treasury as we go along. Those arrangements are still being worked out.



A future fund is a new scheme. We have not had one of those that our department has been involved in before, so we will work with Treasury to work out how that works and what kind of forward idea we get. I can see where you are going—how do we know how to inform the future, not knowing how much money we actually have to throw at it? A lot of that work is still being done. What we have been assured from Treasury is that if we have any left over, we can continue to invest that. If we have change, we can chuck it into next year's works.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Director-General, can you outline what targeted support, if any, have been offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses over the COVID pandemic?

**Dr Sarra:** I think it speaks to the nature of our department and the role that we play in helping other departments to perform their role. There are some elements that we perform in the economic participation space. Some of that is about brokering connections between other departments and individual Indigenous entities right across Queensland. Some of it is about advocacy within departments about how to better package up their products to be able to attract the interest of Indigenous businesses. Let me check with my department if we have anything else to add to that.

In terms of our whole-of-government leadership, the minister in our department has an oversight role. However, each minister carries individual responsibility for ensuring portfolio agencies progress strategies and policies that strive to meet the priority outcomes and targets. The whole-of-government Moving Ahead strategy 2016-2022 outlines actions to improve economic participation outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. As I was saying, our department is not necessarily always doing the doing, but we are helping other departments to get better at doing what they need to be doing in that space.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I wanted to refer back to question on notice No. 20 around the operation of the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act, accepting that those are administered by the resources minister. The issue I was trying to get to with that question was that there were some concerns raised by claimants under the Aboriginal Land Act, or trustees of those claims, that, firstly, First Nations communities do not really know much or are not making the most of opportunities under those acts; and secondly, where they do have grants under those acts, it is difficult to do much with the land granted because of the nature of the title that is conferred. Minister, is the department doing any work to improve access to those opportunities within First Nations communities? Beyond that, is there consideration being given to funding that might be made available to assist in enterprise on claimed lands to make the most of those opportunities?

**CHAIR:** Minister, I will give you two seconds to think through that long question. Member, just be aware of the length of questioning and the preamble.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Indeed, thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I will provide you with the liberty of responding as you see fit.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** There are a lot of moving parts to this. I take the member for Maiwar's point that the land tenure can be very confusing. It can be very confusing for politicians as well, let alone for a traditional owner or if you are trying to understand how it all works. I think there is still a lot of work to be done by governments all across the country to try and simplify some of that. Obviously we have the Aboriginal Land Act, we have cultural heritage, we have Mabo—there is a range of things. At the moment, from our perspective, primarily it is around the joint management. National parks is probably the main one. The ranger programs are happening there around the joint management. I think those programs and those arrangements are giving us better insight as a government as to opportunities and where we could be going with other things as well.

Does our department do any work in that space? Primarily, we hold cultural heritage. That is the legislation that we have and that is all being reviewed right now. I know you are aware of the complexities around cultural heritage and how that works. We are hoping to try and clean a lot of that up as best as we can as we move through the cultural heritage review and change some legislation. But there is still a lot more work to be done and there are lots of moving pieces. Clearly the resources department holds a number of those bits of the puzzle, as does the environment department, as does a whole heap of others.

In our role as the department, we want to try and use some of the levers that we have. One of those is very much around treaty. That is a fairly big lever that our department has to have that bit of influence on other parts of the government and also stakeholders around it, but there are also things like Closing the Gap that we mentioned before.

We have what we call a RILIPO office, which is part of our department. Their primary role is about trying to get those issues ironed out as best we can, particularly in the regions for the family groups and TOs and that sort of thing to understand it better, but at the moment it is still quite a difficult exercise for a lot of people. We will just keep working on that and advocating where we can.

**Mr BERKMAN:** The RILIPO group that you referred to, that is not an acronym I have heard before.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** It is alright. It is one that took me a bit of while to work out. It is called the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office. Good old government—we always like acronyms. If you can find one for my department, please let me know because we have not been able to find one yet. Essentially, the office uses a collaborative approach to resolve complex land administration issues, including native title, Indigenous Land Use Agreements, land tenure, survey, town planning, master planning and infrastructure development, as well as enabling home ownership and economic development. A lot of those components that we talked about before—that is the part of our team that tries to help navigate that for Indigenous Queenslanders. Essentially, a lot of our team is out in the rural or the regional parts of the state. We can get you a more fulsome briefing on RILIPO, if you like.

**Mr BERKMAN:** That would certainly be helpful. I know that this particular stakeholder that I am referring is very keen to understand. He referred to particular funding arrangements that were available around the analogous legislation and claims that exist in New South Wales. I am keen to understand—I know that plenty of stakeholders are keen to understand—what funding options there could be in the future for First Nations enterprise on land that is being claimed.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar, do you have another question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** Sure. I will turn that into a question. I will direct this to Dr Sarra. Putting aside RILIPO, because I do not know that the Aboriginal Land Act was mentioned amongst those specifically that it was looking at, is the department looking specifically at funding opportunities for the use of land that is claimed under the Aboriginal Land Act or the Torres Strait Islander Land Act?

**Dr Sarra:** All I can do is refer back to the RILIPO work from the perspective of our department. The minister talked about that earlier. Land tenure matters, particularly in remote and discrete communities and other areas affected by the Land Act, are complex.

The RILIPO team, primarily based in Cairns, work across government to try to iron out some of those complexities to ensure that things like town planning is done. I will check the terminology—that master planning is done from a community perspective and also from a town community perspective. They are also venturing into rural master planning.

They have executed infrastructure and housing Indigenous land use agreements on the islands of Boigu, Dauan, Erub, Iama, Mabuag and many others in the Torres Strait; negotiated land use agreements for Mer and Poruma islands—they are due to be finalised by December. They are negotiating township Indigenous land use agreements for the communities of Cherbourg and Lockhart River, developing social housing Indigenous land use agreements and developing a social housing Indigenous land use agreements template to help 16 councils to address native title issues for the construction of public housing under the housing program funded by the Queensland government. They have provided land tenure and survey assistance for the Hope Vale Congress prescribed body corporate and continue to deliver a master planning initiative that has enabled the completion of 21 urban master plans, with a further 11 master plans and four rural master plans currently in progress and due for completion at the end of 2021.

That gives you a sense of the work that they do. It does not quite go to your specific interest in funding available to pursue those opportunities. I can assure you we are in constant dialogue with the Coordinator-General and with other major departments around any major work that is occurring to identify opportunities to stimulate Indigenous engagement in those project areas.

**Mr BENNETT:** I was quite buoyed to hear about your work particularly in trying to navigate native title. I will make more of a statement. I am asking for help to try to navigate some issues. Four years ago the fishing vessel *Dianne* went down off the 1770 coast. Since that time we have been trying to negotiate an Indigenous land use agreement and trying to get the TOs on board. It is on national park. Is there a way forward? It has been a four-year process trying to get the memorial built. It is designed. I believe the minister for transport has the money in the budget. It is just this issue of trying to navigate an agreement. I sense from your department that you have that capacity to help work with other departments to make it happen.

**Dr Sarra:** Before I overpromise, what I can promise you is that we would be more than willing to pursue that. I do not know that it is an activity that would sit primarily with us.

**Mr BENNETT:** I am just asking for assistance. I will write to the minister.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** If you write to me then we can do the work that we can do inside government to work out whose portfolio is where. As I mentioned before to the member for Maiwar, it is quite a jigsaw and a maze. If you write to me, we will get some work rolling forward.

**Mr BENNETT:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr SKELTON:** I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can the minister explain what impact and benefit the ministerial and government champions program has for Indigenous communities?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** The ministerial and government champions program demonstrates the Palaszczuk government's ongoing commitment to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reframe the relationship. The program began in 2002. It has ran every year since, except for the three years during the Newman government when it was abolished. In 2015 the Palaszczuk government re-established the program and expanded it further to include both ministers and Queensland government chief executives such as directors-general and the like.

The program operates across Queensland's remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. That list is Aurukun, Cherbourg, Coen, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mornington Island, Mossman Gorge, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area, Palm Island, Pompuuraaw, Torres Strait, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal, Yarrabah and Doomadgee.

The program provides a mechanism for direct engagement between government and Indigenous communities. It enables those communities to communicate their needs and aspirations across all service, support and development areas and strengthen the ability of ministers and government departments to make informed decisions and to champion their community's development aspirations—a bit like the conversation we had before about who is responsible for what. This means that those communities can reach out to the minister or the director-general that is their champion and they can say, 'I have an idea,' or 'I have a problem,' and those champions will then go off through government and help to work out solutions. It is a very simple but very powerful process.

The role of the champion is to advocate for greater community safety supports, service deliveries and improved access to key development areas—things like education, health, housing and the like. Through the program, ministers and DGs take an active and lead role in addressing the challenges unique to their community. Every community is a little bit different. Some have similar problems or opportunities; some are very different. For example, a community such as Yarrabah, which is in driving distance to Cairns, has very different challenges and needs to a community such as Mornington Island like I mentioned before.

The principle of engagement under the program is what ensures the success. Ministers and DGs, as per the principles of engagement, have to report directly on emerging issues and have greater inclusiveness throughout, engaging with all community stakeholders. DGs have a subcommittee that they all on, where they have strategic oversight of the program, where they share ideas and emerging trends, and collectively resolve some of these opportunities and issues.

COVID-19 has made travel very challenging this year. As all ministers and DGs are required to visit their communities throughout the year, it has been quite difficult this year to get boots on the ground in some of these communities. Sometimes that is because of lockdowns here in Brisbane, but at the moment we have the delta strain circling around. Before a DG or a minister would go into a community right now, we would need to check the temperature to see whether that is an appropriate thing to do. None of us want to be the person who takes a virus into a community. A lot of work has still been happening over phones and over Zoom.

I have the pleasure of being the ministerial champion for Doomadgee. I am also assisting the ministerial champion for Woorabinda, who is Brittany Lauga MP, the member for Keppel, as assistant minister. She looks after primarily Woorabinda and I support her in that.

Since I have been minister in this portfolio, luckily in between all those lockdowns I have been able to get boots on the ground into Cherbourg, Horn Island, Thursday Island, Poruma Island, Masig Island, Cape Flattery, Hope Vale, Yarrabah, Cooktown, Woorabinda and Laura. I have been trying unsuccessfully to get to Doomadgee. Every single time we have something planned, someone goes into lockdown. I assure the people of Doomadgee that we are on the way. Just give us some time.

I have seen firsthand some of the simple, but effective, things that champions can achieve in many of these communities. In particular, I know that the program has been important to develop some open dialogue for me—dialogue between myself and the mayor of Doomadgee, Jason Ned, and also the mayor of Woorabinda, Joshua Weazel—and being able to have conversations with those two about

their aspirations, ideas and where they want to move. I can report some of the consistent messaging that is coming back from many of the communities. Housing is a consistent theme and overcrowding—I know that the government is working on that—also economic development, which includes a range of things. You cannot have economic development without good health outcomes for locals. All of these things are intertwined. Some communities have been able to identify opportunities for economic development within their patch, and we are very much working with them to bring that to fruition. I am very, very proud of what our government has been able to do when it comes to the champions.

Madam Chair, before we go to the next question I just want to clarify something. Earlier the member for Surfers Paradise asked a question about the royal commission, and I wanted to clarify some comments. I have just received better information. As noted earlier, the Queensland government has cooperated fully with the royal commission and will continue to do so, given how important it obviously is. I can advise that officers from my department have provided statements to the royal commission that included information about the operation of the Forensic Disability Service but that the royal commission did not elect to call departmental witnesses to give further evidence at the relevant public hearing. I also understand staff of the royal commission visited the FDS to provide information that could be made available to clients about the role of the royal commission and how they could engage with the royal commission if they wished to. A further visit was planned to enable the commission to meet directly with clients, but it has not been able to proceed due to COVID related issues at this time.

**CHAIR:** Minister, we are coming to the end of the session with you, your staff and your departmental officers. Minister, I will hand over to you to tidy up any other unfinished business.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Thank you, Chair. My understanding is that I have one outstanding matter I can address now. This relates to the question from the member for South Brisbane. The question was, 'Of the 680 people who fall outside of the NDIS', and there was a question about those numbers. The response is that we do not track individuals who are not NDIS eligible; however, we do support them through making referrals to other services and advocacy organisations through the delivery of the ART program, which is a partnership arrangement as I mentioned before. We can further support them to make an application. Also, people who are not NDIS eligible can still liaise with Commonwealth local area coordinators from the NDIS about supports that may be available to them. In addition to that, key Queensland government support may still be available to those people even though they do not meet NDIS criteria. Some of those come from other departments such as housing and Main Roads around assistance for things like school transport, taxi subsidies and a range of things. In short, there are still services available to those people the member referred to through the Queensland government, but it is certainly on a case-by-case base.

Madam Chair, in a closing statement can I thank you and the committee, committee staff and the parliamentary staff who have supported today's hearing. I know it has been extra challenging. There is nothing like a COVID layer chucked over the top to complicate things even further. I want to thank all of my hardworking team from the department and my office with a special mention to all of those staff whom the Premier labelled our 'Lockdown Legends.' Thank you to everyone. It has been a privilege to work in this important portfolio. We do some amazing work out there with some of our state's most vulnerable. As I mentioned in an answer to one of the earlier questions, we are not the biggest department, but we very much punch above our weight. I am always happy to work across government with opposition and crossbench members, so if there is anything such as the member for Maiwar had with his question before, we can get you a briefing around RILIPO or any of those. We are very much here to help. We are all on the same page when it comes to that. Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe there are no outstanding questions. That is a good thing, seeing as I planned to go on leave tonight at midnight.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolios of seniors, disability services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships has expired. The committee thanks you, Minister, departmental officers and Commissioners for your attendance.

The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 3.30 pm with the examination of the estimates for the portfolios of the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

**Proceedings suspended from 3.16 pm to 3.30 pm.**

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

### In Attendance

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


Ms B Condren, Chief of Staff

#### Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

Ms D Mulkerin, Director-General

Mr M Drane, Executive Director, Youth Detention Operations and Reform

Mr W Briscoe, Executive Director, Multicultural Affairs

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 6.15 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 5.15 pm to 5.30 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will consider the minister's portfolios as follows: children and youth justice from 3.30 pm to 5.15 pm and multicultural affairs from 5.30 pm to 6.15 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 in the hearing in accordance with standing orders: Dr Amy MacMahon MP, member for South Brisbane; Stephen Andrew MP, member for Mirani; David Crisafulli MP, member for Broadwater; David Janetzki MP, member for Toowoomba South; Jarrod Bleijie MP, member for Kawana; Fiona Simpson MP, member for Maroochydore; John-Paul Langbroek MP, member for Surfers Paradise; Dr Christian Rowan MP, member for Moggill; Amanda Camm MP, member for Whitsunday—welcome, Member; Brent Mickelberg MP, member for Buderim; Tim Nicholls MP, member for Clayfield; Steve Minnikin MP, member for Chatsworth; and Tim Mander MP, member for Everton.

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

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

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public who are watching the broadcast to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of children, youth justice and multicultural affairs open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Ms LINARD:** I would like to start by respectfully acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today—the Turrbal and Jagera people—and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I would like to thank you, Chair, and all the committee members for giving me this opportunity to speak about the great work in often very challenging circumstances that the Department

of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs carries out each and every day. I have now been in my role as Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs for nine months. When I was last before this committee, I had been minister for little more than three weeks.

Since that time, I have travelled widely throughout Queensland, meeting with our dedicated departmental staff, our devoted carers, the extensive number of non-government partners we work closely with, children in care, young people in detention and many of our vibrant and diverse multicultural communities. Whether it is child safety officers looking after vulnerable children, youth justice staff helping to turn young people's lives around or multicultural staff supporting people from culturally diverse backgrounds, their commitment and passion never ceases to inspire me. They have my sincere thanks for the work that they do.

While acknowledging the work of my department, it is my sincere wish—and I am sure theirs—that they had no work to do. This would mean there were no more vulnerable families, children and young people to care for, that all young people's lives were on track and that there were no barriers to people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Sadly, this is not the case and it is why my department exists. Both I and the department are committed to: keeping Queensland children safe from abuse and neglect; focusing on community safety with investment in programs and infrastructure to prevent and reduce youth crime; and recognising and realising to its fullest the valuable contribution cultural diversity makes to our great state.

This year's budget for the department is \$1.86 billion, with continued record investment in child and family services. Even with record funding in secondary family services, unfortunately, we continue to see an increase in children and young people coming into care and an increase in the complexity of the families presenting to us. The stresses and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are real and this is resulting in more pressure on families not just in Queensland but across Australia and the world.

We remain focused on reform in the child protection space and the ambitious Supporting Families Changing Futures reforms are now entering the eighth year of a 10-year reform program. In these final years, we are focused on continuing investment in family support, reducing overrepresentation, strengthening support to carers and enhancing care to meet demand.

A particular area of focus is reducing the overrepresentation of First Nations people in the child protection and youth justice systems. With our partners Family Matters Queensland, the Our Way Strategy and Action Plan has set a strategic approach to eliminating the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system within a generation. Initiatives under this strategy—such as Family Wellbeing Services and the delegated authority trial for Indigenous community controlled organisations—are making a real difference in community and are a shining example of the work the department is currently undertaking.

All Queenslanders have a right to feel safe in their homes and communities, and all Queenslanders want to see young people reach their potential and live meaningful lives. The Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy, together with the five-point plan and the targeting serious recidivist offender work, provides the framework for how we are investing in programs and interventions to divert young people from offending, and investing in facilities to detain young people when needed to keep communities safe. The strategy is evidence based and informed by community members and experts. It aims to strengthen prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation responses to youth crime in Queensland and has public safety and community confidence at its foundations.

With over half a billion dollars invested to date, this year's budget builds on this investment with an additional \$98 million to target serious repeat offenders—the 10 per cent of young offenders who account for 47 per cent of offending. Earlier this year, we introduced tough new measures to strengthen accountability for serious repeat youth offenders, including the presumption against bail, and gave the courts more powers to seek assurances from parents and guardians and trial the use of electronic monitoring devices as a condition of bail.

We are working closely with our partners, the Queensland Police Service, to implement these new measures along with cross-agency involvement. Chair, results are encouraging, with a 12 per cent decrease in the number of young offenders in Queensland with a proven offence in the 12 months ending March 2021.

Queensland has a rich diversity of people and cultures throughout the state. Right now, in August, we make a special effort to recognise this through Multicultural Queensland Month. This year's theme is 'Inclusion in action', which recognises the role everyone plays in contributing to the state's identity and economic prosperity. While there has been some disruption to events because of the ongoing COVID response, it is a great opportunity for everyone across the state to connect, share, listen and

learn about other cultures and to appreciate the benefits of diversity in our personal relationships and our workplaces. While much of the work undertaken by the department can be confronting, I look forward to expanding on some of the great work underway throughout today's proceedings.

**CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the children and youth justice portfolios. I now call on the member for Burnett, deputy chair, for the first question.

**Mr BENNETT:** Welcome everyone. I will defer to the member for Whitsunday.

**Ms CANN:** Thank you to the committee. Good afternoon, Minister, and to your staff as well. My first question is to the director-general. Last estimates we learned that one child alone committed 255 offences. Is this still the highest number of offences committed by one youth?

**Ms Mulkerin:** Thank you for your question. We will need to ask whether we are able to get that data in time. However, as you might have heard the minister talk about, over this last year we have seen an overall reduction in the number of young offenders that we are working with and that we know. Of course, within that group, there is a group of young people—10 per cent—who represent about 50 per cent of the crimes committed. It is that group of young people that we are particularly focused on. I do not want to in any way downplay the work that my colleagues do on the front line working with young people—the other 90 per cent—they do amazing work out in the field, and it is their work that really has contributed to that overall reduction in the number of young offenders.

**Mr BENNETT:** Would the minister be prepared to take that on notice, maybe for the end of this session?

**CHAIR:** Director-General, you did give an undertaking that you may be able to get that information. We will check in with you towards the end of this session and deal with that matter should you not have that information.

**Ms CANN:** Director-General, are children still committing—and I take your point about the cohort of 10 per cent—more than 30 new offences while out on bail pending court appearance? In 2020-21 how many children committed more than 50 new offences while out on bail?

**Ms Mulkerin:** Again, that is a very specific, detailed data question that we will see if we are able to get before the end of the session.

**CHAIR:** Member for Whitsunday, could I clarify? Would it be the first half of 2021?

**Ms CANN:** With that question? In 2020-21? Yes, the first half.

**CHAIR:** January to June 2021?

**Ms CANN:** From 30 June 2020 through to June 2021.

**CHAIR:** So the full 2020-21 financial year?

**Ms CANN:** Correct.

**CHAIR:** Great.

**Ms CANN:** Minister, will you rule out supporting raising the age of criminal responsibility?

**Ms LINARD:** With respect, this is a question that should be directed to the Attorney-General given that sits within the Criminal Code. However, the Premier has been quite clear about the government's position in this regard and I support that position as communicated.

**Ms CANN:** My question is to the director-general in regards to youth detention. To what extent have lockdowns at youth detention centres increased in the year 2020-21, this current year, compared with 2019-20?

**Ms Mulkerin:** In fact, the lockdowns have decreased this year compared to last year. For Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, this year there were six compared to 11 in the previous year. It is the same for Cleveland—15, down from 28 the previous year.

**Ms CANN:** Minister, is it a fact that while these lockdowns have decreased, they have seen youth offenders confined to cells for up to 23 hours each day when they occur?

**Ms LINARD:** Member, in regard to lockdowns, of course when young people are confined to their rooms or secured in their rooms, that can be done for a number of reasons: of course, emergency incidents or for security incidents—absolutely that would happen. It would happen in regard to maintaining good order in the centre, which is what we all expect. We expect our staff to be safe; we expect young people to be kept safe. As for the length of time you have mentioned, I cannot answer

that question. I am not sure. We could seek information in respect of the other questions that we are seeking information on. That detailed information was asked in a question on notice, which is why we had it for the last hearing, but we will seek to do so.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, what has been the impact of these lockdowns? In particular has there been an increase in violence either between inmates or between inmates and officers during periods of lockdown?

**Ms LINARD:** I think it is important to call out, which is what I think you are doing with this question—and lockdowns, of course, are whole, centre-wide lockdowns. We do not like confining young people to their room. Of course, it is a routine matter overnight—like we all do during sleep. Young people could be confined to their rooms for a number of reasons and I have mentioned some of those, but it also could be for illness or the safety of the young person. Importantly, they are subject to strict approvals and they are subject to strict protocols, time limits and record keeping because we are responsible for the welfare of young people who are in our care in youth detention. We appreciate that confining someone to their room for extended periods of time is not preferable, not advantageous. As I said, those sorts of centre-wide lockdowns, which the director-general called out, have decreased and are small in number: six and 15.

In regard to staff assaults, equally, we have seen a reduction in the number of incidents of alleged assaults recorded against staff.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, will the government proceed with the appointment of an independent inspector to oversee its youth detention centres, as suggested by the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner in the wake of the COVID-19 related lockdowns?

**Ms LINARD:** I understand the Attorney has lead in regard to that call from the Human Rights Commissioner and would be the one under whom that would sit. That is my understanding.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, can you advise how many children are being held in watch houses across our state as of today?

**Ms LINARD:** Yes. As at my daily update this morning there were seven. Two were remanded and five were fresh arrests.

**Ms CAMM:** Can I expand upon that? Were any children being held in Townsville?

**Ms LINARD:** No.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, the amendments to the Youth Justice Act, which came into effect on 30 April 2021 with a limited presumption against bail, GPS monitoring and the creation of an aggravating factor during sentencing of committing offences while on bail, appear to be in direct contravention of the government's four-pillar strategy. How can the expenditure of further funds on this strategy be justified when legislative amendments appear to strike out the very basis of points outlined in your strategy?

**Ms LINARD:** The youth justice strategy Working Together Changing the Story is quite clear about the importance of community confidence. The strategy is also about meaningfully diverting young people from offending. Those are an incredibly important focus. It is the sole focus of our agency. We do not want young people offending. Equally, community confidence and safety is our paramount concern. The additional measures we brought in in February were in response to community concern. We stand by that. We want young people to be law-abiding. When they are not, we hold them to account. They are already showing results. If we look at show cause applications, as at June we had seen 199 show cause applications. Equally, when we look at the budget, there is an additional \$98 million in the budget, including \$60 million for ongoing investment in initiatives like the Mount Isa youth hub which is an outstanding example of how we work with young people—and some of the most difficult young people—to reduce offending to protect the community.

Equally, there was \$38 million to enhance and extend conditional bail programs and intensive bail support. That is equally about diverting young people away from offending. It is equally about ensuring they are successful in regard to meeting their orders, but it is also about keeping our community safe. I know that our investment is very clearly consistent with our Working Together Changing the Story strategy.

**Ms CAMM:** I refer to my colleague the member for Burdekin who did question the Police Minister yesterday in estimates in the interest of community interest and community outcry. I believe this falls under the department, but I stand corrected if not. The rapid action patrol group review and the Townsville stronger community action group review—those findings are yet to be released. Can you clarify if that has come out of your budget and will you commit to releasing those findings?



**Ms LINARD:** I am happy to answer the question. With regard to rapid response, that is certainly an operational policing report. If the member is asking me about the latter report, TSCAG, which I assume she is, I am happy to answer in that respect. Yes, I am aware that the member for Burdekin asked questions of my colleague, the Minister for Police, yesterday. Of course I support his answer. That is the answer. The government is considering that report. Yes, my agency partners with police in regard to TSCAG and it is a whole-of-agency response, really. In a whole-of-government response, all the agencies work together. The government will consider that report.

While we are talking about Townsville—because of course that report is focused on Townsville and our meaningful investment there because we hear the concerns of those who live there and are responding fully—there is an investment of \$60.5 million from 2017 through to the end of this term on: co-responder; lighthouse; on-country; Upper Ross after-hours diversion services; intensive case management; family wellbeing services; restorative justice; transition to success; bail support services; conditional bail program; specialist high-risk court; investment in our CYDC. This government not only takes the concerns of the people of Townsville very seriously but invests significantly and will continue to do so. The way that government works together to intensively manage the young people there who need to be managed, particularly the 10 per cent, is very much integrated. We are always looking at ways we can improve that. We obviously have already put in place improvements and will continue to do so.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, this question relates to the provision of education services to detainees in youth detention centres. How many teachers or contractors are employed by youth justice to ensure those in detention still have access to quality education?

**Ms LINARD:** I do not have at hand that number that I am aware of. I appreciate that what happens in our youth detention centres is not well understood, but all young people in youth detention centres in Queensland participate in education—and, for some, appropriate vocational training programs—for 40 weeks a year. They are not sitting idle. As employees of education, that data would be held by the education minister. Certainly, for 40 weeks a year they are engaging in meaningful education programs as they should be. They are young people. Young people outside of youth detention are engaging in education and those in youth detention should equally be so because we want them to get their lives back on track and find meaningful employment or engagement in their communities when they are released.

**Ms CAMM:** I note that the minister said there is a partnership with the Education Department, but is the department experiencing any difficulties when it comes either to engaging employees or contractors to work within youth detention from an attraction-retention perspective?

**Ms LINARD:** That would absolutely be a question for the education minister about whether they experience difficulties in regard to attracting and retaining. The educators I have spoken to—and I appreciate I have not spoken to all the educators across our centres—are very passionate about the work they do and their engagement with young people.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, I refer to the GPS-monitoring trial and the targeting of youth offenders. Currently, how many bracelets have been distributed to young people?

**Ms LINARD:** In regard to the additional tools that we gave the courts, when a young person comes before the courts a suitability assessment can be requested and then is conducted by my department. That suitability assessment obviously informs the court, but of course it is the court's decision as to whether they feel that that young person is suitable on the basis of a number of different considerations. Four of those suitability assessments have been completed on three young people. In each of those cases the court has decided not to make that a condition or an order.

**CHAIR:** Member for Whitsunday, we have time for one very quick question.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, I draw your attention to the rate of children subject to protective orders per 1,000, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as per the SDS. From 2019 to 2020 the actual number was 52.4. This financial year there has been an increase of 5.4 to 57.8. The minister outlined in her introduction the investment being made to ensure that First Nations peoples and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their overrepresentation is being addressed. How can the minister justify this when we have already seen an increase in the rate of protective orders for Indigenous children and families?

**CHAIR:** Prior to your answering that question, Minister, a little counsel in relation to the lengthy preamble. Certainly, Minister, I will allow you to answer as you see fit, or the director-general?

**Ms LINARD:** I will make some comments and then invite my director-general to speak to this, because it is something that I know she and in fact the whole department are very passionate about.

I want to correct—and that might be too strong a word, and the member is right—the fact that I called out in my opening statement that it is of concern to us and the absolute dedication that we have to reducing that over-representation. I do not feel that there is anything to defend with regard to these statistics. These statistics are the reason that we need to continue to do the meaningful work that we are doing because it is of significant concern to us. It is not where we wish to be, but equally I would start by saying that the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland live safely and much loved in their homes and their communities. When we look at the number of children in out-of-home care it is 43.6 per cent, and that is a figure that we are not happy with. We are not happy with that figure. We want those young people to equally be in community, in culture and with their families, and that has remained stable over the past year.

While that is a figure that we are not comfortable with—and nor should be—and something that we will continue to work on, it is equally important to draw out that Queensland has one of the lowest rates of over-representation in Australia and leads the nation in the proportion of expenditure provided to community controlled organisations. When we look at those community controlled organisations, there is 20.6 per cent for family support and 35.94 per cent for Intensive Family Support services. The reason I draw that out is that we are not just talking the talk; we are walking the walk. We are working with community controlled organisations to give and empower them to put the power in communities and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and elders to make sure that they are the ones who are advising and having control with regard to the decisions that are being made. We want to see the system improve and to have improved outcomes, but, Director-General, I know that you have lots of data there and stats—

**Ms CAMM:** Madam Chair, I am happy with that response.

**Ms LINARD:** But I would love the director-general to add a little bit extra.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order, Chair: the minister just gave a very lengthy preamble before answering the question and the member for Whitsunday would like to ask another question in the time remaining. Can we please move on?

**CHAIR:** Member, we are actually over time. We are over time by three minutes, so I may just move on to government questions. I do apologise, Director-General.

**Ms LUI:** With regard to DCYJMA's stated objective on page 1 of the SDS relating to enabling the safety, belonging and wellbeing of Queensland children and young people, with the number of children in care continuing to rise, will the minister advise whether the Carmody reforms have been effective in mitigating demand?

**Ms LINARD:** Sadly, as I mentioned in my opening statement, we are facing increasing pressure and demands in the child protection system. This is not unique to Queensland. There has been a significant increase in reports of harm and entry into the child protection system across Australia and internationally for more than a decade. The reasons for this are complex. Evidence shows a relationship between disadvantage and the neglect or abuse of children. We also know that the community understands and recognises the signs of neglect and abuse more than in the past and this may lead to increased reporting. The most recent child safety data, which covers the 12 months to 31 March this year, shows demand for family support and child protection services throughout the state is continuing to rise. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is visible in the data released today which shows an increase in the number of Queensland children needing care to 10,929 as at 31 March 2021, 730 more than the previous 12 months.

I am sure all members of the committee will be as saddened as I am to know that more than one in three children who came into the care of the department during the 12 months to March 2021 had a parent with current or previous methamphetamine use, up from 38 per cent a year ago. Two in three parents had a past or present substance abuse issue while nearly three in five struggled with their mental health. We also know that more than half had experienced domestic and family violence. Other risk factors including the number of parents with a criminal history and the proportion of parents who had been abused as a child have become increasingly prevalent. All these complexities have been compounded by the economic and social distress caused by the pandemic.

Despite these pressures, I am proud to say that the department and our partners continue to work to improve the system and ensure safe environments for children. The number of investigations commenced by child safety in the past year is up by seven per cent to 26,035, which is 1,771 more compared to the previous year. Most importantly, 95 per cent of investigations in our most critical

cases—our 24-hour cases—started on time. This means we are there when children and families need us most and more Queenslanders have stepped up to become foster and kinship-carers, a 5.1 per cent increase on the previous year, and for that I thank them.

As members would be aware, there has been significant reform to our child safety system since the findings of the 2013 Child Protection Commission of Inquiry led by Tim Carmody QC. The inquiry predicted that in the absence of reform there would be at least 5,900 children admitted to a child protection order by 2019-20. In reality, fewer than 4,400 were admitted, 1,500 fewer than the best worst case scenario predicted by the inquiry. We are now in the final phase of the implementation with a focus on increasing investment in family support, reducing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, increasing and enhancing care to meet demand and need, and strengthening support to carers.

Central to the Carmody inquiry recommendations was the belief that increased investment in family support services would slow demand pressure on the child protection system. In the past eight years Queensland has built a strong family support system in collaboration with the non-government sector that is the envy of other states and territories. Services are tailored for diverse community needs and are accessible, provided at no cost to clients and available across the state. Currently in Queensland there are 17 Family and Child Connect services, 43 Intensive Family Support services, 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing services and 15 Assessment and Service Connect services.

In 2020-21, \$124.4 million was invested to deliver these important services. Evidence shows investment in family support prevents children from entering statutory child protection and our family wellbeing services are seeing high levels of success in de-escalating risks and addressing needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Only nine per cent of families that worked with an Intensive Family Support service and met the majority of their case plan goals were investigated within the following six months. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing services, the results were even more positive, with just 7½ per cent of children with all needs met being subsequently investigated. For family wellbeing services, there was a reduction in subsequent investigations of almost two-thirds.

While 1,500 fewer children and young people are estimated to have come into care because of this investment in family support services, it must however be acknowledged that the 20 per cent reduction in the number of children in care by 2019 predicted by the commission of inquiry has not eventuated. While services are diverting families from involvement in the child protection system, the overall number of children involved in the system continues to rise. The commission recommendations did not anticipate the increasing complexity of families' needs and of course could not have predicted the pandemic as a further exacerbating factor.

The greater prevalence of key risk factors such as drug use, domestic violence and mental health concerns combined with the increased demand as a result of COVID mean that vital investment in the child protection system must continue. That is why this year's budget continues to place a heavy focus on programs and services to keep children safe and boost our frontline services. Our budget this year is a record \$1.55 billion on the delivery of child protection services to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We know that a range of responses from all areas of government is needed to strengthen families and prevent the circumstances in which child abuse and neglect arise. Our staff at the front line are under pressure but are continuing to improve the system and work to keep children safe. We will continue to invest in the family support system to support families earlier and embrace every opportunity to address the issues facing the most vulnerable members of our community.

**Mr SKELTON:** With reference to children and family services effectiveness measures on page 5 of the SDS, will the minister advise how the Our Way strategy is assisting to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation in the child protection system?

**Ms LINARD:** I know I referred to this earlier in the line of questioning, but addressing the over-representation of our First Nations children and families in the child protection system is something that I and the director-general feel very strongly about. It is also an issue that is very close to the Premier's heart. The implementation of the *Our way: a generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families* is a key component of my charter letter. It is important to be clear that the vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in Queensland live safely at home in community and culture. However, it must be acknowledged that children from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background are disproportionately represented in the child protection system. Latest figures at the end of March show 43 per cent of all children in

out-of-home care are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. While the level of representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system is lower in Queensland than in most other Australian jurisdictions, I think committee members will agree with me that this is still far too high.

We are committed to building on our existing reforms such as the 20-year generational Our Way strategy and its associated action plans. They set the strategic foundation for eliminating the disproportionate representation of First Nations families and children in the child protection system. Through Our Way we established 33 community controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing services across the state. Our \$42 million investment in family support in 2021-22 means First Nations communities are able to lead the design and delivery of those services to ensure support and responses are culturally safe, reflect community and family strengths, and hold dear the aspirations, leadership and cultural knowledge of their communities.

In the 2019-20 budget, the government invested \$6.86 million for 31 additional Indigenous youth and family workers and family wellbeing services to prevent children from entering the child protection and youth justice systems by supporting early intervention, diversion and reconnection with family. I am pleased to note that in the 2021-22 budget this program has been extended with an additional \$3.8 million investment, extending the youth and family worker positions for another 12 months.

I would like to share an example from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing service. A 13-year-old boy was choosing to live on the streets and he had a troubled relationship with his mother. He was disengaged from school and had been cautioned by Queensland police for criminal activities. Most worryingly, he was starting to become involved in chroming and other substance abuse. The family wellbeing service staff member worked with the young person for six months and encouraged him to participate in a healing camp where he built friendships and developed a supportive relationship with a cultural mentor.

As a result of the ongoing support and the young person's broader community connections, the family wellbeing service worker saw an increase in the young person's confidence and ability to manage behavioural issues. This was reflected in reduced involvement in criminal activities. The worker connected the young person to other culturally supportive services in the community and assisted him to reconnect with his mother. Ultimately, this young person moved in with a grandparent and support was provided to both of them. As the young person's life stabilised, he became re-engaged with school. This boy's health and wellbeing has changed for the better as a result of the intervention by the family wellbeing service. He is not involved in criminal activity anymore and he even developed the confidence to share his story, as I am doing now, with others.

I am proud Queensland leads the way in the proportion of expenditure provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations for family support and intensive family support. I am just as proud to tell you that we also lead the nation in implementing delegated authority. Delegated authority is where the powers and functions of the CEO in relation to a child in care are transferred to the CEO of an Indigenous community controlled entity providing a more culturally appropriate response and outcome for Indigenous children and families. The first two locations for implementation of delegated authority have been at the Sunshine Coast in partnership with REFOCUS and in Rockhampton where we have partnered with Central Queensland Indigenous Development. I will quote from family members whose children were part of the first decision for delegation of authority—

The CEO of REFOCUS has been the most wonderful support and just what we need. As a family we understand our issues and have extended family support. We ensure the children are our priority. We need black fellas to help and support us and REFOCUS is available to us 24/7.

I commend both REFOCUS and CQID for being the first organisations to commence on the delegated authority journey. While they are the first organisations to take up the challenge, the department has been working with QATSICPP to develop the guidelines and tools needed to support the implementation of delegated authority across Queensland. The department has partnered with QATSICPP to support the department's efforts to embed the child protection principles in practice and in applying the wellbeing outcomes framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland to inform future investment, service planning, development and delivery and the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. A further partnership exists to develop a new kinship care program to maximise the identification of kin who can care for children who are unable to be cared for by their parents.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the members of the First Children and Family Board, which the Palaszczuk government established in 2019. The members of that board provide strong cultural leadership, strategic oversight and advice to the department in the

implementation of the Our Way strategy and supporting action plans. I personally thank Professor Boni Robertson and Mick Gooda for their work co-chairing the board. Both the department and I are committed to meaningfully reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the child protection system and the youth justice system and to doing so in partnership with our First Nations partners.

**CHAIR:** Minister, with reference to the \$7.7 million over four years for a drug and alcohol residential treatment program for our young people, can you provide more information about this program and how it is intended to assist in reducing youth offending?

**Ms LINARD:** Our government recognises the strong correlation between substance abuse and offending by young people. The department's 2020 census of young people on youth justice orders indicated 80 per cent had used alcohol, tobacco or other drugs during the year, with marijuana, alcohol and tobacco being the most frequently used. Worryingly, marijuana and ice use had increased since the previous year's census. In 2020, 38 per cent of young people in detention had used ice or other amphetamines. Among the 10 per cent of serious repeat offenders, almost all have been known to mental health or alcohol and other drug services.

To address this need in this year's budget, the government has committed \$7.7 million over four years and \$2.5 million ongoing for a new residential drug and alcohol treatment facility for young people. This funding will support a 10-bed residential facility, providing three months residential treatment followed by ongoing follow-up treatment. This important service will be delivered in partnership with the Noffs Foundation, which has demonstrated experience in helping young people to break the cycle. The service will contribute to improved community safety while enhancing the health and wellbeing of program participants, helping them change their story and get back on track.

The Noffs Foundation is a national leader in drug and alcohol responses for young people. This new service will deliver the Program for Adolescent Life Management or the PALM program, which has been operating in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory since 1995. Earlier this year I went to Sydney and saw for myself one of the PALM facilities. The time I spent there with program participants was raw but incredibly illuminating. I was impressed at the holistic and intensive nature of the program. PALM is a multidisciplinary residential treatment program staffed by teams specifically trained to work through the kind of trauma, challenging behaviours and complex needs that these young people have. The program offers counselling, family support, group work, vocational educational modules, living skills and recreational activities to get young people out of the cycle of drug use and offending. Data collected by the service at its other sites indicates it reduces offending by participants by 60 per cent and results in significant reductions in their substance use and marked improvements in their psychological wellbeing.

Between 35 and 40 young people who have been in contact with the youth justice system could be expected to be supported through the residential program within a 12-month period. One of the other features of the PALM program that is so important is the three to five years of follow-up treatment. Evidence shows how hard it is to sustain reductions in substance use over a long period. This follow up assists participants to keep their changed behaviour while back in the community and prevent them from relapse. Bringing PALM to Queensland is an example of this government's commitment to delivering world-class evidence based frontline services in areas such as health and community safety.

**Ms LUI:** Minister, with regard to the department's stated objective on page 1 of the SDS relating to enabling the safety, belonging and wellbeing of Queensland children and young people, will you advise how the department is investing in early intervention for at-risk families and detail whether the current approach is working?

**Ms LINARD:** Supporting Families Changing Futures is our five-year whole-of-government strategy for the final stage of the 10-year child and family reform program. Under that strategy a key part of our approach is increasing the reach and effectiveness of family support services to help more families earlier and reduce the number of families escalating into the child protection system. Family support services provide no-cost early intervention support to families across Queensland who access them so that children can grow up safely with their families.

Currently in Queensland—and I mentioned these numbers before to give you a brief idea of what the services are—there are 17 Family and Child Connect services—they link families with advice, information or suitable support services; 43 intensive family support services that respond with a case management approach to families with multiple and complex challenges; 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing services being delivered, as I mentioned earlier, by community

controlled organisations—they enable families and facilitate for families to access support to improve wellbeing and build capacity; and 15 Assessment and Service Connect services that partner with the department during investigation and assessment of a child's protection needs.

In 2021-22, funding of \$124.3 million was allocated for family support services and there is substantial evidence these services are needed in the community. Data for the year to 31 March 2021 shows Family and Child Connect services received 32,633 inquiries, intensive family support services received 6,480 referrals, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing services received 4,573 referrals. Demand for secondary services is high, with FACC and IFS services operating at capacity and managing waitlists in some catchments, while demand for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing services is continuing to grow.

In 2020, we provided additional funding to secondary services to respond to increased demand arising from COVID, including \$820,000 for FACC, \$2.7 million for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing services and an additional \$1.3 million for IFS services.

Evidence shows that these services are working in preventing children from entering statutory child protection. Our family wellbeing services are seeing high levels of success and de-escalating risks and addressing needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Of the total children subject to a child concern report during the year ending March 2020, 13 per cent were subsequently investigated by the department within the following six months. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, 21.4 per cent were subsequently investigated. By contrast, only nine per cent of families that completed an intensive family support service and had all of the majority of their case plan goals achieved were subsequently investigated. This was even better for our wellbeing services as I outlined earlier with just 7.5 per cent of children subsequently investigated.

Chair, family support services assist families earlier and vitally reduce the number of families escalating in the child protection system.

**CHAIR:** I call the Deputy Chair and member for Burnett.

**Mr BENNETT:** I defer to the member for Kawana.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, when did the department first notify Queensland Police Service that the Caloundra watch house facility was being transferred or being considered to become a youth remand centre?

**Ms Mulkerin:** As you would be aware, the responsibility for Youth Justice merged with the Child Safety department in November last year, so I became the director-general across both at that point in time. I understand that there had been ongoing discussions between ourselves, Youth Justice, and QPS for around a year at officer level. Then post the numbers increasing in detention, we have been looking at how we respond both in community and in detention centres, so we were working through our options to put to government. Through the budget process, we formally advised the QPS that the government had made that decision to fund the Caloundra watch house.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, has a contract been awarded for the construction?

**Ms Mulkerin:** No, not yet.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Have tenders been issued or expressions of interest for the construction companies of the scope of the works?

**Ms Mulkerin:** We are definitely in the planning phase. My officers and colleagues have been inside the watch house. We have walked through to have a look at what it looks like and what changes we might need to make in order to make it compliant as a youth detention centre. As you might be aware, the Youth Justice Act is quite specific in its provisions about what I, as the CEO, am responsible for—security, kinds of programs and requirements about staffing. We have been inside and had a look and started to scope out the design.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, when was the member for Caloundra first notified of the decision or consulted on the Caloundra youth remand centre?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I am advised that the member was advised the day of the state budget.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, on the same issue—you notified that your staff have been there. This facility is in Gregson Place which is a one-way street beside a child care centre, school, funeral home, courthouse and police station. It backs onto a hospital and is across the road from a retirement village. When there is a potential security incident at this youth remand centre/jail, as is often the case

in youth justice centres and detention centres, and the area needs to be secured, what plans are in place to ensure the safety, emergency access and evacuation of the children, elderly and other persons at these surrounding locations?

**CHAIR:** Member, I draw from your question that you are posing a hypothetical. However, given the context, I am happy for the director-general, if it was directed to the director-general—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Correct, yes.

**CHAIR:**—to answer as she sees fit.

**Ms Mulkerin:** As the member is aware, it is currently an operating watch house which is located between the police station and the courthouse. The same arrangements that we have in place at the detention centres would be in place for this location, bearing in mind our intention is only to stand it up should it be required, should the three detention centres we have across the state be full and we need extra capacity, and it would only be for short-term periods. We do not intend to hold young people there for long periods of time.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** How many beds, Director-General?

**Ms Mulkerin:** That will be dependent on the planning and the design.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, the Labor government has announced, supported by the member for Caloundra, the closure of the police watch house in this facility. It will be transferred to Youth Justice for a youth remand centre. As you have heard me say, the location is in Gregson Place beside a child care centre, a school, a funeral home, courthouse and a police station, and it backs onto a hospital, an RSL and a retirement village. Minister, the Police Commissioner confirmed to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee yesterday that discussions were ongoing for about 12 months, as your director-general has said, about transferring this into the youth remand centre. Why didn't the government come clean with the people of Caloundra at the election recently in October about this secret plan to establish a youth jail in Caloundra?

**CHAIR:** Member, could I just ask—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I withdraw 'secret'.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I ask that you respond to the question as you see fit.

**Ms LINARD:** Welcome, and thank you for the question, member, and thank you for withdrawing because it was misleading significantly and untrue. There was no secret plan.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It was more of an imputation that I was drawing. It is the truth.

**Ms LINARD:** I will answer the question if you give me the chance.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, you have asked the question and I know the minister is very eager to respond.

**Ms LINARD:** Member, there was no plan. A plan denotes that there is a decision, that there is funding, that there is a detailed proposal. Indeed, the funding and decision was made to procure the Caloundra watch house for use as a short-term remand centre in respect of the budget. It was announced in June. It was brought about and triggered in fact by the tough measures that our Premier announced in February because we made it clear to the people of Queensland that we would hold young offenders to account and that when a young person needs to be detained and held to account, they will be.

We have always planned in government for increasing capacity in youth detention since elected and have seen a 33 per cent increase in beds already. The short-term remand centre and indeed the business case that—I believe \$5.7 million was allocated to a business case for a longer-term detention centre. Additional capacity was announced in the budget only. So the plan, as you wish to say, is a plan only announced this year as part of the state budget and it is the first time there was such a detailed plan.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, you advised in a press release issued on 28 July that consultation with the community would now take place. I drove to Caloundra this morning before these estimates to check out the watch house facility. To my surprise, the watch house sign has now been taken down. Is it normal to consult the community after a decision has been made, and budgeted in this case, or, as appears in this case, that it is a done deal and the consultation is fake and paying lip-service to the Caloundra community?

**CHAIR:** Member, I am going to ask you to reword that question. It does contain clear imputations. However, the first section of the question was—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It was very good, wasn't it?

**CHAIR:**—very well rehearsed.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, is it normal to consult the community after a decision has already been made in this case and budgeted for?

**Ms LINARD:** I think it is very normal government process that you need to allocate money to a proposal or a project before you can actually meaningfully engage in consultation about that project, because indeed you need money for there to be a project to deliver. The state budget announced funding in June. I draw attention to the fact that the very next month, even after a lockdown had unfortunately delayed my ability to be there, I personally went to Caloundra to sit with the member for Caloundra, who is a wonderful advocate for his community, and other community concerned residents to answer questions. We will always very happily—and we should and will—meaningfully engage with community.

In fact, when we talk about our pre-engagement, just recently in August there were 10 days of pre-engagement to inform detailed designs. Not only did that include—of course we have put that information on our website—a brochure or leaflet that was distributed to residents—that was also to provide honest information and to correct perhaps misinformation of other leaflets that may have been received by some residents—but also my department doorknocked those affected residents. They went door to door to say, 'We are here. Do you need any information? Do you have any questions?' My department is absolutely meaningfully engaging in pre-engagement communication with the community and will continue to do so. In fact, there will be another period in September, I understand, of 20 business days where we again do that.

In respect of your comments about the sign, I am not aware of that. With respect, that is an operating watch house and is still in the management and ownership of the Queensland Police Service. That would be a question for them, not for us or my agency.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, youth crime is a huge issue on the Sunshine Coast. The victims list is growing. In fact, recently celebrity chef from 4 Ingredients Kim McCosker had three cars stolen. Minister, will you listen to the Sunshine Coast victims of youth crime and—are you ready for this?—over 4,000 Caloundra residents who have signed my petition to abandon plans for this youth remand centre and finally introduce strong laws that make young repeat offenders accountable for their actions? Our communities need action and our communities want action now.

**Ms LINARD:** Absolutely, you are right: our community wants strong action. That is exactly what this government delivers and continues to deliver. The additional announcements are not only the announcements we made in February, but they were building on the five-point plan and the significant investment that this government has already made in youth justice—over half a billion dollars—because we expect young people to be law abiding and when they are not we expect them to be held to account, and we are doing so.

Member, before you were in the room, I talked about the fact that what we have seen in Queensland to March is a 12 per cent reduction in young people offending with proven offences. Obviously we want to reduce offending even more. On the Sunshine Coast, the incident you are talking about is unacceptable. No-one should be a victim of crime. People should be safe in their communities and homes—absolutely. That is why we take the tough position we do and are making the significant investments.

On the Sunshine Coast the drop in the number of overall offenders is greater than 12 per cent and we are seeing a drop in the number of offences being committed there. However, I appreciate that that is cold comfort to anybody who has been a victim of crime. We will continue to invest across the state—the Sunshine Coast included—to ensure that people do feel safe in their communities, and that is the work of my department and me each and every single day.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You missed the 4,000 people who have signed my petition. What do you say to those 4,000 residents in Caloundra who do not want this youth jail? It is a beachside community. I have lived there my whole life. Nowhere else in Queensland is a youth jail in a beachside community. This is the wrong location.

**Ms LINARD:** Member, I thank you and apologise that I did not address that additional element of the many elements that you asked for in your question. We will of course listen to meaningful and genuine engagement with the community. I appreciate that you are at the very least playing politics with an issue when the community deserves—



**Mr BLEIJIE:** No, I am not.

**Ms LINARD:**—truthful and honest information.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am not playing politics. It is a serious issue.

**Ms LINARD:** That is what my department is going to provide.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We do not want a youth jail in Caloundra.

**CHAIR:** Member, I will not tolerate disorderly conduct and interrupting the minister. The minister has the opportunity to respond to your question and then you will be given ample opportunity to ask a further clarifying question if you need to.

**Ms LINARD:** We will absolutely meaningfully engage with community and I will not pre-empt community consultation. I draw the member's attention to the fact that this is an operating watch house. It is a secure facility. We have watch houses, courthouses, police stations and assets like this across our state. They are very important assets across the state to keep communities safe. I appreciate there is a watch house in Maroochydore. I appreciate there is a courthouse in Noosa. These are all secure facilities, particularly watch houses of course, that I appreciate people go before that do not cause problems in communities. Communities want to see investment in these assets.

The current Caloundra watch house does hold people for short term on remand and that would be the same purpose after. People would not see a difference. The facility, the facade, would all be the same, but I appreciate that people may have legitimate concerns. My department will continue to engage and seek to answer those concerns and provide fulsome and meaningful information. We do not want people having concerns that we can answer and address meaningfully, and we will continue to do that.

**CHAIR:** Member, do you have a follow-up clarifying question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The prosecution rests.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, previously you outlined the 10-bed residential facility to address drug and alcohol use. Where will that facility be located?

**Ms LINARD:** In terms of the announced funding for the PALM program, we are currently working with Noffs about where the greatest demand is and we are mapping what the available services are now. Health does a wonderful job in respect of also providing drug and alcohol services. Where is the greatest demand and the need? We are looking at that now and considering where that location would be. We have not yet decided on that.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, if that facility were to be located in South-East Queensland, would you consider ensuring that a proportion of those beds is allocated to regional and North Queensland participants?

**Ms LINARD:** I call out and appreciate the fact that, as a regional member, you are passionate about ensuring that these sorts of services are available to the people who need them throughout Queensland. Equally we share that passion and that concern. There would be an assessment. We have not had detailed conversations about location and also the offender cohort that would be using that facility. That is something that I will not pre-empt that we need to discuss. If an offender fits the cohort and the parameters then that young person would be able to access the service, but those conversations are ongoing. Director-General?

**Ms Mulkerin:** The only impediments to that would be the actual program that Noffs run and their ability to provide the ongoing support and follow up. Obviously that is a really large part of the program. As the minister outlined earlier, there is definitely a residential component and then there is back in the community supports. It would only be limited by our ability and Noffs' ability to support a young person back in their community.

**Ms CAMM:** This question is in regard to the overall budget, Minister, and I appreciate that you may have to take this on notice. How much of the government's investment—and I am looking for a percentage of total funding—is invested to support foster and kinship care versus the current cost of residential care in regard to children in the care of the state? I am looking for a percentage of the overall budget. That has been raised with me by PeakCare and other agencies across the state as well.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I will allow you to respond as you see fit. I am managing time such that you may have about two to three minutes to respond. We certainly can come back to that question in the next section. It is over to you, Minister.

**Ms LINARD:** I will invite the director-general to respond.

**Ms Mulkerin:** In this session we will endeavour to get the exact breakdown. You are right to call out that we currently have some 12,000 children in out-of-home care. In this last year, through the COVID year, we have seen a significant increase in the number of young people coming into our care. I had really hoped that the increase in children coming in would be a short-term impact of the pandemic and that those children and young people would go home. That is not what we are seeing at all. It would appear those families were probably on the brink, were vulnerable, and then the pandemic pushed them over the edge.

The vast majority of children in our care, 87 per cent, are cared for in family based care, so either foster care or kinship care. We have about 1,300 children in residential care. I have been very clear and public about saying that I think we have too many children in residential care. There are lots of children for whom residential care is absolutely the right placement, the right place for them to grow up. We have about 20 per cent of children in our care who have a disability, so a number of those are in individualised arrangements with nursing care because of the extreme disability they have. We have some children and young people who, because of their trauma experience, are very disregulated and they pose a risk to themselves and others. For them we have to have special arrangements. There are older young people whose preference it is to be in residential care.

I do not want to pretend that this is an issue we are not concerned about. I am personally concerned about it and absolutely echo the views of my good colleague Lindsay at PeakCare that collectively we all have to work harder to get those children and young people out of residential care where we can and really aim to get them back with families, so kinship care arrangements.

**CHAIR:** I will now ask the member for Nicklin whether he has a question.

**Mr SKELTON:** There has been a lot of recent coverage about the changes to legislation aimed at the serious repeat 10 per cent cohort of young offenders. Will the minister provide an update on the additional measures that were announced in February and funded in this budget?

**Ms LINARD:** As I mentioned earlier, community safety and addressing issues related to young offending is a key priority of our government. As members of the committee would be aware, in February this year due to serious incidents and offending involving young people we took steps to further strengthen youth justice laws. These new laws include: a presumption against bail for serious repeat offenders who commit a crime while on bail; the ability for a court to seek assurances from parents or guardians before an offender is released; and a trial of court ordered electronic monitoring devices for high-risk repeat offenders.

This year's budget further strengthened our investment in dealing with serious repeat offenders. In addition to over half a billion dollars invested since 2015 by our government in new youth detention centre beds and early intervention programs, a further \$98.4 million was provided to continue the fight against youth crime, with \$38.3 million focusing on addressing the issues associated with serious repeat offenders. Sixty million dollars of this funding was also directed at strengthening existing initiatives that are showing promising impacts on reducing offending behaviours. This funding will deliver more resources to frontline workers through conditional bail programs to intensively monitor high-risk repeat offenders and give enhanced 24/7 capacity to stabilise these young offenders and support their families through the intensive bail support program.

Under the new funding, co-responder initiatives are further enhanced through the trial of electronic monitoring with an extension of 24-hour supervision capability for young people on bail. The new funding for co-responder teams, the conditional bail program and the intensive bail support program will ensure a greater level of supervision and support on weekends and out of hours. Assistant Police Commissioner Cheryl Scanlon and Michael Drane, senior executive director of my department, are co-leading the Youth Justice Senior Officers Reference Group to provide leadership and oversight of the reforms. Importantly, this group brings together senior representatives from all agencies who have a part to play in addressing youth offending. Along with our department this includes police, health, education, JAG, Corrective Services, Premier and Cabinet, Treasury, disability services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships.

The reference group analyses data relevant to serious offenders and monitors the impacts of our initiatives. For example, we know these serious offenders are more likely to be disengaged from school, have presented to an emergency department, have a disability and have had some involvement with child safety. We know that the drivers of offending often start well before the young person ever reaches

the justice system. It is important to acknowledge that young people in the youth justice system often have complex issues, including substance abuse, mental health issues, behavioural disorders, disability and disengagement from education.

In our work on the 10 per cent cohort we will continue to strengthen our focus on improving early intervention with young people with disabilities, education and health needs and working across agencies and sectors to better meet these young people's needs. It is through this cross-agency work that our government is showing its clear commitment to the shared responsibilities in addressing youth offending and keeping our community safe.

**CHAIR:** Minister, to follow on from the previous question about 10 per cent of serious offenders, what is your department doing to work with the other 90 per cent of young offenders, and what have you found has been working for these young people?

**Ms LINARD:** Since 2015 our government has invested, as I mentioned, over half a billion dollars in youth justice program services and infrastructure. In 2018 the Working Together Changing the Story youth justice strategy was released, and in March 2020 we released the five-point action plan. These reforms are having a positive impact on crime trends, with both the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs and Queensland Police Service data showing an overall decrease in youth offending.

While we know that 10 per cent of young people with a proven offence committed 47 per cent of all proven offences in the 12 months ending 31 March 2021, we also see that the number of young offenders in Queensland is decreasing across the board. The number of 10- to 17-year-old offenders with a proven offence in Queensland in the 12 months ending 31 March has decreased by 12 per cent. As I also mentioned earlier, our government recently announced a further investment of \$98 million to continue the fight against youth offending with a focus on serious repeat offenders: the 10 per cent who are committing 47 per cent of youth crime. We are putting \$60 million of this funding package towards investing in those existing programs showing positive results, with our focus on ensuring the current gains in reducing youth offending continue.

We know that diverting young people from the criminal justice system needs to be a key priority. We also know that early intervention and prevention programs that connect young people back to their families, communities, jobs and education help reduce youth crime. The department will continue to invest in programs and services that are delivering long-term sustainable reductions in crime, including Transition 2 Success and integrated case management, which are available to all young people, as well as culturally specific programs such as family led decision-making, on country programs and cultural mentoring with community youth response and diversion initiatives.

Some of the success stories we are seeing include restorative justice: 77 per cent of the young people who complete a restorative justice conference either do not reoffend or show a decrease in the magnitude of their offending within six months of their conference. More than 1,120 young people have enrolled in the Transition 2 Success program. Over 150 of these young people have gained a job, an apprenticeship or traineeship through the T2S program since it commenced. We know this approach is working, with 67 per cent of all T2S participants who completed a course not reoffending within 12 months of completing their course. I am happy to advise the committee of just a couple of examples if we have time.

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms LINARD:** Thank you. Young people have been able to change their futures because of these programs. Of course I will use names, but these have been changed. Ash is a 16-year-old who had not engaged in education for approximately 12 months and was identified as having a very high risk of offending. Prior to Transition 2 Success Ash identified that some of his significant relationships were not healthy and that he expressed his emotions in a negative way to those closest to him. Since commencing at Brisbane North T2S after being referred by the Youth and Family Support Service Ash has continually applied himself and has excelled on working towards the goals that he set early on. He has attained a certificate 1 in general construction, completed his construction white card, first aid and CPR certificates, completed a community construction project with the team, and designed and built a chair. Across the program he has maintained an equal highest attendance rate of 98 per cent. A community partner closely connected to the Brisbane North T2S program identified Ash's enthusiasm and skills in the construction area. Through their contacts he has now been offered an employment opportunity with a local landscaping construction firm.

A second case study chair is a 16-year-old Indigenous girl from Townsville who was subject to numerous child safety orders and first came into contact with police at 12. She became a repeat offender, committing a number of stealing, assault, burglary and motor vehicle related offences over

four years. The young woman got involved with the Townsville T2S foundation skills program in early 2020 and maintained engagement across the initial COVID-19 outbreak. When the program resumed in August, she maintained 100 per cent attendance and remained out of trouble while awaiting an outcome at court.

After seeing the young woman's persistent engagement with the T2S program in Townsville and lack of reoffending since commencing with the program, the magistrate suspended the 12-month detention order to be served as a three-month conditional release order. The magistrate congratulated her on her commitment to participating with T2S and highlighted that her engagement and leadership on the program reported by staff was highly commendable. The young woman successfully completed the first block of her certificate I in foundation skills in November and transitioned across to the second block of the T2S TAFE foundation skills program earlier this year.

I have another example but I am happy to end there, Chair. I hope that has given you a sense of the success of some of these programs.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. That is inspirational. I call the member for Cook.

**Ms LUI:** With regard to the additional \$76.6 million over four years and \$22.9 million ongoing for 154 additional frontline child safety staff as outlined on page 2 of the SDS, will the minister advise what actions have been taken to support child safety officers in the vital work they do to keep children safe?

**Ms LINARD:** As the member may be aware, in 2021 the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs had an operating budget of \$1.735 billion, and this will increase this year to \$1.86 billion. Our child safety staff and those who work in the child protection system are seeing increased complexities in working with families who are presenting with multiple risks and needs. We are also seeing the number of children in care rise, and there are now over 12,000 children and young people with child protection orders.

As I visit service centres across Queensland, I have been privileged to meet many of our child safety officers. I am always impressed by the passion and dedication they bring to their work. Often facing extremely challenging situations, their focus remains on what is in the best interests of each and every child and young person they deal with.

Our government recognises the importance of these critical frontline officers and has restored and boosted CSO staffing, with an increase of 550 FTE between 2015 and 2021. By 30 June 2022 our goal is to increase this figure to almost 700 new frontline staff since 2015. We have made this investment because we recognise how important managing case loads for child safety officers is. The department has publicly committed to reducing case loads for frontline workers to an average of 16 by 30 June 2022—with an additional 154 CSO child and family service positions over the next two years and approximately 73 to be filled during 2021-22 to support this goal.

The department is only in a position to employ these new staff because the Palaszczuk government has invested over \$1.2 billion in new child safety funding since coming into government. This new investment includes an additional \$282.6 million over two years to address the heightened demand and increasing demand in the child protection system, particularly with regard to out-of-home care, which the director-general touched on in the question before. Compare this to the LNP's record in government and the contrast could not be starker. To the Palaszczuk government's 700 frontline staff and \$1.2 billion, the Newman government applied fiscal repair cuts which hurt this department.

The department is looking at how we can support child safety officers in regional and remote locations, with a review being undertaken on incentives that can be provided to support recruitment. As the member would know, there have been many reviews in relation to the child protection system and the Queensland Audit Office report *Family support and child protection system* completed last year confirmed what we know—that staff and agencies across the child protection and family support system are working hard, that vulnerable families have better and more support available to them now than previously and that great progress has been made in implementing the Carmody recommendations.

The department is undertaking a number of measures to address practice complexity and system issues, including implementation of the Safe and Together training to help train practitioners to become more informed about manifestations of domestic and family violence and the connections between that violence and risk for children. The appointment of the Chief Practitioner, Child and Family Services, who is sitting behind me, and the establishment of the Office of the Chief Practitioner has enabled stronger focus on building staff capability, strengthening practice and growing public confidence in the child protection system. The Chief Practitioner is leading practice improvements to help staff to further develop their skills and knowledge through training, coaching and complex case consultation.

During 2018-19, the department also established a specialist services team of clinicians to support child safety officers to work with children and young people with a disability, including 15 clinicians and 12 transition officers. Other initiatives the department is undertaking include an intake reform project, with a focus on enhanced intake technology including reporting and referral processes and improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. The department has also commenced a four-year program called Unify which focuses on supporting staff, continuing service reforms and enabling more streamlined processes. Unify will also improve information sharing and collaboration across government, social services and justice sectors, while engaging with young people, family, carers and services.

Through Unify, the department will have a contemporary case and client management system that will enable the best outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families. I acknowledge the difficult and often emotionally taxing work of our child safety officers. I want to assure them that the department, the director-general and I remain committed to providing the support and guidance that our staff need to do their jobs, and as minister I am humbled by the work that they do.

**Mr SKELTON:** With regard to the Children and Family Services effectiveness measures on the proportion of children with multiple placements in the past 12 months on page 5 of the SDS, will the minister advise how your department is improving permanency outcomes for children in care?

**CHAIR:** Minister, would you mind if we asked you to summarise in about three minutes please.

**Ms LINARD:** I will summarise my answer, Chair, and you will give me my one-minute warning.

**CHAIR:** I will.

**Ms LINARD:** As Minister for Children, I take my responsibilities in relation to the child protection system very seriously. As highlighted by child protection legislation, the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child must be the paramount consideration. The Child Protection Act highlights the importance of the three aspects of permanency—relational, physical and legal permanency for children. Where possible, that means safely reunifying children with their parents and returning them to an environment where they can be loved and nurtured, as all Queensland children deserve.

Where children cannot live safely with their parents, the decision about who will care for them throughout their childhood is a critical one. In these cases, the department has a suite of options to give children the safety and security they need. This includes: applying for a child protection order with long-term guardianship to a family member or another person, or the chief executive; a permanent care order; or an adoption order. Achieving permanency is one of the most important aspects contributing to positive outcomes for children. It is critically important for a child's development and long-term wellbeing as it promotes belonging, attachment, continuity, connection and stability.

Earlier this year, the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act was passed. The amendments included enhancements to permanency for children in care, clarified adoption as an option for achieving permanency, and clarified the importance of alternatives to a long-term guardianship order to the chief executive when considering the appropriate permanency option for a child in care. In recognising the significance and cultural importance for our First Nations people, the act also made it clear that adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in care was the least preferred option to permanency.

During discussions with my director-general and department regarding these amendments, it was also confirmed that the department's newly appointed Chief Practitioner, Child and Family Services, would focus on achieving the best possible long-term outcomes for children in care through a renewed emphasis on permanency practice. As part of that increased focus on permanency and giving children in care long-term stability, at the end of March 2021 I can advise that there have been 73 permanent care orders made—up from 44 for 2019-20 and eight in 2018-19.

A permanent care order is an order made by the Childrens Court that gives responsibility for parenting to a person other than the child's parent. This person becomes the child's permanent guardian until the child is 18 years old. Of course an important part of the permanency story is the children in care who are able to be safely reunified with their families. For the year ending 31 March 2020, 488 children were reunified with their parents. As at the end of March this year 423 or 87 per cent of these children had not returned to care. There is much more information I can give you about permanency. It continues to be one of the key focuses of the agency here. It is through all of this work that our clear commitment to permanency is being delivered. Every child deserves to know who loves them and who will love them for the entirety of their childhood.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Whitsunday.

**Ms CAMM:** Director-General, the Public Service Commission found grossly inadequate misconduct by child safety officers involved in the investigation of Mason Jett Lee. The recommendation is that the department now seek independent legal advice from Crown law on all discipline matters. Can you outline how many matters have been referred to Crown law?

**Ms Mulkerin:** Yes, you are right. As a result of the Public Service Commission investigation out of the Mason Jett Lee coronial inquest, there were a number of recommendations which, of course, we accepted. Our agreement with Crown law is that we work with them on matters that are complex or relate to senior staff. It is kind of a cross-section of matters on which we are meeting with them on a regular basis and also with the Public Service Commission to oversee those matters. I am entirely comfortable with that. We hold a lot of authority in the lives of children and families. The decisions that my frontline colleagues make every day are life-changing decisions for children and families and so we should be held accountable. I am not worried about that. I think that is exactly as it should be.

I will endeavour to get the exact number before the end of this session if possible.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am aware that you are happy for the member for Maiwar to ask a question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Director-General, we have some very young children in detention in Queensland. This is a sombre question to start with but an important one. Can you tell us what would be the standard response to a young child who threatens suicide in detention?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I might just confer with the minister, because we actually have Mr Michael Drane, who is responsible for the detention centres, here. This has been his working life—working in detention—and I am sure he would be able to give a very comprehensive answer to a very serious question.

**Mr Drane:** It is a very important issue, as the director-general has rightly pointed out. Staff in the detention centres take every single precaution possible when a young person discloses or portrays some form of self-harm behaviour. Staff obviously raise that young person to the highest level of observation possible. The assessment of how that is managed is informed by a multidisciplinary team in the detention centre, usually psychologists and clinical nurses that are employed by health in the detention centre and trained operational staff. They immediately wrap intensive resources around that young person and provide support but also implement a plan to ensure that young person is maintained on the highest level of observation necessary with any risk mitigations that are necessary to manage them such that their safety is paramount.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Director-General, can you tell us what that looks like in practice? What does the highest level of observation—what do those measures look like? Are we talking about kids being isolated for observation here? What is the practical likely outcome?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I will defer to Mr Drane.

**Mr Drane:** In practical terms, that would mean a young person is maintained typically in an environment where they are comfortable—so the room they are allocated to whilst they are in detention. An observation level would be assigned commensurate with the risk and that could be as high as an observation of two minutes, five minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes depending on the level of risk that is assessed by that team that I mentioned earlier. It would also include any other risk mitigations necessary, so additional family contact. It might mean room sharing with someone in the detention centre that they know who is a support for them including a cousin, a relative or a friend. It would be daily follow-up and intensive follow-up by that multidisciplinary team with that child to make sure they are supported and to make sure those risks are mitigated. Does that answer the question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will change tack a little bit here. Director-General, my question is in relation to the alleged incidents of potential human rights breaches against children in detention, as addressed in question on notice 18. Of those instances from July 2020 to June 2021 relating to children being abused or unfairly punished, can you tell us how many relate to seclusion or to the use of the behaviour management unit?

**Ms Mulkerin:** Can I just put some context around the advice that we provided about the human rights complaints? There are two different ways in which we identify human rights issues. The first is the data that we collect where complainants identify themselves that this is a human rights issue, so it is spelt out as a human rights issue. For example, for the total department from January 2020 through to May 2021 there were 86 complaints in total across all areas of the portfolio. However, because we work in a human rights jurisdiction and we have obligations to take that seriously, my department and my colleagues look through every incident, critical incident, professional conduct question, complaints and issues that are raised internally. We do a scan of those to identify whether there are any human

rights issues inside all of those different ways in which we get information. We do a separate investigation in relation to all of those. There are both the complaints where somebody says it is human rights and our own examination of that. Those complaints can be for a whole range of reasons, as was spelt out in the questions on notice. It can be questions about access to food, fresh air or seclusion. In relation to your specific question about seclusion—I think that was your question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Yes, how many relate to seclusion or use of the behaviour management?

**Ms Mulkerin:** There were no formal human rights complaints in detention received since November 2020. However, as I said, the review of our own practice that we undertake—so there were 67 allegations where we have said there were potentially human rights issues and none of those related to seclusion.

**Mr BERKMAN:** The end of the answer to that question says that of 35 complaints that have now been resolved, they were: investigated and unsubstantiated, substantiated, referred or management action was undertaken. Can you provide a breakdown within those four categories that are set out in the answer?

**Ms Mulkerin:** Yes, I think you are making reference in relation to the matters that are still open; is that the question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** That is right.

**Ms Mulkerin:** Thank you. Of the 32 that are still open, five are awaiting investigation. That might be because a staff member is on WorkCover, for example, and we cannot investigate or are not able to speak to them. Twelve are with our professional standards unit for a further examination. Five are with a delegate for a decision, five had some local action and five others are closed.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am sorry, I misspoke: I meant to refer to those complaints that have not been resolved. The 35 complaints have been resolved and they are in those four categories. Are you able to give a breakdown of how many fall into each of the four categories?

**Ms Mulkerin:** So, 35 of the 67 have been resolved.

**Mr BERKMAN:** That is right.

**Ms Mulkerin:** Which leaves 32 remaining open.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Sorry. It is the 35 referred to in the question that have been resolved either as investigated and unsubstantiated, substantiated, referred, or management action has been undertaken; those are the four categories.

**Ms Mulkerin:** Apologies: I do not have that breakdown with me about the 35 that have been completed.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Is that a question that could be taken on notice, Minister?

**Ms LINARD:** We will see if we can come back with that information. Chair, we do have some answers to earlier questions, but I was not sure when you wanted that. I appreciate that the member directed questions to the DG, but I know I gave you an offer at the last estimates last year. I reiterate that as a standing offer. This is an issue that you have raised again. It is clearly an issue of concern to you. I am very happy to sit down with the director-general and/or Michael Drane and run you through that. I appreciate your concern.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will take you up on that offer.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Minister, you raise a pertinent point. We have a number of outstanding issues: firstly, in 2021, a child committed many offences. Is this still the highest number committed by one youth? Do we have an answer, Director-General?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I do have an answer. In relation to your question about the highest number of offences by one young person, as at March 2021 the highest number of proven offences by an individual young person was 202.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, a second issue: how many youth committed more than 15 offences while on bail?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I thought the question was 30.

**Ms LINARD:** My recollection was the question was how many had committed 30 offences? We have that answer, too, Director-General?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I have 92 young people committed more than 30 offences while on bail.

**CHAIR:** Great, thank you. Well, not great, but thank you for your answer. The third issue: data on lockdowns in youth detention centres?

**Ms Mulkerin:** If I recall, the question was the length of time of individual lockdowns?

**CHAIR:** Yes, that is right.

**Ms Mulkerin:** Because of the nature of lockdowns and how we record them, it would be very difficult for us to gather that information. It would take a lot of effort for us to manually collect that.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Director-General. There was a final question—

**Ms Mulkerin:** I think there are two others: the breakdown of residential care versus family-based care.

**Ms CAMM:** Yes, the percentage.

**Ms Mulkerin:** Of the total child and family budgets, the Child Safety budget, 20 per cent, \$309.2 million is allocated to foster and kinship carers either directly or through NGOs; and 10 per cent of our budget, \$161.7 million, are contracts for residential care including therapeutic residential care.

**Ms LINARD:** I think the only other one was the 35?

**CHAIR:** There was one other question remaining: how many have been referred to Crown law since the coronial recommendation?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I do have the answer for that one, too: five matters.

**CHAIR:** Director-General, thank you sincerely.

**Ms LINARD:** Member, that is every piece of paper we had in front of us on sticky notes.

**CHAIR:** You are absolutely correct.

**Ms LINARD:** We genuinely answered your questions.

**CHAIR:** Yes, Minister, you are absolutely correct: it is every single piece of paper that is in front of me as well. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 5.30 pm with the examination of the estimates for the multicultural affairs portfolio. I request any departmental officers who are not participating in the next session to exit the hearing chamber as quickly as possible as the committee does have a very quick changeover period and this will allow the committee to keep to the hearing schedule determined by the House. Thank you, everyone.

**Proceedings suspended from 5.15 pm to 5.30 pm.**



**CHAIR:** The hearing will resume. I welcome back the minister and departmental officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the multicultural affairs portfolio. I will hand over to the deputy chair and member for Burnett, who I assume will defer.

**Mr BENNETT:** I will go to the member for Surfers Paradise for a line of questioning.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Minister, could you advise the committee of the department's support of the Adult Migrant English Program within Community Hubs Australia? I know they are federally funded, but I was at Woodridge at one of those Community Hubs where there were a number of multicultural or CALD community people learning English and I was wondering whether the department has a specific input into those hubs.

**Ms LINARD:** I might ask my Executive Director, Wayne Briscoe, to answer that question. I am not sure what our involvement is. I appreciate you drawing out the fact that it is a Commonwealth program, but, Wayne, could you respond? Do we have any formal or informal involvement?

**Mr Briscoe:** No, we do not have a direct involvement, although I am the departmental rep on the state reference group for Community Hubs and we have a strong relationship with Access Community Services, for example, which is an organising body for Community Hubs in that particular region.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Following on from that, Minister—and maybe to the executive director—what about other Community Hubs programs? Other programs they offer are early childhood programs, advice regarding volunteering or assistance with finding a job.

**Ms LINARD:** We have our own state funding to assist in some of those programs but, Wayne—again, you are sitting on the advisory council—could you speak to that?

**Mr Briscoe:** Yes. We are aware of the hubs and we are very supportive of the work of the hubs, but we do not have a direct input into the operation of the hubs.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you. Minister, could you advise the committee about translation services that may have been provided during the COVID period to CALD communities across the state?



**Ms LINARD:** As you would be aware, my agency has policy lead with regard to implementing, monitoring and reporting on the whole-of-government policy in respect of language services, but it is agencies that fund access to interpreters for clients who access their services and of course it is important—whether you are talking about health or you are talking about education—that they do appropriately fund those services so that everybody can have equal access. What we know with regard to expenditure for interpreter services across government agencies is \$14.6 million was reported. Queensland Health has the largest spend and has been working consistently with my department when there are health directions, and we appreciate that many of those change and change quite quickly. The first step is always that Queensland Health provides plain English interpretation but then the department equally interprets those into—my recollection, Wayne—38 different languages.

**Mr Briscoe:** That is right, Minister.

**Ms LINARD:** Thank you. They then get translated so that they can be distributed to affected communities to ensure that they are getting those key messages. During COVID, in addition to access to those sorts of translation and interpretation services, there was additional funding allocated to support our CALD communities, and that included \$900,000 for a COVID-19 connections support package to address emerging community needs in disaster response; \$187,220 in one-off funding in 2020-21 to support preparedness, response and recovery efforts under the CALD communities coordinated engagement structure; and \$740,000 for the Interpreter Training Boost project, which is incredibly important. You may be aware of that training boost project, but that will enable 100 Queenslanders who speak emerging languages. There are many in the community who do speak these emerging languages and who may have issues being able to access quality interpretation services. They will be supported and their fees will be paid to obtain the skills to be NAATI qualified interpreters. That is incredibly important across our community, and how could we not have seen that during COVID? There is plenty more funding, including a Community Connector position located within the Australian Red Cross and a list of the different support packages that we provided during COVID. I am happy to go through the itemised list fulsomely—I am not sure if you are nodding or shaking your head—

**Mr LANGBROEK:** No, thank you.

**Ms LINARD:** Okay, but I have given you a sense that significant additional funding was allocated because we know how important it is to make sure that our CALD communities understand what is happening during COVID.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thanks but, no, I appreciate your reassurance there, Minister. Minister, have you had a report from the Electoral Commission about the diversity and multicultural outcomes achieved during the March 2020 and October elections? Is that something that the Electoral Commission might brief you about?

**Ms LINARD:** No. To be honest, I do not know if that is a briefing they would even offer. They have not offered me such a briefing, I have never heard of such a briefing and no.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Okay. Minister, I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 10 which refers to Welcoming Cities and I wondered if you could advise the committee of the department's and your interactions with mayors and councils on issues such as housing challenges for CALD communities in the regions?

**Ms LINARD:** Housing is absolutely a challenge across the state, not only in those cities that have signed up to being Welcoming Cities but just generally, and COVID has seen a very low vacancy rate. With regard to Welcoming Cities, it is a fantastic program and I was just recently in Mount Isa talking to the mayor, Danielle, about how important that would be. She was very proud—and rightly so—about the fact that there is significant diversity in Mount Isa and the history of that diversity, and I congratulate her and the council because they have recently signed up to join that Welcoming Cities program.

Equally, I was looking forward to going out to Thargomindah recently to meet with the mayor there—a beautiful place—and was looking forward to meeting the community that has been a part of the Welcoming Cities program but also a part of our regional funding program. They have received \$100,000 over three years to support them to strengthen welcome and inclusion in their local areas, but unfortunately with the lockdown I never made it to Thargomindah, but I will get out there very soon. Member, your question was with regard to my engagement. Did you want me to keep going in terms of ongoing engagement about housing?

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Housing but also other services such as employment, housing and mental health assistance. In other words, I want to know what Welcoming Cities actually does and what it actually practically leads to, because we have seen a lot of migration to the regions.

**Ms LINARD:** One of the wonderful things about Welcoming Cities and the program they provide is some of the benchmarking and lifting the capacity of councils to understand. They are aware of the problems in their community, but they may not be aware of some of the lesser known challenges and barriers that people from CALD communities face. Welcoming Cities engages directly, benchmarks, continues to engage in support and builds their capacity to address those issues. Wayne, you have been engaging in the program longer and for the past nine months I have been engaging with councils. With regard to those services, I ask you to speak to that in detail.

**Mr Briscoe:** We have had intensive work with Welcoming Cities and three of the South-West regional councils. It is more of a trial that we have been doing over the past couple of years with Paroo, Bulloo and Balonne shires. It has been very exciting work. It has concentrated on what more is needed in those communities to ensure that the communities are welcoming and inclusive more generally.

One of the issues that has been raised consistently is housing. That is an issue that is being worked through with relevant government agencies and also at the local community level. We are seeing a lot of positives already coming out of that work. As you would be aware, Welcoming Cities is working with 12 local government areas across Queensland now. All of the feedback that we have had to date is that a very positive relationship is being built with local communities, local governments and others to identify opportunities and also to try to remove some of the barriers, one of which is housing.

**Ms LINARD:** I think it is important to add that, when you are talking about access to services, Multicultural Affairs does the very important job of engaging and ensuring that those service providers—of course, including housing—and the relevant agencies are aware of the challenges and also are building capacity should they not understand or indeed engage with community leaders et cetera. While Multicultural Affairs does not deliver those services, it is like the expertise in state government to assist those line portfolio agencies to address those particular issues and assist councils as a connection point and nexus between the relevant portfolios and council.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I think one of the answers to a question on notice was about specific assistance for people seeking asylum and humanitarian entrants, but many people in the CALD communities do not necessarily fall into those categories. While there is specific assistance for some particular groups, I am looking more for specific government actions across those areas for people who are not seeking asylum or entry on humanitarian grounds.

**Ms LINARD:** In question on notice No. 17 the point is made that asylum seekers and refugees living in Queensland fall under the federal government. The nature of the response that we provided to that question was about our funding under ASRA, the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance program. That is about funding Communitify and partners that we work with to provide emergency relief and food supplies, clothing, medication, housing—so emergency housing; some of them have that emergency housing themselves or again are engaging with those line agencies and portfolio agencies that I just mentioned, such as social housing—family counselling and employment assistance. It is very much an emergency response for people who have exited and often are seeking asylum from immigration detention onto final bridging visas but who do not actually get provided with any adequate support from the federal government. Those service partners—and I mentioned Communitify—include Red Cross, Multicultural Australia, QPASTT, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service and World Wellness Group. They are essentially providing that emergency response.

When we are talking about Welcoming Cities we are talking about citizens and those who may be long-term residents of Queensland. I hope that that is differentiated. ASRA was your question on notice No 17; with Welcoming Cities there would be some crossover but it is a different program addressing some of those longer term issues.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Will the minister advise the committee of state and federal interaction when it comes to organisations—and I will give you Gold Coast examples—such as the Multicultural Families Organisation and the Migrant Centre Organisation? As local members of parliament we are invited to functions and it is very nice that they do that, but often they will say, 'Our funding is all federal.' I am wondering what interaction there is between your department and the relevant federal department in terms of coordination, what you know about them and how you work with them.

**Ms LINARD:** I could probably say there is daily contact or certainly it would be weekly contact between the Multicultural Affairs team and our federal counterparts across a vast range of issues that affect these communities. In regard to an operational response about what we know, when do we know it and what sort of information we get from the federal government, Wayne, could you talk a little about what that engagement looks like?

**Mr Briscoe:** We have a very good relationship with a range of Commonwealth government agencies including, for example, home affairs at the Commonwealth and the state levels. That relationship includes a professional relationship between myself and the state director for home affairs. We are in contact on a fairly regular basis. Also on the community engagement basis we have fairly regular meetings between their engagement people and our engagement people. Both of us aware of issues and opportunities across the broad range of CALD communities.

In relation to funding of particular organisations such as the Multicultural Families Organisation and others on the Gold Coast, we run grants programs and the federal government runs grants programs. They are independent of each other. We do not interfere with their programs and they do not interfere with our programs. Most of the organisations are very open in relation to other funding that they might receive in relation to events, for example. It might be Brisbane City Council funding a number of events in Brisbane. We would be aware of those because they are sponsors of the program as, in effect, we might be by being a significant contributor of funding.

**Ms LINARD:** But we do not get a formalised list, if that is what you are asking. I see you regularly at events and we engage. I do not have a list of what the federal government is funding but, as Wayne said, informally through the fact that we dealing with a lot of the very same communities and leaders we become aware of some of that. Your relevant federal members might be of greater assistance to you in that regard.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I was not so much referring to whether you want to know exactly what they are providing but about the coordination between federal and state to make sure that if there are shortcomings in particular areas that would help either side to improve what they are providing. That is fine. I do not need to keep going there.

**Ms LINARD:** I think Wayne responded to that in terms of regular conversations.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I note Celebrating Multicultural Queensland grants have gone to an extra \$1 million. Could you provide some information to the committee about how you anticipate doling out that money, given that when I asked in May I got a whole list with extensive coverage of who was getting grants? What are the department's plans to give out that extra \$1 million over the next year?

**Ms LINARD:** That was an election commitment and we have been providing \$2 million to that program for some time. As you may be aware, in regard to the CMQ program the funding round opened on Monday for 2022. That is in regard to the events funding. In a program's funding there is an element of CMQ, which is the events that we see each other at regularly, but equally there is a projects element. That round opened and was committed to, I think, in about February. That is my recollection. Time passes quickly. That was to focus on economic and social participation projects, which of course is consistent with the charter letter the Premier gave me to focus on that for our CALD communities, but equally youth and community connection projects. We announced those. I am really excited about the outcomes of those programs and to see what they deliver in the year ahead. That funding is committed and announced.

As I said, the funding round opened on Monday for events that will be delivered in 2022. I am happy to provide that publicly once that round closes and they are announced. On the list in May—I am not recollecting it. Was that in the House on a QoN? I am assume it is the ones that have been approved for 2021.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** It was question on notice No. 677.

**Ms LINARD:** My apologies.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Some information came back.

**Ms LINARD:** You have it, yes.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Yes, I have that.

**Ms LINARD:** Everything is public.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I thought there was an extra allocation announced now of \$1 million and this is another \$1 million subsequently. I could be wrong.

**Ms LINARD:** I think you are talking about the election commitment. The program is a million dollars and the election commitment was that there would be an additional million dollars, so a \$2 million budget. That is a continuation of that. It is very exciting because, as I said, it is not just about events, which is about inclusion, it is about being a united and harmonious Queensland. Those events provide a wonderful opportunity to bring the community together and to celebrate the diversity that makes Queensland stronger, through diversity, but equally some very focused projects around economic and social participation.

Something we are equally very passionate about is an emerging issue that we need to be aware of in CALD communities and that is of youth and community connection projects, ensuring that the youth in these CALD communities who may have been born here and have this interesting challenge of the culture that their parents bring and their respect for that culture but also equally the Australian culture—how do you marry the two of those and how do we ensure connection with both cultures? That is a part of that project and that \$2 million funding.

**Ms LUI:** Will the minister provide details regarding the work the government is undertaking to support refugees and people seeking asylum, including people exiting immigration detention? The SDS reference is on page 3.

**Ms LINARD:** The Multicultural Action Plan 2019-20 to 2021-22 provides a snapshot of initiatives that government agencies are involved in to support refugees and people seeking asylum in Queensland. These actions are aligned with the three priorities of the Queensland Multicultural Policy, *Our story, our future*, achieving culturally responsive government, supporting inclusive, harmonious and united communities and improving economic opportunities.

In respect of Queenslanders from refugee backgrounds and those who are seeking asylum, the federal government has sole responsibility for immigration, including policy and border control, visa grants and conditions and settlement support programs, as you heard me say earlier to the member for Surfers Paradise. Concerningly, as a direct result of decisions made by the Morrison federal government, there are significant gaps in support, particularly for vulnerable people seeking asylum, including some people released from the Department of Home Affairs immigration detention programs.

Both the former federal minister Peter Dutton and current minister Karen Andrews have washed their hands of this issue. People seeking asylum with a bridging or final departure visa and those with a temporary visa issued by the federal government have little or no income support. This leaves them extremely vulnerable with dire mental health issues due to years of social isolation and a lack of certainty about the future. This is not a situation our government finds acceptable and it is not the Queensland we want for all who call our great state home.

We have continued to step up through the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance program, a program established by our government to support the economic and social needs of this vulnerable cohort and ensure that they do not live in destitution for as long as they remain in Queensland. Under the Queensland Multicultural Policy, our government has made a specific commitment to support refugees and people seeking asylum, including reducing barriers and creating opportunities to participate and contribute to all aspects of life.

Earlier this year, I announced an additional \$8.3 million in funding for ASRA from 2021-22 through to 2024-25. This funding is in addition to the \$4.6 million provided since 2017-18. The ASRA program seeks to alleviate financial hardship and mental distress of those within the target client groups who require emergency relief, provide case coordination to assist participants to access relevant assistance or achieve greater independence through employment, and increased capacity and wellbeing of vulnerable temporary protection visa and safe haven enterprise visa holders and their families residing in Queensland. This includes creating better opportunities to participate in the economy and the community assistance to meet permanent pathway requirements.

Currently under the ASRA program, Community Queensland, a proven, professional human service organisation, is funded to coordinate delivery of support services. Community Queensland works in collaboration with organisations, including Australian Red Cross, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service, Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, Multicultural Australia and World Wellness Group, and I thank each and every one of these passionate and dedicated organisations for the vital work that they do.

In addition to the ASRA program, the Queensland government's Multicultural Action Plan includes actions to provide 50 per cent transport concession fares to people seeking asylum through the Fairer Fares package, improve access to playgroups and kindergarten programs for children and families from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds, provides people seeking asylum with access to the electricity rebate and provides opportunities for refugees, people seeking asylum and eligible temporary residents to participate in skills training that leads to job outcomes.

Chair, Gandhi said the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members. Surely those who have fled torture, war and persecution meet such a definition. I wrote to Peter Dutton and his successor, Karen Andrews—both Queenslanders—urging them to step up and not leave Queensland responsible for something that is ultimately the responsibility of an ethical federal government, and I am yet to receive a reply. Thank you.

**Mr SKELTON:** Will the minister advise how the department's multicultural affairs area is supporting Queenslanders from CALD backgrounds to take up training and employment opportunities?

**Ms LINARD:** I will just make a point of clarification on a past answer I gave, Chair, if that is okay to do that now. Member, you asked about the Electoral Commission. I understand the commission has offered to engage with Multicultural Affairs about increasing the number of CALD representatives in LGA elections, but I was unaware of that until today. My apologies, but that is the answer to that question.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Thank you.

**Ms LINARD:** Member for Nicklin, returning to your question, as part of ongoing grassroots community engagement work, the department has been working closely with the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to facilitate reach into diverse communities where there might be limited awareness of the significant training, employment and business support opportunities offered by our government. Much of this work has been focused in Logan, Gold Coast and southern parts of Brisbane. Work on the Gold Coast, mainly through the Arundel mosque, has seen about 100 people registering for various courses at TAFE Queensland. In the Logan area, Slacks Creek Mosque has also seen more than two dozen expressions of interest and some enrolments for various courses in logistics, cleaning and child care. Our partnership with the Islamic Council of Queensland and the Slacks Creek Mosque has been instrumental in connecting community to training courses through information sessions at mosques, together with DESBT and TAFE Queensland, and events that link job-seekers to local employers in South-East Queensland.

One of the latest job expos held in June 2021 connected local construction businesses to potential new talent. This event brought together job-seekers from the African, Samoan, Maori and Islamic communities, as well as Skilling Queenslanders for Work program participants with construction employers who were actively looking for labourers and tradies. We know this has led to employment in local industries experiencing labour shortages, and we are delighted to hear that ICQ is eager to expand these initiatives to other mosques in Queensland.

Through the Queensland African Communities Council based in Moorooka on Brisbane's south side, there have also been more than 20 expressions of interest. Nine people have started certificate III courses in individual support and community services. Recognising the majority of course participants, 80 per cent of whom are female, also have pressing family and school commitments, the training provider adopted flexible hours for course delivery to accommodate participant needs and support continued engagement.

I am so pleased to see that some groups in the community who have had long difficulty gaining employment are now making great contributions in jobs they have secured through the support of DESBT and training colleges. I acknowledge my colleague, Minister Farmer, and her strong support in regard to these initiatives. This is work that supports Queensland's economic recovery.

The department is also liaising with DESBT to support culturally diverse small business owners to become mentors or to be mentored through programs such as Mentoring for Growth. We have heard of migrant owned small businesses who are supporting school students into hospitality training, and others who have linked with mentoring programs who plan to use their new knowledge to train others in the community.

Strong links have been made with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries also, Business and Skilled Migration Queensland, and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, particularly in South West Queensland to address growing regional workforce demands. This complements work being undertaken by the three regional councils that my executive director mentioned earlier—Balonne, Bulloo and Paroo—who have been funded by the department to develop strategies to welcome newcomers into their communities.

We have recently contracted CatholicCare Social Services to partner with the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce to facilitate employment partnerships for interested migrant job-seekers who may want to connect to regional opportunities and make a new home in the Balonne Shire. By facilitating connections within and between communities, Queenslanders from diverse backgrounds have greater access to training and employment opportunities and are contributing their skills to strengthen our regions. We are committed to continuing work in this space.

**CHAIR:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, will the minister update the committee on the current priorities of the Queensland Multicultural Advisory Council?

**Ms LINARD:** I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the Queensland Multicultural Advisory Council. I am privileged to chair that council where I am supported and advised by 11 committed, incredibly knowledgeable and accomplished members of our diverse Queensland community. The members of that council—with your kindness around timing, I would love to mention all of them because they deserve to be named into the record—are: Dr Nora Amath, Ms Dea Bickey, Ms Irene Biedak, Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez, Ms Faiza El-Higzi, Dr Aparna Hebbani, Mr Nkosana Mafico, Mr Tej Man Monger, Councillor Natalia Muszkat, Mr Giridharan Sivaraman and Ms Vicky Yu.

Membership is culturally diverse, with many of the members born in countries overseas including India, China, Zimbabwe, Columbia and Bhutan, and others being born in Australia but having diverse cultural backgrounds including Australian South Sea Islander. Their interests and expertise are broad and range from domestic and family violence prevention to mental health and employment. Members bring impressive skill sets and knowledge from their professions, ranging from legal, education, aged care, medicine, community development and the Public Service.

Members have extensive networks and connections with culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Queensland and some members have lived experience as a refugee. They are all tremendously impressive in their own right. I will showcase just three as an example.

Ms Nora Amath was re-appointed to the council for a second term and is a long-term adviser to the Queensland government and an internationally respected expert in Islamic studies. Ms Aparna Hebbani is an expert in intercultural communication and has been working with and researching refugee settlement in Queensland for the past 12 years. Mr Nkosana Mafico is one of the state's brightest emerging young leaders. When he is not studying for his PhD, he is chairing the Council for Young Africans Living Abroad, an organisation he founded.

I am proud to say the council meets the Queensland government's target of 50 per cent representation from women and includes regional members from north, central and far west Queensland.

In respect of their priorities, the council continued to align their priorities with the government's Unite and Recover—Queensland's Economic Recovery Plan. Through their work the council continues to actively contribute to building back an even more unified, harmonious and inclusive Queensland.

An example of the council's alignment with government priorities has been seen throughout the pandemic specifically in relation to increased reports of racist behaviour towards people of particular cultural backgrounds. The council identified the need to address racism and strengthen social cohesion in their work plan and have since undertaken community consultation in Townsville and Cairns on these issues.

In September 2020, the council held a consultation session with young people from a diverse range of backgrounds in Townsville to find out more about their attitudes towards multiculturalism, immigration and cultural diversity. The discussions at the council's consultation session led to the Queensland Human Rights Commission holding an inaugural Townsville Human Rights Youth Forum on 13 April 2021. On 19 May 2021 in Cairns, the council co-led a community consultation session with the Human Rights Commission on the development of a national antiracism framework. This session enabled members of the Cairns community to hear from the Australian Race Discrimination Commissioner, Mr Chin Tan, and have their say on the development of a national antiracism framework.

At our last council meeting members discussed the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee inquiry into serious vilification and hate crimes and the importance of ensuring the experiences of their cohorts are considered as an integral part of the inquiry. I encouraged the council to work together on a submission including highlighting their own experiences of hate crime and vilification. I am proud to advise that the council has lodged their submission which represents the views and learnings of members based on their respective areas of influence and the culturally diverse Queenslanders they engage and work with. Importantly, their submission is yet another example of how the council are continuing to help create a more inclusive, harmonious and united Queensland in line with government priorities. I look forward to continuing to work closely with them in the term ahead.

**Ms LUI:** Will the minister provide details on what the government is doing to support people who have difficulties speaking English access interpreters so they can get the right services at the right time?

**CHAIR:** Minister, you have four minutes.

**Ms LINARD:** I thank the member for the question, because it gives me an opportunity to expand on a question asked earlier by the member for Surfers Paradise. Queensland is home to people who come from more than 220 countries and territories, who speak more than 180 languages other than

English at home. In the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics census, over 580,000 Queenslanders stated that they spoke a language other than English at home and over 75,500 Queenslanders do not speak English or do not speak it well. This is why the Queensland Language Services Policy and its associated guidelines are in place.

The Queensland Language Services Policy is our strategy for ensuring that all customers of government agencies and funded non-government organisations delivering services on behalf of government are not prevented from accessing the services they need due to an inability to understand or interpret the English language. The policy includes facilitating access to interpreters and the provision of multilingual resources. It also requires all Queensland government departments and some agencies accessing interpreters to report on key performance indicators including the use of interpreters calculated by the amount spent and the number of occasions interpreters are engaged each year and the proportion of clients with limited proficiency in English compared with the proportion of the Queensland population with limited proficiency in English.

COVID-19 has provided a further stark example of the importance of such services with rapidly changing public health information. The department has had a strong relationship with Queensland Health throughout the pandemic to ensure that Queenslanders who have difficulties communicating in English access vital community health messaging in a range of channels, formats and languages. Feedback from community organisations and community leaders is also being used to ensure that any language gaps are identified and the development of translated materials is prioritised.

For languages where it is difficult to source qualified interpreters and translators, community leaders are being supported to provide COVID-19 messaging to members of their community who have low English literacy. For example, we work closely with the Queensland African Communities Council to identify languages and dialects requiring translated materials or information provided in other modalities such as video.

In addition to being responsive in the short term, the Queensland government is taking a long-term approach to supporting people from multicultural communities to access interpreters. We have committed \$740,000 over three years to boost the supply of interpreters in priority languages. As I mentioned earlier, the department has worked closely with the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters—I refer to NAATI—of which I am a shareholding minister, to design an Interpreter Training Boost Program that will help people who speak in demand languages such as the languages of emerging communities with their interpreter training and NAATI certification fees.

The department has released a tender to market inviting offers from select suppliers to deliver the Interpreter Training Boost Program, and I look forward to a successful supplier being announced by the end of 2021. It will provide opportunities for at least 100 Queenslanders to gain jobs in the interpreting industry.

**CHAIR:** You have one minute.

**Ms LINARD:** I am excited that these new interpreters will not only strengthen our government's service delivery response and build connections with diverse communities but also allow 100 Queenslanders from diverse backgrounds to utilise their bilingual language skills, securing skilled work and strengthening our economic recovery.

**Mr BENNETT:** I defer to the member for South Brisbane.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Director-General, we have heard of some of the important work that has been done by the ASRA program and others and work that has been done to bring people into training opportunities. There are people in my electorate on bridging visas who cannot get the skills they need because they are not eligible for subsidised vocational education like many other visa holders are. What analysis has the department done to examine options like providing access to subsidised TAFE for people on bridging visas that would also bring Queensland in line with other states?

**Ms Mulkerin:** I will ask Mr Briscoe to answer.

**Mr Briscoe:** Skilling Queenslanders for Work, which is operated by DESBT, has a very broad intake for skilling Queenslanders for work including people on bridging visas as well. If there are any exceptions to that, it would be good for us to know and we could talk to DESBT. That would probably be my initial answer, unless we know the individual circumstances of people who are unable to access the state funded programs.

**Dr MacMAHON:** If we had individual cases could we come to the department for advice?

**Ms LINARD:** You would be most welcome to send them directly to my office and absolutely we will engage, whether that is writing back with information or providing you with a briefing memo. I am happy either way.

**Dr MacMAHON:** That would be great, thank you. With regard to bridging visas beyond what is already being offered by the ASRA scheme, what analysis has been done for other potential initiatives to help people on bridging visas gain skills and participate fully in the workforce?

**Ms LINARD:** I am assuming that was a secondary question to the director-general, so I am not speaking.

**Mr Briscoe:** Our main focus from multicultural affairs from this department's point of view is through ASRA, but we also work extremely closely with DESBT, employment and small business and training, and DAF, as the minister referred to earlier, so that is agriculture and fisheries, to look for opportunities to fill current employment vacancies—for example, in regional areas—with people from a vast range of backgrounds that we might have a connection to through a range of organisations like Multicultural Australia. There are links that have been created through that collaborative approach which could potentially lead to employment opportunities for people on bridging visas as well.

**CHAIR:** Member, we may have time for one more question.

**Dr MacMAHON:** In the same theme, we have been hearing from families on bridging visas who are not eligible for Centrelink and are struggling to meet schooling costs like stationery, textbooks, laptops et cetera for schoolchildren. My question is: does the department have any plans to work with the Department of Education to assist these families and children to ensure they have the resources they need?

**Mr Briscoe:** We have referred a number of those types of matters on to Education Queensland, so I would suggest if possible to link those people directly into Education Queensland through the schools initially. We have had a number of instances where schools will do whatever they possibly can to ensure children get the education they need. That is through the state school system. I cannot say anything about the other schools.

**CHAIR:** Minister, we are coming to the very end of estimates. I just wondered if you had some closing remarks in relation to that issue or generally around estimates today.

**Ms LINARD:** I obviously was not entitled to answer that question, but I also definitely encourage the member to engage with education. I have heard wonderful stories of what they do in the state system to facilitate that. Every child should have equal access to the resources they need to have an education.

Thank you very much, Chair, you are very generous because there was one matter. I think we had one outstanding matter on the books. I think it was in the last session from the member for Maiwar. I thought we had cleared that up, but was there some advice to the director-general that we had not?

**CHAIR:** No, I understand that you clarified that, Minister.

**Mr BERKMAN:** My apologies, I do not think I have missed this in all of the swapping around, but there was that one remaining point about—

**Ms LINARD:** The 35?

**Mr BERKMAN:** That is right.

**Ms LINARD:** Chair, with your leniency I would respond to that because I wanted to meaningfully respond to everything. You walked in at the right time, member.

The breakdown is: investigated and unsubstantiated, general, seven; investigated and unsubstantiated, vexatious, two; investigated and substantiated, general, three; no investigation, management action undertaken to resolve, 16; referred, no return of advice expected, four; frivolous, three. That was the 35. I believe that fulsomely answers all of the matters that we needed to respond to.

I would like to put on record my thanks to you, Chair, the committee members and also the visiting members for their interest in the portfolios of children, youth justice and multicultural affairs. I would like to acknowledge your secretariat, parliamentary staff and Hansard who have assisted in today's hearing. I would also like to acknowledge: my director-general, Deidre Mulkerin; our deputy directors-general Rob Seiler, Kate Connors, Phillip Brooks and Bernadette Harvey; the chief practitioner for child and family, Dr Meegan Crawford; departmental executives Danny Short, Darren Hegarty, Michael Drane and Wayne Briscoe; and all departmental staff involved, including Melinda Rabbitt, Shauna Dennett, Catherine Donovan, Katrina Lyons, Sharon Roes and Leah Andrewartha. If Arthur O'Brien is listening: we miss you; get well. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my chief of staff, Bernadette Condren, and my hardworking ministerial team: Johanna, Brooke, Michael, Tony, Emma and Josh.



In closing, Chair, I would like to finish as I started and acknowledge the work of all across my department, the carers and sector we partner with to serve the interests of vulnerable children, young people and communities across Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolios of children and youth justice and multicultural affairs has now expired. I thank you, Minister, and your departmental officers for your attendance. Thank you to the members of the committee and visiting members who have attended the hearing. I thank you, Hansard, for your work today, everyone else who has assisted here and our parliamentary staff who have made this estimates possible under the COVID restrictions. I thank you sincerely. I now declare the hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 6.15 pm.**