

WEDNESDAY, 27 JULY 2022

ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE—STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PLANNING; OLYMPICS INFRASTRUCTURE

Estimate Committee Members

Mr CG Whiting—Chair
Mr JJ McDonald
Mr MJ Hart
Mr RI Katter
Mr JE Madden
Mr TJ Smith

Members in Attendance

Mr JP Bleijie
Mr JM Krause
Mr MC Berkman
Ms A Leahy
Mr AJ Perrett
Mrs DK Frecklington
Dr A MacMahon

In Attendance

Hon. Dr SJ Miles, Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure

Ms D Cohen, Chief of Staff

Mr B Wecker, Senior Policy Adviser

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning


Mr M Kaiser, Director-General

Ms N Wilde, Acting Assistant Director-General, Portfolio and Government Services

Mr C Aston, Acting State Planner, Planning Group

Mr B Moon, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Reconstruction Authority

The committee met at 9.00 am.

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the State Development and Regional Industries Committee open. I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are meeting on the custodial land of the oldest living civilisation in the world. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. My name is Chris Whiting, the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. The other committee members are: Mr Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Michael Hart, member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, member for Traeger; Mr Jim Madden, member for

Ipswich West; and Mr Tom Smith, member for Bundaberg. The committee has granted leave for a number of non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today. Other members may seek leave over the course of the proceedings.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2022 and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. While mobile phone use is not permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses today and who have been permitted the use of their devices for this purpose. I do ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode if not turned off. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in the chamber, except for tea and coffee in keep cups.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: state development, infrastructure, planning and local government from 9 am to 12.30 pm; agricultural industry development, rural communities, fisheries and forestry from 1.30 pm to 4.45 pm; and water, regional development and manufacturing from 5 pm to 7.45 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed by the House.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the portfolio areas of the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine the Deputy Premier's portfolio as follows: state development from 9 am to 10 am; infrastructure and planning from 10 am to 11.15 am; and local government from 11.30 am to 12.30 pm.

The visiting members present are, by their electorates: the members for Broadwater, Kawana, Maroochydore, Warrego, Gympie, Nanango, Burdekin, Condamine, Glass House, Scenic Rim, Maiwar and South Brisbane.

I remind those present today that the hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. I intend to see proceedings adhere to standing orders. In particular, I will remind firstly non-government members of standing order 112, questions will contain no opinions or arguments; standing order 115(a), questions will be brief and relate to one issue; 115(b), no big preambles, no arguments, no inferences, no imputation and no hypotheticals; and 115(c), no opinions. I will remind ministers of standing orders 118(a), no debating the issue, and 118(b), the answer will be relevant. I remind members of standing order 185 and signal that I will not tolerate grossly disorderly or disruptive behaviour. Members will be warned and, if necessary, ejected from the chamber. I intend to guide the proceedings 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 Deputy Premier, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard I will ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Deputy Premier or the director-general. I note, following last year's estimates, that my union membership is unchanged since last year—ETU and CFMEU.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of state development, infrastructure and planning and local government open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Deputy Premier, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today. I join you in acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet.

My department is taking the action that sets us on the path to the brightest possible economic future, creating more good jobs in more industries and protecting our unique Queensland lifestyle. Unemployment in Queensland is just four per cent, the lowest it has been since 2008. Unemployment is so low in part because we are exporting more. Queensland exports have hit a record \$99 billion. Much of that is thanks to a long and proud history of converting our natural advantages to economic advantage.

Our future is similarly bright. Queensland has turned its eyes to securing the jobs that accompany a renewable energy future, and the world is watching. Right across the state, communities are benefiting from new jobs in the renewable energy supply chain and in heavy industry powered by renewable energy. We are making Queensland the leading hydrogen hub in Asia-Pacific. In October Dr 'Twiggy' Forrest and the Premier announced a new partnership, bringing FFI to Aldoga near Gladstone to create a world-leading hub to manufacture electrolyzers.

Fundamental to our strategy is setting ourselves up to secure a greater share of the value chain of growth industries. If you are a state with purpose, commitment and focus, energy transition means new jobs, more investment, more local manufacturing and more opportunity. Queensland is that state. We are thinking ahead and acting now to make sure we can guide the state's economy through a changing decade and secure the jobs and investment that are up for grabs.

That is not the only way we are making a difference in Queensland's regions. Over \$348 million has been invested into 67 local governments under the Building our Regions program for 271 vital rural and regional infrastructure projects generating an estimated 2,770 jobs. The Works for Queensland program is supporting jobs, too. Most recently we rolled out the \$200 million 2021-2024 funding round, and we have made a further \$200 million commitment for a 2024-2027 round. By the end of 2024 it is expected that Works for Queensland will have supported more than 26,000 jobs in regional Queensland.

I am also happy to report that the South East Queensland City Deal was signed this year, providing a \$1.8 billion boost for infrastructure, jobs, connectivity, livability and the environment. I understand that managing growth and housing affordability remains top of mind for many Queenslanders. Through Economic Development Queensland, our priority development areas are delivering accelerated and coordinated developments to fast-track and coordinate projects such as North Shore Hamilton, Carseldine Village, Yeronga and four greenfield PDAs bringing an additional 140,000 dwellings. The \$150 million Catalyst Infrastructure Fund will facilitate the major infrastructure needed to continue the delivery of new communities in Ripley Valley and Greater Flagstone to assist in delivering affordable housing to Queenslanders.

Our Growth Areas Team is making rapid progress on unlocking more land sooner at Caboolture West and planning for an additional 30,000 homes which will be delivered by mid-2023. At the start of 2022, we confronted the most significant floods—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: we have just gone three minutes 30 for an opening statement.

CHAIR: I am sure the Deputy Premier is wrapping up.

Dr MILES: I thought I had five minutes.

Mr HART: Three minutes.

Mr McDONALD: By motion of the House it is three minutes.

Dr MILES: The \$741 million Resilient Residential Recovery Package will allow us to retrofit homes with flood resilient design and explore voluntary buybacks. We are proudly progressing the planning, validation, coordination and delivery of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games master plan. I am excited by the future jobs we are helping create. Now really is our time to shine. My apologies to the committee for going over time.

CHAIR: That should be fine.

Dr MILES: We can make it up later.

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

Mr McDONALD: I will hand over to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have a question for the director-general, Mr Kaiser. Are you aware of any self-confessed vote rotters working in the department currently?

Mr Kaiser: No.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: It is just how I expected. Member for Kawana, there are definite imputations and inferences—you name it—in that question. Rephrase the question please.

Mr BLEIJIE: He has answered the question. The director-general said no, so he answered the question.

CHAIR: You do not want to rephrase your question?

Mr BLEIJIE: No. He answered it so it is fine. Deputy Premier, the Premier has committed to appoint directors-general through a merit based selection process which usually involves an independent recruitment panel. Was such an independent panel used to select a replacement director-general when your former director-general left?

Dr MILES: As the member would be aware, DG appointments are made by the Premier and coordinated by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The most appropriate time to ask questions regarding those appointments would have been yesterday. However, I can advise that Mr Kaiser was first appointed as the director-general of the Department of Resources by a merit based process and on the recommendation from an independent recruitment panel.

Mr HART: Was that Anacta?

CHAIR: Member, let the minister finish.

Dr MILES: In April this year, he was appointed director-general of my department. It is not unusual for directors-general to be rotated around departments provided their initial appointment was subject to a merit based process.

Mr BLEIJIE: Am I right in saying that there was no independent selection process for the appointment of the director-general of your department?

Dr MILES: He was appointed as a director-general after a merit based selection process.

Mr BLEIJIE: But not for the current role—a former director-general role, but not the current director-general role?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair: is this not straying into repetition? The Deputy Premier has just answered the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am asking questions—

CHAIR: I am taking a point of order.

Mr SMITH: It very much seems as though it is the same question being repeated.

CHAIR: We could be getting towards that, but I am interested to see where the member is going with his questions. The member is well aware of the standing orders regarding repetition. I point out as well that you cannot direct how the question is answered. Member for Kawana, please continue.

Mr BLEIJIE: When considering Mr Kaiser for the role of director-general, was his previous admission of electoral fraud considered in his application?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: Member, I understand where you are going with that question. I ask you to rephrase the question. You have breached standing order 112—argument or opinion. Can you rephrase the question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I have two points. One, the Shepherdson inquiry, which I have a copy of—

CHAIR: Member, I have just given you a direction. If you want to ask that question, state it without an opinion or an argument and just the facts.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, the member is bringing evidence to the committee which I believe we should hear.

CHAIR: I know you believe that. I have given a direction about rephrasing the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will rephrase it. When considering Mr Kaiser as your director-general, did you take into consideration the adverse findings in the Shepherdson inquiry?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair: is he using that as a prop?

CHAIR: One moment—

Dr MILES: I am happy to address it.

CHAIR: I did not see that. Is something being used as a prop?

Mr SMITH: No, he is just waving it around.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, you have the call.

Dr MILES: As I explained at the outset, appointments of directors-general are made by the Premier and not by me as the minister. The process for their appointment is coordinated by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. You had an opportunity yesterday to question both the Premier and departmental officers. You chose not to take up that opportunity.

I understand the Mr Kaiser was appointed as the result of a merit based process as the director-general of the Department of Resources. The Premier then determined to shift him to director-general of my department. I expect that the outcome of the recruitment process recognised that Mr Kaiser is a highly respected senior executive with an exceptional understanding of the public sector operating environment and experience in dealing with complexities. He has held senior roles with NBN Co and was a partner at KPMG. He has degrees in electrical engineering and economics from the University of Queensland.

Can I make this observation: the opposition spent many months this year talking about how public servants should not be attacked and should not be bullied and now for two days in a row have chosen to use this platform to attack and bully public servants.

Mr BLEIJIE: Only the electoral fraudsters.

Mr SMITH: You have not seen a public servant you do not want to sack.

CHAIR: Members will cease their interjections.

Dr MILES: Yesterday you threw mud at a highly respected public servant—highly respected by both sides of politics—

Mr BLEIJIE: Employed by the Labor Party.

Dr MILES:—who had served both sides of politics—

CHAIR: Members will cease interjections.

Dr MILES:—for volunteering in an office for six weeks 30 years ago.

Mr HART: Volunteering.

Mr BLEIJIE: Labor office.

Mr SMITH: Remember you sack public servants every day—

CHAIR: Pause, thank you—

Dr MILES: Now you come in here and disparage Mr Kaiser—

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, one moment—

Mr BLEIJIE: No, the Shepherdson inquiry did that.

Dr MILES: You disparage Mr Kaiser for something—

CHAIR: Order! Deputy Premier, please pause. I remind members of standing orders 247—direct comments through the chair—and 246, members will not quarrel. I have already asked members to cease interjecting. I will take a dim view of interjections when an answer is being provided by a minister. Deputy Premier, would you like to resume?

Dr MILES: Today the member for Kawana comes in here and attacks a highly respected public servant for something that happened 35 years ago and was punishable by a \$50 fine. That is the kind of disgusting mud that the member for Kawana—

Mr BLEIJIE: The statute of limitations ran out.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, cease your interjections.

Mr HART: So you think there is nothing wrong with—

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, cease your interjections.

Dr MILES: And so it continues.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have a further question.

Dr MILES: Attacking highly respected public servants—attacking them for their own political gain while earlier in the year they purported—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair.

Dr MILES:—to support public servants.

CHAIR: One moment, Deputy Premier. We have a point of order.

Mr McDONALD: The Deputy Premier has answered the question. Any more time that he uses to answer this question can come off government time.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your suggestion, Deputy Chair, but the chair is still in control here. We have a long day ahead of us. We do not need all of our answers delivered in short clips.

Mr HART: Well let's move on then.

CHAIR: I am giving a direction. We are going to be exploring these matters in a fulsome manner, as I indicated before. I know you may not like the answers, but the answers are being provided in a fulsome manner. I find this relevant. Deputy Premier, can you please resume?

Dr MILES: I would note that my response was so fulsome because of the several follow-up questions asked by the member for Kawana and not out of any desire of mine to be addressing this topic. I think it is entirely inappropriate.

Mr BLEIJIE: Two months after the release of the Shepherdson report, which I have mentioned, Peter Beattie told parliament 'the action of a few rorters nearly destroyed a good Labor government and I will never forgive them for that'.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair: how is this relevant to the SDS?

Mr BLEIJIE: Page 1 of the SDS talks about integrity.

CHAIR: The question was to me not to you, member for Kawana. I would tend to agree with the member for Bundaberg. We are talking about an issue that is not examining the appropriation bills. I understand where the member for Kawana is going with this, but I think it is a very thin argument to say that this is appropriate to the examination of the appropriations before us. Would you like to ask your question again, member for Kawana, bearing in mind the directions I have given about relevance?

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I put a point of order to you, Chair, that I believe it is entirely appropriate and relevant in terms of the person responsible for administering the budget of the department and operating the department that their integrity is vital. That is why I think it is relevant, particularly when you reference SDS—

Mr MADDEN: Chair, point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am doing my point of order, thank you. It is relevant when you reference the SDS at page 1—integrity in government.

CHAIR: I understand. Thank you, member for Kawana. I have allowed these questions to proceed for the first 10 minutes.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am happy to move on, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Member, I am responding to your point of order. I understand where you are coming from on that. I have allowed you to ask this question, but I am pointing out that you have just about come to the end of your rope on this line of questioning because the Deputy Premier has provided an answer with regard to who these questions should have been addressed to. I understand your point of order.

Mr MADDEN: Chair, I raise a point of order under standing order 236. We have been going for 20 minutes. The member for Kawana has asked the same question in various forms.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I haven't.

Mr MADDEN: We are dealing with tedious repetition and I think he should move on to another subject.

CHAIR: I understand where the member is going with that. As I said, any further repetition along this line will trigger standing order 236. I will give the member one more go. Deputy Premier, did you have something to add?

Dr MILES: Yes, please, Chair.

CHAIR: That is an answer to the question perhaps.

Dr MILES: Yes. I just think given the disgusting attack from the member for Kawana that the director-general—

Mr HART: You don't like the questions, do you?

CHAIR: Don't interject.

Mr BLEIJIE: I'm allowed to ask questions.

CHAIR: Wait! I have said to members to cease interjections while the minister is giving his answer.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. Given the grubby attack from the member for Kawana on a highly respected public servant—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: I know. Please withdraw that language.

Dr MILES: I withdraw, Chair. Given the attack from the member for Kawana on the reputation of—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: when it comes to standing order 236 on repetition, the Deputy Premier has answered the question. The member for Kawana has—

Dr MILES: He asked it again!

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I didn't.

Dr MILES: He asked it again!

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I didn't.

Mr McDONALD: The member for Kawana has said that he will move on.

CHAIR: Members, stop arguing across the table.

Mr McDONALD: He said he will move on.

CHAIR: Members, cease interjecting! I am dealing with this point of order. I think we are arguing for the same thing at the moment. The Deputy Premier will finish his answer; then we will move on to another subject.

Dr MILES: I think it is only fair, Chair, that, given the statements that have been made, the director-general should be provided an opportunity to respond himself. I would like to refer the question to the director-general for him to address.

Mr Kaiser: I have no hesitation in answering this question. I have been doing so for the last 22 years. The offence that the member refers to occurred when I was 22 years of age—some 35 or 36 years ago. At the time it was punishable by a \$50 fine. Some period later—in fact, in the year 2000—it was publicly revealed that I had committed that offence. For that, I lost my career and my livelihood.

At the time the *Courier-Mail*, of all entities, editorialised that the punishment that I received as a result of that offence committed some 16 years earlier was disproportionate—so the punishment was disproportionate to the offence. Since then I have rebuilt my career. I have been a partner at KPMG, I have been a senior executive for corporations, and I have advised corporations and government for a period of time. I now find myself in the privileged position of being the director-general of this department, serving the people of Queensland. I am honoured and privileged to do so.

Dr MILES: Well said.

CHAIR: Do you have a further question?

Mr BLEIJIE: My point was that I don't think he should be. I am happy to move on.

Mr Kaiser: An independent selection panel thought otherwise.

Mr BLEIJIE: Let me take the interjection from the director-general.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, no quarrelling.

Mr BLEIJIE: There was no—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, cease your interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: The director-general asked me a question.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, if you keep that up, you will be warned under the standing orders. You brought that on yourself. You threw that out.

Mr BLEIJIE: Sorry, Chair. Is the director-general not subject to the same—

CHAIR: No. No interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order.

CHAIR: No. No interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order!

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr BLEIJIE: Is the director-general subject to the same rules that the Liberal National Party members are subject to on this table, Chair?

CHAIR: Who is that question to?

Mr BLEIJIE: That is my point of order to you. Is the director-general, who just interjected with a rhetorical question—the rules apply to him as they apply to the opposition; is that correct?

Mr SMITH: You don't like public servants, do you?

CHAIR: Wait!

Mr BLEIJIE: Is it correct?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I said you asked for that with your interjection. We are both going to leave that and move on to the next one. Member for Kawana, ask your next question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, it was revealed last night that a ministerial staffer had made a sexual assault complaint. Is the Deputy Premier aware of this complaint and, if so, what did he do about it?

CHAIR: Can we verify this? I have not seen this.

Mr HART: It was on TV last night.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was on TV last night and also the email to—

CHAIR: I was busy. Can you verify this?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I can.

CHAIR: You are talking about things that members on the committee have not heard about.

Mr McDONALD: It is on the public record.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is on the public record.

CHAIR: If it is on the public record, where on the public record?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is on the public record.

CHAIR: I have not seen it. If you cannot prove it—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I cannot tell you what to watch at night-time and if you watch the news or not. I do.

CHAIR: Stop it, member for Kawana. I am just saying: how can you verify it? You are saying there are reports of this?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes.

CHAIR: Where are these reports?

Mr HART: I saw it.

Mr McDONALD: I saw it.

CHAIR: Thank you for seeing it. I have done this for the last two years. Verify what you are saying.

Mr BLEIJIE: I can verify this.

CHAIR: Can you recast your question so that it adheres to standing orders? Avoid hypotheticals.

Mr HART: It is not a hypothetical. It was on the news last night.

Mr BLEIJIE: Trust me, Mr Chair, you don't want me to go into the detail and name the person involved.

CHAIR: Stop, member for Kawana. Ask your question again.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is the Deputy Premier aware of any complaints of sexual harassment in the government?

Dr MILES: The extent of my awareness of the basis of those reports does not extend beyond the media report. I understand Queensland police issued a statement yesterday afternoon. I would refer the member to that statement.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, are you telling the committee you were aware of that matter before the news last night?

Dr MILES: No. I was advised of the news report this morning that had occurred last night and told that the police had issued a statement.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, it was revealed last night, as the minister has said, that a ministerial staffer had made a sexual assault complaint. Is the director-general aware of this complaint and, if so, was it with respect to his department and what did he do about it?

Mr Kaiser: Ministerial staff are not the responsibility of this department.

Mr BLEIJIE: That was not my question. I asked if you were aware of it.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I think you have had your answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: No. I am sorry. I asked if he was aware of it.

CHAIR: No. You cannot direct a witness how to answer the question. I think you have your answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: The witness said it was not his responsibility. I am asking if he is aware of it. The witness can answer that question.

CHAIR: He has answered that question. Do you have another question?

Mr BLEIJIE: The witness is refusing to answer my question.

CHAIR: No. The question has been answered. Member for Kawana—

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, were you aware of the allegations before they appeared in the media last night?

Mr Kaiser: Ministerial staff are not the responsibility of this department.

Mr BLEIJIE: So you are refusing to answer my question.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana—

Mr BLEIJIE: That is really—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, cease—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Was that your question or was it a comment?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am raising a point of order.

CHAIR: Which is?

Mr BLEIJIE: In 2022, Mr Chair, are we seriously allowing witnesses before a committee not to disclose whether they knew about sexual assaults that have been alleged by women in the state of Queensland? Are we seriously not allowing witnesses to answer that, forcing witnesses to answer questions?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you are straying close to reflecting on the chair there. My point was: you asked your question and you got an answer. You may not like the answer but you cannot compel the witness to answer the question. You cannot direct the witness—

Mr HART: Isn't that what estimates is about?

CHAIR: Stop interjecting while I am giving directions. You cannot compel the witness to answer in the way you see fit. I am aware of the gravity of this subject. I think you have asked your questions on that. Do you have any more questions along those lines or do you want to go to another one?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am happy to keep asking questions all day, even if they are not answered.

CHAIR: You have one more before it is our turn.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General—

CHAIR: One moment.

Mr SMITH: I am getting a lot of feedback from the microphones. Do we need to reset? There is a high-pitched squealing that is happening. I noticed that it happened yesterday as well.

CHAIR: Reset.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, it is reported that Wellcamp quarantine facilities cost more than \$200 million. Can you advise the committee the total cost of the Wellcamp facility—capital, leasing, medical, police, security—every dollar that has been spent at the Wellcamp quarantine facility, please?

Dr MILES: The director-general can take that question.

Mr Kaiser: I can because it is in our financial statements and it was published in the budget.

Mr BLEIJIE: The budget paper actually says that it is commercial-in-confidence, so I am asking for the total cost. Deputy Premier, I am asking for details.

CHAIR: I know that, but the director-general has given his answer for that. I will start—

Mr BLEIJIE: No, Mr Chair. He has not. I am asking for the director-general to advise this committee the total cost of the Wellcamp quarantine facility at Toowoomba, please.

CHAIR: I know that this is also covered in answer to a question on notice. The director-general has given an answer which reflects that closely. I will start with questions from us.

Mr Hart interjected.

CHAIR: No. You have had 18 minutes. That is enough.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, is the witness not required to answer this estimates committee? This is a parliamentary estimates committee.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I have just repeated you got your answer. I heard it. I am not sure that you did.

Mr BLEIJIE: Sorry, what figure did you hear, Chair?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I am going to warn you under the standing orders. You are getting close to disrespecting the chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, what was the answer?

CHAIR: I heard the answer. You cannot direct how the witness will answer. I will help you out here with questions from me.

Mr BLEIJIE: I don't need your help.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, can you give those figures? Can you help out the member for Kawana with his question?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am sorry. That is disrespectful, Chair.

Dr MILES: I can. I am happy to.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, with respect—

CHAIR: Member!

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I am sorry. You used my name in your question. I do not need your help for my questioning.

Mr SMITH: I think you do.

Mr BLEIJIE: I asked the director-general—

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

Mr SMITH: You need a lot of help today.

CHAIR: Thank you, member; I do not need that either.

Mr HART: Point of order, Mr Chair. The deputy leader asked a question. You are now repeating his question to a different person than it was asked to. Why can't we hear the answer from the person who was asked?

CHAIR: I have asked a question and the answer is coming.

Dr MILES: Thank you for the chance to address this question. I know that as a member of the government you know we have always put the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders first. In the early days of the pandemic there was debate about whether people's health or the economy was more important. Of course, the world learned very quickly that there is no economy without healthy people. You cannot create jobs in a lockdown; you cannot find a job when businesses are shut. From the beginning the Palaszczuk government made the decision to always put our people and their health first. We have always taken the health advice and implemented measures to suppress the virus until our people were vaccinated.

Up until the end of last year Queensland had spent \$7.8 billion on its health and economic response to COVID. That is a big number, but we largely avoided lockdowns and we kept Queenslanders safe while they did not have the option of a vaccine. The Victorian Treasury has revealed that their lockdowns cost their state \$100 million a day in lost economic activity. With Melbourne the most locked-down city in the world at 263 days, that is a staggering \$26.3 billion. What sparked their lockdown? A leak from hotel guarantee.

Mr HART: Point of order. Mr Chair, you asked a question. How is this relevant to the question on how much Wellcamp cost?

Dr MILES: I am answering the question.

Mr HART: Tell us a figure.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. I find this quite relevant. Deputy Premier, please continue.

Dr MILES: Hotels were never designed for quarantine. They were a stopgap in the absence of formal quarantine arrangements which were the responsibility of the federal government—that was the Morrison government at the time—which, you will remember, was not very fond of taking responsibility for anything. You will also recall the significant transmission event and lockdown that occurred in January 2021: another leak from hotel quarantine after a Brisbane hotel quarantine cleaner tested positive to the UK variant and had been out in the community while infectious. On the day the lockdown was announced health authorities had identified 79 close contacts.

In January 2021 the Premier again called on the Morrison government for a purpose-built quarantine facility and wrote to the Prime Minister at that time. Then Wagner Corporation chairman John Wagner released a plan outlining the prospective use of vacant land at Wellcamp Airport for a purpose-built quarantine facility. A regional quarantine facility fit for purpose and located outside of any large metropolitan city yet close to an international airport offered an improved model for sustainable quarantine arrangements. Benefits of this model included enhanced sustainability of the broader system and the ability to limit the need for costly lockdowns of metropolitan cities. When National Cabinet was forced to halve the number of international arrivals in June 2020 the Morrison government commissioned former Department of Health secretary Jane Halton to review the pandemic response. Her report found—

Hotel quarantine is difficult to endure, particularly for vulnerable people. It is an expensive resource and requires a highly specialised workforce to support the system including clinical, welfare and security services in order to mitigate risk and discharge duty of care obligations.

In this context she recommended to the Australian government that the Australian government should consider a national facility for quarantine. At the time, the ABC found that hotel quarantine caused one outbreak for every 204 infected travellers and that it was far from fit for purpose. They identified 21 failures in hotel quarantine between April 2020 and June 2021, so you can see why we just could not wait for the Morrison government. Initial scoped locations for a regional quarantine site included the Homeground Village in Calliope as well as Wellcamp. The federal government advised that the Rockhampton Airport was not fit for purpose and raised concerns about impacts on the resources industry if Homeground was used. I remind the committee that, if any facility had been started in January 2021 when we were calling for it, it would have been delivered by mid-2021 when we had thousands and thousands of people in hotel quarantine. Instead of helping, the Morrison government just played games.

We commissioned consultants Turner & Townsend to provide an independent suitability assessment to advise us on the least-risk option for a quarantine facility for Queensland. Risk was assessed across nine elements. This comparative assessment found that Wellcamp was the preferred location. It was rated more favourably than Pinkenba, but the Morrison government said we could only build quarantine facilities on Commonwealth land—a completely arbitrary rule—presumably to rule Wellcamp out of consideration. After spending the better half of a year coming up with excuses like ‘Toowoomba is in the middle of the desert,’ which of course it is not, in the end the pressure became too much to bear for the Morrison government and they finally agreed to build quarantine facilities in Pinkenba, Melbourne, Perth and upgrades to Howard Springs. Both Pinkenba and Perth facilities remain under construction.

Not only was hotel quarantine proving challenging; it was also very expensive. In a single month before we opened Wellcamp hotels cost us \$24 million. Now we have wound down hotel quarantine. There are no contracts with hotels in place. In the last quarter to 30 June 2022, \$13.5489 million was spent on hotel isolation and quarantine, most of which is payment for hotel costs incurred before that period as hotels often invoice much later than period-of-use and end-of-contract costs, including close-out periods, exit clauses and the need for infection control procedures to ensure the safe return to business as usual. I want to take this opportunity to thank the hotel businesses and their staff who did their part to protect Queenslanders from the virus by leasing us their hotels. They helped 168,000 Queenslanders quarantine safely.

The Wellcamp proposal provided the Queensland government with exclusive use for the duration of the contracted tenancy and did not rely on federal government support. The day before the facility was announced in August 2021 the state enacted a pause on interstate hotspot arrivals due to high demand for quarantine services, with 5,114 people across 22 quarantine hotels at the highest point in that period. The Wagners already owned the land, which meant we could get the facility up and running faster than any other process would allow. It was an emergency, and the experts agreed we needed a dedicated quarantine facility.

We built QRAC in a record five months. The state and the Wagner Corporation entered into a commercial arrangement under which the purpose-built facility would be constructed and leased to the Queensland government for one year following its completion with the option of a further one-year extension. The details at that time were commercial-in-confidence. The Queensland government requested an independent assessment of quarantine-related costs for the construction of Wellcamp. Independent advice from the state's quantity surveyor concluded that the capital cost breakdown of the revised master plan submitted by Wagner Corporation was reasonable.

The LNP has struggled to understand this, but for the Wagners to get the best deal with their suppliers it would have been detrimental to disclose the entire cost at the outset. As the Acting Auditor-General said yesterday in the House, commercial-in-confidence arrangements are always most important during negotiations. Over the years we have been in government we have executed many contracts with private companies to deliver infrastructure for Queenslanders. We have always honoured the agreed rules of those contractual arrangements.

Now that we can disclose the financial details of Wellcamp I will happily take the committee through the budget papers. The costs associated with the quarantine and isolation program, including the Queensland Regional Accommodation Centre at Wellcamp, are incorporated in the budget papers. As the budget papers note and we have said consistently, the specific facility costs are commercial-in-confidence. As such, these measures have not been broken down separately. There is a figure in the public domain of around \$200 million, and I can confirm that is broadly accurate. We currently project the capital and leasing costs will total \$198.5 million. The structure of agreements involving lease payments and operational costs over both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years mean the costs associated with QRAC are not in one place. Firstly, page 19 of Budget Paper 3 shows the department's capital purchases for 2021-22 estimated actuals of \$261.503 million, which includes \$171 million in capital costs, attributed to QRAC.

No further capital costs are budgeted for 2022-23 in relation to QRAC. Consequently, it is not in the list of capital highlights for the 2022-23 financial year—that is Budget Paper No. 3 on page 102. Note, at the time of preparing the budget papers, \$171 million was the estimated actual, and now that the financial year has completed I can confirm the final capital cost for 2021-22 was \$175 million.

Secondly, the Service Delivery Statements also account for things like outgoings—including water and electricity; depreciation expenses; property, plant and equipment; and supplies and services. In addition, I can outline that facilities management is contracted to Compass Group, covering services needed on site like catering, cleaning and security. As at 30 June, the amount paid to Compass Group is approximately \$9 million. This contract is publicly reported online through the standard contract disclosure reports accessed via the open data portal.

The Quarantine Management Taskforce oversee the entire quarantine system. They represent the state's interests in the negotiations and establishment of arrangements with private sector providers, ongoing contract management as well as broader responsibilities for quarantine management, including the hotel quarantine system while it continued and the Pinkenba facility. The task force staffing includes a mix of public servants, secondments from other departments and specialist contractors. The cost for that team to 30 June who work across the entire quarantine system was \$14.3 million.

Whichever way you look at it, the cost of Wellcamp pales in comparison to other quarantine facilities—for example, the Centre for National Resilience in Victoria cost \$580 million to build even though the Commonwealth originally budgeted \$200 million; the Centre for National Resilience in Western Australia cost \$200 million to build and it is not finished; and we still do not know how much the former federal government paid to build the Pinkenba facility but it is widely reported to be \$400 million. It also pales in comparison to the impact of lockdowns and harsher restrictions on businesses. We know that a week-long lockdown costs over \$700 million in lost economic activity.

Since opening to guests on 5 February this year, 730 people have quarantined or isolated there. QRAC at Wellcamp has given our health authorities options to help keep Queenslanders safe. It supported individuals with isolation accommodation in a range of circumstances, particularly those most vulnerable in the community. This includes guests who have tested positive to COVID-19 but do not have a suitable place to safely isolate, such as homeless persons, refugees and victims of domestic violence. Without QRAC, some of the most at-risk individuals in the community would not have had a safe place to stay while dealing with COVID.

As the pandemic evolves, so too does our health response. Queensland's pandemic management strategy has transitioned from elimination and suppression to one that supports the management of COVID-19 as it becomes endemic in the community. With increased vaccination

coverage and community acceptance of COVID-19, the need for dedicated isolation facilities or for any contingency capacity to be held has decreased. Queensland's Chief Health Officer and Queensland Health have advised the Queensland government there is no longer a public health requirement for dedicated government provided quarantine and isolation facilities. I understand this is consistent with the health advice provided in other jurisdictions. The state government has accepted updated advice from the Chief Health Officer and advised the Australian government we will not require use of its facility nearing completion at Pinkenba.

QRAC will be placed in care and maintenance under similar arrangements to those at Howard Springs in the Northern Territory. It will cease hosting guests from 1 August but will remain available should the pandemic response settings change. Having a dedicated quarantine facility provided the confidence we needed to open state and international borders, and it provided an insurance mechanism against an unknown future. The Quarantine Management Taskforce and the Quarantine Management Program Board will be disbanded. We will consider other uses for the remainder of the QRAC lease.

It is easy to forget what an uncertain future we faced at the beginning of this pandemic. It is easy to forget how small decisions could have huge consequences in those early days. I am very proud of our approach to the health and wellbeing of our people and our economic recovery. Because of our health response, Queensland has outperformed the rest of the country on employment, domestic economic growth, workforce participation, retail growth and interstate migration during the pandemic. I credit our preparedness and willingness to do what was right for Queenslanders. I think most people understand that, faced with what we were faced with, we could not have made any other choice.

CHAIR: Thank you for that fulsome answer. That took nearly 15 minutes and it has answered a lot of questions that may have been asked. We will go straight to non-government members for them to resume their questions. I point out that I want to make sure the member for Traeger has an opportunity to ask a question as well.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, wow. Thank you for that comprehensive—

Dr MILES: You are welcome.

CHAIR: Watch your preamble—

Dr MILES: He is saying nice things. Let him go.

Mr BLEIJIE: It has been kept secret for so long. I am surprised you have finally revealed the details after the Auditor-General ruled he is investigating that.

CHAIR: Member, ask your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Here is the question. Deputy Premier, am I correct that you just said that capital was \$175 million? Correct?

Dr MILES: No.

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, you said it went from \$171 million and it was actually \$175 million.

Dr MILES: In the financial year. The total capital cost was \$198.5 million.

Mr BLEIJIE: For capital for Wellcamp?

Dr MILES: Capital and leasing, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: You said 'capital' and then you just said 'and leasing'. Can you separate that for me?

Dr MILES: The capital figure has been previously disclosed and was repeated again in a question on notice I think from the deputy chair. The contract variations was the capital contribution that we made. The original agreement was to lease the facility, and then as we worked through the details of what we needed that added variations. We agreed to fund those variations as an up-front capital contribution. The up-front capital contribution was \$48.8 million, and then the remainder of the \$198.5 million is the lease cost.

Mr BLEIJIE: You said that is over a financial year; is that correct?

Dr MILES: No. The \$175 million was over the financial year. The \$198.5 million was for the entirety of the construction time period to the end of the first year of the lease.

Mr BLEIJIE: Plus Compass of \$9 million and the Quarantine Management Taskforce of \$14.3 million. You have not mentioned Aspen. It was reported recently that there was \$108 million expenditure on that. Can you advise the committee with respect to that, please?

Dr MILES: The Aspen health contract arrangements were arranged by Queensland Health. They were funded through the allocation made to Queensland Health for quarantine so they are not actually in our budget. As the member says, they were allocated a maximum cap for healthcare services of up to \$108 million. I understand that total costs expended to date amount to approximately \$16 million.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, you have given this information to the committee today on the back of the Auditor-General yesterday saying that there is an investigation now launched.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: I know there is a preamble. Please come straight to the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was one sentence plus a question. Deputy Premier, why has it taken this long for you to release these figures to the Queensland taxpayers, when every journalist at every press conference you have done for the last 12 months has asked you these exact same questions and you have failed to disclose this information?

CHAIR: Member, we have got the question.

Dr MILES: I thank the member for the question. Let me first clarify. The member for Kawana is verballing the Acting Auditor-General. As she said, the details of their investigation were notified on their website some time ago. While the member for Kawana wants to characterise that as news, it was certainly not news to us. In terms of the context of the commercial-in-confidence arrangements, I went into some detail regarding that. That was a condition of the initial contract with Wagners. It allowed them to negotiate with their providers, which was important to them. However, we always intended to properly report these figures in our budget papers and in our financial statements, and I have just outlined precisely how we have gone about that.

Now that we are in an estimates process, looking at those budget papers, it seemed to me entirely appropriate for us to disclose more fulsomely, especially now that all of those contract negotiations have been concluded, and in the context of us advising the 1 August mothballing date for the facility, clearly that further reduced the risks associated with disclosing those sums. I can also advise that the proponent in this case, the Wagner Corporation, agreed that it was appropriate for us to disclose them.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, am I correct in that you have advised this committee today that the total expense of Wellcamp is in excess of \$300 million for a facility we will never actually own, the taxpayers will never own, and—

CHAIR: Stop, member! No argument, no opinions, just ask your question. What was the question?

Dr MILES: It was some deeply flawed 'mathing', Chair. The entire capital cost and lease cost to the state is \$198.5 million. I have now outlined what the incurred health and facility management costs were, the taskforce managing quarantine across Wellcamp hotels, as well as Pinkenba, but all of that does not add up to the figure that the member for Kawana just used.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, the \$108 million for Aspen then that was reported, you said \$16 million has been spent?

Dr MILES: Correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: What contract was entered into with Aspen then? Is full payment required of that \$108 million or they just signed a deal and not knowing how much they have—

CHAIR: Member of for Kawana, are you asking about a contract with Queensland Health?

Mr BLEIJIE: The Deputy Premier has confirmed and spoken about it at length so I think he is well-placed to answer.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I am ascertaining if that question, as the Deputy Premier has indicated, needs to go to the Minister for Health.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, the Deputy Premier can answer that.

CHAIR: Wait! I have not finished.

Dr MILES: I am happy to answer it.

CHAIR: The Deputy Premier can furnish an answer as he sees fit for that one.

Dr MILES: The detail of the contract you will have to ask Health estimates, but I can advise that while a total funding envelope was allocated, only \$16 million of that has been expended.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, can you tell this committee how many people are in Wellcamp today?

Mr Kaiser: Three, as of last night; four today.

Mr BLEIJIE: Three as of last night; four today. How many people have stayed in the Wellcamp since it has been established?

Dr MILES: Weren't you listening?

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, I am asking the director-general.

Dr MILES: It has been answered.

CHAIR: Members will cease quarrelling across—

Mr BLEIJIE: You have had these questions for a year—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I am giving a direction.

Mr BLEIJIE:—and you have refused to answer.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I have—

Mr SMITH: This isn't a theatrical display. This isn't a theatre; this is parliament.

CHAIR: Order! I have given directions about quarrelling across the chamber which I will repeat. Standing order 246—members shall not quarrel; and 247—comments shall come through the chair. After saying that, I do not know where we were.

Mr BLEIJIE: The director-general was going to answer how many people have stayed in Wellcamp.

Mr Kaiser: As the Deputy Premier just said moments ago in his answer, 730.

Mr KATTER: Deputy Premier, the rising cost of LNG following the impact of the LNG export industry in Queensland has had severe disruption to proposed development and impact. I can supply reports that I have previously supplied to government to support that fact. We do not have a gas reserve policy. Does the government have figures on what the impact has been on Queensland in forgone industrial development from the rising cost of LNG without that secured or fixed price on gas?

Dr MILES: Not that I am aware of, but if the member is happy for me to see what we can find out between now and the end of this session, I am happy to see—the director-general's former experience in the resources department might mean he has some views, but let me see what we can find out. Otherwise it might be best addressed to the resources minister.

Mr KATTER: Could I ask on top of that then, would that be seen as a priority by the government, given that it is a big deal? Western Australia has a gas reserve policy that has harboured a lot of industry development and we are exclusive of that? Does the Deputy Premier see that as an important metric to acquire?

Dr MILES: Certainly we see access to energy and well-priced energy as critical for ongoing state development. We do have the tenures that were released specifically for domestic use that the member would be aware of. WA is in a slightly different situation to Queensland in that it is not as well connected for export to other states or globally, but if the member is happy, I am happy to come back with a more fulsome answer at the end of this session.

Mr KATTER: With regards to the \$100 million Resources Community Infrastructure Fund which we desperately chase in the Traeger electorate to try to get some of that money back that is gained from what is produced in our area and region, and it is hotly contested by a lot of desperate groups out there, can the minister explain why the government refused the resource companies' offer to contribute to an extension of the fund? I believe that fund is no longer going to continue beyond this year?

Dr MILES: Our government certainly sees the Resources Community Infrastructure Fund as important. My agency administers the processing of the funds—so the receiving of applications, the board that reviews them and makes recommendations about how they can be allocated. We are only able to allocate the funds that are provided to us. At this stage, my understanding is there are outstanding funds that have not yet been provided to be available. Round 2 of the fund closed on 27 April and the advisory committee is looking at those round 2 funding applications.

Mr KATTER: Just to be clear, that is being discontinued, the resources fund?

Dr MILES: There are outstanding commitments that are yet to be received. Once they are received, they will be able to disperse those. As to whether there will be future rounds, that is really a matter for Treasury. The member asked about perhaps why the royalty regime was addressed rather

than through this program, and again that is a question probably best addressed to the Treasurer, but I make the point that we can provide much more certainty of funds and projects for regional areas when we know that those funds will be provided and will be provided in an ongoing way, which is becoming a weakness of the RCIF.

Mr KATTER: I hope it still comes back out west, Deputy Premier.

Dr MILES: For sure.

Dr MacMAHON: Deputy Premier, with reference to the Olympics master plan that you talked about in your opening statement, does this master plan include plans to close East Brisbane State School?

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, we have about a minute for that reply before we change over to the next section.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. As the member would know, we are aware that the redevelopment of the Gabba is expected to impact East Brisbane State School. Early planning and design work for the redevelopment is still underway. The East Brisbane State School community will be consulted once more planning has been undertaken and construction time lines are known. I understand that, separate to this, the Department of Education has also been undertaking long-term planning for the East Brisbane State School and the surrounding primary school network, so that work is ongoing.

CHAIR: The time is just about spot on 10 am, so the time allocated for consideration of the estimates for expenditure in this area has expired. The committee will now consider the infrastructure and planning areas of the portfolio until 11.15 am. Would officials who are changing place at the witness table in the chamber please do so quickly. Deputy Premier, if you wish you can make an opening statement of three minutes.

Dr MILES: I used it all up before.

CHAIR: I thought we would offer you the opportunity.

Dr MILES: I told you we would make it up.

CHAIR: We will go straight to questions on the infrastructure and planning portfolio.

Mr HART: I have a question to the director-general. The interim Coaldrake review identified that a director-general was keeping information from their minister to provide plausible deniability. Was that referring to yourself as a director-general?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair. That is an imputation. Are we going into hypotheticals about what was and was not in the Coaldrake report?

Mr HART: It goes to integrity.

CHAIR: I understand where you are coming from. Member, you are probably technically correct on this, but I note this question was answered yesterday. Would the director-general like to provide a response, even just a brief one?

Mr Kaiser: Our opportunities as directors-general to speak with Professor Coaldrake were undertaken on the basis of confidentiality. Nevertheless, I am happy to say that I was not that director-general.

Mr HART: Director-General, are you aware of any ministerial staff applying pressure to individuals in your department, including yourself, for responses that minimise problems or discourage written advice on difficult topics?

Mr Kaiser: No. We have a good working relationship with the Deputy Premier and his office. Clearly, as you would expect, the department consults with the Deputy Premier and his advisers on the content of material relevant to government policy. I have not encountered any circumstance where the Deputy Premier's office or the Deputy Premier has made changes that have not been appropriate, and the department has not to my knowledge inappropriately altered internal or external advice or documents in a way which contradicts our advice or an evidence based view of the facts.

Mr HART: Can the Deputy Premier satisfy this committee that he or his office has not given details on meetings his officers have had with companies to Anacta?

CHAIR: Can you just repeat that question? I did not hear it properly.

Mr HART: Can the Deputy Premier satisfy this committee that he or his office has not given details of meetings his officers have had with companies to Anacta?

Dr MILES: Yes.

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh—

Mr HART: He has answered the question. I am happy—

CHAIR:—I understand the relevance of the Coaldrake report to the Premier's portfolio and I have allowed some questions on it.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, the Deputy Premier has answered it.

CHAIR: I have not finished. I am just pointing out that you are stretching it to tie this to expenditure. Deputy Premier, did you provide an answer to that question?

Dr MILES: I am happy to provide a bit more context to it if you would like.

CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr HART: It is about his office and he has answered the question.

CHAIR: No, I have not heard it.

Mr MADDEN: He has not answered the question.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, point of order. The Deputy Premier has provided an answer and if the Deputy Premier wants to extend the answer to your question then that should come off government time.

CHAIR: No, the answer is to your question. None of us at this end heard it.

Mr McDONALD: We are satisfied; the Deputy Premier said yes.

CHAIR: The committee needs to hear the answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: He said yes.

Mr HART: We heard it in full.

CHAIR: I am asking the Deputy Premier—

Mr BLEIJIE:—to filibuster.

CHAIR:—to answer that question. The members for Ipswich West, Bundaberg and I have said we have not heard that answer.

Mr HART: Tell us about Anacta then.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, that should be your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Hansard can record it.

Mr SMITH: You cannot say he is filibustering. He is answering your question. Do not ask a question.

CHAIR: I point out he is answering your question. Can we let the Deputy Premier furnish the answer?

Dr MILES: Members can be aware from my published diaries that I have met with stakeholders on 404 occasions from November 2020 to July 2022. Only six of those 404 meetings included lobbyists. None of them included Anacta. That means 1.48 per cent of my meetings with stakeholders included lobbyists. One of those six occasions was with Glen Elmes, the former LNP member for Noosa.

Mr BLEIJIE: On 17 December and 22 December 2021 your senior policy adviser met with Anacta lobbyists and Pacific View Farm, who are the developers of SkyRidge. Can you advise what the meetings were about, please?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question. The very fact he knows about those meetings is the result of the strongest transparency laws that we have. They are all disclosed properly under those strict disclosure rules.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect, I asked what the meeting was about.

Dr MILES: I was not in the meeting.

Mr BLEIJIE: Who were the attendees from Anacta and Pacific View Farm at this meeting?

Dr MILES: All of the appropriate details have been disclosed. My chief of staff advises, though, that it is incorrect and misleading to characterise those as meetings. They were phone calls.

Mr BLEIJIE: Okay. So meetings cannot happen on a phone call? Is that how your office does business?

Dr MILES: The register records all interactions.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is that how your office deals with Anacta—over the phone?

CHAIR: Member, cease interjections. Let the Deputy Premier furnish an answer.

Dr MILES: The register records all interactions, whether that is phone calls or meetings.

Mr HART: Private emails?

Dr MILES: It is misleading to suggest that they were meetings.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, on 6 October 2021 you received an application to change a development approval for SkyRidge. Then there were these two meetings—or phone calls as you say—with Anacta. Then less than 10 days after your office's last meeting or phone call with Anacta it was approved. Did Anacta's involvement get this approval?

Dr MILES: No.

CHAIR: Where is your question? Can we have a straightforward question please, member, without an argument or an opinion.

Mr BLEIJIE: I asked: did Anacta's involvement get the approval through quicker?

Dr MILES: It did not, but I would note for the committee's benefit that the decisions made there have been recently upheld by the Planning and Environment Court.

Mr BLEIJIE: Since the approval was granted, Deputy Premier, Anacta has donated \$87,000 to the Labor Party.

Dr MILES: That is even more than Aspen gave you.

Mr BLEIJIE: How do you respond to people who look at this and think, 'This is incredibly dodgy'?

Mr SMITH: Point of order.

CHAIR: Where is your question?

Mr BLEIJIE: I just said it: how do you respond to people who look at this and say, 'It looks like it is incredibly dodgy'?

CHAIR: I am going to rule that one out of order.

Mr HART: He did not even ask the question.

CHAIR: Would you like another question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Can you at least hear the question, Chair, because I did say—

CHAIR: Recast the question without argument, without inference, without imputation.

Mr BLEIJIE: How do you respond, Deputy Premier, to people who look at this and think twice about the dodgy deals with Anacta and the Labor Party government—donations to the Labor Party?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: Order, everyone. I just gave you a direction on how to rephrase that question. You ignored my direction, so I am ruling that question out of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, the State Infrastructure Strategy was recently released without any announcement. Why was the release of the strategy not announced? Is it because, although it is an infrastructure strategy, it actually does not contain any details of infrastructure you will build over the next 10 years?

Mr MADDEN: Point of order, Chair. There is an imputation of undesirable conduct in that question. I would ask my friend to rephrase the question.

Mr BLEIJIE: What—

CHAIR: Wait, member for Kawana. I understand where you are coming from. It tended towards that, but not quite. Member for Kawana, can you repeat your question without possible inferences?

Mr BLEIJIE: Why was the release of the strategy not announced? Is it because, although it is an infrastructure strategy, it does not actually contain any details of infrastructure you will build over the next 10 years?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question. It was announced. It was in our budget media release which you would think the shadow minister would have read. The State Infrastructure Strategy was the result of very deep industry engagement—13 workshops held across Queensland—and there was further public consultation on the draft in September and October. It has been very well received by those stakeholders. Perhaps the shadow minister should meet with more of our shared stakeholders.

It highlights 183 priority actions across 10 infrastructure classes. The 183 priority actions are a combination of new, existing or expanded activities that will be progressed over the next four years ahead of the strategy's next review.

Five focus areas will target action and create lasting benefits—positioning Queensland as a renewable energy superpower, building a 2032 legacy, connecting our regions, creating livable communities, and driving infrastructure performance. Seven regional infrastructure plans are now being progressively developed to support the strategy, reflecting the unique strengths and opportunities of each region through place based approaches that will prioritise regionally significant infrastructure needs. To deliver on the strategy, the state will collaborate with local governments, the private sector and the community to deliver infrastructure that builds a better Queensland.

Mr HART: I hand over to the member for Scenic Rim.

Mr KRAUSE: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, the involvement of Labor aligned lobbyists with this government has been canvassed extensively by the Coaldrake review. Given Wanless is a client of Anacta, will the Deputy Premier be recusing himself from this call-in decision regarding the Wanless dump at Willowbank?

CHAIR: I will give the Deputy Premier some latitude in answering that.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. At the outset I would ask the member to stop misleading the committee. The Wanless proposal is for a recycling park. The request—

Mr KRAUSE: Which includes landfill.

CHAIR: Do not interject, member, while the Deputy Premier is giving an answer.

Dr MILES: I have outlined publicly the range of reasons why I believed it was appropriate to consider calling in the Wanless Recycling Park. I issued that notice on 27 January. I received 61 representations about exercising my call-in powers. Wanless responded to information requests. As the application is being reassessed, public notification was undertaken again in June. Some 62 submissions were received. The decision itself will be based on the advice provided to me by my department. Even getting to this stage was the result of a thorough process, including considering the requests, the public submissions and the advice from my department.

I emphasise that the call-in does not approve the project. Rather, it acknowledges that the project triggers a number of state interests, including potential economic, environmental and regional planning impacts. The call-in allows the state to do an assessment of the project, including its ability to support Queensland's waste reduction and recycling objectives. It allows proper consideration of the land requirements for the Australian government's inland rail project which should be known around the middle of the year. Wanless will be required to demonstrate the facility will support the state's goal of reducing waste to landfill and increasing re-use and recycling.

Mr KRAUSE: Deputy Premier, given Anacta's involvement, to avoid a perception of inappropriate influence, will you consider cancelling your involvement and revert the decision back to council?

Mr SMITH: I raise a point of order: we could list standing order 115 around inferences, imputations and hypotheticals to the question that was put.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: Why are you protecting Anacta?

CHAIR: Wait. I am dealing with a point of order here. The member pointed out a potential breach of 115(b); I would have said potentially 112. I understand where the member for Scenic Rim is trying to go with this. I might ask him to recast that question whilst avoiding any arguments or opinions, just the facts.

Mr KRAUSE: Okay. Given Anacta's involvement, will the Deputy Premier consider cancelling the state's involvement and revert the decision back to Ipswich City Council?

Dr MILES: Perhaps if the member is so motivated by integrity and avoiding conflicts of interest he would advise the committee that the major competitor of Wanless which would like to stop this project is a very significant donor to the LNP, donating \$18,226 this year alone.

Mr KRAUSE: All publicly disclosed.

Dr MILES: It is pretty hypocritical—

Mr McDONALD: It is not as much as Anacta has.

Mr KRAUSE: What about Anacta—

Dr MILES:—to come in here and do the bidding of a major donor—

Mr KRAUSE:—and their donations to the ALP?

Mr BLEIJIE: \$220,000 from Anacta—

Dr MILES:—just to try to knock off a job-creating project.

Opposition members interjected.

CHAIR: Members, cease your interjections!

Dr MILES: Surely the member would see the hypocrisy.

Mr KRAUSE: Can you answer the question?

Mr BLEIJIE: We always see your—

CHAIR: Wait! Members, cease! Do you have a further question?

Mr KRAUSE: No, thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Do we have any further questions?

Mr McDONALD: Yes. I defer to the deputy leader.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, I refer to the residential lot approvals data from the Queensland Government Statistician's Office which shows that in 2016 there were 25,651 lots approved. The yearly number of approvals has been declining and in 2021 we only achieved 10,552. Why are we delivering less than half the number of lots now than five years ago during a housing crisis?

Mr Kaiser: I can get back to the member with some information about the history towards the end of the hearings, if you like, but I would like to go through some of the measures the government is taking to ensure land release meets the constraints of current supply. Housing affordability is a complex issue and it is not driven by supply alone but by several factors, some in our control and some not. For example, historically low interest rates, although they are rising, are increasing demand for housing supply. We have the highest interstate migration since the mid-1990s and of course since the pandemic people seem more willing to spend money on housing, partly because they have saved on things like overseas trips that they might have otherwise taken, so that is all adding to demand. On the cost side, rising costs for labour and materials is a worldwide phenomena but that is also impacting demand, so these are extraordinary and in many ways unprecedented circumstances that we face.

The department, based on government policy, has a range of measures designed to alleviate this situation and assist in getting supply into the market. For example, we have the growth areas team which uses the planning framework to bring new land supply to market by unlocking approvals and accelerating known growth areas. It plans for new growth areas and identifies systemic changes in the planning process. For example, it has paved the way for streamlined assessments of 3,000 lots in Caboolture West. That team is also leading work on a business case for the development of Beerwah East, potentially unlocking 21,000 dwellings. It is also reviewing under-utilised areas within the urban footprint to identify barriers to development. We also have a range of measures designed to assist in terms of infrastructure delivery for land release. For example, the \$150 million catalytic infrastructure fund provides low-interest loans to accelerate infrastructure in priority development areas. A \$50 million Growth Acceleration Fund supports delivery of critical trunk infrastructure outside of PDAs. There is also a \$210 million growth areas compact which provides enabling infrastructure for Caboolture West as part of the SEQ City Deal.

There are also priority development areas managed by EDQ. The government has nominated more than 30 PDAs to accelerate and coordinate development. EDQ has responsibility for plan making and infrastructure planning in PDAs and is helping to deliver some of the largest residential development in the state. For example, Caloundra South, Flagstone, Ripley Valley and Yarrabilba, when fully developed together, will deliver 140,000 dwellings for some 340,000 people, offering affordability, diversity and choice. Then there are infill PDAs like Bowen Hills, Northshore Hamilton, the Mill, Maroochydore and Southport which are delivering 55,000 dwellings.

The department, while not primarily responsible for social housing, is also working with the department of housing on the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. This includes policy development of inclusionary planning options and also includes measures like, for example, \$200,000 being allocated to the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils to deliver local housing action plans jointly funded between this department and the housing department. EDQ also evaluates projects to deliver more social and affordable dwellings in EDQ-led projects—for example, Northshore Hamilton, Yeronga and Carseldine. There is a range of measures and policies in place for the department to do all it can based on those policies to get more land supply into the market.

CHAIR: We will move on to a block of questions from government members. Deputy Premier, last year Caboolture West was selected by the Palaszczuk government's growth areas teams as a pilot site to accelerate land supply in South-East Queensland. With reference to the Better Planning for Queensland service area identified on page 9 of the SDS, can the Deputy Premier explain how land use and infrastructure planning has progressed for this significantly growing area?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Bancroft for his question; Caboolture West is literally close to home for both of us and so of great interest in ensuring that it is developed appropriately. Queenslanders know that our state is the best place in Australia to live. We have the best communities, the best lifestyle and the best climate, and that is why everyone is moving here. South-East Queensland's population is projected to grow to 5.3 million people by 2041. People and businesses are moving to Queensland in droves to enjoy the economic job and lifestyle opportunities we have to offer.

This has increased demand for land supply, particularly in South-East Queensland. Thanks to targeted co-investment from the Queensland government, almost 50,000 residential lots are being unlocked in South-East Queensland since the 2020 state election, including approximately 30,000 in Caboolture West, helping to cater for the region's current and projected population surge. Caboolture West is the largest growth area planned for the Moreton Bay region. Over the next 40 years it will develop to be the size of a regional city, ultimately accommodating homes for around 70,000 people and access to 17,000 jobs. That is why the Queensland government identified Caboolture West as a priority growth area.

We understand that it is not just about unlocking new lots. We also need to ensure that people, goods and services can efficiently move around and that there is access to affordable housing, green space, schools and health services. That is why the Palaszczuk government has been working with the Moreton Bay Regional Council, infrastructure providers and landowners to do the necessary land use and infrastructure planning for the area. We are ensuring that Caboolture West develops as a well-planned and serviced community.

Today I am happy to announce that a draft interim structure plan has been prepared for Caboolture West and is open for public consultation until 26 August. This is the first stage of structure planning for this new city. The draft interim structure plan covers around half of the total Caboolture West area. This plan includes a network of green corridors, four state primary schools and two new secondary schools. Importantly, this plan also includes land for housing and an explicit benchmark for diverse, affordable and social housing outcomes.

The interim structure plan will be in effect for approximately 18 months and then be replaced with a final structure plan that will cover the entire Caboolture West area. This final plan will include a comprehensive infrastructure plan and charging framework that will ensure that the rollout of development in Caboolture West is supported by essential infrastructure and services. I encourage the community to come along on this journey and to have their say on this draft plan, which I can table for the benefit of the committee. I am sure the member for Bancroft might even want to keep this large map. It shows precisely where the green corridors, schools and housing locations will be. A number of online and in-person engagement activities have been planned for the community to come along and learn more. I welcome community feedback and look forward to seeing this new regional city come to life.

CHAIR: I know the member for Kurwongbah would be very interested in seeing that as well. Are we happy to table that? Yes. It is so tabled.

Mr SMITH: Deputy Premier, I think all Queenslanders are excited about the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games. I was wondering if you could please advise the committee of the benefits of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, particularly when it comes to regional and rural Queensland?

Dr MILES: Thank you, member for Bundaberg, for that question. Can I also thank you for your continued advocacy for regional Queensland, particularly when it comes to the Olympics. We started off with a Bulldogs game and we will finish off with the Olympics. There is no other way to put it: the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be a big deal for Queensland. Now and for the next decade it is our time to shine. In 3,649 days the world will turn its eyes to Queensland. Billions of people will see Queensland and all that it has to offer. The subsequent legacy from the games will bring a boost to our state. It will create jobs and attract more people to our fantastic Queensland lifestyle.

We are not waiting for 2032 to reap the benefits. We will oversee a once-in-a-generation infrastructure spend, bringing together a bold vision for all of Queensland. The benefits of the games do not start and end in 2032; they have already begun, and we are going to feel their benefits for decades to come. Queensland's beloved Gabba will be given a major upgrade and a facelift to

transform the entire precinct into a truly Olympics-worthy venue. The upgrade will increase the Gabba's capacity to 50,000 people and establish a pedestrian link to the newly constructed Gabba station. Last week the Premier opened the Queensland Academy of Sport's new high-performance gym and athlete health suites at the Sleeman Sports Complex at Chandler—a state-of-the-art, one-stop shop allowing Queensland's athletes to access the coaching expertise and infrastructure they need for a winning edge on the world stage.

Regional Queensland will be front and centre at the 2032 games, with Cairns, Townsville and Toowoomba to each host a venue. The Gold Coast will have six venues and the Sunshine Coast four. I would also like to take a moment to remind some members of the committee that much of the infrastructure built in South-East Queensland would need to have been built anyway, so the infrastructure we are building in Brisbane will not mean there are fewer dollars available for infrastructure in regional Queensland. In fact, it means there will be more. Already we are seeing investment in regional Queensland as our rural and regional towns gear up to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

In Hervey Bay earlier this month I joined the member for Hervey Bay and the Fraser Coast Council to announce funding for a major expansion of the aquatic centre. The Palaszczuk government is proudly contributing \$3.557 million to upgrade the 25- and 50-metre pools, creating an opportunity for the next generation of Mitch Larkins to train and develop their love of swimming right there on the Fraser Coast. This year's budget also included \$100 million for schools across the state to build new and upgraded sports facilities so our future athletes can train and prepare for the games.

Just this weekend we officially began the 10-year countdown to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The planning work is well underway and we will see a flurry of activity across Queensland in the decade to come. I look forward to seeing the thousands of good jobs that we will create, the additional services we are able to provide because of the investment and the benefits that will come to Queensland's already world-class lifestyle. Most of all, I am looking forward to Queenslanders dominating the 2032 medal tally at the Queensland Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Mr MADDEN: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier outline how the Palaszczuk government's infrastructure spend is supporting good, secure jobs for regional Queenslanders?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Ipswich West for his question. Infrastructure remains a critical component of Queensland's social and economic recovery. It creates jobs and preserves our fantastic Queensland lifestyle. The Palaszczuk government is investing over \$15.5 billion in infrastructure for 2022-23 which will directly support around 48,000 Queensland jobs. This means that 2022-23 is another year that we continue to deliver our \$50 billion infrastructure guarantee, with the budget committing \$59.1 billion in infrastructure over the next four years to create good, secure, local jobs and deliver key infrastructure.

Our commitment to building job-creating infrastructure in regional Queensland remains as strong as ever in this budget, with 63.3 per cent of the capital program being spent outside of the Greater Brisbane region, supporting around 31,100 jobs. We are also investing in regional communities to deliver both good, secure jobs and an even better lifestyle with programs like our \$1 billion Works for Queensland and Building our Regions, which provide direct infrastructure funding for shovel-ready projects. Another \$88 million will be delivered towards Works for Queensland projects in 2022-23, and councils estimate that more than 22,200 jobs have been supported for regional Queenslanders through the first four rounds of the program. Some \$70 million is available under round 6 of Building our Regions, bringing the total to \$418 million for the whole program. This round is delivering critical improvements to water supply and sewerage infrastructure in regional communities. Our focus on growing jobs through industry development across Queensland is also seeing the delivery of key projects that will create more good, secure jobs for Queenslanders.

Our commitment to Queensland becoming a global renewable energy and green hydrogen superpower is seeing multibillion dollar investments in the green hydrogen industry in regional Queensland, including in Gladstone, Central Queensland, Townsville and Barcaldine. In Cairns we are progressing the development of the Cairns Marine Precinct common user infrastructure, where the Palaszczuk government is working together with the Albanese federal government to deliver more local jobs in Far North Queensland. In the north-west we are working closely with industry on our plan to make Queensland a leading producer and exporter of new economy minerals and the home of new industries. This includes building and owning a new vanadium processing plant for this key mineral resource in Townsville.

Another key element of our support for regional communities is providing grants to local governments and non-government organisations to support their work on the ground in their own communities. In total, the Palaszczuk government will provide \$2.862 billion in capital grants in 2022-23, the vast majority—\$2.131 billion—of which goes to communities outside of the Greater Brisbane region. This includes more than \$700 million to support the Palaszczuk government's program of infrastructure renewal and recovery within disaster affected communities. The recent state budget also includes \$46 million for the Resources Community Infrastructure Fund to support the post-COVID recovery of regional communities by improving economic and social infrastructure across Queensland's resources communities.

It includes \$36.1 million for the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program, which provides funding for priority infrastructure projects to meet identified community needs and to support projects that will enhance sustainable and liveable communities. We are investing \$22.3 million as part of the \$120 million Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program to support Indigenous councils to implement projects and infrastructure works relating to critical water, waste water and waste assets.

Our record in government and this most recent budget demonstrate our continuing commitment to investment in regional Queensland and regional Queenslanders. We back good secure jobs, better services and the great Queensland lifestyle for every Queenslanders, regardless of where they live across our great state.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, with reference to the better planning for Queensland service area identified on page 1 of the SDS, can you please explain how regional plans will complement infrastructure investment and provide those good jobs and better services for Queenslanders?

Dr MILES: As the member knows, Queensland is booming, population growth is creating demand for more homes and our new residents require access to utilities, roads and public transport, employment, health, education and community services. This government understands that growing sustainably requires anticipating the nature and consequences of population shifts before they occur and adopting forward-looking and proactive planning processes. Regional strategic planning plays a key role in helping Queensland meet the challenges associated with managing rapid population growth and change across multiple local government areas.

Queensland is a decentralised state with more than half of the population living outside Brisbane. That is why the government is delivering strategic regional planning beyond Brisbane and the south-east. I have asked the department to integrate the regional planning and Regional Infrastructure Planning programs. Under this new direction, over the next three years my department will undertake faster fit-for-purpose reviews of all regional plans older than five years to align with the Regional Infrastructure Planning program.

Far North Queensland mayors and the FNQROC have requested a review of their Far North Queensland Regional Plan and we have heard them. That is why the FNQ Regional Plan review will be the next plan to be reviewed. This is critically important given the Far North Queensland region has the largest and one of the fastest growing population bases in northern Australia. A fit-for-purpose regional plan will address these challenges and highlight opportunities for more liveable communities. It will also enhance regional investment opportunities and competitive advantages, which means more good jobs for regional Queensland.

The FNQ review will start as we finish another important regional plan. The review of the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan is currently underway. I note that the member for Bundaberg has engaged strongly in that process. Public consultation on that draft regional plan is expected around the middle of this year. Regional plans are developed in partnership with local councils, the community and stakeholders. These plans allow for increased opportunities for collaboration with other levels of government and with the private and not-for-profit sectors. Through good planning we are ensuring good jobs and better services for Queenslanders, while safeguarding our unique environment and great Queensland lifestyle.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Traeger to ask for a question.

Mr KATTER: Deputy Premier, the Labor government has changed their position from selling assets to now being strongly anti asset sale. In that process there was a change to the accounting standard in terms of how those strategic assets were managed in that market lending rates were applied to the GOCs rather than the government lending rates, to mimic market conditions. Does the Deputy Premier acknowledge that this has had an impact on the way that those assets have been managed and the costs that they put back on the people from, say, Ergon electricity and rail?

Dr MILES: I am not an accountant, member for Traeger, and I am not well across the accounting standards that you are referring to. You are right, though: it is very much our government's policy to maintain public ownership of those assets. By owning those assets we are able to deliver better jobs and we are able to deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders. Even through the recent tumult within the energy market, our ownership has provided us with a range of levers and powers that other states wish they still had. I am not sure I am positioned, though, to answer your specific question about lending rates for GOCs.

Mr KATTER: I was trying to illustrate some impacts, to provide some context around what the impacts are.

Dr MILES: That sounds like it is something that might be required under competition law by the ACCC; is that right?

Mr KATTER: It is required under federal agreements. It is an agreement with the other states. My follow-up question is this: would the Deputy Premier be open to considering a review of those arrangements so that those assets now become more focused on industry enablement rather than profit generating, as they would in the private market which they have been arranged to mimic?

Dr MILES: I suspect if there were a role for a state minister to pursue that then it would be one of the shareholding ministers, so the energy minister or the Treasurer. The competition law settings are at a national level. I can advise the member that, rather than adjusting those settings, we have sought to allow the GOCs to pursue those opportunities by providing them with exclusive access to a range of grant funding. The \$2 billion renewable energy jobs fund can only be accessed by those GOCs. I guess that is an alternative way of providing them with support to pursue the kind of industry and state development activities we would like to see them pursue as shareholders, without necessarily triggering the competition ramifications that adjusting other settings might.

Mr KATTER: I do not have much time so I will go to another question. Deputy Premier, I am yet to be convinced of the benefit of the Olympic Games to the electorate of Traeger. Clearly I have nothing against the Olympic Games but certainly I am yet to be convinced. Given that media reports are suggesting anything from a \$12 billion to \$15 billion cost for that, how can you demonstrate to the people of Doomadgee or Croydon that there will be a benefit? I think the Premier outlined that we might be able to get in the torch relay. Other than holding a torch, what benefit would there be for the people of Croydon or Doomadgee from the Olympic Games?

Dr MILES: That is a really important question. The point I tried to make earlier was that much of the infrastructure investment that we will deliver over this 10-year period would need to have been funded anyway and would not have been funded with a contribution from the Commonwealth. That will allow us to free up funds that can be delivered in the regions.

The \$100 million that we have allocated for school sporting infrastructure is one example where we really can use the Olympics to drive investment into regional schools. I know the Premier is very keen to see those investments going to schools such as in Doomadgee. They love their sport there. I am sure if we can give them great facilities then that can give them a chance to also aspire to going to the Olympics, which would obviously be fantastic. There will continue to be those kinds of legacy programs where we can invest in pools, sporting facilities and sporting grounds under the Olympic legacy program that will provide really great benefits to regional communities. I am certainly very focused on all of those opportunities, member for Traeger.

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, is there a question from your side? Who are you handing that to?

Mr McDONALD: We will hand that to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, can you advise the committee when the lease for the Wellcamp quarantine facility expires?

Mr Kaiser: It is April next year, I understand; April 2023.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, is it the case that, if the lease expires in April next year and given you have said that no-one will stay in it from August this year, we are paying for a facility that no-one will actually be staying in and we will be paying for it until April next year? Is that correct?

Dr MILES: The facility will continue to be available should the pandemic settings change between now and then. The decision we have announced today to not occupy the Pinkenba facility, which we understand cost taxpayers roughly \$400 million, will mean it is now available for the Lord Mayor to pursue his aspiration that it should house victims of domestic and family violence. I am certainly happy to assist him to have that conversation with the Commonwealth. Chair, I am happy to have taken these couple of questions, but I just note that the time for these questions was in the earlier session. I will be guided by you about how strict we run this.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am sure there were some planning rules around urgency in building the Wellcamp quarantine facility that you rushed through.

Dr MILES: Well, ask about planning then.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is why I asked the question; it was completely relevant.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we have been quite forgiving in letting those go through. Hopefully we do not need to pursue that any further. Do you another question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Just to confirm that it is the case that we will be paying for it and no-one will stay there. Thank you for that confirmation.

CHAIR: If you do have a further question—

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I do—all day, all night. Happy to stay here.

CHAIR:—you may want to put it on notice.

Dr MILES: Pinkenba—half the size, twice the cost, no people.

CHAIR: Thank you, members.

Mr BLEIJIE: Where are the domestic violence victims staying in Wellcamp?

CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr BLEIJIE: You said it was going to be used for the homeless and domestic violence victims.

CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr BLEIJIE: No-one has stayed there. Waste of money.

CHAIR: Member, I have called order.

Mr BLEIJIE: White elephant in Wellcamp.

CHAIR: Member! I have called for order three times. I was just giving some instructions. For the third time, I remind members not to argue.

An opposition member interjected.

CHAIR: I will bring attention to you again. Members will not quarrel—standing order 246. May I suggest that if there are interjections that does not help either. Please do not answer the interjections. Member for Kawana?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Director-General, Caboolture West, which was just spoken about by the Deputy Premier, was identified as a major expansion area in the 2017 South East Queensland Regional Plan. It was also in the previous regional plan in 2009. How many lots have been delivered since 2012 in the Caboolture West area plan?

Mr Kaiser: I will see if I can get some material that assists. It is clearly the case that major infrastructure and master planning of a community takes some time. We are pretty fond in the department of the old carpenter's adage that you measure twice and cut once. These matters do require a degree of planning. As I mentioned in an answer before, the Growth Areas Team, which was established some 12 months ago, has paved the way for streamlined assessment of some 3,000 lots in Caboolture West through a planning scheme amendment. The answer the Deputy Premier gave just before indicates the other considerable work that has occurred in order to plan the area so that when it is opened for communities and residences they have a well master planned community and enjoy a satisfactory lifestyle.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, no lots have actually been delivered yet; correct? You said that 3,000 are coming online but no lots have been delivered; is that correct?

Mr Kaiser: These things take time to plan, unless you want to create ghettos like were created in the fifties in communities like Woodridge and Inala. That takes time to plan.

Mr BLEIJIE: I do not know if I would say that Woodridge and Inala are ghettos.

Mr Kaiser: Having been born there and grown up there, I can tell you it was not real flash.

Dr MILES: It wasn't the Sunshine Coast!

CHAIR: One moment, members.

Mr Kaiser: Yes, it certainly wasn't the Sunshine Coast.

CHAIR: Can all members cease interjecting. This time I will actually caution everyone, including witnesses, about interjecting and replying to interjections. For example, I would love to jump in on this because, being on the council in that area for many years, I know about the planning in Caboolture West. I will allow the question to be answered by the director-general. I reiterate :no-one interjects and no-one argues. Thank you. Where were we?

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, correct if I am wrong, but the Department of Transport and Main Roads has only recently defined its preferred north-south road corridor in that area. This held up the development for some time. Why has it taken so long?

Mr Kaiser: That would be a question for another agency.

Mr BLEIJIE: Have you made representations to the department of transport over the course of this long planning? We are in the middle of a housing crisis. People do not have a roof over their head and—

CHAIR: Member, you have delivered the question. You did not need to furnish it with an argument or an opinion.

Mr Kaiser: In the course of planning Caboolture West, there have obviously been interactions between this department and the Department of Transport and Main Roads. I am advised that, after consultation is complete, the plan will be finalised and come into effect in late 2022. In the longer term, an additional 30,000 homes will be delivered for Caboolture West, along with supporting legislative amendments for priority growth areas in mid-2023.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, can you provide the committee with the list of infrastructure projects put forward by the state to the federal government for consideration for joint funding as part of the 2032 Olympic infrastructure agreement, please?

Mr Kaiser: Let us see if we have some material that can assist with that.

CHAIR: That is one that might involve a lot of research.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am happy if they take it on notice or come back.

Mr Kaiser: We may need to come back later in proceedings, but if we can just have a moment to check.

Dr MILES: I stopped listening. What was the question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Because you stopped listening is not my problem.

CHAIR: Thank you, members. We can come back. Would you like to come back to us later?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, point of order. The Deputy Premier just said he has stopped listening. Is he finished with estimates? If so, then he can go and we will ask the director-general.

CHAIR: Member, that is a comment.

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, he said he stopped listening. Is he interested in his job?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana!

Honourable members interjected.

CHAIR: Thank you, everyone. Please cease interjections. Member for Kawana, that was almost disorderly. I remind you that I put you under a warning under the standing orders earlier. Do you have another question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Is the director-general taking that on notice, as I asked?

CHAIR: The minister is the only one who can take questions on notice. We have indicated that they will come back before the end of this session, which is at 11.15.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Deputy Premier, at last year's estimates hearing you said that the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games meant a 10-year pipeline of construction industry jobs, trade and investment opportunities and legacy projects that will benefit all Queenslanders for decades to come. It is now less than 10 years until the Olympic flame is lit. Why has the government not released a comprehensive list of additional projects it intends to build between now and 2032?

Dr MILES: The projects that will be included in the Olympic infrastructure program are subject to negotiation and agreement with the Commonwealth. We sought but were unable to conclude those negotiations with the previous government prior to the election. Understandably, the process of the election—caretaker, swearing in and all of that—has delayed those negotiations, although I am sure they will be much more fruitful with this government than they would have been with the previous one.

Mr McDONALD: My question is to the director-general. Page 2 of the SDS says that your department will progress the planning, validation, coordination and delivery of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Brisbane 2032 Master Plan and associated Olympics infrastructure. Can you please explain the delineation in responsibilities for that project?

Mr Kaiser: This department has responsibility for the delivery of venues and stadiums infrastructure and the development of the master plan for those across the entirety of the Olympics. In late 2021 the Olympics Infrastructure and Precincts Office was established in the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. That office liaises across state and federal departments, agencies and councils on the Olympics master plan. The precincts office will maintain and manage a register of master plan issues and opportunities as well as regularly report to the interim Olympics infrastructure board for strategic direction on these topics. Amendments to the master plan and associated master list of sites will need International Olympic Committee approval, typically through engagement with the organising committee for the Olympic Games and agreement of the relevant international federation and games partners.

Mr McDONALD: With the challenges faced with coordinating planning approaches across South-East Queensland among different government departments, how will the director-general and this office be able to hold to account different government departments in the coordination, validation and delivery of the master plan?

Mr Kaiser: In the usual way. We have responsibility for the master plan and the delivery of that infrastructure. Obviously we will not do that alone. We will work with other parts of the department, like EDQ for master planning of certain precincts, and others within the department and across government. Accountability will be dealt with through the governing arrangements of the Olympics.

Mr McDONALD: With projects being delivered for the Olympic Games subject to best practice industry conditions, what will be the additional cost to taxpayers?

Mr Kaiser: Everything we do in terms of infrastructure delivery for the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be subject to government policy.

Mr HART: At 50 per cent more.

Dr MILES: For good jobs.

Mr McDONALD: It has been recognised that best practice conditions have attracted additional costs of 30 per cent. Is that what taxpayers can be expected to pay?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair: is this asking for an opinion or hypothetical?

CHAIR: The answer to your point of order is that I am unsure. Can you repeat the question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Chair: the best practice industry principles are actually government policy and the director-general has said that they are going to be subject to government policy. They do increase costs so we are after the costs of the—

Dr MILES: They deliver good, secure jobs is what they do.

CHAIR: I was talking to the member for Lockyer. You are talking about best practice principles. Do you want to explain a bit further how that relates to your question?

Mr McDONALD: Can the director-general quantify the additional cost due to the implementation of government policy and best practice industry conditions?

Mr Kaiser: We are obviously required to deliver this infrastructure in accordance with government policy. The Buy Queensland procurement policy, for example, includes best practice principles. It demonstrates the government's commitment to supporting our local workforce and businesses and adopting high standards in doing so. The best practice industry conditions provide a system by which we can deliver on our commitment and policy to ensure safe, quality, well-paid jobs for tradespeople and labourers. In setting the conditions under the best practice industry conditions the government is guided by private sector enterprise agreements signed by employers and unions and ratified by the federal Fair Work Commission.

Mr HART: Just a grubby deal with the unions is what it is.

CHAIR: Cease your interjections, member for Burleigh.

Mr Kaiser: The government, as a matter of policy, will continue to work tirelessly to improve and leverage our purchasing power through the Buy Queensland approach to support more local and quality jobs across Queensland.

Dr MILES: The LNP just does not believe—

Mr HART: It is just a grubby deal with the unions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier, please do not interject across the table. Are there any further questions?

Mr McDONALD: Yes, Chair.

CHAIR: You can ask one more and then we cross to government questions.

Dr MILES: They are back to last year's questions.

Mr McDONALD: Deputy Premier, on 28 April, in a press conference at Visy, you said that you had seen a close to the final version of the new South Bank master plan and that it would be released in the next couple of months. Three months later, where is it?

Dr MILES: I welcome the deputy chair's interest in the South Bank master plan. It has been subject to consultation for some time. It will be released for publication very soon. I undertake to alert the deputy chair on its release so that he can see all of the great drawings and he can let me know what he thinks.

Mr McDONALD: This is another delay by the government, is it not?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair: is that a question or an interjection?

CHAIR: Stop, please. Can you rephrase that question?

Mr McDONALD: No, Chair—

Dr MILES: I have noted the eagerness of the deputy chair to see the master plan. I will get it out as quickly as I can.

CHAIR: We will now go to government questions.

Mr SMITH: I refer to page 8 of the SDS. Deputy Premier, could you please provide an outline of an example of how planning is helping to develop better services and a great lifestyle to Queenslanders?

Dr MILES: Queensland's planning framework provides indispensable tools to cater for surges in population growth such as we are seeing across South-East Queensland with new infrastructure to meet the needs of the community. It allows the timely delivery of community infrastructure like schools, police stations and hospitals. It means better access to quality services like health care and education through the delivery of new infrastructure which enhances the livability of our local communities.

That is why I am pleased to advise today that I have approved the ministerial infrastructure designation for the Toowoomba Hospital. The approval of the ministerial infrastructure designation will enable works to begin. The Palaszczuk government will invest \$1.3 billion to build a new hospital in Toowoomba which is proposed to include a new day surgery building, a new acute hospital building and a new multistorey car park. Importantly, there will also be a new acute mental health building to service the needs of the region. Toowoomba and the Darling Downs is a wonderfully diverse and high-growth region and it is important to ensure that the community has the best health care available. That is why I am so proud that the Palaszczuk government is investing in this fantastic facility which will serve the growing community for decades to come.

It is all part of our historic Queensland Health and Hospitals Plan delivered under the 2022-23 budget. The plan includes \$9.785 billion for 2,220 extra beds across 15 hospitals plus 289 beds across existing facilities fast-tracked over the next 24 months. That is 2,509 extra beds across Queensland over the next six years. This is in addition to the 869 beds being delivered through current expansion projects and builds on the 350 additional beds the Palaszczuk government has opened across the state since 2015.

Our planning tools provide strong support for the delivery of the plan by enabling us to fast-track and provide new and expanded healthcare facilities across Queensland. The Queensland Health and Hospitals Plan is about putting the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders first. We did that from day one of the pandemic and we are continuing to do it now as the whole country faces challenges delivering health care to a growing population.

The Palaszczuk government is absolutely committed to making great services, especially health care, available across Queensland. That is exactly what the new Baillie Henderson Hospital will deliver for Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. This is a fantastic outcome for the community. I am very much looking forward to seeing the works when they are completed.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the Deputy Premier. With reference to the better planning for Queensland service area identified on page 8 of the Services Delivery Statements, can the Deputy Premier explain what work is underway to accommodate South-East Queensland's population growing in the existing urban footprint?

Dr MILES: Good planning is part of the solution to improving housing affordability and boosting the quality of life in our growing cities and regions. Planning has a role in identifying enough land and redevelopment opportunities in the right places. Planning can also resolve development constraints and create conditions that bring forward housing investment by ensuring the right infrastructure is in the right place at the right time.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to a long-term sustainable pattern of development where Queenslanders have access to good jobs, better services and a great lifestyle. Through the South East Queensland Regional Plan we are encouraging growth within the current urban footprint. This means housing where people can take advantage of existing infrastructure which ensures easier, more affordable access to services. This also means people can live closer to their jobs, decreasing commute times and encouraging healthier, happier Queenslanders.

To ensure that a realistic supply of land for housing is available in the urban footprint to meet growth assumptions to 2041, it is necessary to ensure land identified for urban purposes is capable of being delivered as supply. My department has worked closely with South-East Queensland local governments, industry representatives and utility providers to identify and investigate constraints that are impeding the timely development of longstanding, under-utilised areas of the regional plan's urban footprint. I am aware that there are some areas in ShapingSEQ's urban footprint that are considered under-utilised due to issues such as fragmentation, infrastructure planning and delivery.

A constrained urban footprint can put upward pressure on land costs. That is why we want to investigate these areas to identify why they have not been identified for urban purposes and identify potential responses. Unlocking the under-utilised urban footprint is a key focus of the Palaszczuk government's housing supply efforts. That is why I have asked my department to fast-track detailed evaluations of all under-utilised urban footprint areas in ShapingSEQ to find potential projects where the state could expand its involvement to unlock land and housing. It is anticipated that the outcomes from this work will also inform the future review of ShapingSEQ.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, can you advise the committee what the capital spend in 2020-21 and 2021-22 was? How is the government managing the impacts of the supply chain and workforce shortages on infrastructure projects?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question. It is a very good one. It also provides me an opportunity to talk about the Palaszczuk government's record capital spend. The Palaszczuk government is committed to creating good jobs, delivering more services and protecting our world-class lifestyle. We cannot do that without delivering additional infrastructure, whether that is the schools of the future, our satellite hospitals or state-building infrastructure projects that benefit Queenslanders across the state.

The last few years have been characterised by unprecedented disruption on a global scale. In Australia we have seen bushfires and floods place significant pressure on our supply chains and our ability to get resources where they need to be. Of course, the global pandemic has created workforce shortages at home and abroad which have placed even more pressure on our supply chains. This is not a Queensland-only problem. It is not even an Australian problem. It is a global problem.

The delivery of both public and private infrastructure projects in Queensland has been adversely impacted by natural disasters such as the flood event in February, global and national supply chain disruptions, shortages in the supply of labour and building materials, and the rising costs of energy, construction materials and labour. Despite all of these challenges, I am pleased to advise the committee today that in this year's budget the Palaszczuk government has delivered a record capital budget of \$59.126 billion—well above the Newman government's three budgets. In fact, they drove down their last two budgets below \$43 billion, and they would have kept going if they had been allowed to. They boasted about having a small capital spend.

I have been advised that in 2021-22 we were able to deliver 95.7 per cent of the allocated funding, with \$14.05 billion spent—just \$634 million below what was allocated. In 2020-21 this figure was 93.4 per cent, or \$13.863 billion spent, despite significant disruptions from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic including lockdowns in Queensland and globally as well as the global supply chain grinding to a halt.

This means that over the past two years on average 96 per cent of the budgeted capital program has been delivered. This is nearly \$52 billion worth of infrastructure delivered for Queenslanders. That compares very favourably to the LNP's record when in government. The Newman government never once delivered on its capital budget commitments, leaving underspends close to or over \$2 billion every single year they were in government—and they did not have a global pandemic interrupting supply chains. That is the LNP's record in government when it comes to capital expenditure—that and the fact that the only thing they built was a monument to their own arrogance, 1 William Street. While they sacked workers, cut services and slashed infrastructure investment, they carried on with the 'tower of power'.

In contrast, the Palaszczuk government through this budget is providing infrastructure and services not just to meet the needs of the 5.2 million Queenslanders already living here but also for our future Queenslanders. Through this infrastructure program we are creating more good, secure jobs. We are delivering even better services right across Queensland and we are protecting and enhancing our Queensland lifestyle as we grow.

CHAIR: I will go to a couple of questions from the opposition and then to a question to wrap up from the Greens.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, the SDS talks about the livability of Queensland. The answer to the question on notice in terms of lot release shows that in the most growing areas of population in Queensland we have only three years of land supply available. Does this show, Deputy Premier, that you have completely failed the people of Queensland in delivering lots and dealing with the housing crisis that we are suffering at the moment?

Mr SMITH: Chair, imputation.

CHAIR: Member, I do not agree with how you have cast that question. I am going to let that go through to the Deputy Premier. He can answer that as he sees fit.

Dr MILES: The Land Supply and Development Monitoring Report shows that the broader SEQ region has at least 15 years of long-term planned residential land supply. However, it did highlight that some local governments have fallen below the minimum four years required for short-term land supply. These local governments include Brisbane at three years; Gold Coast at 2.1 years; Sunshine Coast at 3.2 years; Noosa at 0.6 years; and Moreton Bay, closer to the four-year target, at 3.7 years.

We undertook a peer review of the Land Supply and Development Monitoring Report in response to feedback from industry. That has highlighted a number of actions that we can take to ensure the report is useful and accurate. It tended to highlight challenges in the medium term rather than in those three- to four-year time frames. Clearly we need to continue to work with local governments to assist and support them to increase supply. We will continue to do that bilaterally through the SEQ regional planning committee, through the review of the regional plan. A lot of this comes down to the ability of local government to get lots approved, and we want to work with them to help them do that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, question on notice No. 2 talks about a business case being undertaken for Beerwah East. Why is the department not undertaking a business case for Halls Creek, which is on the other side, as part of the Stockland Aura development? It is cleared land. I went there the other day. It looks ready to go. Lots could be developed there.

Mr Kaiser: I am not certain, member. Perhaps I can take that as a suggestion and we can investigate Halls Creek for you.

Mr BLEIJIE: There is Beerwah East, which the department is conducting a business case for. I was surprised because on the other side of the highway you have Halls Creek. So the department currently is not undertaking a business case for that land?

Mr Kaiser: I might, if the chair is willing, get the State Planner to address that question.

Mr Aston: We are undertaking a business case for Beerwah East as a potential future growth area for the Sunshine Coast. We are also investigating the northern interurban break, which includes the Halls Creek area you mentioned before. As part of that we are investigating how much of it needs to be conservation zone and how much development capacity will be needed for the South-East Queensland region, particularly in the Sunshine Coast area.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Aston, is it the case at the moment that where the Halls Creek development is located—I went there the other day. It looks like cleared former farm land. You mentioned the interurban break. That Halls Creek area does not fall in the current interurban break, does it?

Mr Aston: Part of the work we are doing in the department is to define the boundary of the northern interurban break. There are differing views among stakeholders about where that should be.

Mr BLEIJIE: There is an interurban break at the moment, though.

Mr Aston: There is, but the boundary is not statutory defined.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is Mayor Jamieson pushing to have the interurban break extended?

CHAIR: You are asking for an opinion on that. Do you want to recast that question?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is not an opinion because I know he is. I am asking as a stakeholder.

Mr SMITH: You don't need to ask the question, then.

CHAIR: Quiet, please. The director-general has to refer that question to an adviser. Did you have a quick follow-up to that?

Mr BLEIJIE: No. I have one question to the Deputy Premier though, Chair.

CHAIR: Very quickly before we move on.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is the government going to build the long-awaited Sunshine Coast rail in the CAMCOS corridor from Caloundra to Beerwah to Kawana to Maroochydore?

CHAIR: Could the Deputy Premier clarify if that is under your jurisdiction?

Dr MILES: It is primarily under Transport and Main Roads.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is pretty big for the Olympics, though.

Dr MILES: It certainly will be involved in the planning of transport projects for the Sunshine Coast, but the specific business case work and planning work will be undertaken by TMR.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is it on the Olympic infrastructure list that you are proceeding with?

Dr MILES: As I outlined, that list is subject to ongoing negotiations with the Commonwealth.

Mr BLEIJIE: But that list is going to be provided soon by your director-general, who said he would get the details before the end of the session. We asked for the full infrastructure list.

CHAIR: We are attempting to do that. We could probably go straight to that now, if you want.

Dr MILES: I think that undertaking was in relation to venues rather than transport projects.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, it was infrastructure. It was all infrastructure.

Dr MILES: They are not finalised yet.

CHAIR: Director-General, can you provide an answer to the question that was asked earlier in the session about the list of projects?

Mr Kaiser: As the Deputy Premier has just mentioned, it is still in a phase of negotiation with the Commonwealth.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, my question at the start was that there were projects put forward by the state to the federal government for the Olympics. That exists. That is what I asked for—the projects that were in the list that went to the federal government by this state government. They have it. It exists, so where is it? Surely someone has the list.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, the answer the Deputy Premier has given is that the list is currently under negotiation. I am not sure how he can move ahead with this answer. We have an answer. That is the answer you are able to get at this stage.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is the Deputy Premier saying that a list was not provided to the former federal government for Olympic infrastructure?

Dr MILES: No. What I am saying is that—

Mr BLEIJIE: So there was a list. Where is it?

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, can you help furnish an answer?

Dr MILES: There were proposed projects incorporated into the budget that were provided to the previous federal government; however, the final list will be subject to the negotiation of an intergovernmental agreement. Those negotiations, as I have said, are ongoing. They will set out joint governance and funding arrangements as well as which projects will be funded.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I did not ask about the future. A proposal was put forward. That is the one I want.

CHAIR: I understand what you asked for. We have an answer from the director-general and the Deputy Premier. I am not sure how you are going to be satisfied with the answer we have, but I think they have furnished an answer as best they can at the moment.

Mr McDONALD: Mr Chair, earlier the director-general said he might be able to get it before the end of the meeting. If he cannot get it then perhaps the Deputy Premier could take it on notice.

Dr MILES: The detail will not be able to be provided until that IGA is negotiated.

Mr BLEIJIE: But there was a letter that you wrote. Surely you have it.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we understand exactly. You have asked this question a couple of times. We have the answer. There is a list currently under negotiation.

Mr BLEIJIE: I do not want to know about—

Dr MILES: Once it is agreed you will know about it.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chair. My question was not about what is going to be agreed to. My question was the state government put forward a list of proposed infrastructure to the federal government. That is the list I am seeking for this committee. We were told that the DG would provide that list today.

CHAIR: He would try to provide that today.

Mr BLEIJIE: What is the secrecy, Mr Chair? Why is it secret?

Mr SMITH: Mr Chair, I know that the member for Kawana is a big Elvis fan, but maybe he can take some advice from Mick Jagger and understand that he can't always get what he wants.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect, I take estimates very seriously, member for Bundaberg, and I asked a legitimate question about—

Mr SMITH: As I do too.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, you do not.

Mr SMITH: As public servants do. The same public servants that you tried to sack time and time again.

Mr BLEIJIE: You're a joker.

Mr SMITH: Just like you would with nurses.

CHAIR: Please stop interjecting!

Mr BLEIJIE: He's a joker.

Mr SMITH: Just like you would—

CHAIR: Please stop interjecting!

Mr BLEIJIE: Billions of dollars of infrastructure—

CHAIR: One moment, please; I am talking! Member for Bundaberg, that was inventive but you will have to withdraw.

Mr SMITH: I withdraw.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you have the answer to the question you were seeking before.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I do not. The witness is hostile—

CHAIR: I was about to say it is perhaps not the answer—

Mr BLEIJIE: The witness is hostile.

CHAIR: I was going to say you can't get any satisfaction from it, but I will not. You will perhaps not be happy with that answer. I cannot see a way forward on that. The Deputy Premier has said that it is under negotiation. We will not be taking that any further. We will not take that question on notice.

Mr McDONALD: What are we here for?

Mr BLEIJIE: Cover-up. Secrecy.

Mr SMITH: That is a reflection on the chair.

CHAIR: Yes, it is.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am saying he is a cover-up. I am saying he is joker.

CHAIR: No, let's not go down that path. We were doing so well right up until this moment.

Mr BERKMAN: Mr Chair, I have one question. I am aware that the member for Traeger has a further question if time permits. My question is to the minister. We have seen again this year the devastating impacts of inappropriate historical development in flood-prone areas in Brisbane and across Queensland. It is clear that these impacts and costs will only increase over time as the climate

crisis worsens. Putting aside the flood resilience funding and potential buybacks you mentioned in your earlier comments, my question is what steps is the government taking to prohibit development on known flood-affected land to protect Queenslanders from future floods?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Maiwar for the question. You have touched on what is clearly one element of the response to ensuring places do not flood again, particularly the buyback program but also the raising and retrofitting. After the floods I organised a regional planning committee flood workshop with all of the South-East Queensland mayors to explain how we can better build resilience into the planning framework. The range of options includes better and better utilisation of flood mapping, making sure it is more freely available, and changes to compensation provisions which are sometimes identified as a barrier to down-zoning for councils. There are a range of initiatives and learnings that have come out of that workshop and the feedback we have had since as well as the flood experience itself. I look forward to more advice from the state planner about what other initiatives we should build in to assist councils to make sure they are not approving inappropriate developments in locations where they are likely to flood.

CHAIR: The time for this session has expired.

Mr McDONALD: Mr Chair, just before you close, the issues we were talking about before that were to be taken on notice?

CHAIR: We have further information on the history of land lots approved, that question was from the member for Burleigh, and the answer to the question of the list of infrastructure projects has been answered. We traversed that particular question quite extensively.

Mr McDONALD: Mr Chair, on that point, whether it be the Warrego Highway or the Bruce Highway or highways up on the Sunshine Coast, this is the committee's inquiry and I think it is a valid thing. Even though there might be some more work to be done on it, the Deputy Premier could take that on notice and get back to us in relation to a very vital part of the Olympic journey.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Mr Chair. The original question by the member for Kawana was directed to the director-general. I believe it is only the Deputy Premier who can take questions on notice.

Mr McDONALD: That is what I just asked.

Mr SMITH: That is a separate question to what was asked earlier.

Mr BLEIJIE: Wake up, mate.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana! Deputy Chair, as I said, the answer that the Deputy Premier and DG provided has been provided a couple of times. You may like not like that answer, but you may need to deal with it in your dissenting report at the end.

Mr HART: You do not want to disclose it, Mr Chair, because the new government is going have a different deal with them. They are going to make a different deal with the new government.

Mr McDONALD: Mr Chair, that is you answering the question. I think it is up to the Deputy Premier whether he takes it on notice or not.

CHAIR: No, I am phrasing where we have arrived at to this point.

Mr McDONALD: It is up to the Deputy Premier to decide whether he is going to take it on notice or not.

CHAIR: I believe he has indicated that—

Mr McDONALD: He has not said no.

Mr HART: He did say he would.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chair, we have gone past the time. You were about to close the session.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think you can hold morning tea for a bit, mate.

Mr SMITH: We have strict timelines so we do not—

Mr HART: Let's get out of here before you have to answer any questions.

CHAIR: The issue has been dealt with as far as I can see.

Mr BLEIJIE: He has to run off to his scones.

CHAIR: We will move on. I do not know what you said, but I did not hear it.

Mr BLEIJIE: I said he had to run off to his scones. He is more concerned about morning tea than answering questions.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Mr Chair. I take personal offence and I ask the member for Kawana to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: Sorry. Carrot cake, whatever you want.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, that is really unbecoming.

Mr SMITH: This is the maturity of the LNP leadership: Crisafulli one day, Jarrod Bleijie the next.

CHAIR: You are not helping either, member for Bundaberg.

Mr BLEIJIE: Who are you, mate?

Mr SMITH: Immature.

CHAIR: Order! Order!


Dr MILES: Give him a chance to debrief with his acting coach over morning tea and he can come back fresh for the last session.

Mr BLEIJIE: Why don't you answer the question?

Mr SMITH: He might have sacked his acting coach.

CHAIR: That concludes the committee's examination of estimates for the infrastructure and planning portfolio areas. We have that question on notice from the member for Burleigh. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and resume at 11.30 am.

Proceedings suspended from 11.18 am to 11.32 am.

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now consider the local government area of the portfolio. I note we have been joined by the members for Warrego and Scenic Rim, who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions. Deputy Premier, you do not need to make an opening statement so we will go straight to questions.

Ms LEAHY: My first question is to the Deputy Premier. The member for Ipswich raised in parliament two years ago the 'dodgy' planning deals, the misuse of taxpayer funds and facilities—

CHAIR: Stop. You can start your question again without the preamble.

Mr SMITH: Without the emotive terms.

Mr HART: It was one sentence, Chair. It was in parliament.

CHAIR: Member for Warrego, please recast your question.

Mr McDONALD: It is a quote. It is in *Hansard*.

CHAIR: Thank you. I have given some instructions.

Ms LEAHY: My first question is to the Deputy Premier. The member for Ipswich raised in parliament the misuse of taxpayer funds and facilities by Ipswich councillor Paul Tully. Why has the government ignored the warnings of their own members regarding this councillor?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Warrego for her question. I understand it relates to recent media reporting of a trip members of the Ipswich City Council took in 2012. I would first note that I was not the local government minister in 2012. The now Leader of the Opposition and member for Broadwater—he was not the member for Broadwater then—was the local government minister when that trip occurred. I would also suggest that the now member for Broadwater would be well aware of how those councillors behaved on those trips, given he went to Taiwan with Mr Pisasale. I table a holiday snap of their trip to Taiwan between the now member for Broadwater and Mr Pisasale.

CHAIR: We will examine that.

Dr MILES: I think some of your questions about that trip would best be directed to the man who was the local government minister when it occurred.

Ms LEAHY: Your backbencher raised the issue in 2020.

Dr MILES: You were in government and your leader was the minister.

Ms LEAHY: Your backbencher raised it in 2020.

Dr MILES: Your leader was the minister.

Mr HART: It has only become apparent recently.

Dr MILES: You went away with him too. Ask him about that trip.

CHAIR: Order, members. Member for Warrego, you have asked the question. Can I suggest it is going to be hard to tie this to the Appropriation Bill. If you want to continue this line, I suggest you look at how you actually do that. Do you have a further question?

Ms LEAHY: I do. I refer to SDS page 6 at dot point 5, 'build their integrity'. My question is to the director-general. Has the director-general received as part of his incoming brief in April this year information on Councillor Tully's overseas travel expenses and associated blocked RTI requests?

Mr Kaiser: No, I did not.

Ms LEAHY: With reference to the recent revelations regarding Councillor Tully, can the director-general advise how he intends to provide objective advice to the Deputy Premier, given the director-general and Councillor Tully were both involved in the Shepherdson inquiry investigation into electoral fraud?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Warrego, I cautioned you about applying this to expenditure. You are way out of line on that. Can I suggest you recast—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair. The shadow minister referred to page 6 at the start of her preamble.

CHAIR: She did, and I listened to the rest of the question as well, and the question part was very wide-ranging. Member for Warrego, ask your question where it conforms to standing orders, especially 112. There was a point of order from the member for Bundaberg.

Mr SMITH: Chair, I am happy with that.

CHAIR: I dealt with that point of order.

Mr HART: Point of order, Chair. The minister has oversight of the Office of the Independent Assessor. This falls into that realm so the member is completely entitled to ask these sorts of questions about integrity in local government.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, I am not sure what your point of order is.

Mr HART: It is about local government and integrity and recently highlighted issues in the media.

CHAIR: I am still not clear where you are going with this point of order on that.

Mr HART: The minister has carriage of the Office of the Independent Assessor, who delves into this.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Mr HART: That is the coverage.

CHAIR: Member for Bundaberg, what is your point of order?

Mr SMITH: My point of order is the question to the director-general and its imputation in there as to his character. I think that is outrageous.

CHAIR: I would have said 112 on that, so I understand your point of order. Member for Warrego, I have asked you to recast that question.

Ms LEAHY: In relation to the SDS, there is a dot point that says 'supports local governments to build their integrity, governance and financial sustainability'. Can the director-general advise how he intends to provide objective advice, given the involvement—

CHAIR: Wait. You just asked your question. That is all you need.

Mr Kaiser: There is nothing in this circumstance that would prevent me from providing impartial advice to the Deputy Premier should he request it.

Ms LEAHY: Deputy Premier, other mayors and councillors have been charged with misconduct by the Office of the Independent Assessor for breaches of conduct and trust. Will the Deputy Premier be referring Councillor Tully to the Office of the Independent Assessor following the recent revelations?

CHAIR: One moment. Member for Warrego, you are not charged with anything when you go to the Independent Assessor. You are going to have to recast that question. The Office of the Independent Assessor and the CCT deal with issues of behaviour.

Mr HART: That was not the question, Chair.

CHAIR: Please recast your question in a way that does not contain arguments or inferences.

Ms LEAHY: Other mayors and councillors have been referred for misconduct to the Office of the Independent Assessor for breaches of conduct and trust. Will the Deputy Premier be referring Councillor Tully to the Office of the Independent Assessor following the recent revelations?

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, answer that as you see fit.

Dr MILES: My understanding is that this was subject to an investigation by the CCC who determined that further action was not required. Where the CCC investigates these matters, that would only then be further investigated by the OIA if the CCC referred it back to them which, in my understanding, they did not do. Let me make this point, though: in part, based on information regarding those trips, Councillor Tully was sacked, and that was one of the matters taken into account when he was sacked. So, the matters were investigated by the CCC. This matter was taken into account when there was a recommendation that he be dismissed. The matter of the documents that have now been released and the applicability of the RTI Act was all determined by the Information Commissioner. Given how forthright the LNP have been in defending the Information Commissioner and demanding they be even more independent, I am surprised to see them continuing to question the decisions made by the Information Commissioner.

Ms LEAHY: My next question is to the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, Mr Brendan Moon.

CHAIR: Can I clarify, Mr Moon, that the QRA does fall under this section of local government portfolio?

Mr Moon: It does.

Ms LEAHY: To your knowledge, how many flood mitigation levee banks have been built to protect Queensland homes or businesses in the last seven years?

Mr Moon: There are a number of levee banks throughout Queensland protecting towns. To my knowledge, there has been one levee bank that has been built in Queensland since then, which was the Roma levee bank. Other levee banks have certainly figured in some of the funding programs that have been funded under the resilience and mitigation funds for maintenance and upgrade of those levees.

Ms LEAHY: I think it may have been the drainage portion that was the last portion of the Roma one. I have a second question: in relation to the Resilient Homes Fund, open for registrations 76 days ago for home buybacks, how many homes have been bought back to date?

Mr Moon: The Resilient Homes Fund is the largest retrofit house-raising and buyback program to manage flood risk in Australia. Three levels of government have been working since that program was approved—commonwealth, local and state agencies. We have also been working very closely with the insurance industry, the building industry, architects and also flood risk managers. There are three elements to the program: there is the retrofit and there is the uplift in the house. This is being managed by the Department of Energy and Public Works. QRA are managing the buyback portion, along with local governments, as part of that program.

There are 4,200 registrations of interest at this point in time. Four hundred and thirty-seven properties have identified they wish to be part of the buyback, but also importantly, 667 property owners are unsure about the next way forward, and that is why we are working with Energy and Public Works to determine the best outcome for them. Home assessments have already been undertaken by Energy and Public Works, and also 3,100 floor-level inspections have commenced. This is to understand where the water came in during the last event, but also to give us an idea of where it may go in the next event because this will inform the best option for a home owner, whether it is a retrofit, whether it is a house raise or whether it qualifies as a buyback.

Seventy per cent of those 437 residents who have registered for home buyback reside in Ipswich and Brisbane. We are working with Brisbane City Council now for them to administer that part of the program in their local government area. We have identified with Brisbane City Council the most at-risk properties in there and they will be contacted over the coming weeks. In Ipswich, we have already contacted 31 of the most damaged and also the most at-risk homes in the Goodna area. In the next three weeks, this will drive the property valuation process, but at all stages through this program, additional support will be provided to those home owners who are unsure about what the next step for them is.

Ms LEAHY: To clarify, none have been bought back to date; there are no homes purchased by the QRA?

Mr Moon: That is correct. I understand there is a tension between money out the door and getting the best outcome here. By way of an example, if I may share some of our interaction with some of those home owners, Chair, back in May when we visited some of those most impacted residents who had lived in some of those streets in Goodna for decades, there was no interest in being a part of the

buyback program and selling their homes. Recently, we were out there inspecting those homes for the second time since the floods, and those same home owners, in severely flooded homes, have indicated they now wish to be part of this process. We are very focused on getting the settings right so we can take into account people's attitudes which may have changed since the event, but also as we get a better understanding of what the flood risk for those homes look like.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, question on notice No. 5 shows that the Works for Queensland program has been cut to \$20 million in 2023-24. Given this cut, is the director-general aware of any council projects that will be cancelled or left unfinished due to this funding reduction?

CHAIR: Director-General, feel free to answer that in any way you want to.

Mr Kaiser: I am not aware off the top of my head. I am checking to see whether or not there is any information that we have which might help the member.

CHAIR: Do you want to furnish more information, member for Warrego?

Ms LEAHY: It is in the answer to question on notice.

Dr MILES: I can answer it.

CHAIR: The Deputy Premier has some answers. This time will come off ours. Deputy Premier, did you want to help out?

Dr MILES: If the member for Warrego is happy for me to address it.

Ms LEAHY: I am happy for you to address it.

Dr MILES: The claim from the LNP that this represents a cut to program shows a fundamental inability to read the budget papers. The latest round of Works for Queensland has been distributed over three years from 2021 to 2024. This round will deliver a further \$200 million to councils, and there will be another round of the program in 2024. The shaping of the expenditure of those grants over that period is based on when councils expect to expend those grants, and that is what is included in the forward estimates. As projects change, those forward estimates will change, but the \$200 million is allocated over the years 2021 to 2024. I would simply note that the LNP, in their opposition to this program, would have effectively cut the whole program.

Ms LEAHY: I have a further question to the Deputy Premier. To assist you, Mr Chair, because I know we do not see too much of the TV. Deputy Premier, I refer to the boundary review between Rockhampton and Livingstone councils. The Deputy Premier is quoted on 7News Rockhampton saying—

Before any boundary change could be made, the proposal would need to show that it had the support of the community, the support of the local governments involved and that both would remain financially sustainable.

Given the Livingstone Shire Council have withdrawn any form of support from this proposal, will the Deputy Premier keep his word and rule out proceeding with this boundary review?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Warrego for her question. The government's approach has been that in order to commence a boundary review process both local governments would need to be supportive of that. At the time we commenced the process both local governments were supportive of that. Now I understand the personnel in both cases, the mayors in both cases, have changed and one of the councils has changed their position. However, the process had commenced and the process is proceeding. It is at the stage of directly consulting with the communities affected and that will continue. I will then receive advice from the Local Government Change Commission regarding the change. I would simply note that this entire situation only exists because of the deamalgamation that was overseen by the then local government minister—

Ms LEAHY: What about the former minister who referred it? He did not have to refer it.

CHAIR: Cease your interjections.

Dr MILES:—who allowed a deamalgamation, leaving both councils unsustainable.

Ms LEAHY: The former minister, your predecessor, referred it.

Dr MILES: Your leader allowed the demerger. Your leader picked this boundary.

Ms LEAHY: Your predecessor referred it.

Dr MILES: Your leader picked this boundary.

CHAIR: Will both members cease their interjections. There is a point of order from the deputy chair.

Mr McDONALD: It has been dealt with now.

CHAIR: One more question.

Mr HART: Deputy Premier, Gold Coast City Plan major update 2 and 3 was submitted to the minister in December 2021 for approval. Since then the council has been advised the decision had been paused three times. Can the minister advise when the Gold Coast City Plan will be approved and whether the minister intends to seek to vary the plan before approval?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Burleigh for his question. The major amendments to the Gold Coast planning scheme that have been proposed by council are incredibly large and complex. The planners in my department do not call it an amendment; they call it a mega-amendment. It includes a number of changes to policy about the design and density of residential development in certain localities. The proposed amendment has been subject to a protracted consultation process involving four rounds of public consultation, of which three rounds were for separate packages of significantly different changes.

My department is undertaking a thorough and comprehensive assessment to ensure that the proposed amendment meets all the requirements and that there are no unintended consequences. Given the size and nature of the proposed amendment, this work is still underway. Departmental officers are working quite productively through the issues with council officers.

CHAIR: We will go to questions from government members.

Mr MADDEN: Deputy Premier, referencing page 28 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you provide an update on the recovery from the southern Queensland flooding earlier this year that severely affected my city of Ipswich?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Ipswich West and note how devastating it was in parts of Ipswich. As the most disaster affected state in the nation, Queenslanders are renowned for our grit, determination and resilience, and this year we endured Queensland's worst disaster season since 2011. Queenslanders experienced the full might of the rain bomb as Wivenhoe held back four Sydney Harbours worth of water, or 2.2 million megalitres, during the recent floods.

An independent Deloitte report into this year's South-East Queensland floods, which I am happy to table today, estimates that more than 500,000 people were affected by the floods in some way, with an estimated health and social cost of \$4.5 billion. The same report has revealed an estimated total cost of \$7.7 billion to Queenslanders. Recovery from an extraordinary disaster such as this one is a long process, but we will stand shoulder to shoulder with Queenslanders every step of the way.

Since it was established in 2011, QRA has responded to 97 natural disaster events and has managed a recovery and reconstruction program in excess of \$21 billion. After this recent flooding, QRA has been working hard to develop an ambitious recovery and resilience plan that is funded by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments. As at 1 July 2022, more than \$30.84 million in financial assistance had already been provided to impacted Queensland residents, benefiting more than 106,200 people affected by the severe weather and flooding across South-East Queensland. We also secured more than \$2 billion in extraordinary assistance packages jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements to provide support to communities in need.

Grants are available to primary producers, small businesses, not-for-profit organisations and sporting and community clubs to help flood-affected communities get back on their feet. To date 3,817 grants, valued at more than \$55.95 million, have been approved to assist primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profit agencies as well as more than \$3.84 million in low-interest loans to assist primary producers and small businesses.

Critical to ensuring that Queenslanders are protected from future floods is the \$741 million Resilient Homes Fund, the largest home resilience program of its kind to ever be delivered in Australia. While we cannot stop floods from occurring, we can take steps to reduce their impact by giving homeowners the choice to rebuild to a more resilient standard, raise their home or have their home bought back if they are at high risk.

As of 26 July there have been more than 4,200 registrations of interest in the program. This includes 1,257 people registering their interest in house raising and 1,501 in retrofitting. That is why we fought so hard to ensure we could provide as much support to as many flood-affected Queenslanders as possible. Following our significant advocacy, the Commonwealth government agreed to match Queensland's \$370 million commitment to deliver the full extent of the package.

I can also report that we have just finalised reassessments on the initial damage assessments conducted in the direct aftermath of the flooding. From these 8,600 reassessments we know that people are getting back into their homes, with almost 3,400, or 40 per cent, no longer showing signs of damage. About one-third of properties that required repairs have also had repair works commence. This is an encouraging sign of recovery, but we still have a lot of work to do.

More than 1,300 properties were assessed as still having severe levels of damage, more than 1,900 with moderate damage and more than 1,900 with minor levels of damage. That is where our Resilient Homes Fund kicks in. The Department of Energy and Public Works is now busy conducting home assessments and providing rebuilding options to flood-affected homeowners. Insurers are also doing their bit, incorporating the Resilient Homes Fund into the insurance claim process.

Our work does not stop there. We have also secured significant funds to help the broad range of sectors that were affected by the disaster. We have \$170 million for betterment funding to build essential public infrastructure to a more resilient standard; there is \$150 million for community and recreational assets including sport, council parks and national parks; \$177 million is going towards human and social support including accommodation support; \$200 million has been allocated to economic recovery including tourism recovery and business loans; while there is \$86.9 million for environmental recovery including riverine recovery and weed and pest management. These significant funding envelopes are focused on adaptation and resilience to help protect Queenslanders' homes and our great Queensland lifestyle.

CHAIR: I reference page 28 of the Service Delivery Statements and the Resilient Homes Fund. I know there have been assessors on the ground in Major Street and McGahey Street in my area. Can you give an update on the Resilient Homes Fund and how it will make southern Queensland homeowners more resilient to future flooding?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question, and he has referenced Major Street. That was the one place I visited that convinced me that we could not just raise and retrofit; we needed a plan to buy back homes that could not be raised as they are on slabs. Queensland holds the unenviable record as the most disaster impacted state in Queensland. We are in the midst of a significant recovery task after the recent flood emergency saw parts of the south-east suffer disaster damage not experienced since 2011. So many Queensland homes were inundated by floodwater, leaving behind a big clean-up job for communities and significant damage to homes. While we cannot stop floods from occurring, we can take steps to reduce their impact.

After the floodwater receded, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority got to work developing a resilient homes funding package that would make a real difference. Following significant advocacy, the Commonwealth agreed to match our \$370 million commitment. It will help Queensland homeowners who are devastated by floodwaters make their homes more resilient. It is the largest program of its kind ever in Australia. Eligible Queenslanders whose homes were damaged by flooding in the 2021-22 wet season will receive funding to repair and retrofit their home, raise their house or consider moving out of harm's way. Incorporating resilient building design can significantly reduce the effort, cost and time to return people to their homes following a flood.

This is a nation-leading program which will change people's lives by improving their resilience to future flooding or removing them from harm's way altogether. The Queensland government has worked closely with insurers and representatives from the building industry to create the best program for Queenslanders. Earlier this month we released flood resilient design guidelines to help Queenslanders understand options to improve their home's resilience to floods. As of 26 July, there have been more than 4,200 registrations of interest. This includes 437 people registering their interest in the voluntary buyback scheme. Once assessed, registrants will receive a home assessment report to assist in understanding the flood risks and resilience options available to them. Home owners can then decide on the option that best suits their individual needs. Registrations are still open, so I encourage people who have not registered to go to the Resilient Homes Fund website or call 13QGOV for more information.

In the case of the voluntary buyback scheme, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority will work with home owners and the relevant local council. The buyback program will see properties purchased where the home owners wish to sell and where repair, retrofitting or raising are determined not to be suitable. There has never been a program of this size and scale in Australia that has focused on increasing resilience in households. This is a program that will truly change the lives of people who have been affected by floods. We want to make sure we get it right in close consultation with industry. This is not just about building back; it is about building back better. The Palaszczuk government is committed to building safer, stronger and more resilient communities.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, just on that, Mr Moon, the CEO, referred to 4,200 homes that qualified for relift and uplift and then 437 for buyback. I thought the Deputy Premier might have actually given us a breakdown on that. I wonder if he could take a question on notice breaking down those areas per local government area. I had a look at the Deloitte report and it is not actually outlined in there.

CHAIR: We will come back to that. We will take one more question from government members and then we will go to the member for Traeger, so you will be able to ask that as a brief question in your session.

Mr SMITH: Deputy Premier, with reference to the local government service area identified on page 6 of the SDS, can you please outline what measures the government is taking to support the long-term financial sustainability of local governments and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. Queensland's local governments play a vital role in delivering community infrastructure which enhances the liveability of our communities while also supporting secure local jobs. The financial sustainability of local governments is crucial to this work. With the assistance of the Palaszczuk government, local governments across Queensland are recovering from the financial impacts of COVID-19 and they are building resilience to the financial impacts of natural disasters and global economic headwinds. I am pleased to advise that in the 2020-21 financial year the Queensland Audit Office reported that 35 councils generated an operating surplus, up from 21 councils in 2019-20. As a result, fewer councils are at a moderate or high risk of not being financially sustainable. What is more, the Auditor-General has advised that three previous high-risk councils have improved their financial sustainability risk ratings.

The Palaszczuk government is working to safeguard the continued financial sustainability of councils across Queensland through a variety of measures. With \$5 million in funding from the 2022 Queensland budget, my department will deliver a suite of local government sustainability initiatives over three years to enhance the sustainability and capability of the local government sector. The initiatives will focus on supporting Queensland councils to address capability, service delivery and financial challenges that are impacting the sector's long-term sustainability. In the past year, my department has been working in close consultation with councils on the development of a new sustainability framework. In Queensland the diversity of councils is very broad, with councils facing a range of individual circumstances and challenges depending on factors like their location, size and asset program. A one-size-fits-all approach to assessing financial sustainability is no longer appropriate. That is why the final sustainability framework has been proposed to include new financial sustainability ratios for councils, with the ratios to consider the different sizes, services and circumstances of the various local governments.

Following initial consultation, the local government department is now developing a draft sustainability guideline. Once implemented, it will support better, long-term planning from the state, provide a more informed basis for council decision-making and support improved outcomes for local communities. The draft sustainability guideline will be released shortly for council and stakeholder feedback. We are committed to supporting councils to be as sustainable as possible and it is a key focus of this government to continue to explore ways to support councils to improve their long-term position. We also have a suite of grant programs to support council sustainability, including the flagship \$1 billion Works for Queensland program. The Palaszczuk government's flagship investment program for local governments is supporting community infrastructure, local jobs and a great lifestyle in communities across Queensland. Through a combination of grant funding and programs focused on improving capability, the Palaszczuk government is improving the long-term financial sustainability of local governments.

CHAIR: Thank you. I will go to the member for Traeger for his question.

Mr KATTER: Thank you, Chair. With reference to the Weipa Town Authority, can the Deputy Premier please advise what efforts he has made and further intends to make to assist the quasi-local government organisation to achieve normalisation?

Dr MILES: I can advise the member that there are no active discussions regarding normalisation of the Weipa Town Authority. Obviously if the community or the authority or Rio Tinto wanted to commence those discussions, they could ask to meet with me.

Mr KATTER: Following on from that, given that Rio Tinto said it is winding up in eight years, has that triggered any response from the government in terms of urgency surrounding the future of that local authority given the high reliance it has on Rio Tinto right now?

Dr MILES: It has not at this stage, member for Traeger. Obviously it may over time. I am advised that the possible transition of Weipa to full local government status is complex and sensitive and requires consultation with a range of stakeholders, including traditional owners. Both Rio Tinto and the Queensland government agree that any changes must be sustainable and provide a clear benefit to the residents of Weipa in the long term. As I say, if any of those important stakeholders wanted to commence those discussions, I would be happy to.

Member for Traeger, on your question earlier about the impact of gas pricing on industry, given much of it rests outside my department, I was wondering whether I could coordinate a whole-of-government response for you—a letter where we can get feedback from industry, the resources department and others. Rather than really only answering from my department, if you are happy to take a letter, that would be good.

Mr KATTER: I am really appreciative to hear that because I think it is a big issue. Thank you.

Dr MILES: Yes; great.

CHAIR: Just before we go back to non-government members, we have three things to table. I cannot see anything that offends standing orders. Are members happy to table those?

Mr McDONALD: Chair, I am happy to table the first one you have there.

CHAIR: I bet you are!

Mr McDONALD: The one of the photo from an overseas trip has nothing to do with the committee process.

CHAIR: All right. We will discuss this in a meeting later, in that case. Such a lovely photo too! Deputy Chair, do you have any questions?

Mr McDONALD: Yes, certainly. I will hand over to the member for Warrego.

Ms LEAHY: Deputy Premier, will the government retain the current optional preferential voting system for the 2024 Brisbane City Council elections?

Dr MILES: I am not aware of any active discussions to change that system.

Ms LEAHY: The question is though will you retain the optional preferential voting system?

Dr MILES: I am not aware of any policy discussions to change it.

Ms LEAHY: I have a further question to the Deputy Premier. I refer to the Deputy Premier's media release last year regarding the councillor conflict of interest laws. Have any changes been made to the conflict of interest laws since that date?

Dr MILES: The member may be aware that this committee is currently undertaking a review of the operations of the Office of the Independent Assessor and what I have said to local government is that we will make amendments appropriate to that system once the committee finishes its very important work, and I take the chance to thank the committee for the work that it has been doing.

Ms LEAHY: I have a further question to the Deputy Premier in relation to the Councillor Conduct Tribunal. Is the Deputy Premier satisfied with the performance of the Councillor Conduct Tribunal given they have had a 120 per cent increase in funding since they were established and they are still two years behind in hearing cases?

CHAIR: Before we move on to that, can I say to the member that what you are talking about here is proceedings of a committee dealing with this very issue which are not yet reported on and we do not want to anticipate debate before this report is actually lodged. That is a summary of standing order 113. Can I suggest the member for Warrego find a different way to talk about the CCT in terms of numbers of issues dealt with.

Ms LEAHY: Mr Chair, I have an answer to a question on notice where it talks about the amount of funding. That is something separate to your committee hearing.

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms LEAHY: They are still two years behind. The question to the Deputy Premier is: is he satisfied with the performance given that he has outlined in a question on notice the increase of 120 per cent in funding?

CHAIR: Member, it is not even grey; you are asking for an opinion. I have asked you to find a different way that does not offend 113 or does not ask for an opinion.

Mr HART: There is no legislation regarding this in front of the committee. This is a committee inquiry that was directed to us by the government and therefore it does not need to comply with that standing order. The member is completely entitled to ask that question.

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, I refer to you the estimates manual which has been provided to all members. It deals with this very specific issue. It refers to standing order 113, which talks about questions on proceedings in front of a committee not yet reported on. I would find it difficult to allow a question through that asks for an opinion and allow a question through that anticipates the report of the committee. I have tried to help the member for Warrego with this. I am not sure if I can help any further. The member for Warrego will have to recast the question so it does not anticipate the work of the committee.

Mr HART: Standing order 113 refers to proceedings in the House and this is not a proceeding in the House.

CHAIR: I understand that. I have referred to you the estimates manual which deals with this particular issue. I cannot be any clearer than I have been.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Mr Chair. We will move on. Is the minister aware of the number of cases that have been decided by the Councillor Conduct Tribunal and the number of cases that are still awaiting determination?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Warrego for her question. I am advised that in the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, 25 misconduct applications were referred to the Councillor Conduct Tribunal by the Office of the Independent Assessor, 16 misconduct hearings were conducted by the Councillor Conduct Tribunal, 16 decisions about misconduct applications were delivered, eight inappropriate conduct allegations were referred to the Councillor Conduct Tribunal by local governments for investigation and nine investigations were finalised. A total of 41 misconduct matters are awaiting hearing as at 30 June 2022. After a misconduct finding, any party to the matter may apply to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a review of that decision.

Ms LEAHY: Is the minister satisfied with those figures?

Mr MADDEN: Point of order under 113.

CHAIR: Member for Warrego, you know that is asking for an opinion.

Mr HART: Point of order: the member is responding to the answer that the minister just gave.

CHAIR: And responding by asking for an opinion which breaches the standing order.

Mr HART: The minister opened the door to this question.

CHAIR: I have given my directions on this. If the member for Warrego could find a different way to ask that question without asking for an opinion.

Ms LEAHY: My next question is to the Office of the Independent Assessor, Ms Florian.

CHAIR: In terms of witnesses, the member can direct questions to the Deputy Premier or the director-general on this particular issue.

Ms LEAHY: My question is to the Deputy Premier, can the Office of the Independent Assessor advise how many decisions of the Councillor Conduct Tribunal have been appealed to QCAT?

Dr MILES: I will check if we have that to hand.

CHAIR: One of the issues is that they are two separate bodies. I do not know if the OIA can report on that. Can you help out, Deputy Premier?

Dr MILES: I can. Four applications for review were filed with the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal in that time frame I reported on before, the financial year 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

Ms LEAHY: How long has it taken for QCAT to resolve those matters? Do we have any information on that?

CHAIR: I know that is not your portfolio. I do not know if you can shed any light on that.

Dr MILES: No. I am happy to take that on notice, though. What is the specific question?

Ms LEAHY: How long has it taken for QCAT to resolve those matters?

Dr MILES: Those four matters. I will take that on notice.

Ms LEAHY: Does the Deputy Premier have any intention to change the Local Government Act to force councillors to resign before contesting higher office as demanded by the member for Maryborough, Bruce Saunders.

Dr MILES: I am not aware of—

Mr SMITH: Hypothetical.

Dr MILES: It is hypothetical.

CHAIR: Members, I do understand that there is a hypothetical there, but the Deputy Premier can answer that in whichever way he sees fit.

Dr MILES: I am not aware of any active policy discussions in that regard.

Ms LEAHY: It has been called for by the member for Maryborough in those media reports. It is not actually hypothetical.

CHAIR: You are obviously furnishing those. You have the answer to that question supplied by the Deputy Premier. Do you have any further questions?

Ms LEAHY: I have a further question to the Deputy Premier. Has the state government approached the federal government, or does it intend to approach the federal government, in relation to increasing the level of financial assistance grants to councils?

Dr MILES: We have previously indicated support for the LGAQ's campaign to increase the amount of those grants. That would continue to be our advocacy position. So, yes, we would certainly support the Commonwealth looking at the size of those grants.

CHAIR: Have you finished that answer, Deputy Premier?

Dr MILES: Yes.

CHAIR: Do you have any further questions?

Mr McDONALD: I have a couple of clarifications.

CHAIR: Do you want to ask for those clarifications?

Mr McDONALD: This is a question to the director-general. Can the director-general advise whether the federal government has provided a funding commitment for the Bundaberg flood levee?

Mr Kaiser: To my knowledge they have not. Those discussions are ongoing.

Mr McDONALD: I have a question for clarification on the breakdown of the 4,200 houses subject to rebuild and betterment and the 437 houses subject to buyback, and a breakdown per local government area. Obviously the Lockyer Valley was very badly affected. We have some experience in buybacks and land swaps that would be helpful.

Dr MILES: Here is one we prepared earlier, which I am happy to table for the benefit of the committee. I can advise the member that in the Lockyer Valley Regional Council area we have 21 registrations of interest for house raising, 17 for resilient rebuild funding, 15 people who were not sure what the best option for them would be and 23 people who have opted for the voluntary buyback. I have that for all of the local government areas and I am happy to table that for the committee.

Mr McDONALD: Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR: We will have a look at that.

An honourable member interjected.

CHAIR: We will deal with all of those in a private meeting. Do you have any further questions? We will go to the member for Ipswich West.

Mr MADDEN: Deputy Premier, with reference to the local government service area identified on page 6 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government's suite of grant programs is benefitting Queensland local governments?

Dr MILES: To protect and enhance our great Queensland lifestyle as our state grows, we need reliable community infrastructure that will support the needs of Queenslanders and we want to create good secure Queensland jobs when we build new infrastructure. Queensland's local governments play a vital role in both delivering and maintaining community infrastructure for our local communities, whether they are urban, regional or remote. That is why we are delivering hundreds of millions of dollars in grant funding support to local governments across Queensland, especially regional and remote councils.

This year we have awarded the latest round of the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program, funded at almost \$86 million. This competitive grant program allows local governments to seek funding for priority infrastructure projects, ranging from new features for local sporting facilities and critical water and waste water upgrades, to the construction of critical housing for staff in regional and remote communities. The program also helps councils extend the functional life of their existing infrastructure, helping councils make the best use of their budget.

I know the member for Traeger will appreciate the \$2.05 million investment in the Mornington Island motel and accommodation expansion, funded through the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program. Expanding the hotel will provide much-needed accommodation for tourists, service providers and stakeholders and will enhance liveability and economic independence on Mornington Island. What is more, these projects will support secure local jobs.

We are continuing to deliver the \$200 million COVID Works for Queensland program and the first tranche of the \$200 million South East Queensland Community Stimulus Package. These programs were established as part of Queensland's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and they are continuing to deliver for Queensland communities. I know that COVID Works for Queensland has helped councils get their communities back on their feet as quickly as possible after the impacts of the pandemic and helped minimise any long-term effects of the global disruption it caused.

The deputy chair will be aware of projects such as the Lockyer Valley Cultural Centre Renewal Program, which was awarded over \$500,000 under the program. The project facilitated rectification works on the facility's roof, as well as heating, ventilation and air conditioning, enhancing the amenity of the facility.

The South East Community Stimulus Program has helped our south-east Queensland councils in regions like Moreton Bay, member for Bancroft, and Ipswich, member for Ipswich West, preserve and enhance the liveability of their growing communities, like the \$1.5 million contribution from the South East Queensland Community Stimulus Program to the Bellara Foreshore Improvement Project to upgrade and improve the appearance and amenity of the precinct, provide park equipment for the community and make the precinct more accessible for local small businesses. A great lifestyle is enhanced by the amenity and accessibility of community assets. That is exactly what projects such as this one are delivering under the SEQ Community Stimulus Program.

Of course, we are continuing to deliver on our commitment of another \$200 million round of our flagship \$1 billion Works for Queensland program. Works for Queensland is about making sure that Queensland's hardworking regional councils have the funding needed to maintain and deliver infrastructure to their communities.

With the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games approaching, I am very proud to say that the 2021-24 round of Works for Queensland is providing over \$13 million in funding to the Bundaberg Regional Council to undertake stage 1 of the Bundaberg Regional Aquatic Centre, which will deliver a new FINA standard covered 50-metre Olympic pool. I am sure that the member will agree that that new pool will be a great asset for our future Olympians as they train for 2032.

The guidelines of the Works for Queensland program require councils to focus on ensuring jobs created or supported under the program where possible go to young people who are not currently in employment or training, helping secure good jobs for the next generation of Queenslanders. I am proud to say that in 2024 there will be another \$200 million round of Works for Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to working in close partnership with local government to deliver community infrastructure and services to every region in Queensland because we know that doing so supports the great lifestyle we enjoy here in Queensland and secures good jobs for locals in our communities. Only the Palaszczuk government will secure and continue our investments of over \$1 billion in grant funding to local governments.

CHAIR: We will go to the member for Maiwar, then deal with any outstanding issues and then go to a closing statement from the deputy premier.

Mr BERKMAN: Deputy Premier, I think it is pretty clear to all of us that the cost of delivering infrastructure at the local government level has increased significantly in recent years, yet there has been no commensurate increase in developer contributions or infrastructure charges in that time. With the Brisbane Lord Mayor recently joining the Greens' longstanding call to increase the cap on infrastructure charges, will the government finally consider raising or removing the cap on infrastructure charges so that developers pay a fair share for that vital local government infrastructure?

Dr MILES: Obviously I get feedback from local government as well as from industry about those charges and both their ability to fund infrastructure needed as well as their effect on land supply and development pricing. That is the balance that obviously we need to consider. Queensland's infrastructure planning and charging framework is crucial to making sure we are able to deliver jobs, services and the Queensland lifestyle that we want to keep. As we experience unprecedented growth, we want to ensure that our communities are well planned, liveable, sustainable, resilient and prosperous. As I say, we need to balance housing affordability with local government financial sustainability and the viability of those developers.

The cap that the member refers to has been a key element of our infrastructure charging for some time. As I say, local government has raised with me concerns about the cap. We will take those concerns on board and continue to consider them in the context of our efforts to deliver more land and affordable houses as well as fund infrastructure.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a very brief related follow-up question. One thing I have noticed recently is the increasing use of ministerial infrastructure designations to avoid the payment of infrastructure charges, which I suppose makes sense more in the context of public developments but makes far less sense, in my view, in the context of private developments, whether that is private schools or other infrastructure. Is the state considering removing the exemption other than for public entities?

Dr MILES: As the person who has to do all the work on those ministerial infrastructure designations, I am aware of the number of them that have been coming through—that is not to discount all of the other people who do work on them. They are primarily for the expedited planning of community assets and state assets such as schools, hospitals and that kind of thing. In the 2021-22 financial year, 44 designations were made. Twenty-four of those were educational facilities, nine hospitals, four emergency services facilities, two sporting facilities or stadiums and five other facilities. We have also made amendments to 12 designations. They have allowed us to deliver \$715 million worth of capital investment.

The advice I have asked for is whether there is a mechanism by which, in some cases, we might be able to make ministerial infrastructure designations but still condition some kind of infrastructure charging. That might not be appropriate for all MIDs, but in the case of some private sector infrastructure we are happy to consider how that might be done.

CHAIR: We have a couple of outstanding issues. One is that the deputy premier has agreed to take on notice a question concerning the time it took for a QCAT resolution on those four cases from the CCT.

Dr MILES: I have that now.

CHAIR: Fabulous.

Dr MILES: Of the 16 matters currently before QCAT, the oldest unresolved case has been with them for two years and three months. They are all ongoing; none yet determined.

CHAIR: Was there a question about the four resolved ones?

Mr McDONALD: No.

CHAIR: Good; we have dealt with that. The other outstanding issue was about further information on the history of land release and lots approved. I think we have an answer for that one; is that correct?

Dr MILES: I have an answer for that if the committee is happy to receive it. In 2016, 22,077 lots were approved across South-East Queensland while in 2021 there were fewer than that with 14,809. It is more accurate to take an average over a number of years because there is a variability year on year and there are a lot of reasons why 2021 was not a good example. I am advised that, between 2016 and 2021, each year 15,600 lots were developed. In the preceding period of 2011 to 2015, 14,900 were developed. The actual average number per year has been increasing. There was an increase of lot approvals in 2021 of 53 per cent compared to 2020. I hope that addresses the question.

CHAIR: Thank you. Deputy Premier, it would be appropriate if you close with a closing statement.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair, committee members and visiting members of parliament for the interest you have shown today in my portfolio areas. Preparing for the annual estimates hearing is an extensive undertaking. There are many people in the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning who have contributed to today's proceedings. I would like to thank Director-General Mike Kaiser for his contribution and apologise to him on behalf of the parliament for the attack he endured. I would also like to thank Coordinator-General Toni Power, Queensland Reconstruction Authority Chief Executive Officer Brendan Moon and South Bank Corporation Chief Executive Officer Bill Delves.

I would like to thank all of the deputy directors-general in my department, but give a special thanks to Acting Assistant Director-General Natalie Wilde and her estimates coordination team, including: Jodie Meerten, Mary Weaver, Stephanie Hall, Robert Hoge, Jo Manson, Filomena Pastore, Christine Richards, Bree Linklater, Jordana Appleton-Seymour and Eve Grant. Finally, I thank my assistant minister, Nikki Boyd, for her support; my chief of staff, Danielle Cohen; and advisers Katherine Wright, Benton Wecker, Amy Hunter, Pete Spencer, Carl Ungerer, Maddie Cunnington, Riley Lang,

Virginia Dale, Kylie Gates, Zoe Bos, Will Akol, Reuben Grantley-Davies, Annette Dew and Holly Walker, plus our planning DLO, Alyssa Van Butzelaar. They have all worked very hard to ensure we were able to answer the committee's questions today.

CHAIR: Thank you. On behalf of the committee, I thank the deputy premier, the director-general and all departmental officials and ministerial staff for their attendance today. The time allocated for the consideration of the expenditure of estimates in the portfolio area of the deputy premier has expired. The committee will now adjourn for lunch and we will resume at 1.30 for the examination of the estimates for the portfolio area of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities.

Proceedings suspended from 12.34 pm to 1.30 pm.

**ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES
COMMITTEE—AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES;
RURAL COMMUNITIES**

In Attendance

Hon. ML Furner, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities

Mr D McIntyre, Chief of Staff

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries


Mr R Gee APM, Director-General

Ms B Ditchfield, Deputy Director-General, Agriculture

Mr G Bolton, Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry

Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority

Mr C MacMillan, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** Good afternoon. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities. I am Chris Whiting, member for Bancroft and the chair of the committee. The other committee members are: Mr Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Michael Hart, member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, member for Traeger; Mr Jim Madden, member for Ipswich West; and Mr Tom Smith, member for Bundaberg. The visiting members who may be present are: the members for Broadwater, Kawana, Maroochydore, Warrego, Gympie, Nanango, Burdekin, Condamine, Glass House, Scenic Rim, Maiwar and South Brisbane. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio areas of agricultural industry development and rural communities until 3 pm and the estimates for the fisheries and forestry portfolios from 3.15 pm until 4.45 pm.

I remind those present today that this hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that all questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply to this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112, 115 and 118 in this regard. Questions should be brief, relate to one issue and not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, arguments, inferences, opinions or imputations. I intend to guide this afternoon's proceeding so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members. I ask that all phones and electronic devices be switched to silent mode to avoid any interruptions to the proceedings. I remind all present that food and drink are not permitted in this chamber, except tea and coffee in a keep cup.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers, staff from the minister's office and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I note that we have an updated response to question on notice No. 3. I also want to note a correction to something I said: during the last session I referred to standing order 113 when I should have referred to standing order 115(e) to (g).

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of agricultural industry development, rural communities, fisheries and forestry open to 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 three minutes.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair. I thank the committee for the opportunity to appear at today's hearings. It is with great respect that I proceed and recognise the process of estimates. I am pleased once again to be here today to answer your questions. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which the committee meets and acknowledge elders past, present and emerging. I am joined by my director-general, Bob Gee; my chief of staff, Dan McIntyre; my ministerial office colleagues; and

public servants of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries as well as representatives of statutory bodies. I also would like to acknowledge the tireless staff of my department, who have worked very hard in preparation for today's hearing, for their ongoing dedication in terms of the portfolio, particularly through COVID-19. I am advised that my department has provided an update to question on notice No. 3 following an error noticed in the first column.

The state budget represents a new phase for Queensland as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and reach for the enormous opportunities before us. We are putting in place policies and programs to support good jobs, create better services, and protect and enhance our great lifestyle. We were the first state to declare agriculture an essential industry in the pandemic, knowing the crucial role it plays. We have seen the Queensland agricultural sector produce incredible results despite the challenges of the pandemic and a series of weather events. Throughout these challenges we have stood shoulder to shoulder with our farmers—working with them, not against them—and the industry has risen to these challenges time and time again. The sector is estimated to have a gross value of production of more than \$23 billion this financial year—an incredible achievement. It is my honour to serve them through this portfolio.

In the biosecurity space we are once again being challenged. We are seeing outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease in some other nations. This impacts on countries including some of our trading partners. We see the challenge of Varroa destructor mite in beehives in New South Wales. Obviously we are doing important work to keep it out of Queensland.

The state budget has delivered in spades, not least through the \$608 million investment in my portfolio—once again, a record budget in agriculture. It has increased 49 per cent since the election of the Palaszczuk Labor government. I am very proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of agriculture. There has never been a better time to be in agriculture in Queensland. I thank the committee and I look forward to your questions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I will change things slightly and open with the member for Traeger, who has been on this committee for many years. I want to give him the chance to go first. Member for Traeger, you can have the first question today. Do not worry, member for Gympie, you will get all your time.

Mr KATTER: I appreciate that; thank you, Mr Chair. I hope that the minister will appreciate a bit of a preamble here; it is very pointed and hopefully very relevant. I had a message from Mayor Ernie Camp at Burketown. He said that in 1947 the then Queensland premier, Mr Hanlon, directed his agriculture department to go to the gulf to put a crop of sorghum in what is now part of Floraville, his station. There he is 75 years later, off his own bat, with no help at all, doing it himself. We still have a situation with not much farming activity at all—a small handful of people—along the Flinders and Gilbert, after so many years of talk. What efforts has the minister's department and the government made that have resulted in farming being conducted in the north-western gulf?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. I also acknowledge Mayor Camp and the good work he does for the community the member also represents. Obviously research, development and extension work is a priority of this government. There is \$140 million in RD&E in this budget alone. I am really impressed to lead a portfolio that has a direct focus on research and development, particularly in the areas you mentioned in your question. We are seeing a drastic change in terms of how primary producers consider the future of their cropping and their use of their land overall. It is encouraging to see that sort of investment put into RD&E.

I will give some examples of what you are referring to, certainly in terms of the partnership funding deed. The Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia has committed \$200,000 per annum over three years. That has been extended into 2021-22 with an additional \$200,000 commitment. The deeds and those moneys were available to the CRCNA for general CRCNA activities as set out in the agreement with the federal government. I welcome the opportunity to work with the new federal government and having a renewed partnership and relationship with the federal government. I will no doubt in the future get to comment with regard to our engagement through Biosecurity Queensland as well.

Through CRCNA and DAF we have had approximately \$2.5 million in funding for projects over the past four years. We are targeting a diverse range of topics including softwood pine production systems, market access—like mango export supply chains—protected area cropping and grain supply chains. I am encouraged by the focus on looking at what we can do in that space in the particular areas that Mayor Camp represents in the gulf.

To give you some idea about the new deed and how it is framed around the three integrated project based pieces of work with staged horizons for implementation, the project activity aligns directly with the Queensland government's and the CRCNA's shared strategic vision for realising sustainable agriculture development and diversification across North and North-West Queensland, complementing the broader Northern Australian government agenda. I was pleased to be not too far from that area recently with my director-general and my chief of staff and talking to primary producers who were successful applicants for the Rural Economic Development Grants. We have Rural Agricultural Development Grants coming on line. The RED Grants for the people we visited delivered in spades in terms of giving them opportunities in agriculture of up to \$200,000 per recipient. I encourage anyone in your electorate looking at R&D but also looking for assistance in that area to access those grants. The fourth round of RED Grants has been delivered, but there will be another round coming towards the end of the year or early next year. There are further opportunities through QRIDA and PIPES.

Mr KATTER: Given that things have been moving very slowly in terms of the development of agriculture and farming in the north-west and the gulf and notwithstanding the things you are doing already, with the outbreak of FMD Mayor Ernie Camp suggested why is there not a push or focus now to diversify from just livestock and concentrate on this now. Would what you are saying now be commensurate with a concerted effort in that area or do you think there is an opportunity to provide more effort in that area given that we have FMD on our doorstep and there is an opportunity to diversify?

Mr FURNER: There is a multitude of different examples of how we have engaged with regional Queensland. You would know very well that we are the most decentralised state in the nation. It is important that the Queensland government gets out there and engages with stakeholders. I made reference earlier to seeing some recipients of the Rural Economic Development Grants. They were in Mareeba and Lakeland. In that same weekend and extended period of time we attended the far northern regional forum in Cooktown.

As you would know, there are seven regional forums in the state where ministers, along with assistant ministers and backbenchers, get out and engage with rural Queensland to establish the needs of those areas so that we can come back to cabinet with those issues. I am also tasked to do that with regard to my rural communities portfolio responsibilities. I, along with Minister Butcher, who will be appearing this afternoon, have to get around to all seven regional forums so we are well versed in positioning our government with regard to the requirements of rural Queensland.

CHAIR: We will go to questions from the deputy chair.

Mr McDONALD: I will defer to the member for Gympie, the shadow minister for agriculture.

Mr PERRETT: Before I commence my questions, I will make a declaration with respect to my register of interest. I advise the committee that I am a landowner and a livestock producer and am eligible for drought preparedness assistance and Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants and I have a registered biosecurity entity.

CHAIR: Are there any memberships of any bodies that you need to advise us of?

Mr PERRETT: They are included in my register of interest. Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 5—biosecurity services—and the current threat of foot-and-mouth disease. Are disinfectant foot mats now installed at all Queensland international airports? If they are not, when will they be?

Mr FURNER: Could you repeat the last part of your question?

Mr PERRETT: Are disinfectant foot mats now installed at all Queensland international airports? If they are not, when will they be?

Mr FURNER: That would be a question better directed to the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. I am able to respond to the member's question with regard to the measures around dealing with a possible incursion of foot-and-mouth disease. I note that that was one of the initiatives of the newly-minted Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Murray Watt. I stand to be corrected if necessary, but I believe this is the first occasion where a measure such as this has been implemented to deal with an emergency animal disease such as foot-and-mouth disease. In addition to that, as you would probably be aware, he has lifted the opportunities for reviewing and has put in place surveillance measures for postage because the strong likelihood of infection from foot-and-mouth disease is via meat product coming through the post. In terms of the part of your question regarding mats, I understand that they are also going to be installed—if they have not been already—at Denpasar Airport in Indonesia to stop this disease reaching our shores.

We take biosecurity overall very seriously. It is one of the things that sometimes gives me sleepless nights. You can rest assured that our legislation is contemporary and strong. We have strong, professional men and women in not only DAF but also Biosecurity Queensland so we will throw everything we can at this. That is the case with not just foot-and-mouth disease but lumpy skin disease, African swine fever—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: I am sure the minister will get the chance to give that part of his answer later on, but this question related to foot-and-mouth disease.

CHAIR: I know that lumpy skin disease and all the other diseases may be included. We have only had a couple of minutes on this subject so I am going to allow the minister to continue a little further. Remember we have until three o'clock for this session. This issue will be canvassed a bit.

Mr FURNER: To add further to the factors with regard to foot-and-mouth disease, it is not just Indonesia but other countries that have had this disease—in some cases for many years. We are preparing for foot-and-mouth disease. We also recognise our important role in terms of the Ausvetplan when it comes to FMD. I encourage the committee to read that document. The document outlines that 'the most significant risk of entry of FMD in Australia is through illegal entry of meat and dairy products'. The risk of FMDV contaminated animal products being imported illegally has been acknowledged for some time as well—and not just the recent incursion identified in Melbourne with some pork floss.

As the member for Gympie and other members of the committee would know, biosecurity is everyone's responsibility. There is a general biosecurity obligation on everyone. I am impressed with the interest and concentration of the public on that on a regular basis. We look forward to continuing that engagement. Last Wednesday we engaged with Commonwealth for the first agricultural ministerial meeting this year. The last time there was a meeting of such was when the previous federal government was in place. In fact, the last face-to-face meeting of AMM was 21 February 2020. It gives you an example of how quickly the current federal government has acted on this particular matter and in bringing the AMM together. I am impressed with the federal government and the new minister on this occasion.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, has the department undertaken any modelling on the economic impact of a foot-and-mouth outbreak in Queensland?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. In fact, that is quite relevant because we have been modelling. We have been doing exercises on foot-and-mouth disease since 2016. Once again, this is not a new incursion or a new disease that has all of a sudden appeared and threatened our livestock and our economy in Queensland, if not Australia. We have been readily engaged and stood up since 2016.

In fact, last Wednesday we engaged through the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting and we discussed the very need for the consideration of further exercises. There is an ABARES report that deals with FMD in respect of the public. Once again, this budget delivers over \$200 million in biosecurity alone. There are opportunities to make sure we are well positioned to deal with FMD or any other disease that is on our borders.

Mr PERRETT: Has an audit of preparedness been undertaken in anticipation of an FMD outbreak? Does Queensland have an FMD control policy and/or response plan?

Mr FURNER: One of the first things we did was set up an emergency animal disease preparedness task force. We have representatives on that. Our Chief Biosecurity Officer, Mr Malcolm Letts, is on that. Last Wednesday afternoon we engaged with all of our key stakeholders—that is, stakeholders right across Queensland; there were well over 100—to make sure they are aware of the particular incursion. We have communicated with 60,000 registered biosecurity entities to provide them with relevant information. Once again, we did the exercise in 2016.

We also did exercises in lumpy skin disease in 2018. That was with New South Wales. That was referred to as Border Bridge. In 2019 we introduced and strengthened regulations to support farms with biosecurity management plans and signage. Since May, as I indicated earlier, the emergency animal disease preparedness task force has been meeting weekly, if not fortnightly. That involves industry and government as well. We will continue that engagement. The Ausvetplan is the lead plan for how we deal with this particular biosecurity risk.

Once again, I reassure the committee that Queensland is well prepared in terms of biosecurity. You need only look at our record on how we deal with incursions and how we deal with containment and in many cases eradication of disease. In fact, Australia did have foot-and-mouth disease back in

the late 1800s which was eradicated, given that back then it was a different time, different population and different circumstances to what we face now. Member for Gympie, we are well prepared with modern, strong legislation.

Mr PERRETT: This question follows on from the fact that foot-and-mouth disease was in Australia many decades ago and that circumstances have changed. Minister, given that all cloven-hoofed animals are susceptible to FMD, how many feral pigs are there in Queensland and what is their geographic spread?

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, that is a big one.

Mr PERRETT: It is an important question, Chair, I can tell you.

CHAIR: It is important.

Mr FURNER: It is an important question. Once again, there are estimates out there of around 24 million feral pigs in Australia. I do not have a direct figure in terms of Queensland. In 2005 feral pigs cost the Australian economy about \$106 million. That would convert to a national cost of almost \$140 million today. Under the Queensland biosecurity legislation, the responsibility for feral pig control rests with the landholder. Notwithstanding that, we are assisting local governments to manage their responsibility for feral pigs through the process of taking control actions consistent with plans.

DAF undertakes feral pig research to improve control options such as trapping and baiting. DAF is well represented in the field of feral pig research and has actively promoted the benefits of its expertise through publications and community engagement. DAF also assists local government and landholders in meeting their obligations by providing technical advice. DAF is also undertaking field studies to support the continued use of 1080 as a feral pig baiting program for horticulture and grazing lands.

The best results occur when landholders work together. We will look at different options and meet different requirements for seasonal conditions, be it baiting, trapping or shooting. I can advise the committee that there is \$1 million for the next round—round 7—of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative. That is to assist interested parties in their management of feral pigs. That will no doubt be welcome. In fact, in Queensland alone, in respect of that component of feral pests, we have funded \$565,715 to date in feral pig management since 2015.

Mr PERRETT: I have a follow-up question to the director-general. Has DAF upgraded plans to contain, manage or eradicate FMD if an outbreak spreads to the feral pig population? If so, what actions will the department undertake?

Mr Gee: I, too, acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders, past and present. I thank the member for the question. For many weeks, as the minister has indicated, we have been working closely with industry firstly around lumpy skin disease and then foot-and-mouth disease. That has been a coordinated approach from the national level right down to the local level.

In my experience there is always more to do, particularly around communicating. I think we need to acknowledge the strong legislative base that this House has given Queenslanders. We have a very strong legislative scheme. We have well-practised biosecurity processes and systems. We have very capable staff who are acknowledged as world leaders. We also have a tremendously capable disaster management system. We have practised for many years—well over 20. Some of us who have been around for 30 to 35 years have practised for this type of event, particularly in the instance of foot-and-mouth.

I would not be doing my job if I did not point out to the committee that foot-and-mouth is just one issue. The issue of lumpy skin disease is as critical, if not more critical. Australia has done particularly well in this space and so has Queensland. I can guarantee the committee that we are working very hard at the national, state and local level. I do not want to take up too much of the committee's time, but we have done many webinars and information sessions already and will continue to do them. I take the point and the intent of the question. As an example, out of 50-odd social media tweets and posts, we are reaching each and every time somewhere between 50,000 and 300,000 people. There is interest and there is a thirst for information.

I think most members of the committee would understand the concern. I can tell you that we have exercised and we will continue exercising and we will do that in a multi-threat approach. We have done that around other multiple threats. We have done that with police and other agencies on the ground most recently in Roma—that was a very useful exercise—on another threat, but we will be doing more

of that. I am sure you will see more exercises and more publicity around exercising. I encourage all landowners, particularly those smaller ones that might be classified as hobby farmers, to turn their minds to the risk. I thank the member for the question. I hope that helps.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, when was that plan last tested?

Mr Gee: There is a whole range of plans. For my mind, internally since I have been with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries we have done a number of desktop exercises at executive level. We have also done business continuity planning in the context of COVID, obviously. Through my experience I can think of at least half a dozen exercises through 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018. I hope that helps.

Mr HART: My question is to the director-general. In order to deliver the department's objectives as set out in the Service Delivery Statements, clear and consistent communication between the responsible minister and the department is vital. Have you or any of the senior members of your department ever withheld information from your minister so they can maintain plausible deniability?

Mr Gee: No.

Mr HART: Director-General, are you aware of any ministerial staff applying pressure to individuals in your department, including yourself, for responses that minimise problems or discouraging written advice on a difficult topic?

Mr Gee: I have always had a very professional relationship and prided myself on an honest and open relationship with any minister whom I have served. My current minister and his office have been ultimately professional, very responsive and open to dialogue. It is a very honest, trusted relationship where open views are held. I have never seen, heard of, or had reported to me any unprofessional behaviour from anyone in my current minister's office nor any of the other ministers I have served as director-general.

CHAIR: I have a question to the minister. Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government is meeting its commitment in creating good, secure jobs in agriculture?

Mr FURNER: I thank the chair for the very good question with regard to good jobs in Queensland because that question speaks to the heart of what the Palaszczuk government is all about. Agriculture is a powerhouse for Queensland's economy. As a government we are passionate about creating good, secure jobs in this sector. That is why the Palaszczuk government established the rural jobs initiative in 2015. The initiative is comprised of the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance and the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network.

For the benefit of the committee, the RJSA is driven by industry through the Queensland Farmers' Federation to provide timely advice on current and emerging agricultural workforce needs. QAWN is a regional network of seven industry-based workforce officers who work with local agribusinesses to address workforce issues. Since they were established these initiatives have assisted agribusiness on more than 23,000 occasions, leading to over 12,000 good jobs and 8,000 training and educational outcomes. These programs work. That is why we have renewed our funding in 2018. During the height of the COVID pandemic the Palaszczuk government invested a further \$1.1 million to address seasonal labour shortages, which included additional funding for QAWN to deliver local solutions. These programs are supported by industry.

Just last month Joe Moro, chair of the Queensland Horticulture Council—a new council established in the lead-up to the 2020 election—wrote to me asking for QAWN to be extended. The member for Bundaberg, who is a good advocate for the primary producers in his area, would know that Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers is also very keenly looking at the furthering of QAWN workers in that area, so I am pleased to announce that today. Joe Moro described it as being critical in supporting his members to address the evolving workforce landscape. Furthermore, he says QAWN has enhanced the capability of employers and the quality of their business practices. As minister, I am very proud of this government's track record in working with the agriculture sector to help our farmers.

Today I am happy to announce that the Palaszczuk government will continue the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance initiative for another three years. This \$4.4 million initiative will see my department continue to work with industry groups like QFF, Canegrowers and Growcom to attract and train a new generation of skilled workers for the agriculture sector. This is yet another example of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to create good jobs and provide better services that support the great lifestyle that comes with working in agriculture in Queensland.

Mr SMITH: Minister, my question is with reference to page 18 of the SDS and the words, 'To administer timely financial assistance to foster productive and sustainable regions and rural communities.' Minister, the Queensland agriculture industry has been hit hard in recent times. How is the Queensland government providing support to our farmers?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. There has never been a greater friend to Queensland farmers than the Palaszczuk Labor government. I notice the member for Lockyer acknowledging that. He is nodding. There is no finer example than the fact that since 2015 we have doubled the amount of funding available each year under our Primary Industries Productivity Enhancement Scheme, PIPES. When we came into government PIPES was capped at \$60 million; today it is capped at \$120 million. PIPES is administered by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority and features First Start Loans and Sustainability Loans. Both schemes provide concessional interest rates for loans up to 20 years with interest-only payments for the first five years. First Start Loans are available to newcomers in the industry, providing up to \$2 million to purchase or establish their first primary production or wild-catch fishing business. The average loan approval for 2021-22 increased by almost 15 per cent from the previous year to just over three-quarters of a million dollars, with loans utilised to purchase property or for succession planning.

Tim and Sasha Thornbury from the Gulf of Carpentaria in the member for Traeger's electorate were successful in securing a First Start Loan to give them a boost in expanding their breeder herd. Sustainability loans of up to \$1.3 million are available to existing primary producers or wild fishers to improve their enterprises by increasing productivity and viability. The average loan approval in 2021-22 was more than \$515,000, an increase of 41.8 per cent, and most were likely utilised for property expansion. Thanks to a Sustainability Loan, Nikki and John Cleary from a property near Warwick were able to make water improvements, put in additional fencing, install feed bunkers, upgrade their yards and silos, and complete electrical works. We know that PIPES is helping our farmers. At 30 June 2022 QRIDA's PIPES portfolio was worth more than \$532 million, supporting 5,145 loans. In the 2021-22 financial year QRIDA received 208 applications and loans worth \$95.4 million were approved.

But support for our farmers does not stop there. We are proud to support our farmers by providing grants to strengthen the agriculture sector and promote job creation in our regions. In 2018 we implemented the Rural Economic Development Grants Scheme I spoke about earlier. I am very proud of this scheme. We have seen some major gains in our primary industries. In four years the Palaszczuk government has invested more than \$13.3 million, supporting 59 regional agribusinesses worth more than \$52 million. It is estimated this will create more than 1,800 good jobs. RED grants are available as a co-contribution of up to \$200,000. Applicants are required to fund 50 per cent of the project and be able to demonstrate economic and employment benefits to the regions.

Let's talk about job creation, which is something this government is passionate about. Round 3 of the RED grants scheme has supported 15 businesses with a total of \$3.14 million, with an expectation this will create 90 direct jobs, 251 direct jobs after completion and 346 indirect jobs through the entire process. Applications for the \$3 million fourth round recently closed.

Today I am thrilled to announce that Mareeba citrus growers Gina and Giovanni Galati of Galati Citrus, which I was fortunate enough to visit recently, are one of the 16 businesses that have been successful in receiving and securing a RED grant. The Galatis will use this grant to install an additional coldroom to support the expansion of their orchard. In 2020 I visited Kialla Pure Foods in Greenmount south of Toowoomba which received a RED grant to install new machinery to allow them to package products locally rather than interstate. I also visited Kenilworth Dairies which received a RED grant to build a new milk-bottling plant. I went to Schmidt Grazing Industries in Victoria Hill which received a RED grant to construct a new lamb feedlot. All of these projects provide economic benefits and employment in their local communities and are a firm example of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to our primary producers and our regional communities—to protecting jobs, growing our regions and providing better opportunities for Queenslanders.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, on page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements it states that in 2022-23 the department will—

... minimise the impact of biosecurity threats to the economy, the environment and human health and our way of life through biosecurity prevention, preparedness, and response and recovery measures.

In relation to fire ants, can you advise how the department is assisting to protect Queenslanders from the devastating effect of fire ants?

Mr FURNER: Our government continues to support the approach of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program, which I would like to put on the record is supported by all states and territories and also the federal government. It is supported because the evidence from overseas and

our own experience of this exotic ant tells us that without our efforts to eradicate and suppress this ant our landscape would be a very different place today. Our economy would be impacted, jobs would be impacted and our great lifestyle would without a doubt be impacted. Unfortunately for us, Australia's climate means that more than 95 per cent of this country is the perfect climate for fire ants to live. This means it could be open slather for the fire ant if we did nothing. We must eradicate and that means investment and effort.

Our budget, as I indicated today, is more than \$200 million, and a proportion of that—\$37.1 million over five years from 2021-22—continues to the joint Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce so pre-eradication can continue. This is part of the national strategy review panel recommendations for Queensland—to scale-up those efforts within the South-East Queensland urban areas—and that is exactly what this government is doing. This will advance the efforts of suppression and integrates with the national eradication program, which is focused on eradication from the west to the east. This means that, as the national program is eradicating in the west and as they move towards the east, pre-eradication will have already occurred thanks to the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce and the \$37.1 million investment over five years.

What we have seen from the Palaszczuk government is strong support from the national program to protect the great lifestyle that Queenslanders enjoy. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, we have followed the health advice and through reviews of the fire ant program we have followed the science as well. That is what committed, caring governments do: they follow the science and respond appropriately to the expert advice. The Palaszczuk government will fight to protect the great lifestyle that Queenslanders have, and that means continuing the fight against fire ants. This is what we are committed to do and this is what we will deliver.

CHAIR: With reference to SDS page 3, can the minister outline how the government through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is meeting its objective to 'deliver innovative research, policy and support services that enable agribusinesses to grow'?

Mr FURNER: The statement in the SDS sums up the Palaszczuk government's approach to agriculture pretty well. Through the budget, as I mentioned earlier, there is \$140 million to research and development this financial year to drive the productivity and innovation in Queensland's livestock, aquaculture, cropping, horticulture, forestry, timber and food-processing industries through world-class research, development and extension. We have had some of the best and brightest agriculture researchers working within DAF. In fact, DAF is the second largest investor in research, development and extension within the government behind Queensland Health. That is almost 600 dedicated RD&E staff working right across our great state to help our farmers improve their practices in developing those new markets.

For instance, DAF's citrus breeding program has produced several mandarin varieties that have been a hit on supermarket shelves for features like having few to no seeds and being really easy to peel. The Murcott mandarin variety has been available to growers since the 1990s and now there are more than 120,000 Murcott trees across citrus-growing regions of Australia. International plantings of Murcott varieties have now gone past 235,000. These are varieties developed by DAF. Orders for these varieties are still coming in now. DAF staff continue to work with growers on developing new varieties. The member for Bundaberg would be interested to know that the citrus program is run out of DAF's Bundaberg research facility, which I know he attends on a regular basis.

DAF is a sought-after partner in research and development. My department works with 175 different organisations across Australia and another 31 in 16 countries across the world. Over the last three years, DAF staff have partnered with the Australian Mango Industry Association, Manbulloo and Marto's Mangoes to trial high-density and trellis planting of mangoes across Queensland and the Northern Territory. These results have been very impressive. They demonstrate that an orchard at Walkamin produced 3.5 times more fruit than conventional orchards, reduced production costs of up to 20 per cent and improved on-farm efficiencies of mango production. As any Queenslanders knows, Australia loves their mangoes. This trial shows we can grow smarter and more efficiently so we can continue to meet grower demand. Talking of mangoes, the DAF bred Calypso is another Queensland success story, with 2.6 million trays harvested last season worth \$93 million.

Our RD&E investment goes beyond agriculture. The Bribie Island aquaculture research centre have been successful in growing black-lip oyster spat. Chair, I know you have been there and tasted some of that black-lip oyster that we are growing out of that facility. It is great to bring this to the attention of the rest of the committee. They have supplied 110,000 of those spat to Bowen Fresh Oysters. Black-lip oysters can survive in warm waters, are larger in size and taste sweeter compared to the

southern grown oysters. This is the first oyster operation in North Queensland and the first of its kind outside South-East Queensland. I am told that the operators of Bowen Fresh Oysters cannot keep up with the demand, and the possibilities from growing this industry in North Queensland are immense.

These products are just three in the portfolio of the 306 programs DAF is involved in. They represent the Palaszczuk government's strong commitment to backing agriculture research that ultimately helps farmers grow produce more efficiently so that they can improve profitability. It means more Queensland produce on plates around the world. By investing in research and extension programs, we are providing better service to our primary producers.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I refer to SDS page 2 and the budget highlights relating to the management of fire ants. When was the fire ant eradication program transformed into the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. Bear with me because this is a long answer, because there is a lot of history concerning the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. Once again, I want to stress the point about previous assessments of the cost impact. It would have cost us \$1.65 billion per year had we not acted. The fire ants would have reached as far north as Mackay, as far west as Longreach and as far south as Canberra. What we did as a result, because it is a national program—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair. The question was: when was the fire ant eradication program transitioned to suppression? It was asking when, not an explanation of the program.

CHAIR: I understand, but the minister is going to take a little bit of time to get there. I understand why you want to come to that answer as quickly as possible. I am allowing the minister a bit of latitude, but I know when it comes time for a fuller response, we will ask him for that. I ask the minister to continue on with the introduction before he gets to the nub of the question.

Mr FURNER: Like any programs, they are reviewed. On this occasion it was 2021. Program funding had triggered an independent strategic review by Dr Helen Scott-Orr, a former Australian inspector-general of biosecurity. That review was to establish whether fire ants are still eradicable, and it was the case that they are, and that is why there is investment for future options for funding and the delivery of such. A key finding was that they do remain eradicable, providing substantial changes are made. However, that additional funding was required for it.

The program steering committee, once again a national program, got together to prepare a four-year response plan from 2023 to 2027 for agriculture ministers' consideration. In the interim, that funding is being brought forward to 2022-23 to commence a more extensive eradication and containment program. Additionally, it was recommended that greater suppression within South-East Queensland urban areas should occur, and our current approach is responding to public reports that there is not sufficient suppression of fire ants.

The review panel has recommended that the fiscal responsibility for the suppression activity should lie outside the cost-sharing arrangements of the national program's responsibility. That is why we have taken action in terms of putting forward \$37.1 million over the next five years. The purpose of that task force is to suppress them in areas adjacent to the eradication zone.

I know that the director-general is the chair of that task force, which has met at least twice in 2022 and agreed to a form of subcommittees. That will include representation by local government agencies, state government agencies, federal government agencies, ports of entry and private landholders and managers. We are doing everything we can—by funding and by engagement not only with the local governments but also with persons in the industry, whether they be nurseries, primary producers, developers or earth movers. It is important that we do this to ensure the program continues its aim; that is eradication and dealing with the spread of fire ants as they currently stand.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, you just mentioned that fire ants can still be eradicated with some changes to the program. What are those changes, Minister?

Mr FURNER: Once again, I am happy to go over those changes. We mentioned the funding of \$37.1 million that the Queensland government has put in to develop a unique task force in respect to that. There is a number of things that currently are occurring in respect of how we deal with the pest itself. We have covered off in terms of the eradication process over the next 10 years, working from the west to the east. We are looking at surveillance techniques—visual surveillance, field teams, odour detection dogs, remote sensing, and community surveillance and reporting. There is a whole host of things to combat the spread of this pest. Once again, it is up to everyone to work together. That is why we have engaged local governments to have their say in the process, along with other stakeholders like earth movers, developers and nurseries.

Once again, there is a general biosecurity obligation on everyone, regardless of whether you are the ones who go to the markets. We are working with some of those stakeholders in the markets to have an understanding of where they are buying pot-plants from and those sorts of measures. We will work with local stakeholders and developers. I am more than happy to offer a briefing to the member, as with any case in respect of agriculture, to make sure there is understanding of the involvement we have with respect to this particular pest or any biosecurity measure.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, is it department policy for fire ant officers to advise property owners with fire ant infestations to contract private pest control services?

Mr FURNER: I am not certain of the nature of that question, but no doubt there is engagement with contractors, and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries staff are also involved in the program. That does fluctuate given the time of year, the weather and the circumstances at hand. Obviously there is engagement with a person who has an infestation on their property. Anything that is operational I would not have intimate details on in terms of a request by particular staff in terms of engagement with a person who has an infestation on their property.

Mr PERRETT: If that is the case, why do DAF fire ant officers say—and I quote from a complaint I received recently 'We haven't got time to be running around after these little jobs. Don't have the manpower, mate'?

CHAIR: Member, forgive me, you know what I usually say in these circumstances: it would be good to have that verified. You have a complaint there?

Mr PERRETT: I have a complaint directed to me. I can verify it.

CHAIR: You better make it available to us. As you know, the practice is: if we have a complaint or a report of something, we need to see that verified. Otherwise that slips into the hypothetical. It is an operational question, but—

Mr PERRETT: It just raises the concern that I have.

CHAIR: It does, yes.

Mr PERRETT: That is why I highlight it, because it is a serious concern.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, we do not need to publish this at the moment.

Mr PERRETT: I would prefer that it was not. I have provided it to you as chair.

CHAIR: Yes, but do you want to share that with the minister's table?

Mr PERRETT: If the minister requires it, but it is a direct quote from a complaint I got with regard to an infestation on a property.

Mr FURNER: Obviously it is difficult to answer a question if I am not familiar with the details. It would be beneficial. I do understand confidentiality, if that is what the member wishes with regard to its tabling. I am sure that we can exclude any names on the document if that assists the committee in its deliberations in terms of getting an answer suitable to the relevance of the question.

Mr PERRETT: It is quite a lengthy email, Minister, but quite a concerning one.

CHAIR: Do you want to come back to this?

Mr FURNER: Putting aside the very nature of the he-said, she-said exercise with regard to a response, if it relates to recent flooding it may be a possibility. I think the member for Gympie submitted a question on notice, which I did respond to, that related to the most recent weather events. From memory, the question was whether there was concern by me as minister or the department about fire ants rafting as a result of the flood event. My response, from memory, was that, due to the nature of the recent flooding events this year, my advice was that it would be highly unlikely that fire ants would be rafting on this occasion—due to the severity and the height of the water.

Once again, the outside activities of the area is the new FAST announcement as well. We will deal with these sorts of issues and we will give the opportunity also for further engagement by the expansion of the task force. Once again, it is difficult to give a precise response to an email that is so lengthy. We do have sufficient resources, no doubt, to deal with that. That is why today we have raised with the committee the additional funding in the budget of \$37.1 million for suppression and eradication of fire ants in the south-east corner. I do thank the member for Gympie for his email. It may be appropriate, should he wish to have us respond to that through the normal mechanisms, for him to write to the ministerial office and we can respond accordingly to the details of the allegations in this email.

CHAIR: The member for Gympie might want to follow that up with the minister in this particular case.

Mr PERRETT: I highlight it because it came directly to me. It concerns me if that is what biosecurity officers are advising landowners. I take that and I am happy for the minister to respond accordingly.

Mr FURNER: The normal practice, whether it be opposition members or crossbenchers, is they write to the ministerial office and we always respond to their correspondence. One example is the member for Nanango, who has requested a briefing on FMD. We welcome that. We welcome more members of the opposition or the crossbench to have an understanding of what is really happening out there with regard to our portfolio. We will be briefing the member for Nanango on foot-and-mouth disease. I know the Katter party sought a briefing. We have delivered that. I thank the party for their interest in a particularly dangerous disease such as FMD. If anyone else wishes to have that briefing, I am more than prepared to organise that.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, we are talking about fire ants at the moment.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Gympie?

Mr PERRETT: I will go to the director-general this time. I refer to SDS page 19 and QRIDA and Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. Director-General, how many applications did QRIDA receive for either the \$15,000 grant or \$50,000 grant?

Mr Gee: I think that is a more appropriate question for the CEO of QRIDA. If we can take just a little bit of time, we will come back hopefully this session with an answer.

Mr PERRETT: I had a follow-up question to that, so I probably need an answer.

CHAIR: Do you want to get the CEO for QRIDA to answer that?

Mr MacMillan: I thank the member for the question. In 2021-22 we have been managing four different activations right across the state, so it has obviously been a very busy year. As at 30 June we had approved 3,470 disaster grants, for \$62.3 million.

Mr PERRETT: Excellent. I was wanting to know how many had been received and how many you have processed. How many did you receive?

Mr MacMillan: With the minister's approval, I would have to take that—

Mr PERRETT: I was interested in how many you received and then how many were then processed for each grant amount.

CHAIR: You have an opportunity to come back before the end of this session if you need that information. We may not have to do that.

Mr PERRETT: I am happy for that to be answered later in the session in the interests of time.

CHAIR: You can come back to us later.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, I refer to SDS page 18 relating to drought loans and assistance under QRIDA's Drought Assistance and Reform Package. New criteria for applications now require a farm business resilience plan, and the DAF website says they can apply for a 50 per cent rebate up to a maximum of \$2,500 to prepare the plan. Director-General, how many applications have been made for the rebate to prepare a plan and how many plans have been approved?

Mr Gee: I am sure that the CEO of QRIDA will be able to give those numbers. I am not sure whether the CEO has them at this very second.

CHAIR: Do you want to ask that question again?

Mr PERRETT: I was referring to the drought preparedness grants of \$2½ thousand. I want to know how many applications you have received.

Mr MacMillan: I have the approvals but I do not have the actual applications. If it is okay, with the minister's approval—

Mr PERRETT: I would also like to know—and I am happy for this to be answered later—

Mr FURNER: Chair, I can assist in this regard if that is appropriate.

CHAIR: Are you happy with that, member for Gympie?

Mr PERRETT: It was to the director-general and I had a couple of follow-up questions that relate to the same theme. I want to know how many applications and how much has been paid to eligible producers.

CHAIR: That will come up, Minister. I will ask that question and that will come off our time, if you can provide the information the member is searching for.

Mr FURNER: I can. Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for the question. Since 21 July this year QRIDA has received 99 applications for drought preparedness grants. Of those, 54 applications have been approved, to the value of \$1.5 million, and 18 have been declined. There have also been 10 applications for the farm management grant, to the value of \$10,390, and for the new drought ready and recovery loan there have been three applications to date, with two of those approved, to the value of \$427,000.

In terms of the reforms to the drought package, the member for Gympie would be fully aware that they were informed by the review in 2019 by Ruth Wade and Charles Burke, two eminent people from QFF, and also AgForce as CEOs put forward consideration for the Palaszczuk government to deal with reforming drought preparedness. It was pleasing to be in Stanthorpe recently and see the first recipient in horticulture, who have never before had the ability to access drought support funding, receive four kilometres of polypipe to assist in the irrigation of their orchard. This is an expansion of what we are doing to look after farmers in Queensland. I am very proud to lead that with the support of DAF.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I accept that there have been changes to the government's drought policy; however, what certainty is there that the change in this drought policy will support Queensland primary producers through the next drought, given the slow uptake?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. The certainty lies in the very nature of meeting the National Drought Agreement arrangements, for which both the Premier and I went to Canberra in 2018 to start the next stage of drought reform. There is also \$79.6 million over the next four years in the budget that is held centrally in terms of supporting droughted properties. It concerns me when I talk to people who believe there is no drought, despite the fact that Queensland is still 44.9 per cent in drought. Nevertheless, it is very important that as climate changes we represent our primary producers. That is why we have put forward that funding for drought assistance programs to respond. There is also \$150 million over three years from 2022-23 for drought preparedness and emergency drought assistance loans.

Mr PERRETT: I now move to agricultural colleges, and I note the announcement today with respect to the Longreach Pastoral College. Minister, I refer to SDS page 10 and the capital grants and the \$4 million allocated to 'finalise the future of assets previously held by the Queensland agricultural training colleges'. Minister, what is the budget breakdown of this \$4 million figure?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. One thing we did when we considered how we repurpose the Queensland agricultural training colleges was to make a commitment of \$16.74 million over five years to maintain the site in a safe and fit-for-purpose condition. That will meet specific capital investment as required for the repurpose of the colleges. We have seen what is happening in terms of Emerald: there is a smart cropping centre there. There is strong consideration. Just last week I was at the Central Highlands Regional Council dinner held here in Brisbane. The mayor highly commended not only me as minister but also the Palaszczuk government on what we are doing to progress research and development by having smart cropping in Emerald.

The \$4 million for capital grants expenses to finalise long-term decisions of the future of the assets is formally held by QATC. There is \$2.4 million in capital expenses to finalise long-term decisions on the future of those assets formally held by QATC, including the new Central Queensland Smart Cropping Centre at Emerald. There is a \$1 million capital grants expense in 2022-23 towards the upgrade of adoption facilities by the Young Animal Protection Society in Cairns—this is the variance obviously between the estimated actuals and the 2022-23 budget—and \$500,000 for capital grants expenses for 2022-23 for the Queensland Country Women's Association for building restoration and renovation programs to continue those minor works upgrades to infrastructure.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I refer again to the SDS at page 9, where it says 'finalise long-term decisions on the future of assets'. Is this \$2.7 million in addition to the \$4 million, because it is mentioned twice in the SDS? If not, what is the real figure?

Mr FURNER: Sorry, but what page was that again, please?

Mr PERRETT: In the SDS at page 9 there is mention of \$2.7 million in the capital program and the one I referred to previously was on page 10, so I am trying to work out whether the \$2.7 million is part of the \$4 million or whether it is in addition to the \$4 million.

Mr FURNER: I understand it is in addition.

Mr PERRETT: If so, what is that additional funding for—the \$2.7 million?

Mr FURNER: The SDS spells that out in terms of smart cropping in Emerald.

Mr PERRETT: So that is specific to that program and that commitment?

Mr FURNER: That is what the SDS explains.

CHAIR: We will go to the member for Traeger for a further question.

Mr KATTER: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, earlier we spoke about efforts made to diversify and promote agriculture—namely, through irrigated agriculture. Could you tell us how many meetings you have had with the water minister or his department to discuss projects like HIPCo which has \$180 million from the feds to enable agricultural development in the gulf and north-west?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question and I will use the example of cabinet meetings. I actually sit next to the minister for water and manufacturing, so we quite often discuss water initiatives. No doubt it is intricately linked with agriculture. I also have regular meetings with proponents with regard to looking at projects around the state. I would not have a figure off the top of my head, but once again there are the regional forums as well. Water, member for Traeger, is a regular feature of discussion at those seven regional forums. That is certainly a matter that I would not be able to quantify at today's estimates hearing with regard to the number of meetings, but if you count the number of cabinet meetings that are held in addition to the diary entries of those proponents I meet with that would give you a fair enough answer in terms of the number.

Mr KATTER: You have been made aware of HIPCo before?

Mr FURNER: Sorry? Could you—

Mr KATTER: The Hughenden Irrigation Project worth \$180 million—the HIPCo project on the Flinders?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. That would have been when we had the meeting with the mayor of Flinders on that. I do not have the exact date in front of me.

Mr KATTER: Sure.

Mr FURNER: I once again say that I take pride in meeting with anyone who is willing to see the growth in agriculture in our state of Queensland.

Mr KATTER: Perhaps I need to spend some more time with you as well on that. Minister, we have recently lost 150 years worth of knowledge and experience out of the north-west in terms of DAF officers. Recently, as you would be well aware, there is an allegation of what would seem like spray drift affecting almost 20 kilometres of natural vegetation and grasslands which could be directly attributed to a lack of resources on the ground to monitor that sort of stuff like there is in the Tablelands and other areas. Is that seen as a trigger by your department that we need more resources out there? In the context of emerging agricultural industries, are we going to have more of that sort of stuff?

CHAIR: That is asking for an opinion, but I will allow that to go through and allow the minister to answer that.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for Traeger for his question. Once again, this is a record agriculture budget of more than \$608 million. We are consistently provided the same staffing numbers. In fact, as of June 2022, FTEs stood at 2,085.5—the second highest of the financial years since 2013-14. We have a recognition and a focus on FTEs in terms of our budgets and that is why we have put \$140 million into RD&E to have a direct focus on how we deal with new technologies, how we deal with advancing agriculture into the future as the climate changes and as the world changes dealing with COVID-19 and all of the other factors. Whether it be biosecurity and issues associated with trade, the focus is in respect of how we examine the ongoing needs of agriculture and research and development in Queensland.

CHAIR: Member for Traeger, I also encourage you to raise that directly with the minister's office as that might help you out. We will move to government questions.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, on page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements under 'Budget highlights' it identifies that \$1 million has been allocated to deliver round 7 of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative to support the management of invasive plants and animals. Can you advise the committee how this funding will assist regional communities in addressing the issues of invasive plants and animals?

Mr FURNER: I thank the honourable member for Ipswich West for his question. No doubt feral pests are an issue in every community in Queensland, and I know that the member for Ipswich West travels extensively around regional Queensland. Communities in different regions might experience those issues in different ways because of different conditions. As members might be aware, biosecurity is everyone's business and we all have a responsibility to ensure that we are managing pests on our lands. In the cities we might see a different pest profile and population than we do in outback rural

areas, but it is no less an issue. Some regions might be impacted by more than one kind of pest than another region, be it wild dogs or feral pigs or invasive ant species or a whole host of things right across the state of Queensland. We are the frontline state for incursions in the nation unfortunately.

The Palaszczuk government has continued to work with communities to address the issues of feral pests and weeds. Our government recognised very early in our first term that weeds and pests needed urgent attention and that it would take a whole-of-community effort to eradicate feral pests and weeds across Queensland. Since coming to government in 2015, our government has allocated over \$27.1 million to assist regional communities in managing invasive plants and animals. Since the first round of the QFPI in rural communities, we have used these grants to address feral pigs and weeds in the Desert Channels, wild dogs, rabbits and deer control, cactus control, Koster's curse and cat's claw across Queensland.

From the Far North to the Desert Channels to the border towns, these grants have enabled communities to address these feral pests and weeds that cause them grief, cause their crops and land grief and cause communities a lot of pain and hard work. We have granted funding to 61 different projects across Queensland to address the issues that cause them the most pain. We know that this money has gone to work and reduced issues specific to local communities, because this government talks to all Queenslanders. Whether it is in Brisbane or the Bulloo shire, Cape York or Torres or Thargomindah, we will listen to what all Queenslanders have to say and will act upon that. History has shown us that each round has gone on to help communities across Queensland, and I know that round 7 will be no exception. I know that allocated funding of \$1 million in this year's budget will help support regional and remote communities in managing invasive plants and animals.

Mr SMITH: Minister, with reference to SDS page 3, could you please outline how the Rural Agricultural Development Scheme will enhance the productivity, profitability and sustainability of agribusiness and benefit jobs growth in regional Queensland?

Mr FURNER: I thank the honourable member for Bundaberg for his question. The Palaszczuk government has made huge inroads by working closely with growers to develop and breathe life back into the sheep industry in the west and southern regions of Queensland. Cluster-fencing projects have proven their worth in assisting our western livestock producers protect flocks from wild dogs. Initial data indicates that lambing rates and sheep numbers have increased dramatically in most of these southern and western areas. With the construction of cluster fencing, lambing rates have increased from 40 per cent to more than 75 per cent. That is a staggering increase.

The objective of the Blueprint to Enhance the Growth of Queensland Sheep and Goat Industries is to nearly double Queensland's sheep numbers, from a record of 1.8 million in 2016 to 3.5 million in 2026. The Palaszczuk government remains committed to shoring up good jobs in the bush, and we support and encourage regional Queenslanders to remain in the bush to nurture industries, create local jobs and, in turn, support our country towns, to chisel out local jobs, to sustain and grow regional areas. The construction of cluster fencing has been a fine example of government and industry working together as a team with, to date, very impressive results. We listened to what they needed and we targeted drought-affected sheep and wool production areas, working towards the ultimate goal of bringing large numbers of sheep back into those areas.

To continue with the success of this growing industry and to build on almost 9,000 kilometres of fencing, the Premier launched the Rural Agricultural Development Grants scheme in May this year. That is \$4 million over the next two years to build measures along the supply chain that complement cluster fencing to help grow the sheep industry in Western and Southern Queensland. The grants of up to \$200,000, to be matched by the successful applicants, can be used for things like developing new markets for sheep or goat products or expanding the capabilities of businesses in the supply chain. Expressions of interest were due to close on 1 July 2022, but we appreciate that many producers have been impacted by the wet weather event we have had this year. That is why we are still taking applications until 31 July.

This is another important investment that underlines just how critical agriculture is in Queensland's economic recovery plan. Our RAD scheme has the backing of AgForce as well. When the Premier launched the scheme earlier this year, AgForce's sheep and wool board said that these grants would help rebuild Queensland's sheep industry and aid the development of the goat industry. I would like to put on the record our thanks to AgForce for continuing to work hand in hand with the Palaszczuk government on redeveloping this sector.

Since 2015 we have provided more than \$60 million in loans and grants for cluster fencing across Western Queensland to support sheep production through the QFPI, QRIDA and loan schemes. Success as we have experienced develops confidence and inspires Queenslanders to have the

courage to invest in developing these flocks which, in turn, creates good jobs. In my role as Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities I have had the privilege to travel Queensland speaking to those who forge their livelihoods in very tough country. I meet Queenslanders who tackle the elements daily and stand up to our tough climate, including drought and floods. I take my hat off to those men and women who have taken up the challenge to reinvigorate Queensland's sheep industry against the odds of wild dogs. Wild dogs in the past have decimated flocks, broken our hearts and broken our properties. The success of this growth is a credit to and a testament to the courage of the Queensland agriculture industry and I look forward to continuing a positive working relationship with the industry.

CHAIR: I will go to questions from the member for Maiwar and then we will go back to the member for Gympie for what will probably be the last question.

Mr BERKMAN: Director-General, I understand that the provision of shade and shelter for animals in Queensland was not part of the recent review of the Animal Care and Protection Act, but it is an issue of some concern to a number of advocates in this area. What research or statistics are available from the department regarding the number of deaths or illnesses amongst livestock caused by sun exposure?

Mr FURNER: Chair, I would ask for your guidance in relation to this question in that it relates to a bill before the House. With the bill before the House, which this committee examined, there may be opportunities to raise this issue in the second reading of the bill when it reaches the chamber.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Member for Maiwar, through the submissions that may or may not have been raised, but certainly it may well be something that is debated when that does come to parliament which I am hoping will be very soon. I do not know if there is anything that the director-general or the minister can advance without breaching standing orders.

Mr BERKMAN: If I might suggest, I can simply recast the question without the preamble that makes reference to the review.

CHAIR: Let us try again.

Mr BERKMAN: Leaving the preamble aside, what research or statistics could the department make available regarding the number of deaths or illnesses amongst livestock caused by sun exposure in Queensland?

Mr Gee: To my knowledge we do not publish those specific statistics. We are open to providing those things. I am more than happy to take the member for a briefing through our material, but our website is instructive in terms of the amount of material. It is a really specific question. We publish in annual reports and other places the number of compliance activities we undertake from time to time, investigations of the type, but, understanding the anticipation rule, I am not sure I should comment any further.

Mr BERKMAN: To be clear, though, my understanding is that this is not an issue specifically—that is, the provision of shade for livestock—that is addressed in the bill. I am ready to be corrected on that. I am keen to know specifically what statistics you can provide to the committee.

Mr FURNER: I may be of some assistance. Although it is not directly with regard to numbers, I can advise the committee that every primary producer I engage with takes animal welfare very seriously. In fact, many of the feedlots that are being established or renewed these days are providing shade for those animals. There is a direct focus on animal welfare as primary producers want to make sure their animals are cared for in the most appropriate ways.

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, you may need to bring that up directly with the minister's office. That may well be one of the issues that is debated, about why it is not in the bill, when that does come up. We have time for one more question. Member for Gympie?

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, I refer to SDS page 10 and the \$1 million grant to the Young Animal Protection Society. Under what funding program was the grant allocated and what is the criteria for the funding?

CHAIR: Bear with us a minute, member for Gympie. That is a specific question. I think we should be able to get some information for you.

Mr Gee: From my knowledge it is a direct election commitment.

Mr PERRETT: Is the funding in addition to the \$500,000 announced in last year's SDS on page 3?

Mr Gee: I am advised it is exactly the same.

Mr PERRETT: As an addition or as part of that?

CHAIR: We will get that answer for you. There is a lot of knowledge in the room by the looks of it.

Mr Gee: It is \$500,000 over two years. That is why it appears twice. It is \$1 million as it was an election commitment. If it is okay with the chair, back to your earlier question around disaster assistance grants, the number of applications received is 6,673.

CHAIR: I think you got your answer to the question you posed. Did you get the answer that you were happy with?

Mr PERRETT: There was one regarding the Drought Preparedness Grants. I do not know that that was completely answered.

Mr FURNER: I believe I provided those figures directly in regard to the number of applicants and the complete total of funding.

CHAIR: I remember it was quite extensive. You might need to check the transcript, member for Gympie.

Mr PERRETT: I refer to page 10 and the Young Animal Protection Society. Minister, who made that election commitment?


Mr FURNER: That was the government of the day, the Palaszczuk government.

Mr HART: The minister? The member for Cairns?

Mr PERRETT: I wondered who made the commitment because I am confused by it as I was trying to work out the criteria.

CHAIR: It may not be a specific individual, but the broad answer is that it was the government as a whole. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates for expenditure in the portfolio areas of agricultural industry development and rural communities has expired. I think we have answers for all the questions that were posed. Thank you, Minister, officials, staff and departmental officers for your attendance.

Proceedings suspended from 3.00 pm to 3.16 pm.

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the fisheries and forestry portfolio areas until 4.45 pm. Minister, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Mr FURNER: Once again I thank the committee for the opportunity to answer questions on the fisheries and forestry aspects of my portfolio. Again I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and their elders past, present and emerging. As with the previous hearing session, I am joined by my director-general, Bob Gee; my chief of staff, Dan McIntyre; and senior department and statutory body officers.

This state budget makes further important investments in our sustainable fisheries reforms. At the outset we knew that this was a long road but the allocation in the budget of a further \$28.1 million investment over the three years, as we head into the second half of the 10-year reform program, will enable us to continue our essential work. In the forestry space, the Palaszczuk Labor government continues to deliver on its commitment to work with the Native Timber Advisory Panel to provide advice to government to maintain a sustainable timber industry into the future.

The Palaszczuk government continues to be a strong supporter of these industries, which make an important contribution to the economy of our state and the lifestyles of our communities. I look forward to questions from members of the committee.

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, do you want to start off?

Mr McDONALD: Thank you, Chair. I will hand over to the shadow minister.

Mr PERRETT: My first question is to the minister. I refer to SDS page 2, relating to the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy to support fisheries reform. Minister, how much was spent on the fisheries reform process last year and how much has been budgeted to be spent this year?

CHAIR: Member, just clarifying: that is obviously by the department in the preparation and execution of that strategy? Is that the kind of thing you are after?

Mr PERRETT: That is right, to support the fisheries reform.

Mr FURNER: Obviously we continue to make good progress. We are well placed for the delivery of the 33 actions by 2027. We were allocated \$16.2 million in 2022-23 to support the continued delivery of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, which will support sustainable fisheries for all Queenslanders.

This includes the successful component of the commercial fishing industry and a vibrant and growing recreational sector. Progress reports on the implementation of the strategy are published on the DAF website. The year 4 progress report is available and shows that good progress is continuing in implementing the strategy.

The overall budget amount is \$101.3 million for fisheries and forestry in terms of direct funding and, as I indicated, there is \$16.2 million for sustainable fisheries. Once again, there is excellent advancement being made in this sector, and not just to support commercial fishers in export and domestic markets. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to modernise fisheries improvements through efficiencies and to support a resilient fishing industry.

If the member is interested, since commencement 31 stock assessments have been completed for 24 species and 35 fish stocks to inform the setting of sustainable catch limits. Stock assessments are currently underway for 13 species and 17 stocks. We have commenced the allocation of individual transferrable quota for five new ITQ managed species, the creation and allocation of new individual transferable effort for the Moreton Bay trawl region, and the reallocation of existing ITEs for the four new east-coast trawl regions.

Once again, there is additional support in terms of the wellbeing of fishers, particularly those experiencing difficulties through COVID-19. We provided a \$426,000 grant to Seafood Industry Australia to implement an industry-led Stay Afloat wellbeing program. We do recognise the pressure that was on fishers in our fisheries sector at that particular stage. Overall, the actual estimated amount was \$12,619,000, which supported 44 FTEs as well, when the budget allocation was \$16.223 million, once again supporting 44 allocated FTEs.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I refer to page 6 of the SDS and the renaming of the service area from 'Fisheries and Forestry' to 'Fisheries and Forestry Industry Development'. How much did it cost to rename the service area? How does this benefit the industry?

Mr FURNER: I note that the SDS measures are there. There was no cost associated with the change of the titles. It was to better reflect the industry and also my ministerial title of industry development.

Mr PERRETT: The second part of that question was: how does the name change benefit the industry? I am keen to know that because obviously it has been a conscious decision to change it. I just want some clarity around that.

Mr FURNER: Once again, that is reflected in the nature not only of fisheries but agriculture in general—to build the industries themselves. That is reflected in the budget of over \$608 million and sustainability of the numbers of FTEs in the jobs that support good jobs throughout Queensland. Certainly, these services have been renamed since the 2021-22 DAF SDS to better describe the services that DAF provides to its customers. The service standards define the level of performance that is expected to be achieved appropriate to the area of service. Service standards of efficiencies and effectiveness are measured.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I refer to page 6 of the SDS and the sustainable, high-value fisheries. On 31 March 2022 the minister said that Spanish mackerel stocks were at historically low levels and that 'action is needed to rebuild the stocks of this iconic fish'. On 8 July the minister ruled out the complete closure of the fishery because of 'the impact it would have on fishers, jobs and communities'. What happened between March and July to drastically change the position?

Mr FURNER: Chair, I would like to start by overemphasising the need to provide some detail in my response. The east coast Spanish mackerel is an iconic species in Queensland. It is important to understand the history behind that but also the fitting of the species within the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. I want to reassure members that no decision has been made at this point in time. That is why we are going through a lengthy process of consultation with not only commercial and recreational but also the sector as a whole, to make sure there were adequate opportunities for feedback. It follows a stock assessment of the species in 2021. The species was determined to be at a biomass of 17 per cent. It was independently reviewed by Dr Neil Klaer, a former CSIRO fisheries scientist. The reviewer agreed with the data in that it was used appropriately and the assessment model within itself. He did question the model setting of low resilience for the rebound or the bounce-back and was unable to support the modelled predictions; however, having tested that—and that is where I am referring to the steepness of the parameters of the fish itself—we were able to identify that there is a need to follow the path we were doing in terms of not only having consultation through engagement but also engaging with the scientific working group and the Spanish mackerel working group. The process commenced from there.

The first round of consultation opened on 6 April 2022 and closed on 5 May. There were some 1,500 submitters. Some 1,000 free-form written comments were received. At the request of the industry, DAF organised further engagement through meetings of commercial fishers and charter fishing operators affected. They held those meetings in Cairns, Townsville and the Sunshine Coast. These were attended by 33 commercial fishers. No charter fishers accepted invitations to those meetings. They also met with representatives of recreational fishing and the tackle industry. The final round of consultation is the second round. Once again, no decision has been made. We have put out two options to the industry. That commenced on 8 July this year. Consultations will close on 5 August 2022 to inform a final government decision beyond that.

Once again, I appreciate the member for Gympie's recognising that a final closure was not considered by the government, myself or the department. Once again, doing nothing is not an option in this case. I put on the record again that by taking no action the Spanish mackerel fishery could collapse. I am on record indicating that. We would lose \$6.7 million in that industry. We would lose 66 good FTE jobs from the commercial sector and \$6.8 million from the recreational sector alone. It is important that we act upon this.

The other thing people need to recognise—the committee, I am sure, would be versed with that—is that the wildlife trade operations governed by GBRMPA under federal government requirements have a lens over these fisheries, and no doubt other fishery species as a result. That is why it is important to act when stocks are in decline and when stocks are below the 20 per cent threshold, which is the trigger to take action in this respect. Once again, it is an iconic species. We recognise the importance of the fishery sector in itself, and that is why we have been undertaking these detailed consultative processes and ensuring we maintain a sector for our children and our grandchildren into the future.

Mr PERRETT: I have a question for the deputy director-general, Mr Bolton. Was there changed advice from the department to the minister to arrive at this new position?

Mr FURNER: I think the question should go through the director-general.

CHAIR: I was going to say that even though the question was to the DDG, it is the DG who is going to have to answer that.

Mr Gee: Could you repeat the question please, Mr Perrett.

Mr PERRETT: Was there changed advice from the department to the minister for the minister to arrive at this new position?

Mr Gee: I can answer that question: no. There was a range of options given to the minister. The science has not changed. We are guided by science. Our modelling and the analysis underpins all those options. We understand the concern of many people out there and that is why we continue to consult widely, but I think the scientific expert panel nailed it in one in terms of something had to be done.

Mr FURNER: Chair, may I complement the response given?

CHAIR: The question was to the DG. I will ask the minister the question and the time will come off our time. Can the minister furnish some more information on that question?

Mr FURNER: I wanted to make the point that all stock assessments are readily available on the fisheries website. One thing we have prided ourselves on is the need to make amendments to the legislation. This started when the member for Gympie's party was in government. The MRAG report set up this process. That was followed by a green paper. From there we have progressed to having sustainable fisheries legislation in place to make sure we provide sustainable fisheries into the future.

CHAIR: I will go back to the member for Gympie.

Mr PERRETT: I refer to page 6 of the SDS relating to the management system of Queensland fisheries. In 2009, Queensland Coroner O'Connell was scathing about Fisheries Queensland for bureaucratic obstruction. The industry declared no confidence in DAF whatsoever in terms of its ability to function as a responsible resource management agency. The March communique of the last East Coast Spanish Mackerel Working Group, published on DAF's website, states—

Recreational and commercial members expressed frustration with the level of communication from Fisheries Queensland ... regarding questions on the stock assessment inputs and methodology.

Minister, what has been done to address Fisheries Queensland's cultural issue of covering up and obstruction?

CHAIR: That is a long question and it contains argument and opinion. I would ask you to rephrase the question and without the preamble so it is a bit clearer what you are requesting the minister to address.

Mr PERRETT: I have the documents and they were contained in a coronial inquiry, but I will go directly to the question. What has been done to address Fisheries Queensland's cultural issue of covering up and obstruction?

Mr MADDEN: Come on. That is emotive.

Mr SMITH: Point of order.

Mr PERRETT: There is also a communique, that I referenced, which is on DAF's website.

CHAIR: I agree with the points of order from the members for Bundaberg and Ipswich West. That is in breach of standing orders 112 and 115.

Mr HART: In what way?

CHAIR: Because it contains argument and opinion. There is a possible inference—

Mr HART: He is quoting two sources.

CHAIR: Wait one moment. Minister, did you want to answer that question? I can give you a fair bit of latitude in answering.

Mr FURNER: I refute the imputation in the question with regard to an alleged cover-up by the good men and women of Fisheries Queensland. They work tirelessly seven days a week—and in many cases into the night—keeping our waters sustainable into the future for us, our children and grandchildren.

The state of Australian fish stocks report is readily available online. You will find no imputations as suggested by the member for Gympie in the assessments reported on there. They report that there is a status of 70 fish species from 102 stocks that occur in Queensland waters. This is peer reviewed and nationally adapted by SAFS protocols. If anyone has any allegations they should write to my office and we will deal with them accordingly. At this stage, I am not entertaining any alleged cover-up by our men and women of Fisheries Queensland.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, what is the government doing to communicate with commercial and recreational fishermen?

Mr FURNER: We just spoke about the engagement around the east coast Spanish mackerel as an example. The ongoing process of engaging on our sustainable fisheries policy is there to be seen. Some 11 working groups were established to make sure we have people available to have their views heard. That is across all sectors of the fisheries sector. They meet on a regular basis. I have been fortunate enough to be involved in some of those. I am impressed by their input. A feature of the sustainable fisheries strategy we put in place is making sure we have that engagement across the sector. There is regular engagement.

There has been development of applications to have that engagement so people can determine what their catches are. There is ongoing consultation. Probably the most thorough and best process of engagement is with our good men and women on the Queensland boating and fishery patrols. They work tirelessly seven days a week on our waters and meet with fishers directly. I enjoy meeting with them. Townsville was an occasion—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: in terms of standing order 118 I point out that the minister has answered the question and now he is going on to conversations he is having rather than—

CHAIR: Thank you, member. Remember I did say that I could have ruled that question out of order but I am allowing the minister to answer and would give him some latitude.

Mr FURNER: I know the opposition struggle with the fact that this government consults with industry. It is probably a facet that they would be best served adopting.

Mr PERRETT: It says on your communique you are not.

Mr FURNER: That is why I am known as 'Furner, the farmers' friend'. In many cases people refer to me as 'Furner, the fishers' friend'.

Mr PERRETT: Your website does not say that, Minister.

Mr FURNER: I will continue going out engaging with the whole of the industry because I thoroughly enjoy it. It is the best way to have engagement with the industry when you are facing these challenges.

Mr PERRETT: The communique says the opposite.

CHAIR: I caution members about interjections as it makes it hard to hear.

Mr PERRETT: I refer to page 6 of the SDS relating to the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and the minister's press release titled 'Ensuring a stronger Spanish mackerel fishery for the future' where he said that DAF will be 'improving our data by requiring recreational fishers to report their Spanish mackerel catch'. Minister, how will that be done? How will DAF ensure the data is accurate?

Mr FURNER: That is out for consultation currently.

Mr PERRETT: I am not sure that that actually answered the question. I was wanting to know how the department will ensure that the data from recreational fishermen is accurate.

Mr FURNER: I might ask my director-general to respond.

Mr Gee: If it is okay with the committee, I will throw to my deputy. The first point I would make is that our communication methods are open and transparent. I know this will come to building trust around all of those recreational fishers in particular. Their associations have clearly told us that they would like to provide data. For me, publishing open, different and dissenting views on our website where that exists is one of the most open and accountable processes I have seen in my 35 years of public service. I would ask my deputy to go into some more detail around the options available to us and the community. Of course we would take an approach where we want to encourage people to give that data.

Mr Bolton: As the director-general and the minister mentioned, we are currently out for consultation on what options might be made. What we heard through the first round of consultation is that there is overwhelming support for better recreational catch reporting. What we want to know from our recreational and commercial fishers now is how that should be done. There are a number of ways that could be done—through electronic apps on your phone, through physical logbooks or tags or through a number of other types of reporting including phone reporting. We have that as one of the questions in there including whether or not that should be mandatory or voluntary. Once we have that various information in, we will consider the technical aspects behind the various options in the feedback and we will make recommendations based on that.

CHAIR: I go to the member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: This might be a quick one because you have covered it fairly thoroughly. It might be better directed to the director-general. Firstly, I would like to ask about mackerel with regard to the change in the modelling from the 2018 stock assessment to the current. Can the director-general advise if a bridging analysis has been performed to compare the variations between the modelling of those two formulas to assess the current and previous biomasses?

Mr Gee: If it is okay, I will throw that question to the deputy director-general.

Mr Bolton: Probably an easy way to describe it, before I get to the crux of the question, is that the key difference between the 2016 and the 2020 stock assessment is that we are using much better technology now. If you look at the old style fish finders, 20 years ago they were basically paper based with a wire that scratched a line on the bottom. Now you have technology where you can actually see fish take your lure.

It is a very similar progression or evolution within the technology we are using. The stock synthesis model is the latest technology we are currently using. In addition to that, we have four years more worth of catch data—recreational, commercial and biological data—so we have a much richer model that we are now working from.

We are looking at a bridging analysis. That work will take some time to do. That is more to understand why there was a difference between the two so we can better explain that. Having said that, our independent review clearly identified that the model was appropriate, and our own Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel recommended that we accept that as the base model and that we make management decisions accordingly.

Mr KATTER: I understand there was resistance to providing data that has been collected through this process, which has upset a lot of fishermen. They are saying, 'How can we question it or how can we interrogate this?' Especially in the gulf fishery, the majority of the data is coming from the fishermen themselves. Is there still resistance to that? Could the minister explain why there is still resistance to being more transparent with giving the data back to the providers of that data?

Mr FURNER: Using the example of what we gauged from the stock synthesis modelling for Spanish mackerel, there was extensive feedback in terms of a whole variety of different fishers: 231,000 from Queensland commercial logbook records; 7,000 from New South Wales commercial records; 37,600 from Queensland charter logbook records; 70,100 from recreational or commercial caught

Spanish mackerel measures through that routine biological monitoring; more than 1,400 boat ramp surveys; and 18,100 age data records. I think there is more respect but also acknowledgement of the importance of factoring in all that data.

Also, the stock synthesis modelling is consistent with other states and the Commonwealth in terms of their modelling in regard to how they do stock assessments on fisheries. It is important that we accept the contemporary modelling when we do stock analysis. That is why I think it is important to not only recognise that but continue using that type of modelling into the future.

Mr KATTER: We have had discussions with timber harvesters in the north. The forestry industry has proven to be a highly sustainable industry but it has been decimated over the last 20 years. We have only small remnants of what the industry used to be. They are saying that their big problem into the future is tenure, with lease terms and availability. Has the government effected any significant change to address the disruption in timber supply we are now faced with in terms of tenure over forestry leases in the north?

Mr FURNER: We are working through the timber action plan. We are working with Timber Queensland to consider all of those facets of the timber industry. We do value the importance of the industry. I know that the member for Gympie is a very active member, as chair of the timber friendship group. It is important that we continually engage with them. If there is anything specific in relation to the matter you are raising, member for Traeger, I am happy to address that through a briefing or, if you can correspond with our office, I would be more than happy to do that. We met with NQ timber millers too and had forestry discussions with them, and they are ongoing. Once again, it is another factor of our continual engagement as a government but also under this portfolio to reach out to industry and have those matters satisfied and understood.

CHAIR: I refer to the first page of the SDS. Minister, can you explain how Fisheries Queensland is protecting our Queensland lifestyle, particularly when it comes to the Shark Control Program?

Mr FURNER: I want to state clearly that the Palaszczuk government will not compromise on human safety. That is why the Shark Control Program, as it stands, has been keeping Queenslanders safe since 1962. In fact, in that time there have only been two fatal shark attacks on beaches where Shark Control Program gear has been in place. Sadly, two fatalities have occurred but it is a record since 1962 that has been sustained in terms of protecting human life.

The Palaszczuk government is, and has always been, willing to look at ways to improve the Shark Control Program. That is why we have committed \$1 million each year to trial alternative shark mitigation technologies and \$2 million per year to extend our trial of drone surveillance in South-East Queensland for a further two years. Since September 2020 we have been trialling the use of drones on some of our popular beaches, together with Surf Life Saving Queensland. Trials have been conducted on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and North Stradbroke Island, as well as at Townsville and Cairns. No doubt it meets the requirements under CASA in relation to flying drones near airports. That is why it is important to understand the ability and capabilities around where they are flown.

Across seven beaches Surf Life Saving operated more than 3,600 flights covering nearly 1,500 kilometres, and beaches were temporarily evacuated four times because of intelligence gathering via the use of the drones. The technology complements the shark nets and the drum lines used across Queensland. I am pleased to announce that we will continue the partnership with Surf Life Saving Queensland operating those drones on selected beaches until 2025. In addition to the seven beaches I have mentioned, work is now underway to extend that trial to four new sites, with \$2 million a year dedicated funding for an extended trial. The new sites include the member for Gympie's beach of Rainbow Beach, Bribie Island, Noosa Main Beach and Kurrawa Beach.

Surf Life Saving Queensland is the most trusted organisation in this state. I join the member for Burleigh, who I think is still an active member of the Burleigh Surf Life Saving Club. I was a member for the North Burleigh Surf Life Saving Club in my younger days. Our department is partnering with Surf Life Saving Queensland, together with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, to spread the SharkSmart message. Messages will be placed in Beach Safe community booklets, as well as reaching tens of thousands of school and university students through Surf Life Saving community education programs.

Being SharkSmart means being responsible for your safety and for the safety of others in the water. You can be SharkSmart by doing the following: swim between the flags at patrolled beaches and check signage; have a buddy and look out for each other; avoid swimming at dawn or dusk; reduce risk, avoid schools of baitfish or diving birds; keep fish waste and food scraps out of the water where people swim; and swim in clear water away from fishers.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the minister. Minister, I refer to page 3 of the Service Delivery Statements in relation to sustainable fisheries. Can you confirm that the Palaszczuk government is on track to deliver on its commitment to having no overfished stocks by 2027?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for the question. When we came to government seven years ago it was abundantly clear that changes had to be made to the way the Queensland fishery is managed. It was fairly evident back then because the previous government commissioned the MRAG report, which I referred to earlier, but it had not been released. We did that. Some members of the committee may have forgotten about it or have never read it, but I wish to table copies of that review.

It was clear back then, and it is clear now, that there is a need for change. It has been a hallmark of this government that we always consult with the people of Queensland on reforms. That is why we did that with the release of the green paper in 2016. For the benefit of the committee, I present copies of that paper which was released for public consultation. The following year we released the white paper on fisheries reform. Copies of that paper were again released to the public for comment. I table that.

As you can see, Mr Chair, there was a very extensive period of consultation. There were no surprises with regard to what was coming. When we introduced the Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Act it was brought before this committee. Again the public had an opportunity to have their say on these proposed reforms during that process. More than 11,800 submissions were received and countless meetings with industry were held over a three-year period. I find it disappointing that, when you consider the volumes of material and the period of time over which we consulted on these reforms, the member for Gympie said in his budget reply speech that there is a need for a regulatory impact study. The people of Queensland, and in particular the fisheries sector, were consulted every step of the way.

We remain well placed to deliver all 33 actions set out in the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy by 2027. Almost half of the actions were delivered in the first two years. We have reviewed or set new commercial catch limits on 26 species or multiple species groups to support these reforms as well as new harvest strategies that began in September last year. We continue to consult with the industry. Eleven fishery working groups are now in place.

While this government is committed to a sustainable Queensland fisheries sector, unfortunately the same cannot be said of the LNP either here or when they were in government in Canberra. It is well-documented that in February 2019 the member for Gympie moved amendments in the House to give black marketers a five-day head start.

Mr PERRETT: Nonsense!

Mr FURNER: It is on the public record. *Hansard* is quite clear with regard to the amendments that were moved. Those amendments would have given black marketers a free kick. We would not have caught and prosecuted the number of black marketers that have appeared before the courts without the measures we took as a government to make sure they are caught and prosecuted according to law. It must also be said that Queensland fishers did not have the backing of the previous federal LNP government either.

The former federal environment minister played politics with environmental export accreditations and approval processes for fisheries. The process was increasingly inconsistent and complex. Export approvals for the mud crab and blue swimmer fisheries were revoked last year despite these fisheries being compliant with all of the conditions for approval. Export approvals for black teatfish have been revoked even though the last assessment showed that stocks are at 59 per cent. As a result of playing politics and being inconsistent, the former federal government hurt our fisheries and put their futures, earnings and markets at risk. I do welcome the opportunity to work with the new environment minister Tanya Plibersek and the Albanese government to ensure the best outcome for Queensland fisheries so they are sustainable, profitable and able to support good jobs into the future.

Mr SMITH: Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS in relation to the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. For those who do not have such a great understanding, could you please explain stock assessments and where they fit within the strategy?

Mr FURNER: A key part of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy is to get better data as well as regular stock assessments. I thank the member for Traeger for his recent question in this area. Stock assessments do more than just give us an idea about the quality of certain species of fish; they are essential for setting sustainable catch and effort quotas and testing the performance of fishery management strategies. They rely heavily on accurate catch and effort data as well as detailed information on the biology of the species.

Since the start of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 31 stock assessments have been completed for 24 species and 35 stocks. This is a great achievement. Until recently the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries used their own in-house programs for the stock assessment of Queensland fisheries. They have now switched to a model called stock synthesis, which is the most widely used and tested method of stock assessment in the world. It is more accurate, and it is recommended by the independent Sustainable Fisheries Strategy expert panel. It is also currently used in other jurisdictions across Australia as well as the CSIRO. This model was used to assess the east coast's common coral trout last year. It found that the unfished biomass of coral trout was around 60 per cent. That is significant, because 60 per cent is the nationally agreed figure at which a species of fish is considered economically and biologically sustainable. The same model was used to assess stocks of red emperor for the first time earlier this year. Stocks in this fishery are at a healthy 58 per cent.

The Palaszczuk government will always listen to and use the best available science when it comes to ensuring sustainable fisheries. The same stock synthesis model has also been used to assess Spanish mackerel fisheries. Unfortunately, as we now know stocks have declined to 17 per cent. That is below the nationally agreed trigger of 20 per cent and action must be taken to rebuild these stocks. Doing nothing is not an option. The fact that members of the opposition have questioned the science behind the Spanish mackerel assessment highlights their lack of understanding of Queensland's fisheries and the science. One cannot disagree with the stock assessment for Spanish mackerel and then accept the findings of the assessments for coral trout and red emperor. They all use the same science and modelling. That is why the Palaszczuk government can be trusted to implement these much needed reforms to Queensland's fisheries using the best available data and science to conduct stock assessments to ensure a fishing legacy for our children and grandchildren.

CHAIR: I refer to page 6 of the Service Delivery Statements. Minister, can you outline what support the Palaszczuk government provides to ensure Fisheries Queensland meets its objective to position Queensland as a world leader in fishing experiences?

Mr FURNER: I have said repeatedly that the Palaszczuk government wants to create a sustainable fisheries legacy for our children and their children. That is why we provide several grant schemes across the commercial, recreational and fishing sectors to encourage more people to take up fishing and, importantly, support sustainable practices.

The Commercial and Charter Fishing Grant Program provides \$250,000 to promote behaviour change and industry modernisation of the commercial fishing and charter fishing industries in Queensland by supporting modern and innovative initiatives. Mr Chair, 2021-22 is the first year the program was delivered with a range of initiatives as part of the Queensland government's commitment to continue the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. In 2021-22 the program received 28 applications, with four applications being awarded a total of \$250,000 in funding. Successful applicants include: OceanWatch Australia for a project focused on sustainable fishing practices and education; the Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association for a project focused on sustainable fishing practices and education; James Cook University for a project looking at biomass estimates related to corals; and Dragon Lady Tours for a project on the effectiveness of electronic shark deterrent devices.

The Palaszczuk government wants to see more people take up recreational fishing, and that is why we have increased our funding compliance and commitment to Queensland's community fishing grant program from \$200,000 to \$250,000. Mr Chair, 26 community based not-for-profit organisations, fishing clubs and incorporated associations will receive funding for fishing projects such as fishing clinics, research, promoting recreational fishing or fish habitat improvement. For example, the Rockhampton Regional Council will receive \$10,000 to support Fishing the Fitzroy.

The Australian Fishing Trade Association will receive \$27,310 to provide an Indigenous youth recreational fishing cultural exchange program in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Brisbane. The Gladstone Area Promotion and Development will receive \$51,000 towards a Gladstone Regional Fishing Trail.

The Palaszczuk government cannot create a sustainable world-class fishery without the continued support and the commitment of our commercial, recreational and charter fishers. Our grants schemes continue that partnership and commitment to the sector to support the good jobs and the profitability of one of Queensland's iconic industries, as well as supporting the great lifestyle that Queenslanders can enjoy through fishing.

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

Mr PERRETT: I have a follow-up question on Spanish mackerel. I refer the minister back to his press release when he stated 'commercial fishers and charter fishing operators who are most likely to be affected by future management changes'. Minister, will there be an economic assessment on the impact that reduced catches will have on the livelihoods of commercial fishers and the regional communities they operate out of?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question, and no doubt consultation is out there now. In my earlier response to I think it was the member for Traeger, we indicated that doing nothing is not an example of how we will conduct the sustainability. If no action is taken, there will not be a fishery. We will lose \$6.7 million and 66 good FTE jobs as a result out of the commercial sector and \$6.8 million from the recreational sector.

Once again, there is a lens over the fishery species at present by the federal government or GBRMPA of wildlife trade operations. We need to conform with those requirements of WTO. In my response to the member for Bundaberg, I referred to what occurred with regard to the previous LNP federal government breaches of WTO. We do not want to go down a path of that being the same example used here with regard to a decline in the east coast Spanish mackerel. It is extremely important that we not only comply with the law but also make sure we follow our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy to make sure this stock is there for the future for our children and grandchildren.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I do not dispute that ongoing assessment needs to take place. My question was quite specific and related to the economic impact, given it was acknowledged in a press release that it is likely to happen. I do not understand, and I would like you to explain, why there will not be an economic impact assessment on the effect it will have on the livelihoods of those commercial fishers. I am just asking why there will not be an economic impact assessment. That is the question.

Mr FURNER: It seems repetitive, Chair. I have just responded to the member with regard to the impact should we do nothing.

Mr PERRETT: I am not disputing that, and I said that in my preamble. I asked why there will not be an economic assessment of the impact. Surely that has to be known, regardless of what the government does or does not do. This is the livelihoods of commercial fishermen and charter boat operators identified within your press release.

Mr FURNER: Once again, I have outlined to the member the economic impact on the fishery sector, both commercial and recreational, if we do not take this action.

Mr PERRETT: I get that. I understand that. It is the economic impact assessment to those commercial fishers and charter operators—what impact it is going to have.

Mr HART: They are two different things.

Mr PERRETT: They are two different things and that is why I want to know.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I know that you have dismissed it previously about regulatory impact statements, but I am just asking, with respect to the work that is happening at the moment, whether that could be a consideration of the department, to do that economic impact assessment.

CHAIR: We have a point of order from the member for Bundaberg.

Mr SMITH: It is reinforcing the point of repetition. The minister has said twice that he believes he has answered the question satisfactorily and the member for Gympie continues to ask the same question. Perhaps we should move on.

Mr PERRETT: No, in my view he has not answered it.

CHAIR: We have had the figures provided. The point of order does have some validity because the answer has been given in terms of what are the economic impacts. These are the figures.

Mr HART: On that point of order, Chair, the member is asking what is the impact if the minister does nothing. That is what the minister has already told us. Now he is asking what is the impact on the industry if something is done. They are two different questions.

Mr SMITH: The minister has said that he has answered the question to his satisfaction.

CHAIR: One moment. Are you talking about a regulatory impact statement? Is that what you are talking about?

Mr PERRETT: An economic impact assessment, or regulatory impact statement if the minister likes.

CHAIR: Are you asking if an RIS has been done on the effect of taking action?

Mr PERRETT: I said: will it be done as part of this ongoing work that the department is doing?

CHAIR: I am not sure where we can go with this without being repetitive but I am trying to help out.

Mr HART: They are two different things.

CHAIR: Minister, I do not know what further information you can give, seeing there has been an assessment done of not taking action and also of taking action.

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. Once again, consultation is out there currently. As I indicated, it will close on 5 August. If the member is suggesting there needs to be a RIS, a regulatory impact statement, on determining whether compensation should be paid or not be paid, my understanding is that, because this matter is as a result of the overfished status of the species, financial compensation is not payable under the legislation.

Mr PERRETT: But I specifically asked about an economic impact statement.

Mr FURNER: Financial compensation is economic.

Mr HART: Do you know how much damage financially you will do to the industry if you take this action?

CHAIR: I think we are going around in circles on this.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair, under standing order 236.

Mr HART: It is a straightforward question.

CHAIR: The member for Burleigh has assisted his colleague on this but the information that is being given is becoming repetitive. I do not know what else you can add, Minister.

Mr PERRETT: I accept that it is not going to be answered so we will move on.

Mr HART: A repetitive no answer.

CHAIR: No. I think we are at cross-purposes here. We will move to the next question.

Mr McDONALD: Minister, the government has promoted a commitment to mental health. However, the Australian Productivity Commission in its review of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy criticised the government for failing to conduct a regulatory impact statement, including an analysis of mental health impacts on fishermen. Will the government do a regulatory impact statement and consider the impact these mental health issues have on fishermen?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Lockyer for his question. As we did and are still doing during COVID-19, we provided substantial funding to the fisheries sector as a result of the loss of their export trade. One of the initiatives we did back in 2021 was that the government backed the Queensland commercial fishers with a \$59,000 Stay Afloat program, which is a nationally recognised resilience and wellbeing program. That funding was provided to Seafood Industry Australia to trial industry-specific mental health pilot programs with Stay Afloat into Queensland, building on those three existing locations in New South Wales, Victoria and Darwin.

In 2021-22 the Queensland government provided an additional \$426,000 grant to Seafood Industry Australia to continue and expand the industry-led Stay Afloat wellbeing program in Queensland. The Stay Afloat program has been developed to help break the stigma associated with poor mental health within the commercial seafood industry, to develop a network of trusted industry advocates whom fishers can reach out to and find support from and to educate primary healthcare networks about industry pressures. The program has been well received and we are considering options to support continued implementation and support for fishers in Queensland. Stay Afloat advocates have attended meetings with Spanish mackerel fishers and provided important assistance during the recent consultation for fishers.

Mr McDONALD: With regard to that activity, has representation been made to the Minister for Health regarding the mental health effects of fishermen from the reforms?

Mr FURNER: That would be a question directed to the Minister for Health. I think she appears before the relevant estimates committee this Friday. No doubt, once again—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair. The question was: have representations been made to the Minister for Health?

CHAIR: I think the minister is about to cover that.

Mr HART: Have you made representations?

Mr FURNER: For the record, the state budget for mental health overall is \$1.46 billion. As my charter letter demonstrates, I do have responsibility to confer with the Minister for Health and I will be taking that opportunity when it arises. We meet on a regular basis. It is important, I believe, particularly with the Stay Afloat example, that we try as best as is practical to break down that stigma of mental health as a result of the impacts on persons that are affected by circumstances at hand, particularly if it is COVID-19 or whatever the case might be. We have done that through other circumstances in agriculture when they have been affected by adverse weather conditions as well. The member for Gympie would be well aware of that. After the monsoonal event in 2019, we travelled up there on the Flinders Highway and saw the effect on the mental health of people in primary industry. People were extremely affected, and that is what all governments do.

Mr PERRETT: I will move on. Minister, I refer to SDS page 6 relating to implementing the native timber action plan. Almost three years ago the Premier committed to a comprehensive two-year study to identify sustainable future options for timber supply. Minister, what recommendations has the study outlined and what is the status of those recommendations?

Mr McDONALD: Good question.

Mr FURNER: It is a good question. Once again I commend the member for Gympie for his advocacy on the forestry friendship group, along with the member for Maryborough, Bruce Saunders. Since that time, there has been a planned delivery of some immediate decisions, including the state owned native timber production in the South-East Queensland regional plan. There is still work to be done to achieve a long-term sustainable future for the native timber industry across Queensland and puts that balance on the good jobs in that industry and the environment. The panel chair is Mr Alan Feely. He brings substantial experience to the committee in that role. He has held numerous senior roles in the Queensland government—Deputy Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, the former department of natural resources.

The panel includes representations by native timber industry, conservation and research sector unions and First Nations people. They met seven times. I think I have met with them at least twice. The panel's first communique was released in December 2021, outlaying its progress. They cover a wide range of issues related to native forestry on state, privately owned land, conservation outcomes, economic and job impacts, and opportunities for regional communities. They have reviewed the draft revised *Managing a native forest practice accepted development vegetation clearing code*. That has been reported to the panel's submissions to me which my colleague, the Hon. Scott Stewart, Minister for Resources, has carriage over. Certainly the panel's submissions will be considered by the Minister for Resources as a result of that also and review that particular code.

An estimate and future sustained yield by state opened native timber in Eastern hardwoods region has been completed and provided to panel members also. This was the first output of studies undertaken under long-term sustainable supply of state owned native timber resources and a key commitment to the plan, no doubt. The specialised technical work was overseen by DAF and included tasks such as data correlation and also on-site inventory work and data analysis and future forest growth modelling. Similar assessment work on state opened native timber resources in other supply regions has now commenced and the assessments of the available native timber resources on privately owned land are also being undertaken. That includes remote and field based data collection and analysis. The outcomes of those studies will ensure future decisions on the supply of Queensland important native timber resources.

I want to finalise on that, Chair, by indicating that this is a valuable industry. It supports many thousands of jobs throughout the state. However, these are difficult times for that particular industry, due to not only the floods and weather events they have experienced but also supporting those people whose houses were damaged through the recent weather events earlier this year and getting them back on their feet, as well as the growth in population into the state from southern states putting pressure on the industry as a whole.

CHAIR: We will go to a question from this side. Member for Bundaberg.

Mr SMITH: Minister, my question refers to page 6 of the SDS and it refers to responsibly managing the allocation and use of state owned forests and related resources. Can you please outline the importance of research and supporting our timber industry?

Mr FURNER: Chair, the Queensland timber industry is worth \$4.4 billion and it proudly supports 9,000 jobs. Native timber harvesting is ceasing at the end of 2024 in the South-East Queensland regional planning area. At this stage, supply in the Eastern hardwoods region has been extended to 2026. Now is the perfect time to invest in research, to invest in alternative sustainable forest options and products.

The timber industry has come a long way in Queensland. For many who are not intimately familiar with the industry, you can understand how they may not have a sense on how complex it is. There is so much more than finding timber, cutting it down and shipping it off. In our state of Queensland, it is vital to construction. It is part of a complex manufacturing supply chain. It is at the forefront of new technologies that could change the face on how we build and fit out our homes and other buildings. This is where engineering wood comes in.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is investing in research to increase productivity of forestry by-products. For those unfamiliar with the process, when logs are harvested, transported to the sawmill and turned into lumber, the by-products are used to manufacture kitchen benches, furniture, particle board and bioenergy. DAF's Agri-Science Queensland's forest product innovation team has a number of projects on the go, investing in different ways of using engineered wood products which can directly substitute for high background emission products currently in construction and reduce wood waste by 30 per cent. One project funded by DAF and the University of Queensland Future Timber Hub, included the installation of wireless moisture monitoring sensors at the Maryborough fire station which is currently under construction and is being using engineered wood. The year-long project will examine the environmental impact on engineering wood products with the sensors allowing ASQ to monitor potential variation in moisture during the build, with the objective of minimising exposure to high-moisture content which can lead to deterioration.

Another collaboration between DAF and UQ includes the installation of a cross-laminated timber structure at the DAF Salisbury research facility to investigate the moisture performance of the panels. Through you, Chair, I encourage you to get the committee out there to have a look at that centre. It is amazing the work they do out there. I have been there on a couple of occasions and I am always impressed with the work they are doing in terms of the progression of timber.

By investing in projects like this we can grow the construction industry by bringing another building product to the table. DAF has also been looking at environmentally conscious projects including using recycled tyre crumbs and wood particles to create particle board. The two-year project collaboration with Tyre Stewardship Australia will investigate the performance of the product and the advantages of using rubber crumb which could assist with noise dampening, skid resistance and surface grip. This is just a small glimpse of the groundbreaking research being undertaken by DAF. These projects could not only alter the industry but also look at sustainable and innovative solutions for the future.

CHAIR: I refer to page 6 of the Service Delivery Statements and the objective of positioning Queensland as a world leader in fishing experiences. Can you explain what this means for the recreational fishing sector in Queensland?

Mr FURNER: I thank the chair for his question. It is fair to say Queenslanders love to throw in a line. I do occasionally when I get a chance, but it is very rare. In the last recreational fishing survey nearly one million people said they had been recreational fishing during the previous 12 months. Who could blame them when we have some of the best fishing spots off our coast and some of our best stock impoundments? From barramundi to bass, coral trout to Murray cod and mud crab to marlin, we have it all here in Queensland, and the Palaszczuk government wants to see those numbers grow. That is why we introduced the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, to ensure a fishing legacy for our children and their children.

This year the Palaszczuk government increased the Queensland Community Fishing Grants Program, from \$200,000 to \$250,000, and community groups right across Queensland are set to benefit yet again. For instance, the Tableland Fish Stocking Society has been given a grant to run educational clinics while the Australian Fishing Trade Association has received more than \$27,000 to provide an Indigenous fishing culture exchange program in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Brisbane. The recreational fishing sector contributed more than \$337 million to the Queensland industry thanks to these grants which will help drive good jobs and growth in the industry.

If we can encourage more people to fish, that means more jobs for local economies, from bait to tackle sales through to tourism and accommodation. Members will be happy to note that when it comes to fishing the Palaszczuk government is already ahead. Earlier this year we launched the women in recreational fishing program to create a safe place online for women fishers of all abilities and backgrounds to share their experiences. At the last survey approximately 347,000 women and girls had participated in recreational fishing activities across the state and the Women in Recreational Fishing Network is an exciting platform to increase the participation rate.

I want to put on record my thanks to Dallas D'Silva, who is now with our fisheries sector, who spoke to me personally about this incentive and the opportunity to include women in fisheries. It is a great initiative. This Facebook network has already attracted over 500 members since it was launched, and a group of WIRF members are attending the AFTA conference on the Gold Coast in August to meet industry leaders. Fisheries Queensland and the Palaszczuk government will support this network and provide members with opportunities to develop leadership and promote knowledge sharing. This is yet another example of our government's commitment to Queensland's women.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the minister and it relates to fisheries enforcement. I refer to page 6 of the Service Delivery Statements. Will you outline how providing education and enforcing fishing regulations is ensuring the sustainability of fishery resources for commercial, recreational and traditional fishers?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Ipswich West for his question. In order for Queenslanders to be confident they have sustainable fisheries into the future supporting secure jobs in the commercial and charter sectors and providing access to preferred catch for recreational and traditional fishers, it is critical that rules supporting our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy are understood, applied and enforced. In 2021-22 the Queensland government invested over \$15.7 million in the state's fisheries compliance program, and we are investing a similar amount this financial year.

Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol has a massive job. They monitor fishing activities along 7,000 kilometres of coastline not to mention hundreds of freshwater rivers and impoundments inland as well. That is all done by 103 authorised officers. I remind the committee that it was this government that reversed the cuts of the previous administration by employing 20 new officers and reopening the Gladstone office, increasing our ability to protect and monitor Queensland's precious fisheries.

In 2021-22 QBFP officers and their fleet of 75 vessels and 12 drones delivered an overall compliance rate on inspected vehicles of 88 per cent, and we are aiming for 90 per cent this year. Noncompliance is addressed through education, field cautions, official written cautions and fisheries infringement notices, and more serious offences are dealt with through the courts. Maximum penalties up to \$413,550, or three years imprisonment, can apply. In 2021-22, QBFP issued 728 fisheries infringement notices and 1,285 cautionary infringement notices under the provisions of the Fisheries Act 1994. Total penalties were more than \$380,000. In the same period 34 court prosecutions were finalised for offences against the act.

Much of the QBFP's compliance work is undertaken using the fleet of 75 commercially registered vessels located in 19 locations across the state, from the Gold Coast in the south to Weipa in the north. The fleet comprises personal watercraft, aluminium dinghies, rigid-hull inflatable boats and larger offshore vessels. Those wishing to exploit our fisheries resources are becoming craftier and the QBFP needs to evolve with the times. That is why the Palaszczuk government has been supporting the QBFP move towards more intelligence based compliance and surveillance activities to provide intelligence functions to inform local, regional and state fisheries investigations.

Specialist investigators conduct complex investigations into activities such as black marketing, and body worn cameras continue to be used by officers to help improve their safety on the water and to collect that evidence. Twelve drones are deployed around the state including the Gold Coast, Warwick, Noosa, Harvey Bay, Bundaberg, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and in Brisbane, with trained pilots in each of those locations. Footage from those drones can be used to gather intelligence, prosecute people who break the rules and support training of the marine animal rescue teams.

Along with body cameras and drones, the QBFP's surveillance capabilities have been turbocharged with an array of high-resolution, digital dashboard, infrared cameras, night-vision monoculars, ghillie suits and other covert surveillance gear. As I noted earlier, this compliance activity is vital to protecting the fish stocks which underpin Queensland's commercial charter, recreational and traditional fishing sectors.

It was the LNP that moved to repeal our sustainable fishing regulations. This would have devastated our fisheries industry, particularly the exporters. By enforcing the rules, we are supporting good jobs in Queensland and protecting fish stocks for the future. It is the Palaszczuk Labor government that continues to build our legacy of sustainable fisheries for our children and our grandchildren well into the future.

Mr SMITH: Minister, with reference to SDS page 6, how is the Palaszczuk Labor government ensuring the future of Queensland's timber industry?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring long-term sustainability of our timber industry. In 2020 we committed to establishing a ministerial advisory committee to bring together representatives of our timber industry to

ensure all aspects of the industry can provide input. As chair, I am proud to say that it has come to fruition. The timber industry ministerial round table membership includes peak industry entities representing softwood and hardwood processing, plantation production, native forest growers and end users along with representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Timber Queensland to focus on the Queensland government's future strategic direction in this all-important industry, which has an annual turnover of around \$4.4 billion and an employment workforce of about 9,000 employees including in the electorate of Gympie.

When people think about the timber industry, their thoughts automatically go to building and construction, but it goes much further than that. If we follow the chain from the moment the trees are planted or harvested to the moment they are collected and transported to the mill for processing, that cut timber is sent off to be assembled into housing frames, furniture, decking, paper when the waste is used, to make furniture and benchtops. The list goes on. Everywhere you look you can guarantee that some part of the material originated somewhere from the timber value chain and this is why we need to support this industry. We need to identify and explore ways to grow the industry across the board, from native plantations and processing areas. We need to look at any potential investment issues and we need to strengthen the industry through research and development, in particular supporting our regional areas.

The timber industry ministerial round table will also explore climate-friendly options such as carbon sequestration and greener construction methods. Under the former federal government our state missed out on participating in the Emissions Reduction Fund—a missed opportunity. This could incentivise the industry and I look forward to working with the new federal government to ensure a better future for our timber industry in this state. The Palaszczuk government is committed to the long-term sustainability of this incredibly important Queensland industry. From the implementation of our Native Timber Advisory Panel to the implementation of the timber industry ministerial round table, we are dedicated to getting the best outcome for our industry and for Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will go to the member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: Minister, it has been brought to my attention on several occasions of reports of illegal fishing activity in the gulf fisheries over the years and more recently an allegation of an overseas—namely, Chinese—interest looking to take advantage of the agreement made over the Torres Strait fisheries through Papua New Guinea. Has the minister identified that as a risk to our fishery and what actions have you taken to address those risks, if any?

CHAIR: Minister, I usually ask for these things to be verified, but obviously with illegal fishing there are always claims out there. Can you furnish an answer to this one?

Mr FURNER: Yes. I thank the member for Traeger for his question. No doubt this has been raised. I can indicate, member for Traeger, that the mayor of Mornington Island personally came to see me early in the piece after he was elected and we directed him to the work in particular of those officers from the Weipa QBFP and asked for further advice from him. No doubt through the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority there are opportunities for this matter to be raised as well. I am really happy that the new agriculture, fisheries and forestry minister has all of those parts in his portfolio given that it was broken up with the previous minister. Previously forestry and fisheries was a junior portfolio and now it is under the auspices of the relevant minister, so it is important that we engage with him over these matters as well.

No doubt there is also a role for AFMA to engage in, but I would really encourage further consultation with you to provide me with that material for our next engagement with the minister over the aspects that you have raised here at today's estimates because I know that he is keen to make sure that he is aware of these matters. Once again I offer that opportunity to you or anyone else on the committee to have that engagement with my office given the current circumstances at hand. He is extremely busy no doubt with biosecurity matters, but I know that he has a strong interest in fisheries and being able to work with his colleagues in terms of any alleged illegal fisheries in our waters beyond our state waters in Queensland.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 2 relating to the future of native timber harvesting. Timber Queensland has called for the state owned supply arrangements to be extended for a minimum of 10 years to avert an industry crisis. Will the government commit to extending the SEQ RFA from 2024 to 2034 and if not why not?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. No doubt the loss of forested areas through expanding urban development has definitely had an impact on remaining areas, including state forests set aside for timber production becoming increasingly more valued by the community. That is why DAF is working with the balance of those interests including assuring biodiversity, habitat and forest health,

soil, water and cultural heritage and other values are appropriately managed through timber harvesting operations. Additionally, the native timber action plan includes a commitment to progressively transition up to 20,000 hectares of state forests to this region to add to Queensland's protected area estate before 31 December 2024. The supply of state owned native hardwood in the eastern hardwoods region and the northern part of the former South-East Queensland forest agreement region will continue until 2026, so future supply will be informed through comprehensive studies of native timber resources to estimate long-term sustainable state owned supply.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 2 again that relates to the future of native timber harvesting and industry calls for a category F. Has the minister advocated to the Minister for Resources the industry proposed inclusion of a category F in the Vegetation Management Act?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. Maybe this matter is best asked of the Minister for Resources in his portfolio responsibility, but obviously I would be willing to see what the recommendation is from the panel on those sorts of things. I can inform the committee that there was a whole range of things that were discussed last week with the forestry round table and we will continue engaging with the industry about matters, whether it be the establishment of category F and how we deal with the sustainability of forestry. It is a good question—I admit that—but no doubt the main auspices and responsibility fits within the governance of Minister Stewart, the Minister for Resources, to have that dialogue. Once again, I would be happy to have more engagement with the member for Gympie along with the possibility of a further briefing by the Minister for Resources as well.

Mr PERRETT: Just as a follow-up to that—and I note your acknowledgement that industry has proposed a category F and there are some challenges in and around where it sits—I ask the minister: has the minister advocated for the proposed category F to be removed from the Vegetation Management Act and be included within the Forestry Act?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. We are obviously awaiting those recommendations from the panel, but once again we will have that discussion. That is a facet of a lot of the ministerial responsibilities from portfolio to portfolio and the member would realise, being a primary producer himself, that there is a lot of overlap from other portfolios with regard to the interactions with agriculture. We will have those discussions, we will await the recommendations from the review and we will consider the future with respect to that particular aspect.

CHAIR: I go to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks very much, Chair. I want to put my first question to the director-general, if I could. You might be aware of media back in March that reported a false killer whale had been captured and taken to Sea World for rehabilitation after beaching itself. This is not an orca; it is a different member of the dolphin family. Last week Sea World posted on its page that the animal had died. Can you advise whether Village Roadshow Theme Parks had applied for a licence to exhibit this false killer whale under the Exhibited Animals Act and does the department have any information on the cause of the animal's death?

Mr FURNER: Just as a point of clarification, this may be a matter that fell within the exhibited animals part of the legislation which we dealt with in the early part of proceedings today. I know in some cases there is confusion between fisheries and exhibited animals, but that certainly would be my view, and I would be happy to hear your view in that respect, Chair.

CHAIR: I think that is a relevant point, that it may come under the Animal Care and Protection Act, but could the director-general furnish any information that he may have on this particular matter?

Mr Gee: Thank you, Chair. I just reiterate what the minister said: it is dealt with under the biosecurity provisions in legislation.

Mr BERKMAN: They are mammals, but they are ocean-dwelling mammals. Is there any practical obstacle to the question being answered in this forum?

Mr FURNER: Chair, once again there is a process that the member for Maiwar can avail himself of. There are no other committee hearings on today. The member for Maiwar could have been in appearance for the other part of the hearing that dealt with exhibited animals.

Mr BERKMAN: I was here and I took every opportunity that was available to me to ask questions. If the inclination is to hide behind standing orders, by all means. I will ask an alternative question if I could.

CHAIR: Do not engage in argument across the table. I think you have the answer that you are going to get because it clearly came under the auspices of the first part of the hearing. Did you have any further questions?

Mr BERKMAN: Yes, I have. I will put this question to the minister in relation to the Queensland Shark Control Program. You would be aware of lots of work in this space at the moment. There was the recent Cardno report reviewing non-lethal approaches to shark nets and drum lines and a Senate inquiry recommending transition to non-lethal methods. We have seen the entanglement of at least five whales in nets this year, yet you have confirmed that the government has no plans to remove any shark nets or drum lines, as understand it. Minister, who made the decision not to remove shark control nets ahead of humpback whale migration season and on what basis, given that this contradicts the recommendations of the government's own Shark Control Program Scientific Working Group?

Mr FURNER: I am happy to respond broadly in regard to the question. There is work being done. I apologise that the member was not present when we gave a response in relation to the good work that is being done in respect of surveillance drone technology. There has been more than \$6 million put into further enhancement of a further four beaches in regard to using drone technology, the consideration of looking at zones to also provide for coverage in regard to measures of assisting people to safely bathe or do water activities in those areas, but we need to work with those councils on those sorts of things.

Mr BERKMAN: Point of order, Chair, on relevance. I am mindful that time is very short. I did hear the answers before around remote drone monitoring. The question specifically is: who made the decision not to remove the shark nets ahead of humpback whale migration season and on what basis, given that this is contradicted by the government's own Shark Control Program Scientific Working Group?

CHAIR: I am not sure how you are going to answer that, Minister, but I invite you to continue on with the answer you are providing.

Mr FURNER: In my view there have been no significant changes to the program. As we have been up-front all along, since 1962, the initial policy position is to protect human life. That is paramount in terms of what we do as a government in terms of making sure our waters are free from shark attacks. No doubt there is a continued expansion of whales up and down the coastline as a result of migration. That is why we are looking at drone technology. We are expanding the program. We are looking at alternatives through technology. There are a whole host of technologies available. We will continue investing in those, as we have in this budget, and look at those technologies that are new and exciting to make sure that people are protected but also marine life is protected. That is why we have a catch and release program for those areas that we are trialling—a very successful program, catching and releasing those three types of sharks, whether it be bull sharks, white sharks or tiger sharks, in those locations where the catch and release lines are in place.

Mr BERKMAN: Can I take it from your answer that your assertion is that the risk of shark bite would increase if Queensland shark nets and drum lines were removed? Is that your assertion?

CHAIR: There is an implication there. I know, member for Maiwar, you are asking about our program, but I did not hear the minister travelling towards what you are implying.

Mr BERKMAN: That is why I am seeking clarification.

CHAIR: I think it is a bit argumentative. I do not know how the minister can answer that—

Mr BERKMAN: I know how the minister can answer it.

CHAIR:—unless the member wants to rephrase that question.

Mr FURNER: We support the Shark Control Program, as we have done since 1962.

Mr BERKMAN: The question as I put it was: is it your assertion that the risk of shark bite would increase in Queensland if Queensland shark nets and drum lines were removed?

Mr FURNER: That is a hypothetical.

Mr BERKMAN: It is absolutely not hypothetical. It is a question about assertions implicit in your answer.

CHAIR: I understand where you are going, but it is hypothetical and argumentative as well.

Mr BERKMAN: There is nothing hypothetical about that question.

CHAIR: I am going to rule that the minister has answered that.

Mr HART: Before you wrap up, can I correct the record? Minister, I am a member of Pacific Surf Club—before someone takes me to task about that.

Mr FURNER: My apologies.

CHAIR: The time allocated for the consideration of estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities has expired. Minister, did you want to give a brief wrap-up?

Mr FURNER: I would like to thank the committee members for their questions. I hope the members have gained a new and updated appreciation of the work being undertaken in support of our fishers, our farmers and our foresters. I thank the committee also for their questions on such an important sector of the Queensland economy. I know they are all committed and experienced members of this committee who value the agriculture sector. I would also like to place on record once again my standing offer to any member for the opportunity to talk to my office and request a briefing on these subjects we spoke about today, or any other broad subject in agriculture. I would also like to thank primary producers for their massive contribution to the food and fibre that Queensland is renowned for around the world. Finally, I would like to thank all the hardworking men and women of the department, who played such an important role in preparing today's hearing, for what they do each and every day for the people of Queensland. Also I would like to thank Hansard for their important work in capturing all the words and content of today's hearing. Thank you.

CHAIR: We have no question on notice. Thank you, Minister; thank you, officials, departmental officers and ministerial staff for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and we will resume at 5 pm to examine the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water.

Proceedings suspended from 4.47 pm to 5.00 pm.

ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE—REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURING; WATER

In Attendance

Hon. GJ Butcher, Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water

Ms F Stewart, Chief of Staff

Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water

Mr G Fraine, Director-General

Ms L Dobe, Deputy Director-General, Water Resource Management

Ms B Zerba, Deputy Director-General, Regional Economic Development

Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority (Seqwater)

Mr N Brennan, Chief Executive Officer

Sunwater

Mr G Stockton AM, Chief Executive Officer



CHAIR: The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. My name is Chris Whiting. I am the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. The other committee members are: Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; Mr Jim Madden, the member for Ipswich West; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. The visiting members who have been given leave to appear are: the member for Broadwater, the member for Kawana, the member for Maroochydore, the member for Warrego, the member for Gympie, the member for Nanango, the member for Burdekin, the member for Condamine, the member for Glass House, the member for Scenic Rim, the member for Maiwar and the member for South Brisbane.

The committee will examine the minister's portfolio area of water until 6.30 pm and the estimates for the regional development and manufacturing portfolio areas from 6.45 pm to 7.45 pm. I remind those present today that this hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply to this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112, 115 and 118 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, arguments, inferences, imputations or opinions.

The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that all phones and electronic devices be switched to silent mode. Also, I remind you that food and drink, outside of tea and coffee in keep cups, are not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, ministerial staff, departmental officers and members of the public. 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 water, regional development and manufacturing 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 three minutes.

Mr BUTCHER: It is great to be here to speak about what we are delivering in the water portfolio in Queensland. I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands on which we gather today and their elders past, present and emerging.

Queensland is growing. In the past few years we have had tens of thousands of people migrating to Queensland. Businesses are also diversifying what they grow and where they grow it, which is driving more jobs and more investment in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government knows that water is a

precious commodity for agriculture right through to resources, energy, tourism, community development and emerging industries such as hydrogen. A secure water supply brings people to communities and provides opportunities for economic and social development.

The recent budget saw our investment in water infrastructure and planning grow to more than \$3.4 billion since 2015. Thanks to this investment, more than 2½ thousand jobs have been created in many regions of Queensland. It includes our commitment of more than \$300 million to the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline to deliver a reliable drought contingency supply for the Southern Downs and a permanent water supply to Toowoomba's satellite communities. Other notable projects include the Gracemere to Mount Morgan pipeline, stage 1 of the Cairns water security project, the Hughenden water bank and connecting the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct to the Haughton pipeline.

We are also progressing important projects such as Rookwood Weir, which is on track to be delivered next year; restoring Paradise Dam; finishing the south-west pipeline; and investigating raising Burdekin Falls Dam. Our dams are also the centrepiece of tourism for many of our Queensland regional communities. Nearly \$25 million has been allocated to upgrading 19 of Sunwater's recreational areas, which is fantastic news for tourism, local communities and local jobs.

We have also been working with councils through Building our Regions funding, providing funding for water and sewerage projects that are critical to the liveability of and growth in our regional communities. This financial year, nearly \$40 million will be invested out of a total of \$70 million allocated to round 6 of that program. Investments in water are just one way that the government is providing good jobs, better services and a great lifestyle, no matter where you live.

We are also undertaking important planning activities in food bowl regions across the state through our Regional Water Assessment Program. This means we are investing in infrastructure now while also planning for future water needs. By creating a specific minister for water, we have prioritised this portfolio and the role that it plays in economic and community development in Queensland. I am proud of the department's record of delivering for the people of Queensland in the water portfolio. I am excited about seeing existing projects reach completion and recently announced projects getting underway. I look forward to the committee's questions today.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. We will go straight to questions from the deputy chair.

Mr McDONALD: I defer to the member for Nanango.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, how many pieces of legislation have you introduced as water minister in Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, we certainly are driving an agenda here in Queensland to make sure that we get good processes in place and good options for the targets that we need to set. We continue to deliver in the water portfolio, as you know. Certainly as part of that we have organised programs and put things through parliament, and I note that you have supported all of those things that we have done.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair.

Mr BUTCHER: I will get you the information in one second.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr McDONALD: It was a very specific question. I note that 50 seconds have gone by, but it was a very specific question about legislation.

CHAIR: I understand that and I appreciate the form of the question as well, without it compromising standing orders.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I do not think it should take you long.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. The testament of a good government is not measured just by how many bills get through parliament; it is the quality of those bills that counts. I will stand by my strong legislative record, including on legislative amendments. In 2021 we bolstered water restriction powers for South-East Queensland distributor-retailers and enhanced water security. The same bill also strengthened cybersecurity protections. In June 2021 I amended the legislative framework for the Fitzroy water plan to enable Rookwood Weir to progress.

I think it is quite embarrassing that the member is over there counting on his fingers as I am doing this. I do not need you to hold your fingers up to tell me how many I am reading.

Mr HART: It is late in the afternoon and—

CHAIR: I was not aware that that was happening. Members, we have just started. Let us maintain some decorum.

Mr BUTCHER: In February 2020 I was involved in amending legislation to facilitate the delivery of essential works on Paradise Dam to reduce—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Mr Chair. I thank the minister for his comprehensive answer. However, my question was very clear. I used the word ‘introduced’. Are there any and if there are none let us move on because I do not want to waste the committee’s time?

CHAIR: Member, we understood. It is the first question. We are two minutes in. I am sure that the minister is coming to a conclusion. The gist of the question was clear and the minister is answering that.

Mr BUTCHER: Shared bills are certainly introducing legislation into the parliament. In 2020 I sought the introduction of amendments to licensing arrangements for craft brewers and distillers to reduce red tape and bolster the sector. In this term of government I have also delivered 14 pieces of subordinate legislation, including things like actions on water plans, amendments to the Water Regulation and a moratorium notice for Mount Tamborine.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would like to ask a question of the CEO of Seqwater. Mr Brennan, has Seqwater engaged any lobbyists to deal with the Palaszczuk government in the past 12 months?

Mr Brennan: No, not to my knowledge.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Mr Brennan, I now turn to a matter in relation to staffing at Seqwater. Can you please provide the committee with the number of staff who have left the organisation in the last three weeks?

Mr Brennan: No, I would not have that detail available. I will ensure that we get that by the end of the proceedings.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would like to get that. Mr Brennan, is there a cultural issue within Seqwater that may have led—

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

Mr McDONALD: The question has not been asked, Mr Chair.

Mr SMITH: It is already hitting on an opinion.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. I am happy to rephrase.

CHAIR: No, the member was quite right: you are already asking for an opinion. Member, can you recast your question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I can. Mr Brennan, is there any truth in the fact that the number of staff who have left in the last six months would put—if there was another February flood event—the government’s response—

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: We will come back to your point of order. We will wait for the member to finish the question. I think I know where you are going and I agree. Member, finish your question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Would it impact the response of the government, given the number of staff who have left Seqwater in the last short period of time?

CHAIR: Member, you are asking once again for an opinion. I agree with asking about some impacts there, but you are asking for an opinion.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I can rephrase.

CHAIR: I will allow you to recast that. Just stick to some facts—straight questions. That would be great.

Mr SMITH: My point of order regards inference around the statement ‘truth in the fact’. That would be inferring or impugning the conclusion. I am happy if the member is happy to rephrase.

CHAIR: There was some degree to that point of order, but we are allowing the member to recast the question. Member, proceed.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. Thank you. Mr Brennan, in your role as CEO of Seqwater, are you comfortable with the number of staff in your employ to respond to a major flood event in Queensland should it happen immediately?

Mr Brennan: Yes, I am comfortable with the resources available.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. Thank you. Chair, will the question about the number of staff who have left in the last three weeks be taken on notice or will that come back?

CHAIR: Mr Brennan has indicated that he will attempt to get that information and get that back to you before the end of the session. If not, we will see how we deal with it from there.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. Thank you. Mr Brennan, have any staff been required to pay back overpayments in their salary in the last 12 months?

Mr Brennan: I do not have that detail available, but I am sure—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That is fine. I am happy to wait for that information. Thank you.

CHAIR: Keep going, member for Nanango.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Brennan, for your answers. My next question is to the minister. Minister, in relation to the Paradise Dam improvement project—or should we say ‘rebuilding project’—the budget papers before us show only \$30 million out of a promised \$600 million, with a mere \$35 million outlined in the forwards. With this in mind, more than five-sixths of the state’s contribution to this project is still unfunded, and it has been for almost three years, since the wall was ripped down. When will the Paradise Dam wall be fixed?

CHAIR: I will allow that one through. Please keep your question shorter next time.

Mr BUTCHER: There are a couple of matters in that question. The first fact is that there has been over \$100 million spent on Paradise Dam in the last three years in relation to making the dam wall safe.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: To pulling the dam down?

CHAIR: Member, please cease your interjections.

Mr BUTCHER: I continue to take offence at the way you say that we tore the wall down. We do things here in Queensland to make sure that the communities downstream of our dams are safe. We will continue to do that. Every major expert—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Touchy subject, Minister!

CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections.

Mr BUTCHER: It is only touchy to you, member. Every major expert in dam safety around the world—not only in Australia—said that that dam was not safe. The actions this government took at the time to lower the wall, to make sure that it was safe for the downstream communities, certainly were the right thing to do. I will back that move every day of the week.

Mr HART: Did you say ‘every expert’?

CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections.

Mr McDONALD: Just clarifying.

CHAIR: No, it was an interjection. You can have that question.

Mr BUTCHER: I said ‘experts around the world and in Australia’.

CHAIR: Member to my left, if you want an extra question you can have that later. Let the minister finish his answer.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. To the second part of your question, this year Sunwater is completing engineering design and detailed work supported by geotechnical activities on ground and market testing to get ready for this project to be delivered. Early works to commence this financial year include planning, design and upgrade of existing road networks around the dam. Investigations into suitable aggregate and other construction materials and planning the mobilisation and establishment at the construction site need to happen. The early works are vital to ensure that the construction program is safe, that it has suitable materials and that everything is ready to go on this vital project. Sunwater is investing \$30 million this financial year for these critical activities.

I was in Bundaberg early this month to announce—great news for the Bundaberg region—that a key contract had been awarded to a local contractor, Harrison Infrastructure Group. They are leading an extensive investigation of the road network leading to the dam. That business will examine haulage and construction transport needs to determine what road upgrades are required for that project.

It is pretty ironic that the LNP sit here today having a go at me about a \$30 million investment in pre works for Paradise Dam when the member for Nanango said that she would fix the dam for \$25 million and said that it would fix the problem. Some \$1.2 billion is required to rebuild this dam—not \$25 million.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Someone’s a bit touchy, aren’t they?

Mr BUTCHER: To come in and say that \$30 million is not enough—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: He is deliberately just attacking me because he thinks it is funny. It is not funny to the people downstream.

Mr BUTCHER: It is absolutely critical.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is not funny to the people who want to use the water.

Mr BUTCHER: The growers.

CHAIR: Members, order! We are once again—I cannot believe this is the third time today I have said this—arguing across the chamber. I direct members to standing order 246—do not quarrel across the table. Put your comments through the chair, standing order 247. Minister, have you finished your answer.

Mr BUTCHER: I have, thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Minister, with that answer, am I correct to say that you are unable to give the landholders who utilise the water from Paradise Dam a timeframe in which the dam wall will be fixed?

Mr BUTCHER: Like I said, this is a huge project. We have to get it done right. As you know, we want to make sure—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Put some money into it.

CHAIR: Member, please cease your interjection.

Mr BUTCHER: We are not into cheap, quick fixes.

Mr HART: Obviously!

CHAIR: Member, please cease your interjection. Members for Burleigh and Nanango, that is the third or fourth time each I have directed you to cease your interjections during the minister's answer. Minister, please continue.

Mr BUTCHER: By doing the important preconstruction works right now, project construction can proceed as planned. As I have just mentioned, important early works are happening right now. Preconstruction works—building the workers camp, getting all the roads ready and that sort of work—will happen in 2023. Major construction activities will commence in 2024. We anticipate that it will take at least three wet seasons to complete this big project.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Chair. The minister just said that major works will start in 2024, but there is no money in the budget into the forwards; is this correct?

CHAIR: Is this a point of order or is it another question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No, it is another question. It is a follow-up question to the minister.

CHAIR: I just need to establish whether the minister had finished his answer.

Mr BUTCHER: Mr Chair, we are certainly—

CHAIR: He had not finished his answer. You might want to bring that question up in a moment when the minister finishes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will. Okay. No worries.

Mr BUTCHER: The final case will be determined as part of a detailed business case currently being undertaken by Sunwater based on specialist engineering design and information to market. There will be money in the budget in the future. At this stage—this year's budget, 2022-23—it is \$30 million for those early works to be started.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So I can be really clear: there is no certainty for the water users of Paradise Dam about when the dam wall will be restored and completed—yes or no?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: There is a point of order. You might need to recast the question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to recast the question. I do not need to hear from the member for Bundaberg.

CHAIR: The first part of the question was argumentative and had an opinion. Can you stick to the question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There is no extra money for major works in the forward estimates in the budget but yet the minister expects this committee to believe and the people of Bundaberg to believe that major works are going to start in 2024?

CHAIR: Minister, I will allow you some latitude in answering that.

Mr BUTCHER: This government has committed to rebuilding Paradise Dam to its original height before we made it safe.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: But when?

Mr SMITH: He just told you.

Mr BUTCHER: The Premier has made it clear that this government is supporting Paradise Dam. Through the election we committed to looking at Paradise Dam. The fact that we had the member for Bundaberg elected as part of that is testament to the fact that the people of Bundaberg trust this government. The Premier has made it quite clear that \$600 million from the state government is guaranteed. The federal government has also committed—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You did not do it for the growers; you did it to get this joker elected.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango—

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: Member, if you keep interjecting you will be warned.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The minister made a political statement—

CHAIR: Order! I am giving a direction. Member for Nanango, if you keep interjecting you will be warned under the standing orders. Did you have a point of order, member for Bundaberg?

Mr SMITH: I take personal offence to the unparliamentary language used by the member for Nanango and I ask her to withdraw.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I withdraw.

Mr SMITH: That is why she is no longer the leader anymore.

CHAIR: Member, you did not need to do that. Members, can we cease quarrelling.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Gee, that hurt!

CHAIR: Members, can we cease quarrelling. Minister, have you finished your answer?

Mr BUTCHER: I will continue. There is \$600 million guaranteed by the Premier of Queensland that this project will happen. There is \$30 million in the budget now to get this project started. As I said before, during the federal election both the previous federal government and the new Labor federal government both committed \$600 million to match our funding for this project. This is a \$1.2 billion project that has been committed to by all parties. As a government we will make sure that we deliver on this project for the people of Bundaberg.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a question for the CEO of Sunwater, Mr Stockton. Will medium priority allocations be reduced during the Paradise Dam construction works?

Mr Stockton: We continue to provide water for our customers. Medium and high priority announced allocations for the Bundaberg water supply scheme in this current water year are at 100 per cent. We understand the need to maximise the productive use of water that must be released to support a safe environment for our workers whilst on site. Water may need to be released to provide sufficient and safe clearance for work on the structure. We will then work with irrigators and with the department to ensure water availability throughout the course of construction.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So I am clear: during the construction works is it anticipated that the medium priority allocation will be reduced for certain growers to ensure there is enough allocation for everyone during the work?

Mr Stockton: At the present stage we do not anticipate a reduction in medium priority allocations. The allocations will be determined on the availability of water at the start of each water year in accordance with the water allocation process.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It would obviously depend on the water year. I suppose what I am getting at is this: will you be able to guarantee that no Sunwater customers will have less than 100 per cent of their water allocation during the construction phase or is it the case that the dam has been lowered so significantly that it will impact it irrespective?

Mr Stockton: As I have stated, water allocations are determined at the start of the water year and they are based on the available water held within the storages that exist within the scheme. The Bundaberg scheme is serviced by not just one dam but two dams. That will be taken into account at the start of the water year.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Has Sunwater engaged any lobbyists in the last financial year?

Mr Stockton: No.

CHAIR: Before we go to government questions, I am going to go to the member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: Minister, water pricing is the first priority in the Flinders tender when assessing tenders for water in this round. Most small operators are out competed by larger companies on this basis. Larger corporates typically have greater and better access to capital. Does the minister acknowledge the difficulties for small operators to enter this tender?

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, I have had several meetings with you in relation to the Flinders water allocation tender process that is ongoing. As I have explained before, this process is independent from me and is certainly done independently in the department. As you know, I have been out and seen the project on the ground. I have met with the stakeholders from HIPCo, which is in that part of the world, that are certainly looking for one of the allocations. I take it that is what you are referring to.

I am advised by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water that the current release process uses a market-based tender mechanism with a confidential reserve price that protects the value of existing water licences and other businesses that also allocate that water. The market will continue to determine the price and what the water is worth in that region.

Use of a market-based mechanism is consistent with the principles agreed by all jurisdictions under the national water reform in 2004 and consistent with previous releases in other areas of Queensland and certainly in the Flinders area. To ensure proponents of agricultural projects can compete fairly in this process, a decision was also made to exclude resource projects as part of this allocation from the current sale.

Within this catchment there is a general reserve to which the current process is now applying and a strategic reserve. This is a further way that the department provides fair access to water for agricultural projects and mining projects—the two separate things at this point in time. An open and transparent tender process is presently underway. That is the best way to ensure that access to this water is equitable. The current release of 110,000 megalitres also means that some water will remain in reserve for future water needs.

It is also important to note for the member that the water release process and decisions in relation to it are made by a department decision-maker, as I explained, and not by the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. As I have said to you before, we want to make sure that any water project delivers for communities. I know your passion for growing communities—and not just in terms of the HIPCo project that you are supporting. In relation to the work that you and the HIPCo team have done and my dealings with them it has been very positive. They are working with the department to continue to move forward with that project not only in relation to funding from the federal government but also in relation to the opportunity for water allocations when they come.

Mr KATTER: Moving forward, Minister, with the future development of the ROP, as it is proposed, in 2024, is there any desire to create a space for those smaller operators to get access without having to compete with the bigger corporates?

Mr BUTCHER: As we have discussed previously, the way those smaller irrigators you are talking about can get access to future water allocations is when the water plan is redone. As you said, that process will be starting in a year or so. It is a big opportunity for irrigators in your communities to make sure they put forward their projects and the allocations they are looking for. The process is lengthy and detailed because we want to make sure that any future water plan goes for five years. We want to make sure that those allocations that are announced are still available for future development but also to those people looking for alternative allocations of water going forward. In addition to the current release that is happening at the moment, people wanting access to new volumes of water can seek temporary or long-term water supplies from the water market established under the Gulf Resource Operations Plan for projects on a smaller scale.

CHAIR: We will go to government questions. Minister, with reference to page 5 of the SDS, can you explain how the Queensland government is supporting economic development through investment in water?

Mr BUTCHER: The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of water to Queensland communities and to driving economic growth, as I said before. Since 2015 more than \$3.4 billion has been invested in water infrastructure and planning right across Queensland.

Mr HART: How many dams have you built?

CHAIR: Thank you, member, for your interjection. It is not welcome.

Mr BUTCHER: We are investing in the construction of new infrastructure, in the maintenance and upgrades of existing assets and in planning for future water needs of communities including by supporting regional councils with smaller but critical projects to bolster water supply and water treatment infrastructure. We also continue to make affordable water available to irrigators, industries and certainly the community, and we undertake releases of unallocated water to facilitate development across parts of the state. The \$367.2 million Rookwood Weir project is well underway. When complete, it will be the biggest weir in Queensland and the largest built in Australia since World War II.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thanks to the former federal government.

Mr BUTCHER: We had to drag them kicking and screaming, member, if you want to interject on that.

Mr Hart interjected.

Mr BUTCHER: I will take that interjection.

CHAIR: Members, I have counselled you about your interjections. The next time I need to do that there will be a warning.

Mr BUTCHER: I am just happy to be here and receiving questions from the member, because I do not get them in the chamber, so today is a good day.

Important works continue thanks to our \$30 million investment in Big Rocks Weir, the \$20 million invested in the Southern Downs drought resilience package and the \$420 million investment into Townsville's water supply through projects like stage 1 and stage 2 of the Haughton pipeline. We can go on about how the federal government support of that project was a failure to the maximum. These projects are all progressing right now. This budget proudly builds on these significant investments.

We have also committed more than \$107 million for the Cairns Water Security project, \$26 million for the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct in Townsville, more than \$40 million to the Mount Morgan pipeline and \$25.6 million for the Hughenden Water Bank project. More than \$300 million has been committed to construct the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline to shore up that region's long-term water security.

Mr HART: Lots of pipes, no dams.

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, I instructed you about those interjections. I said the next one will bring a warning, so you are officially warned under the standing orders.

Mr BUTCHER: How many dams did you guys build?

CHAIR: Minister, you are not helping the cause here.

Mr BUTCHER: Early works will commence this year as we prepare to rebuild Paradise Dam to its original height. This is a \$1.2 billion project, as we have just heard, that will provide water security and economic growth for the Bundaberg region for years to come. I know that our government's decision to safely rebuild the dam means so much to that local community.

This year we will also progress planning works for the upgrade to Burdekin Falls Dam, complete the South West Pipeline and continue planning works for the necessary upgrades to South-East Queensland's water storage and flood mitigation dams. Important planning is also underway through our \$9 million Regional Water Assessment Program. These assessments in all three areas have commenced and are on track so informed decisions can be made by regional communities to drive economic growth into the future through investment in water.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you advise how the South West Pipeline project will improve long-term water security for the Scenic Rim, particularly in light of the population growth experienced in recent times in South-East Queensland? Can you advise as to the status of that project?

Mr BUTCHER: As we saw during COVID, people are flocking to South-East Queensland from other states. Statistics released by the ABS last year showed that in 2020 Queensland was the most popular destination, with a net gain of 30,000 people moving to Queensland. The next closest was Western Australia, at 1,385. Investment in water infrastructure to support South-East Queensland's growing population is therefore vital. That is why it was fantastic to see the progress on the South West Pipeline when I visited the Beaudesert region earlier this year. Construction is well underway on the \$95 million pipeline which will ensure water security for one of the fastest growing regions in South-East Queensland.

In this year's budget, \$38.3 million will be invested in the pipeline, which is on track to be completed by the end of this year. It was great, as I said, to be out there and see that work ongoing. The pipeline is the second stage of the Beaudesert Water Supply Upgrade, a long-term water supply solution for the Scenic Rim. The Scenic Rim is experiencing a period of significant growth, with more than 67,000 people expected to call this region home by 2041. Providing water security for this growing community is critical, as is providing economic opportunity for agribusinesses in that region. The South West Pipeline will help do exactly that when it comes to connecting Beaudesert to the South East Queensland Water Grid, which we know is one of the most successful grids in the nation.

When I visited that site it was a hive of activity. I saw firsthand the scale of the project which is helping to ensure this region has a secure and adaptable water supply not only now but also into the future. The 27-kilometre pipeline will connect two recently built reservoirs at the existing Beaudesert water treatment plant to the South East Queensland Water Grid. Importantly, up to 100 construction jobs are supported by this project. This pipeline will be the biggest addition to the South East Queensland Water Grid since completion of the Northern Pipeline Interconnector in 2012.

The way the South East Queensland Water Grid connects drinking water supplies across the region is a unique system in Australia. It provides us flexibility to manage the water supply challenges arising from patchy rainfall, drought, climate change and population growth, as we have just heard. We are continuing to invest in water infrastructure projects to ensure our region has a secure and adaptable water supply now and for future generations.

Mr SMITH: There are no prizes for guessing what the topic of my question will be. Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, could you please advise how the Palaszczuk government is supporting our irrigators in the Bundaberg region through the decision to restore Paradise Dam?

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair, under standing order 236—repetition.

Mr SMITH: This is about 'supporting'.

Mr BUTCHER: I am pretty sure he has not asked a question yet.

Mr McDONALD: I ask for your ruling.

CHAIR: I think it is a very different question. I think there is enough that we can say about Paradise Dam. There is no point of order. Let's hear the answer.

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. As we have heard, we are getting on with the job of rebuilding Paradise Dam. As I said, it is a \$1.2 billion investment in regional jobs, supported by \$600 million from the Queensland government.

Mr HART: Where's the money?

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, congratulations. You have been warned under the standing orders for interjecting. You have still not listened to me. You can take a break for one hour under standing order 253A.

Whereupon the honourable member for Burleigh withdrew from the committee at 5.39 pm.

Mr BUTCHER: The project will use nearly as much concrete as it took to build the original dam. About one million tonnes of material will be hauled to the site. The rebuild will meet future water demands for the agriculture, urban and industrial sectors and provide a reliable water supply in the face of climate change. It will provide jobs and economic growth to the region, including 250 jobs during construction. It will be funded thanks to \$600 million from our government and \$600 million from the federal government. Sunwater's customers will not pay for this upgrade.

This project is huge and it is complex. It is important that Sunwater takes the time to properly design and plan for the construction phase so we can fix the dam once and for all. Early works to commence this financial year include: planning, design and upgrade of existing roads; investigations into suitable aggregate and other construction materials; and planning mobilisation and establishment at the construction site. The early works are vital to ensure the construction program has suitable materials and that everything is ready to go. Sunwater is investing \$30.1 million this financial year for these critical activities.

I was recently in Bundaberg with the local member and Sunwater meeting with stakeholders. We talked through the next phases of the project and announced the key contract. With a project of such significant size, we have to focus on building the dam back stronger and safer and ensure that the early works, especially things like road networks, are safer to meet the needs of the project and the community over the longer term. Local businesses are already benefiting from this project. As I said,

early works will start in 2023, including those roadworks and planning the workers' camp, which will need to house 250 workers as major construction starts in 2024. We are going to get this project right so it delivers on water security, safety and economic growth for the Bundaberg region for years to come.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the minister. Minister, with reference to page 16 of Budget Paper 3, can you update the committee on how Seqwater is improving the flood resilience of important infrastructure and water treatment assets that supply drinking water to South-East Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. Seqwater is improving the flood resilience of important water treatment assets and other infrastructure through the \$111 million Mount Crosby Flood Resilience Program. Seqwater is also investing an additional \$13.9 million to install a centrifuge at the Mount Crosby water treatment plant. This project will increase Mount Crosby's water treatment capacity. The flood resilience program focuses on updating and relocating important assets to increase flood resilience and mitigate the impacts that flood risk presents to essential infrastructure at Mount Crosby. I know that you are interested in those water treatment facilities, member for Ipswich West.

Through this year's budget Seqwater will invest \$23.6 million in this important project to strengthen South-East Queensland's water security. This program comprises three major upgrade projects, including: \$32.6 million for replacement and relocation of the existing electrical substation to higher ground; \$49.4 million flood improvement upgrades to the East Bank Pump Station, including electrical upgrades to connect the new substation; and \$29.5 million for the construction of a new road river crossing. I know you are quite passionate about that as well, member for Ipswich West.

Seqwater is progressing planning works for the substation with \$6.5 million allocated to upgrade works in 2022-23. Construction commenced in March 2022 and is expected to be completed later in 2022. The pump station upgrade recently received a \$49.4 million investment approval.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Mr Chair. I would hate the minister to mislead the committee so can I please just ask for clarification? Are you talking about the Mount Crosby East Bank substation and enabling works? It is going to be complete in 2022. It says here that there is money here for post 2023.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, we have one more question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am sorry, I could ask that a bit later.

Mr BUTCHER: I can get that information for you by the end of the session. In my notes it says it will be complete by late this year.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I was just double-checking your work.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, member; that is a good pick-up. The pump station upgrade recently received a \$49.4 million investment approval. The project will upgrade the existing motors, invest in critical spares, improve the flood resilience of the heritage-listed pump station building, and upgrade electrical infrastructure to connect to the new substation. The new road bridge will be more flood resilient, sitting almost three metres higher than the existing bridge to assist the community in remaining connected during flood events. It will have two lanes to improve traffic flow in the area. The bridge construction contract has been awarded, with construction to commence later this year. The new bridge is expected to be complete by late 2023.

Together these works will improve the flood resilience of the critical bulk water infrastructure located at Mount Crosby East Bank, which provides around one-third of South-East Queensland's water supply, and the flood resilience of the river crossing. The Mount Crosby water treatment plants are also being upgraded at present, with work on the filtration upgrade project that commenced in 2019 being completed in June 2022. Through this \$35 million project these works will ensure the plants can continue to operate efficiently during flood events, which cause high turbidity levels in the water as we have seen during the last flood event.

Mr MADDEN: Is that three metres higher than the existing Mount Crosby Weir bridge?

Mr BUTCHER: That is correct.

CHAIR: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you advise how the Queensland government is supporting the delivery of the Rookwood Weir project?

Mr BUTCHER: After strong advocacy from the Palaszczuk government, both levels of government have contributed \$183.6 million towards the weir, bringing the total investment to \$367.2 million. The Rookwood Weir is a region-shaping project for Central Queensland that will provide jobs during construction and more jobs and bolstered economic prosperity for the region for years to come. The weir will provide significant opportunities for increased agricultural and industrial development and boost water security for the Central Queensland region.

We have maximised the height of the weir, increasing it to 86,000 megalitres for water users. Once complete, it will be the largest weir in Queensland and the largest built in Australia since World War II. The project has created over 100 regional jobs so far through road and bridge upgrades. Construction of the weir is well underway, supporting 280 jobs with 140 of those sourced locally. Apprentices and trainees are expected to make up 15 per cent of those construction jobs. As I said, these are good, solid jobs: labourers, form setters, steel fixers, concreters, riggers, crane operators and sparkies—the list goes on in terms of the jobs available. This project is a massive undertaking and the early works we have seen show that. Since construction started in April 2021 the construction team has moved around 400 cubic metres of soil, excavated seven metres into the riverbed and poured over 25,000 cubic metres of concrete. Despite the prolonged wet season, the project remains on track to be completed in 2023.

The project recently announced an historic milestone with the signing of an Indigenous land use agreement with the Darumbal people. Under the terms of the agreement the traditional custodians will be provided with a water allocation from the weir in perpetuity. The agreement provides for employment, training and cultural opportunities, which is absolutely fantastic. It was wonderful to be in Rockhampton recently to sign the agreement with Darumbal representatives. I would like to thank them, the department and Sunwater for their work in bringing about this historic outcome. It is an example of the way in which these big construction projects can truly drive great outcomes across a range of different areas, including for our traditional owners.

Every time I visit the weir I am blown away by the scale of the project and just how much is going on. I look forward to getting out there again later this year to see how much further progress has been made on this fantastic project.

CHAIR: We will go to the deputy chair.

Mr McDONALD: I defer to the shadow minister.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Director-General, I refer to SDS page 2, departmental highlights, and more specifically the action to ‘facilitate the completion of feasibility studies’. How many water feasibility studies have been undertaken in the department since 2017?

Mr Fraine: In terms of feasibility studies, the department works very closely, as the committee would be aware, with the federal government through the National Water Grid Authority in regards to the work that happens through the National Water Grid funding through projects that proponents bring to either levels of government to consider for progress through business case through to construction.

In terms of projects that are underway in that space at this time, there are projects underway for the Bowen Pipeline, and there are considerations being done for the Burdekin Haughton water supply scheme, the Paranui Weir preliminary business case, the Bedford Weir preliminary business case and two projects through the National Water Grid Fund Science Program to the tune of \$0.33 million. Those are current ones.

In terms of the other projects that have been going in this space, we know that Urannah Dam, Hells Gates Dam and the Lakeland Irrigation area have been going through that National Water Grid Fund process. The project that the member for Traeger mentioned before—the Hughenden Irrigation Project—completed their business case through the National Water Grid Fund in March this year. The Coalstoun Lakes irrigation area is another one. The Dawson Valley supply water scheme has been progressing. At the moment there are 11 feasibility assessments ongoing as part of the National Water Grid Fund.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I note in your answer, Mr Fraine, that a lot of those projects were certainly instigated on a federal scheme, and I understand that because unfortunately the appetite has not been here in the state.

CHAIR: Member, ask your question please.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How many of these water feasibility studies have reached completion, or are they all ongoing?

Mr Fraine: Some are ongoing, but in terms of those that have been completed there have been 15 feasibility studies completed and, as I mentioned, there are 11 currently underway.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I appreciate that answer. Minister, of those 15 completed water feasibility studies, how many have you taken to cabinet?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: There is a point of order regarding what has gone to cabinet. Minister, I do not know what you can furnish with that without breaking the conventions, rules and laws about what goes to cabinet. I think there may be a policy issue as well, but I am giving you a broad brush to deal with this question.

Mr BUTCHER: I note the member's comment before. We certainly do support a lot of these projects. Not only do I support them—which is seen in the fact that the state government has moved them on to getting funding from the National Water Grid—but I have actually been to just about every one that the director-general talked about. I have been on the ground to have a look at the projects and talk to the proponents in relation to them. At the end of the day, all of these projects need state government support before they are even moved to the National Water Grid for funding. To say that we have not done anything in relation to these projects is certainly not true.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Chair: the minister is misleading the committee. They are not my words. What I am actually being very clear about—and I can have Hansard re-read my question—is: of the 15 completed, how many has the minister taken to cabinet. It was not me saying they had not done anything. For the first time, I actually have not said that. I could have but I did not.

CHAIR: That is not a point of order. I have given the minister a broad brush to deal with this question. I could have ruled it out of order but I am giving you the benefit of the doubt.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to rephrase it.

CHAIR: He has already answered it.

Mr BUTCHER: I have answered the question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The answer is none?

CHAIR: Member, let the minister finish.

Mr BUTCHER: We are in government and cabinet-in-confidence is certainly part of the process which we hold very securely here in Queensland. I cannot answer that question for the member.

Can I clarify a question from earlier? I needed to get back to you about the language I said, and I did say 'every expert'. My department advises that this is correct. Every expert asked agreed the dam was unsafe and needed to be fixed in relation to Paradise Dam.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you.

Mr McDONALD: How many of those 15 completed studies have been referred to the National Water Grid for funding?

CHAIR: That is a specific question. It might take a bit of time to get that.

Mr BUTCHER: From my understanding, all of them have been sent to the National Water Grid. They need to be approved by us to go down to there. The ones that have been mentioned today by the director-general have all been agreed to and approved by the state government to move forward.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Of the 15 feasibility studies that have been completed, Minister, you are confirming that the state government is moving forward on all of those 15 feasibility studies and you are going to prepare submissions for your colleagues to look at and support?

CHAIR: Member, there is a hypothetical in there.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is very important, Chair.

CHAIR: I notice the minister is prepared to answer that so I invite the minister to answer that.

Mr BUTCHER: Between 2017 and 2022, the government has made 15 applications and secured \$15.84 million. The previous Australian government also committed: \$176 million plus a further \$7.5 million to part fund Rookwood Weir; \$42 million and \$126.5 million to part fund the Granite Belt Irrigation Project; \$180 million for assessment to part fund possible construction of the Hughenden Irrigation Project subject to the outcome of a business case; \$30 million plus \$8 million for part funding for construction of Big Rocks Weir; \$5.4 billion to fully fund construction of Hells Gates Dam; and \$483 million to part fund construction of Urannah Dam. That is the funding that has come through from the federal government in relation to those cases.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I refer to SDS page 2, which refers to addressing recommendations made in the Queensland Audit Office's December 2021 audit *Regulating dam safety*. Within the audit report it is stated that 'the department is not effectively managing the information it collects', 'not effectively collecting information on its dam safety upgrade schedule' and 'not effectively monitoring progress to ensure all the upgrades will be completed by the ... 2025 deadlines'. What has the minister done to rectify this complete failing of your department?

CHAIR: Member, you may not be aware that this committee has programmed a hearing with the Auditor-General on this particular report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I was unaware of that. I would like to join that committee.

CHAIR: I bet you would. That is anticipating our inquiry into that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I can move on. I was not aware. I apologise to the committee.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: that is not a bill and it is not anticipating debate. Matters of the committee are matters for the committee. I think the question should stand as it is because it is a question outside of the ongoing process of the committee.

CHAIR: Member, I draw to your attention once again what is in the estimates manual at 115(e) to (g). It says that there will not be questions on 'proceedings of a committee not yet reported to the House'. Let us not anticipate debate or a report on that. We have set aside a time to have the Auditor-General in to deal with that report.

Mr McDONALD: I appreciate that, Chair. I believe that is a self-initiated inquiry that other members of the parliament would not know about.

CHAIR: It is proceedings of the committee. Minister, you seem keen to furnish some answer.

Mr BUTCHER: Without touching on committee business, I remind the member that she has written two questions on notice in relation to this issue that she just talked about and we have responded twice about the same question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Obviously I am not satisfied with your response, Minister.

Mr BUTCHER: If you could read the response, then that is all I can say we can do at this point in time.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, that must be a bit like the questioning—

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nanango. Do you have a question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: If we are going to be talking about questions on notice, I refer the minister to question on notice No. 1 and I ask does the minister seriously believe his answer?

Mr BUTCHER: I already said we responded twice to your question on notice.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Or is that semantics?

CHAIR: Member, can you recast that?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Have a look at it.

CHAIR: Order! Member, can you recast your question which does not contain an argument.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will give the minister some time to get his notes together on the answer to that because he might like to go—sorry, that is argumentative. I am ruling myself out there, Chair.

CHAIR: You beat me to it, yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am going to move on, Minister, because I doubt you will answer it. Minister, I refer you to page 1 of the SDS in relation to service areas, water resources management services. Given North Pine Dam has been reduced to 68 per cent of its full water supply level since 2019, where is the funding in this 2022-23 budget to undertake the necessary works to repair the dam and return it to its full capacity?

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, we do take dam safety very seriously. We continue to make sure that we have a program here in Queensland. We have certainly started on a program since we have been in government on repairing dams, particularly down here in South-East Queensland. As the member knows, to ensure that we have referable dams here in South-East Queensland particularly, with dam safety guidelines, seven Seqwater dams must be upgraded by 2035—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Chair. I asked a question about dam safety in the budget and I was ruled out. The minister is approaching the same topic, so surely the minister should stop what he is saying and refer it to the committee.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr BUTCHER: It is about a dam improvement program.

CHAIR: One moment. I am offering that ruling. Under 115 (e) to (g), it talks about anticipation. I point out that under 181, we also have a direction saying a member may ask any question which is relevant to the examination of the appropriation bill, but we are in that area between the two. Once again, I caution both the member for Nanango and the minister if we are talking about dam safety not to stray too far at all into the answer. I think, Minister, that may help you with the answer.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: And we can move on.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. As I said, upgrades have been completed at Cooloolabin, Ewen Maddock, Wappa, Leslie Harrison and Sideling Creek, which is important as all these storages spilled during the 2022 flood. The business case for Somerset Dam is well underway and is the first of the three major dam improvement projects scheduled for delivery in South-East Queensland. The business case is anticipated to be delivered in the first half of 2023. Next up, Seqwater will develop a business case for the North Pine Dam upgrade with the business case expected to be complete by the end of 2024, and the Wivenhoe Dam business case is expected to be completed in the first half of 2026. Importantly, opportunities to improve downstream flood mitigation will be explored in parallel with the Wivenhoe upgrade process as well and provide broader economic and social benefits beyond that. We will also take the opportunity to do that during the other dams that we are doing at the same time as opportunities for flood mitigation, as part of that, including Somerset Dam.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I refer you again to page 1 of the SDS—it is a pretty good page—department of service areas water resource management services and I ask: referring to the Burdekin Falls wall, the government has committed \$29 million and has already spent \$19 million, but the wall has not been raised one centimetre, not one extra drop of water, and cannot tell the people of Burdekin how high the dam wall will be raised. When will the government deliver on its commitment to raise Burdekin Falls Dam and what height will it be raised by, remembering the government has already spent \$19 million so surely we have an answer?

CHAIR: Very long question, member for Nanango, but we got to the nub of the question.

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, we want to make Burdekin Falls Dam safer into future, but we also want to make it bigger. That is why Sunwater is looking at doing both the dam improvement works and an increase to the dam wall as one project. The investigation in relation to the raising is considering a raising of either two metres or six metres. These assessments are thorough and consider a range of factors, including demand, cost, future water needs, existing water uses, environmental impacts and what any raising means for other projects in the Burdekin area. We expect to be able to confirm shortly which option we are progressing our investigations further on. That will enable Sunwater to continue its important work to support an investment decision in 2023. This year, Sunwater will invest, as the member said, nearly \$30 million in a dam improvement project and is to investigate into the raising of the dam wall.

There is a lot going on in the Burdekin, as we know—proposals like raising Burdekin Falls Dam, Big Rocks Weir, Urannah Dam and Hells Gates. There are also things to be considered like how we best address rising groundwater issues and support irrigators and Sunwater with important and off-farm works. It is also important to consider these projects and catchment as a whole.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair. The question was about when in regards to the Burdekin Falls Dam. We are now about two minutes into the answer.

CHAIR: I am sure the minister is coming to the nub of the question.

Mr BUTCHER: I said that the investment decision on Burdekin Falls Dam will be in 2023. Part of that process going through the detail business case will examine further on the construction time frames and the like.

Mr McDONALD: Was that an investment decision?

Mr BUTCHER: Correct.

Mr McDONALD: So there is no time frame?

Mr BUTCHER: The investment decision will be in 2023 and you will have time frames when the detailed business case is finished.

Mr KATTER: I am not sure if my question is best directed to the minister or the DG, so either feel free to answer. I am interested to know what are the employed strategies now around the take-up and promotion of water take-up around the Gilbert and Einasleigh river systems given that it is adjacent to

your portfolio with the vegetation management which restricts a lot of the development along there. I am interested to know the strategies around that because that is the biggest complaint I get about take-up in that there are so many other restrictions. Do any exist? I welcome your response on that.

Mr BUTCHER: It is certainly something I am not aware of at this point of time, but we can endeavour to get you some information by the end of this session; if not by that time, I am more than happy to have a conversation outside of this in a process where we can certainly look to see what the issues are you are talking about and get you the information you are looking for.

Mr KATTER: It is something that has come up with the shire up there recently. One last question: the GABSI scheme used to be deployed when the bores were capped. There was a phenomenal amount of water going out. When they are capped, there would be a small percentage that would go back. Some producers out there—just 100 acres or something; you are only talking about small quantities back. There seems to be no tolerance for that anymore—a percentage back for any other use once it is capped. Is there any consideration for turning that around or providing that in the future, given we are trying to diversify a bit out there away from straight cattle grazing?

Mr Fraine: Thank you for the question. That is a topic about which I have met with a couple of landholders and irrigators in the GABSI area. That is something that the department through our northern region is continuing to have some conversations with those individuals about, including some we have met who I think are your constituents. It is an ongoing discussion, as you will appreciate, about trying to balance the opportunities for economic growth with the health of the aquifers out there. It is certainly something about which we are in ongoing discussions with some landholders.

Mr KATTER: There is some consideration for it?

Mr Fraine: Yes.

Mr BERKMAN: I would like to put a question to the CEO of Sunwater if I could, please. Documents that were obtained by the Australian Conservation Foundation under RTI last year showed that Sunwater has, at least previously, held contracts with Adani, or Bravus as they call themselves these days. Does Sunwater have any current contracts in place to supply water to Adani and for what projects?

Mr Stockton: As a water service provider, Sunwater supports all industrial irrigation and urban customers through the access to a commercial water supply. Sunwater owns a significant network of water infrastructure in the region, particularly in the Bowen Basin area, and the supply of raw water to mining customers is part of our business. We apply a consistent approach to all industrial customers. All our contract details with our Sunwater customers are, in fact, commercial-in-confidence.

Mr BERKMAN: Despite being a government owned corporation, am I to assume that you could not tell me how much water Sunwater has agreed to provide to Adani and for what cost?

Mr Stockton: That would be a commercial arrangement and would be commercial-in-confidence.

Mr BERKMAN: One final try, Chair, if I might. Can you tell us anything about the source of any water that Sunwater is providing to Adani?

Mr Stockton: Water that is provided by Sunwater to our customers through the Bowen Basin is supplied from two key sources. The first source primarily is from the Burdekin River by the Burdekin-Moranbah pipeline pumped from Gorge Weir south into the Bowen Basin. The second source of water is from Eungella Dam via the Eungella pipeline.

Mr BERKMAN: Finally, can you specify where that water is going from to supply which of Adani's projects?

Mr Stockton: As I indicated, that water supply is into the Bowen Basin via our pipeline network.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It has been answered, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr BERKMAN: Specifically, Chair, for which project? That was the other element of the question.

Mr Stockton: I do not have the detail of Adani's particular projects by name or by number. The network of pipelines that we have through the Bowen Basin is there to support a range of customers, whether they be irrigation customers, predominantly industrial customers or some urban supply customers.

Mr BUTCHER: Can I just clarify one statement I made earlier which was incorrect. I said that water plans expire in five years. It is actually 10 years that the water plans run for and I said five years. I correct that if that is okay.

Mr SMITH: Minister, my question is with reference to page 81 of Budget Paper No. 4. Can you please advise what investment the government is providing to upgrade the recreational facilities located at Sunwater's regional dams across the state?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. Of the many aspects of the recent budget, this is something I was really excited to bring to government and get support on. Our dams and lakes are a vital water supply and a source of economic development in our regions, but they are also centrepieces of Queensland's thriving tourism sector. We know that they are places that Queenslanders go and where family memories are created, and they are drawcards for interstate and international tourists. My parents as grey nomads certainly appreciate those wonderful areas.

Thanks to this year's budget, the Palaszczuk government is investing \$24.5 million over the next five years to upgrade and maintain 19 of those recreational facilities owned by Sunwater in locations right across Queensland. This investment will enable Sunwater to undertake a range of works, from upgrades to picnic and barbecue areas, campsites, lookouts to water treatment plants and amenity blocks as well as improve access so that all members of the community can enjoy these recreational facilities for many years to come.

The 19 recreational areas include Burdekin Falls Dam, Julius Dam, Leslie Dam, Lake Tinaroo and Kinchant Dam, just to name a few. Thanks to investment opportunities for local communities such as boating, swimming and camping, those areas will be enhanced. We know that this will draw even more visitors to regional towns and support those local economies. I will add that improvements to recreational areas of Boondooma Dam and Bjelke-Petersen Dam in the electorate of Nanango are also part of this program. I am sure the member has been to those facilities a few times.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I certainly have.

Mr BUTCHER: As with other projects underway across Queensland, Sunwater will prioritise local workers and businesses wherever possible for the upgrade, the operation and the maintenance works on those facilities. This means our investment will also support good regional jobs as well as the lifestyle we love so much in Queensland.

An amount of \$6.3 million will be invested in these important projects this financial year. This investment is a direct injection into regional Queensland by this government. Costs associated with these upgrades to recreational facilities are not recovered by Sunwater through their irrigation pricing. This government is committed to supporting regional communities, and that is why we are making these investments in these important locations.

I look forward to seeing these projects get underway and the jobs on the ground across regional Queensland thanks to these important works. Water is certainly the lifeblood of communities in Queensland. That means not just for irrigation, for agriculture and industry but also for the wider community—for tourists and local businesses that benefit from the tourism and recreational opportunities that these sites will provide.

Mr SMITH: Seeing as we are talking about regional water, Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you please provide an update on the progress of the Regional Water Assessment Program?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. Investments in water infrastructure planning are critical to ensure that we are considering the best options to support water security and economic growth both now and well into the future. That is why the Palaszczuk government has invested over \$9 million across three regional water assessment programs focusing on three important regions in Queensland: the Southern and Darling Downs, the Bundaberg-Burnett and the Tableland regions. We are working with local stakeholders to investigate long-term water security solutions that provide economic activity and drive growth and jobs in our regions. Work commenced in every region by late 2021, including important early investigations into service needs and hydrology. All assessments are well underway, and I know that my department and Sunwater are engaging with stakeholders across these regions to determine the best solutions possible.

For the member's information, in the Bundaberg and Burnett region Sunwater has hosted five stakeholder advisory group meetings and a detailed online survey has been released so irrigators can identify future water demand that they may need. In the southern Darling Downs, the findings on service need were presented to a stakeholder advisory group and work is now underway to develop short-listed options for future exploration. In the Tablelands, representatives from Mareeba Shire Council, Tablelands Regional Council and the Cairns Regional Council along with representatives from agriculture, industry and other peak bodies are participating actively in these projects.

Seven technical advisory panel meetings have also been held across the assessment regions to review the technical work being completed at key milestones. The panel incorporates expertise across a range of important areas both within government and externally. The feedback I have received from mayors and other groups involved has been incredibly positive. Chair, I would like to acknowledge the local council and industry stakeholders who have made the time to support this process to date. We are certainly getting on with the job and we are getting great support in every region that we are doing these regional water assessments. We want to consult thoroughly and get all options on the table so priority projects can be considered into the future. We can then determine which infrastructure and non-infrastructure options will best deliver water security and economic growth which will be suited to each of those individual regions. This investment is further evidence of our commitment to water security right across Queensland. We are consistently working to improve water security and bolster economic growth and we are planning for the future.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you provide an update of how the Queensland government is bolstering long-term water security on the Southern Downs? I hope the member for Southern Downs is watching so he can hear your answer, because I know it is something passionate for him.

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question, and you are right: the member for Southern Downs is certainly very passionate. He is that passionate that he writes me letters telling me how excited he is and thankful of the funding that has come his way. As minister I have visited the region on several occasions. I have seen Storm King Dam when it was empty, Leslie Dam at almost record lows and seen the many water trucks that were travelling between Warwick and Stanthorpe to ensure that Stanthorpe did not run out of drinking water. I have met with the mayors each time and spoken with local irrigators and business owners. I admire the strength and resilience of this region in the face of prolonged drought. In more recent times I have also seen Leslie Dam spill and Storm King Dam full and I have seen the photos of the mayor standing there like he was god. I do not think I will forget the look on the mayor's face when the drought finally broke and Storm King Dam filled.

While the recent rain is a relief, we know that we cannot always rely on rain. The science tells us that the region will face drought again. That is why the Palaszczuk government is committed to bolstering the region's long-term water security including through projects like the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline. This project represents more than \$300 million in investment in long-term water security to the Southern Downs and Toowoomba satellite communities along the way, for the information of members.¹

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is this the one that was going to be completed by October 2020?

CHAIR: Order, member! Member—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I just thought the minister might like to add that in.

Mr BUTCHER: Maybe you should ask me that in parliament.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We ask every week.

Mr BUTCHER: I have never heard a question about that.

CHAIR: I was about to say, member, that I have said that I will proceed to a warning. I have not decided in this case here because we are so close to the end.

Mr BUTCHER: I am happy to move on, Chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have not been warned yet.

CHAIR: I know you have not been warned, but you are very close. To the member and the minister, please cease your cross-chamber chatter.

Mr MADDEN: Chair, I would like to hear the minister answer my question.

CHAIR: So would I.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, and so would we!

Mr BUTCHER: It will deliver drought contingency supply for the Southern Downs communities of Warwick, Allora, Killarney, Yangan and Stanthorpe and provide permanent water supply to the residents of Cambooya, Greenmount, Nobby and Clifton in the Toowoomba region. Construction of the

¹ This figure was amended to \$300 million from \$30 million by the department following the hearing. See correspondence received 1 August 2022.

pipeline will deliver approximately 420 jobs and we know that long-term water security will bolster jobs and economic growth and provide enhanced liveability to these regional communities. I have spoken with the mayors and my department is working very closely with the councils.

Subject to consultation with the councils, the preconstruction on the new pipeline could begin within the next few months with a proposed completion date of 2026. Our government has a strong history of supporting this region, including through a \$15 million investment committed to water carting and the \$19.34 million investment in the Southern Downs drought resilience package in the early stages. My department is also undertaking a regional water assessment, as I just talked about, for the southern Darling Downs as part of those three programs that I just discussed. Those assessments, as I said, are well underway and will set a road map for economic growth for that region through investment in water infrastructure. Through these significant investments, our government is working closely with local communities to provide long-term water supply to ensure our regions continue to grow and continue to prosper.

CHAIR: We will go to the member for Nanango. You probably have time for one or two questions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Just quickly following up on that question that the minister was talking about, the Premier committed publicly to have that pipeline that you just talked about completed by October 2020. How can the minister justify how the project will be delivered six years late if it will not be completed until 2026, as the minister just informed the committee?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I think that this is an issue that we dealt with in one of the last two estimates in terms of a public commitment.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Well, it still has not been built!

CHAIR: No, verifying this commitment to have that done and I cannot recall exactly where we landed with that, but there was some conjecture about that. I will not ask you to verify that—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. I will move on and I will ask another question.

CHAIR: No, no. Did you want to recast that?

Mr BUTCHER: I would like to know where the member got that comment from or when it was.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am more than happy to provide that to the committee at a later time.

CHAIR: Member, do you just want to ask questions directly from that one?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Given the project for the pipeline was due to be completed in October 2020 as promised by the Palaszczuk government, how can the minister justify a six-year delay in delivering a project?

Mr SMITH: I raise a point of order, Chair. I think the member actually knows this herself, but making such a claim will need to be verified—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I was asked to reword it and I did.

Mr SMITH: No, I am supporting your earlier statement here, member for Nanango, in terms of needing to provide—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: October 2020.

Mr SMITH:—evidence of the Premier actually making that statement.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. That was submitted to the committee last year.

CHAIR: Without the preamble—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We will do it again next year and the year after until 2026 obviously, unless we deliver it!

CHAIR: Did you want to move—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay, I will move on. I have a quick question.

Mr BUTCHER: All I know is that I am getting on with it and we are going to build the pipeline.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I have a question in relation to the Building our Regions program. It has been reported that a water pipe bursts every 80 minutes in rural communities thanks to ageing infrastructure that has been inherited by local councils to maintain, but as you know many of these councils do not have the capacity to fund those replacements, and I know you agree with me on that.

Mr BUTCHER: I do.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This is to ensure safe drinking water for their communities. Given this budget only provides \$70 million over three years towards the program, I see a shortfall of \$430 million. What are you doing, Minister, to advocate for that shortfall on behalf of these regional communities to ensure that they get that critical water infrastructure and it can be replaced?

CHAIR: Minister, that contained some opinions and arguments, but I ask if you want to answer that question and I will give you wide latitude dealing with that subject.

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. The funding for Building our Regions, as the member discussed, was designed because of advocacy from the councils that they did have a cliff coming at them in relation to local water infrastructure that was built some 50 years ago in some different locations. It was because of that advocacy that the department and myself made a decision that Building our Regions would not just be used for councils to make pretty things in their communities but to start to put what we call the non-sexy stuff in the ground like water infrastructure, whether it be water treatment, wastewater or water infrastructure. We committed to that. Building our Regions is in two stages, and I take note of the member's question. There are some councils that really struggle to have the people on the ground to do the work to even get to a stage where they can identify what the projects are that they need funding to get done.

The first stage of Building our Regions funding is designed to allow those councils which we have already announced to start to do the prefeasibility stuff to get them shovel ready for the next round of Building our Regions for the infrastructure group that is coming forward. I think 35 of those grants have been awarded to local governments for those planning parts of their projects, which is great to see, totalling \$8.29 million going to those councils which, as I said, would previously struggle to get the detail of what they were looking for. This funding specifically supports smaller councils to get that planning work done so that projects are shovel ready. We are looking forward now to seeing the next group of regions, but the benefit of the \$70 million investment, just to follow up on what I am doing, is that the \$70 million is an investment to these councils to do this work but it is also co-funded with those councils. We envisage that most of the projects will be funded out of the \$70 million, so there is a \$70 million investment and most councils will have either equal funding or more depending on what sort of project it is. We could see up to \$200 million in investment in that cliff that the member was talking about in relation to support not only from our government but also from the councils that are doing the work.

CHAIR: We have just about run out of time.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order: with regard to the previous question the member for Nanango was asking, we have documents with regard to the announcements by the Premier.

CHAIR: Let us have a look.

Mr McDONALD: The first is on 20 January 2020, so the Premier talks—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There are two news articles.

CHAIR: We have had a look.

Mr McDONALD: There are two news articles.

Mr MADDEN: Where is the point of order?

CHAIR: We have done this before. It is all coming back to me—'possibly by the end of the year'. We have dealt with this.

Mr McDONALD: And from 21 January where the feasibility study was completed in November.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You asked for evidence.

CHAIR: I did. It is deja vu all over again.

Mr MADDEN: He should have asked the Premier yesterday.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: He is the water minister.

CHAIR: Once again, the Queensland government is seeking ways to deliver a pipeline by the end of that date. We have dealt with this previously and this question has been answered.

Mr BUTCHER: Can we clarify a few things we said we would clarify by the end of the session?

CHAIR: I think we needed to get a couple of things from Mr Brennan as well.

Mr BUTCHER: In relation to Mount Crosby substation, civil and enabling works for the substation are to be completed in 2022. In terms of the turnover in the past three weeks with Seqwater—our attrition rate is comparable with industry—12 permanent staff have left Seqwater over the past three

weeks out of our 779 full-time equivalents. Seqwater also has temporary employees, and an additional four temporary positions came to an end. The third one related to overpayment of staff. They are not aware of any instances of employees being required to repay an overpayment in the last 12 months.

CHAIR: Member for Traeger, did you have a question that we had to get answered?

Mr BUTCHER: I said I would commit to having a meeting with the member after the session.

Mr McDONALD: Just a clarification with regard to Paradise Dam: I took note that you said three wet seasons. Am I right to say that the government committed to \$600 million for the project before the last election and we hear today that commencement of major infrastructure would be in 2024-25? Does that mean the project will not be completed until 2028?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair: I thought I might correct the member there in that there was not an election commitment of \$600 million. The announcement of that \$600 million was made this calendar year.

CHAIR: Thank you for that information. Do you want to add any clarification?

Mr BUTCHER: My maths is pretty basic, but I would imagine a start of major works in 2024, with three wet seasons, we will see it in 2027.

Mr McDONALD: So 2024-25 financial year?

Mr BUTCHER: We will start the major works in 2024.

Mr McDONALD: With funding in the 2024-25 financial year?

CHAIR: Member, you are pursuing that, but I think we have a lot of information.

Mr McDONALD: The wet season is at the end of the year.

Mr BUTCHER: There will be funding of \$1.2 billion in the overall project.

CHAIR: You have your answer, Deputy Chair.

Mr McDONALD: The wet season after that is not until 2028.

Mr BUTCHER: You are a smart man. It does rain.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I think that is a good point to finish on. The time allocated for the consideration of water estimates has expired. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and the hearing will resume at 6.45 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 6.32 pm to 6.45 pm.



CHAIR: Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the regional development and manufacturing portfolios until 7.45 pm. Minister, if you wish you can make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Mr BUTCHER: I would love to make an opening statement, thank you, Chair. Plenty has been happening in the regional development and manufacturing portfolio, and I am excited to share with you how we have been driving good jobs and economic growth across Queensland. Manufacturing is one of the biggest industries in this state, contributing \$22 billion a year to our economy, and that number is growing. I have always said that I am a big fan of 'go, look, see', and during my travels extensively throughout Queensland, from the far north to the far west and down to the south, I have visited dozens of manufacturers who are benefiting from our investments in those industries.

This year's budget sees more than \$68 million going directly towards programs and initiatives that will help Queensland manufacturers scale up their businesses and invest in those new technologies. Central to our efforts to help local manufacturers transition to advanced manufacturing are Queensland's six regional manufacturing hubs. I am very passionate about these hubs as they perform a vital role in their communities, giving local manufacturers expert advice to develop their capabilities and improve their processes. That is why we have made the hubs permanent, with almost \$18 million allocated for the next four years, as announced earlier this year. On top of that, our \$50 million investment in two major grant programs will see local manufacturers continue to bolster their capability, create new jobs and re-shore work to Queensland. \$10 million has been allocated over two years towards the Manufacturing Hub Grants Program. Since 2020 this program has awarded \$11 million to 38 manufacturers across the state. This has seen more than \$18 million in private sector investment pumped into our regions.

Our support does not stop there. Since 2017 Made in Queensland grants have supported 105 advanced manufacturing projects, delivering more than 1,700 new jobs and supporting thousands more, many in regional Queensland. More than \$140 million in private sector investment has been

generated. That is \$2 from the private sector for every dollar granted through Made in Queensland grants funding. That is why we have committed a further \$40 million over the next two years for Made in Queensland, bringing our total investment in this program to more than \$100 million.

This year's budget also will see round 6 of the Building our Regions program, with \$39 million to support regional communities with urban water supply and water treatment infrastructure. That is part of our \$70 million investment in round 6 and in addition to more than \$8.3 million that has already been granted early this year for important planning works. We will continue to deliver jobs and economic growth for regional communities and I look forward to seeing these projects come to life and to answering the committee's questions today.

CHAIR: I call the deputy chair.

Mr McDONALD: I would like to hand over to the shadow minister.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you very much. I have a question for the director-general. The interim Coaldrake review identified that a director-general was keeping information from their minister to provide plausible deniability. Was that referring to yourself as director-general?

Mr Fraine: I thank the member for the question. Certainly the basis of the question is that in a Westminster style system directors-general and their departments should be free to give clear policy advice to their ministers and certainly both myself and my department do that. On that basis, the answer to your question is no.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Director-General, are you aware of any ministerial staff applying pressure to individuals in their department, including yourself, for responses that minimise problems or discouraging written advice on difficult topics?

Mr Fraine: Both myself and my department have a professional and constructive relationship with both my minister and his office. The answer to your question is, no.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have another question to the director-general, but this time in relation to manufacturing hubs. What are the KPIs in place to ascertain whether or not a manufacturing hub is successful?

Mr Fraine: By way of context for the committee, you might recall that the manufacturing hubs are currently in six locations across the state: Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone and on the Gold Coast. The hubs program was initially established in 2019, with an initial three hubs opening in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton. In 2020 the Gladstone hub was opened to further support regional manufacturers in Central Queensland and in 2021 the program was further expanded with two additional hubs opening in Mackay and on the Gold Coast. Initial funding of \$30 million was invested to establish the first four hubs, with an additional \$8.5 million invested to support the establishment of the hubs in Mackay and on the Gold Coast. While the hubs are located in six communities across Queensland, the services that they provide are available across the state. We are delivering workshops and training programs from Toowoomba to Mount Isa and all towns in between.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair.

Mr Fraine: Coming to the member's question in that regard—thank you, member—in terms of some of the outcomes that the hubs have provided, through the Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program to date there have been, through completed projects, 900 jobs either created or sustained, or retained in that sense. Certainly for all the projects funded through the manufacturing hub grants to date that will end up at about 1,380 jobs either created or retained. Certainly one of the measures for the hubs is the number of jobs they create or retain through the hubs program.

Another set of measures will come through the work that they do in the Industry Engagement program. For instance, in that space there are a number of workshops, events and seminars delivered under the Industry Engagement program that play an important role to address strategies under the government's Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan. For instance, 89 workshops, events and seminars were delivered across Queensland from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, attracting 1,466 attendees. Fifty-nine of those workshops were delivered in regional Queensland and online, attracting 772 attendees. Workshops and events included, for instance, four digital transformation online events to bring manufacturers closer to their customers and better positioned to manage the whole manufacturing process.

You will see through that process that there are the jobs that I have mentioned and there is the outreach to manufacturers. Another example for the committee is the work that has been done through the Rail Manufacturing Strategy. If I speak briefly to that—

Mr McDONALD: Chair, I appreciate Mr Fraine's answer and the detail that he is going into but the question was: what are the KPIs that are in place?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to move on.

CHAIR: I understand what you are saying there, Mr Fraine.

Mr McDONALD: We have jobs and outreach.

CHAIR: We have that sorted there. Could you move forward to the end of your answer? I have appreciated the detail that you have gone into.

Mr Fraine: As I have mentioned, it is jobs and, as the member mentioned, it is outreach and engagement with manufacturers. It will also be, through the grants programs that the hubs do and the role they play in broader grants programs such as Made in Queensland, some of the leveraging they get for the companies they work with, which not only get the grants from us but also are able to turn that into contracts. As I was mentioning in the rail manufacturing space, for instance, our Rockhampton and Gladstone manufacturing hubs have joined with stakeholders to form a Central Queensland manufacturing hubs rail group, which is a direct result of this partnership. There has been an uptake of welding qualifications for fusion welding of metallic materials and steel in order to assist manufacturers with taking advantage of rail manufacturing opportunities in this state.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Fraine, I have a follow-up question in relation to the KPIs, which I am sure you discuss at length with the directors of the manufacturing hubs to establish if those hubs are actually working. In relation to the manufacturing hubs, can you confirm that the director of the Cairns manufacturing hub, the director of the Townsville manufacturing hub and the director of the Rockhampton manufacturing hub have all resigned, and if so why?

Mr Fraine: Yes, those three directors of the manufacturing hubs have in the course of this year moved onto other fulfilling roles. In fact, Andrew from Cairns has moved into the marine area in a role that is not far removed from the role he was playing for us. Mick has moved onto a broader role and Dean is now working with AIG, the Australian Industry Group. We would expect, as happens in a modern public sector, that there will be people who move in and out across the public and private sectors to further improve both their careers and the ecosystems that they are a part of.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Fraine, are those positions still vacant?

Mr Fraine: They have been certainly through a recruitment process and I will—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I think there is a pretty strong 'no' behind that.

Mr Fraine:—come back to you during the course of this in terms of where each of them is at.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would like to know if there are any other leadership positions in those manufacturing hubs that are currently understaffed or unfulfilled. My understanding, from the information that I have, is that there are many vacant director positions in the manufacturing hubs.

Mr Fraine: We will get that information during the course of the event. Certainly, from our perspective, with the government having made the decision to permanently fund the manufacturing hubs, including \$17.75 million over the next four years, the provision of permanency will assist with the retention of staff.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, you have obviously committed to extra funding in the manufacturing hubs. Given the turnover issues with the director positions, are you concerned that the correct outcomes are coming out of those manufacturing hubs?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Or is that the reason why they are moving on?

CHAIR: Member—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am sorry; I remembered I needed to finish the question.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, we did not need that last bit, but the minister is answering.

Mr BUTCHER: I visit our manufacturing hubs whenever I go to any of those communities in my travels around regional Queensland. As I have said before, I travel extensively—extensively.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I know. I have written it down. Trust me: I am going to use it.

Mr BUTCHER: You can use it all you like but—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: A minister for travel.

Mr BUTCHER:—if I do not go, look and see then you would be sitting there making comments about me not getting out of my office here in Brisbane.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That I would.

Mr BUTCHER: You have made a comment before that I do get out and about and you are quite happy with that. Your words were, I think, 'You get your boots dirty.' I am proud of that. Every time I go to a manufacturing hub, the teams are continuing to do exactly what I expect them to do—that is, get out and meet manufacturers in their communities. My expectations of the manufacturing hubs are that they not only look after their own areas but also go further afield. We have seen manufacturing hub directors heading out to places like Longreach and other regional areas to support businesses and manufacturers in those regions. It is my expectation that they should do that.

In relation to staff moving on, I am a big believer in never holding anyone back from advancing themselves. Manufacturing hubs, which are a new group that has been set up, are a good platform for good people to get involved in the manufacturing sector outside of being on the tools and have a say in how our manufacturing industries continue to grow in Queensland. As I talked about before, the growth in the manufacturing industry in the last three years has been exceptional. A lot of that is because the manufacturing hubs are aligning with manufacturers to get them the new equipment they need to transform their businesses from a normal business, where they were before, to looking to start to export, to make—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Chair, point of order: the minister is now straying from the question and simply filibustering. I have more questions.

CHAIR: No. Thank you, member for Nanango.

Mr Butcher interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was about the directors, Minister. I am happy to ask my next question, which is on a different topic.

CHAIR: Member, I am just asking the minister to wrap up that answer. I am finding that relevant.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. As I said, I have faith that all of the directors in the manufacturing hubs, that have been there and are there currently, will continue to the programs that we ask them to deliver.

CHAIR: Mr Fraine, you have some more information?

Mr Fraine: Yes, I do. Member, in response to your earlier question, certainly the Cairns director role has been recruited and it is going through final checks prior to announcement. The Rockhampton role has been recruited and the successful applicant starts next week. Townsville is in recruitment. That is the directors. In terms of other positions, there is a project support officer in Cairns that is going through recruitment. All other positions are currently filled.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Nanango?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I refer to the government's 2020 election commitment of \$16.5 million to establish Manufacturing Skills Queensland, evidenced obviously by the Labor Party's campaign document—and I have that here if the committee has forgotten it. When was this industry body established?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. This initiative is led by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training. My department is certainly involved in the interagency working group set up to get that moving and will of course be involved once MSQ is established. I understand that MSQ will be established shortly and that industry stakeholders are excited to work with us as we continue to strengthen manufacturing skills here in Queensland. Further questions in relation to MSQ should be directed to Minister Farmer.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: When you say 'shortly'—that is the second time this committee has heard 'shortly'. You were going to 'shortly' build something, I think.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, do you have a question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How does the minister define 'shortly'?

CHAIR: Wow!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Well, how does the minister define 'shortly'? Is that shortly this month—

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: One moment. We have a point of order from—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: A 2020 election commitment.

Mr SMITH: There are two: one on opinion but perhaps more standing order 113, asking the appropriate minister.

CHAIR: Yes.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr Butcher interjected.

CHAIR: One moment. Can we stop the cross-chamber banter.

Mr SMITH: Standing order 113, the question must be put to the appropriate minister. Minister Butcher has just outlined that that is Minister Farmer.

CHAIR: Exactly. The minister has pointed out that that should go to the minister.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order: all day, the member for Bundaberg's points of order have been fringing on reflecting on the chair, like this one now. I would ask you to consider that. You don't need his protection.

CHAIR: Thank you, member.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am quite sure your minister does not want that protection either!

Mr McDONALD: We just want an answer.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member, that is getting towards frivolous in itself. I will not go any further with that. Member for Nanango?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chair. In relation to Manufacturing Skills Queensland—I am sure the minister is partnering with the relevant minister, as evidenced by his answer that he is partnering with the Minister for Skills and Training—given your opening statement in relation to manufacturing and given the significant skills shortage that is going at the moment, if there is to be significant growth in local manufacturing, which I personally hope there is, why is the government delaying the establishment of MSQ?

Mr BUTCHER: Once again, these are questions that should be asked of the relevant minister. The Minister for Training is responsible for training and skills here in Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: And this is manufacturing skills.

CHAIR: Member, please cease your interjections.

Mr BUTCHER: I am the minister responsible for the manufacturing industry here in Queensland. It is like talking about—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: This had better be a point of order and not an argument.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: At last year's committee hearing it was discovered that I was not allowed to ask about train manufacturing, which I note—and I did not interject when the director-general was talking about train manufacturing—

CHAIR: This is a long point of order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My point or order is: what questions will the minister take in relation to manufacturing in Queensland?

CHAIR: There is no point of order. The minister was actually answering that question directly. Please cease your interjections and allow the minister to answer the question. Minister, could you resume your answer, please?

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. Once again, this was delivered to the member in relation to a question on notice that she asked me last week which I responded to. Maybe she does not read her question on notice responses. The point I am trying to get to is: manufacturers here in Queensland, particularly tradespeople who work in the manufacturing industries, have apprentices and send them to TAFE to get skills. That is looked after by the skills and training minister here in Queensland. There is no difference from the work that will be done by Manufacturing Skills Queensland. It is very similar to what apprentices do here in Queensland now in the trade fields. I look after the manufacturing sector, which has workers who are involved in trades. The training and skills that are required in the future for manufacturing will be delivered by the Minister for Training And skills in Queensland. This project is within her remit. If you have any questions in relation to that, I am sure Minister Farmer would be more than happy to answer any of these questions in relation to the setting up of Manufacturing Skills Queensland.

CHAIR: Did you have one final follow-up on that, member for Nanango?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I do.

CHAIR: Or another question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No, I would like to follow this up because I think it is extremely important. Maybe I am just trying to help the minister out here. Surely—

Mr BUTCHER: That would be a first!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No, it is not. I am genuine in this. Surely, as the Minister for Manufacturing in Queensland, you would have some form of oversight of what is going on in relation to the establishment of Manufacturing Skills Queensland. I ask again: given the skills shortage across the state, why are you unable to provide this committee with information about what is going on in relation to Manufacturing Skills Queensland? In your answer you have stated that you are working with the minister, so in your role—

CHAIR: Member, that is a really long question.

Mr BUTCHER: Did she just use up all of the time asking the question?

Mr SMITH: Point of order: I worked with the minister in restoring Paradise Dam but that does not mean that I have any responsibility.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr SMITH: Again, standing order 113—the question is not to the appropriate minister.

CHAIR: Yes, I understand that. I have indicated that this needs to go to the relevant minister, member for Nanango. I do not know if you can furnish anything else, Minister.

Mr BUTCHER: All I can say is that as part of the development of Manufacturing Skills Queensland, our department—as I said in relation to the first question that was asked—is involved with what it looks like and what is involved in it, but at the end of the day Manufacturing Skills Queensland is the responsibility of the Minister for Training and Skills in Queensland.

CHAIR: We will go to questions from government members.

Mr SMITH: Minister, with reference to page 3 of the SDS, can you please provide examples of successful grant recipients reshoring because of the support provided through Made in Queensland round 4?

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, a strong manufacturing sector is critical to the sustainability of our industries including health, mining, construction as well as others that rely on the timely delivery of manufactured goods for their projects and programs to remain on time and on budget. That is why, following the impacts of the pandemic, we focused round 4 of Made in Queensland on reshoring. We wanted to encourage manufacturers to reshore or onshore their operations to Queensland. The aim was not only to strengthen our domestic manufacturing capability but to create good, secure jobs here in Queensland.

Throughout this year it has been fantastic to get out and about and meet those businesses that have been successful in the round 4 Made in Queensland grants. So far, 21 of those projects have received funding through the reshoring round. Packer Leather, in the Brisbane area, received a grant which enabled them to bring finish work in the leather industry back to Queensland—making them one of a few manufacturers in Australia with this capability. It was great to visit them earlier this year with the chair.

Aqseptence Group received a grant for an advanced selective laser machine allowing them to manufacture products in Queensland that were previously imported from India. A grant to Watkins Steel will see steel fabrication work reshored from the US, New Zealand, Singapore and China thanks to their purchase of advanced manufacturing laser cutting equipment after their success with this grant. Obadare in Toowoomba used its grant to purchase equipment that will build its capacity to meet market demand for oil and gas rigs, moving beyond component manufacturing to delivering a full rig package—work that is currently done overseas. Because of this grant they are bringing that back into not only Australia but Queensland. This project will bring work back to Queensland and at the same time has created an extra 15 local jobs. Aletek in Bundaberg, for the information of the member for Bundaberg, is using their grant to purchase advanced manufacturing equipment that will enable them to onshore manufacturing in Queensland, creating 29 jobs in the process.

Each and every one of these 21 projects involves bringing manufacturing to Queensland which currently takes place overseas or interstate. China, Japan, Indonesia, the USA, New South Wales, Victoria—work is coming to Queensland from these locations. The recipient started their projects in

February this year and will be completing them over the next 18 months. Round 4 projects are anticipated to create over 2,100 jobs in Queensland over the next five years, showing the benefits that can be achieved by bringing manufacturing back to Queensland.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, with reference to page 3 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you provide further details on the permanent funding announced for the manufacturing hubs?

Mr BUTCHER: I know the member has a big interest in the manufacturing hubs. The Palaszczuk government is continuing to deliver good jobs and better services right across Queensland. One way that we are doing this is through our continued investment in the manufacturing hubs, as we have heard before. The manufacturing hubs were a \$38.5 million commitment to bolster the growth of Queensland's manufacturing sector.

In 2019 we opened manufacturing hubs in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton. In 2020 one was opened in Gladstone to address the growing renewables and hydrogen industry in Central Queensland. We know Central Queensland is an area of significant interest for these growth industries and the region is now well placed to capitalise on future manufacturing opportunities that these new industries will bring to Queensland. In late 2020 we committed an extra \$40.5 million into our Making it for Queensland strategy. This included an \$8.5 million investment to establish two further manufacturing hubs on the Gold Coast and in Mackay.

These hubs provide world-class services, support and advice that is seeing our manufacturing sector grow and prosper. I am proud to lead a department that has vital services and staff in regional Queensland, ensuring our manufacturers are supported to grow their business and make the most of these new opportunities that are coming here in Queensland. What I really appreciate about our hub staff is that they are consistently out and about visiting these businesses, helping them and supporting them to grow the industry. Our hub staff in Rockhampton service businesses in Western Queensland. Our Cairns staff are often travelling up to the Tablelands. The value of the hubs and the expertise that they provide is critical to Queensland's regional manufacturing sector.

That is why earlier this year I was pleased to announce that our government has committed permanent funding to these hubs. Nearly \$18 million will be invested over the next four years so they can continue to support manufacturing businesses across Queensland. Between the six hubs there have been over 3,000 individual engagements with manufacturing businesses and stakeholders right across regional Queensland.

I know the hubs are a vital and valued part of Queensland's manufacturing sector. That is why this government has committed to ongoing funding of the manufacturing hub network to ensure that the important work they are doing continues. This is particularly important as we continue our work to equip Queensland's manufacturing sector with the opportunities that come through all manufacturing including rail manufacturing, emerging industries such as hydrogen, growth in renewables and the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

CHAIR: Minister, I am glad that we have talked a bit about the Made in Queensland grants. Thank you for coming out to visit the businesses in my area. Can you update the committee on the overall progress of Made in Queensland, including more details on how many businesses have been supported, what jobs have been created and the private investment outcomes?

Mr BUTCHER: Thanks to the 2022-23 budget, Made in Queensland is now a \$101.5 million program. Since 2017 the Palaszczuk government has invested over \$100 million in this grant program which is helping small and medium sized manufacturers increase their international competitiveness, productivity and innovation via the adoption of new technologies. It is a program that is generating the high-skill manufacturing jobs of the future. Since this program started, 105 advanced manufacturing projects right across the state have been supported. Businesses right across Queensland are benefiting from this government's investment in our thriving manufacturing sector. Some 5,800 jobs have been created or supported since 2007, with more to come thanks to further funding for this successful program.

Made in Queensland has generated more than \$140 million in private sector investment to go with it. These figures are set to increase further as manufacturers maximise the benefits of productivity, quality improvements, onshoring, exporting and certainly waste reduction, which we know is so important. That means that our investment is supporting businesses to invest in new technology and equipment so that they can grow their businesses and harness emerging opportunities that are coming at them. Queensland manufacturers are capable of competing with anyone in the world when they have the tools to do so.

Our government continues to invest in this program because we understand that more than ever before governments, companies and individuals are looking to source their goods from Queensland or Australia. Queensland manufacturers, backed by the latest technology, are well placed to benefit from this trend, and this includes our Made in Queensland grant recipients.

Made in Queensland supports manufacturers right across the state. So far, 39 grants have been awarded to regional manufacturers, with 33 of these projects already complete, creating and supporting more than 2,000 regional jobs. All Queenslanders benefit when our manufacturing sector is strong. The Palaszczuk government will always back this sector and that is why we continue to invest, year after year, in the Made in Queensland program. We know how important it is to our manufacturers.

I know that it works. I have seen it firsthand. I have been to these businesses. I have seen the difference that these grants have made. I have seen highly skilled jobs the new equipment creates and I have met the young apprentices and people getting into manufacturing because of the emerging opportunities with these new tools. I look forward to visiting more businesses in the future when I travel in regional Queensland, supported thanks to the additional \$40 million in funding for Made in Queensland announced in the recent budget.

CHAIR: Minister, returning to the issue of the manufacturing hubs, I am interested because my area of Moreton Bay is very interested in one as well. We have heard a bit about the staffing. We have heard a bit about the permanent funding and only a few details of what they do. Can you talk a bit more about how the Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program is supporting those manufacturers, especially in regional Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: Our Manufacturing Hub Grants Program is assisting businesses in the Cairns, Central Queensland, Gold Coast, Mackay and Townsville regions. Our \$18.5 million investment in this program provides an opportunity for manufacturers to become more productive and create the jobs of the future through investment in new equipment and technologies, and manufacturers are starting to harness these new opportunities right now as we speak.

Thanks to an additional \$10 million in this recent budget, we can continue to provide these grants to manufacturers across Queensland. Since launching the program in 2020, we have already invested more than \$11 million in 38 of these manufacturers, from the Gold Coast to Cairns and from Emerald to Gladstone. These projects are expected to generate an anticipated \$18.7 million in private sector investment and to support and create over 1,300 jobs in Queensland.

In the Cairns region, 13 projects have received funding. We have invested in 15 projects in Central Queensland and nine in Townsville. Of the 38 approved projects, 21 have already been completed, and the success stories are certainly worth sharing with the community.

First Nations owned business Kelly's Australia from Innisfail, which I had the pleasure to visit, received more than \$420,000 to purchase a robot to clean marine equipment at shipyards. This is the first of its kind in Australia. It uses advanced technology to safely and efficiently clean maritime vessels' hulls and reduce environmental hazard risks at the same time.

Then there is Gladstone manufacturer Mecha, which received more than \$227,000 to purchase 3D laser scanners and other advanced manufacturing equipment that enables them to reverse engineer spare parts. Importantly, this means that they are now producing parts here that were previously made overseas and interstate.

In Townsville, manufacturer Engineering Industries Australia received more than \$330,000 to purchase new equipment that is enabling them to fabricate heavy metals locally. They know there is demand for locally manufactured products, and the new equipment means that they can meet this increased demand.

G.E.T. Engineering in Emerald boosted its manufacturing capability with a grant of more than \$280,000 to purchase a machine that helps repair equipment for the local mining, agriculture and civil sectors. They can now meet increased demand for their services and create new jobs. These projects mean more local jobs for regional Queensland, and that is what I want to see.

I look forward to visiting more of these regional businesses, as the member for Nanango has. I see on her social media pages that she has visited many of these businesses I just talked about and celebrated with them, taking photos of some of the great work that is being done in the manufacturing sector, as she also travels around the state seeing manufacturing businesses.

Mr SMITH: I was just reflecting on the investment in manufacturing at the Bundaberg State High School and Kepnock State High School. I am looking forward to seeing more manufacturing in the regions into the future. On that, Minister, could you provide to the committee an update on Building our Regions round 6?

Mr BUTCHER: Building our Regions certainly has a long history of supporting Queensland regional local governments to invest in essential infrastructure and create flow-on economic development opportunities and the jobs that go with it. While I was out in the regions last year, mayors were telling me that they were facing challenging funding, as we have talked about in the last session, for water infrastructure for their communities that were necessary but not necessarily obvious to ratepayers. I came back to Brisbane and ensured that the centrepiece of our budget was a further round of Building our Regions which provided funding exactly for that purpose.

Last year's budget delivered \$70 million over three years for local governments to improve their water supply and sewerage services. Previous rounds of Building our Regions have seen more than \$348 million approved towards hundreds of projects, creating almost 3,000 construction jobs in regional Queensland and supporting regions. These projects have leveraged over \$539 million in additional funding from other sources for a total capital expenditure of over \$887 million, supporting more than 2,700 construction jobs.

Under the first stage of Building our Regions, as we have discussed today, 23 local councils have received over \$8.3 million. In June I was pleased to advise the mayors of these councils that they had been successful in their applications for important planning funds.

The investment of \$8.3 million from the Queensland government will support business case preparation and detailed engineering design works of the 35 future water supply and sewerage projects that we know are important for developing our regions. From the Torres Strait west to Quilpie and south to Goondiwindi, the money will be used to plan for projects which will improve the livability and long-term prospects of regional communities.

This year's budget builds on our commitment to this important program, and \$39 million has been allocated in 2022-23 to support the construction of important water and sewerage projects in regional Queensland, where it is needed most. The construction projects are currently being assessed and I look forward to my department completing these so I can inform successful regional councils soon.

Getting these projects underway will create jobs, deliver better services and draw more people to regional areas. Building our Regions round 6 is an example of how this portfolio is delivering for regional development in Queensland. With people moving to the regions in droves, it is this Queensland government that you can count on to deliver and to make sure that there are jobs, there are services and there are opportunities and a bright future for us all in this state no matter where you live.

Mr KATTER: I would like to ask some questions about biofuels—I understand that it falls within another portfolio—as they relate to manufacturing, particularly given the strong nexus with the water portfolio and the potential. I would hold the view that the best opportunities we have for manufacturing in rural areas are through biofuels. The government makes a big deal about hydrogen and EVs, but there has been, I would characterise it as, radio silence around ethanol and biofuels for the past 18 months. Could the minister explain why there has not been this commensurate push for biofuels?

Mr BUTCHER: It relates to a different minister's portfolio, but I can answer in relation to my portfolio responsibilities including manufacturing. What we are seeing now is that when they deliver these projects a lot of the equipment they receive is premanufactured offsite and some of it is manufactured overseas. These types of projects, I believe, should be looked at in relation to us building the equipment for these facilities. I think it is really important that the biofuels industry, as well as hydrogen and those other industries that are coming forward in Queensland, is part of the manufacturing space here in Queensland.

In relation to the information that I have here, ethanol certainly is an important chemical for many of those industrial processes and for our manufacturers and as a renewable biofuel to assist the state's transition to net zero emissions. The Queensland government is committed to the production of this important chemical in Queensland and is supporting ongoing production of ethanol in this state. As I said, we are continuing to support the manufacturers that are looking at these new industries that are coming into Queensland.

Mr KATTER: With the opportunities for manufacturing associated with that, has the minister had any acknowledgement or discussions with IAME, the Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers, about the immediate potential for hybrid trucks with blended ethanol and EVs?

Mr BUTCHER: I cannot say I have personally been engaged with that group you are talking about. It is exciting to see right across the state, particularly in regional Queensland—I acknowledge the member for Bundaberg. We visited one of his facilities where they manufacture garbage trucks. They are looking to transfer to hydrogen and electric garbage trucks.

In relation to your question, no, I have not had discussions with them. I am not sure whether the department has or not. I am more than happy to meet with that group and have further discussions on how we can support that industry in transferring this new product into the way we move our vehicles around the state—absolutely.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I note that you spent about a minute of your three minutes talking up the Made in Queensland funding. I refer to the Made in Queensland funding on page 81 of Budget Paper 4. How much of the \$20 million amount for 2021-22 was expended?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. I am sure we have that detail here somewhere. We can get that information to you by the end of the session if that is all right.

CHAIR: Member, we will come back to that if you like.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. Minister, why is there no Made in Queensland funding in the forwards past 2024? Why has the minister decided to discontinue it?

Mr BUTCHER: Is that a secondary question, or should I answer the first one first and then answer that one second?

CHAIR: Just the first one question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: However you like. It is good you took the second question.

Mr BUTCHER: The member for Nanango in her 2019 reply speech announced that she would gut manufacturing here in Queensland by \$26 million.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Mr Chair. What a lot of rot!

Mr BUTCHER: It is true.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Prove it. I would like to see the evidence from the minister.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, do you have a point of order?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I do have a point of order. I would like the minister to withdraw. I take offence and I ask the minister to withdraw.

Mr BUTCHER: I withdraw. The LNP's manufacturing plan was to slash Made in Queensland, rebrand it Built in Queensland, and reduce it to nothing more than a glorified marketing campaign. Instead of investing millions directly into manufacturing businesses, the LNP wanted to take it away.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Mr Chair. Seriously, he has run out of things to talk about obviously.

Mr BUTCHER: We fund that program. We supported it since 2017.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. It is relevant.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question was very clear, Mr Chair. The minister may like to play politics with what he is doing but my question was: why is there no funding in the forwards past 2024? It is a simple question.

CHAIR: Thank you for your point of order, member for Nanango. I am sure the minister is coming to that. We had some layout of context for these questions. Minister, please continue with your answer.

Mr BUTCHER: As I said, we have continued to support Made in Queensland because we know how important it is on the ground for those manufacturers. This is further two years of Made in Queensland funding. We will continue to support Made in Queensland because we know as a government that this is an important program for our manufacturers in Queensland. We will not cut it. We will continue to support it. I am sure in next year's budget the member will see sustained funding for Made in Queensland because this government supports manufacturers and we support the grants that continue to make our manufacturers viable into the future—not only to continue doing what they are doing but to get to the next stage where they move into advanced manufacturing, where they move into robotics, where they move into industries that continue—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order. In his answer is the minister therefore confirming the program is continuing? Yes or no.

There is no money in the budget but it is going to continue: yes or no?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, you cannot direct how the minister answers the question. You have pointed out relevance before. The minister is coming to an answer.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Good.

Mr BUTCHER: For the member's benefit, there is \$40 million for the next two years, so that is \$20 million in this year's budget and \$20 million in the budget after that. As I said, we support Made in Queensland. While I am the manufacturing minister I will do everything in my power to make sure that funding for Made in Queensland continues to be delivered in this state because we know exactly what Made in Queensland does. I just finished mentioning the difference to businesses as you walk in and see the Made in Queensland grants that have been delivered to their businesses—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The minister is just winding down the clock.

Mr BUTCHER: I have every right to wind down the clock.

CHAIR: Member, please cease your interjections. The minister is clearly coming to the end of his answer.

Mr BUTCHER: In relation to continued funding for Made in Queensland, as I said, I am a big supporter of it. I will do everything in my power to ensure the continued funding of this program from 2024 to deliver to our manufacturers in Queensland and not cut funding to them.

Mr McDONALD: Minister, why is it not in the forwards past 2024? Did you not get it through cabinet?

CHAIR: The minister will disregard that last bit. Deputy Chair, I would point out that we are examining the expenditure for the current budget, as you know, so the question is out of order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a question to the minister. Minister, I refer to your answer to prehearing question on notice No. 5, which I did extensively read a couple of times. I note that the minister refused to answer in relation to the cost of the forums, who attends the forums, the selection process for the attendees, and if there are any transparency measures in place for minutes, deferring the responsibility to the Premier. I therefore ask: what input do you as regional development minister have in these forums?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. Being a regional member myself, I have certainly seen the value of the regional forums held in regional communities in Queensland. I know that most of the members sitting at the table are from our regions. To answer your question, the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water assists the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to deliver regional forums across Queensland and assists with the implementation of the identified priorities that arise from these forums.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Mr Chair, on relevance. The minister is simply rereading the answer he has provided to the committee. I have follow-on questions.

CHAIR: We will get there, member for Nanango.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was a follow-on from his answer.

Mr SMITH: A good answer is a good answer.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is obviously not or I would not waste my time re-asking it.

CHAIR: Order! I am delivering instructions. I am finding this useful. Once again let's allow the minister to get to the end of his answer in a not elongated way and we will move on to the next question.

Mr BUTCHER: As I said, my department and all government departments work across portfolios and departments in the way that we run different programs here in Queensland. Regional forums are no different to that at all. My role in regional forums is helping develop the program that we deliver in regional forums. The member would be happy to know that we have also just done a refresh of the program and asked for new members to come on to those committees. At the forum I attended recently in Hervey Bay with the member for Bundaberg it was good to see a fresh set of eyes looking at what is important to those communities in regional Queensland.

One of the main reasons we hold regional forums is to get out to the communities to listen to individuals from the communities and report back to the Premier—a report that I do with the minister for agriculture, Mark Furner—in response to what we are hearing on the ground and what are the actions that we are getting out of these regional forums and delivering on what these forums are looking for to support each of their communities. The forums are held right across regional Queensland areas, not just in one location every time. We are making sure that we are being heard and listened to in relation to these forums right across the state. It is a great program. The Premier is passionate about it. She introduced this when we got into government because she sees the benefit of making sure that all regional Queenslanders are heard and have a voice in the Queensland government.

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

Mr McDONALD: I just have a follow-up question. How are the new members identified and selected for those forums?

Mr BUTCHER: My understanding is that they go through an application process. They put an application in and it is done through an independent panel who assesses it through that process, and they are selected on their merits. As I said, there are some old members who have stayed on the committees, but there are also new members with difference interests in different aspects of the regions in different parts of the state. I am not sure to whom you are referring. I know there was commentary around the Central Queensland forum where the member for Burnett complained there were not enough people on the forum from Agnes Water. The Central Queensland forum has a very large area to cover and there are many stakeholders from many parts of it. There is one member from Agnes Water on the forum that was held in the member for Burnett's area, and every time a forum is held with that member on that committee they are certainly heard.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There are a couple of things. In relation to the forums, where is the application process, where is the transparency for the minutes, and what are the costs of these forums? We want to know how they apply, who decides, what is the transparency in the minutes and what is the cost of those forums. Minister, I know you are going to say it is all the Premier, but, seriously, you are the minister.

Mr BUTCHER: The regional forums sit under the Premier's office. They are responsible for the funding of the forums through the Premier's office. They are not part of my SDS where I fund the regional forums. You had an opportunity yesterday to come in and sit down and ask the Premier—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: What is the minister responsible for in regional development?

CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections.

Mr BUTCHER: I am responsible for regional development but I am not responsible for the funding of the regional forums that are held because it comes under the Premier's department.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: What does the minister do in regional development? The only thing the minister has been able to talk about is forums.

CHAIR: Order! Member, it would be unusual for you to be thrown out with three or four minutes to go. I think your interjections are not being taken. Can we let the minister finish that and then we will go to one last question from the member for Ipswich West.

Mr BUTCHER: I understand that the member was the assistant treasurer at one stage so I would have thought she would have understood where funding allocations go, the funding streams and asking questions of the relevant minister.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I think he used to call me the architect.

Mr BUTCHER: The architect? We can say that if you like. I can run through this now if you have time. I can certainly run through what I do as part of that.

CHAIR: No. I think we have answered that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You travel extensively.

Mr BUTCHER: Yes, I travel extensively and get out to regional Queensland, where you would expect me to go.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister and member for Nanango. We will have our last question.

Mr MADDEN: My question relates to a topic that has not been raised today, but I am sure the minister will give us a broad answer to this question. Minister, with reference to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you advise how the Queensland government is supporting craft brewing and the artisan distilling industry in Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: I could not think of a better note to finish on than talking about craft beer, after what we have been through for the last couple of hours. Within our manufacturing sector, craft brewing and artisan distilling is emerging as one of the fastest growing industries in the manufacturing sector in Queensland. They currently contribute over \$100 million annually to Queensland's economy and our share of these markets in Australia continues to grow. There are 103 craft brewers and 60 artisan distillers now employing more than 1,800 people in Queensland.

We released the Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy in November 2018 to bolster capability in the sector and assist in accessing new markets that we knew were out there. All nine actions under the strategy have been implemented and continue to be expanded upon, including initiatives to support growth of the Queensland artisan distilling industry in Queensland. Some of the key achievements include establishing Australia's first BrewLab and providing \$1.1 million over five years to assist craft

brewers test their recipes and the introduction of a cert III in food processing in brewing through TAFE. We have seen 46 students complete this qualification and 30 are now employed in craft breweries in Queensland. There is currently a waitlist for this course because of the demand we are seeing.

Our artisan liquor licence continues to support small enterprises and new entrants into the market. Since commencing in May 2021 there have been 118 applications approved, including almost 40 from brand new producers joining this industry. This is a great example of how our commitment to reducing regulatory burden is creating more jobs, particularly with our artisan distillers in regional Queensland.

I have to admit that whenever I read the paper I constantly see stories about new breweries and new distilleries opening right across Queensland. This is also something I see for myself when I am out travelling around Queensland, South-East Queensland and regional Queensland. Just recently I was in Longreach meeting with the regional economic development body there, RAPAD, and testing their new local beers, the Winton, Longreach and Barcaldine lagers. The Central Western Queensland Brewing Co has launched its initial product as a trial as part of a long-term plan to establish a regional brewery in the outback, to reintroduce brewing manufacturing and to create new tourism opportunities in that area.

I am seeing these new businesses and products all throughout my travels. A great part of my portfolio is that I could almost go to any region now and visit a local manufacturer, see a water project we have invested in and visit a craft brewer or a distiller on my way around. I look forward to visiting more of these businesses as these growth sectors continue to expand off the back of our government's commitment to training, facilities and a regulatory environment that is stimulating more growth and jobs in Queensland.

CHAIR: The time allocated for consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water has expired. We have one outstanding question about Made in Queensland expenditure from the member for Nanango. Minister, do you have any information on that?

Mr BUTCHER: I have a response for the member for Nanango. There was \$9.01 million expended as part of the Made in Queensland grants completed in 2021.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: We therefore have no more questions on notice.

Mr BUTCHER: There was one other one. In relation to Building our Regions planning projects, 23 regional councils received almost \$8.3 million. I said 'over \$8.3 million'; it is actually \$8.3 million.

CHAIR: I thank the minister, officials, departmental officers and ministerial staff. That concludes the 2022 hearing of estimates for the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and visiting members who participated in the hearing today. Before we finish, Minister, do you want to give a wrap-up?

Mr BUTCHER: I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for the opportunity to be here this evening. I am passionate about my portfolios and it is good to have a chance to explain to the committee the work the government is doing across these important areas. Thanks to the parliamentary staff for bringing all of this together, especially for staying back late for sessions like this. I know it is a long day going through this process.

Estimates do not come together without a huge effort from the people in the department, the government owned corporations and other bodies, and also in my office. Thanks especially to the hardworking staff in the department, particularly my director-general, Graham Fraine, and the DDGs, Bernadette Zerba and Linda Dobe. I also thank Sunwater and Seqwater for their involvement tonight. Both of these organisations have been incredibly busy throughout the year—whether it is operating the dams during the floods or completing big infrastructure projects. I really do appreciate their work.

Thanks also to the staff in my office. They have been absolutely amazing this year. I know that despite the stress of estimates—and it is a big stressful time for them—we were all looking forward to a chance to talk at length about the important work we do for these portfolios. I once again thank the committee and all of the staff who have stayed back and helped out today.

CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I want to thank Hansard, the parliamentary broadcast staff and our secretariat for pulling all of this together. I thank everyone who has done all of that. Thank you, Bryn and Steph, and everyone else who helped out in our secretariat. I thank our Parliamentary Service staff who have supported this hearing today. I declare this hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 7.48 pm.