

TUESDAY, 2 AUGUST 2022

ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS

Estimate Committee Members

Mr SR King—Chair
Mr LL Millar
Mr BW Head
Mr JR Martin
Mr LA Walker
Mr TJ Watts

Members in Attendance

Mr MC Berkman
Dr A MacMahon
Mr SJ Minnikin
Mr PT Weir
Mr JJ McDonald
Mr TL Mander

In Attendance

Hon. MC Bailey, Minister for Transport and Main Roads
Ms A Tibbitts, Chief of Staff
Mr F Gibson, Senior Adviser
Department of Transport and Main Roads
Mr N Scales, Director-General
Cross River Rail Delivery Authority
Mr G Newton, Chief Executive Officer
Gladstone Ports Corporation Limited
Mr C Haymes, Chief Executive Officer

The committee met at 9.00 am.



CHAIR: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Transport and Resources Committee open. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

I am Shane King, member for Kurwongbah and chair of the committee. With me here today are: Mr Lachlan Millar MP, member for Gregory and deputy chair; Mr Bryson Head MP, member for Callide; Mr James Martin MP, member for Stretton; Mr Les Walker MP, member for Mundingburra; and Mr Trevor Watts MP, member for Toowoomba North. The committee has granted leave for the following non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today: the members for

Broadwater, Scenic Rim, Kawana, Burdekin, Maroochydore, Chatsworth, Condamine, Everton, Glass House, Maiwar, South Brisbane, Traeger and Lockyer. Other members may seek leave over the course of today's proceedings.

The committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2022 and the budget estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask all present to ensure phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode if not turned off.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: transport and main roads from 9 am to 11 am and from 11.15 am to 1 pm; energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2 pm to 3.30 pm; public works and procurement from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm; and resources from 5.30 pm to 7 pm and from 7.15 pm to 8.15 pm. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the portfolio of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads until 1 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 11 am to 11.15 am.

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

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. I welcome the following non-committee members: the members for Chatsworth and South Brisbane. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of transport and main roads open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Chair. Good morning to you, to honourable members present, to officials and to Queenslanders watching online. I begin today by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Jagera and the Turrbal people, and offer my respects to elders past and present.

It is an honour to serve Queenslanders as the transport and main Roads minister, especially at a time when our state is attracting record numbers of interstate migrants while growing and changing. Our population is booming off the back of the Palaszczuk Labor government's strong economic record, with 80,000 Australians moving to Queensland in the last two years. Queensland unemployment is at a 50-year low, and the Palaszczuk Labor government continues to lead Queensland through the first global pandemic in a century as well as through an extended La Nina, which has brought heavy rain in summer and winter, widespread flooding this year as well as the high inflation left by the Morrison government.

Despite this, last year my department delivered an additional \$366 million in capital projects above the forecast in last year's budget—20 per cent more infrastructure than in the previous year. The Palaszczuk Labor government is investing \$29.7 billion in transport and road projects over the next four years—our seventh consecutive record budget. Spearheading this spend in the budget is our \$3.5 billion rail revolution which will support Queensland's surging population growth and over 5,000 jobs. Projects like Cross River Rail, Gold Coast Light Rail, the Sunshine Coast rail duplication and the Kuraby-Beenleigh double-track duplication will expand rail capacity in some of Australia's fastest growing regions. These projects will allow for more services, take cars off the road and make rail a quicker and easier travel option.

We are also bringing train manufacturing back to Maryborough, delivering Queensland-made trains made by Queensland manufacturing workers. Our \$7.1 billion Queensland-made train manufacturing investment will see 65 new trains built while also rejuvenating rail supply trains in our

state. The Queensland-made trains will run through the Cross River Rail twin tunnels underneath the Brisbane River and the CBD—Queensland's largest ever infrastructure project. The \$5.4 billion project will transform train travel to, from and through South-East Queensland. When operational, Brisbane's first genuine underground line will unlock the bottleneck that has long plagued our South-East Queensland rail network by doubling core capacity. This will allow capacity for more future services and enable other expansion projects for the rail network. Cross River Rail is supporting 7,700 jobs and is currently pumping \$3 million a day into our economy.

Bringing all these projects together is our South-East Queensland rail connect plan. I seek leave to now table copies for each member of the committee and the secretariat.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr BAILEY: This plan maps out what South-East Queensland's rail network will look like once Cross River Rail opens. Commuters can now see how south-east train lines will link up when the first trains run in the underground Cross River Rail tunnel.

We are not just delivering on rail. We are investing over \$21 billion in road upgrades over the next four years to continue improving Australia's largest road network. This includes the biggest road project in Queensland history, the congestion-busting \$2.1 billion Coomera Connector, or our second M1 as it is known. The second M1 will provide much needed relief to roads on the Gold Coast, and Gold Coast residents will spend less time in traffic. This is only happening because of the leadership of the Palaszczuk Labor government.

We are protecting the area's wildlife as we do it. We have just secured 400 hectares of pristine land to create a protected koala habitat at Greenridge in Pimpama to be the future home to hundreds of koalas. It is great news for koalas and other flora and fauna as well as Gold Coast commuters. Labor is investing heavily in Queensland's regional roads. From the billion dollar Gympie bypass to the \$500 million Peninsula Developmental Road upgrade in the cape, the \$1 billion Rockhampton Ring Road and the \$145 million Mackay Northern Access Upgrade, we are delivering more lanes, better interchanges, a better Bruce Highway and safer regional Queensland roads.

Thanks to Queensland's electric vehicle superhighway, there are EV charging stations from Coolangatta to Cairns. Over the next year, stage 3 will see 24 more electric vehicle charging stations open in Western Queensland—Mount Isa, Cunnamulla, Barcaldine, Dingo, Kingaroy, Cloncurry, Longreach, Emerald and Charleville to name a few locations. Only Labor invests in the road and rail infrastructure that enables a strong economy with this, our seventh record budget. Labor's plan will futureproof Queensland, as our population continues to grow on the back of a world-leading pandemic response. Support for over 25,000 jobs across the state will make it easier to move around Queensland. Labor will continue to invest, deliver and make Queenslanders' lives better by providing better transport infrastructure, because that is what we do.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Gregory to direct traffic for the first question.

Mr MILLAR: Thank you, Chair. I hand over to the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, member for Gregory. I have a question to the minister. How much time does the minister spend each day getting major projects back on time and on budget and how much time does he spend on Twitter?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a pretty lightweight question to start. We are operating in the real world with an infrastructure commitment that is nearly 50 per cent above our first budget seven years ago after the horror cuts of the LNP when the honourable member was the assistant minister for public transport—

Mr MINNIKIN: Twenty-four thousand—

CHAIR: Member, please do not interject. You did ask a question; the minister is answering the question.

Mr BAILEY: Chair, it is interesting that there has been criticism of parliamentary committees, but the people who play up most to the committees seem to be the LNP. To answer the question, we are seeing a high-inflation economy left by the Liberal-National coalition in Canberra with a six per cent and surging inflation rate. That is going to have a natural flow-on effect to some projects in this state, but we are not going to cut those projects like the LNP did. When it got into power it cut road projects like the Sumners Road interchange, like the Cross River Rail project. All it seemed to do was cut, other than building 1 William Street—a tower to themselves.

Mr MINNIKIN: Enjoy the view?

Mr BAILEY: We are building road and rail infrastructure right across this state. We are very proud of that record and we will not cut them because there might be a high-inflation economy. This is a real world, not a la la land that the LNP lives in. This is a real world with a real economy and we are dealing with the issues at hand and we will get this infrastructure built, because with the growing population coming to Queensland on the back of our world-leading health pandemic response we need that infrastructure to deal with population growth. Some 80,000 new people have come to Queensland in only the last two years. If we were cutting projects like the LNP, it would be a disaster for our economy and a disaster for Queenslanders.

Mr MINNIKIN: Twenty-four thousand tweets.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Chatsworth, do you have another question?

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, my question relates to ministerial announcements regarding the minister's responsibilities as outlined in the SDS document. I refer to comments made by the minister on social media last week criticising a journalist. Does the minister wish to take this opportunity to correct the record and apologise to the journalist concerned?

CHAIR: I will not rule the question out of order because, Minister, he has made an SDS reference, even though I find it a bit spurious. Anyway, answer it as you see fit.

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I can give the honourable member this guarantee: this government will never kick the media off this parliamentary precinct as they did when they were in power.

Mr MINNIKIN: It was embarrassing, wasn't it?

Mr BAILEY: I respect the role of journalists.

Mr MINNIKIN: Not last week!

CHAIR: Member!

Mr BAILEY: I have nothing further to add to the matter. I am entitled to a point of view, as are all people—that is what a democracy is about—but I have always respected and made myself available to the media. I respect their role in a democracy. I will always defend their role here in the parliament and we will never kick them off the parliamentary precinct as the LNP did when it so arrogantly assumed power in 2012.

Mr MINNIKIN: Chance to apologise?

CHAIR: Member, let us just start on a good thing. I will not allow the minister to interrupt your questions if you try to hold back on the interruptions of the answers. Please, go on.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, the Coomera Connector, Centenary Bridge and Beams Road rail crossing projects were all due to start construction in 2021 but did not. The Coomera Connector is \$600 million over budget, the Gold Coast right rail is \$500 million over budget, the Boundary Road rail crossing has increased by 114 per cent, Cross River Rail will not open until 2024 or cost \$5.4 billion as originally promised and as again outlined in the minister's opening statement today. Is the minister able to refocus his priorities and finally stop the runaway train that is Minister Bailey's budget blowouts?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. He has obviously put a lot of time and preparation into literature. I congratulate him on that great achievement. It is in addition to rhyming, which I know is an important part of the policy-making process in the LNP. Let us go through those projects that are mentioned specifically in this question. Firstly, the advice to date to me as the minister is that the Cross River Rail project is on time and on budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: No, it is not.

Mr BAILEY: That is the advice to date, and that is a fact. I have not received any advice to contradict that at this point.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, that is not a fact and you know that.

Mr BAILEY: Sorry; you do not interrupt.

CHAIR: Member, the minister is answering the question. If you take issue with the answer, there are methods to deal with that, not to interrupt during the answer.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Chair.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Chair. Let us go through the projects that are mentioned in the question. The Coomera Connector, or as is known as the second M1, was blocked by the LNP when it was in power and was well reported at the time.

Mr MINNIKIN: Seven-and-a-half years ago.

Mr BAILEY: When I came to power as the minister I did not even have a road corridor. We had to secure and gazette the road corridor, which we did. To do that for a new highway of 43 kilometres in length in only four years was an unusually fast achievement given that it had been blocked by those in power. We then went about getting funding for this project and did so successfully within about a year and a half using stimulus funds and secured joint funding. This project would never have happened under an LNP government because it made it very clear it did not want it and it was not interested in it. Even though it held all the Gold Coast seats, it was not interested in this project. It had blocked it. That is a matter of public record.

This government is getting the project done. It will be the largest road project in the state at \$2.1 billion, and today there has been a significant announcement: in terms of the koala habitat that is quite fragmented along the corridor through there, and koalas are clearly under threat, we have a 400-hectare conservation area being added to the Pimpama River Conservation Area. There will be nearly 1,000 hectares of koala habitat that we have secured as part of this road project as well as the Tabooba property, which is another nearly 400 hectares. This project is progressing. There are environmental approvals that are outstanding.

Mr MINNIKIN: Slowly.

Mr BAILEY: We tried to get the former federal transport minister Barnaby Joyce to approve some of the approvals that we needed and failed to do that over six months. I wrote to him in November of last year and wanted it done before caretaker. Nothing happened under the federal government, so it has actually held up this project significantly—

Mr MINNIKIN: Seven-and-a-half years.

Mr BAILEY:—but we will get it done because we believe in building infrastructure for a growing population. It is a high-inflation environment. We have a situation where workers are a scarcity at the moment. That is well known to anybody who understands the current economy, but we will get this project done.

Likewise, we saw nothing happen on the Coopers Plains level crossing under the previous government. We are 75 per cent there, and I see the member for Stretton nodding his head very strongly because he knows that on the south side of Brisbane this is a massive issue. We have \$300 million allocated to it. We have a business case that has been completed. A lot of work has gone into it. I am very keen to see this project happen. It would not have happened under the cuts under the LNP. So we can see a lot of complaining and negativity from the LNP, which is really just code—

Mr MINNIKIN: Seven-and-a-half years.

Mr BAILEY:—for cuts. They criticise parliamentary committee possesses, but it is always them interjecting and behaving badly at these committees as the member for Chatsworth is doing right now. We have a record investment in road and rail infrastructure. We understand the need for a growing population and I look forward to more of our road and rail projects coming online, because infrastructure is what Labor does. We build; the LNP cuts. It is in its DNA.

Mr MINNIKIN: I would ask the minister: how many days has he actually been in the portfolio for main roads? How many days has he been the minister?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am surprised that the member for Chatsworth is wasting the committee's time with a matter that anybody can do a Google search on to find out when I was appointed. It seems to be a very frivolous and a—

Mr MINNIKIN: Some 2,700 days.

Mr BAILEY:—lightweight question from a member—

CHAIR: Member, if you have a point of order, please call it.

Mr BAILEY:—who continually interrupts me and only has lightweight questions.

Mr MINNIKIN: Three days—three days to one of the previous government.

CHAIR: Is that a question, member?

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, I notice that in question on notice No. 2 skills shortages are one of the reasons being blamed for delays and project cost blowouts. Labor has delivered 14,400 fewer traineeships and apprenticeships than promised since 2015. Is this a problem of the government's own making?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question and I certainly reject the premise of the question. There have been considerable investments in training and skills across this government, particularly on projects. With regard to, for instance, the investment in seals on Cross River Rail and other major projects, I expect that the honourable member has not taken those into account. We invest in RoadTek, for instance, in transport and main roads, in skills and development and apprenticeships. We do this across our major infrastructure projects. We are building nearly 50 per cent more in terms of road and rail infrastructure than when we first came to office and by the previous government.

There is a lot of training and a lot of skills going into that. We have added additional commitments across our other portfolios into that area. Everybody knows that there is a shortage of labour at the moment and so you need to invest in skills, in apprenticeships, and that is what we are doing. Queensland Rail, I think, is doing more than 50 apprenticeships this year. I am happy to get more details on that. We are investing in that area so I simply reject the comments by the honourable member in terms of skills and training. We are very committed to doing that. We do not cut TAFE, like the previous LNP government did. They were about to privatise the whole TAFE system. We saw the prices of training—

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Chair, a point of order under 118(b) on relevance. This has nothing to do with his portfolio.

CHAIR: I do not think there is a point of order. The minister is answering about skills and training. Your question was about X amount of skills and training lost under this government. Minister, please try to remain within your portfolio, but I understand the question was broader.

Mr BAILEY: I can give this absolute guarantee to the member for Chatsworth: we will not privatise the TAFE system as the LNP tried to do the last time they were in power. If there had been a second term it would have been sold off. We believe in TAFE. We invest in TAFE. It is an important part of our training program. What we saw was the cost of TAFE skyrocket when they were moved into the private sector. You have to invest and make sure that TAFE is affordable for people so they can get training. Otherwise, they are often unable to pay the fees. That is why we invest public funding in TAFE—building it where people need it. We are investing heavily in that and we have a very strong commitment.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, I refer to reports of cost blowouts in the ETCS project where there seems to be some confusion about which project the blowout refers to. For clarity, can you confirm that the project listed in QTRIP as New Generation Rollingstock, automatic train operations and platform screen doors fitment worth \$275 million relates to the Cross River Rail platform screen doors and their operation?

Mr Scales: Before I answer the question, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathering today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. To the member's question, basically you have two parts of ETCS: the stuff that is in the tunnel, which is a total cost of \$717 million, and then the vehicle modifications on the New Generation Rollingstock. When the projects are listed in the Queensland Transport Roads Investment Program, QTRIP, they are developed with a public-private partnership which is a 32-year contract which ends in 2046. It includes the major modifications, automatic train operations, accessibility variation project—that is, putting toilets back on the trains—European train control system and platform screen doors as variations to the original deed. The NGR base contract and AVP—accessibility variation project—modifications are covered in investment ID14201 in QTRIP. That is a total budget of \$4.16 billion. The New Generation Rollingstock, automatic train operations and platform screen doors fitment, listed as ID2417122 in QTRIP, is an additional scope of work added this year to supply automatic train operations software integrating the onboard ATO equipment and platform screen doors equipment to interface between the trains and the platform screen doors.

For the benefit of the committee, basically the automatic train operations system makes sure there is guaranteed repeatability when the trains enter the underground stations and match up with the platform screen doors. It is a new line in QTRIP, and the total budget of \$275.7 million was approved in late April 2022. The project is for the detailed design, fitment and ongoing maintenance of ATO onboard software and the platform screen doors onboard equipment for the 75-train NGR fleet. The reason it is described in that point is that we have just gone through a massive program where we have tested ETCS on trains and actually had them on the network. The funding for fitment of onboard equipment for the interface between the NGR trains and the ETCS level 2 signalling system, at \$374.1 million, to be used in the Cross River Rail tunnel is listed in QTRIP. The line item now reflects the full amount for the fitment of ETCS and the automatic train operations equipment. Last year's QTRIP figure of \$255 million was an indicative amount because we had not done all the work and we had not

got the software supplier on board. The total budget has increased by \$119.1 million, to \$374 million. The ATO side of things is basically the guaranteed repeatability so that the trains in the underground stations match up with the doors.

Mr MINNIKIN: I understand. Thank you.

CHAIR: I love a good question about the actual budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, the minister is quoted as saying that the ETCS project cost is \$764 million, but the cost listed in QTRIP is \$717 million. Is part of that \$374 million project listed in QTRIP as 'New Generation Rollingstock, European Train Control System fitment, install new signalling' making up the difference?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. I can help the committee out on that. In June 2018 ETCS was transferred to the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. The sponsor is Transport and Main Roads. On 22 December 2021 we moved to an alliance contract, so basically from an adversarial contract we had gone into an alliance contract which involved all three agencies acting in concert—ourselves, Queensland Rail and Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. The original budget was \$646 million. If you add to that the \$71 million which is in QR which was reallocated from the transport services contract, because QR are now part of the alliance, that gets you to \$717 million. Then you add \$47 million, which is in the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority towards the back end of the program for ETCS, and that gets you to \$764 million. Basically, we started off with \$646 million and we changed the contract to an alliance contract, so if you add \$71.7 million from our colleagues in QR, because they are part of the alliance, and then \$47 million from the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority that gets you \$764 million.

I was thinking about this this morning—what the difference is between the ETCS fitment, the infrastructure, and the ETCS fitment and the ATO and the platform screen doors on the rolling stock—and the best analogy I can come up with is that it is like an airport. If you are building an airport you do not have any regard to the avionics and the systems on the planes. If you think about this as Cross River Rail building the infrastructure—the tunnels, the underground stations—the bit that we have just answered to the honourable member on the ETCS, the automatic train operations and platform screen doors is the bit that is on the vehicles.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, just to confirm, the ETCS cost has only increased from \$634 million to now \$764 million, which is an increase of \$129 million, or around a 20 per cent increase?

Mr Scales: No. Basically what has happened is you have \$646 million in my budget, \$71 million in QR, in the transport services contract, and \$47 million in the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority budget. They have been welded together and then given to the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority to deliver under an alliance contract. We worked out that an adversarial contract with the supplier was not going to go anywhere so we transferred everything to Cross River Rail Delivery Authority in 2018 and we did a lot of hard work, and on 22 December 2021 we moved to an alliance contract. It is not a blowout; it is a consolidation of the various pots of money into one place.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes. Lots of thanks.

CHAIR: Hold that thought while we go to the member for South Brisbane for a question.

Dr MacMAHON: Minister, with respect to elderly people and people with a disability who have been greatly impacted by the availability shortages in the taxi industry, as well as disruptions to the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, what planning has this government done to ensure that these people can travel when they need to?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is a very important issue. People with disability need access to transport and particularly personalised transport in the form of taxis. We have a range of measures in place. For instance, we have a comprehensive framework for personalised transport in Queensland now in place that provides greater choice while strengthening safety standards and ensuring accessibility.

A number of years ago we supported the industry with a \$100 million Industry Adjustment Assistance Package and we have assisted the industry a couple of times during the pandemic with, firstly, a \$54½ million essential transport package and an additional \$23 million in support payments for taxi and limousine operators. We also have a \$21 million wheelchair accessible taxi program, which is basically a fifty-fifty subsidy from us to replace old wheelchair accessible taxis with newer ones.

I am aware, as the member has mentioned, that currently there have been instances where people have been waiting for longer than acceptable times for a wheelchair taxi. I was concerned about that. I have had a meeting with the taxi operators and peak body about a month ago and raised this

specific issue because it concerns me greatly that people with a disability may be waiting for inordinate times or may be missing medical appointments and that sort of thing. That is not something that I want to see.

The taxi companies have committed to try to improve their processes. They say one of the factors is simply the availability of drivers at the moment. With the jobless rate so low they are finding it very hard to recruit new drivers to get the kind of coverage that they can potentially have with the number of units that they have. Some of those units are not always on the road because they literally cannot find the drivers. We have asked them to do everything they can to improve that and internally their communications systems and incentives for drivers can be improved so that we do not see that happening on the ground. I know, for instance, the taxi subsidy increased by \$5. A few years ago we brought in the \$20 lift fee to give drivers an incentive because sometimes it takes a bit longer to load someone in a wheelchair. We brought in that \$20 lift fee to give drivers more of an incentive to pick up people.

We are attacking the problem in a number of different ways. I do share the honourable member's concerns and I am hopeful that the taxi industry, which is responsible for providing these services, can improve their service delivery in the very near future.

CHAIR: Member, do you have any further questions on that issue?

Dr MacMAHON: Yes, I have a separate question.

CHAIR: Make it quick.

Dr MacMAHON: Minister, in 2020 you announced a corridor study for Montague Road in West End. We have since received notification that that project is being entirely outsourced to the Brisbane City Council. Was it always your intention to delay the project and then hand it over to the Brisbane City Council?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for the question but it is certainly misleading in terms of suggesting that I have delayed anything. The fact is that Montague Road is a Brisbane City Council asset. This was an election commitment from the government leading into the 2020 election. We keep our election commitments. The logical way of doing this, rather than overlapping and having us doing studies for something that is an asset owned by the local government, was to ask them to do that work on their asset.

Having been a former councillor myself, I know that their local officers, in terms of the city council road network, will know the ins and outs not just of Montague Road but how it relates to all the other roads. They will have more on-the-ground knowledge in terms of how the road network works than our state people. We have fantastic officers, but we are very concentrated on state controlled roads, which often are the major roads, rather than the local roads. It made sense for us to have another level of government that owns the asset to do that work. They are happy to do that. We will work with them for that improvement.

Montague Road has changed a lot in the past 10 years with all the growth around there, particularly the high-density buildings going in between there and the river. That is putting pressure on Montague Road. It made sense for the asset owner to do that work, funded by us to make sure that it is done. I look forward to the outcomes of that.

Dr MacMAHON: Minister, if that is the case, why didn't you hand it to the Brisbane City Council in 2020 when you announced that money to a Brisbane City Council road?

CHAIR: Member, the minister has answered the question. Minister, do you want to quickly tidy that one up?

Mr BAILEY: It was an election commitment by this government and we are fulfilling the election commitment. That is what we do.

CHAIR: We will now go to government questions. Minister, I refer to the \$29.7 billion investment in road and transport, as outlined in the budget paper. Can you outline how the investment will deliver better roads and services for Queenslanders and are there any other approaches?

Mr BAILEY: Chair, I place on record your advocacy for better road and rail infrastructure in your electorate. The Petrie roundabout upgrade, for instance, has been very much an asset to the area and you have had a very strong and consistent record on that.

Our \$29.7 billion QTRIP commitment includes some very major projects such as the second M1, \$2.1 billion, and early works are underway; the M1 upgrade at the southern Gold Coast, which adds to the M1 upgrade we have ready completed at Mudgeeraba—\$1 billion; and \$1 billion for the M1 upgrade through Daisy Hill and Logan at Springwood. I think anyone who comes from the Gold Coast cannot miss that. It is a massive project with active transport, which is very obvious as well.

We are also six-laning the Bruce Highway from Steve Irwin Way to Caboolture; the Rockhampton Ring Road to come—there are more interjections from the LNP; they cannot help themselves—the Gympie bypass with a \$1 billion upgrade to the Bruce Highway; Edmonton to Gordonvale, Bruce Highway, nearly half a billion dollars there in Far North Queensland; the Mackay Port Access Road, \$350 million; Townsville Ring Road Stage 5, \$230 million underway because of the advocacy of the member for Thuringowa, who is a very strong advocate for roads in Townsville; and \$40 million for the School Transport Infrastructure Program.

Of course, we have an investment over time of \$7.1 billion in Queensland-made train manufacturing. We all remember that the last NGR trains were ordered on the cheap, made overseas, not even disability compliant and what a debacle that was. It has cost the Queensland taxpayer \$335 million to rectify them. I can report to the committee that we are currently rectifying the 23rd NGR unit ordered by the LNP to make it disability compliant after doing a lot of work with all of our disability groups. That is 23 down and I think 53 to go over the next year and a half or so.

There is \$300 million worth of works going into the Mount Isa lines. Of course, there is the Sunshine Coast rail duplication. We did not even have a business case when we came into office. We got that done. We have more than half a billion dollars to get that done. There is the double-track duplication from Kuraby to Beenleigh. I know the member for Stretton is a huge supporter of that. We are not just decreasing the travel time for people by getting express trains through much faster but also a range of level crossings are being removed there, including at Kuraby, in particular, in the member's electorate. He has been a big advocate of that and I congratulate him for standing up for his local community. We have a brand new digital signalling system that we have already been discussing to some degree.

We invest in infrastructure. We know that growth in Queensland is very strong, partly because of our world-leading health pandemic response but also partly because we have secured the games, which means we have infrastructure coming into the state for the next decade. There is a lot of confidence in the economy because of our success there. One of the key reasons we got the games was Cross River Rail. Having Cross River Rail already underway meant that our games submission had a lot of merit. That commitment to infrastructure is going to have long-term benefits for jobs and for dealing with population growth, not just in South-East Queensland but as you know, Chair, from what I read out, there are a lot of regional projects. The majority of our QTRIP commitment is outside the metropolitan area. It is a big state and upgrading our road networks across the state is something we are very committed to and will continue to be committed to.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS, regarding enhanced passenger rail performance. Can you provide the committee with an update on Cross River Rail and its benefits to commuters and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: Of course, the member's constituents will benefit from a direct train line. Those who work in the CBD, and I am sure there are plenty, will be able to get a train straight into the heart of the city to the first inner-city train station in 120 years. I was at Albert Street Station only last Friday morning. It is phenomenal. It will be one of the most popular stations, straight up. You will be able to get off and go straight up the Queen Street Mall or down towards the Botanical Gardens. A lot of people will get to their place of work within a block or two. Currently, a lot of people get out at South Bank or South Brisbane because we have a very circuitous rail network. You get out on the edge of the CBD at Roma Street or Central Station and you are not really in the heart of it.

Cross River Rail will have a whole new underground train line and it will be phenomenal. The new platform at Park Road integrates with the busway network as well as the Beenleigh and Gold Coast lines. Let us face it: getting out at the Gabba for a sporting event or a concert is a nightmare when there is a large crowd. There are lots of buses; you can throw buses at it. It is pretty hard.

When we have the Cross River Rail station operating 30 metres below, we will be able to move 900 people out every three or four minutes. It will clear it very well. Also, with Albert Street connecting to Roma Street, everyone in the network will be able to get off at Roma Street because the two lines dissect there. You will be able to transfer between them as well as transfer onto the busway network. There will be a lot of interchanging going on. When there is an Olympic venue down there—it is not just for the Olympics but also for other sporting and cultural events—that end of town will be much more lively than it currently is. Likewise, Exhibition station will become full-time for the first time. It has been great to visit that site. It is changing significantly. We are improving active transport underneath it and that sort of thing, but the RNA urban renewal area has seen a huge increase in the numbers of people living in that precinct. They will have their own full-time rail station to use. That is going to be a huge advantage.

Aside from the network advantages of Cross River Rail, there are 7,700 jobs as part of it. The station boxes have 220-metre-long platforms with ceilings that are eight or nine metres above. It is going very well. At Roma Street station, building box excavations have been completed, with structural works and permanent lining of the cabin underway. At the new Boggo Road station, cabin excavation and permanent lining are complete, with the station box and cabin structural works now underway and station fit-out commencing later this year.

At the Gabba, permanent lining of the north and south station cabins is complete and the installation of the precast units that will form the mezzanine floor level has commenced. In Albert Street, the deepest of the stations, excavation for both station boxes is now complete, with work on the permanent station structure now underway. The laying of rail tracks is already started between Albert Street and the Gabba, with several hundred metres laid.

Cross River Rail and its delivery partners have also started commissioning the new digital signalling system, ETCS, on the Shorncliffe line. This system is state-of-the-art and will improve safety and allow for more frequent movement of trains throughout the tunnel and out onto the network.

What we are seeing at the stations at the moment is the mezzanines being put in. These are massive concreting operations to get the mezzanine level escalators to go up to there and then go up further. Huge specific metal forms are put in. They pump the concrete into a seal, into the whole cabin—it holds an enormous amount of weight—and then it sets over a day or so and is entirely sealed. These mezzanines are giant operations and it is just phenomenal technology.

This Cross River Rail project will transform travel across South-East Queensland. Because the rail system will be faster for a lot of people, it will just make more sense to take the train into the CBD than to drive. That is what we want to see. We want to see modal shift. This would not have happened under the previous government. They cut this project and then promised to cut it again, amazingly, at the 2017 election. Thank God that we as a Labor government were committed to it, because it is overdue. It should have been done a long time ago by the previous government. It is an important part of us running the Olympic and Paralympic Games. We saw a lot of negativity leading up to the Commonwealth Games but, of course, the transport plan worked very well. I expect the same sort of outcomes for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, because we will have a much stronger rail network and light rail network because of the investments of this government.

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister. I know that this whole committee is very excited about Cross River Rail. We would love another viewing of the construction at some stage, but that is not what today is about.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, as referenced on page 2 of the SDS, can you advise how the Palaszczuk government will enhance passenger rail performance? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for the question. We know that Queensland is growing at a record rate, with 80,000 people coming here in the last two years. That is why we are investing record amounts in both rail and road. A big part of that is our \$20 billion commitment to rail. That includes, of course, Cross River Rail. We are not just building the two new tunnels; we are building a whole new network. With that comes changes to the existing network map—that has been in place for decades—to make sure trains are moving as efficiently as possible so we can capitalise on the time saving the project brings.

Today we released the new three-sector rail network for the first time. Queenslanders have plenty of time—three years in fact—to familiarise themselves ahead of services starting on the new network. The plan shows that the Gold Coast and Beenleigh lines will run through the new tunnels to Woolloongabba and into the heart of the city at Albert Street before continuing via the new full-time Exhibition station onto the Redcliffe and Nambour/Gympie lines—Sunshine Coast lines, essentially. Lines from Ipswich, Springfield and Rosewood will travel through Roma Street and Central stations to the airport, Shorncliffe and Doomben lines. Finally, the Cleveland lines will continue to travel via the South Bank and South Brisbane section through Central station and out to Ferny Grove.

Essentially, we have one north-south configuration and two east-west configurations at different diagonal angles. The planning that has landed us here shows that this configuration will see commuters save time on their travel and open the door for future timetable enhancements. Cross River Rail combines with other investments across the network including \$2.6 billion on the double-track duplication from Kuraby to Beenleigh, the Sunshine Coast rail duplication and the smart ticketing rollout. We are not just doing the hard infrastructure; we are also doing the soft infrastructure that sees more services rolled out as occurs in other places like Boston, Chicago and London.

There is the Queensland Train Manufacturing Project, \$7.1 billion, with Queensland manufacturing workers making Queensland trains here. With supply chains under pressure and the pandemic, this shows the wisdom of this government to not source trains made overseas anymore. We also have over \$500 million for the Station Accessibility Upgrade program which I am very glad to see is seeing real benefits. Cannon Hill is open now, Auchenflower is nearly done, Yeronga is open again, we are now doing Fairfield and there are many more. It will allow us to deliver better services, create thousands of good jobs and leave a legacy in infrastructure leading up to 2032. Our government actively plans and invests in the future. We do not cut, sack or sell; we invest in infrastructure and we get things built. We do not cut train driver training, for instance. We do not sack Queensland Rail workers—

Mr MINNIKIN: Just blow out project costs by billions.

CHAIR: Member, contain your exuberance about all this good news, please.

Mr BAILEY: We build. The Cross River Rail project is phenomenal. It is an honour to be the minister responsible. We have 15 active sites. By the time I get around to a site, having done a whole lot of the other ones, the world has changed. It is amazing how much our workers get done so quickly. I will certainly keep you and the public informed as we progress.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to the capital allocation for the Queensland Train Manufacturing Project, outlined in Budget Paper No. 3, can you advise how the Palaszczuk government's strong investment in Queensland's rail manufacturing industry will support our economic recovery by investing in regional jobs and businesses?

Mr BAILEY: Thanks very much, member for Mundingburra. I know that you are very committed to regional infrastructure, as one of our members in Townsville. I know that is an area of interest to you. It is useful to remember that when we came to government Maryborough's economy was extremely tenuous. One of the region's biggest employers, which had been manufacturing and maintaining trains for Queensland Rail for over 100 years, was overlooked for the NGR contract ordered by the previous LNP government, with trains to be made overseas. I am pleased to say that the Palaszczuk Labor government has committed to right that wrong with the Queensland-made train manufacturing program, thanks in no small part to the advocacy of the member for Maryborough, my Assistant Minister for Train Manufacturing.

We have committed \$7.1 billion to boost our train manufacturing industry and build and operate 65 new six-car passenger trains. The program is administered by TMR, with funding of \$22 million allocated in 2021-22 and \$185 million allocated for this financial year. Our first job is to build the \$239 million purpose-built train manufacturing facility at Torbanlea. This will be a state owned facility which will house the manufacturing workforce. The new fleet will be manufactured in the lead-up to the games and will provide considerable benefits, modernising and enabling the expansion of the passenger fleet to support South-East Queensland's population growth.

Due to the long lead times associated with train manufacturing, procurement of an initial fleet of 20 trains commenced in December 2020. The project is currently in the request for proposal phase, with three short-listed applicants. The preferred applicant is expected to be announced late this year, following a rigorous assessment of proposals. A new rail facility, which will include additional stabling and train wash infrastructure, will also be constructed in the Gold Coast region.

The project has undertaken comprehensive engagement with the disability sector to ensure the new fleet is compliant, accessible and functional for all passengers and has appointed an accessibility adviser. We want to make sure that the mistakes of the past are never repeated. The project has taken on board all recommendations from the new generation rolling stock commission of inquiry and is working closely with Commissioner Michael Forde and the Queensland Accessible Transport Advisory Council. I thank all the representatives from the different disability groups who have worked with us on that council. They do an amazing job and advise us very well.

Aligning with our Queensland Procurement Policy 2021, the state announced that the new trains will be built at Torbanlea. We have acquired the Torbanlea site, which was chosen due mostly to its proximity to the Bruce Highway and Maryborough, and the existing rail line, with the gazettal published on 10 December last year. The planning process is underway with approvals anticipated in this quarter of this year. This is required prior to the preferred applicant being announced. It will support hundreds more rail jobs in Maryborough and support up to 3,000 jobs over the life of the program.

To support train manufacturing, we have also purchased the Rockhampton rail yards. This will assist in the rail supply chain jobs as well. We want to spread the benefit in regional Queensland. We have already had a lot of interest from the private sector in the Rockhampton rail yards which is a very big site.

Mr WALKER: With reference to page 4 of the SDS and the Queensland government's objective of growing our regions, how does the 2022 QTRIP invest in roads infrastructure and job creation in regional Queensland?

Mr BAILEY: We are delivering a record level of investment in Queensland roads. Roads are critically important to our state's economic growth. We are the most decentralised state in the country. We have the biggest road network in the country, despite having only the third largest population. Our seventh record \$29.7 billion road and transport plan supports more than 25,000 jobs. Of this investment, more than 60 per cent is being delivered in regional Queensland. That is \$18.1 billion that will benefit Queenslanders in places like Cairns, Townsville, Cape York, Rockhampton, the Darling Downs, Mackay and the Whitsundays, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Gladstone and Mount Isa, to name a few.

Most importantly, in terms of the thing that connects them all, the Bruce Highway, we are delivering a \$13 billion Bruce Highway upgrade program over 15 years with joint funding. This is upgrading the highway from Pine Rivers to Cairns, with 2,400 jobs over the life of the program. The Bruce Highway is very much the backbone of Queensland, moving freight, commuters and tourists up and down our state. We currently have 140 projects in delivery in terms of the Bruce Highway. There are 50 in construction—50 upgrades are underway—and 46 in design and 33 in planning. There is a considered pipeline of continual upgrades of the Bruce under the Palaszczuk Labor government. We have locked in an \$883 million jointly funded boost for the Bruce to target upgrades between Gladstone and Rockhampton, Mackay and Proserpine and north of Townsville. We have a real Bruce plan, with state and federal money on the table, and we are getting on with delivering it.

While we are speaking of the Bruce, it would be remiss of me not to mention my hardworking assistant minister for regional roads, Bruce Saunders. He is out there on the roads spruiking the Palaszczuk Labor government's major investment in the regions, which is supporting a massive 16,200 jobs over four years. I think everyone understands that the member for Maryborough is highly regional. He has always lived in the regions. He loves the regions. He is assisting in the portfolio. He is a big fan of projects across the state—for example, the Edmonton to Gordonvale upgrade, the Pine Rivers to Dohles Rocks Road upgrade and the Caboolture to Steve Irwin Way Bruce Highway upgrade, which will deliver more lanes.

We are also rolling out intelligent transport systems where they can assist as well. We are implementing not just the hard infrastructure but also smart infrastructure. That means less time stuck in traffic. With this seventh record budget we have a continual commitment to it.

We do not cut projects, like the previous government which cut stage 2 of the Morayfield Road upgrade between the Bruce Highway and Gympie Road and the Summers Road interchange.

Mr MINNIKIN: And you do not get them done on time or on budget.

Mr BAILEY: I have a long list here.

CHAIR: You will get a chance in a moment, member.

Mr BAILEY: I will spare the committee going over all the horror cuts of the previous government when the member for Broadwater sat around the cabinet table. The contrast is very strong. We back regional Queensland. That is why this government has so many regional members. Many of our new members at the last election were from the regions because we back regional Queensland, regional roads and regional infrastructure.

CHAIR: We will now go back to the member for Chatsworth who has been very eager to ask a question.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the director-general. Mr Scales, if we add up the amounts that relate to the Cross River Rail platform screen doors then, regardless of whether it is equipment on the platform or equipment on the train that talks to the equipment on the platform, it comes to about \$603 million. I refer to videos from 2019—this is a screen grab—when the builder for the Cross River Rail stations was selected, the videos clearly showed that the platform had screen doors. Why was this cost not part of the original Cross River Rail budget as it was clearly part of the original design?

Mr Scales: The line item that we have now reflects the full amount for the fitting of ETCS and the ATO equipment. Last year's QTRIP budget had \$265 million in the system. That was an indicative amount. We could not really put a figure on that until we had done the work. That involved significant testing on the system. It also involved negotiating with the PPP. As I have said before to the honourable member, it is a 32-year PPP. You have to take the costs all the way over that. You might think that that is easy to calculate but it was quite complicated because it is quite lumpy. As you fit vehicles up or as you do software maintenance it is linear. We have to account for that over the whole 32-year PPP which ends in 2046.

Mr MINNIKIN: So it has been accounted for now but not in the original design.

Mr Scales: Just to expand on that for the benefit of the committee, this is a complicated software interface. We cannot afford to get it incorrect. The ATO is the non-safety part where the ETCS is the safety part. The ETCS will work out if the line ahead is clear and the ATO will make it replicable for each train to stop in exactly the right place. Basically, we could not put a hard number in because we had not done the work and we had not actually got the supplier on board. That is the reason for it.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, I refer to a LinkedIn post from Mr Scales, the director-general, from December 2021 that says—

The Mayne yard facility is being delivered as part of the Cross River Rail project and is nearing completion.

Given the admission that this project is part of Cross River Rail, do you now admit that the cost of this work should have been included in the Cross River Rail budget and not listed as a separate item in QTRIP?

Mr BAILEY: This project is seeing very strong collaboration between the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, Queensland Rail, TransLink and the contractors. It would be remiss of us and irresponsible and reckless of us for them not to be working closely together and where there are issues of benefit where we can integrate that we would not take them up. Where it has made sense for certain projects to be delivered by another agency and for us to cooperate, we have taken up those opportunities. There is no doubt that the improvements at Mayne yard will have network-wide benefits for the whole Queensland Rail network.

For the honourable member to have a bias that anything apparently that he dubs is related to Cross River Rail be added to Cross River Rail, I say that it is not as simple as that. We are taking advantage of not just building the new underground line, but taking advantage of any complimentary opportunities to improve the Queensland Rail network. For us to not do that would also be very strange. The honourable member was partly responsible for cutting this project. It is not surprising that the honourable member does not understand how this project is being built.

Mr MINNIKIN: You're responsible for blowing it out!

Mr BAILEY: The only real major infrastructure that was built under the previous Newman government was 1 William Street, not major infrastructure like Cross River Rail.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

CHAIR: Do you have a point of order, member?

Mr BAILEY: With Cross River Rail we have a lot of cooperation. That is the way any major project should be leveraged. The fact that Queensland Rail, the delivery authority, TransLink, contractors and TMR are all working closely together is a sign of a mature project.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, if we add \$603 million to the \$6.888 billion budgeted cost of Cross River Rail, plus all the additional components that have now been snuck into the budget under different project names, is the total new cost for Cross River Rail at least \$8 billion?

Mr Scales: The Cross River Rail budget remains at \$5.4 billion. The other works are ancillary works. As the minister has just explained, for one item which is Mayne Yard, for example, they are ancillary and unnecessary costs. The actual project itself remains at \$5.4 billion, plus adding the costs that we discussed at last estimates and the estimates before—the PPP costs. The core remains at \$5.4 billion.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales: \$5.4 billion, plus PPP—\$6.888 billion—agree. Plus there is Breakfast Creek Bridge, realign track; Clapham Yard stabling at Moorooka; Fairfield train station to Salisbury train station upgrades; Mayne Yard, relocate facility; Mayne Yard, upgrade vehicle and pedestrian access; Moolabin power station; Roma Street to Exhibition station (Normanby), construct third track; NGR, installing new signalling; and NGR, operations and platform screen doors fitment. If I go through the figures sequentially outlined for the individual item IDs from 5733 to 5850 and add them all together, that comes to a total figure of \$8.24 billion. That is a 48.6 per cent cost increase. Mr Scales, again, the total cost including PPPs to be paid back by the taxpayers of Queensland for the Cross River Rail project I put it to you is close to \$8 billion.

CHAIR: Before you answer, Director-General, member you have asked this question several ways. I am going to allow the director-general to answer. Please accept that the director-general has answered this question several times. Can you please answer it again?

Mr Scales: Breakfast Creek Bridge and the station upgrades are things that we would be doing anyway. In terms of the network access—making it safe for the Breakfast Creek Bridge is a good example—the work we are doing on Mayne Yard and the work we will be doing on Clapham for another staging point is work that we would be doing anyway. I am not going to be drawn, member for Chatsworth. It is \$5.4 billion, plus the ancillary parts. I will concede the PPP costs being added because that is a matter of the record. That is what we did two years ago. Estimates two years ago and estimates last year—

Mr MINNIKIN: You bumped it up to \$6.888 billion.

Mr Scales: No, I did not bump it up, as you well know, member for Chatsworth.

CHAIR: Please, no argument, member for Chatsworth.

Mr Scales: Actually, I just said that is how we account for PPPs. It is an accounting treatment. I am an engineer, not an accountant. It is an accounting treatment.

CHAIR: Please do not include Dakabin station in my area as part of this either. Do you have another question—on another line preferably?

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question for the minister. 'Oh, what a tangled web we weave when we first practise to deceive,' said Sir Walter Scott. Does the minister have an explanation to Queenslanders how a \$5.4 billion project will now cost approximately \$8 billion when you add these other essential items? Let's get real with the taxpayers of Queensland—\$8 billion.

CHAIR: The member has asked the same question. Minister, can you please answer the same question again?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the repeated distorted question. The reality is—

Mr MINNIKIN: \$8 billion.

Mr BAILEY: He can add up oranges and apples and grapes and watermelons—

Mr MINNIKIN: Mangos perhaps?

Mr BAILEY:—and come up with any kind of creative topic he might like. There is no doubt that there are cost pressures on major infrastructure projects. That is well known. I have received no advice that there is an increase in costs in this project at this time. We are aware that there are cost pressures. We have been very clear about that. There is no advice at this point. That is a matter of fact. The member's question is distorted and politicised and ridiculous.

Mr MINNIKIN: Because it is accurate.

Mr BAILEY: This is a project that is only being built because of the Palaszczuk Labor government. It was cut when the member was the assistant minister for public transport. How embarrassing to be the assistant minister for public transport and you cut the Cross River Rail project.

Mr MINNIKIN: \$8 billion.

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, please stop. You have asked the question again and again and again. You are getting an answer.

Mr BAILEY: Which I never interjected on.

CHAIR: Yes, that is right.

Mr BAILEY: How embarrassing would it be to be the assistant minister for public transport and all that happened were cuts!

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Chair, on relevance. The minister is being—

CHAIR: There is no point of order. This question has been repeated again and again and again. I am giving the minister leeway in answering. Minister, you are sticking to the facts but can you stick to the basis of the question?

Mr BAILEY: No matter how often this question gets asked, the answer is still the same. It has been answered fulsomely by me. It has been answered fulsomely by the director-general. We can keep answering the same question until one o'clock if we like. The fact is that this is a transformational project—

Mr MINNIKIN: It is now \$8 billion.

Mr BAILEY: More interjections from the poorly behaving member for Chatsworth. This is a transformational project the public understand and love. We will build it. We will continue to build it. It is an awesome project. I have said that before and I will keep saying it. I am proud to be the minister. It is

a great credit to the delivery authority, to the department, to Queensland Rail, to those who made the decision. It is going to be a lasting legacy for this city going for many decades. It will be an enormous part of our successful Olympic and Paralympic Games which would never have happened if those opposite were in power.

Mr MINNIKIN: Well done—\$8 billion.

CHAIR: Member, can you stop interjecting and ask a question, please?

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly, Chair. Minister, the TMR website shows that the last Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council meeting was in November last year—that is 252 days ago. The council is made up of a number of respected stakeholders such as the Local Government Association of Queensland, RACQ and the Queensland Trucking Association. Why isn't the minister interested in leveraging the expertise of these groups?

CHAIR: I think there is an imputation there, but I will allow the question. Minister, I will allow some leeway in your answer—and no interjections during the answer would be nice as well.

Mr BAILEY: The questions from the LNP are often asked imagining that there is no pandemic, that there is no inflation and that we have not had a La Nina summer and winter—ignoring all these real-world realities that affect a whole range of things. The reality is that the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council is an important part of our Bruce Highway advice and projects. We established it to advise us. It has met four times: 17 July 2020, 26 November 2020, 16 September 2020 and November of last year. I think the committee and just about everybody remembers that since the last meeting there has been now more than one outbreak in terms of the COVID pandemic which makes meetings not necessarily easy to get together.

We bring the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council together as much as we can. We have had good representation there: the Queensland Trucking Association, RACQ, a whole range of different groups. We even have a nominee of the Leader of the Opposition on the group because we believe in a bipartisan—hopefully—approach to Bruce Highway upgrades.

The commitment by this government to the Bruce Highway is very strong. The trust will again meet this year, but there have been some limitations. We also had flooding from Bundaberg to the border in February and March, so there was a major disaster for people to deal with—not just us but also the stakeholders. The impact on our road and rail stakeholders during that time was severe. It was not the time to be sitting around having a committee meeting when people's houses are flooded. We are dealing with the real world, not some sort of LNP la-la land. We are dealing with the real world here. We have had COVID outbreaks and we have had a number of factors including flooding.

The Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council is a valued advisory committee. It will meet again this year. I thank everybody who is on that committee for their contribution. It is a valued part of the advice that we receive on the Bruce Highway.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, QTRIP shows that \$3.469 million has been spent on the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council to date. As you said, Minister, they have only had four meetings. With the minister's meetings now blowing out to cost \$900,000 each, how can Queenslanders trust this government to deliver the infrastructure on budget and on time?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for the question, although I do doubt the veracity of his question. I am happy to take that on notice and come back to him so we can do some checking in terms of that. There would be some costs in terms of people meeting face to face from different parts of the state, but I am happy to take that on notice and come back to the committee.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, the interim Coaldrake review identified a director-general as keeping information from their minister to provide plausible deniability. Was that referring to yourself as director-general?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. The basis of the question is obviously that of a Westminster style system, where directors-general and their departments should be free to give policy advice to their ministers. Both myself and my department do that, so the answer is no.

Mr MINNIKIN: Is the director-general aware of any ministerial staff applying pressure to individuals in his department, including yourself, for responses that minimise problems or discourage written advice on difficult topics?

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the question. Both I and the department have a professional, constructive and respectful relationship with both my minister and his office. The answer is no.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, on page 23 of the SDS it says that RoadTek aims to 'Provide a safe and secure transport system and Transport and Main Roads workplaces'. I have been told by a government whistleblower of drinking and drug tests on RoadTek worksites. A recent question on notice confirms there have been 18 formal complaints of this behaviour in recent years. How has this behaviour been allowed to occur?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. We have 42 RoadTek sites distributed about the state. There have been occasions in the past where there have been instances, unfortunately, of drinking before going to work. We do have drug testing and alcohol testing at specific sites and we have detected that, and those people—on the drinking side—are not allowed to be attending work. On the drug side I think there were nine, but six of those were as a result of medication and they all would have been stood down. We are doing drug and alcohol testing under project site-specific arrangements. We recently changed the general manager in there and we have a cultural change being implemented to eradicate the issue.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, the whistleblower alleged that Minister Bailey has intervened at the request of the ETU to prevent alcohol and drug testing of union members. Have there been any discussions between RoadTek and the minister or his office about RoadTek's drug and alcohol testing policy?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. I am not aware of any, but if you take the Captain Cook Bridge, which is not very far from here, we had a drug and alcohol testing there. The reason for that is because you have trades working under the bridge and on top of the bridge. Some of them would have been ETU members. I am not aware of any interventions whatsoever from any interested body to try and dissuade us from doing anything, so I think the answer to that, respectfully, is no.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, will you commit to obtaining advice from RoadTek management about this matter and reporting back to this committee?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. I am not aware of anything that has happened in that situation at all. For any meetings with the minister involving RoadTek I would have been briefed beforehand and afterwards. I am not aware of any situation that you are alluding to. It is up to the minister whether I take it on notice or not, but I do not think I will find anything because I have a really close working relationship with the senior leadership team as well as my executive leadership team, so I do not think there is anything there, member for Chatsworth, to be honest.

Mr MINNIKIN: Is the director-general aware of allegations the ETU has made it clear to the management of RoadTek that they have an open door to the minister's office and that performance management of ETU members should not be undertaken?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do not think that is right at all, because management must manage and it is not only ETU members onsite: there are CFMEU members onsite, there are AWU members onsite within RoadTek. As far as I am concerned, the disciplinary process and the management process exist the same as it does anywhere else. I am not aware of the issue you are alluding to, member.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, are you aware of threats made to the management of RoadTek from ETU members about the performance management of union members?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. No, I am not aware of that. We have with the EBA. If there is no resolution, there is myself and the secretary of the ETU. It has only been used once when we signed the last EBA. I have not seen anything in that area at all. From my experience, and talking to the RoadTek leadership group on a regular basis, I do not think that is correct.

CHAIR: Member, you have been on this line of questioning for a while. Do you have a final question on that?

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, given what you have just said in the last couple of answers, will you commit to obtaining advice from RoadTek management about the issue and reporting back to the committee? These are serious allegations.

Mr Scales: I thank the member for the supplementary question. Honestly, we have just replaced the leadership in RoadTek and I have quite regular meetings with the new general manager as well as meetings on a very consistent and frequent basis with the whole of the infrastructure maintenance and delivery group. I am not aware of any issue on that or any other stakeholder group applying any pressure.

CHAIR: We will now go back to government questions.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, regarding the capital allocation to projects on the Gold Coast as outlined on page 1 of Budget Paper 3, can the minister outline how the region will benefit from this investment, and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. The budget will see the Palaszczuk Labor government deliver \$5.2 billion worth of transport infrastructure on the Gold Coast over the next year. We will see key projects like the Coomera Connector, worth \$2.1 billion, well and truly underway. As anyone who has driven on the M1 down around Varsity Lakes to Tugun can see, the world has changed down there dramatically. Work will start soon on the \$1.2 billion light rail extension from Broadbeach to Burleigh—something that only ever happens under a state Labor government. It never happens under an LNP government. We have \$212 million going towards upgrades at exits 41, 45 and 49 on the M1. They add to the upgrades we have already done at exits 54 and 57. These interchanges on the M1 near growth corridors at Pimpama, Ormeau and Coomera are really important. They only ever happen under state Labor governments. Nothing happened under the previous government.

There is \$120 million going towards three new train stations on the Gold Coast as part of the Cross River Rail project, so residents at Pimpama, Hope Island and Merrimac will have a new station, access to the rail network for the first time and better public transport because of the investment of the Palaszczuk state Labor government. This pipeline of work is at record levels. Under the Newman LNP government not a new single new dollar went to the M1. We understand the Gold Coast is a popular destination for people to move to.

It turns out that in the last budget before we were elected there was only \$735 million—that is it—for the entire Gold Coast for transport infrastructure. That is not even three-quarters of a billion dollars for Australia's sixth largest city over three years under the Newman government. We see this government investing in the Gold Coast because we understand how important it is. We do not cut projects like Springbrook Road, Southport Nerang Road, Tamborine Oxenford Road or the Smith Street connection, as was done under the previous government. We invest in the Gold Coast.

Those cuts were regrettable. We are always glad to work with the mayor down there, Mayor Tom Tate. He has been a big supporter of our light rail program. We did stage 2 connecting the heavy rail to the hospital and the uni precinct in time for the Commonwealth Games. Without it, the transport would have been difficult. It was not planned for by the previous government. We built it in record time. Now we are going to do stage 3. Gold Coasters love their light rail. They are using it in huge numbers. We have had more than 63 million trips already on the light rail. That extension down into Burleigh is going to be a real positive.

We know that it is opposed and criticised by opposition members like the member for Mermaid Beach, who called it an infliction. I do not think most Gold Coasters think it is an infliction; I think they see it as a fantastic public transport system. We are seeing that the member for Burleigh wants stage 4 to be rerouted to go past his brewery in Burleigh. It is astonishing that the opposition leader does nothing about that. We will put the light rail where it is of maximum public benefit, not to benefit an MP's investment property and basically misuse public money for that. The light rail is going to be very successful. We are doing planning for stage 4 of it as well.

The second M1 was blocked by the previous government in 2014; we gazetted the whole corridor, as I have outlined. Early works are underway. We have a few more environmental approvals to finish after delays thanks to Barnaby Joyce when he was the federal transport minister and deputy prime minister. We will get through that. I look forward to heavy construction starting on the second M1, as well as nearly 1,000 hectares of koala habitat. Those growing areas there—Coomera, Pimpama and Ormeau—will have nearly 1,000 hectares of beautiful habitat, not just for koalas but for other fauna as well. There is some flora there that will be a bit protected as well. It will be like the pristine lungs of the northern Gold Coast. This has only happened because the Palaszczuk Labor government believes in protecting our environment, believes in protecting koalas and also believes in building the infrastructure that a growing northern Gold Coast needs.

We will do active transport along the entire 16-kilometre route of the second M1, with four new lanes of traffic for people in that growth area. That compares very well to the promise at the last election from the opposition for a puny little six-kilometre section that they were going to do. That is not even half the length of the full stage 1. They were going to dump all the traffic on the Gold Coast Highway and leave out entirely the southern section. That made no sense whatsoever. Under Labor, the full 16-kilometre stage 1 of the second M1 will be built. That is being funded by us, when we did not even have a corridor in 2015.

Mr WALKER: Minister, I refer to the SDS and the government objectives of supporting jobs and protecting the environment. Can you please update the committee on work done by the Palaszczuk government to clean up our waterways of derelict vessels?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for Mundingburra for that question. I know that he is a big supporter of boaties in North Queensland. Queensland has one of the most beautiful coastlines in the world, and that is why we have the highest level of boat registration across the country—because Queenslanders love to get out there. However, what we also have out there, as I have become aware as the minister, is a lot of derelict vessels, a lot of wrecks, and we did not have the capacity to deal with them. I am very proud of the Palaszczuk Labor government's War on Wrecks program, which we established. We made sure there were good funds available to clean up our waterways of environmental hazards and deal with derelict vessels. We have been able to deal with over 1,000 vessels already, with quite a number of those in North Queensland and Far North Queensland. They have been all the way up the coast in fact.

I would like to acknowledge the great work of the task force chair and member for Redlands, Kim Richards; Maritime Safety Queensland; the Gold Coast Waterways Authority; local VMS; and the contractors. They all play a key role working together on this. Our successful War on Wrecks program is managed by Maritime Safety Queensland. It has supported the removal of more than 1,026 vessels from Queensland waters as part of a four-year, \$20 million program.

In June this year I was joined by the chair of the task force, Kim Richards MP, and the Minister for Tourism and member for Sandgate, Stirling Hinchliffe, to witness the removal of the 1,000th vessel from Cabbage Tree Creek in north Brisbane. Watching the removal of the boat previously known as *Sonda* was a stark reminder of the important role this program plays in removing these eyesores and hazards—not just environmental but sometimes navigational—from our waterways. It was an important milestone for the program and I thank all those involved.

To date, we have been able to remove derelict and abandoned vessels from as far north as the Torres Strait Islands and as far south as Burleigh headland. These numbers clearly show that the program is working well, and that is why we have committed a further \$15 million over three years, which was announced in this year's budget. Maritime Safety Queensland has thrown its weight behind the program, demonstrating it can get the job done efficiently and promptly with the support of responsible owners, local governments, state government agencies and also, can I say, the contractors. This is creating jobs amongst the maritime contractors, and they do great work. When I was at Cabbage Tree Creek I saw that it is not easy work. They are getting into very muddy, deep creeks with PPE kind of heavy gear on up to their chests. These guys are doing amazing work out there on behalf of the public and boaties.

The program has identified a further 152 vessels across the state which are classified as derelict and about 217 more at risk of deteriorating. It is pleasing to see that the task force interventions resulted in 136 vessels being removed by their owners themselves in the 2020-21 financial year. Wherever we can get it done cooperatively, we do so. In some cases, there might be other reasons it is there and the owners are fully cooperative. I expect the task force to progress towards achieving a long-term vision where owners are able to take responsibility of their vessels for their entire lifecycle and all Queenslanders can enjoy safer and cleaner waterways and seas. The program has also been a reliable source of work in particular for Gold Coast marine businesses. Jobs are created by each individual salvage project. Those marine businesses also use local equipment hire for bobcats and other machinery, while scrap yards reap the benefits of dismantling the boats and using some of the materials at times.

It was the Palaszczuk state Labor government that put the focus on this. I am very proud of this project. It is one that is very particular to Queensland, with so much coastline, and it is one that has been able to benefit boaties right the way up to the cape as well as down to the border. This continued investment shows a real commitment to our boaties, to our waterways and to environmental protection.

Mr WALKER: Minister, regarding the capital allocation to projects in the Townsville region as outlined in Budget Paper No. 3, can you advise what the Palaszczuk government's plan is regarding roads and transport in the region and whether you are aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for Mundingburra. He has been a great advocate for Townsville infrastructure, having been not just the state member but also a local councillor and deputy mayor. He is really committed to Townsville and I commend him for that. It is certainly much more commendable than the previous member for Mundingburra going back to 2012 to 2015, who after losing

the seat deserted the city, with the connivance of the office of the LNP, for a safe seat on the Gold Coast. You are committed to Townsville and I admire that in you. You back your home town 100 per cent and that shows real integrity.

We have over a billion dollars in road transport projects over the next four years that will benefit North Queensland. This investment will support jobs that will deliver critical upgrades on almost all of the district's major arterials across the Burdekin, Charters Towers, Hinchinbrook, up to Palm Island and also Townsville local government areas. I am also pleased to advise the committee, following your strong advocacy, that the Palaszczuk government is investing \$70 million to deliver a new upstream bridge over Townsville's Ross River adjacent to the existing Bowen Road Bridge, where I visited with you recently. We have already committed \$46.4 million to duplicate Stuart Drive to four lanes between University Road and Bowen Road Bridge in 2024. These are very significant achievements in your first term, member, so well done.

The project will remove the last remaining bottleneck on this section. As more people move to Queensland and into our regional areas as well, it is important that we are delivering upgrades now to prepare for that future demand. Over 24,000 people use this section of Stuart Drive each day. On top of that, we are also delivering the \$230 million Townsville Ring Road Stage 5 project to the south that will improve travel times. It is the last single-lane section of the ring road. We are finishing that off that. That will help with the reliability of freight, passenger vehicles, and people moving around Townsville as well. The project will also provide a new connection between the ring road and Beck Drive, improving local connectivity to improve employment nodes and essential services in Townsville, including Lavarack Barracks, the uni and the hospital.

Townsville's northern suburbs are not neglected either because they are getting a \$107 million jointly funded Townsville northern access intersections upgrade, delivering a new bridge over the Black River, significant safety improvements and a dual-lane highway. I am also pleased to share that the new bridge is due to be opened to traffic in the coming months. I acknowledge your representation there, member. Even though they are not your constituents up there, I do remember you convening a meeting with me when we were in Townsville on their behalf.

Mr WALKER: Correct.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you for making sure that their voices are heard well.

Mr WALKER: Thank you.

Mr BAILEY: In the south-west, there is \$95 million for the Riverway Drive Stage 2 project, championed by the member for Thuringowa, which will improve safety and capacity along that major arterial into the Upper Ross which is a high-growth residential corridor. Construction also recently commenced on the \$33 million Flinders Highway overtaking lane project which will make it a safer drive between Townsville and the historic Charters Towers township.

In the west, construction is progressing well on more than \$40 million worth of payment upgrades in the region's inland freight route, the Gregory Developmental Road as well between Charters Towers and the Lynd, and many of these major upgrades funded for construction in the Townsville City area include improvement to active transport facilities to make it easier and safer for walking and bike riding around Townsville. On Stuart Drive, we were talking to bike riders and they were very happy about seeing improved bikeway facilities along that road as well being designed into the upgrade. That makes sense.

In closing, as I have advised the committee in a question on notice, freight and passenger rail operations will be improved through Queensland Rail's \$77 million North Coast Line Capacity Improvement project which is progressively lengthening eight passing loops from 650 metres to 950 metres between Rockhampton and Townsville to boost capacity on this important section of the rail network. We are also improving efficiency and capacity on the Mount Isa line with \$379 million in capital upgrades and maintenance works invested there over five years. Member, thank you for the question. I think you can see that our commitment to North Queensland is very strong: no cuts, just infrastructure, jobs, road and rail.

Mr WALKER: With reference to Budget Paper 3, can the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government's record spend on transport infrastructure will benefit all public transport users across Queensland, and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: The public transport system is absolutely essential to having a balanced transport network generally. What we are investing in is a better rail system with Cross River Rail, the Kuraby to Beenleigh double track duplication, the Sunshine Coast rail duplication, the work with joint funding in

terms of the corridor from Beerwah into Sunshine Coast—there is work going on there to look at how that would be done—and we are also seeing light rail being extended on the Gold Coast with smart ticketing, using the latest technology.

We are committed to making sure that public transport is not only better but also more competitive because people are pretty savvy about doing their numbers, and the reality is you have got to make it more competitive if you want to get people out of cars and onto public transport. That is why we have been investing in a better public transport system. We know we are going to get a lot more people. If everybody drives their car, then we will all grind to a halt. That is why investing in the public transport system is absolutely essential for us to do.

We are building the Cross River Rail. Again, that was cut by those in opposition not just once but twice. We are ordering high quality, disability compliant trains that are made by Queenslanders. We are not ordering trains from overseas like those opposite did when in government.

The train driver training program is very strong. We are seeing about 40 per cent more drivers now available and about 50 per cent more guards, whereas we saw a loss of 48 train drivers available under the last year of the Newman government.

RoadTek is a really important unit responding to natural disasters in particular, as well as everyday operations and maintenance on our very vast road network. I commend our RoadTek workers. We have added to our workforce there. We did not sack 700 RoadTek workers like the LNP did when they were in power. We see the QTRIP investment nearly 50 per cent more than when we came into office, whereas previous to that we saw a \$1.6 billion cut to the road and transport budget across a whole range of areas that was quite regrettable.

The previous government even cut road safety funding. Can you believe that even road safety got cut? We will invest more than \$1.5 billion over four years to upgrade roads, specifically in term of road safety, as well as support driver educations and safety campaigns. I think you know, member, I have been very tough about cracking down on people being distracted by their phones, not wearing seatbelts and speeding. These things are really dangerous and kill people. We are unashamed about being tough and hardline about sending the message that people who are doing those dangerous sorts of things will pay a penalty if they continue to do it because it is a danger to other people.

We are seeing tremendous progress with the second M1. Early works are underway. The full stage 1, as I outlined before, would not have happened if we were not in power and we would see the Gold Coast grinding to a halt as a result. Light rail is going to where it should go—to Burleigh—and we are planning for a future extension along the Gold Coast Highway. We see the member for Burleigh object to that and want it past his brewery there in Burleigh. The federal member extraordinarily says that she does not support it on the Gold Coast Highway, she does support at the airport, but then refuses to say what route it should go in terms of the stage 4. The reality is if you do not put it on the Gold Coast Highway, you are resuming hundreds and hundreds of houses along Cypress Avenue and Mallowa Drive, yet the federal member will not say to her own constituents where she wants that stage of light rail to go. It is a very strange situation.

Chair, we see the commitment to public transport in a way that we have not seen before in the previous government. We will continue to be supportive of a better public transport system, and also we will see zero-emission buses being rolled out year by year. We have 60 coming this financial year. What we need to see, of course, is the reduction of emissions using the latest technology. The bus sector is working with us to ensure that we are providing buses which have no emissions and are of a much better technology. We have a very strong record. We will keep going.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now go back to the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, thank you very much; you always give fulsome and detailed responses. I do appreciate that very much. I have been sitting here thinking about what was said earlier this morning. Starting with the \$5.4 billion for Cross River Rail, would that be an extra \$2.6 billion of ancillary works with all the things I mentioned before? Simply put, would the Cross River Rail be able to operate without them?

Mr Scales: I think the issue is that with things like the station upgrades, the bridge works that we are doing and the modifications to Clapham Yard, the stabling will be more in the centre of the city rather than out at Wulkuraka. The work at Mayne Yard, I think, would all have to happen anyway. Will it be able to operate? That is a hypothetical question and I cannot really speculate on that point.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, I am referring to a copy of the general arrangement sheet 12 in relation to Arup engineers showing that the northern line of the Cross River Rail goes literally right the way through the middle of Mayne Yard. Again, the question is, without these extra additions, aside from

maybe small amounts for station upgrades in terms of beautification and disability access, which are important, the main items I have gone through, in addition to the \$5.4 billion and also the PPP, this project would not be able to proceed without them?

Mr BAILEY: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: There is a bit of an opinion sought there.

Mr BAILEY: We are here to examine the budget allocations. Hypothetical questions are not within standing orders.

CHAIR: The member has asked the question and it has been accepted before. He is asking the same question again. Director-General, do you have anything further to furnish on that? This committee is very happy to hear about the Cross River Rail project; we love it.

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. I am not going to be drawn any further, sorry. I have answered the question to the best of my ability and I will leave it at that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. We will leave that line of questioning out.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Chairman, I have a question to the minister, please. I refer to the former state archivist report to the CCC regarding the 'mangocube' affair, as it was referred to. In that report he says—

From the evidence reviewed in this investigation the relationship with the ETU seems to be one that Minister Bailey has difficulty managing.

Does the ETU have undue influence on you, Minister, and your office?

CHAIR: You are referring to something that happened a good many years ago. I understand that we have delved into some history lessons today. I will allow the question but, Minister, I do not think it is a relevant question to now. If you have anything to add, please do.

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. He is referring to a matter that was finalised five years ago—

Mr WATTS: Was it?

Mr BAILEY:—fully investigated by the independent—

Mr WATTS: Was it finalised?

Mr BAILEY: More interjections from the LNP.

CHAIR: Please, no interjections.

Mr BAILEY: It is very poor behaviour. This matter was finalised five years—

Mr WATTS: It certainly was poor behaviour.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North.

Mr WATTS: The minister is quite correct.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North!

Mr WATTS: Yes, Chair?

CHAIR: You are interjecting and I will ask you to stop, please.

Mr WATTS: The minister then needs to stick to the topic and stop throwing barbs.

CHAIR: Are you reflecting on my ruling, member?

Mr WATTS: Not at all.

CHAIR: Please cease. Minister?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question and the interjection. That is from a member who was admonished for not—

CHAIR: Thank you for that, Minister.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order.

Mr WATTS: He took responsibility, though, Minister. Someone else did not.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, cease your interjections. I have a point of order from one of your own members who you are talking over now.

Mr MILLAR: The minister continues to throw barbs and continues to—

CHAIR: There are a fair few barbs in the questions as well, so continue.

Mr MILLAR: Pull us up. You must pull the minister up as well, I would suggest.

CHAIR: Minister, can you please reflect on your answers.

Mr BAILEY: Chair, I am happy to respond to the question. This is a matter that was fully investigated by the independent watchdog five years ago. The matter has been fully canvassed. It is not a matter that is relevant to this year's budget for 2022-23. I have nothing further to add.

Mr MINNIKIN: There was an email from Peter Simpson dated 30 June 2015 that talks about the amount of 'effort and strings he pulled' to put you there. Does the minister owe the ETU?

Mr BAILEY: Point of order. 2015? We are here to deal with the 2022-23 budget, Chair. I ask the member to come back to the budget.

CHAIR: Thanks—

Mr MINNIKIN: Not the Newman government, no.

Mr WATTS: Point of order, Chair.

Mr BAILEY: I am having a point of order.

CHAIR: Members, the minister has called a point of order. Can you please have some decorum. What is your point of order?

Mr BAILEY: This is an estimates hearing to deal with the 2022-23 budget. It is not related to something that was fully investigated and finalised five years ago, and the member is now raising something from seven years ago. If they have nothing to say about the budget they should say so.

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister, for your point of order. There were other points of order. Before I go to them, the minister answered the previous question and said he has nothing further to add. What was your point of order, member for Toowoomba North?

Mr WATTS: The minister said that undue influence would not be relevant to this year's budget. I contest that it would be relevant to this year's budget if the ETU had undue influence on the minister's office.

CHAIR: Thank you. There is no point of order. I rule that out of order. The minister has said he has nothing further to add on that topic. Member for Chatsworth, do you have another question on another line?

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, I do, Mr Chair. Reviewing the diaries for the period June 2021 to May of this year, the minister met with the ETU three times—as often as he met with the RACQ, a key motoring stakeholder. Given the minister does not have portfolio responsibilities for the electricity GOCs or electrical safety regulation, can the minister advise why he has so many meetings with the ETU—just as many as the RACQ?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. We are a consultative government that works with all stakeholders including MPs, business community representatives as well as many of our employees. Over the past year, for the committee's benefit, I have met with more than 800 stakeholders including business and community reps and also representatives of the workforce. We actually meet with them at times and I think any decent government should do that. We are also the government that has introduced things like real-time disclosures for political donations. We have also brought in things like property development donations—a lot of integrity measures all voted against by the LNP.

Mr MINNIKIN: Private emails.

Mr BAILEY: We work with stakeholders. The fact is that representatives of the workforce have a legitimate case, just like other peak bodies, to represent their members' interests. Government should work with all stakeholders. They should not be excluding any particular group of stakeholders and refuse to meet with them. That is the Newman government style. The opposition members seem to be advocating for more of a Newman government style of government.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr BAILEY: The people spoke on that well and truly in 2015.

Mr MILLAR: Going back seven years?

CHAIR: You are going back seven years.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, I refer to page 3 of the SDS, which notes that Mr Bruce Saunders MP, the member for Maryborough, is the Assistant Minister for Train Manufacturing and Regional Roads. The member for Maryborough has recently made some comments about 'hunting down' public servants who had raised concerns to Coaldrake. What measures are you putting in place to protect employees in your department from any reprisal actions by the member for Maryborough?

Mr Scales: As it clearly states on page 5 of the Coaldrake report, all submissions are totally in confidence. In the case of anybody who would have submitted anything to the Coaldrake report, their confidentiality is assured. My understanding of the Coaldrake report is that most of the stakeholders who have submitted something—and bear in mind it is confidential—would have been senior level people, key stakeholders, directors-general, ministers or whoever had an opportunity to actually contribute to Mr Coaldrake's report. My view is that, whatever might or might not have been said by the assistant minister, the confidentiality of any submitters to Coaldrake is protected, and it is clearly stated on page 5 of the report.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, at the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program public briefing in Maryborough in December of last year a senior TMR public servant allegedly said in her speech, 'Mr Saunders has been a huge promoter of this project and a huge promoter of bringing manufacturing jobs back to Maryborough.' Given what we now know about the member for Maryborough's attitude towards the independence of the Public Service, can you guarantee that public servant was not threatened or pressured to include this line in the address?

CHAIR: Really? I am going to allow the question. I find it laughable, though, I am sorry.

Mr MINNIKIN: I find it very pertinent.

CHAIR: I just do not think it is. Anyway, we have a difference of opinion. The director-general can answer as he sees fit.

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do not think there is any suggestion of any—

Mr MILLAR: It is a very long bow.

Mr Scales:—of my staff being pressured by the assistant minister. My interactions with the assistant minister have always been respectful. What I have observed is that interactions with my staff have always been respectful. I do not see anything along those lines, Mr Minnikin, at all.

Mr MINNIKIN: So the member for Maryborough did not review the speech before it was given?

CHAIR: Member, is that a follow-up question?

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, please.

Mr Scales: I can answer the question, Chair. I think all the speeches and all presentations that go outside to external stakeholders are reviewed by me. I can guarantee on this occasion that he would not have reviewed the speech; that would have been done by me—if it was one of my people that did it, of course.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Mr Scales. Minister, have you ever acted contrary to the advice of a unanimous board decision of a government owned corporation of which you are a shareholding minister?

CHAIR: Before you answer, Minister, is that referring to—

Mr MINNIKIN: Gladstone Ports Corporation, to be specific.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I work with our boards. There are a considerable number of boards and ports within Queensland that I work closely with. I cannot specifically recall any instance involved in terms of that. No.

Mr MINNIKIN: Nothing comes to mind? Okay.

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth?

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the Gladstone Ports Corporation CEO, if I may.

CHAIR: We will take a moment for the CEO to come up, remembering to introduce yourself for the benefit of Hansard when you first address the committee.

Mr Haymes: Good morning, my name is Craig Haymes. I am the CEO of the Gladstone Ports Corporation. I commenced in the role on 1 May of this year.

Mr MINNIKIN: Welcome to the estimates hearing today. Thank you for your time. Gladstone Ports Corporation has engaged a company that possesses a lobbying registration. Can you name and advise the name of that company and the services they have been engaged in?

Mr Haymes: I thank the honourable member for the question; I will have to take that question on notice.

CHAIR: The minister is the only one who can allow a question to be taken on notice. You are not allowed to take questions on notice. Is the minister happy to take the question on notice?

Mr BAILEY: I am happy for it to be taken on notice.

Mr Haymes: Thank you.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you.

CHAIR: We will attempt to see if we can get an answer during this session. If not, we will officially take it on notice. Member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you Mr Haymes. That was my only question. Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay. Thank you for your time, Mr Haymes.

Mr MINNIKIN: A question to the minister. On 28 July, the Deputy Premier said that releasing the commercial-in-confidence funding figures for the Wellcamp Quarantine Facility was appropriate given that the estimate process was approaching. In line with this policy, will you release the details of the Cross River Rail commercial-in-confidence contract?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have answered a lot of very similar questions about the Cross River Rail today. The funding of the project is as I, and the director-general, have previously outlined. The project is obviously keeping a close look on costs in terms of materials. We know that there is a lot of pressure in the construction industry at the moment. We are monitoring that closely but, in terms of the contract amount, it is very clear that we have reported on the amount. The reality is that there are commercial sensitivities about such a large project. I do not want to contravene or, in any way, shape or form, undermine the integrity of this project.

Mr MINNIKIN: A question, if I may, to the director-general. Mr Scales, I refer to the contract disclosure log entry dated 16 August 2021 with Lunaan Advisory. The description states that the contract was to—

... verify that the response requirements for the Cross River Rail project are on track and to be achieved. TMR is seeking the views of experts to see at this stage in a major program of work and what implications arise for subsequent stages.

In fact, there are two contracts for \$81,000 each on that date with Lunaan. There is also one dated 09/08/21 with 2XM Projects Pty Ltd. Does the department lack confidence in the information being provided by the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority?

CHAIR: I caution you before you answer the question; that was a very long preamble. I understand that you had some information to impart but—

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, Chair.

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is standard practice for the department to check large contracts to make sure that we have an independent third view. There is nothing untoward, sinister or anything that I would be concerned about in this case. We make sure, because it is public money that we are 'triple glazed'. We have checks and balances to make sure that we satisfy ourselves that everything on any project—unless it is a very small project, of course—is on track and is meeting the requirements of the department. Bear in mind that at the end of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority's tenure, the project when it is finished it ends back with the department.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you Mr Scales.

CHAIR: Just one more quick question, then we will go to a crossbench question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Scales, what was the advice provided? Is this project on track for an opening to the public in 2024, as previously promised by the government?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. I refer the member to what the Premier said in her estimates which is that major construction will be finished by the end of 2024, then in 2025 there will be a whole series of testing. Bear in mind, because it is an operational railway, we will have to get the sign-off from the national rail regulator, so it will open in 2025. I have no different information to that at this point in time, if that helps.

CHAIR: Thank you. I welcome the member for Maiwar to the chamber and I invite you if you have a question.

Mr BERKMAN: I will put my first question to the director-general. I have asked about this before, but I am keen to follow up in light of the smart ticketing system that is currently being rolled out at a cost of \$371 million. Mr Scales, what are the operating costs for TransLink's smart ticketing system under the government's 10-year contract with Cubic, both in the first full year of operation and over the whole 10-year term of the contract with Cubic?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is probably commercial-in-confidence and that is probably what I said last time. I do not want to speculate at this point, because the project—along with lots of other projects—have been affected by COVID and supply chain issues. One of the things that we are reliant upon is so-called ‘integrated circuits’ or ‘chips’. There is a worldwide shortage of integrated circuits. It has been in the press that the project has been delayed because of supply chain issues, so I cannot really speculate, or give you an opinion now that would help. Also, you are asking me to determine something that is ten years in advance. Therefore, again, I would not be able to help the committee by speculating at this point. I am sorry I cannot be any more definitive at this point in time.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Mr Scales. I seek clarity on a point of order. You would be aware of the comments from the Deputy Premier last week around estimates and commercial-in-confidence, where he observed that the estimates process requires a level of rigour that is over and above the restrictions of commercial-in-confidence. He referred to legal advice to that effect. Can I seek a ruling from you about whether the witness can be required to answer questions that cross over to the issue of commercial-in-confidence and that he be compelled to do so?

CHAIR: I understand your point of order; I have sought some advice. Every contract is different. What the Deputy Premier referred to is the Deputy Premier’s one, so that the director-general is able to, he may be able to furnish you with some more information, if you have another question but I cannot rule in the way you want, sorry.

Mr Scales: If it helps the committee and the member for Maiwar, the contract is being delivered by Cubic, who are an international world organisation. I would not be comfortable releasing any commercial information at all because that could be used against them not just in Australia, but elsewhere. It is commercial-in-confidence and Cubic won that on an international competitive tender basis. I do understand what you are saying about commercial-in-confidence and what the Deputy Premier may or may not have said, but I will take the chair’s guidance, as well. Each contract is different, but as far as I am concerned, it was commercial-in-confidence, the process was competitive and I cannot see a way I can release any of that information.

Mr BERKMAN: Absolutely. I am happy for us to deal with this later. I appreciate your ruling, Chair. We will take it up with the Speaker through the appropriate channels.

CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have a further question?

Mr BERKMAN: I have, yes, thank you. A further question to the director-general. In my electorate there is a significant missing cycle link that you would be aware of along Lambert Road between the Indooroopilly Riverwalk and the St Lucia Esplanade bikeway. I have previously written to the minister about this issue and I understand that the Brisbane City Council has also unsuccessfully applied for funding under the SEQ Community Stimulus Program to deliver what is called the stage 3 and 4 Indooroopilly bikeway. Has the department considered, or does it have a plan to provide funding for council to deliver this much-needed link?

CHAIR: Director-General, just before you answer—and I am just conscious of the time that’s all—I am happy to go into the break period, but we have got a few minutes until the committee has to have a break.

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. There are annual grants available that the councils—not just BCC—can bid into. It would be a matter for them to bid into that. I have not got the detail to hand, but I can assure the member that we are, as a department, really intent on providing active transport, whether it is walking routes or cycling routes. On major projects, we always look at adding active transit.

For that specific project, if it has been turned down before it means that it did not pass the threshold for support. That does not mean to say that they cannot resubmit. The issue is that we tend to have more projects than budget, which is a good thing, and one benefit of COVID is that a lot of people are getting out walking and cycling. You will know, I am sure, that if you try to get a really professional pushbike—a cycle—you are waiting six to nine months because there has been a big demand, so there has been a consequent demand for support for the cycleways. On that particular one in your constituency, all I would encourage BCC to do is submit again when the round of tenders comes up.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. The committee will now adjourn for a break. This hearing will resume at 11.15 am with the continuing examination of the estimates for the transport and main roads portfolio area.

Proceedings suspended from 11.00 am to 11.15 am.



CHAIR: Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will continue its examination of the estimates for the transport and main roads portfolio area.

Mr WALKER: With reference to the SDS, can the minister outline any steps the government is taking to reduce transport emissions and if there are any future plans to partner with industry to reduce emissions in the transport sector?

Mr BAILEY: Thank you very much, member. I appreciate the question and your interest in emerging technologies. We know that Queensland is the most vulnerable state when it comes to extreme weather events and to climate change. We have the most population up in the tropics and subtropics, where you and your family and constituents live, and we have seen a definite increase in the number of extreme weather events and the escalation of cyclones much quicker than we previously had seen as a common thing, so we all need to do our part in terms of transitioning to cleaner energy sources. As a developed western economy with all the skill base, there is no excuse for us shirking our responsibilities in that regard, and I certainly look forward to working with the new Albanese federal Labor government, which understands the importance of that, unlike the previous government.

Recently I announced that Queensland has more than 10,000 electric vehicles now on our roads. In 2017 there were only 525 electric vehicles registered and now, five years on, encouraged by our strategy, we see more than 10,000 vehicles—a nearly 2,000 per cent increase on the number of electric vehicles on our roads. I believe that we now have over 60,000 hybrids as well, so Queenslanders are embracing that new technology.

As a government we have taken our responsibilities to act on climate change seriously and we are supporting that by transitioning to electric vehicles. We were the first state to release an electric vehicle strategy and at the centre of that strategy is the Queensland electric vehicle superhighway. There are chargers in Townsville, of course—something that people who need to charge their electric vehicles on long-distance journeys can avail themselves of. Most people will charge from home for everyday running around, but for those long trips you want to know that the chargers are there. That is why we invested \$5.3 million into 31 electric vehicle charging stations from Coolangatta to Port Douglas, Brisbane to Toowoomba.

In last year's budget we announced a further \$2.75 million to do stage 3 of the electric vehicle superhighway out in Western Queensland. I am sure the member for Gregory would be very supportive of our measures. We are seeing 18 charging stations going into places like Longreach, Emerald and Mount Isa, and more recently we announced six extra sites to stage 3 on top of what we announced last year. They will include Richmond, Kynuna, Injune, Rolleston, St George and Cunnamulla. Look at the big smile on the member for Gregory's face. Isn't he happy to see Labor governments investing in new technology in LNP electorates?

Mr MILLAR: What about Birdsville and Bedourie?

Mr MINNIKIN: Not so happy with that.

Mr BAILEY: Once finalised, the Queensland electric vehicle highway will provide a fast-charging infrastructure network with 55 locations across Queensland and will be the longest electric vehicle superhighway in any single state anywhere in the world. We will also include two border crossing sites, at Goondiwindi and Stanthorpe, to encourage our interstate neighbours to join our electric vehicle revolution. The Palaszczuk Labor government will partner with Yurika to deliver the next phase, which will use 75-kilowatt Tritium fast chargers manufactured right here in Brisbane, in Murarrie. The Palaszczuk Labor government has supported Tritium from an early stage through our Advance Queensland program and it recently—I think it was late last year now—had a press conference with the President of the United States. It is just amazing to see Queensland technology and Queensland innovators from the University of Queensland achieving so much worldwide. It now has big contracts in the United States, and good on it! We love to see Brisbane and Queensland based companies succeed internationally.

Motorists who may be thinking about making the switch to an electric vehicle certainly need to have the confidence that the charging infrastructure that they need is easily found in regional areas, not just in our CBD areas in cities. While these increases are positive, Australia's uptake is still fairly anaemic compared to the rest of the developed world. Just as we needed genuine leadership on the vaccine rollout and fit-for-purpose quarantine in the past, we needed national leadership on zero-emission vehicles. Unfortunately we did not see from that previous prime minister Morrison, who said the weekend would be over if we went with electric vehicles. That is probably one comment he might regret these days. Thankfully, the new government is working closely with us. On electric buses,

the Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy also reinforces our commitment to transitioning heavy vehicles, with every new TransLink bus on the South-East Queensland network to be zero emissions by 2025 and across regional Queensland from 2025 to 2030.

We are also seeing that plan in action with electric buses hitting the road in Brisbane, the Bayside down Redlands way, Gold Coast and soon the Sunshine Coast and Cairns. There will be plenty of opportunities to supercharge our local manufacturing capabilities, such as our local Gold Coast businesses like BusTech who are already partnering with the Palaszczuk state government to build 10 new electric buses for Clarks Logan City Bus Service. Moving towards a more sustainable fleet in Queensland will assist in delivering on one of the key objectives and values of the Olympic Games in Queensland and that is sustainability. Buses, unlike most motor vehicles, spend a large amount of time on the road on any given day so their contribution to the airshed just in terms of kilometres driven as well as the size of their task means they are a significant part of the airshed. Every bus we move to zero emissions is better for not just particulate pollution but also in terms of carbon emissions.

We will continue to innovate. We will continue to work with industry. The industry is very keen to work with us. We will see about 60 electric buses added over the next 12 months. The industry knows this is better technology and I have to say people out there increasingly understand it is too because they are very quiet compared to a traditional bus. If you live on a bus route you would much rather have electric buses going past your house rather than old-technology buses.

CHAIR: Minister, regarding the capital allocation—and there has been a substantial one in the Moreton Bay area—can you please advise what the Palaszczuk government's plan is regarding roads and transport in the region I live in and whether there are any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank you for the question—it is always a pleasure working with you—and for your strong advocacy for infrastructure in the Moreton Bay region. It is one of the fastest growing urban regions in the country. Its population is forecast to grow by over 40 per cent to more than 690,000 by 2024. That is why the Palaszczuk state government is investing \$2.9 billion across the North Coast TMR region, which obviously includes your area. Our government is undertaking major projects such as the \$2.1 billion Gateway Motorway and Bruce Highway upgrades; the \$662 million six-laning of the Bruce Highway from Caboolture-Bribie Island Road to Steve Irwin Way, and it is clear to anybody up there that that project is going well and, of course, will take out that vulnerable-to-flood section at King Johns Creek and raise those bridges making the Bruce Highway much more flood resilient when we complete that project; the \$163 million Deception Bay Road interchange upgrade; and the \$57 million Eatons Crossing Road upgrade.

We are also planning for the future and that is why we have planning underway on a new transport corridor through the north of Brisbane and Moreton Bay. The Bruce Highway Western Alternative will provide an alternative route to the Bruce Highway to alleviate traffic congestion and accommodate future growth in the area. This project forms part of the \$20 million North Brisbane Bruce Highway Western Alternative project with \$10 million each committed by the Commonwealth and the Queensland Palaszczuk state Labor government. Stage 1 will improve access for emerging communities within and around Caboolture West and increase certainty for future development which will boost the economic development for the region.

Late last year I joined you, Chair, as the member for Kurwongbah, and Mayor Peter Flannery to announce the start of early consultation on the next priority stage that runs 13 kilometres between Moorina and Narangba, south of Caboolture West, which is currently still out for feedback online. Just last week I was pleased to announce that the Moreton Bay community has the chance to share its thoughts for stage 2. I know that your constituents have been well informed by you about how they can do that, and I thank you for that.

It also would be remiss of me not to mention, on one of your questions, the hard work and advocacy you have put in in terms of the Dakabin station accessibility upgrade which I was very pleased to come out and open with the Deputy Premier, and the multistorey park-and-ride. The station looks magnificent. We have First Nations artwork there. We worked with the Kabi Kabi traditional owners. It is a beautiful piece of public art as part of a much more functional station that looks terrific. It looks a bit different to the Dakabin station that I arrived at when I went to Lakeside to see Peter Brock race in 1987, I can assure you of that.

CHAIR: It certainly does, Minister.

Mr BAILEY: It was a great day. The upgrade is designed to provide a single access path from accessible station entrances to the assisted boarding points achieved through platform raising and upgrading accessible parking and essential station and customer facilities. We also saw major upgrades with the new pedestrian footbridge with lift access so people with wheelchairs, parents with

prams and senior citizens can take the lift, a raised section of the platform, upgraded hearing augmentation loops and tactile platform services, upgraded security cameras and lighting around the core zone. We worked with the disability community to make sure it is user-friendly for people with different kinds of disabilities. It is important that we realise that while some people have physical disabilities, other people might have audio disabilities and we are accommodating for them on our public transport network.

I know that you will continue to advocate for improved parking on the western side, which we will be looking at. While there is land available, there are a number of drainage and environmental issues that we are working through and looking at, but we will continue to deliver for the fast-growing Moreton Bay region. We know that your constituents will need more infrastructure going forward. It is great to work with you to achieve that.

Mr MARTIN: With reference to the capital allocations for the Rockhampton rail yards as outlined on page 10 of Budget Paper 3, can the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government's strong investment in Queensland's rail manufacturing industry will support regional jobs and businesses?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for Stretton. This is a very important topic. There is no doubt that supply chains have been put under more pressure in the last two and a half years with the pandemic than I have ever seen in my adult lifetime. The impact of the pandemic, and increasingly now the war in the Ukraine, has had some very unpredicted impacts at times. We have a high-inflation situation. We have had the impact of COVID in China where there has been big holdups through the Shanghai port of all kinds of products from all around the world. There have been a lot of impacts and it has shown us that the supply chain is really important within our state and our country.

In terms of train manufacturing, we had already made that decision to make trains in Maryborough in Queensland and increase the skill base there and I have outlined very clearly to the committee the work around that. I thank and acknowledge the Assistant Minister for Train Manufacturing, Bruce Saunders, who has been a great advocate for Queensland-made trains.

We also have to make sure that we have a supply chain supporting train manufacturing in Maryborough. That is why we have purchased the Rockhampton rail yards which have been under-utilised for some time. It is a big site, at 21 hectares, right on the edge of the Rockhampton CBD. It is a very convenient site. We want to establish new opportunities in terms of supply chain into the manufacturing base. The redevelopment of the site will transform it and offer local industry an opportunity to be involved in the supply chain of our rail manufacturing program. It will support hundreds of jobs across multiple later markets. I have had the pleasure of being at the Rockhampton rail yards. You can see just how much capacity is still there on site. There is tremendous infrastructure on site and we are looking to use it.

Fostering the train manufacturing supply chain in our own backyard in the heart of Rocky supports this government's vision of supporting good jobs and investing in skills in our rail manufacturing sector. We have to do that. We are seeing substantial projects built not just in Queensland but also New South Wales and Victoria and workers are hard to come by at the moment so training is important. Just last month we released an expression of interest to the industry and hosted a briefing for interested parties to learn about the site, its value and the Palaszczuk state government's plans for the future. We hope to have successful attendants in place this year to kickstart the Rocky rail rejuvenation and have boots on the ground contributing to regional growth in Queensland that we have seen through strong leadership under this government through the pandemic, through infrastructure, not just in the recent couple of years but from day one.

Seven record QTRIP allocations shows that we do believe in infrastructure, particularly in regional areas. Rockhampton is getting the ring road. They have just finished the Rockhampton Northern Access Upgrade. We are investing in the Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road. We have finished the Capricorn Highway duplication out to Gracemere. We are doing the Lawrie Street duplication over the rail line. A lot of infrastructure has gone into Rocky. This is another great opportunity for Central Queensland workers.

CHAIR: We will now go to non-government questions and the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: I ask for Mr Newton from the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority to answer a few questions, please. Mr Newton, on ABC Radio on 11 August last year Minister Bailey said—

Yeah, so with the public-private partnership, Steve, there's maintenance and work that goes on long after the actual project is built. It is a bit similar to the Toowoomba bypass where they built a huge project up there and then there's payments from the private sector over time in terms of maintaining the asset. It's a pretty normal thing that occurs and that is, in fact, not taxpayer funds.

In other words, not only will the private sector be providing \$1½ billion in capital funding; they will maintain the asset at no cost to the government. Is the minister's description of how the Cross River Rail public-private partnership works correct?

Mr Newton: Member, could you clarify the exact question, please? I am not quite clear.

CHAIR: I was going to warn the member about the lengthy preamble but you were quoting.

Mr MINNIKIN: The minister was on ABC Radio in August last year giving his definition of a public-private partnership as it pertains to Cross River Rail. I gave the quote. I will make it simple: has Minister Bailey ever been briefed about how a public-private partnership properly works?

Mr Newton: I am not sure that that is in my purview to answer in relation to what the minister does or does not get briefed on in relation to operations of public-private partnerships.

Mr MINNIKIN: Involving Cross River Rail. Mr Newton, what is the cost to the Cross River Rail project due to the southern area modification?

Mr Newton: On the Cross River Rail project, we are very pleased with the progress that is happening at the moment. As you are aware, last year the year of tunnelling, as we coined it, was progressed. That also included the connections in preparation for linking into the wider network. The sector that you are referring to is the southern area connection, which is really where the southern portal comes from the Boggo Road station, where it merges into the southern sector. That area is a very complicated sector. It is where the Cleveland line joins the Park Road line, at the connection there, and, coming from the south, the Gold Coast and Beenleigh line.

When we went through the process of the tender we identified that that area needed some evolution as far as its design goes. That was at the tender phase. We saw different bids come in from different operators. We worked with the successful bidder to go through the final design. As part of that process we refined the design and tied it back into the overall network and operations, which included dialogue with Transport and Main Roads and Queensland Rail. The design and the components of that are incorporated into the \$5.4 billion overall program budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: Specifically in relation to the southern area modification, you have said clearly that it was rescope. What specifically was budgeted for the modification to the southern area portal—specifically within the \$5.4 billion?

Mr Newton: To be clear, there was a connection that was designed for that section. We went through a process of refining that with the contractor and in dialogue with Transport and Main Roads and Queensland Rail and then went through a settling of the final scope, which is actually in delivery at the moment. Having been down there recently I have seen that it is really quite an impressive piece of infrastructure. The details of the settled element in relation to that are part of the contract and is classified as commercial-in-confidence because it is presently in delivery.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, other cost blowouts on Minister Bailey's watch have been disclosed, for example, the Coomera Connector, being commercial-in-confidence. Why can this not be disclosed?

Mr Newton: As I said, it is incorporated into the total project budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: So you cannot ascertain within the \$5.4 billion specifically the modifications to that southern area today?

Mr Newton: As I have reiterated several times, that is part of the total project scope. It was always an integration that was part of the total project scope. Refining the design is not an unusual practice and then settling on the final design with the contractor is not an unusual practice. It was part of the contract negotiations and it was settled and that is what is in delivery.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, regarding these changes in the southern area modification, on 11 August 2020 in parliament former minister Kate Jones said—

I can advise the House that any costs associated with the detailed design and alignment must be absorbed within the existing budget.

Can the CEO please outline where savings have been made in other areas of the project to offset this additional cost?

Mr Newton: I think I have answered the question fulsomely with my previous answer, that the costs associated with those aspects of the project are incorporated into the overall project budget. These are quite commercially sensitive items. We do not disclose what the overall contract values are and then also what the retained risk is for these projects. Were we to do so, that would put at risk a range of commercially sensitive items.

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I think the CEO has answered that question several times in several different ways. I will allow you another question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Or has attempted to at the last couple of budget estimates; correct. Mr Newton, I refer to the Boggo Road priority development area plan, which shows that the area east of Joe Baker Street will be zoned for 14 storeys. That is just above the Boggo Road station. Has the station been designed to allow a 14-storey building to be built on top economically, because none of the artist images on your website show a 14-storey building at that particular location?

Mr Newton: I will just grab the details.

CHAIR: Take your time, Mr Newton.

Mr Newton: The question, as I understand it, relates to the block of land adjacent to Joe Baker Street which is over the station?

Mr MINNIKIN: And Peter Doherty Street, correct.

Mr Newton: Could you restate the question?

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly. I refer to the Boggo Road priority development area plan, which shows that the area east of Joe Baker Street will be zoned for 14 storeys. That is just above the Boggo Road station. Has that station been designed to allow a 14-storey building to be built on top economically, because none of the artist images on your website show a 14-storey building at that particular location?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The station has been designed to take an over-station development in that particular site. It has been taken into account what the requirements are for the size and scale for that particular site. I will highlight, though, that the scheme that was presented for public consultation did incorporate that 14 storeys; however, the final height and determination will be from the minister for economic development. He is currently assessing the development as we speak.

Mr MINNIKIN: From an engineering perspective, it still will be capable in theory of taking a 14-storey building above that particular site?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. I believe so, yes.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you. Mr Newton, again with the Cross River Rail, because this is of vital importance to the taxpayers of Queensland, you mentioned last year a \$5.4 billion original price but, with the PPP, it will be \$6.888 billion. If you look at the items that are formally referred to the director-general—that is, other bits including Breakfast Creek Bridge, the Clapham Yard stabling, Fairfield train station, the Mayne Yard relocation facility, given the fact that the track runs literally right through the middle of Mayne Yard, Moorabbin Power, the NGR European Track Control System fitment, screen door fitments—add them as well to the project—it comes to \$8 billion. The question specifically, if those extra items were not included, could Cross River Rail happen?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for question. I seek guidance. I believe this question has been addressed.

CHAIR: It has been asked and answered many times.

Mr MINNIKIN: But it is to Mr Newton.

CHAIR: I am chair of this one, mate. It has been. I will allow you to answer the question as you see fit, noting that it has been answered many times. You are responsible for what you are responsible for—not the overall picture.

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. I do refer back to my previous response in last year's estimates—and I believe the year before but particularly last year. It is a similar response. The \$5.4 billion for the core delivery of Cross River Rail remains as previously stated and as reflected by what was presented by both the minister and the director-general before this hearing.

In relation to those additional scopes of work, similarly to what was referred to last year, these are complementary works. They are part of a wider network enhancement. The document released today provides context for those particular projects such as the Clapham Yard project, further enhancements at Mayne Yard and so forth. Those are part of a network enhancement. We are delivering works in approximate location to those. It just makes sense, while we have the sites open and operational, to be doing construction in that we would do similar works. I guess it is a serendipitous piece of work that we are doing in order to augment the network.

Mr MINNIKIN: A further question to Mr Newton. Mr Newton, I am a valuer; I am not an engineer. But I am staring at a plan here that shows very simply Cross River Rail passing directly through Mayne Yard, including underpasses and crossovers that have to be done as part of this project. Are you

seriously telling this committee that the other items I have listed, including Mayne Yard to relocate the facility, could be done irrespective of whether or not Cross River Rail is happening? I am cutting to the chase here. This is an \$8 billion project. This surely must be done.

Mr BAILEY: Point of order, Chair? Clearly this is a question for government and of government policy. Hectoring a senior officer is really not befitting of the member. If he wants to ask me this question, let him go for it. Hectoring and harassing the CEO of the delivery authority on a matter highly political is really not appropriate.

CHAIR: Thank you for your point of order, Minister. The CEO has answered the question and you are asking the same question again. You have asked the question many times today. You have had answers. You might not be happy with the answers, but you have had answers to that question. Do you have any other lines of questioning?

Mr MINNIKIN: No, I do not—other than thanking Mr Newton for his time.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Newton.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a further question then to the Minister. Direct question: Cross River Rail is going to cost the taxpayers of Queensland \$8 billion—yes or no?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the repeated question. I refer him to my previous answer. The advice to me to date is that the budget is on time and on budget. We are monitoring the impacts and the economy. We are aware that there are pressures there. We have said this many times. Really, the member is wasting a lot of committee time on the same question asked a lot of different ways.

Mr MINNIKIN: You can't answer it.

Mr BAILEY: I just answered it. I have made it very clear—a very specific answer. The member just does not want to hear the answer because this is a project that is—

Mr MINNIKIN: \$8 billion.

Mr BAILEY: The member can repeat the same old political line all he likes. The reality is that the advice to me to date is that it is still on time, on budget.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is not on time, Minister.

CHAIR: Please stop your interjections. If you have another question afterwards, you will have the time later.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Chair. No matter how badly behaved you might be, that does not change the facts of the matter, that is, that we are building a transformational project that was cut when the honourable member was the assistant minister for public transport—embarrassingly.

Mr MINNIKIN: That is an \$8 billion project over budget.

CHAIR: Member, please stop your interjections. I do not want to have to warn you.

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Chair. With respect, I am happy to accept barbs but, in the course of this particular questioning, the minister always refers back to the previous government. The question was asking for a yes or no: will Cross River Rail cost the taxpayers of Queensland \$8 billion?

CHAIR: I understand your point of order. You have asked a question. The whole committee is listening to the answer. I know the minister is barbing. I also know that a fair few are coming from here. I ask you not to interject with them. Some of your questioning has been quite pointed. I have personally found some of it offensive. I have let it go because there is a bit of to-and-fro. Minister, please resume your answer.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Chair. There has been a lot of criticism by the opposition of the parliamentary committees. We see all the bad behaviour from opposition members.

CHAIR: Stick to the answer please.

Mr BAILEY: I have answered the question fulsomely. I cannot be more specific than I have been—awesome project. It will transform travel across South-East Queensland. We are very proud of this project. I look forward to continuing to work with everyone involved—it is a big project—and to keep informing the community about just these incredible benefits. It is not surprising the member does not understand how a project is built, because they did not build them when they were in power.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Thank you for your answer.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a further question to the Minister. I refer to a media release dated 3 January 2021, and I quote—this is from the minister—

Minister for Transport and Main Roads Mark Bailey said because of the Palaszczuk Government's decisive action, Cross River Rail would be ready to service the South-East by 2024.

The question specifically: Minister, will this be achieved—yes or no?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. The member can appreciate that we have issued a lot of press releases over a lot of time. We have announced a number of years ago that the construction would cease in 2024. There would be a year of testing and signalling work which is a learning out of the Redcliffe line opening and that the full opening of Cross River Rail to the public would be 2025. This has been known for many budgets. For the member now to pull out something that—

Mr MINNIKIN: It was from 18 months ago.

Mr BAILEY: It sounds to me like there was a typo in that release.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is your department.

Mr BAILEY: Again interjecting, carrying on. It is really not befitting of you, member for Chatsworth. I thought you would be better than this. I have constantly and often referred for many years to the fact that the construction would stop in 2024—that the project would open in the later stage of 2025. I have said that on numerous occasions and in numerous documents. You have found something with a typo. Congratulations!

CHAIR: Thank you. You have one last question member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: It was not a typo but I would say incompetence. I move on to the Coomera Connector, if I may. I refer to the minister's tweet, which he is popular in doing, of 13 January that indicated that early construction works would start in that month. Question on notice 731 states that in 2021-22 money was spent on environmental studies, project acquisition, design and contract administration but no early construction works. Is the minister's tweet incorrect or is the information he has provided to parliament incorrect?

CHAIR: Just before you answer, Minister, I will point out, just in case you were not aware, member, that you did throw a barb in that question. I reiterate what I said earlier.

Mr BAILEY: This is another question about a project built by Labor and blocked by the opposition.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is not built.

Mr BAILEY: We will get it done. We believe in infrastructure. We believe in the Gold Coast. I was born on the Gold Coast so I have an affinity for my old hometown. This is a project that will benefit a growing part of the Gold Coast. It is fully funded, with joint funding lined up, after we did not even have a corridor. We did not have a single metre of corridor when I became minister. We gazetted all three sections, in 2016, 2017 and 2019. We were able to fund it with stimulus funding in 2020 and add to that in the current economic environment.

This is a very important project. There have absolutely been some early works undertaken on site. Geotechnical and environment work has been happening. The necessary preparation work has been occurring. As has been well outlined by me, there was a hold-up in terms of the delivery of PPR under the previous Morrison-Frydenberg government, which seemingly the member for Chatsworth did not communicate with.

In November of last year the Department of Transport and Main Roads wrote to the department of the then federal transport minister, deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce, requesting that they release the next round of funding to get construction on the Coomera Connector going and it was ignored. We contacted them. We tried to get it done before the government went into caretaker mode, but there was no response from Barnaby Joyce or his office. I was unsuccessful in ever getting a face-to-face meeting with Barnaby Joyce in either of his terms as federal transport minister. To his credit, when Michael McCormack was deputy prime minister he met with me in Queensland many times and we got lots done, including the funding for the Coomera Connector.

This funding was critical to ensure we could pay contractors to get this much needed project underway on the Gold Coast. By not releasing the funding they threatened to delay the entire project. The Palaszczuk state government was forced to step in to keep the project moving, bringing forward hundreds of millions of dollars to cover the Morrison coalition government's shortfall. This was well reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* at the time.

Fortunately for Gold Coast residents, the Palaszczuk state Labor government filled that void left by the Morrison-Joyce government. We did the heavy lifting in order to build the Coomera Connector and get the early works underway. We raised this with new minister Catherine King. She is freshly

elected and still getting used to the job but she has already given approval for one of the PPRs. That is after we got nothing out of the previous government for six months. If the member for Chatsworth would like to see more progress, he should have been lobbying his own coalition colleagues in Canberra because Barnaby Joyce held up this project and its progress for nearly six months.

CHAIR: Member, do have one more quick question on that line of questioning or if you have a few I will get you to hold that thought.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, I do. In relation to the point that was raised by the minister in his previous answer to me with regard to the media release dated 3 January 2021 having a typo, I ask the minister directly: when the Premier told the International Olympic Committee that trains would be running on Cross River Rail by 2024, was there also typo in her speech?

CHAIR: That is hypothetical. The minister cannot do that—

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, Mr Chair, I am checking—

CHAIR: The minister is not responsible for that. You are asking him for an opinion. Minister, if you have something quick to add you can, because I am keen to ask some questions.

Mr BAILEY: The timing of this project has been known for years. What we have here is a cheap performance by the member for Chatsworth. He is trying to re prosecute this issue ad nauseam and get himself a little run in some media that might be naive enough to think that it had not been reported before. It has been reported before, and often. It has been on the website. It has been in numerous media releases. I have said it in so many media conferences it is not funny. The honourable member presumably watches the press conferences I do. He would know that I have said 2024 for construction completion and 2025 for open to the public. He knows I have said this.

Mr MINNIKIN: You have blocked me on Twitter.

CHAIR: Member, can you please stop your interjections.

Mr BAILEY: I will take that interjection because it is actually the member who has blocked me pretty regularly. He is not innocent when it comes to that. I have to say that I am not terribly worried.

CHAIR: Maybe the pair of you can step outside and have a chat about Twitter.

Mr BAILEY: He can block me all he likes. I do not look at his nonsense most of the time.

Mr MINNIKIN: I care about the taxpayers of Queensland.

Mr BAILEY: What we see is the transformational Cross River Rail project 100 per cent funded by this Palaszczuk Labor government. We had the vision and commitment to build a project of this size on our own without the help that every other state government had from Canberra. We did it all on our own. We did the heavy lifting. It will be awesome when it opens in 2025. I have announced this and I have talked about it so many times. The question is an absurdity.

CHAIR: As excited as we all are about Cross River Rail, you mentioned park-and-rides before. There has been a lot more funding—not in my area but all over the state—for parking at bus and train stations. Minister, can you explain how many additional parking spaces will be delivered and are there any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: It is understandable that the member gets excited by park-and-rides and bus stations. I know I do. They play an important role in connecting Queenslanders with the quality, high-frequency public transport services the state has to offer. That is why we offer parking free of charge at 158 locations across our train, bus, ferry and light rail networks. They are also a key way we can reduce congestion on local roads, by helping more people to park at their local stations and catch public transport to work, school and important services. That is why the Palaszczuk state Labor government is delivering more parking spaces across the public transport network.

Over the next four years more than 2,400 new car spaces will be built as part of the jointly funded \$172 million park-and-ride upgrade program. Right now, construction is underway to deliver 500 additional spaces at the Coomera train station. Coomera is getting a lot of attention from the Palaszczuk Labor government, whether on transport or health. There will be 280 additional spaces at Mango Hill train station. There will be 250 extra spaces at the Ferny Grove train station as part of the transit orientated development. It is great to see residential, commercial and transport infrastructure integrated at Ferny Grove. I thank the member for Ferny Grove for his advocacy there. I thank the Deputy Premier, who advocated strongly for the spaces at Mango Hill train station.

There will be 170 more spaces at Carseldine train station thanks to the member for Aspley's advocacy. This forms part of the exciting first stage of the Beams Road level crossing removal project. This is fully funded. It is a fantastic project that will relieve traffic congestion on the north side. As I have mentioned before, we completed the Dakabin station upgrade and the multistorey park-and-ride, which looks terrific as well as being practical. The additional 340 additional spaces there take the parking capacity at the station to 515 spaces.

I am pleased to inform the committee that detailed design is also underway for parking expansions at Lindum train station, Narangba train station, Gaythorne train station and the new Rochedale bus station, in the Minister for Energy's Springwood electorate. Since coming into office in 2016, nearly 8,000 new spaces have been delivered by the Palaszczuk Labor government. Let me say that again: nearly 8,000 new spaces have been delivered next to public transport for people to get on the system. We will continue to build on the over 34,200 spaces already available to commuters.

It is incredible progress. It not only increases the number of parking spaces available at transport locations but also creates the infrastructure jobs to help people pay off their mortgages, to have good careers and to have good lives. We do not cut projects. We do not sack people. We do not sell assets. That is us. That is Labor. If you want those kinds of things you get the LNP.

Mr MARTIN: Regarding the capital allocations to projects on Gold Coast Light Rail set out at page 1 of Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's progress on the Gold Coast Light Rail is and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: Gold Coast Light Rail has been an outstanding success story. Stage 1 was built by the Bligh and Rudd-Gillard governments when the current Premier was the transport minister. It shows the vision and foresight of the current Premier as the transport minister and Anthony Albanese as the federal transport minister. It was very controversial at the time and fiercely opposed by the LNP at the time. Traffic gridlock I think the member for Surfers Paradise warned about. Look at it; it is a fantastic success.

This government built stage 2 in record time for the Commonwealth Games, integrating with the heavy rail network so that stages 1 and 2 go through the university, the hospital, Southport and Surfers. That adds to our much wider infrastructure program on the Gold Coast. Stage 3 is not far off heavy construction work starting. We have done all the early works there from Broadbeach to Burleigh. I used to go to school in Broadbeach as a young kid. There will be eight new stations to Burleigh which is absolutely terrific to see.

What we believe in is better public transport. We do not believe that public transport will be obsolete in five to 10 years time. That is what we have been warned and told by the member for Burleigh and from the LNP: 'Forget about public transport. It will be obsolete in a decade or less.' The opposition do not understand light rail and they do not understand public transport.

Incredibly when we announced stage 3 the member for Bonney turned up for a photo-op to try to claim credit for a federal-state government commitment—very unusual. Then we had the member for Mermaid Beach saying, 'Light rail is an infliction on Gold Coast residents.' Then we had the member for Burleigh saying he wanted it to go past the brewery he owns in west Burleigh and not along the Gold Coast Highway. Trusting the LNP with public transport is a pretty risky business.

The member for McPherson in federal parliament, as outlined before, says she supports it to the airport but does not support it on the Gold Coast Highway and will not be open and transparent about what her preferred route is. She is keeping it a secret from her residents on the Gold Coast. This is the LNP on the Gold Coast. You get about five or six different positions on light rail but none of them give you any confidence that light rail would ever be added to by an LNP government because they do not believe in public transport.

Mr MILLAR: It is estimates.

Mr BAILEY: Light rail—all three stages built under state Labor governments.

Mr MILLAR: Tell us what you are doing.

CHAIR: Member!

Mr BAILEY: We see bad behaviour again here from the committee with constant interjections. That is all they have to offer—the same question over and over and a lot of bad behaviour and then they criticise the chairs of our committees about behaving so badly. They have not learnt anything from being in opposition so long, whereas most parties do.

CHAIR: Member for Gregory, please stop your interjections. The members on this side are not interjecting during your questions or answers. I ask you to restrain yourself. I know how excited you are about Gold Coast Light Rail. However, the member for Mundingburra has a question.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements and the TMR objective to deliver an integrated transport network accessible to everyone, can the minister update the committee on the Palaszczuk government's commitment to provide transport options for all Queenslanders?

Mr BAILEY: Accessibility is a key principle when it comes to public transport. People need to have that option—a genuine option—as often as possible if we are to have a truly inclusive democratic society where we value every person no matter what their abilities or backgrounds. The fact is, for the committee's benefit, almost 20 per cent of Queenslanders have a disability. We have a geographically very diverse and decentralised state with many people living in remote parts of the state. People are living longer than ever before. At 65 years of age Australians can expect to live half of their remaining years with some level of disability.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to providing accessible, safe and reliable public transport for all Queenslanders. As part of that vision, the Palaszczuk Labor government is delivering a number of initiatives to remove barriers for people living with a disability, unlike the opposition who cut so deeply into the transport budget.

The Palaszczuk government has committed almost \$500 million towards train station upgrades at various locations including Auchenflower, Banyo, Buranda, Cannon Hill, Fairfield to Salisbury including Dutton Park station, Lindum, Morningside, South Bank, Woolloowin, Bundamba, East Ipswich, Burpengary and Dakabin—we cannot forget Dakabin! Accessibility upgrades generally deliver new footbridges with lifts and platform raising. An example of that is Yeronga station, where we closed it for a period and we replaced huge numbers of rickety old stairs with one single level with lifts that will be going in later this year. When you are on it you realise just how important it is for someone who cannot get around so well to access the public transport network. We are currently working on the Fairfield station as well—an election commitment of this government.

Other project features included accessible toilets, hearing aid loops, tactile floor and platform surfaces, lighting upgrades, improved CCTV and wayfinding signage, as well as new bicycle enclosures because we want to see that modal shift happening. We build both bicycle cages—there is one for 32 bikes at Yeronga station—and informal bike parking. If you ride regularly, you might be able to book it regularly and have your bike secure. If you are just using it as a one-off, you still want to have somewhere to tether your bike, and people are increasingly doing that. Sometimes they take their bike on the train as well which we do now allow during peak hours.

Major upgrades are on track at two of our busiest stations, at South Bank and at Auchenflower. South Bank is a key destination for tourists visiting our city. It will also be home to key venues for our Olympic and Paralympics in 2022. The Palaszczuk government's upgrade of the South Bank station will deliver a full-length raised platform giving easier and safer access for the community including those using mobility devices, seniors and customers travelling with trams and with luggage. We will also be installing new lighting, CCTV and new platform seating to improve customer comfort. Construction is on track and expected to be completed in 2023.

It was quite something to see the new pedestrian overbridge being installed by a 700-tonne crane at the Auchenflower station recently. I saw the image; I was not there at one in the morning. The crews did a terrific job. Over six months they will install the stairs and the lifts connecting the bridge to each platform. The bridge will create an accessible path through the station precinct and to the Wesley Hospital for all members of the community. In this case we reconfigured the entire station to make access to the hospital as well as to local suburbs so much better. I think you have to do it once and do it right. That is what we seek to do.

Since 2015 we have completed accessibility upgrades at Nambour, Dinmore, Graceville, Alderley, Newmarket, Strathpine, Morayfield and Boondall stations. We also launched a \$51 million program across the next four years of regional station upgrades as part of the 2021-22 budget with Rockhampton, Maryborough West and Bundaberg. We were looking at the Townsville and Cairns stations recently with the honourable member. While they are quite functional stations, I think they could certainly do with a lift in terms of amenity and customer experience. As a gateway into North Queensland and Far North Queensland tourism economies, I think they are probably in need of a bit of love and attention. We will be working with the honourable member there to ensure that that is looked at and upgraded.

We are also improving accessibility by delivering three new stations on the Gold Coast as part of Cross River Rail, giving Gold Coast people access to a better system. We are upgrading eight above-ground stations including making the Ekka station full-time, as I outlined earlier on, and accessible. The current Ekka station is not up to standard and the new one will be. I think that is going to be a great asset for people.

In closing, I want to say a big thank you to the Queensland Accessible Transport Advisory Council, chaired by retired District Court judge Michael Forde. They have been a really important group in terms of giving us that intel and experience—user experience and a lot of experience from different sectors—to make sure we get this right.

I would also like to acknowledge this government's disability parking reforms. We see too often able-bodied people selfishly parking in disability parking bays. It actually infuriates me, to be quite frank. I have sometimes raised it with people doing it. It really is arrogant. For some people if they cannot get a park they cannot get to their doctor's appointment. They cannot do basic things. The least we can do is support people with disabilities and stay out of their parking bays. I doubled the fine because, to be quite frank, I think that kind of behaviour is disgraceful. We want to give incentive for more enforcement from local government to ensure that people support every member of our community, particularly people with disabilities who need access to those parking bays often to get to basic services and important things like health appointments.

CHAIR: I remember that a previous iteration of this committee worked on that legislation.

Mr WALKER: Minister, regarding the capital allocation to active transport projects outlined in QTRIP and Budget Paper 3, can you advise what the Palaszczuk government's approach is to active transport, and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for the question. I appreciate and acknowledge his support of active transport. When we were out at Stuart Drive we saw plenty of children and adults riding by underneath the bridge. It was nice to have a chat with the member.

We need a safe active transport network for a number of reasons. Firstly, in some cases people are choosing to do that rather than drive. That is good for traffic congestion but also people's health. With so much on offer digitally and online, we are the least active generation. We really need to make sure that we have a healthy community. For a lot of people, a safe cycling network will make the difference whether they ride a bicycle or not, and integrating it into road and rail upgrades should be fundamental. The Palaszczuk Labor government has always regarded it as fundamental that when you upgrade a major motorway like the M1, the Ipswich Motorway or the Gateway Arterial—sometimes the Bruce Highway in an urban context—you do active transport at the same time. That is what we are doing with the bridge duplication at Stuart Drive.

You do not cut it; it is a fundamental part of the transport system. Sadly, we saw savage cuts to active transport under the previous government. I do not trust them to understand that this is good transport policy. It should be a fundamental part of our road network. We are integrating active transport into the second M1; the Coopers Plains level crossing; the Bruce Highway upgrade, Edmonton to Gordonvale at the southern access into Cairns; and the Beams Road level crossing. We have done it already with a lot of other upgrades such as the more northern parts of the Cairns Southern Access Upgrade. We have invested in grade separation at the veloway, we did it as part of the rail duplication and we did it as part of the Caloundra Road to Sunshine Motorway road upgrade. There is a whole new separated system there for people to get around safely. It is really important for kids to be able to use it safely. A lot of adults do commute. When I can, I cycle into work and back home. There are a lot of other people out there doing the same thing. Whether it is down Annerley Road in Brisbane or along the Bicentennial Bikeway by the University of Queensland, it is a good way to start the day. It is a good way to end the day, too. It is good for your health and we support it.

As the minister, I have established the rail trail program. I am very proud of this as well. We have seen that cycling and bike riding in New Zealand is a really important part of their tourism economy, yet here we are in Queensland with much better weather—300 sunny days a year—a huge variety of landscapes and a lot of former rail lines that will never become rail lines again. They are perfect for bikeways and rail trails. That is why we have \$14 million in the budget over four years to support local governments to plan, design and construct rail trails across Queensland. I recently announced, fifty-fifty with the Logan council, \$3.5 million in this year's budget for the Bethania to Logan Village Rail Trail, and I thank Mayor Power for working with us. We have also seen big success with the iconic Brisbane Valley Rail Trail. I think in a lot of ways that is the originator in Queensland, because it has rejuvenated

a lot of little towns up there through the Lockyer. People get out there on the weekends to eat, have a few drinks and stay overnight. The trail has just continued to improve. Fernvale, for instance, recorded 34,468 visitors in 2019—let me say that again: 34,000-plus visitors. It has seen an average growth of 24 per cent each year, with 53,000 plus visitors recorded in 2021, the second year of the pandemic. They are pretty extraordinary numbers.

Building on that, the Palaszczuk government has supported councils and community groups to build rail trails across Queensland including \$19 million Bundaberg to Gin Gin Rail Trail, 10-kilometre extension to the Mary to the Bay Rail Trail between Hervey Bay and Maryborough in partnership with the local Fraser Coast Bicycle User Group, and the Boyne Burnett Inland Rail Trail—this is a terrific one; I have visited this—which goes through very beautiful 100-year-old rail tunnels up in the hills. It is absolutely spectacular. They have opened a 32-kilometre section of the trail. There is a huge group behind it and there are lots of businesses starting in the area to facilitate people going with their bikes. These are all good, healthy things for our community. It is also good for our tourism economy. I think there is huge potential for rail trails all the way up the state's coastline in a variety of different contexts. The rail trail program is helping get that infrastructure in place as well as, of course, active transport integrated into our road and trail upgrades.

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

Mr MILLAR: My question is to the minister. I note previous advice that the maintenance backlog as at 1 July 2021 was \$5.753 billion and the backlog was reduced by \$99 million in the previous year. Based on maintenance funding going up by \$69 million in this year's budget, at this rate the maintenance backlog will not be eliminated for over 30 years. Is it acceptable that a backlog that has developed under this government will take over three decades to eliminate?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question, but the implication in the question that there was not one under the previous government is clearly not true.

Mr MINNIKIN: Seven-and-a-half years ago.

Mr BAILEY: It is a misunderstanding of what this is. It is actually a ratings system. It does not necessarily mean that these roads are unsafe at all; it just means it is a ratings system. Our recent budget includes a record \$4.94 billion towards maintenance, preservation and operations, reflecting an increase of \$277 million compared to the previous budget. A record \$4.4 billion has been invested by the Palaszczuk government in the maintenance, preservation and operation budget compared to a measly \$2.77 billion under the previous Newman government in their final QTRIP of 2014-15. What we see there is a \$1.6-plus billion gap between what we are spending on maintenance, preservation and operations versus the Newman government.

Mr MINNIKIN: What are you doing now?

CHAIR: He is just saying now, member.

Mr BAILEY: For those opposite to suggest that not enough is going into our roads—

Mr MINNIKIN: That the minister is incompetent: yes, we are suggesting that.

Mr BAILEY:—is just incredibly wrong. I hear grumbling and mumbling over there from the member for Chatsworth. Again, this is poor behaviour at this estimates committee hearing which is being broadcast around the state. We are spending nearly 50 per cent more on road and rail than when we were first elected. That includes increases in maintenance. We see a reduction of the deferred maintenance backlog as well as part of that record funding. There have been seven record budgets since we were elected. The member for Chatsworth is looking at me longingly at the moment because all they did when he was assistant minister was cut.

Mr MINNIKIN: \$5.7 billion. Getting desperate, aren't you?

Mr BAILEY: They did not build a thing, essentially, yet here we are cracking out road and rail projects left, right and centre, seeing this state surge forward, dealing with population growth—

Mr MILLAR: Have you been on the Dawson Highway?

Mr HEAD: Or the Leichhardt Highway?

CHAIR: Members, please!

Mr BAILEY: This is poor, bad behaviour. It is really disappointing.

CHAIR: Minister, I will point it out. It is a bit of bad behaviour. Please continue with your answer.

Mr BAILEY: If you had said to me when I was a kid that our state would host the Olympics, I would have thought you were crazy. But here we are, about to host the biggest event in the world. Across the state we will get all of the public transport infrastructure benefits that come with it. Because we ran a very successful Commonwealth Games, we have invested in infrastructure like Cross River Rail, Bruce Highway upgrades, M1 upgrades—

Mr MILLAR: I am talking about regional roads. What is the relevance?

Mr BAILEY: We maintain the network very strongly. We increased maintenance significantly, by more than \$1.6 billion since the last government, yet I still get criticism and whingeing from the LNP. It is disappointing.

Mr MILLAR: One KPI in the SDS is the number of fatal crashes on state controlled roads per 100 million vehicle kilometres travelled where the road condition was likely to be a contributing factor. Last year the number of fatalities was 40 per cent higher than the department's target. Minister, how do you explain this significant failure?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is actually a serious topic. The number of lives lost on our roads is something I take very seriously. I get the fatality summaries each morning so it is something that I am very conscious of. The lowest ever year in terms of lives lost was in 2019. It was a significant drop. The numbers were relatively consistent for about three or four years, and then when the pandemic hit we saw a big change. It is inescapable that the increase in the numbers of lives lost is related in some way to the pandemic. It is not a coincidence.

It has been a difficult time for a lot of people. That means I think more people have been doing more risky and dangerous things on our roads. The truth is—and I know the honourable member knows this—that the majority of fatalities, sadly, involve people making often one or even more dangerous choices when they drive and paying a terrible price for it.

I think you will appreciate that I am very strong on road safety. We have brought in cameras to deal with distraction, which is basically the drink driving of this era. We see many fatalities each year from people looking at their phone and not looking at the road. We have also included seatbelts in that. I sincerely say to the member and all members that not wearing seatbelts is much higher in regional areas, and we all need to do anything we can to get that message across to deal with some of the myths out there. There are quite a few myths. We see a much higher number of people dying on regional roads than urban roads who were not wearing a seatbelt. We have got to get that message out.

We have these cameras. They are mobile so they will move around the state like random breath testing, and we will be adding to them. I have said that, and I will repeat it. People are going to be very surprised to see where they got a ticket for not wearing a seatbelt or being distracted by a mobile phone. They will be on roads where they have never seen enforcement before. That is going to increasingly occur, and we are going to add cameras to that. We have also increased some of the fines around speeding because, unfortunately, we have seen a big increase in speeding too in the last two years.

It is frustrating in terms of the number of lives lost in the last two years. I am very conscious of my responsibilities. We have been tough about road safety and some of the penalties. We have been upping some of our education around this, but we need to do anything we can as MPs around road safety with our followings, particularly on social media. I find that a lot of people out there understand this issue very well because there are a lot of people who have lost somebody, whether it is family, friends or work mates.

I think there is more we can all do. There are a lot of different ways of dealing with it. The majority of crashes that deal with fatalities do have some element of the fatal five in them. We will do what we can to increase the safety of roads in terms of infrastructure. We have already outlined to you our QTRIP there, but there is also the behavioural side of it. I welcome any contribution from members from any party or independents who can help get that message out there.

Mr HEAD: Minister, residents of my electorate are very concerned about the maintenance of roads, including the Leichhardt, Burnett and Wondai highways, two of which are state strategic roads. Are works on these roads being delayed because of cost blowouts on projects in South-East Queensland?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I congratulate him on his election and congratulate him on his first question in the committee today. He has already done better than the previous member for Callide did last year, so good on him.

The simple answer to that is no. What we are seeing is a record level of investment in roads right across Queensland. Anyone who actually drives on roads across Queensland would see just how much we have spent. We had a billion dollars worth of stimulus, both state and federal, that I worked with

Michael McCormack on. We specified that \$100 million would go into just sealing roads. I am very conscious that, while we have got the biggest road network in Queensland, it also means we have a lot of dirt roads in regional areas, and this was a great opportunity to get more done.

I am not talking about specific roads. You can appreciate that I probably do not know every specific road in Callide. The feedback I get from people—particularly from grey nomads and those who get out into Queensland, and also from what I have seen when I get on the road—is that there are a lot of upgrades going on everywhere. There is a lot of sealing going on in regional areas. The member for Gregory knows there is a lot going on in his electorate. I expect there will be a fair bit of work going on in your electorate as well.

Mr WATTS: Director-General, could you give the committee an update on corridor identification to the north-west of Toowoomba for a second road from Highfields? Is it via Boundary Street? Is there a time line for this identification to be finalised?

Mr Scales: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do not have that detail to hand, unless someone hands it to me. I will take it on notice, if the minister is happy with that.

CHAIR: Minister, are you happy to take that on notice?

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, do you have a further question?

Mr WATTS: I am very happy for that to be taken on notice. This second corridor is very important to the electorate. The New England is getting clogged up, so if I can get a concise answer on that I will be very happy.

Mr Scales: I have got some further and better information about the member for Maiwar's follow-up question on the Indooroopilly cycling inquiry.

CHAIR: Could you wait until the end for that?

Mr Scales: I was just letting you know so I can read it into the record.

CHAIR: Thanks. Just wait for that one.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, this committee was advised during a previous estimates hearing 599 days ago that motorists will be able to drive on the Coomera Connector all the way from Coomera to Nerang by 2024-25. Is this information still accurate?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. We are building the roads as quickly as humanly possible. It would not have been built if the LNP were in power. The LNP blocked this project when they were in power.

Mr MINNIKIN: We built the original M1.

Mr BAILEY: Really? So the member for Chatsworth is now going back 25 years ago to justify blocking the second M1. That is an extraordinary contribution. Can I just say that the only party which would get the second M1 built is the Palaszczuk Labor government.

Mr MINNIKIN: Not much to show for it.

Mr BAILEY: This is going to be the biggest road project in Queensland. 'Nothing much to show for it' was the interjection from the honourable member. So \$2.16 billion of funding is nothing much to show apparently. How embarrassing. This is flogging a dead horse here. There is early work started. We are keen to get heavy work started. It was the member for Chatsworth's colleague and good mate, Barnaby Joyce, who would not cooperate with Queensland—he would not listen to us and he would not give me a meeting—and has held up part of this project. Fortunately, the new minister has been able to solve the problem in a month—in one month. That is action and that is interest. We will get this project done. It will be four new lanes from Carrara—

Mr MINNIKIN: Four?

Mr BAILEY: It can be expanded to six but four extra lanes at first—all the way from Carrara up to Coomera. The LNP went to the election with a pathetic little six-kilometre version that only went from the Gold Coast Highway to Coomera. All that would have done was clog the Gold Coast Highway full of traffic—due to the intervention of the member for Bonney. We have got the member for Bonney driving transport policy in the LNP, not the actual shadow minister. That is the truth of it. That is the humiliating thing for the member for Chatsworth. They took a six-kilometre version to the election. We took a 16-kilometre full stage 1 to the election. Why could we do that? Because we did all the hard yards—securing the corridor, gazetting three different sections, all the way up north. We then funded it

with more than \$2 billion of joint funding. That is apparently not much to show for it. If you think \$2 billion is not much to show for it, there is not much I can do to help the member for Chatsworth, who has been very ineffective.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a further question to the minister please, Chair.

CHAIR: Director-General, did you have something to add to that?

Mr Scales: With your leave, Chair, I have the response to the member for Toowoomba North if you want me to read that, with Mr Minnikin's leave of course.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Scales: Thanks very much for the question. In response to your query, the Queensland government has allocated \$2.422 million to investigate a major new north-south transport corridor for Toowoomba to address growing traffic problems stemming from the New England Highway through to Toowoomba city.

It will provide an alternative route for the New England Highway around Toowoomba city and connect into the Toowoomba Bypass at the Ipswich link at Charlton. Corridor planning will maximise the economic opportunities for the community and industry while providing a transport network that facilitates heavy vehicle movement and supports community integration by better connecting new growth areas to the city and employment activity. It is a planning project for now. There are not short-to medium-term direct negative impacts that we can see. However, communities, businesses and industries can have confidence that future infrastructure will be provided.

Extensive planning and analysis is on the way to identify a preferred corridor. That will be presented back to key stakeholders and the broader community for feedback. The preferred corridor option will complement the current and planned development of the Western Gateway identified in the South East Queensland Economic Foundations Paper 2018 and the South East Queensland Regional Plan, one of the regional plans we have recently introduced for the whole of Queensland. This will support the Toowoomba Trade Gateway between SEQ Trade and Enterprise in the spine there. Work is underway and money is allocated and I am sure, through the minister, we will be keeping you up to speed as the local member as to what was happening.

Mr WATTS: To clarify, you said that was via Charlton, not via Boundary Street?

Mr Scales: It is Toowoomba city connecting the Toowoomba Bypass at Charlton.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, the TMR website says that the Coomera Connector business case would be completed 11 months ago, back in September 2021. Given the significant delays in construction start, why will the minister not release it publicly, or is the minister concerned that it would draw attention to the cost blowouts we have already seen on this project?

Mr BAILEY: This is a project that is only happening under this Palaszczuk Labor government. It was blocked by the member when he was in power with a record majority. Early works are underway.

Mr MINNIKIN: You ain't got much to show for it after 7½ years.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to take that interjection.

Mr MINNIKIN: Please do.

Mr BAILEY: The LNP previous government built virtually no infrastructure other than 1 William Street, a big castle for themselves—

Mr MINNIKIN: You enjoy the view.

Mr BAILEY:—so they do not really understand how road and rail projects are actually constructed. This is going to be a 16-kilometre new highway that is done environmentally sensitively. We announced today that we have added 400 hectares of koala habitat next to the Pimpama River conservation area. We also bought Tabooba property, a bit further away. We have more than 1,000 hectares of koala habitat because the section that we are actually building, that the LNP did not promise to build at the last election—

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Chair.

Mr BAILEY: You asked about the Coomera Connector and you do not want to know about it.

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Chair, under standing order 118(b) on relevance. The question was specifically about the Coomera Connector business case, which was completed 11 months ago. I am talking about the business case and why it will not be released. That is the question.

CHAIR: Thank you. The minister is providing some context there, but if the minister can go back to the major question at hand.

Mr BAILEY: It is not necessarily ordinary practice to release a business case. We have a project where early works are underway. That is only happening because of this government, and in fact this section—

Mr MINNIKIN: No wonder there are blowouts.

Mr BAILEY: Even though the LNP realise their massive blunder by blocking this road in 2014 when they were in power—

Mr MINNIKIN: Hopeless.

Mr BAILEY: They realised their mistake and then promised to build a little bit of it at the last election, but the majority of it that they would not build is actually where a lot of fragmented koala habitat is. We have been working with the koala groups. What they want to see is those koalas moved to somewhere they will survive urban development, traffic and all those things, and they are very happy to see all of this habitat. We have 1,000 hectares of habitat in the northern—

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: We have a point of order, Minister.

Mr MINNIKIN: A point of order under 118(b) again, relevance to the question asked. It was about the Coomera Connector business case.

CHAIR: I understand your point of order. I advise you, Minister, to return to that quickly as you wrap up.

Mr BAILEY: I have already answered the question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Minister.

Mr BAILEY: The member is clearly embarrassed by the inability—

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Chair, another question?

CHAIR: The minister is just finishing.

Mr BAILEY: He does like to—

CHAIR: Unless it is a—

Mr BAILEY: The member for Chatsworth has been trying to talk over me all day and I guess he will keep hacking away it, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: I am really disappointed in the member for Chatsworth. He usually behaves a lot better than this. Member, do you have one more question along this line? Otherwise we have some questions to ask.

Mr MINNIKIN: I do, Chair, and I am very disappointed in the answers the taxpayers are receiving.

CHAIR: Member, was that really necessary? Come on, ask your question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Chair. Minister, I refer to a *Gold Coast Bulletin* story from 19 March 2021 titled, 'Coomera Connector: New images of second M1 revealed with construction "just around the corner"'. This story contains images of a six-lane road, yet by the end of 2021 the department was submitting a valuation notice to the federal government for a four-lane road. When was the decision made to reduce the scope?

Mr BAILEY: I note that the LNP policy was for four lanes at the last election, so the member seems to be banging on about something that his own party had a different policy for. It is embarrassing.

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Yes, your point of order is taken, member. Minister, can you please address the question?

Mr MINNIKIN: The minister—

CHAIR: I have taken your point of order. I know what your point of order was.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: I am pretty psychic when it comes to that point of order. I've got it. Minister, can you answer the question, please.

Mr BAILEY: Sorry, can you repeat the question, please?

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly. Minister, I refer to a *Gold Coast Bulletin* story from 19 March 2021 titled, 'Coomera Connector: New images of second M1 revealed with construction "just around the corner"'. This story contains images of a six-lane road, yet by the end of 2021 the department was submitting a variation notice to the federal government for a four-lane road. When was the decision made by the Palaszczuk government to reduce the scope?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. This road will be built to be four lanes, expandable to six lanes when the volumes are justified. That is how people build roads. There will be four extra lanes for 16 kilometres under this government, from Coomera to Carrara. Under the LNP it would have been four lanes for only six kilometres—a puny little section from Coomera to the Gold Coast Highway. Do the maths on that. Four lanes times six is the LNP's 24. If you do 16 kilometres times four under Labor, you get 64. The contrast is that you get more than double the capacity and more than double the length of the second M1 in Coomera Connector under the Palaszczuk Labor government compared to the transport policy that they took to the last election which was dictated to by the member for Bonney, who was all afraid about his constituents down there and rolled the shadow transport minister. He was rolled.

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Mr Chair, on relevance. The question was: when was the change made? That is the question.

CHAIR: The minister is answering the question but in a roundabout way. I will ask you to finish the answer. We have some questions to ask as well, Minister, that are not about the Coomera Connector.

Mr BAILEY: All I would add there, Chair, is that—

Mr MINNIKIN: When did six become four?

Mr BAILEY:—it is normal in transport projects for us to put up—

Mr MINNIKIN: To reduce lanes.

CHAIR: Member, come on!

Mr BAILEY: It is normal to put pictures up looking at the ultimate configurations of infrastructure. That is not unusual. For the member to be suggesting about not getting six lanes when his own policy was four lanes is just ridiculous.

CHAIR: Yes, we are aware of that.

Mr BAILEY: It really is ridiculous.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now go to government questions. Member for Stretton?

Mr MARTIN: Regarding the capital allocation to projects in Sunshine Coast as outlined on page 21 of Budget Paper 3, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's plan is regarding roads and transport in the region and whether he is aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: Isn't it fantastic to see the hard work and effectiveness of two new Sunshine Coast MPs, the members for Caloundra and Nicklin? They are doing an extraordinary job. They get things done. They do not just complain; they are actually being highly effective. It is a real pleasure to work with them. I look forward to working with hopefully more new members up there who are interested in outcomes rather than just rhetoric.

The Sunshine Coast is the third biggest city in the state by a considerable margin and growing very quickly. We are very conscious of that in the Palaszczuk state Labor government, so we have a \$3 billion commitment to jointly fund rail and transport investment there, creating thousands of jobs. More than 550,000 people are expected to be living on the Sunshine Coast in 20 years, and only this government is delivering the critical infrastructure needed for the future.

We have jointly funded \$320 million for the Mooloolah River Interchange under a plan to transform major roads between Caloundra and Mooloolaba, creating 209 jobs. We did not even have a business case for MRI when we came into power. It was left to us to get it done. Now that we have jointly funded that, we will see that happening. Design work for the MRI project is now progressing and it is expected to be completed in 2023.

We are also delivering on our commitment to duplicate the Sunshine Motorway, which is currently in the planning phase. Planning is investigating duplicating a key 10-kilometre section of the Sunshine Motorway from the David Low Way interchange to north of Yandina Coolum Road. These additional lanes will improve safety and congestion and accommodate future growth. It will mean locals and businesses who rely on the motorway will spend less time stuck in traffic, particularly during those peak commuting times.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's \$35 million investment to bring forward the new 11½-kilometre Bells Creek Arterial Road between Caloundra and the Bruce Highway is being delivered right now. It was a great pleasure to be onsite with the member for Caloundra recently. They are going very well despite having an incredible amount of rain through the La Nina summer and winter. It is pretty hard to set cement when there are huge pools of water. The road was 60 per cent complete. There are two new bridges in place over the creek and a new active transport bridge under construction. This will take the pressure off Caloundra Road, giving people in that area a way to get to the Bruce Highway travelling south. It will mean they will not have to use Caloundra Road. We have brought this forward by a decade because we understand the growth that is happening on the Sunshine Coast. The person who advocated for it is the current member for Caloundra before he was even elected. He understood this issue and he was well connected with that community. It is to his great credit that we are doing it.

There is over \$18 million in joint funding for a new intersection on Nicklin Way to create a new entry into the Caloundra CBD and reduce delays on the Caloundra Road-Nicklin Way roundabout. Works are also underway on the Bruce Highway upgrade from the Caboolture-Bribie Island Road to Steve Irwin Way, the six-laning project between Caboolture and Steve Irwin Way. Everyone can see that and everyone knows it is a good thing. We are cracking on there. The new bridges are much higher, so there is much greater flood immunity. When we saw an extreme weather event four or five years ago it actually cut the Bruce Highway at King Johns Creek bridge. There is a lower bridge there that goes under much easier. We saw people stranded there for many hours. It was not good. This project mops up that issue. There are new bridges that are much higher and have much greater flood resilience for the Bruce Highway. I think everybody will be glad to see that as well as the greater capacity for people on weekend trips going to the beach.

That is on top of a billion dollars for the Gympie bypass, another Bruce Highway investment, on top of the new interchange at Deception Bay Road. Every time I go through there it is just amazing to see how much they change it in only a month. It is also on top of the project we have at the Maroochydore Road and Mons Road interchange. That is \$301 million there. That is a huge project. There are new service roads and new capacity across the Bruce Highway at Nambour Connection Road and greater safety for people. Of course, we saw early works on the \$550 million jointly funded stage 1 of the Beerburum to Nambour rail upgrade kicking off earlier in the year. Again, it did not have a business case when we came into office. We got that done; we got the funding in place and 333 jobs are flowing from that.

On the smaller scale of things we see \$9.8 million going into the Beckmans Road interchange upgrade; \$3.7 million for Ridgewood Road, which is now complete and well received by the Caloundra member's constituents; \$18 million to upgrade the Six Mile Creek bridge in the electorate of Noosa; \$18 million for Steve Irwin Way, Beerburum to Palmview; and \$19 million for the D'Aguilar Highway.

What we see here are real investments, real commitments under the Palaszczuk Labor government to the Sunshine Coast. That contrasts starkly with the fact that not much happened there in the three years before we were elected because we only saw cutting, sacking and selling—

Mr MINNIKIN: Seven-and-a-half years and there is no duplication. Hopeless.

Mr BAILEY:—by Sunshine Coast MPs there—

CHAIR: Member, these are our questions.

Mr BAILEY:—with the exception of the former member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington, who was a very fierce advocate. We saw a lot of smoke and rhetoric, but we did not see a lot of outcomes there. Not much happened on the Sunshine Coast. That is not happening under this government. Our record is there for over seven years.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. There is a question from the member for Mundingburra.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. Regarding the capital allocation to projects and Wide Bay-Burnett, as outlined on page 24 of Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister advise what is the Palaszczuk government's plan regarding roads and transport in the region and whether he is aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question and his ongoing interest in regional Queensland. It is a big state. I outlined earlier the substantial commitments in North Queensland. The Wide Bay-Burnett region is a really important region as well. What we are seeing there is a commitment of \$1.5 billion over the next four years supporting 1,430 local jobs as part of an \$18 billion commitment to better roads and transport outside of the metropolitan area. The investment is an important part of our economic recovery. Our four-year QTRIP will see the state moving along supporting jobs and

infrastructure with long-lasting benefits. We provide \$70 million in funding to local governments in the region each year including in the Wide Bay-Burnett through the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, or TIDS as it is fondly known. We restored that after we were elected after the deep cuts under the Newman government. There is fifty-fifty funding for those smaller projects with local government. It gives them a bit of extra capacity. The Premier has always been very clear about working with local government as cooperatively as we can. We certainly seek to do that.

Road projects there include the Tiaro bypass, the billion dollar Gympie bypass, a \$103 million package to upgrade Saltwater Creek bridge on the Bruce Highway near Aldershot and \$41 million for planning for an upgrade of the Maryborough Hervey Bay Road and Pialba Burrum Heads Road intersection in the electorate of the member for Maryborough. While he is renowned for his rail advocacy, he is pretty good on the road advocacy as well. That is why we made him Assistant Minister for Regional Roads, because he understands regional Queensland incredibly well and loves getting out on the road.

More than \$3.5 billion is locked in over the next four years for new rail projects. That will transform Queensland and, of course, in that Wide Bay-Burnett region manufacturing will mean a lot of jobs. I think they will be not just local jobs; it will probably draw a few people into the region because they are good, secure, skilled jobs because this Palaszczuk Labor government believes in Queensland manufacturing work and Queensland manufacturing workers. We do not believe in outsourcing their jobs overseas. We know having that manufacturing capacity here as an island continent is absolutely important. We want to avoid the scenario we might have seen. Maryborough would have been lost its production facility if there had been a second term of the Newman government. We have been very happy to support rail workers in that region and expand it and double down on it as well as our investments in local roads, which have been substantial.

Mr MARTIN: In relation to patronage and impacts of COVID-19 and with reference to page 9 of the SDS, can the minister outline what measures the Palaszczuk government has undertaken to improve transport patronage during the current COVID-19 wave?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously the COVID pandemic has had a big impact on public transport patronage in the short term not just here but around the world. That is for obvious reasons. It is partly due to people wanting to socially distance more and minimise their risk. We have to remember there is a substantial number of people out there with health conditions who are very careful about not picking up COVID. I have had COVID. It was a very unpleasant experience. I think some people get a very mild dose of it; that is great. For others it becomes something that is much more of a dire health threat.

We are very conscious of that, but we are also conscious that public transport will also come back. We need to be careful to not think public transport is less of a priority. In a couple of years time when the pandemic is very much in the rear-view mirrors, a lot more people's behaviour will alter as well. We have seen some driver shortages in terms of our public transport network because of the pandemic. This third wave has had a big impact on workplaces right across industries including, for instance, our bus services. Some regional areas have been impacted by driver shortages due to that above-average unplanned absenteeism that has been brought about by the impacts of not just COVID but a pretty hefty flu season too after two really good years where everybody was socially distancing and being really careful.

During that time our delivery partners have prioritised school services over urban services where needed, and the recent school holidays have alleviated some of the current pressures. In consultation with bus operators, reduced timetables were implemented commencing in some places in term 3, from 11 July. TMR is continuing to work closely with our delivery partners to restore services to their regular timetables and to minimise customer impacts as much as possible. Situations like this are an obvious reminder that we are not through the pandemic yet—we have a way to go. As much as we would all like it to be over, we have still realities and difficulties to manage.

Whilst some COVID-19 restrictions have been eased in Queensland, face masks remain mandatory when travelling on public transport. I urge people to make that effort. At times, Queensland Transport has been handing out free masks to encourage people to stick with it for a bit longer. Obviously, we want this third wave to drop off and for people not to be so affected. Minimising transmission risk is really important.

During the ongoing pandemic, cashless operations have been extended to maintain social distancing and to lower health and hygiene risks for frontline staff. We have to remember that our staff are dealing with the public all the time in many cases. All of our South-East Queensland bus delivery

partners, including Transport for Brisbane, have returned to front- and rear-door boarding to help people to distance as much as we can. We have updated signage to the Transport and Main Roads network to encourage people to play their part in respecting each other's space and being considerate to other passengers. We will continue careful monitoring. We added both bus services and weekly train services in August 2020 to maximise social distancing opportunities. We added 960 weekly bus services and 105 weekly train services. We added 58,000 extra seats. That was an important part of our response.

The thing that has got Queensland through the pandemic to date and increased confidence in our state is our commitment from day one to listen to and act on the health advice. That is what has guided us, and still guides us, in terms of public transport and elsewhere. Politicising the pandemic is not helpful to our health response. It is irresponsible and reckless. Sadly, we have seen too much of that, including from the Leader of the Opposition in 2020, when he was backing in then prime minister Morrison. You will never see that from me as the Minister for Transport. When it comes to health and science—

Mr MINNIKIN: We'll never see a project delivered on time, either.

Mr BAILEY: More interjection. We are almost through here. The protection of the health of members of the public has to be our first priority. Whether it is in terms of lives lost on our roads, as the member for Gregory covered before, or whether it is the pandemic, we need to keep working together and collaborating to minimise impacts. I am very committed to that as the Minister for Transport.

I thank all of our staff—Queensland Rail, TMR and the delivery authority—for working so well with us through really difficult times. It is not always easy. People are on edge at times. We face all kinds of reactions out there. Our staff do a magnificent job. I place on record my appreciation for all they have done with the public during a really tough period over the last 2½ years.

CHAIR: I am sure we have time for a quick question from the member for Stretton, knowing that we have some answers to questions taken on notice.

Mr MARTIN: Can the minister provide an update to the committee on the success of smart ticketing on Gold Coast Light Rail and outline the Palaszczuk government's commitment to deliver this successful system across the public transport network?

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, member for Stretton. I know that your constituents are big fans of better public transport. On the Gold Coast we have seen an incredible 100,000 trips taken since the new technology was installed. It was so successful that it has had one of the fastest uptake rates of any global smart ticketing trial. Plans are well on track to roll out the new system across the South-East Queensland heavy rail network by the end of this year.

I am very proud to see a strong First Nations influence on the project. Recently we have installed 561 new smart ticketing validators wrapped in TransLink's Connecting Thread artwork across 136 South-East Queensland train stations, along with 230 fare gates. We are also installing some 13½ thousand onboard devices on buses and ferries over the coming year. They are very distinctive. We have seen a bit of a rebranding with TransLink. I think that is appropriate; we had not seen a new brand for more than two decades. It really stands out. We love working with our First Nations communities to tell a story and integrate that into the public transport system. I think most people would accept that the artwork looks absolutely striking and is terrific.

Most importantly, we want to see this latest technology make public transport easier. We are doing that. There have been some impacts from the pandemic. I got an inquiry the other day which suggested that the pandemic would have helped us with this project, which is a very strange idea, I have to say. Global pandemics do not generally help projects. Obviously they are something to be managed, which we have done in this case. We will get this project done. The people who are already using smart ticketing really love it.

CHAIR: Director-General, you had information for the member for Maiwar?

Mr Scales: I had already taken it as far as I could without this detail, but I am advised that the departmental representatives are meeting with the member for Maiwar in the coming weeks to provide an in-depth briefing on the project. I am sure that this briefing will assist the member with the detailed questions that he had for me on the specific project. I can provide the committee with a very brief update.

The Queensland government remains committed to delivering active transport infrastructure across the state that makes riding a bike easy, convenient and an enjoyable way to travel. Within our active transport program there is \$122.4 million allocated for cycling grants, providing capital grant funding to local governments. Funding is provided on a fifty-fifty basis.

The project in case, the Indooroopilly Riverwalk, Twigg Street to Centenary Cycleway, shared path is in fact a Brisbane City Council project which is supported through \$140,000 in funding through TMR's Cycle Network Local Government Grants Program. The project scope is to design an off-road shared path from the Indooroopilly Riverwalk to the Western Freeway Bikeway in Indooroopilly. It is not published as an individual line item in QTRIP because it is a relatively low value, at \$140,000.

We have checked, and the most recent update from our colleagues in Brisbane City Council notes that the project is still underway and is a complex link. Pending completion of the design project, TMR would welcome a funding application from Brisbane City Council for future stages, as I said in my address, including to construct the link. I trust that reading that into the record will help the member for Maiwar.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Minister, we had a question on notice about the costs of the Bruce Highway Trust. Do you have any information?

Mr BAILEY: I have two answers to provide. I will give the shorter one first. I am advised that, as a government owned corporation, GPC has not engaged any company for lobbyist services.

CHAIR: That is the Gladstone Ports Corporation question.

Mr BAILEY: That is exactly right.

CHAIR: And the costs of the Bruce Highway Trust?

Mr BAILEY: In terms of the Bruce Highway Trust, the QTRIP 2022-23 to 2025-26 forecast \$3,649,000 to be spent on the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council project. The costs outlined in QTRIP reflect forecast costs as at the end of June 2022. They include the cost for the meetings, technical inputs to develop the 15-year vision and action plans and the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan, and the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council secretariat cost.

The Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council has convened four times, with members provided oversight and feedback across the technical and customer research work streams in the development of the 15-year vision, three five-year rolling action plans and the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan. Meeting costs totalling \$43,568 comprise travel, accommodation, catering expenses and remuneration for non-ex officio members—that is, the chair, the deputy chair and the regional members, the deputy chair being appointed by the Leader of the Opposition.

It also includes related TMR travel and accommodation costs associated with attending meetings in two regional centres. This is a committee that does not just meet in Brisbane. I note it was a key election commitment under a Real Bruce Plan from 2020 to have regional representation on the advisory council north of Gympie. These six regional members reside in South Kolan, Sarina, Mackay, Magnetic Island, Townsville and Innisfail.

The vast majority of the costs of the advisory council project totalling \$2,338,932 is for technical inputs to inform the development of the vision and action plans by TMR, subject matter experts and external consultants, so the characterisation of it as being about just the meetings is incorrect and inaccurate. The expenditure includes a significant number of pieces of customer research, a baseline condition and performance audit, economic outlook and modelling and a road safety review, and the development of technical vision standards and heavy vehicle access standards, so it is a substantial piece of work. In addition, the project includes project management and secretariat support costs totalling \$1,159,880. There is a substantial amount of work there, and of course it is funded on an 80-20 basis—that is, 20 per cent funded by the state and 80 per cent funded by the Commonwealth.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The member for Chatsworth has a brief correction.

Mr MINNIKIN: I want to correct the record on one thing. The minister said before in a question I asked in relation to Cross River Rail that it would be ready to service the south-east by 2024, so that was a typo. That was actually dated 4 April 2019, to correct the record.

CHAIR: That corrects the record, so thank you very much, member. The time allocated for the consideration of proposed estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads has expired. Minister, on behalf of the committee I thank you, the director-general and officials for your attendance. Did you wish to give any thanks?

Mr BAILEY: Yes, Chair. I want to thank the committee and anyone who has attended the committee today. I thank all of the officials and staff who have worked on estimates over the last month or two—not just the CEOs and the directors-general et cetera but all of our staff, who do a wonderful job. It is always an intense time of year for people. Thanks to all the officials here who have been recording part of the whole show. In particular, I say a big thankyou to my ministerial staff, who always

do an amazing job for me. I thank them for all of their commitment in working with us at estimates time. It is probably one of the most intense times of year. Thanks to you also, Chair, for running such a good hearing.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I also want to thank the Hansard staff and everyone else involved. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 2 pm for the examination of the estimates for the portfolios of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement. Thank you all once again.

Proceedings suspended from 1.02 pm to 2.00 pm.

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

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

Mr N Heath, Chief of Staff

Department of Energy and Public Works

Mr P Martyn, Director-General

Mr D Shankey, Deputy Director-General, Energy

Energy Queensland

Mr R Duke, Chief Executive Officer

CleanCo

Mr T Metcalfe, Chief Executive Officer

Stanwell Corporation

Mr M O'Rourke, Chief Executive Officer

Powerlink

Professor P Simshauser AM, Chief Executive Officer

CS Energy

Mr A Bills, Chief Executive Officer

Queensland Building and Construction Commission

Ms A Levy, Commissioner



CHAIR: Good afternoon. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement until 5.15 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the minister's portfolio as follows: energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2 pm to 3.30 pm and public works and procurement from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 3.30 to 3.45 pm.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. I also remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. While mobile phone use is not permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses here 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 or, if not, turned off.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. I also welcome the following non-committee members: the member for Condamine and the member for Lockyer. Welcome. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify

themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of energy, renewables and hydrogen open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you very much, Chair and members of the committee. I am pleased to address the examination of the 2022-23 Queensland budget for my relevant portfolio responsibilities. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

The budget that we are examining creates good jobs, delivers better services and protects the great Queensland lifestyle. I was so pleased to see the Premier delivering in this budget record investments in health and education, more jobs in more industries, particularly in regional Queensland, greater environmental protections, additions to frontline community services and our record investment in energy transformation. Chair and members, it is that energy transformation that is our most significant challenge. It is also our greatest opportunity. You only need to ask members of this House about that—MPs like the member for Redlands, the nation's first hydrogen champion, and the member for Lytton, who joined me to start work on Australia's first hydrogen refueller at a service station.

We have done the forecasts. The numbers are showing that to capitalise on Queensland's opportunity by 2035 we will need to build three times as much energy generation as we have now in Queensland. The members for Thuringowa and Mundingburra up in Townsville have made it a priority too. Our budget makes huge investments in Central Queensland as well. The members for Gladstone, Keppel and Rockhampton are the most effective advocates of jobs for their constituents in the nation. They know that to power the industries, the homes and the transport fleets of tomorrow much of that power and the jobs it creates will come from their region, because, Chair and members, with the global economy changing at a rapid pace we will not let Queensland stand still.

With the Deputy Premier's leadership in our state development areas and through investment in our government owned corporations, we are delivering another record investment in this state's energy transformation. I also want to acknowledge the members for Nicklin and Caloundra because it is in their backyards that thousands of tradies will deliver the nation-building hydro-electric project at Borumba Dam. I also want to acknowledge the Queensland Treasurer and his commitment to progress additional sites for some of the world's largest pumped hydro storage schemes.

We will build the largest utility scaled battery in Queensland at Greenbank thanks to the hard work of the members for Jordan and Bundamba, but our battery blitz extends right across Queensland. I give credit to members right across the state for their advocacy in securing a further 12 network connected batteries for their regions and of course the member for Maryborough, who will have industrial scale battery manufacturing in his backyard in addition to Gladstone. In very real terms, all this sets Queensland up for some of the biggest industrial scale renewable energy projects in the region—a series of nation-building hydro-electric dams; the build out of our renewable energy zones, including hundreds of kilometres of transmission lines; the development of a green hydrogen industry; continued investment in our existing power stations because they are critical to our energy security; and, through the investment in the publicly owned network, world record amounts of rooftop solar.

Chair, I wish as well to acknowledge the 160th anniversary of Public Works and in doing so pay tribute to every single person who has and is serving this state through that agency. I note that we are meeting today in a building constructed by Public Works. Despite our many achievements over those 160 years, we can predictably expect more continued criticism and negativity from the opposition today, because rarely a week goes by that we do not get a thinly veiled attack on the Public Service from the Liberal National Party—an attack on the hardworking mums and dads in our agencies, the tradies who work with them and the bright-eyed apprentices who just want to build this state.

While the opposition's obsession with operations and minutiae continues to attack the nobility of the state's public servants like those in the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, using tabloids and hearsay to slander them over who said what on Facebook or the details of a website, our government—this government—is focused every single day on the big issues that Queenslanders actually care about like keeping the lights on and getting people back into their flood damaged homes, like delivering national energy efficiency reforms and addressing the cost of living, and like helping our tradies and frontline workers get into good jobs.

We are focused on responding to communities like those represented by the member for Townsville and the member for Cook with a \$519 million housing construction package building over 400 new homes for frontline workers. We are focused on heeding the calls from those like the members for Bundaberg, Mulgrave, Cairns and Barron River to deliver the \$20 million Household Resilience Program. We are focused on acting quickly after more record and devastating flooding hit our state this year, with the \$741 million Resilient Homes Fund. This government is focused on good jobs, better services and the great Queensland lifestyle. Chair and committee, I am happy to take questions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Before we go to questions, I noticed the member for Bundamba here. Welcome.

Mr WEIR: My first question is to the CEO of Energy Queensland, Mr Duke. Mr Duke, I refer to the minister's statement on 26 May which says 'Queenslanders will receive a \$175 cost-of-living rebate on their next power bill'. Three months have passed and Queenslanders have received electricity bills without the rebate the minister promised. Mr Duke, I now understand that the rebate will not be applied until 31 August at the earliest. Why is that?

Mr Duke: The \$175 rebate per customer would be applied by retailers and, of course, that means in South-East Queensland retailers other than Ergon retail, who only are responsible for the selling of electricity to retail customers in regional Queensland, outside the south-east. As for the timing of the application of that rebate, we do not have any specific instructions on the timing of that and I would have to take some advice as to whether, in fact, it would be August or some other time.

Mr WEIR: Minister, my office has been inundated with people who have checked their bills looking for this relief and there is nothing there. You told Queenslanders this relief would come off their next bill and Queenslanders have budgeted for that now. With yet another hike in the cost of living expected today, Queenslanders will be feeling this broken promise even more. Minister, what do you have to say to Queenslanders who view this as a broken promise?

Mr de BRENNI: The reason we decided to commit to the \$175 cost-of-living rebate was that our government understands the pressure that households are under when it comes to the rising cost of fuel and groceries. No doubt that is why constituents will have approached you, because we know that every dollar counts. It is also why we are focused on putting downward pressure on electricity prices.

The 2022-23 budget absolutely delivers a significant cost-of-living rebate to Queensland households. Some \$175 will be provided through the electricity bills that are due to start arriving from the end of August. The rebate builds on our \$50 asset ownership dividend announced in February—I know that asset ownership dividends have only been a feature of this government; there were no asset ownership dividends prior to 2015 back to 2012—making it a total of \$575 in dividends to Queenslanders over the last four years. Households will start to see the rebate applied to bills from electricity retailers from 31 August. That has always been clear in the materials that we have provided. The media has been clear around that and retailers have been clear around that in their communications. I know that Energy Queensland will be enabling the provision of that rebate to Queensland households.

That brings the total assistance to Queenslanders for the cost of living since 2017 to almost \$1.2 billion, back into the pockets of Queenslanders. We have been able to do that for a very important reason, member for Condamine: Queenslanders own their electricity assets. Had their electricity assets been sold, the entirety of the revenue that was earned by those electricity assets would have been in shareholders' pockets today. Because of the decisions that we took and the support of Queenslanders, those funds are returned to Queenslanders through that cost-of-living rebate—significant financial assistance to those households made possible.

In addition to that, over the last four years retail bills for regional households, for instance, have reduced by 17 per cent—again, because Queenslanders own their electricity assets. We are very proud of that commitment and that cost-of-living relief to Queenslanders, and I am sure you would be in the position to provide that information to your constituents.

Mr WEIR: Mr Duke, I refer to SDS page 3—'deliver reliable, affordable and renewable energy to Queensland households'—and the implementation of your Digital Enterprise Building Blocks computer system. Mr Duke, what was the initial budget allocation for that IT upgrade and what is it now?

Mr Duke: I thank the member for the question. Energy Queensland is implementing an extremely significant digital transformation program to provide our employees modern systems to best serve our customers, to keep communities safe and to realise operational efficiencies. This digital transformation

program is critical to ensuring the continued safe operation of Queensland's electricity distribution networks, both now and for the future, and it has a great deal of benefit to Energy Queensland's personnel and to customers, including the ability to operate consistently across the state, including consistent business processes and work constructions supported by a proven modern and tightly integrated set of platforms.

Real-time visibility of the network and the assets, with field workers able to undertake key processes on mobile devices, and moving from pin boards to online platforms in our control rooms are key elements of those changes. Energy Queensland's personnel will also be able to provide seamless customer service in times of significant weather events and business disruptions from anywhere in the state and will have the ability to effectively manage our network—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: We have a point of order.

Mr MILLAR: It was a very simple question: what was the original budget allocation for this IT upgrade and what is it now?

CHAIR: I will urge the CEO to get to that point, but for those of us on the committee—and it is a committee who do not have the background of this—we are enjoying finding out about it. I will direct you to come back to the actual budgetary bit of it, but thank you for the background.

Mr Duke: If I can complete that sentence, it allows us to manage these systems from anywhere in the state, from any of our control rooms here in the south-east of Queensland or in our control rooms in Rockhampton or Townsville. In short, the systems we are putting in place are moving us from IT systems inherited from the merger of Ergon and Energex that occurred about six years ago, some of which, frankly, date from just after the Second World War. We are moving from pin boards in the control rooms to make sure we know the status of pieces of equipment in the network to an online electronic system which, of course, is what we have had in the Energex control rooms for more than 10 years. That is one, but one very important, element of the overall scope of DEBBs. This is not just installing Windows 365.

In terms of the budget, this year is disclosed in the budget statements. We are to spend \$117.85 million on digital ICT capital expenditure in 2022-23, and this expenditure is inclusive of both our expenditure on the DEBBs programs as well as ongoing non-DEBBs investments. In the Queensland budget in 2020-21, the Capital Statement detailed a multiyear digital capital expenditure for Energy Queensland totalling \$866.4 million, and this total was inclusive of both the DEBBs program of works and non-DEBBs IT investments. This figure was derived from the actual expenditure for financial years 2018, 2019 and 2020 and for future forecast known at the time of writing of that budget back in 2020-21 for the financial years 2021 through 2025.

Mr WEIR: What would be the total budget for the initial, the actual and the projected cost of this program?

CHAIR: He just went through quite a lengthy period of time.

Mr WEIR: Yes, but that was the total.

CHAIR: You are after the breakdown?

Mr WEIR: Yes.

Mr Duke: I thank the member for his question. Overall, the life of the program, which has, as I said, been over a period of five, approaching six, years, includes thousands of datasets, many hundreds of thousands of contract hours, ICT specialist works and applications. To give it some context, our total spend is expected to be about 2.9 per cent of our total asset value of \$28.4 billion, so less than three per cent of the assets of the business will comprise these ICT spends over a six-year period. I would hold that that is a very modest investment in the context of what is Australia's largest electricity network—indeed, one of the largest electricity networks, one of the most complex electricity networks, in the world. The projected expenditure over the entire period is projected to be \$814.66 million through to the middle of 2023.

Mr WEIR: What was the initial expected cost?

Mr Duke: The total business case that was approved—I am just looking for the year that it was approved; I am assuming it was five or six years ago, noting that I have been in the business for just over two years—was \$633.52 million.

Mr WEIR: That is a significant cost blowout.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Chair. The CEO of Energy Queensland, I think, gave a very clear answer. He answered questions that pertain to outside of the remit of this examination. I understand that the examination can take into account 2021-22, 2022-23 and the forward estimates period. You asked about the total cost of a program that goes back to both before the CEO was the CEO and to the budget years commencing in 2018. He gave a very clear answer to you that the 2020-21 capital statement—

Mr MILLAR: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: We have a point of order currently, members. We will hear it.

Mr de BRENNI:—and was asked to express the variance in the original business case to the current figure over a period of five years and then there was an attempt to verbal the CEO, which I think is inappropriate in that context.

CHAIR: I am ruling on a point of order, member for Gregory. Minister, these questions can be furnished because the project started back then but is still funded out of this budget. There is no point of order. The CEO is answering the questions. Continue, but I am watching.

Mr WEIR: Mr Duke, when would you expect this program to be completed?

Mr Duke: We would expect to complete this program through the course of the calendar year 2023. We have a target for July 2023 for the go live on the major release, which is the point where we will tie major elements of this project together to make sure that they are sharing the same dataset.

Mr WEIR: Mr Duke, are you aware if the head contractor has an interest in a labour hire company that is working on this contract and, if so, how much has the labour hire company received from this contract?

CHAIR: I am not sure, but I remember that there are commercial-in-confidence issues. I am not sure whether or not this is, but I am warning members generally that GOCs do have that.

Mr Duke: I thank the member for his question and I am happy to answer it. The portfolio project director is an employee of an entity that also provides other employees to the project. An independent investigation was conducted to review the arrangements for the original contract and for any subsequent amendments to that contract. The daily rates of the contractors employed through that entity appear to be commercial and value for money, certainly when compared to similar market rates from some of the larger well-known names that provide those kinds of services in the IT sphere. The matter has been assessed in accordance with the Crime and Corruption Act 2001 and has not met the criteria for suspected corrupt conduct. The investigation is concluded and the matter is closed.

Mr WEIR: Minister, the ETU has said publicly that 'the project has been mired in cost blowouts, failed solutions, conflicts of interest and massive delays'. Is the ETU's assessment of this failed project correct?

CHAIR: Minister, before you answer: member, are you talking about the same project?

Mr WEIR: The same project.

Mr de BRENNI: I am presuming that he is referring to the Digital Enterprise Building Blocks project that Energy Queensland is implementing. We have heard from the CEO that this is a significant digital transformation program that has been underway since 2018. There is a significant budget allocation in 2022-23 of \$117.85 million. I concur with the CEO that this is not a simple update. This is one of the most complex and sophisticated IT projects that has been undertaken in the nation. Not only does it manage all of the many thousands of staff wages, payments, revenues; it manages all of the stock and it manages the control of electricity as well. It is an enormous undertaking. It will deliver wages to 7,679 employees across a range of settings in blue-collar roles and white-collar roles. It will operate 212,000 kilometres of overhead and underground powerlines. I think around 1.7 million power poles will be managed by that system—if I am correct, CEO? It is not a single solution.

To give you some context in terms of the challenge: we are committed to ensuring that Queenslanders have secure, reliable and affordable electricity. The Digital Enterprise Building Blocks program is fundamental to energy security and energy reliability, and it ensures that we are able to deliver the most affordable electricity to Queenslanders.

In respect of governance of the IT program, I regularly seek assurances about the progress of this and I can elaborate on that for the benefit of the committee. I am advised that the project has close executive oversight and Energy Queensland engages advisers to undertake assurance on the program with a focus on data migration testing, user readiness and pre go-live stages. We will not go live on elements of this IT system unless we are absolutely certain that it is going to deliver energy security

and reliability, that it will deliver workers their wages and make payments to contractors when they are due those payments. It has rigorous governance checks and only goes live following the successful completion of all required testing phases as well as clearing various entry and exit criteria to reach those phases.

We will not rush this. We will get this right. It is a significant undertaking on behalf of the state. I want to note that we are undertaking this significant IT project because we believe in investing in publicly owned corporations. They deliver a service to Queenslanders, they are of benefit to Queenslanders and they are an asset of Queenslanders.

I can advise the committee that we are doing some further testing and defect remediation to allow implementation to commence after the 2022-23 summer storm season. I think it is an appropriate programming decision that has been made by the corporation to allow staff to focus on keeping the lights on in households and businesses through what is potentially another severe summer season of weather.

As we heard, the project's final delivery date has moved from the current date of July 2022 to July 2023. There have been, no doubt, as members of the committee and I am sure the general public can appreciate, significant challenges faced by all parts of the Queensland economy over the past two years. I want to congratulate the men and women at Energy Queensland, whether they are working for Energex or Ergon, for their attention paid throughout the recent severe weather. I think they returned 180,000 properties that were without power due to the floods in a matter of 10 days. That would not have happened with a privately owned company. It did not happen with privately owned distribution companies in other states.

I am satisfied that the governance arrangements are robust and that the investment in this publicly owned corporation is justified. I look forward to seeing the project concluded at the appropriate time when those appropriate actions have taken place.

Mr WEIR: Mr Duke, what was the procurement process for this program and this system?

Mr Duke: I presume you mean in respect of the DEBBs program. There are multiple elements to the program—in fact, there are 185 different elements of the overall DEBBs program—a great number of which have already been successfully implemented, are online and have been for some years as the program has been rolled out. The procurement process, which predated my arrival in this job, I understand was a competitive process to determine the primary technology provider, SAP. The procurement process for all of the other elements of the project in terms of resourcing of project teams and other technology choices has been conducted within our normal procurement processes, looking for quality and best value from the organisations with which we contract.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Duke. Hold that thought, member for Condamine. I am going to the member for Stretton.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, while much is made of the size and scale of new renewable energy project construction, can you update the committee on any offtake agreements for this power and how they will benefit everyday Queenslanders?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for Stretton for the question. As committee members would be familiar, one of the other government owned corporations in the electricity fleet is CleanCo. It is an electricity generator and retailer supporting both commercial and industrial customers in Queensland with their decarbonisation objectives. Their ambition is to harness Queensland's abundant natural resources to offer reliable, globally competitive low-emissions energy services, catalysing a sustainable and prosperous future for all Queenslanders. I can inform the committee that they have a target to support 1,400 megawatts of new renewable generation by 2025. Our activities will contribute to the achievement of Queensland's 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030.

As I said in my opening remarks, Queensland's energy transformation is the greatest opportunity in a generation. I was very pleased to announce this morning that Scentre Group has signed an agreement with CleanCo to source 100 per cent renewable electricity for its Queensland portfolio of Westfield living centres by 2025. Renewable electricity will be provided to the Westfield centres. This morning I was at Garden City, not far from the electorate I represent. Power will be provided primarily from the Western Downs Green Power hub, the Kaban Green Power hub and the Dulacca Wind Farm, where CleanCo has power purchase agreements in place. Combined, these projects support more than 850 jobs, many in regional Queensland. The good news is that every time someone shops, dines or takes part in an entertainment activity at any of the five Queensland Westfields they can know that they are doing their part to help Queensland reach net zero while also supporting economic growth in the state.

Like Scentre Group, major businesses all over Queensland have set net zero targets. CleanCo will support them to achieve those with Queensland-made renewables. Many of those businesses are in Central Queensland, because we have seen Central Queensland already play a key role in the state's energy transformation. I take the opportunity to thank the member for Keppel for representing me recently at a ground-breaking ceremony at the Andrew Forrest backed Clarke Creek Wind Farm north-west of Rockhampton. The Queensland government is committed to supporting industry investment, and that is clearly demonstrated through this project.

Stanwell Corporation, another one of Queensland's public owned corporations, has a power purchase agreement for 346.5 megawatts of capacity from just stage 1 of that development. The power purchase agreement with Stanwell has provided the financial certainty required to develop this important project. That project means 350 construction jobs once work starts and up to 15 full-time operational jobs once Clarke Creek is generating.

Every credible expert in the nation is saying that renewable energy is the biggest opportunity since the industrial revolution. There is no doubt about that. Queensland is in prime position to cement our status as a global leader in the renewable energy era. We have that opportunity because we boast an abundance of sunshine and wind, and we have great potential for pumped hydro energy storage. Of course, we all know that publicly owned energy assets provide a key competitive advantage. That is complemented by public ownership of a range of other infrastructure, notably our port infrastructure. They are the energy and port assets that the LNP had a policy to sell off. We shudder to think where we would be in this state without the leadership of good mates like mine, the member for Gladstone and the mayor of the Gladstone region, who helped save those assets from LNP sell-offs.

The Palaszczuk government can absolutely be trusted to commit to reliable and affordable energy. We will deliver more than \$2 billion in large-scale storage, renewable energy projects, generation and transmission investment. The project I mention will form part of the \$3 billion Clarke Creek Renewable Energy Precinct, which will ultimately be Queensland's largest combined wind, solar and storage project. Not only will this help ensure that Queensland is able to provide clean, reliable and affordable energy to Queensland homes and businesses; it will also ensure we can continue to support our southern neighbours through the National Electricity Grid as well as export Queensland renewable energy right across the world.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The new system in the supply industry sounds amazing. That is a complex bit of software you are getting. The events of 25 May 2021 put our energy network to the test, both at that time and more recently during the unusual cold winter. Minister, are you able to update this committee on how our energy system has responded during those events and the benefits of the public ownership of energy assets?

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair, for your question. I acknowledge your service to Queensland through your role before being a member in this place. I want to acknowledge as well your concern, shown on several occasions, for the welfare of workers at Callide when it suffered that significant incident as well as your support for our delivery of better services for Queenslanders.

As energy minister, you hope that the day you are giving the approval to begin load-shedding never comes, but in May last year that is exactly what I was confronted with. As the member noted in his question, our network was put to the test on that day, but it was a test that we here in Queensland passed with flying colours—a test that has extended right into the current budget period as well. This was due to the tremendous efforts of our publicly owned generation, transmission and distribution companies and their workforce. Of course, our greatest energy asset is that workforce. Because of them, we were able to respond and recover quickly. More than 300,000 homes had power restored within just a couple of hours. That is an incredible effort. It would not happen probably anywhere else in the nation. I commend the efforts to increase generation, manage the load and work with customers to reduce consumption at that time. Because of this, we avoided load-shedding that night and kept the lights on.

There were two strengths, particularly in the context of Queensland, that made the difference that night and every night throughout 2021-22 and into 2022-23: the diversity of our energy mix and public ownership. It was the strong and diverse power system with a mix of generation and storage that was critical in maintaining Queensland's energy security. That makes it robust, secure and reliable. It was the publicly owned Swanbank E and Wivenhoe that came online and pumped reliable energy into the grid. In fact, over 5,600 megalitres of water flowed through Wivenhoe that day. That is over 2,240 Olympic sized swimming pools.

We are also connecting more and more storage into the network, with batteries and investment to kickstart more pumped hydro at Borumba and beyond. The fact that Queenslanders owned our transmission and distribution companies made all the difference. They are working in the interests of Queensland and they work in partnership with our government and the Australian Energy Market Operator to manage the system.

I also acknowledge the efforts of the team at Callide who got back to work and safely restored and returned to service the available units. I also extend our thanks to the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services that joined the onsite response team. Our government was proud to announce that Callide C4 will be returning to service. We are rebuilding that unit. It was insured. With the indulgence of the committee, I would like to table photographs—

CHAIR: Minister, are you seeking leave to table those photographs?

Mr de BRENNI: I seek leave to table these photographs. The photographs that I have sought leave to table are of the replacement unit that is currently under construction by our Japanese based partner Toshiba. You will see there two photographs of the elements of that turbine in manufacture. I am pleased to report that just last week the generator's transformer passed its final quality assurance tests and that the turbine and generator manufacturing are well underway.

CHAIR: There being no objection, leave is granted for the tabling of those photographs. I have performed maintenance up there and these units are of a fair bit of interest to us all.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, with regard to fossil fuel prices affecting our domestic energy market, what steps are you taking to ensure that Queenslanders are futureproofing our state's energy independence?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for Stretton for his interest in how we are acting to address global pressure and protect the great Queensland lifestyle. The Treasurer indicated in his budget speech that the global economy is changing fast and that energy is a critical linchpin of that transformation. We can see electricity demand is increasing rapidly both here and abroad. Our power transmission and distribution networks require significant upgrades to keep up with that, including back of house operations like IT. Boardrooms across the globe are running full steam ahead with their decarbonisation efforts. We are seeing alternative fuels offering cheaper and cleaner energy to new transport technologies. Disaster recovery and environmental devastation are costing this nation billions of dollars every year. Our existing power assets are ageing and becoming more expensive and, to be frank, in some parts of the nation unreliable.

As the member rightly points out, international markets for fossil fuels like gas and coal are disrupting our local supply and they are increasing prices. To meet the global challenges of tomorrow that face this state and our nation now, the Palaszczuk government's budget is accelerating the development of a Queensland made energy industry with jobs at its centrepiece. In Australia we have suffered through nine years of energy policy chaos under the LNP coalition leaving Australia missing out on potentially hundreds of thousands of jobs and opportunities already. However, the state 2022-23 budget matches the urgency for action with optimism. We are working with our global partners to secure clean energy export opportunities right across the Indo-Pacific. We are developing our hydrogen industry to capitalise on our significant renewable resources, our global gas export expertise, our world-class publicly owned port infrastructure and our longstanding relationships with international partners. This makes engaging in international relations incredibly important for both our energy and national security.

Members would be aware that we have a highly skilled mining and energy workforce that can and should play a role in the skills development in the region. We know that Queensland was able to stand up a global leading LNG industry and we are now developing a \$3 billion green manufacturing hub. Queensland will deliver many of the 604,000 jobs in federal Labor's Powering Australia plan. We have runs on the board, of course, with \$10.9 billion of investment, continued in this budget, and 7,900 construction jobs delivered across 50 large renewable projects. We are working on an energy plan, as members are aware, that we will triple our energy output and create tens of thousands of job opportunities.

Importantly, members of the committee, this is not just about energy or climate; it is really about this nation's security. We have to make the most of the challenges that are before us and we have to leave a better world because the alternatives are far too costly and are too great a risk. We cannot afford to take an approach like the Greens political party which disrupts our economy, wipes out jobs and fails workers in communities, in the regions in particular. We cannot fumble around like the LNP that, for nearly a decade, have had their heads in the sand doing nothing and pretending change is not happening. What we are doing is adapting, capitalising, transforming and taking real action to power our future.

In conclusion, Australians are far too exposed to outside factors when it comes to energy. We have been impacted by Middle Eastern oil barons and impacted by Russian oil oligarchs. We simply cannot take the risk of letting that continue. Our approach is to build more Queensland made energy, break away from those global impacts and take control of our energy security. By acting and delivering reliable, affordable electricity we can open up investment in business, create new jobs and drive industrial growth by bringing more manufacturing back to Australian and Queensland shores and put billions of dollars back where it belongs—into the pockets of Queenslanders.

Mr WALKER: Minister, as you know I have a very keen interest in hydrogen and the jobs it can bring to Townsville. Can you provide an update on the hydrogen hub that has been identified for Townsville?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for his long-term commitment and for all the work he does as one of the Palaszczuk government's three hydrogen champions. As I have said many times before—and I have said this in North Queensland—hydrogen presents an incredible opportunity to create more jobs in more industries, particularly in places like Townsville. Its future as a renewable hydrogen powerhouse has been further strengthened with the proposed Townsville hydrogen hub. I acknowledge the member for Mundingburra for his work in that sphere.

The hub presents an opportunity to bring thousands of jobs and more industries through cleaner, cheaper energy. It will put Queensland at the forefront of new skills and new technology as well. For example, Origin Energy's proposed Townsville hydrogen liquefaction project is expected to create 2½ thousand jobs in construction and then on completion and operation 700 ongoing jobs for Queenslanders living in and around the electorate of Mundingburra. Then there are Edify Energy's and Arc Energy's proposals that could deliver over 5,750 jobs to Townsville. To capitalise on these opportunities and the good jobs they will create, we are making sure that we have the skills required by investing \$10.6 million in the hydrogen and renewable energy training facility at Bohle TAFE.

These hubs will be places where hydrogen users, producers, manufacturers and exporters are grouped together. In this configuration that the member for Mundingburra has been working on, they can offer a number of benefits in helping develop this incredibly exciting industry right across the whole supply chain. The co-location around those key infrastructure needs ultimately reduces duplication and that equals lower costs in production, which is incredibly important. The hubs are obviously helping in skills development and increasing local capability and job creation are flow-on benefits. It is terrific to see those benefits coming to fruition in communities like Townsville.

We have already seen them come to fruition in places like Gladstone where we will see hydrogen electrolyzers manufacturing commence soon for domestic market applications as well. Townsville has the potential to be a powerhouse, as does Gladstone. Through our hydrogen strategy we have taken an active role in bringing proponents together to help achieve their ambitions for this industry and make hydrogen hubs a reality.

We have seen those who are opposed to this technology and investment in this industry. Member for Mundingburra, the LNP record is quite simple for others to see. We have doomsday deniers who do not believe in renewable energy. They would prefer to see a nuclear industry before a hydrogen industry in Townsville. They are yet to say where they would dump their nuclear waste. Perhaps their plan is to dump it in Mundingburra. I do not know. They have not been clear on that. Queenslanders know that they simply cannot trust the LNP.

Queensland could have as much as 40 per cent of Australia's hydrogen production by 2040. We are walking the walk. We are taking action in places like Townsville to ensure we develop the skills and supply chain to establish a thriving hydrogen production industry and an export industry in Queensland. Our hydrogen partners across Asia-Pacific and now in Europe trust the Palaszczuk government because they know that we have a record of delivering sensible, affordable energy solutions. That trust is something this government and for that matter the federal Labor government as well take very seriously.

CHAIR: We will now go to the member for Condamine.

Mr WEIR: Mr Duke, has Energy Queensland engaged any lobbyists in the last financial year?

Mr Duke: The answer is no.

Mr WEIR: My next question is to the CEO of CleanCo, Mr Metcalfe. I refer to the answer to question on notice 323, which confirms CleanCo has engaged a lobbying firm. What lobbying firm or firms were engaged and when and what was the scope of the work?

Mr Metcalfe: By way of context, I think the committee is aware that CleanCo is a relatively new company. We have been established for around three years. In the process of standing up our business it was important for us to make sure we had good stakeholder relationships. One of the appointments that we have had this year—in fact, in February 2022—was with Anacta. It was a short appointment—one month. It concluded in March. It was in consulting services to assist us in advising us on stakeholder relations through local relations with sites in which we operate—traditional owners, unions, customers, three tiers of government—across the board. All of that advice was for internal purposes alone. We did not ask our consultant to engage with any external stakeholders. It was all internal.

Mr WEIR: What was the cost of that?

Mr Metcalfe: \$11,000.

Mr WEIR: My next question is to the CEO of Stanwell, Mr O'Rourke. I refer to the answer to question on notice 323, which confirms Stanwell has engaged a lobbying firm. What lobbying firm or firms were engaged and when, and what was the scope of the work?

Mr O'Rourke: Stanwell can confirm that SEC Newgate was the organisation that was on the Register of Lobbyists. We have been engaged since the beginning of 2020. The organisation was not hired in a lobbying capacity. We used them to undertake issues management advice in relation to customer and community research. The expenditure covers customer research and issues management. The expenditure totalled \$336,000.

Mr WEIR: Thank you for that. I ask the CEO of Powerlink, Mr Simshauser, to come forward. Mr Simshauser, has Powerlink engaged any lobbyists in the last financial year?

Prof. Simshauser: No, no lobbyists at all.

Mr WEIR: I ask the CEO of CS Energy, Mr Bills, to come forward. Mr Bills, has CS Energy engaged any lobbyists in the last financial year?

Mr Bills: No.

Mr WEIR: Mr Bills, as assets age it is common sense that they require an increased maintenance spend. Can you explain why CS Energy's maintenance spend has decreased substantially in the past three consecutive financial years?

Mr Bills: First of all, in terms of our approach to maintenance, we take it very seriously in terms of meeting our statutory obligations and the safety of our people and plant. The timing of overhauls is determined by our asset management strategy. Every year our maintenance spend will vary depending upon that strategy. If I take you to 2019, we actually had a record spend in our overhauls. Since then we have not had the same volume of work. It is entirely dependent upon the timing of those statutory overhauls and when they fall due on the asset management strategy.

Mr WEIR: You would expect an increased level of maintenance on ageing facilities. No?

Mr Bills: No. These are governed by a very strict compliance with statutory obligations and an asset maintenance strategy. That determines the expenditure. It has nothing to do with the age of the plant. For example, as I said, if you look at what we spent on Kogan in 2019, it was over \$90 million.

Mr WEIR: You are comfortable that the maintenance budget is sufficient to ensure there are not going to be any major failures?

Mr Bills: As I said earlier, we take the safety and maintenance of our plant and the safety of our people very seriously, and we invest in our plant accordingly.

Mr WEIR: Are there any CS Energy generators offline as we speak due to unscheduled maintenance?

Mr Bills: Yes. There is one unit—B1—offline at the moment. That is due to a tube leak in the superheater. That came off last week and it is due to come back next week.

Mr WEIR: Thank you, Mr Bills. I have a question for the director-general. I refer to comments the minister made in estimates last year that the Callide C explosion 'would have no net impact on consumers' electricity prices'. Did you or your department provide that advice to the minister?

CHAIR: For context, the director-general was not in that role at that stage. It is pretty hard for him to answer that question. Do your best.

Mr Martyn: As the chair has pointed out, I was not in the role at that point. I cannot comment on the advice to the minister. Some facts that I could present to the committee are that last week the Australian Energy Market Operator published the Quarterly Energy Dynamics report for quarter 2

of 2022. It is a document that really canvasses every major issue around energy in the NEM. It has a lot of interesting statistics. AEMO's comments around coal-fired generation in Queensland are interesting. The report states—

In Queensland, lower output (-111 MW on average) was mainly driven by outages at Callide C (the ongoing unplanned outage of Unit 4 following its major incident in May 2021, and a planned outage at Unit 3) and Gladstone. Lower output was however partially offset by increased output from Kogan Creek and Callide B.

What the market operator is saying is that the output of the fleet was only 111 megawatts lower when the unit in Callide was out during this most difficult time for the energy system. Whilst I cannot comment on the advice offered to the minister last year, looking back I suppose in hindsight—and everyone is wiser in hindsight—I would say that the fleet performed and worked hard and really almost made up for the absence of that unit at a time when we faced unprecedented peak winter demand of around 8,400 megawatts.

Mr WEIR: I note that what the minister said contradicted the Queensland Competition Authority's finding, which in its determination for 2022-23 showed steep increases in power prices in part due to the fire which shut Callide C power station and higher gas and coal prices. Minister, what did you base your statement on?

Mr de BRENNI: I based my statement on the prevailing circumstances at the time. The prevailing circumstances did not include a range of factors which since that incident and that statement was made impacted the electricity market. The Australian Energy Market Operator declared that the costs which are being incurred in the wholesale electricity and gas market impacting particularly gas generation are these. These were not prevailing circumstances at the time of the Callide C4 outage. AEMO said: Russia's invasion of Ukraine; high international coal and gas prices; fuel supply issues at coalmines due to flooding; the early onset of a record-breaking cold winter; coal generator outages across the National Electricity Market—they did not point to Queensland specifically across the National Electricity Market—and greater reliance on gas-fired generation.

These issues are not unique to Queensland and the greater cost of wholesale electricity is not on its own in relation to the outage at C4. It is not, as members opposite are likely to infer, the result of renewable energy investment. It is not the fault of publicly owned generators and some inference that may be made around maintenance schedules. It is not a good reason to invest in nuclear power either, members. The result of a confluence of factors have been declared as the reason for high wholesale prices. That is not my conclusion: that is the conclusion reached by the Australian Energy Market Operator. I am confident that all of the market bodies concur with those findings.

CHAIR: There is time for one more question from the member for Condamine and then we will go to the member for Maiwar.

Mr WEIR: Yes, it is a quick one. Minister, do you stand by your statement to not close any coal-fired generators prior to their stated end-of-life dates?

Mr de BRENNI: Yes.

CHAIR: That was a quick question. We might have time for another quick question.

Mr WEIR: The next one is a bit longer.

Mr de BRENNI: I can provide further context to the member if he would like.

CHAIR: That would be beneficial.

Mr de BRENNI: The reason that I can give that commitment is purely because Queenslanders own those assets. In other states we have seen an incredible amount of chaos, early and unexpected closures. They are some of the things that have contributed to outrageous prices in the wholesale National Electricity Market. It is also why we can provide a guarantee of more renewable energy that will meet our renewable energy target and achieve our emissions reductions objectives. We will guarantee the job security of workers in those regional communities.

Members will have heard us indicate that our forthcoming energy plan will outline how we will deliver more renewable energy to support our regions with more jobs in more industries. I reiterate: we will not be shutting the gate on those power stations, their workers or their communities. On the contrary: we will invest in them. We will continue to invest. We have been investing. In fact, the director-general just provided me with the generation maintenance forecast for Stanwell and CS—and CleanCo is in there as well—over the five years over the forwards, over \$1.064 billion in investment. We will do that because those power stations that Queenslanders own are well placed. They have connection to

high-voltage transmission and access to water and onsite emergency services. We will do it because they are critical to power system stability. Remember, the thing that Queenslanders demand most is electricity reliability.

We use these power stations every single day. We use them every afternoon when the sun goes down to meet our evening peak. We use all of them on the hottest days of the year, and for the first time even more now as we have these incredible cold spells. We have used them more than ever. They also have a highly skilled workforce that is a great asset for this state: the 860 men and women who work in those power stations. We have a plan to modernise those stations and invest in those people.

This is in stark contrast to the policy of the LNP, which has a plan to sell those assets. They will not catch up to the 21st century. Last year their state chapter did vote to build new coal-fired power stations. The problem with that, Chair, is that it might be a good sound bite in Collinsville, but all this will do is strangle existing power stations and their customers and close them faster. In order to build a new coal-fired power station in Collinsville which power station would you choose to close? Maybe that is a question the member for Callide would like to ponder. Would he like to tell workers in Biloela that they can all go home—

Mr WEIR: Chair, we ask the question and the minister answers.

CHAIR: We have time for one more question from the member for Condamine and then we will go to the member for Maiwar.

Mr WEIR: Director-General, in order to deliver the department's objectives as set out in the SDS, clear and consistent communication between the responsible minister and the department is vital. Have you or any senior member of your department ever withheld information from your minister so they can maintain plausible deniability?

Mr Martyn: The answer is no.

Mr BERKMAN: Director-General, at estimates last year the director-general reported that the proportion of our electricity generation sector which was publicly owned was 66 per cent. Can you give us an update on the current figure?

Mr Martyn: The figure in 2021-22 was 65 per cent.

Mr BERKMAN: That is a decline of one per cent.

Mr Martyn: That is right, yes, due to additional renewables coming in, that are non-government owned.

Mr BERKMAN: Indeed. Given the government's stated policy of retaining a majority of public ownership, we could reasonably expect that proportion to continue to fall potentially to as low as 50 per cent; is that correct?

CHAIR: You are seeking an opinion there too, member.

Mr Martyn: I think it is important to say that, because the government has over the course of the last financial year and in the budget announced significant new investments in renewables through the government-owned energy sector, that is a countervailing force in terms of that percentage. I do not think I can assume that at all.

Mr BERKMAN: The question, though, is that within current government policy it could drop as low as 51 per cent.

CHAIR: You are really seeking opinion there.

Mr Martyn: As a public servant, I am not here to comment or offer opinion.

CHAIR: Do you have another question?

Mr BERKMAN: I have plenty more so I will move as quickly as I can. I will stick with the director-general for the time being. The minister has just stated unequivocally that there will be no early closure of any of the state's coal-fired power generation fleet. We have seen recently that even the Queensland Resources Council CEO, Ian Macfarlane, said that all of Queensland's coal-fired power generation could be shut in 10 years time. Has the department, in preparing the forthcoming energy plan, conducted any modelling or other analysis around the early closure of Queensland's coal and gas generation facilities?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. The forthcoming energy plan will ensure Queensland customers continue to have access to affordable, reliable electricity supply throughout and beyond the energy transformation. In terms of what the department has done, what I

can say is that the department is undertaking detailed modelling and analysis to ensure the right balance of generation and storage is in place and the transmission grid is fit for purpose. The department uses a range of modelling tools to assess the impacts for the energy transformation. It keeps its eye on a range of other modelling that is undertaken by, for example, AEMO, the Energy Security Board, AEMC et cetera. Obviously, we do analysis through our own sources that will go into the energy plan.

It is important to note that, while modelling is an important input into decision-making, the Queensland government is also considering other aspects of the energy transformation that will impact on the timing and optimal delivery of transmission, generation and storage infrastructure. These considerations include how to best unlock other benefits such as increased levels of local content, improved outcomes for communities, potential supply chain and workforce considerations. It is our intention that that analysis will be outlined in the energy plan.

Mr BERKMAN: I want to go directly to the question, though. Has the department done its own analysis on early closure of coal or gas generation assets that the state owns?

Mr Martyn: The department's analysis has been of the changing energy system in every respect.

Mr BERKMAN: And that involves early closure of coal and gas assets?

Mr Martyn: We analyse, as I said, every aspect of the energy system including generation, storage and transmission. We are not able in this hearing to identify the considerations that go into government decision-making, as you would appreciate.

Mr BERKMAN: I might ask a question of the CEO of CleanCo please, Chair.

CHAIR: Certainly. We are running out of time but we have time for that.

Mr BERKMAN: Mr Metcalfe, can you outline for the committee how many CSG wells CleanCo has a stake in and how that compares to the number of wind turbines CleanCo has a stake in?

Mr Metcalfe: I thank the honourable member for the question. I would like to confirm with my CFO here with me today. I believe we have 45 right now, but we are drilling additional gas wells as we speak. We are expanding that.

Mr BERKMAN: And how does that compare to the number of wind turbines in which CleanCo has a stake?

Mr Metcalfe: We are under construction with the largest wind farm in the state, the MacIntyre wind farm, which we have a major PPA offtake agreement with. I would have to confirm the number of turbines we have at that site, but it is considerably more than the number of gas wells.

Mr BERKMAN: Can I confirm, though—

CHAIR: Member, you need to finish up with this question.

Mr BERKMAN: Of course. I am working at it. Those PPAs are different from ownership of the assets themselves; am I correct?

Mr Metcalfe: That is correct.

Mr BERKMAN: So in terms of actual wind turbines owned by CleanCo, how does it compare?

Mr Metcalfe: Right now we do not have any turbines that are installed and running and owned by CleanCo but we have a project underway.

Mr BERKMAN: Okay. That is kind of what I was getting at. I have one very brief follow-up, if I might. In relation to the Kogan North gas project joint venture with Arrow Energy, do you see it as a reputational risk that our publicly owned clean energy company is operating and expanding in coal seam gas fields?

CHAIR: That is asking for an opinion. Member, you cannot really ask for an opinion.

Mr BERKMAN: Point of order, Chair: as the CEO of CleanCo—

CHAIR: You are still asking for an opinion.

Mr BERKMAN: Chair, if I could just express my point of order. As the CEO of CleanCo, he clearly has, as part of his role, to consider reputational risk of the company. I am asking whether he considers there is a reputational risk for CleanCo around owning and expanding in coal seam gas fields.

CHAIR: Let me take some advice. What you can ask is if you had considered it but not what your opinion is.

Mr Metcalfe: If I may for the committee, the reason for the gas that we acquire is for the Swanbank E power station, which is a critical firming asset for the state. It actually allows and enables to leverage more renewables in the state because we have that backup capacity, quick ramping, quick response energy when the market needs it.

Mr BERKMAN: The question though is, as the Chair rephrased it: have you considered reputational risk that comes with that?

CHAIR: Member, you have an answer to the question.

Mr BERKMAN: I thought your question was great, Chair. I would like an answer to it.

CHAIR: We will now move to government questions. You have had a pretty good run.

Mr WALKER: Minister, earlier in the year Queensland experienced some of the worst flooding on record. Could you please advise what steps were taken to help respond and recover and what we are doing to prepare for future events?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for Mundingburra for the question, and I want to acknowledge your recognition of the unsung heroes in times of need for Queenslanders. In times of natural disaster, there are some things that you can always count on Queenslanders to do. It is that they show up, they step up and they get stuck in. We saw that through the floods of 2022—the worst flood event this state has seen since 1892. Queenslanders showed up to lend a hand. They showed up to help each other, to help the community and to get the job done. I would like to pay particular tribute to our energy workforce employed in Queensland's publicly owned power companies Energex, Ergon and Powerlink.

More than 180,000 customers, as I referred to earlier, across South-East Queensland lost power. That occurred with a peak of 57,000 on Monday, 28 February. At that time, Energex was faced with repairing significant damage to the network in very difficult conditions. However, for 10 days Energex and Ergon field crews and operational teams worked around the clock to safely restore network power. They worked in difficult terrain to rebuild the network. The unprecedented amount of water, as one could imagine, made even some of the most ordinary suburban locations quite treacherous to operate in. However, in true Queensland spirit, some Ergon workers showed up from as far away as Cairns to be a part of that restoration effort, and we thank them. Power was restored to all affected parts of the network by the evening of Tuesday, 8 March. The incredible efforts of Queenslanders did not stop there. On Monday, 7 March the Electrical Trades Union stood up Operation Energise.

CHAIR: Hear, hear!

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the chair for his acknowledgement of Operation Energise. We also saw Master Electricians on the ground who went to work on insured premises. With Operation Energise what we saw was our publicly owned energy companies and Electrical Trades Union volunteers conducting safety checks for community groups and not-for-profit groups. They prioritised Queenslanders like single parents, pensioners and those without insurance—which, unfortunately, was many of those who were hardest hit in those areas, as the member for Bundamba, who is here today, would know all too well. Those safety checks that they conducted are necessary once network power is restored to ensure that individual premises can be re-energised safely. For those who cannot afford those safety checks for their home or community organisation, there is no cost. This is a demonstration of goodwill by Operation Energise and its partners, so our thanks go to the publicly owned power companies and the Electrical Trades Union on behalf of those Queenslanders they helped.

I was very pleased to recently join my colleague the member for Bundamba and you, Chair, as the member for Kurwongbah, to commemorate the efforts with a thankyou ceremony. I know that many of the volunteers showed up and were quite proud to accept recognition for the work they did in supporting those who need a helping hand.

We are seeing more and more of those types of weather events impacting Queensland. In fact, Queensland has always seen more than our fair share of natural disasters. What is concerning is that the human, social, environmental and economic impact of those natural disasters is growing. In the true Queensland way, we will continue to work shoulder to shoulder with Queensland's energy workers and communities on the road to recovery in response to this and any forthcoming weather events. We will also make sure that disaster planning is a significant part of the decisions that we make. When disasters do strike, Queenslanders can be better prepared when they are again called upon to show up, step up and get the job done. Again, I thank all contributors to Operation Energise.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, I note that this budget invests a record amount into new renewable energy projects. Can you update us on how the Kaban wind farm project is progressing and how we were planning to capitalise on the supply chain opportunities it presents?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank you for the question, member, and for your support of renewable energy projects and the good jobs that they create. I joined the Deputy Premier earlier this year, the member for Cairns and Senator Green representing federal Labor at the Port of Cairns, to see the first blades of our Kaban wind farm arrive. These blades are massive. Each blade is 79 metres long. When you include that with the prime mover, member, the trucks moving the blades are a whopping 91 metres long, and I take the opportunity to thank both the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Police and their respective agencies for supporting the transport effort from the port to the construction site.

I can confirm that turbines and now transmission towers are going up at the Kaban Green Power Hub in our northern Queensland Renewable Energy Zone. Our government owned generator and retailer, CleanCo, will use 100 per cent of the energy produced at this wind farm to support Queenslanders and our businesses in Queensland on their sustainable energy journeys. I mentioned earlier the Scentre Group Westfield sites which will be enjoying power from those locations in 2024, heading towards their net-zero emissions target of 2025.

This generation site at Kaban is a very exciting step towards our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. There are hundreds of workers on site, so it is a good jobs contributor to North Queensland. There are 39 blades, 24 tower sections, 13 nacelles, 16 hubs and 16 power drive chains in each of the five shipments that are arriving for the Kaban wind farm. It is a truly incredible undertaking for what is a cornerstone project in the northern Queensland Renewable Energy Zone.

I take the opportunity as well to remind members of the committee that we, the state, nearly lost the Kaban project and the 250 construction jobs for Queenslanders when the former Morrison government vetoed its NAIF funding. We saw a complete ambivalence to the manufacturing jobs opportunities and the construction job opportunities. This is something that the Palaszczuk government will always take action on. We will not let projects like that slip through our fingers. We saved the Kaban wind farm, and now Labor federally will step in under Anthony Albanese to make sure we start making not only renewable energy but also making the components here in this nation as well, which I think is something which is incredibly important in our energy transformation. If we can do that, this nation can stand on its own two feet and truly become a global renewable energy superpower.

I want to touch on the components manufacturing issue if I can, if the committee will indulge me. Massive as each load of these components are, and Kaban the massive boost to our renewable generation it is, it is also sadly somewhat of a missed opportunity. We can, I believe, and we should, be building those sorts of components here in Australia. In fact, we should be building them here in Queensland, not just importing them, as happened under the previous federal LNP. It is true that the components for that wind farm were manufactured in China, no doubt using significant quantities of Australian steel and aluminium and electricity generated from Queensland coal. Instead of watching them in the future swayed off a ship imported into our country, we would like to see them made here.

Perhaps they could be made in the Gladstone state development area or in Ipswich or Rockhampton. I know the member for Mundingburra would be very keen to see them manufactured in the Landsdown industrial precinct, perhaps. Indeed, we should be making them here and sending them to other nations, particularly in our region in the Indo-Pacific from our publicly owned ports in places like Cairns and Gladstone. The good news is that renewables offer that opportunity—an opportunity to decarbonise, reduce electricity prices and bring manufacturing back to Queensland.

We have seen a report commissioned by the Business Council of Australia which found Australia's clean export opportunities could create around 395,000 jobs in 2040; that is why we are investing in projects like Kaban. Whether it is trains, electric buses, batteries or wind turbines, Queenslanders want to make the future here, chair and members. However, while there is plenty of opportunity and potential, we know that Queensland cannot really go this alone. So with the support of the new federal government and combining with other states and territories, we can truly become a significant global player.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, will you please outline how the Palaszczuk government is leading the way on EVs and supporting the development of this industry through the electrification of the government vehicle fleet?

Mr de BRENNI: The Palaszczuk government is revving up the state's zero-emissions vehicle credentials. Today there are over 10,000 EVs on Queensland roads, double what we saw this time last year, and up from 525 just a short time ago in 2017. To help grow the sector, this year we launched our upgraded zero-emissions vehicle strategy. It looks towards 2032 with a focus on breaking down the two key barriers to electric vehicle ownership—cost and infrastructure. It is no wonder that growth is so huge because here in Queensland we have already started work on one of the world's most significant electric vehicle superhighways. We have a huge \$1.41 billion of capital investment through Energy

Queensland that includes \$179 million worth of network augmentation and a further \$9.546 million of infrastructure service to build, own, operate and maintain that network through the publicly owned subsidiary of Energy Queensland, Yurika.

There are 31 charging stations from Coolangatta to Port Douglas and Brisbane to Toowoomba. As part of our commitment to reducing emissions and improving connectivity for electric vehicle road users, we are building another 24 charging sites in regional and rural locations, taking Queensland's total to 55. Those sites are at Charters Towers, Hughenden, Julia Creek, Cloncurry, Mount Isa, Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe, Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall, Emerald, Dingo, Charleville, Roma, Miles, Kingaroy, Esk, Richmond, Kynuna, Injune, Rolleston, St George and Cunnamulla. It is apt to reflect that this is a significant rollout of the EV superhighway.

We will not forget, though, the time that the former Australian government, the Morrison government, spent telling Queenslanders and Australians that EVs will end the weekend. What that inaction and deception has done is put Australia years behind and made us the world's dumping ground for traditional vehicles while states like Queensland have had to go it alone.

I see the member for Lockyer rolling his eyes, but where is the Queensland LNP on this? Where were they campaigning with their colleagues in Canberra to bring Australian transport into the 21st century? We saw a half-baked attempt by the former prime minister just before the election to backflip on electric vehicles, but thankfully Australian voters saw through that. I see the acknowledgement of the member for Lockyer on that.


Mr McDONALD: I was rolling my eyes, Minister, because you are winding down the clock instead of us having to ask more questions.

CHAIR: Member, no interjections, please.

Mr de BRENNI: It makes us really understand how empty the Queensland LNP is and why they brought zero EV policies to the last election. I am sure the member for Lockyer is familiar with that. In conclusion, Chair, we now have a partner in the new Albanese government who has promised to cut import and fringe benefit taxes on EVs and invest in charging. Finally, we can develop a national electric vehicle strategy that will boost sales, boost infrastructure and cut costs to Queenslanders. All this equates to creating good jobs, delivering better services and protecting the great Queensland lifestyle, and saving the weekend.

CHAIR: Thank you. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 3.45 pm with the estimates for the public works and procurement portfolio areas.

Proceedings suspended from 3.30 pm to 3.45 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the estimates for the public works and procurement portfolio areas. I would like to welcome the member for Everton. I call the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Minister, have you or your office ever requested right-to-information documents to be sent to you for review prior to documents being released?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I have no knowledge of any of those requests being made. I certainly have never made such a request.

Mr MANDER: Can I call the QBCC commissioner, please? Commissioner, did the QBCC request legal advice on whether they have to provide the minister or his office with the final RTI release before it is made public?

Ms Levy: I thank the member for the question. Yes, we did seek legal advice into our obligations under the RTI Act.

Mr MANDER: What motivated the commission to seek that advice?

Ms Levy: I was not the one who sought the advice. I do not know the motivations, but I understand it was just to clarify our position in terms of RTI to inform our policy.

Mr MILLAR: There are documents to table.

CHAIR: They are tabled. Is the minister getting one of these copies as well?

Mr MANDER: I hope so. There is one there for him.

CHAIR: We will have to wait for a moment for everyone to peruse the document.

Mr MANDER: While we are waiting, I will ask another question of the commissioner. What did that advice that you received actually say—the legal advice?

Ms Levy: I understand that it confirmed our policy that the commission—we take our obligations under the right-to-information legislation very seriously, including operating our right-to-information function in accordance with a pro-disclosure approach. That advice confirmed our policy and our position in terms of that. As a function within the organisation we have an RTI team, a dedicated team, to work on our responses. That team act independently. When a decision-maker is appointed, that decision-maker makes a decision about the RTI position and there are no directions issued by me or anyone else within our organisation. At the point at which we determine whether it is appropriate for that information to be released beyond the applicant, that is the point at which that would occur.

There are occasions when it is appropriate for us to brief the minister on RTI positions, particularly as it relates to preparing him for public debate, including when matters are of public interest or are raised in parliament. That advice confirmed that position, that when it is appropriate RTI information can be provided to the minister's office to prepare him for debate in parliament.

Mr MANDER: Minister, I refer to the documents we have just tabled. These are email exchanges between the QBCC Ministerial and Executive Services and the RTI officer. The QBCC officer states—

... just wanted to raise with you that the Ministers Office would like to see what is going to be released to Mr Hart and when it is going to be released.

Minister, is this not in contradiction of what you have just told me, that you do not have anything to do with the RTI process?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I said I did not have any knowledge of matters being requested. I think the commissioner gave a very clear explanation that if material is being released that is going to be the subject of a parliamentary debate then it is useful for it to be provided. I think the appropriate step that the commissioner has taken to seek that advice answers your question.

Mr MANDER: Minister, the Premier last year during estimates was asked a number of questions about RTIs. She stated on at least three occasions things like, 'I am not the RTI officer', 'The RTI officer decides that', 'They are independent from ministers' and 'I do not know what the scope was. I am not privy to that information nor should I be.' Minister, you constantly talk about how the QBCC is independent from the operations of your office. This is a clear example that you are monitoring RTIs before they go out and seeking advice with regard to when they will go out as well. How can that be seen as being independent?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I think that he is asserting an opinion and asking me to assert an opinion about his opinion. I do not see how that question pertains to the budget estimates process, or is a question within order. In any case, I reject the basis of the question.

CHAIR: I just missed that one because I was dealing with another issue, Minister. Member, do you have a further question?

Mr MANDER: I do, Mr Chair. How do you justify the QBCC engaging with your ministerial office in regard to right to information data being seen by the minister before it is released?

CHAIR: The minister has answered, but go ahead if you have anything further to add.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. I do not see anything in the materials that have been tabled today that would enable you to effectively reach that conclusion. There is nothing in the materials that have been tabled that impacts on the independence of the RTI officer. The commissioner was quite clear that she sought legal advice about her responsibilities in that regard, and that she acted in accordance with those responsibilities.

Mr MANDER: Minister, to me it seems plain that your office has interfered in the RTI process. You constantly talk about the fact that your office is independent from the QBCC. There were further revelations in the paper this morning which showed that, once again, you have misled the parliament with regard to your personal interference and your office's interference of the QBCC. Will you do the honourable thing and admit that you have misled parliament and resign?

CHAIR: Member, you are putting three of your own opinions, then asking the minister the question. I will allow the minister to answer in any way he sees fit.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you very much, Chair. I have been incredibly clear in all of my public statements, including in this House. I stand behind and stand by all of those statements that I do not engage in the operational matters of the commission and its independent regulator. I have the highest confidence in the staff of the commission to perform their functions in accordance with the obligations under the act, as the commissioner has pointed out.

For the member's benefit, perhaps I can allay some of his apparent confusion. If you look at the enabling act that sets out the establishment and functions of the commission, including at section 11(e), one of the functions of the act is—

- (e) advising the Minister on issues affecting—
 - (i) the building industry; and
 - (ii) consumers; and
 - (iii) the administration of this Act; and
 - (iv) the administration of the commission;

So the act itself requires the building commission to provide me advice and an exchange in relation to those matters. It is clear to me that your confusion stems from a lack of understanding of the QBCC Act. I cannot see any other reason for your line of questioning.

Mr MANDER: My next question is to the commissioner. Why did the QBCC find it necessary to engage Anacta and Evan Moorhead to assist in improving the commission's working relationship with the minister?

Ms Levy: I was not at the commission at the time of the engagement, but I am led to believe that the engagement related to providing advice on reporting to government and government relations.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, I appreciate that you may not have been there but, why was it necessary for the chair of the QBCC to authorise engagement with Anacta outside of the normal procurement process?

Ms Levy: My understanding is that the chair had discussions with the commission but, ultimately, it was the commissioner of the day who executed the contract with Anacta.

Mr MANDER: Minister, how would you describe your working relationship with the chair of the QBCC board, Dick Williams?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I would describe my working relationship as one which is in accordance with the act.

Mr MANDER: Minister, I assume that you are saying that you have a cordial and good working relationship with him.

CHAIR: You are making an assumption there, member.

Mr MANDER: Only because his answer was so general. Why would the QBCC board find it necessary to engage Anacta to advise them on how to deal with you?

Mr de BRENNI: Chair, I am not in a position to provide an opinion in relation to those matters.

CHAIR: I was going to step in—you answered too quickly. You are asking the minister what his thoughts are on what another body has done. It is seeking opinion and I will ask you to either move on, or ask another question.

Mr MANDER: I will ask another question. Minister, how did your relationship with the chair of the QBCC improve after the engagement that Anacta had?

Mr de BRENNI: Again, Chair, I think the member is asking matters of opinion in relation to a relationship. I have made it clear that the relationship between myself as the Minister for Public Works and the chair as a member of the board, is outlined in and under the act. The engagement that I have with that board is in accordance with that act. I do not bring emotion to that role.

Mr MANDER: What I conclude from that answer is that despite the QBCC engaging Anacta, there was no material difference with regards to how the board related to you?

Mr de BRENNI: In terms of your assertions about what the board did in providing me advice on issues affecting the building industry, consumers, the administration of this act and the administration of the commission—whether they were advising me about unfair and unconscionable trading practice affecting security of payments to contractors and subcontractors—it has been at a standard that has seen the building industry flourish in Queensland. It has never been stronger. There is more building work going on today than in Queensland's history. There are more licensees, there have been more home warranty schemes and more home warranty scheme policies are written.

The building commission is functioning to the best standard possible. We have said—and I cannot speak for him but I am sure that the chair would acknowledge—as good a job as the QBCC does, we all recognise that further improvements can always be made. That is why, I think it was on 16 November 2021 that, the director-general commissioned an independent review of its governance framework.

That review is now complete. The Palaszczuk government has agreed or agreed in principle to implement all 17 recommendations of that review. Action, I am pleased to say, is already underway in a continuation of the Palaszczuk government's comprehensive building reforms. Overall, the review recognises that the commission's regulatory role is far broader than when the Palaszczuk government took office in 2015. A lot has been achieved since then in terms of reform that has been delivered by the 500 men and women who work for the commission with, obviously, the leadership of the commissioner and the guidance of the board. The recommendations that are being progressed by the director-general will ensure the regulator continues to focus its activities around being more customer and outcomes focused. There will be structural and functional realignment—

Mr MANDER: Chair, I raise a point of order. We are now veering off into elements not associated with the question. There will be plenty of time to talk about these things later.

CHAIR: Sure, member. Have you finished your answer, Minister?

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. The member was asking my opinion about the nature of the interactions between the board and me as a representative of the government and what I am articulating is that to improve those arrangements an independent review was commissioned by the director-general. The Varghese review considered those governance arrangements. We provided a report—

Mr MANDER: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. This has nothing to do with the question. The question's context was all about Anacta's engagement with the QBCC with regard to the relationship with the minister.

CHAIR: Yes, member, and you did ask if there was any change in the relationship. The minister is articulating that. I will ask the minister to wind up because the member will have another question.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. As aggressive as the member for Everton may want to get—

Mr MANDER: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: We have another point of order.

Mr MANDER: I take offence at that comment.

CHAIR: Can you please withdraw it?

Mr de BRENNI: I withdraw. I am confident that the implementation group that is implementing a 90-day action plan has a firm focus on an implementation drafted to demonstrate the government's commitment to swift action. There will be an update due in September. That is all intended to ensure we can uphold confidence in Queensland's building and construction industry. That is incredibly important for licensees, home owners and investors. Despite years of campaigning by the member for Everton and some of his colleagues, that confidence remains high because Queenslanders can trust our government to work with those members in the service of Queensland to deliver them the services around regulation of the construction industry.

Mr MANDER: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. If you allow the minister to continue to ramble, it goes against every principle that we are trying to achieve here today of transparency and openness.

CHAIR: I understand that, member, but please do not reflect on the chair. The minister is, I am sure, finished his answer now.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Member, your point of order was taken.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

CHAIR: Can you please ask another question?

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, the chair of the QBCC board, a former Labor Party president and part of the Left faction of the Labor Party, appoints a former Labor state secretary and Labor member and member of the Left faction to help him have a better relationship with you, a Labor minister and a member of the Left faction, who appointed him chair. Would you agree that the \$8,800 paid for this service is a total waste of taxpayers' money?

CHAIR: There is so much wrong with that question. Member, I ask you to rephrase that question without the preamble. The context has been given; just ask the question.

Mr MANDER: It is quite obvious, Mr Chair, and the question is to the minister: does he admit that this \$8,800 paid for Anacta is a total waste of taxpayers' money?

Mr de BRENNI: Again, the member for Everton is asking for an opinion. In terms of the operations of the commission, the decisions that the board takes in the administration of its functions or that the commission takes in the administration of its functions are a matter for the board and for the commission. I am confident that they undertake evaluations of those investments that they make from time to time and act in accordance with the best interests of Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Member, do you have one more or anything on this line of questioning before we go to government questions?

Mr MANDER: Yes, I do. I might just ask another question, if I may, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, are you able to tell me the total cost of the advertising campaign or education strategy that the QBCC has engaged in that includes videos with *The Block* stars Norm and Jess?

Ms Levy: I thank the member for the question. The public awareness campaign was to enact objects of the act that the commission is required to undertake, being to provide support, education and advice for consumers and those who undertake building work. The cost of the campaign expenditure in its entirety in 2021-22 was \$1.065 million.

CHAIR: Thank you. Hold that thought, member, while we go to government questions.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, rainfall events and major flooding struck many areas across Queensland at the start of this year, with devastating impacts to thousands of people across the state. Could you advise of the important role that the Palaszczuk government has in the delivery of the Resilient Homes Fund?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for this important question that many thousands of Queenslanders will take great interest in and for his concern for his fellow Queenslanders. It is fair to say that Queensland is the most natural disaster impacted jurisdiction in the nation. What is not fair though, members, is that Queenslanders and in fact Australians are now bearing the brunt of almost a decade of inaction on climate change and its consequences of severe and catastrophic weather. We have seen that time and time again in our state. We have seen fires, storms, cyclones, drought and now flood after flood, and still Liberal-National governments in the country cannot accept the science. The South-East Queensland rainfall event earlier this year had far-reaching financial, social and economic impacts. Approximately 7,000 homes were damaged, from Maryborough to the Gold Coast and west to Toowoomba as well, I am advised. Queenslanders who live in Gympie, Maryborough, Bundamba, Waterford, Mount Ommaney or Toohey know all too well that it is no longer a risk but a reality.

In a moment I will come to the delivery of the nation-leading Resilient Homes Fund, but I want to say this: the LNP and former prime minister Morrison had to be dragged kicking and screaming to support those Queenslanders when they had lost everything, and it is widely considered that they only reached agreement around the Resilient Homes Fund contribution because they saw how disastrous their electoral polling was. We are now over a month behind where this program ought to be, and that is because the Morrison government—we are a month behind getting Queenslanders back into their flood impacted homes—and the LNP were so focused on their own jobs that they could not commit to the Resilient Homes Fund package. That says a lot about a lack of leadership and it says a lot about the total lack of influence that resides in the Queensland Liberal National Party, which ought to have been advocating for citizens of this state in the wake of some of the worst flooding Queensland has ever seen. We saw then prime minister Morrison with his chequebook wide open for his Liberal mates down south, but he could not do a deal for Queenslanders on emergency funding.

Despite record-breaking flooding in Lismore during March and flooding across many New South Wales local government areas this disaster season, the New South Wales LNP government is yet to announce a comparable flood resilience package, let alone complete a single assessment. What do you know? It is because of our leadership and our ability to respond quicker that Queensland has been approached by New South Wales and New Zealand because they are both interested in leveraging aspects of our program design. Queenslanders, as we know, had enough of the LNP and its failure to hold a hose, and so on 21 May they got rid of it. I want to commend the new Australian Minister for Emergency Management, Senator Murray Watt, who has been actively engaged in the delivery of the \$741 million package which is now jointly funded fifty-fifty by the Queensland and Australian governments. With a prior context, I can update the committee on the delivery of the program.

The fund is backing Queenslanders whose homes have been badly damaged by flooding. We are doing that with a range of options that may include retrofitting, house raising or voluntary buyback of homes at risk from future floods. We have launched a register of interest portal to provide displaced residents with information about packages, eligibility and how to apply. As at 1 August 2022 over 4,280 registrations of interest have been received. I can advise the committee that, of those 4,280 registrations, 3,100 floor level surveys, or 72 per cent of impacted properties, are underway across 16 local government areas. Floor level surveys are a vitally important aspect in helping identify the best option for a particular home. It tells us where floodwaters have been and where they may go into the future. That support helps home owners make informed decisions about their future.

I can further advise that of the registrations we have received, over 1,200 homes are uninhabitable and 72 per cent have home insurance with flood cover. Of the eligible registrations of interest, the current indications are that 1,542 prefer a resilient rebuild, 1,282 are preferring to have their home raised, 445 are interested in a voluntary buyback and 674 remain unsure.

Following an initial sample of approximately 150 homes, planning and prioritisation is underway to scale up for the remaining homes. 15 Queensland surveying businesses have been invited by QBuild—and I want to acknowledge and thank QBuild for their role—to tender and so far five businesses have been successful. I am pleased to report to the committee that we should have completed all of the assessments by the end of the year—that is our goal—but I do remind you, Chair, and the committee, that this will be a marathon not a sprint. I can inform the committee as well that we will prioritise those assessments based on impacts, socio-economic factors and flood risk, availability of council flood level data and floor surveys, operational efficiencies and properties identified for voluntary home buyback.

Mr MARTIN: Can the minister outline the benefits of the Palaszczuk government's flood resilience guidelines?

Mr de BRENNI: The good thing in the design of this program—remember it is the first program of its type in our nation's history and never has there been a program of this scale; not since, I think it would be fair to say, the rebuild following Cyclone Tracey all those decades ago—is that nothing in the program prevents home owners or insurers from progressing their claims and, in fact, many insurers are already well progressed. For example, I can report to the committee that RACQ, for 12,704 property claims, have more than 93 per cent of home assessments completed.

Unlike many programs this fund is not means tested either. It is available to both insured and uninsured home owners. The aim is to help as many Queenslanders as possible within the funding available to build back better. Yes, we are intending to fund those who are insured to allow rebuilding of more flood resilient homes in addition to their insurance coordinated works.

At this point I would like to acknowledge and thank the Insurance Council of Australia, Suncorp and RACQ who have all made significant contributions to co-designing the program. It is terrific to report to the committee that we have boots on the ground already. I was out in Goodna recently with my colleague, the member for Bundamba, Lance McCallum, and the federal member for Oxley, Milton Dick, the new Speaker of the Australian parliament. We saw firsthand how the support of the Palaszczuk government was helping people in some of the most vulnerable circumstances in their desperate time of need.

There are thousands of folks across Queensland, many just like Alan, a bloke that Lance took me to meet, that have been impacted by these floods. They need help to not just get back on their feet but to protect their homes long term. That is exactly what our industry-leading flood resilience guidelines and Resilient Homes Fund will do. I want to refer the committee to the flood resilient building guidelines for Queensland and seek leave to table the *Design Guidance for Flood Resilient Homes*. Through you, Chair.

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr de BRENNI: Are you happy for me to continue?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr de BRENNI: Assuming the committee is happy for that to be tabled, I provide that to the committee for its benefit. It provides incredibly useful information about improving the flood resilience of new and existing Queensland homes. The guidance in this nation-leading document is based on lessons learned through consultation with the building industry, with local governments and a range of Queensland government agencies. It provides information about reducing the impact of floods on Queensland homes and, importantly, on families. I take this opportunity to note that it is suitable for use by building industry professionals, both here in Queensland, but much further afield, by state and local

authorities and owners of residential properties in flood-prone areas. It also provides clear guidance on flood resilient design principle strategies, construction details, materials and the expected benefits and costs of flood resilient design.

CHAIR: I seek leave that the document be tabled. Leave is granted. Thank you. Member for Stretton?

Mr MARTIN: Minister, the construction of seven satellite hospitals will provide additional frontline health services to communities in South-East Queensland. Can you advise how many secure jobs the construction of these satellite hospitals will provide?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for another important question in relation to the delivery of significant job creating infrastructure in Queensland, infrastructure enabled by another Palaszczuk government infrastructure guarantee. I acknowledge his keen interest in how we are delivering more good jobs, better services and protecting the great Queensland lifestyle. There is no better way to achieve that than with the biggest expansion program we have ever seen in a state budget squarely focused on the delivery of better health infrastructure. I am proud to be a part of this government that has delivered the largest investment in new hospitals and new beds in Queensland's history. Members would be aware that the 2022-23 budget provides additional funding of \$9.78 billion over six years and these new hospitals and hospital expansion projects announced will deliver 2,509 extra beds across Queensland over the next six years.

A big part of that investment is the Palaszczuk government's Australian-first satellite hospitals program. This program is a Queensland government commitment that will deliver seven new healthcare facilities across South-East Queensland. They are crucial projects to ensure that we are able to deliver improved healthcare services in what are rapidly growing communities. The locations that have been identified by Queensland Health are Pumicestone, Murrumba, Morayfield, Currumbin, Ipswich, Redlands and Stretton. I am sure the member is pleased. The program will support—this goes to the essence of the question—773 decent jobs in construction. The Department of Energy and Public Works will deliver it through a partnership with Queensland Health and Queensland's iconic Hutchinson Builders. While Queensland Health may be the lead agency—that is where the budget sits—it will be the nation-leading expertise that comes from QBuild and Public Works that will drive these projects to completion. That means more good local jobs for Queensland tradies, apprentices and project managers across all of our satellite hospital projects.

This Australian-first program is significant. It is complicated. It is not immune to some of the construction industry impacts being felt across the country. Despite the significant construction industry impacts on supply chains, labour and weather events, there is much to celebrate. The managing contractor has already established four sites, I am advised, at Caboolture, Redlands, Ipswich and Currumbin. In fact, I was pleased to join the member for Redlands and the Minister for Health at the ground breaking at the Redlands facility.

Following consultation and execution of cultural heritage management agreements with the Kabi Kabi First Nations people on 30 May 2022 I am advised Hutchinson Builders has been granted possession of the Pumicestone and Murrumba sites with early works scheduled to commence in the coming weeks. On 14 February 2022 we announced the seventh and final site at Eight Mile Plains in the mighty electorate of Stretton. I would put on record though that it is not too far from the mighty electorate of Springwood, member for Stretton.

I am advised that the site establishment is currently scheduled for later this month. That is more good news for constituents in Stretton, Springwood and surrounds. As at 20 June 2022, across the program 660 workers have already been inducted on site. In addition, 46 trade packages are closed and under review and 41 trade packages are awarded to date.

It is good to know that there is bipartisan support for our investments on this health infrastructure as well. I want to acknowledge that no member of the parliament voted against the progressive coal royalty regime that will help pay for this critical infrastructure; nor did any party express opposition to the substance of new progressive coal royalty tiers. I am pleased that there were no votes cast opposed to the revenue measures from the LNP, Katter's Australian Party, One Nation or the Greens political party.

The Satellite Hospitals Program about which the member for Stretton inquires is an Australian-first initiative. It will improve health care. It will support jobs in construction and ongoing health jobs once they are open. This will be a new model that delivers rapid construction in best-practice conditions. It will be delivered under a project trust account model and it will deliver a quality finish and a lasting legacy for Queensland.

Mr WALKER: Minister, Queensland has had its fair share of extreme weather events over the past 12 months. Soon summer and the next cyclone season will be upon us. What are you doing to help Queenslanders living in cyclone-prone areas to protect their homes, in particular those in the community who are on low incomes?

Mr de BRENNI: I think this is a pertinent question given my answer a few moments ago about just how natural-disaster exposed the jurisdiction of Queensland is and how we are seeing increasing levels of severe weather events. There is no denying that Mother Nature has taken a fair few hits at Queensland recently, but the thing about Queenslanders is that we stand strong. No matter what is thrown at us, we stand strong and we take care of one another. A symbol of that is clear in this budget. It is the Palaszczuk government's allocation of \$20 million for a third three-year phase of the Household Resilience Program. I acknowledge the advocacy of members like you, member for Mundingburra, and others such as the members for Bundaberg, Mulgrave, Cairns and Barron River who have helped secure this funding.

The previous program supported 3,525 households. That is a massive number of households that have been supported through this program. That is thousands upon thousands of families that can sleep a bit more soundly or have the freedom to travel away from home in summer knowing that the next time a bad storm comes through they will return to a home that is liveable. It is about families like that of Karen and Robert Larson to whom the member for Mackay introduced me when I was up there recently. They had some cyclone-proof roller shutters—really quite attractive shutters—put onto their home. They were overwhelmed with relief when they spoke about the difference they make to their lifestyle.

I was excited when we announced that the latest phase of this program had opened just yesterday. The Household Resilience Program supports low-income Queenslanders living in cyclone-prone coastal areas to make their homes stronger and safer—that is, along the coast from Bundaberg right up to the cape and around to the Northern Territory border. They can apply for funding of up to \$11,250 for works like replacing a roof, building stronger doors, securing external structures and reinforcing windows, such as Karen and Robert Larson have done.

For those who have already received support, there is terrific news when it comes to the cost of living, which we know it is so important to Queenslanders, particularly those on a fixed income. Many have reaped the side benefit not only of a more cyclone-resilient home but also of reduced insurance premiums. In the previous phase of the program we saw an average reduction of nine per cent. That is a big saving for Queenslanders on a fixed income, Queenslanders on lower incomes and working families. Every dollar counts.

It is also terrific to see that this program has been a real boost for local businesses, with the first two phases injecting almost \$61 million into the northern Queensland economy. We had reports from the first two phases of funding that some businesses had gained the equivalent of a year's work just through that one program. We saw new jobs created for tradies and labourers, as well as opportunities right through the product and support supply chains. In the smaller regional centres, the flow-on effect of this money certainly, we can estimate, had a multiplying effect as it spread throughout the community.

CHAIR: We will now return to non-government questions and the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, following on from the last question about the campaign, can you confirm that a significant proportion of the work was carried out by Dee Madigan's firm Campaign Edge?

Ms Levy: I can confirm that the engagement that the QBCC had was with Rowland to undertake the strategic design and public awareness campaign. I am aware that Campaign Edge was a subconsultant to Rowland. I am not privy to how much of the costs were associated with that subcontractor.

Mr MANDER: Is it correct that Campaign Edge was not included in the standard offer arrangements with the Queensland government?

Ms Levy: I understand that is correct.

Mr MANDER: Is it correct that the QBCC board chair, Dick Williams, specifically instructed that Campaign Edge be used for this campaign?

Ms Levy: I was not there at the time and I am certainly not aware of that. My understanding was that Rowland were determined to have the capability and the capacity to undertake the work and were engaged to do so.

Mr MANDER: To your knowledge, Rowland was not instructed by anybody to use Campaign Edge?

Ms Levy: Not to my knowledge.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, can you confirm that the easiest way to get around Campaign Edge not being included in the SOA was to engage Rowland so that they would engage Campaign Edge, despite strong internal advice that that was inappropriate?

Ms Levy: I cannot comment on that. I was not there at the time. My understanding was that Rowland were the firm that had the capability and the capacity to do the whole scale and scope of the work that they were engaged to do.

Mr MANDER: Minister, it seems apparent that Rowland was engaged for this particular project so that they would engage Campaign Edge. Is this not just another sneaky and underhand tactic by the government to reward Labor Party supporters and luminaries—

CHAIR: Member—

Mr MANDER:—with juicy government contracts?

CHAIR: Member, I am ruling that question out of order. You can have another go at it, but that really is so out of line it is not funny. Do you have another question?

Mr MANDER: I have, thank you, Chair. Commissioner, is it correct that Norm, who appears in the QBCC promotional video, is a Queensland licensed builder under his real name Jarrod Hogan?

Ms Levy: I can say that the character Norm is a licensed builder on the QBCC register.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, did anybody check Norm's QBCC licence history before choosing him to star in the promotional video?

Ms Levy: I believe that there were checks to ensure he was a valid licence holder and his record, yes.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, a quick search of Norm's licence details on a licence search shows that he has had a total of five licence suspensions due to overdue fees. Do you think he is appropriate, with that record, to be the face of the QBCC's \$1 million promotional campaign?

CHAIR: Member, you are seeking an opinion. Commissioner, answer in any way you see fit.

Ms Levy: The campaign was there to present a message to the community. Norm and Jess, as actors, were simply that, providing scripted comments as the campaign directed them.

Mr MANDER: Minister, is it an embarrassment for you as the minister and QBCC that the poster boy for this campaign is a person who has had his licence suspended on five occasions for non-payment of fees?

CHAIR: Part of that question about 'embarrassing', member—

Mr MANDER: Let me reword it.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr MANDER: Are you concerned, Minister, that a campaign is headed up by a licensed builder who has had five breaches of his licence through non-payment of fees and that he is the poster boy for the QBCC promotion?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. It does occur to me that, given the nature of the question, if the individual has had a suspension for not paying his licence fees but is currently licensed, he must have corrected that.

The commission, as I understand it, takes a range of regulatory approaches to supporting licensees to meet their regulatory obligations, including sending notices and reminders. I cannot comment on the individual circumstances of that individual. Perhaps that individual was under severe financial stress. I do not know if a family member had a significant illness. I do not know if he had an injury at work. I do not know if he has been living in a community that has been flood impacted and he has not been able to work. The circumstances of that individual's financial challenges, I think, are irrelevant to his role as an actor. It is entirely inappropriate but clearly consistent with the member's approach to use individuals, their misfortune, perhaps in this case—I do not know—for their own political gain.

Mr MANDER: Very well paid by taxpayers' money, Minister.

CHAIR: Member, please, if you have a question, ask a question. If you have a point of order, take it; but, please, do not interject. Do you have a question?

Mr MANDER: Thank you. Commissioner, are you aware if QBCC board member Andrew Hickman is the subject of a CCC investigation?

Ms Levy: I am not aware of that.

Mr MANDER: Have you been contacted by the CCC at any point in relation to Mr Hickman?

Ms Levy: I thank the member for the question. No, I have not.

Mr MANDER: Director-General, are you aware if Mr Hickman is the subject of a CCC investigation?

Mr Martyn: I thank the member for the question. No, I am not.

Mr MANDER: Have you been contacted by the CCC at any point with regards to Mr Hickman?

Mr Martyn: No, I have not.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. Minister, in the foreword of the QBCC review, Mr Varghese states: 'It is important to avoid politicisation of the QBCC...' Do you concede that over the last seven years as minister you have overseen the absolute politicisation of the QBCC, particularly the board?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. Quite the opposite. It has been the member for Everton and his colleagues who have sought to politicise an independent statutory authority. I reject the basis of the question. The LNP has attacked the credibility of the staff who work in the Queensland Building and Construction Commission.

Mr Millar interjected.

CHAIR: Member, don't interject. The Minister is answering the question.

Mr de BRENNI: There are 500-plus Queenslanders—mums and dads—working with tradies right across Queensland who get up and go to work every single day trying to make sure that Queensland has the highest regulatory and safety standards around our built environment. Consistently, the member for Everton attacks their credibility. I indicated in my opening remarks that we were likely to see more of that same attitude and aggression towards those individuals today.

Mr Mander interjected.

CHAIR: Member, your interjections are unwarranted, unnecessary. The minister is answering the question.

Mr MILLAR: And throwing barbs at us.

CHAIR: No. I am sorry. There have been a few barbs thrown, accusations, seeking of opinion, a whole lot of things and questions that I have let go that I should not have. The minister is answering. I will ask you to remain silent and to listen to the answer. You might not like it, but he is answering.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. The basis of the opposition's criticism has really been about the process of reform that the Palaszczuk government—

Mr MANDER: When you appoint a former Labor president as the chair of the QBCC—

CHAIR: Member for Everton! I do not want to have to warn you. Please, you have the opportunity to ask questions. You are just wasting time now with these interjections. Every time you do it, it wastes time. The minister is answering the question.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. As I was saying, for a number of years now the Palaszczuk government has been responding to the needs of Queensland building and housing consumers and licensees as well as responding to a number of reviews conducted in Queensland, but also nationally, to ensure that we have the highest possible standards. These have been either opposed by the Liberal National Party in Queensland or they have sat silent. They have not taken a position, because they do not stand for anything. We know that.

The Queensland Building Plan was released in 2017. They criticised this plan. My job as a minister and that of members of this House as politicians is to deliver the sorts of frameworks that ensure that the building commission and its clients—home owners—have confidence that the homes and buildings in which they work, live and play are of the highest standard. We have reformed security of payment. We are the only state that has taken genuine action to provide trust accounts to protect tradies' wages. Those opposite are on the record as being against protection of tradies' wages. We took action in Queensland around non-conforming building products. The Liberal National Party—

Mr MANDER: Point of order, Mr Chair. What has this got to do with the question? Is he going to go through everything over the past five years?

CHAIR: The Minister can come back to the question.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. I understand that the member asked about politicisation of the construction regulator. I am providing context as to why he may feel that that is the case, because there has been a significant and nation-leading program of reform. I think it is fair that I take the opportunity to respond to that question by outlining what that reform is, because that is the crux of their concern. They are opposed to that reform. At every step of the way, either vote against it, speak out against it—

Mr MANDER: Thank you, I appreciate that.

CHAIR: Minister, I think the member is happy with your answer.

Mr MANDER: Thank you; very happy.

CHAIR: He is quite happy with that answer; he said so. Member, do you have another question?

Mr MANDER: Yes, I do. Commissioner, one of the primary functions of the QBCC is to inspect building defects. What is the commission's service standard regarding the time taken for an inspection after a complaint has been received?

Ms Levy: I thank the member for the question. There are no specific, set time frames for undertaking building inspections. I will just refer to my notes if you will bear with me. We certainly will acknowledge that at this point in time wait times are currently longer than usual. We have been experiencing an unprecedented increase in activity across the entire building sector as well as Australia-wide material and labour shortages that have put significant pressure on the industry consistently this year. There has been a 32 per cent increase in disputes lodged with the QBCC during the past three months due to the recent flood events and a number of insolvencies across the residential builder market which created a backlog of work for our building inspections.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, is there an average current waiting time?

Ms Levy: There is not an average waiting time. There is a different waiting time across each of our regions.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, I have a copy of a letter that a QBCC official sent to a constituent. They are apologising in that they were originally told it would be 18 weeks but that unfortunately the expected time for allocation was now estimated to be 30 weeks. That seems an extraordinarily long time. Is that now the norm?

Ms Levy: No, it is not the norm. We aim to conduct our building inspections as quickly as possible. As I said, these range of factors have played into increasing the wait times beyond those. The wait times vary significantly across the state. They are as low as one week in some of our regional offices. What we have been doing to address those areas with longer wait times is redeploying some of our inspection resources across the state. We have had inspectors from North Queensland assisting with South-East Queensland work.

We are currently recruiting new building inspectors across the board to fill existing vacancies and to grow our cohort of building inspectors. We are looking to engage contractors to bolster resources and support us in the interim while we are bringing on board new building inspectors. We are providing customer service officer and admin support to make sure we are freeing up our building inspectors to focus on the critical work that only building inspectors can do.

There are a range of complexities for many building inspection cases that play into the time frames for those cases. Some are complex cases. Requesting additional information before a building inspection can be undertaken and ensuring that all parties involved are available and there to participate in the building inspection all play into the factors at play. It is quite a moving feast on a week-by-week basis as to what the wait time is in any particular region, but we are doing our very best to bring the wait times down across the whole state to ensure we are delivering a more efficient service to all of our customers.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, I would regard this as one of the basic functions of the QBCC. Taking into account the Varghese review, which talks about being more outcome focused, why would this measurement not be a standard KPI?

Ms Levy: Going forward, this is a KPI that I as commissioner will certainly be looking at across the organisation. I can tell you that on a weekly basis I am asking for information about wait times. We are reporting that information to the board on a regular basis. It is something that we are focused on—that is, ensuring we are reducing those times and keeping an eye on this as an important measure.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, I noticed a media report on 1 June that a home warranty claimant was waiting four months before for their claim was processed. What is the current waiting time for a home warranty claim to be processed?

Ms Levy: I do not have the answer on the average wait time for a Home Warranty Scheme claim. I will have to take that on notice.

CHAIR: The minister would have to agree to take that on notice.

Mr de BRENNI: I am sure the commissioner's staff or my staff can provide that information before the conclusion of the hearing. We will attempt to do that.

CHAIR: We will get back to the member on that before the end of the session. Member for Everton, do you have another question?

Mr MANDER: I do. Minister, attachment C of the Varghese review lists nine previous reports into building industry governance during your reign as minister. Do you take responsibility for the failures identified in Mr Varghese's report?

Mr de BRENNI: Of course I take responsibility for my role as Minister for Public Works administering the building commission. That is what I said in my earlier response. I was very pleased that the Department of Energy and Public Works engaged Mr Varghese. What the culmination of those reports shows is that the commission and the department have been actively working over time to have a program of continuous improvement.

What I would also say is—and this is indicated in the government's response to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission governance review: the independent reviewer recognised the wideranging functions delivered by the QBCC across a diverse industry and an increasingly complex environment. You indicated before that it was your opinion that there were central functions, and building inspection is one of those. I think it is important for the committee to recognise that there are a range of functions performed by the staff at the QBCC. It is important to understand the breadth of their work and the nature of the change in work which has been enabled by the findings of each of those reviews.

In 2021-22 they provided dispute resolution services for 5,450 cases. There were 200 inquiries and complaints relating to nonconforming building products. That is a function that was not performed before 2015. They imposed conditions on 6,805 licences, suspended 3,237 licences and cancelled 1,625 licences. All of those regulatory actions are significant in their resource allocation. They excluded 75 individuals and 53 companies from holding a contractor licence and permanently excluded 13 individuals from holding a contractor licence. They issued 1,159 penalty infringement notices, 690 warnings, two disciplinary actions and five prosecutions. They monitored and enforced compliance with building codes and standards to protect the public from poor quality building work in Queensland, issuing 979 directions to rectify. They conducted 1,430 proactive compliance site visits—that is in addition to the other site visits. They managed the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme. They issued 150,171 policies, finalised 1,856 claims and approved payment of \$36 million for building defects, non-completion of work or subsidence.

The point I am making is that each and every one of those reviews has identified improvements that can be made to the operation of the commission so that it can continue to perform those functions. The results are clear. There are more licensees, there are more homes being built, and homes and buildings built in Queensland are of a substantially higher quality than those we are seeing built in other states, particularly in New South Wales and some of the outcomes in Victoria.

The program that has been overseen by the QBCC in respect of combustible cladding has been recognised by the Grenfell Tower inquiry—and these are not my words; these are the findings of that inquiry—as world's best practice. In my view, they are certainly world's best practice and nation-leading.

I commend the work of the commission, but its work is varied. It has a bright future which will be enabled by the work that was done by Mr Varghese. I reiterate that there is a 90-day action plan, being led by the department in collaboration with other government agencies and the commission, to address the matters raised in the review report. We are looking forward to making sure that Queensland has the sort of building regulator that is required to deliver the modern homes and buildings of the future.

Mr WALKER: Minister, the Palaszczuk government is committed to creating secure, well-paid trade jobs to assist in the delivery of vital infrastructure and services. Will you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is a leader in the building and construction industries in the delivery of high-quality training and apprenticeships?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for his support in delivering more good jobs and the next generation of Queensland tradies. That next generation of Queensland tradies is coming online ready to build our state. What we are doing is giving young Queenslanders in particular, but adults as well, the training, skills and experience they need to thrive in the construction industry. A big part of that was when Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced the Rebuilding QBuild program.

The Premier's commitment was to engage an extra 300 trades based staff including 60 apprentices over three years. I am pleased to report that all 60 apprentices have now commenced their employment. That is another 60 Queenslanders launching their careers, building and maintaining our schools, hospitals and social housing. That is on top of the 219,400 Queenslanders who are employed today—more than there was before the COVID pandemic.

To expand on that for the benefit of the committee, consistent with the key deliverables outlined on page 19 of the SDS, I can report that eight apprentices have already completed their apprenticeship, with six of them—which is pleasing—staying on as tradespersons in QBuild as at February 2022. We have also recruited, in accordance with our commitment, 200 qualified tradespeople since the revitalisation of the apprenticeship program. These tradies are making a real difference by training, mentoring and shaping those young apprentices into quality tradies who will build our state.

I can further advise that the QBuild apprenticeship program is focused on delivering an industry-leading apprenticeship program. I commend the leadership of the department for that program because it provides opportunities to gain real-world experiences in disaster recovery, modern building methods and a variety of building typologies as well. They will be supported by world-class project managers in delivering significant Queensland infrastructure. Of course there is a veritable gold mine of experiences to deliver Queensland construction industry's highest skilled tradies to build the future. They are also helping to deliver construction and maintenance services in some of the most remote places in Queensland too, ensuring the buildings in which we deliver services to Queenslanders, no matter where they are, are of the highest standard.

Additionally, I can inform the committee with respect to our targets on inclusivity and diversity that our success in attracting more women to frontline trade roles mean that 16 per cent of QBuild apprentices are women. This is important because this far exceeds the National Association of Women in Construction target of 11 per cent. Nationally they said we should aim to get to 11 per cent; we have achieved 16 per cent—a great achievement for QBuild. We are incredibly proud of that. Further, employment opportunities for First Nations Queenslanders have also been supported, with eight per cent of QBuild's apprentices identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Whilst these tradies are building Queensland, we are doing the work to rebuild QBuild. There are few starker examples, I think, of the difference between our government and those opposite. In almost every major regional community across Queensland you will see a new QBuild depot delivered by this government where tradespeople, supported by this budget, will work in stark contrast to the depots that were decimated by the LNP when they stripped 1,647 jobs from QBuild. The majority of those job cuts as well, members, were in regional Queensland. The majority of those job cuts were targeted at the women in QBuild. Instead, the Palaszczuk government is backing our frontline workers rather than sacking them.

Our budget delivers billions of dollars in new infrastructure builds that will deliver a pipeline of work that supports those jobs in QBuild. We will be prioritising regional Queensland. We will be looking at targeting our efforts in high unemployment areas, delivering apprenticeships and direct employment on maintenance and upgrade programs. Most importantly, we believe that this budget supports decent, stable, secure jobs.

I would like to acknowledge the excellent training programs delivered as well in conjunction with Queensland trade unions. They have been an important partner in the Rebuilding QBuild venture. This ensures that under the Palaszczuk government, with the support of the 2022-23 budget, QBuild will continue its journey as a modern, efficient and accountable organisation, as a training ground for Queensland's construction industry that I am sure all government members are proud of. Qbuild, I am sure, has a big role to play in our next generation of hard-hat careers.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. As one of the major employers and economic drivers in the state, our construction industry provides the foundation for the state's future growth. Can the minister advise how the government is helping to deliver certainty for builders and tradies?

Mr de BRENNI: As I was indicating earlier, the Palaszczuk government's building industry fairness reforms are the most influential construction industry reforms seen in Queensland in a generation. They are absolutely seismic in their impact. They have shaken up the industry from top to bottom. We are immensely proud of these reforms. We undertook the most extensive industry consultation on a construction industry reform the state has ever seen. We continue to consult as we implement each stage of the reforms because it is critically important that we get these reforms right not just for Queensland's economy and not just for the Queensland construction industry but for every mum-and-dad business that depends on this industry to support their family.

We have taken though a measured staged approach to implementation to ensure that businesses have time to prepare for these important changes. As a government we undertook the first significant trial of project bank accounts, as they were named then. We did this to test reforms and iron out any unforeseen issues before asking the private sector to take them on too.

There have though been external factors related to the pandemic that are significantly impacting industry at the moment. Members would be aware of workforce and material shortages, significant price increases and incredibly high demand, and the entire industry is still on the tools really driving Queensland's flood recovery effort. That is why it was important that we took further steps to make sure that this rollout progresses in a way that supports both businesses and the community because right now we need builders out in the community focused on repairing and rebuilding thousands of homes.

Notwithstanding that, the implementation of project trust accounts is important and we will continue with its implementation. In December 2021 a health check was undertaken into industry readiness for the rollout of the remaining phases. This indicated challenges around COVID-19 conditions. We are aware of labour shortages and price rises. It identified some challenges around the compatibility of some accounting software. It also identified some challenges around awareness of the project trust account framework, particularly for contractors.

On 24 March this year, a proclamation was made to extend start dates for the remaining phases of the framework by just nine months. On 1 April next year, project trust accounts will expand to the private sector, local government statutory authorities and GOC contracts valued at \$3 million or more. From 1 October later in the year, full implementation will be achieved with project trust accounts applying to all eligible contracts valued at \$1 million or more.

We have continued to consult with industry at all stages of implementation to determine the best way to roll out each stage. By extending the time frames, it enables us to continue to deliver on our commitment to tradies. We are delivering the most significant building reforms in a generation. As I indicated earlier, this is the first jurisdiction to take the issue of securing pay for tradies and for subcontractors seriously and to implement reforms. I acknowledge the work of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission in the oversight of that project trust account regime.

Mr MARTIN: The Palaszczuk government is committed to creating a fairer building and construction industry and making sure everyone in the sector operates on a level playing field. Will you update the committee on the progress of this work and, in particular, the ongoing developer review?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I also thank you for giving a voice to this issue, for this review was a recommendation of this very committee, so I am pleased to be able to provide this report back. As outlined in the Department of Energy and Public Works Service Delivery Statements, there is the objective to be the trusted expert to government and the industry on regulatory reforms. They are reforms that deliver a record of safer, fairer and more sustainable construction industry outcomes.

With respect to the particular question around the developer review and the department's advice to government with respect to developers, we understand that developers are the driving force behind much of the work undertaken in the construction industry. We know that when developers do their job well we do see really positive outcomes in the industry. We also know it is contractors and tradies who bear the burden of incomplete work, payment disputes and dodgy building products. Stakeholders told us that the role of developers in the supply chain has to be examined to determine the impact of their conduct on building quality, payments and the broader financial viability of the industry. That is why I understand the committee recommended examining the role of those at the top of the contractual chain.

The review has considered the benefits of ensuring everyone is accountable for the financial security and sustainability of what is a \$47 billion industry. We appointed an independent panel to undertake this critical work. That is chaired by industry professional Alison Quinn.

Alison has more than 25 years experience as a CEO and senior executive in the property development and aged-care sector. The other panel members are construction advisory firm managing director Gina Patrick and respected lawyer John Payne. The panel held its first meeting in December 2021 and has met regularly since. They have also been supported by an industry reference group. I am informed they have held over 50 hours of targeted consultation with key industry stakeholders. I am advised by the panel chair that a discussion paper will soon be ready for release with broader public consultation from later this month.

We are looking forward to the results of the developer review to ensure fairness, safety and sustainability right throughout the contracting chain. We are very pleased to be conducting this review as a result of a recommendation by the members of this committee because we anticipate that recommendations from this review are likely to back better protections for Queensland construction industry companies, subbies and tradies.

Mr WALKER: Minister, the Palaszczuk government has made a strong commitment to ensure the Buy Queensland procurement policy makes investing in Queensland businesses and jobs a priority. Will you advise the committee on how the Buy Queensland approach has benefited Queenslanders since its introduction?

Mr de BRENNI: The Palaszczuk government has always put the jobs and services that Queenslanders rely on first and foremost. As members of the committee would be aware, the Queensland government invests around \$18 billion buying goods and services each year. I am proud to say that our government is committed to ensuring Queenslanders get maximum value for every dollar spent. Through our Buy Queensland procurement approach, we are committed to directing much of that investment back into local businesses here in Queensland.

I am pleased to inform the committee that, since we introduced our Buy Queensland procurement approach in September 2017, \$48 billion has been invested by the Palaszczuk government in Queensland businesses. That means \$48 billion to more than 64,700 Queensland businesses from Coolangatta to Charleville, Coorparoo to Cloncurry, and up to the cape. That includes \$9.34 billion and 29,300 businesses in the regions, and 87 per cent of the contracts that have been awarded via QTenders have gone to businesses with a Queensland presence. In 2020 we set a target to invest 25 per cent of our spend with Queensland small and medium enterprises. We are proud to report to the committee today that we have smashed that target. It is now 28.36 per cent.

I suspect that some members of the opposition think Buy Queensland is just a slogan, but our policy keeps Queensland taxpayers' dollars circulating in our state, creating jobs and investing in our economy. We are doing that because we unashamedly back decent, secure Queensland jobs. I remind those opposite who voted against this approach in this parliament that backing good Queensland jobs is exactly what our Buy Queensland approach does. I can tell all members of the committee that it is exactly what Queenslanders want from their government. When a government invests in projects big or small, when we buy things on behalf of mums and dads in cities or the regions, that investment delivers real value back to those communities. Investing in those regional communities in particular is the Palaszczuk government's priority. Whether it is \$199.5 million in this budget in priority regional water infrastructure projects, \$19.6 billion in education and trade, including TAFE services across the state, or \$23.6 billion for health care that we are very proud of, our policy for all of those investments is that we will Buy Queensland.

We know that the policy of those opposite is to sell Queensland out. We have continued to mature our procurement approach since we inherited the LNP's so-called procurement transformation approach. I am sure that the member for Everton would be very familiar with this. This approach was all about getting the lowest price. What must have been incredibly embarrassing for them was that they did not even reach halfway to their lowest price savings targets and all the while they were sending jobs to New South Wales, Christchurch and further afield to India. If that were not such a serious issue for Queensland jobs, that record would be laughable.

Even worse, the LNP in Canberra has not done much better either. They left Australian taxpayers with the most historically dubious legacy: forking out nearly \$3.5 billion on a botched submarine procurement deal. That is an incredible and disgraceful waste of Australian taxpayers' dollars. The LNP has shown that they are the poorest economic managers imaginable.

Mr MANDER: You forgot to start with 'Once upon a time'.

CHAIR: Member! The minister is just winding down.

Mr de BRENNI: Not only has the 2022-23 Queensland budget had to deal with the cost-of-living mess that the coalition left this nation here in Queensland but they have shown they are anti worker time and time again—

Mr MANDER: You did not support workers with JobKeeper!

CHAIR: Member for Everton, do not make me warn you at this stage. You are about to go to your questions. You want to be in the room for it.

Mr de BRENNI: I will conclude by reminding the committee that we know they are anti worker because they voted against Buy Queensland. They voted against a wage theft inquiry. They consistently went for the cheapest price at the expense of quality local jobs for Queenslanders and the businesses in which they work.

CHAIR: I now assume we are returning to the member for Everton for two quick questions.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, can you please advise the committee how much the Varghese review cost?

Ms Levy: I was not involved in the procurement of the Varghese review and I do not have the answer to that question.

Mr de BRENNI: Perhaps I could assist the member for Everton. That was a report commissioned by the Department of Energy and Public Works.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, I will redirect the question to the director-general. Director-General, can you please advise how much the Varghese report review cost?

Mr Martyn: The breakdown of expenditure in relation to the review of the QBCC was: \$198,000 to the leadership company, which is Mr Varghese; \$44,000 to Queensland University of Technology; \$126,000 to the Australia and New Zealand School of Government, which undertook a lot of comparative work; and a couple of other minor pieces of work to the order of about \$12,000, for a total of \$380,097.98.

Mr MANDER: Minister, recommendation 14 of the Varghese review says that priority should be given to establishing a sustainable funding model. With the construction industry under enormous pressure, will you rule out increasing any charges, levies or taxes on builders or building companies to meet this recommendation?

Mr de BRENNI: Perhaps I can answer that question in two parts. I can answer it in one part which goes to some of the revenue that the commission receives for the Home Warranty Scheme. The member asked a question earlier about wait times to process a Home Warranty Scheme application. If you are happy, I can answer that question too. That answer was already provided to the committee in response to estimates prehearing question on notice No. 14. It indicated that the median wait time to process these applications was 24 working days. That has already been provided.

As members know, the Varghese report made 17 important recommendations and 77 actions that set up a transformational program of reform to become a more customer and outcomes focused regulator. I think it would be fair to say that the breadth of tasks that have been asked of this regulator since we came to office in 2015 has grown significantly and its revenue base has not.

The work around the financial sustainability of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission progresses. The government will consult industry on any option that may impact the structure or frameworking of licensing fees. We do not have a firm position on those.

CHAIR: We have time for one quick question, and I welcome back the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: I have one question for the director-general. I note that there is some welcome funding in the budget for new housing and upgrades to current stock in the government employee housing scheme. Director-General, were any properties that were once owned under this scheme sold on the private market in the last financial year? If so, how many?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. Our approach to the management of the government employee housing stock generally is to dispose of stock where it is no longer needed in order to fund a reinvestment. We undertook a major review of that funding model. What that review found was that in many cases the location of the government housing stock was in areas where there was not a functioning private market—that is, small country towns where the idea of selling to reinvest did not actually work. That is why the advice was provided to government for a significant new equity injection into the government employee housing stock, which is what has been delivered in the budget.

We will continue from time to time to sell old houses. Frankly, in some places the average age of a house is 50 years and they are dilapidated. Sometimes a better way to utilise our stock is to sell it and actually invest in new housing stock. The significant investment by the government sets up a multiyear program of growth in government employee housing for frontline workers in communities across Queensland, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Mr BERKMAN: Is there any policy or process in place to see that housing stock owned by the government under that scheme is maintained in government hands for the purpose of social housing, given how drastically we know it is needed across the state at the moment? My apologies, more specifically I should say public housing as opposed to social housing.

Mr Martyn: I am advised that before a government employee house is sold it is offered to the department of housing to see if they can use it for their stock. Where it is disposed, it probably does not meet anybody's needs in some of these communities.

Mr BERKMAN: To the first question though, are you able to provide a number in terms of the number of houses that were sold in the previous financial year?

Mr Martyn: That is probably going to require a considerable amount of work to get, but I am happy to come back—

Mr BERKMAN: Is it a question that you could take on notice?

CHAIR: The minister would have to take it on notice. It is a question you can ask in the normal parliamentary sitting though.

Mr BERKMAN: Indeed. I have a long list of questions to ask in normal parliamentary sittings so if there is a way for estimates to perform its function here and allow me to get an answer to a question—

CHAIR: Do not tell me how it works. I have been doing this a little while and I appreciate that.

Mr de BRENNI: Through you, Chair, I may be able to assist. I can commit that the director-general will provide written advice to the member in relation to that. I think I can see what you are getting at—a question about whether or not housing stock is disposed that could otherwise be used for social housing. I think you indicated that.

Mr BERKMAN: Yes.

Mr de BRENNI: The director-general has indicated that this occurs in a market where there is not a viable use for it for other purposes and it is offered to the department of housing in the first instance. Many of these communities are places which have seen significant economic change. If the member is satisfied, the director-general will provide that advice to you in writing.

Mr BERKMAN: Sure.

CHAIR: It was not taken on notice but the director-general will get that information to you. The time is almost expired. Minister, do you have any final comments?

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. I thank all members of the committee for their inquiry this afternoon. I thank the parliamentary staff who do a stellar job. I thank the director-general and his team. I thank the staff of all Queensland agencies, including those who work in our independent authorities, our government owned corporations and the like. I thank my chief of staff and his team for putting together the material this afternoon. I thank members of the committee for their goodwill throughout the afternoon.

CHAIR: The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed estimates of expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement has now expired. I would like to thank the minister, the director-general and all the officials for your attendance. It is much appreciated by this committee. I once again thank Hansard and our secretariat staff in particular. We appreciate your work. The committee will now have a break and the hearing will resume at 5.30 pm for the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Resources.

Proceedings suspended from 5.15 pm to 5.30 pm.

ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—RESOURCES

In Attendance

Hon. SJ Stewart, Minister for Resources

Mr P Keene, Chief of Staff

Department of Resources


Mr M Cridland, Acting Director-General

Mr S Ferris, Deputy Director-General, Georesources

Ms C Venables, Acting Deputy-Director, Business and Corporate Partnership

Resources Safety & Health Queensland

Mr M Stone, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in Appropriation Bill 2022 for the portfolio of the Minister for Resources until 8.15 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 7 pm to 7.15 pm. I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. I also welcome the member for Condamine and the member for Lockyer to the committee. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of resources open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Chair. I will. Before I begin, I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I have some acknowledgements today: Mr Paul Keene, Chief of Staff; Mr Mark Cridland, Acting Director-General; Mr Shaun Ferris, Deputy Director-General, Georesources; Suzanne Stone, Acting Deputy Director-General, Lands; Ms Celia Venables, Acting Deputy Director-General, Business and Corporate Partnership; Mr Mark Stone, CEO of Resources Safety and Health Queensland; Mr Warwick Squire, CEO of GasFields Commission Queensland; and Ms Jane Pires, Land Access Ombudsman. I would also like to acknowledge all the committee members here this evening, the chair and the parliamentary staff with us today.

It continues to be an honour to serve Queenslanders as the Minister for Resources at a time when both our land and resource sectors are at critical junctures. As minister, the safety of Queensland's resources workforce continues to be my No. 1 priority. I continue to encourage industry to invest real effort in protecting workers from hazards wherever they may arise and no matter what time of the day or night.

I can announce today, following discussions with the chair of the Transport and Resources Committee, that they will initiate an inquiry into how the industry has acted on recommendations from the Coal Mining Board of Inquiry, which examined the explosion that took place at the Grosvenor mine in 2020, leaving five people seriously injured. The board of inquiry made 65 recommendations for improving safety and health in the mining industry, to the coalmining industry, Grosvenor mine, the Mining and Energy Union, Resources Safety and Health Queensland, and the Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee. The most important thing to come off a mine site is the workers, and the Palaszczuk government will always put the health and safety of Queenslanders first, which is why I welcome this parliamentary inquiry.

While it is often our mineral and energy resources that take the spotlight at these hearings, I would like to highlight some of the news from the land side of my portfolio as well. I am pleased to announce that consultation begins on Friday on officially renaming iconic Fraser Island as its Indigenous name, K'gari, a name meaning 'paradise'. We know it certainly is. K'gari forms part of the Butchulla people's creation story, which details how the island came to be, including the creation of the island's waterways, plants and animals. The Butchulla people have maintained a strong commitment to changing the name of the island itself after the national park changed in 2017 and the World Heritage area just last year.

Embracing traditional place names is something we can be proud of as Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk government is committed to using language that celebrates our First Nations people and the deep connection they hold to country, a connection that has existed for more than 60,000 years. The K'gari name change, if the community supports it, would recognise and honour the Butchulla people, their traditions, culture and continued connection to the land. The proposal will open for public consultation from this Friday, 5 August until 16 September this year.

Over to the resources side of my portfolio, I am proud to say that the sector continues to be a key cornerstone for the state's economy. It employs more than 77,000 Queenslanders and in this financial year is forecast to deliver more than \$7 billion in royalties. Our resources belong to all Queenslanders, and these royalties will be used to build hospitals and schools and employ teachers, doctors, nurses and police officers. They will help create better services in an area where many of these resource projects operate, and they will continue Queensland's great lifestyle, particularly in our regional communities.

In June we released the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, delivering on an important election commitment, which is a 30-year plan to drive jobs and prosperity in the sustainable resource industry. It is no secret that our government wants to harness the potential of new economy minerals, and the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan highlights the importance of growing this sector of the resource industry. The 2022-23 budget will help do this by transforming Queensland's fledgling new economy minerals sector into a long-term, pit-to-product mega industry. This budget has injected over \$40 million into the discovery, development and processing of these minerals that are needed for renewable and advanced technology. This multimillion dollar shot in the arm for the new economy minerals sector will fast-track projects and the good jobs and business opportunities that come with them.

Let me be clear: you cannot have renewable energy without a strong resource sector. As the world needs these minerals to decarbonise, the Palaszczuk government's vision is to do more than just produce these minerals. Our vision, as laid out in the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, is to process and manufacture our rich mineral resources generating highly skilled, highly paid, long-term jobs in regional Queensland. We are also boosting expenditure to find the next generation of minerals that will help decarbonise our economy. This budget includes an additional \$17.5 million over four years for exploration, particularly for the new economy minerals. This takes the total investment over five years to \$22.6 million to find the minerals and metals the world needs.

We have also dedicated \$10 million over two years to geoscientific research to find out more about identified deposits and potential new ways to mine them, and another \$5 million over two years for research to better define Queensland's new economy minerals potential. We have committed \$5.7 million over three years to expand Mackay's Resources Centre of Excellence and develop a future industries development hub to support new economy minerals projects. In a measure that will benefit the whole resource industry, the budget includes \$1.59 million to make mining and exploration assessment and approvals more efficient. These budget funds come on top of at least \$10 million already committed to a common user new economy minerals processing plant in Townsville. The plant will initially be used by vanadium miners but could be used for the abundance of other important new economy minerals in the north-west and north-east mineral provinces.

The Palaszczuk government's commitment to the 2022-23 budget is investing in a diversified and resilient resources industry, a sustainable future for our lands and, importantly, more good jobs for Queenslanders now and into the future. I would like to thank the chair and committee members for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to questions from members.

Mr WEIR: Minister, ministerial diaries published for the period from January to May this year disclose that the Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer all attended up to 15 CBRC meetings. Your ministerial diary does not list your attendance at a single CBRC. Why was the Minister for Resources excluded from the discussion regarding significant changes to the Queensland coal royalties scheme?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The member may or may not know that I am not part of the CBRC committee and that the issue of royalties actually lies with the Treasurer. That is why I have not appeared at any of those meetings.

Mr WEIR: Has the minister sought advice from the Treasurer or his department on how the new coal royalty might affect the cost structure of Queensland coal producers in this state?

Mr STEWART: What I will say in regard to your question is I met with the department of Treasury around their proposed changes and I have not received any further information about what those additional coal royalties will look like. I have not seen any modelling from Treasury or the coal companies. They have not met with me about that.

Mr WEIR: Minister, I refer to SDS page 1 where it says 'enable a resilient, responsible and sustainable resources industry'. Did the minister propose the changes to the coal royalties in this year's budget? If not, who did?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. No, I did not propose them. That is a matter for the Treasurer.

Mr WEIR: Minister, at the Queensland Resources Media Club event on 8 June 2022 the minister is purported to have told the audience he had been 'briefed on proposed budget changes'. When was the minister briefed on these changes and who was he briefed by?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Like I highlighted in my earlier response, I met with the Treasury department after I asked the Treasurer what the proposed royalties scheme may look like. I was briefed on the Tuesday of the same week, 7 June.

Mr WEIR: You were never, ever briefed on this increase in royalties before it was announced?

Mr STEWART: Yes, I just highlighted that I was briefed on 7 June, before the budget was announced. Yes.

Mr WEIR: I have a question of the director-general. I note the government's current advertising and PR campaign on the coal royalty hike. Major trading parties are questioning the sovereign risk of future investment in the Queensland resources sector. I ask: was sentiment analysis or research conducted prior to or as part of this campaign?

Mr Cridland: My department did not conduct any sentiment testing regarding this.

Mr WEIR: Could the director-general advise whether the advertising campaign was commissioned because of public sentiment around the royalty hike?

Mr Cridland: I am not sure that is within my—

Mr WEIR: Do you intend to do any research or analysis of the impact?

Mr Cridland: As the minister referenced in his answer, it is a matter for Treasury. They are the ones that undertook the analysis.

Mr WEIR: I will go back to the minister. On 17 February 2015 the Premier issued a media release in which she stated the following—

As we did in Opposition, my Government will consult with all stakeholders and listen to their views and concerns.

We need to work together to restore confidence in the economy, because when employers are confident, then more jobs are created and more money invested in our state.

As the minister appointed by the Premier, can you outline the steps you have taken to deliver on this commitment and note specifically the consultation that you undertook prior to the royalty increase?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I have highlighted several times that this is actually a question for the Treasurer, Chair. I do not have any purview or control of—

CHAIR: You have highlighted that several times. I am just seeing where the member is going with it. Feel free to—

Mr STEWART:—of royalties. I will say that I am very proud of my travels, connections and consultations and the work that I do in meeting with a whole range of stakeholders right across this state when it comes to my portfolio. In fact, since I have been minister my team has calculated that, excluding my travel between Townsville and Brisbane, I have travelled around 80,000 kilometres, which is twice the distance around the earth. That is going out to site meeting with people to gain an understanding about their particular issues.

When it came to our Resources Industry Development Plan, we consulted extremely widely right across Queensland to develop our draft. When the draft was proposed I then travelled to each and every one of those consultations bar two that we ran online, and I was online for those two consultations. When it comes to consultation, when it comes to the work that we do with our industry under my portfolio, I am very proud of the amount that we do. In reference to the member for Condamine, when he was at the media lunch, Ian Macfarlane actually stood up and said that they were consulted to death on that particular plan. I think the proof is in the pudding on that matter.

Mr WEIR: Let me state I am going to the confidence of the business of mining in Queensland. That is what I am asking my questions about. My next question is: what steps have you taken to restore the confidence of Japanese companies to invest in Queensland—that is a country that TIQ have named as Queensland's second largest trading partner—following the clear declaration made by the Japanese ambassador that this government's actions have fundamentally damaged the trust and goodwill built up over many years?

CHAIR: That it is seeking a bit of an opinion there I think, but anyway, Minister, if you—

Mr STEWART: I am happy to answer that. I thank the member for the question because the Japanese ambassador actually said that with regard to the royalties. I know that the Treasurer met with the Japanese ambassador that same week on the Friday morning to discuss those particular concerns, as he should because that is part of his portfolio. We will continue to work with our coal companies. I will continue to meet with CEOs and I will continue to undertake that work of building the trust and the confidence, which is particularly outlined in our Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan. That actually highlights the future of coal here in Queensland. Member for Condamine, I know you have read this document, but I will highlight it for the rest of the committee.

It very clearly says that the future of coal in Queensland is very bright and that there will be continued investment. We are seeing that continuing to happen because we know that the steel-making coal, which is 85 per cent of the exports in our state, comes out of Queensland, particularly in that Moranbah area and those areas where a lot of the coal companies that are owned by Japanese companies reside. That steel-making coal will continue to be mined and exported for a long time yet because, as we know, there is no commercially viable alternative to making steel and so it will be in huge demand. The information we have received from the steel-making manufacturers, bearing in mind that around 1.8 billion tonnes of steel is produced each year, is that they will continue to use our high-quality steel-making coal well into the future.

Mr WEIR: Minister, you were talking about businesses being confident in the industry and about the resources plan. I refer to the Resources Industry Development Plan, page 10, which states 'a resilient, responsible and sustainable Queensland resources industry that grows as it transforms'. How does increasing coal royalty rates to now make us the highest-taxing jurisdiction in the world, according to Wood Mackenzie, comply with that stated purpose of your plan?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I am confident that, despite those global pressures we are seeing around the world because of the war in Ukraine, we are seeing those increased and accelerated prices. We have seen how quickly those geopolitical issues can rise and seriously destruct global commodity supply chains. Of course, that has led to the increase in those spot prices for coal. This government has long held a position that we support coal projects so long as they stack up financially, environmentally and socially, and our position has not changed.

I also remind the member for Condamine that these coal royalties got bipartisan support when they were introduced into the parliament. The LNP supported it. The Katters supported it. One Nation supported it. The Greens supported it. Our Independents supported it. When you come in here and ask about confidence around these royalties, remember that these royalties are for the resources that everyday Queenslanders own. You own them; the member for Gregory owns them; I own them. These are owned by Queenslanders. When you see these coal companies making record prices—this is the highest price that coal has ever reached, and the Treasurer has introduced these additional top tiers when those record prices are there—this is just saying to Queenslanders, 'We deserve our fair share.' That is what mums and dads say to me when they talk to me about this—that is, when those multinational companies are making superprofits from our coal, they just want their fair share. As the Treasurer has highlighted, the royalties will go back into particularly the targeted funds around investing back into our hospitals. The new progressive royalties arrangements follow, as you know, 10 years of royalty stability for the coal sector, and the unanimous support of the Queensland parliament for these new coal royalties arrangements promised further political stability for the industry moving forward.

Mr WEIR: Minister, I once again refer to the recent hike in coal royalties. As we have seen, Queensland gas is an essential component of supply to the east coast domestic gas market. Given the unforeseen royalty increases on the coal sector, can Queensland gas providers expect a royalty increase as well?

CHAIR: That is a bit of a stretch there with a hypothetical question, but, Minister, if you have an answer there—

Mr WEIR: Business confidence.

CHAIR: We will not knock that one back. We will see where we go with it.

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Chair, for your guidance on that one because that was going to be the issue I was going to raise. You are asking me, I believe, a hypothetical, member for Condamine, which is outside my control. That is a matter for the Treasurer around those—

Mr MILLAR: You do not have a briefing note ready to go?

CHAIR: Member for Gregory, come on! The minister is answering, even answering your hypothetical questions—

Mr MILLAR: We did not know about the coal royalties.

CHAIR:—and I think that is really good.

Mr WEIR: Minister, in my discussions with the gas industry, it is something that it is very concerned about. Can you give a guarantee to the gas industry that it will not suffer a similar fate?

Mr STEWART: Again, that is outside of my control and outside of my purview. That is a question for the Treasurer and is a question that you would have asked, no doubt, of the Treasurer during his estimates hearings.

CHAIR: You have the opportunity when parliament next sits to ask questions as well.

Mr WEIR: Minister, I note in today's *Courier-Mail* that Queensland is already doing the heavy lifting when it comes to providing for Australia's domestic gas supply. Can the minister guarantee that Queensland energy producers will not be unfairly treated because of shortfalls in other states to ultimately keep Queensland gas prices down?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Queensland no doubt, as you have heard us say, is certainly doing the heavy lifting when it comes to our domestic gas supply. As you have heard me say in parliament, we have released over 20,000 square kilometres of land exclusively for the Australian domestic supply. In the 2021-22 financial year, around 26 petajoules flowed from Queensland to southern states via the south-west Queensland pipeline. To put this in some sort of perspective for everyone in the chamber today, one petajoule of gas can power up to 19,000 homes per year. I will say that again: one petajoule can power up to 19,000 homes per year, so that is nearly half a million homes in the southern states being powered by Queensland gas. For the same period, 51 petajoules were supplied to support Queensland gas powered electricity generation and about 111 petajoules for Queensland manufacturers and households.

We know that additional supply is the best mechanism to ensure reliability of supply to the domestic market. We are not only increasing domestic gas supply through this land release process; we are also encouraging greater diversity of suppliers and increased competition, and I know that this approach is working. In March 2018 Senex Energy's Project Atlas was awarded the first Australian market supply condition tenure and is now supplying gas to the east coast market for production of electricity and everyday consumer products such as bricks and beverage bottles. Senex's customers include CSR Building Products, Aurora, Visy Glass, Alinta Energy, CleanCo Queensland, Southern Oil Refining and Adbri. Senex Energy's Project Atlas is currently producing 12 petajoules of gas to the domestic market on an annual basis and it has announced plans to expand its production to 18 petajoules by the first quarter of 2023. Again, to put this into perspective, 18 petajoules is equivalent to the energy used by approximately 342,000 homes in a year.

Also since January of this year, APLNG has been supplying gas to Incitec Pivot, Orica and Queensland Nitrates from an area that was also conditioned to supply to local manufacturers. Here in Queensland we are continually looking at ways that we can facilitate the unlocking of additional gas reserves and connecting these to market. We have committed \$5 million to investigate the feasibility and options of a new gas pipeline to connect the currently stranded areas of the Bowen Basin in Central Queensland to the Australian east coast gas market or other regional centres of demand. On 6 January this year the final report to the Bowen Basin gas pipeline concept study was released on my

department's website and now we are currently progressing to the second phase of that project: a structured market engagement to assess the commercial feasibility of a gas pipeline to the market's perspective.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I welcome the member for Maiwar to the chamber. Do you have a question?

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks kindly, Chair. I will put my first question to the director-general, if I might. Last week during estimates I put a question to the director-general in the science session about the SLATS report that you would be aware was released on 30 December last year. They suggested that it was a question for you given that the resources minister released it. Director-General, when was that report made available for release by the Department of Resources?

Mr Cridland: Thank you for the question. As I was not here at that time, I will refer to the advice I have received. I only started in May this year, but my understanding is that the SLATS report for 2018-19 was released on 30 December 2021. The release followed a stakeholder briefing by the Department of Environment and Science in late November 2021 on the new peer review technology which underpinned the report.

Mr BERKMAN: Okay, but I was actually trying to get at when it was available for release. We are aware it was released on 30 December, which, I guess, is a rather inconvenient time for anyone interested in a report like that. I am trying to be as direct as I can, Chair, so the question is really more about when it could have been released earlier. It was after that briefing in November? Is that what I can take from your answer?

Mr Cridland: That is what I am taking from the advice, yes. The briefing did not occur until late November and it was released in December.

Mr BERKMAN: Okay; thank you. I will move on to a question around the Resources Industry Development Plan, if I could, Director-General. When it was released last month the deadline for a decarbonisation plan was pushed back to 2027, so four years later than the deadline proposed in the consultation draft. Can you advise the committee how much funding the government has allocated to develop and implement this decarbonisation plan and what it will include?

Mr Cridland: Thank you for the question. The Department of Environment and Science has the lead on developing the decarbonisation policy framework. We are assisting them but they have the lead, so you would have to refer questions of funding to them.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. I will. I have a related question which I think will fall to you. Again, the consultation draft that was released included a requirement for industry to develop plans by 2023 to decarbonise their operations, but this requirement, as I understand it, was removed from the final plan. Director-General, what was the basis of the decision to remove this requirement?

Mr Cridland: Thank you for the question. As my understanding, the draft plan as released was out for consultation, including with government agencies, and as a result of that feedback the time frames of between 2022 and 2027 were inserted. That does not mean that it is 2027 until we have them. That was the time frame agreed to for the final draft of the plan.

Mr BERKMAN: I will go one more. In fact, I will loop back around to the first question I asked before, if I could. I do not know, Mr Cridland, whether you are able to answer this. In relation to the SLATS report, is there a reason the report was not released between that briefing in November 2021 and the final release date of New Year's Eve eve, as it was, last year?

Mr Cridland: Apologies, I am unable to answer that. As I said, I commenced in May of this year so I do not have line of sight on that.

Mr BERKMAN: In that case, if I could put the same question to the minister. Is there a reason why the report was kept hidden for that month and dropped on the day before New Year's Eve?

CHAIR: Member, we are going to accept the question, but can you tone down the way you put the question.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I reject the premise that it was hidden away. We received a briefing in late November and then we received the report in early December. It then gave us time to actually look through what the report said and for us to cross reference. So basically within the month that we received it we then published it.

CHAIR: You have a couple of questions on this line?

Mr BERKMAN: Yes. Without intending to cast aspersions or make any imputations about the timing of the release, was any consideration given to a later release date when perhaps half the state was not on holidays or otherwise occupied on the day before New Year's Eve?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I was still working so for me it was just another day at work. However, what I will say is that this was a very different report. This was not the same series of images, it was done under a very different system, and so we needed to make sure that we understood the report. The information was provided to me by stakeholders and then, as I said, we were briefed in late November. We then received those results, as I said, in December. It gave us time as a department, and myself and my team, to actually look at that report and then we published. One of the commitments that we did make was that we would publish it that year, so 2021. We did.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate it.

CHAIR: We will now go to government questions. Minister, will you please advise what actions the Palaszczuk government and Resources Safety and Health Queensland have undertaken in response to the board of inquiry?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. It is critical that Queenslanders can be confident the resources industry is doing everything that it possibly can to ensure the safety and health of the workers they employ. I welcome the inquiry that you are going to conduct as a committee. The most important thing to come off the mine site, as you know, Chair, is its workers. The Palaszczuk government will always put the health and safety of Queenslanders first. Every worker must be confident of their safety on the job and their ability to speak out and up about safety.

Our government is always thankful that the five coalmine workers who were injured in that explosion at Grosvenor are recovering physically. However, no Queensland worker should go through what they have experienced. I understand the independent regulator, Resources Safety and Health Queensland, is still in the process of considering action against individuals in relation to the Grosvenor incident and I await their decision.

The Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry made a total of 65 recommendations in its two reports. The board of inquiry's final report makes for some disturbing reading, particularly about the consequences of placing coal production ahead of safety, about failing to recognise the gravity of precursor incidents and the failure to properly account for and report them, both internally and to the regulator. I have raised these issues while meeting with numerous stakeholders regarding the board of inquiry's recommendations, including the Queensland Resources Council, Anglo American, the mining energy union and other workers' representatives. Resources Safety and Health Queensland, the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health Kate du Preez, as well as briefing opposition members, the member for Burdekin and the shadow minister, the member for Condamine, on the contents of this report. I have commenced frequent industry round tables with coal, mineral and gas sectors to ensure an open and honest dialogue occurs regarding safety across these sectors.

I am updated by the independent regulator, Resources Safety and Health Queensland, every fortnight on its progress against the 31 recommendations it received. I am advised Resources Safety and Health Queensland is developing a suite of legislative proposals for consultation with stakeholders in response to other recommendations it received to further the outcomes of the inquiry. Among its recommendations to the regulator the board endorsed improvements already underway and recommended this work to continue.

I have also initiated an industry-wide safety reset similar to the activity undertaken across the mining and quarrying sector in 2019 and focusing on the principle findings from both the board of inquiry and the Brady fatality review.

Finally, when I received the board's report I wrote to industry through the Queensland Resources Council as the peak body representing Queensland's coalmining industry asking that they develop and share their action plan for progressing the board's recommendations and I am updated quarterly on that progress. I have called upon Grosvenor's operator Anglo American and the mining industry as a whole to take the lead in bringing in change to ensure the safety of our workers and to invest real effort in protecting them from hazards wherever they may arise at any time of the day or night. This parliamentary inquiry will help shine a light even further on the issue and I look forward to seeing the committee's report in the future.

Mr WALKER: With reference to page 1 of the SDS and the implementation of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, can the minister please provide an update on actions taken by his department to improve coexistence outcomes in gasfields communities?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for Mundingburra for the question. This is really an important question. I am sure the member for Condamine will agree. Sustainable coexistence is a key ingredient for the growth of our resources industry and in practice must include a positive legacy for communities to ensure its success. There must be buy-in from resource companies, landholders, communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people if all parties involved are to develop long-lasting, genuine relationships which are mutually beneficial. It is a delicate concept that needs to be nurtured by all parties involved to be truly sustainable.

Chair, I have always said that this government expects all parties involved in achieving sustainable coexistent outcomes, including operators, landholders and communities, to meet their obligations under our resources framework. This framework balances the rights and interests of resource companies with landholders and communities and minimises and manages environmental impacts across the state. The importance of this framework cannot be overstated. The GasFields Commission Queensland's *Industry snapshot: Shared landscapes* from April of 2021 states that 4,504 conduct and compensation agreements, or CCAs, were in place in Queensland in the 2020 financial year, with more than \$702 million paid in total cumulative compensation to landholders.

The value-add to Queensland's economy when communities and resource companies work together is absolutely significant. We want these companies to leave a positive economic and social legacy in places where they operate. Fostering coexistence is a key focus area of our Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan and our 30-year vision for the resources industry outlines a number of actions which aim to improve outcomes. We have committed to publishing and implementing principles for coexistence in the Land Access Code, which is best practice guidelines for communication between resource companies and landholders. As the relevant resource company must provide a copy of the Land Access Code to landholders with an initial entry notice and negotiation notice, incorporating coexistence principles in this document will ensure that both parties are aware of government expectations.

Further, we have also committed to review land access and coexistence institutions, such as the Land Access Ombudsman and the GasFields Commission Queensland, to ensure that they are well aligned, contemporary and efficient. In particular, this review is investigating the scope and functions of the two aforementioned bodies to see whether a single entity would be more appropriate and if their functions would be expanded or altered. Additionally, the review is also assessing whether interdepartmental roles and responsibilities in this space are clear and easy to access and how duplication and overlapping can be reduced for coexistence issues such as water and subsidence. I am advised by my department that this work is well underway and progressing well.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention the work being done by the GasFields Commission in conjunction with the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment, or OGIA, in relation to subsidence. This is an important, proactive and data-driven piece of work that builds on OGIA's underground water impact report and will assist government in gaining a better understanding of the impacts of coal seam gas in relation to subsidence.

Further, the GasFields Commission has released a discussion paper outlining the existing protections and how they could potentially apply to the agricultural sector should CSG induced subsidence result as an economic impact to the business. There are already a number of safeguards in place to make sure gas companies are doing the right thing, but this review will allow stakeholders to give their views freely. I look forward to seeing the final report from the commission in due course.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the State Valuation Service, can you advise why the Queensland government did not change the valuations act to amend property valuations following the floods in February?

Mr STEWART: As the minister responsible for valuations, I have two goals for the program. Goal No. 1 is to provide individual valuations that are not decided by a politician but are decided by an independent statutory officer under the Land Valuation Act. My second goal is that the valuation methodology is transparent and appealable. It is remarkable that every land valuation issued in Queensland every year is available on the Department of Resources open data portal. If you want a valuation to be independent, transparent and appealable, you end up with a system like the one we have here in Queensland. There is legislation that gives the methodology and time frames in which valuations must be done. I raise these two points so that we can acknowledge that no politician should be deciding individual valuations. I support the process where the valuation is determined independent of politicians.

The flood event in February was difficult for everyone and I know: I have been through similar in Townsville. That weather event impacted every local council in the south-east corner of Queensland. It impacted as far north as Gladstone, south to the New South Wales border and as far inland as the Somerset Regional Council. In February, when the flooding occurred, there was no capacity for the State Valuation Service to meet their legislative requirements to have valuations delivered by 31 March as well as redo valuations for flood-affected properties. Not meeting that 31 March date required legislation to be considered urgently and passed by parliament. I ultimately decided not to rush legislation into parliament and I want to provide some information about my decision with regard to that.

Local councils needed valuations to build their budgets. In February 2022, some councils had been using the valuation data for months to build their budgets. The disruption to local council budgets would have been substantial. My second consideration was based around the advice I received from the State Valuation Service about what might happen if legislation was rushed into parliament. I take this opportunity to commend the State Valuation Service for the frank advice they provided me in February.

The facts with which I was provided were that approximately 1.5 million land valuations statewide were either already with local councils or nearly with Australia Post. The best estimate available in February was that around 12,000 properties were directly impacted by flooding, but I was advised that a conclusive list of impacted properties would not be available until weeks after the flooding event. Finally, I was advised that the properties that had the potential for the greatest change in valuations were the ones that had never flooded before but did so in February of that year. The data on newly flooded properties definitely was not available and there was no clear pathway for getting that data in a timely manner.

The other important point weighing against attempting to rush legislation was that any legislation was not going to change the valuation method. I will say that again: any legislation was not going to change the valuation methodology. The property market post COVID-19 restrictions was growing so strongly that there was always a chance that any valuations that were redone because of a change in the law might have actually gone up. Ultimately, I decided that the disruption from changing legislation outweighed any benefit that could be delivered from changing the valuation legislation.

There were a couple of other considerations that I had in not pursuing legislation. While they did not relate directly to the Land Valuation Act, they did contribute to my decision. The Valuer-General had provided me with information about how the State Valuation Service had set up a flood information service to help people with valuations and that could help people who had been flooded access the objection process. Those additional information services were set up proactively by the State Valuation Service and they would help people access objections or requests for re-valuation due to natural disaster damage.

The other matter I was acutely aware of is that valuations themselves are only an input to local council rates and land tax. Local councils and state government would both have time, in preparing their budgets, to consider measures that could directly assist ratepayers and taxpayers impacted by floods. As I previously indicated, even if legislation had been rushed to parliament and passed to re-evaluate flood impacted properties, valuations might not have gone down given the strong property market showing that it was rising.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS and the budget funding of \$5.7 million for stage 2 of the Resources Centre of Excellence in Mackay, can you please outline what this expansion will entail and the opportunities the centre will provide?

Mr STEWART: I know that the member for Mundingburra is a big supporter of our METS sector and is looking forward to seeing for himself the Resources Centre of Excellence in Mackay.

Mr WALKER: Absolutely.

Mr STEWART: The Palaszczuk government is committed to creating a diverse resources industry and more good Queensland jobs, particularly in regional Queensland, where the member for Mundingburra and I both live. That is why I was so pleased to join with the Treasurer in June of this year in Mackay to announce, as part of the budget, a \$5.7 million investment over three years into the Resources Centre of Excellence. Nearly two years to the day after the Treasurer and I announced the additional funding, the centre was able to open after the government joined forces with the Mackay Regional Council and invested \$7 million to help create jobs and prosperity in the region. The centre has been incredibly successful since it has helped solidify Mackay as one of the world's best hubs for mining expertise and innovation in mining equipment, technology and services.

This stage 2 expansion will provide the Resources Centre of Excellence with the ability to extend the capability and capacity of the already highly successful centre to include a new future industries development hub. The hub will deliver a new facility that meets current and emerging resources industry needs as well as continue to embed the Resources Centre of Excellence's successful model of connecting the brightest minds in resources, research, education, technology and METS to help shape the industry of the future. I am informed by the general manager of the centre, Steven Boxall—he is one of my past students—that interest in stage 2 has been very strong, and he is confident that any new additions to the centre will continue to build industry capacity in the region.

It is no secret that the Mackay region has a long and important history as a resources hub. We know that we can harness the region's existing skills and experience as the emerging new economy minerals sector continues to grow and existing industries transform. That is why one of the key focus areas in our Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan recognises the importance of building a safe and resilient workforce that is diverse, inclusive and equipped for the jobs for the future. I can advise the committee that my department is working collaboratively with the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to develop a Queensland resources industry workforce plan in acknowledgement that the skills of the future will be different from the skills needed today. It is essential that industry and government plan for this change, and I look forward to being updated on that piece of work as it progresses.

Further, our QRIDP includes funding for the Queensland Future Skills Partnership, or QFSP, an initiative led by BHP Mitsubishi Alliance, TAFE Queensland and CQ University. The Queensland Future Skills Partnership has successfully defined the first wave of new skills required to support automation and technology advances in Queensland's resources industry. This government is investing \$1.2 million for the Queensland Future Skills For All Program that will allow for current micro-credentials and qualifications developed by QFSP to be made broadly available to those seeking to upskill and reskill in autonomous technology fields. There is \$2.1 million in our QRIDP to fill high-level skill gaps by developing pathways to higher education courses.

This government understands that future workforce needs will be met through a range of pathways. With funding for the Resources Centre of Excellence and the Future Skills Partnership, we are investing in skills for tomorrow for the resources industry today.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, with reference to page 5 of the SDS, can you advise what lease compliance activities are funded for island resort leases?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for Stretton for the question. Very briefly, my department under the Land Act administers approximately 19,000 leases across the state. Those leases cover a huge range of purposes—everything from state land used for council parks or surf-lifesaving clubs to entire commercial or industrial businesses. Leases also include agricultural leaseholders and, yes, even tourism leases. There are 35 leases administered by the Department of Resources for island tourism resorts. Those leases are as unique and varied as any type of lease the resources hold. They cater for everything from the largest operation running on Hamilton Island to boutique eco lodge and tourism operations like on Long Island and Elysian Island.

It is no secret that natural disasters and the extremely high Australian dollar of the 2000s and 2010s had a dramatic impact on some of these island resorts. In 2015 approximately half of these resorts were not operating. Since 2015, as a government we have invested in public infrastructure and removal of derelict buildings at some of these islands. There has been general improvement in the number of resorts operating, with the number of non-operating resorts now down to four. The Department of Resources has actively targeted its compliance program at non-operational island tourism leases over the past 24 months and that effort continues this year. The non-operational tourism resorts that are on leases are: Great Keppel Island, Double Island, Lindeman Island, Brampton Island and South Molle Island.

I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about efforts to make sure lease are complying with their conditions. With respect to Great Keppel Island, the recent sale discussions between the current leaseholder, Tower Holdings, and Hancock Prospecting did not proceed. The reasons for that are a matter between the two organisations. I understand that the Department of Resources will continue to work with current leaseholders Tower Holdings on the future plans for Great Keppel Island. In the meantime, I understand the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning is continuing its master planning process and that Tower Holdings has begun discussions with other potential buyers.

The four remaining non-operational tourism leases have been actively managed as part of my department's compliance program in the past year. Those activities will continue into the future. For the information of the committee, I can confirm that the leaseholder of Double Island Resort near Cairns has agreed to a notice to remediate their compliance with the lease conditions progressively by March 2023. That undertaking requires public and day-use facilities to be progressively repaired and open to the public between now and March 2023. It also requires the operation of the resort consistent with lease conditions by March 2023 and includes monthly reporting to ensure that progress continues to be made.

Lindeman Island had its most recent compliance audit completed on 30 June this year. I am informed that the Department of Resources had reported the results of that audit to the leaseholder and was preparing to issue a show cause notice as to why the lease should not be forfeited. While that notice was being prepared for the Lindeman Island lease, it was put to the market. Resources will now await the results of sale process before we consider the next steps. Compliance audits for South Molle and Brampton islands are continuing. I am informed that the results of those audits should be made available later this year.

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister. We now go to the member for Gregory.

Mr MILLAR: Thank you, Mr Chair. Ministerial diaries published disclose you met with the QRC on 23 February. They also list that the minister met with Peabody on 24 February, New Hope on 31 March and Whitehaven on 21 April. Minister, at any of these meetings did you take the opportunity to consult with the stakeholders and listen to their views and concerns regarding proposed changes to the coal royalty regime?

Mr STEWART: No, I did not, because I was unaware of any proposed changes to the coal royalties—and neither were they.

Mr MILLAR: Director-General, in order to deliver the department's objective as set out in the Service Delivery Statements, clear and consistent communication between the responsibility of the minister and the department is vital. Have you or any senior members of your department ever withheld information from your minister so they can maintain plausible deniability?

Mr Cridland: Thank you for the question. The answer is no.

Mr MILLAR: 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 Cridland: The answer is no. We have a very respectful relationship between the minister's office, myself and my department.

Mr MILLAR: Thank you, Director-General.

Mr WEIR: Can the director-general please confirm how many expressions of interest were received in the EOI process for coal and gas tenures? How many of these applications were unsuccessful in reaching the tender process?

Mr Cridland: I might ask the Deputy Director-General of Georesources to come and address that for us, please?

Mr Ferris: I thank the member for the question. I actually do not have that specific level of information in terms of the number of expressions of interest that were submitted to us as part of the process in relation to tenders. I am happy to work with my team and come back very quickly in relation to the specific details of the numbers of the EOIs that were submitted as part of that process. My apologies.

Mr WEIR: Is that taken on notice?

CHAIR: No, the minister can only decide whether to do that.

Mr STEWART: We will get back to you by the conclusion. If we do not, we will assess it.

CHAIR: They are committing to get that answer back to you during the term of this hearing.

Mr WEIR: As part of that, was there any modelling of the economic opportunity for the state that was lost in terms of the lost potential supply of gas and coal to the market from that process?

Mr Ferris: My apologies, member. Is that a question for me or for my director-general? In relation to—

Mr WEIR: The lost economic opportunity for the state, and what is the lost potential supply of gas and coal to the market?

Mr Ferris: No, we have not done that modelling.

Mr WEIR: Do we intend to? There are no plans to do that modelling? That is not something you do as a matter of course?

Mr Ferris: No, we have not done that modelling.

Mr WEIR: Director-General, the federal government recently finalised the geological and bioregional assessment of the Cooper Basin. This work was undertaken by Geosciences Australia. The CSIRO and the Queensland government also participated in this process. The assessment concluded that resource development could occur without material impacts to the unique environmental attributes of the area. Can you confirm why, after three consecutive terms, this government is still effectively holding a moratorium on resource development in that region?

Mr Cridland: Chair, I think that is a matter of policy.

CHAIR: I was just going to say that. You have not been in the role that long, but perhaps the member could direct that question to the minister? Do you want to restate the question? I think the minister heard it.

Mr WEIR: Yes.

Mr STEWART: I will answer, rather than getting the member for Condamine to repeat. I can just clarify that there is no moratorium on that. Companies in the Cooper Basin have been producing oil and natural gas for decades. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensure that the protection of the Lake Eyre Basin's streams and water courses is balanced with economic development of the region. While this policy work is underway, my department has deferred releasing new petroleum exploration acreage in the Cooper. I understand that there are large, undeveloped reserves of natural gas in the Cooper. This gas has the potential to place Queensland in a strong position to continue to supply domestic and international markets well into the future.

Queensland has been doing the heavy lifting in relation to supplying natural gas to the east coast market—to the point where I actually needed a hernia operation!—and our liquefied natural gas export industry is a major economic driver for the state.

While there are no quick fixes to the issue of the National Electricity Market, we know that unlocking more gas and supplying it to the domestic market will be critical. This is particularly the case for the medium to long term, where gas will play an important role in securing energy supplies and providing flexibility as coal generation units are phased out. Ensuring an ongoing supply of natural gas is vital for our economic wellbeing going forward. That is why we are working hard to ensure we get the policy settings right for the Lake Eyre Basin.

Mr WEIR: Director-General, I refer to the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan reference as a highlight in the SDS at page 1. We note that the consultation period with industry for the QRIDP took around 20 months. How much was spent on the consultation process broken down by consulting fees, events and travel?

Mr Cridland: I do not have to hand that breakdown as you have requested it. I will see if we can seek that information before the end of this session.

Mr WATTS: Director-General, with reference to the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan and the consultation period of 20 months, was the issue of royalty increases ever canvassed during all of the consultation process?

Mr Cridland: As the minister has referenced a number of times, royalties are a matter for the Treasurer.

Mr WATTS: I am curious about the consultation period that was conducted by the department and whether during the consultation with all of the stakeholders over the 20-month period royalties ever came up.

Mr Cridland: No.

Mr WATTS: Further on the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, obviously Department of Resources personnel attended various different regional workshops as they travelled around doing that consultation over the 20 months. How many of the team who were involved in that consultation process are still employed by the department?

Mr Cridland: I am not aware of any changes to the team, but it is before my line of sight when that consultation occurred so I will have to check on that for you.

Mr WATTS: If you could, please. I note that the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan was announced with \$68.5 million of funding. I am curious how this figure was arrived at. Is it appropriate given it is a stated intention of the plan to set out a 30-year plan for Queensland's most valuable export industry?

Mr Cridland: The \$68.5 million is over the first five years of a 35-year plan. It is also spread across a number of departments. This is a whole-of-government plan. The Department of Resources specifically received \$39.8 million over five years for various activities.

Mr WATTS: As you were going through the consultation process in developing the plan, was any feedback sought from prospective producers of critical minerals as to proposed royalties or royalty increases?

Mr Cridland: The only issue I am aware of that the new economy minerals representatives raised with us is the need for support from government during their early establishment days from the lease fees, which was part of the actions that were approved and funded by government.

Mr WATTS: No royalty discussions were had—

Mr Cridland: Not that I am aware of.

Mr WATTS:—in the consultation on the Resources Industry Development Plan?

Mr Cridland: Not that I am aware.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, I am not having a go at you, but because the director-general keeps having to take his mask on and off, if you are continuing to question him could you let him know, to save him a bit discomfort? If the line of questioning is to the director-general, can we clarify that for his sake, please?

Mr WATTS: My next question is to the minister, so the director-general can leave his mask on. Minister, I refer to the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, at page 47, which states that 'regulatory changes where appropriate are subject to a 12-week consultation process consistent with the Queensland government guide to better regulation'. In that context, what does 'where appropriate' mean?

Mr STEWART: 'Where appropriate' means looking at the context of what the individual changes might be. I do not have a specific example and you have not asked me for a specific example. It just means where appropriate.

Mr WATTS: Your own documents prove that the consultation process has not been 12 weeks. I am wondering why sometimes you would not use the 'where appropriate' 12-week period.

Mr STEWART: I disagree, because when it comes to consultation on QRIDP we consulted for weeks and weeks. As the member for Condamine has already highlighted, Ian Macfarlane from the Queensland Resources Council said that he was consulted to death on the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan.

Mr WATTS: Not about the royalties.

Mr STEWART: You did not ask about the royalties. If that is a question, I would like to add to that. As I have highlighted many times, royalties are within the purview of the Treasurer. Those questions are properly directed to him.

Mr MILLAR: But you are the resources minister.

CHAIR: The minister has said and repeated—and I will not repeat the word 'repeated' again—that that is within the Treasurer's purview. I think we have clarified that for the benefit of this committee beyond all doubt.

Mr WATTS: I understand that the royalty introduction and change of royalties is within the Treasurer's purview, but if you are developing a 30-year plan surely there should have been some discussion of royalties in the development of that plan. Regardless of what Treasury may or may not do, would it not have been appropriate to seek input from industry on one of their major cost bases such as their royalty payment to the Queensland government for mineral extraction?

Mr STEWART: We are very proud of the work we have done on our 30-year vision for what the resources industry looks like. This is about working with industry, working with the community and working with government collaboratively to make sure we get the best out of the opportunities we see ahead us. As you have highlighted, there was an extensive amount of consultation undertaken. During that consultation phase and during the development of both the draft and the final plan the royalties were not part of any discussions because they are not within my purview. They are a matter for the

Treasurer. It was not raised by any of stakeholders, including resources companies. It was not raised by the Queensland Resources Council. It was not discussed, but it is a matter for the Treasurer when it comes to determining royalties and it is within his purview.

Mr WATTS: Minister, are you concerned that Queensland as a jurisdiction has been slipping down the Fraser Institute ranking in terms of international investment and attractiveness? Does the minister believe that the coming year's report will reflect the change in royalties that has been administered in Queensland?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I disagree with what you are suggesting there. While the report is one of a few ongoing global surveys that allow for some form of interjurisdictional comparison, I note the sample size varies across jurisdictions as well. Any apparent trends may be influenced by individual responses when sample sizes are in fact so small.

The report confirms yet again that Queensland has remained in the world's top 20 jurisdictions for overall investment attractiveness for mining and exploration. Queensland ranked fourth highest amongst Australian jurisdictions and ranked 18th out of 84 jurisdictions on this measure in 2021. Rather than going backwards, I think what this data is showing us, as you have highlighted the Fraser Institute, is that we are improving. Jurisdictions' overall investment attractiveness is made up of two main elements—the policy environment and the pure mineral potential. I am pleased to note that the perception of Queensland's mineral exploration policy has improved since 2017. Queensland's mineral exploration policy is currently ranked 21 out of 84 jurisdictions and the third highest jurisdiction in Australia according to this index. In terms of our mineral prospective potential, Queensland ranked 19th out of 84 jurisdictions, which is the fifth highest in Australia.

The Queensland government is committed to working with the resources sector to continue to improve our processes and adapt to an ever-changing global market. That is why our Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, which we have done extensive consultation with, is so important. The plan supports exploration investment in Queensland by focusing on improving our regulatory processes, removing barriers to industry growth and delivering actions that responsibly unlock resources for the future.

I am pleased to note we are already seeing strong exploration results in the Queensland resources sector particularly for minerals. For the 12 months to March 2022, \$727 million in exploration expenditure was invested in Queensland. This included \$303 million in mineral exploration expenditure where we saw strong growth of almost 44 per cent year on year.

Mr WEIR: Minister, going back to land valuations for a moment, you outlined the difficulties of changing or rushing to change legislation. There were other options open and they are not without precedent. In 2011, after the Brisbane floods, the then Labor premier Anna Bligh wrote to the Valuer-General and asked him not to delay the valuation of land following those floods. Why didn't you take that option? That would not have involved changing legislation.

Mr STEWART: I highlighted very extensively during my answer to the question from the member for Stretton the processes that I undertook after discussing with the Valuer-General his concerns at that particular time. He assured me, as I have already highlighted, that changing legislation would not in fact alter the methodology associated with valuations, as you know. It is an independent process, as you know.

During our discussion, given the way that the market was so red hot with the property sales that were going on, there was genuine concern for the impact any revaluation process would have on our mums and dads and their properties. The decision I made rests very comfortably with me. I was not going to race legislative changes in and that we establish processes where there is the opportunity for those who were aggrieved or disagreed with those valuations could appeal those processes. In that discussion that I had with the Valuer-General, he assured me that he would set up a hotline such was the expectations that we had at that particular time. As you know, we were constrained by the valuations needing to go out by 31 March each year. That is a legislative requirement.

My decision-making about not rushing legislation was purely about what is going to be the best outcome for our property owners given what was happening in the market. I sit very comfortably, after speaking with and getting some very frank and honest advice from the director-general and his team around processes that we could put into place to ensure that we could look after those property owners.

Part of that discussion was that the Valuer-General gave me assurances as well that there is a 60-day window for those appeals and that, should flood affected victims need further time, he would certainly treat each one of those appeals outside of that time on its own merits. My understanding is that that is exactly what happened. This was about the best outcome for our property owners. Rushing legislation would not have done anything to those property values.

CHAIR: We will now go to some government questions.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 3 of the SDS, can the minister please advise of the work being done by his department to resolve native title determinations this year?

Mr STEWART: Our government is committed to reconciliation and healing, to building, strengthening and reframing our relationship with First Nations people, as you are no doubt aware. Recognising native title is vital for Queensland's pathway towards reconciliation as it may assist to preserve Indigenous culture, values and traditions.

My department resolved 12 native title determinations in the 2021-22 financial year which brings Queensland's native title status to more than 30 per cent of our state since legislation was introduced in 1993. Queensland has resolved 173 native title claim applications. Of those, 159, or 91.9 per cent, have been settled by agreement with the claimants. Let me be clear: our priority is for these applications to be resolved by consent. However, they can be very complex and in some cases an agreement cannot be reached, resulting in the matter going to trial.

There is also some 282 square kilometres of state currently subjected to 47 active native title claims. I would like to highlight a major milestone that hopefully will be achieved in the coming year in the native title space. The Cape York United Number 1 Claim was lodged in 2017. It is certainly the largest native title claim that will ever be made in Queensland, covering 80,000 square kilometres. The Cape York United Number 1 Claim area is roughly half of the entire cape.

The first two claim areas were formally settled by the Federal Court in November of last year. An additional four claim areas were finalised in July of this year in Cairns. My department will continue working alongside Indigenous Queenslanders to recognise their native title rights and to take positive steps towards reconciliation.

Mr MARTIN: My question is to the minister. With the department's objective to facilitate exploration, can the minister please provide an update on minerals exploration in Queensland?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for Stretton for the question. I know the member is just as excited as I am about our growing exploration sector right here in Queensland, so I am more than happy to oblige with his particular question. This government recognises that a vibrant exploration sector is critical to developing a healthy pipeline of mining projects to support the future growth of our great resources industry. When it comes to mining exploration, we have a great story to tell here in Queensland and we have a multitude of opportunities at our doorstep that we are seizing with both hands.

The Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan is one of the key ways we are making this happen. This plan is about setting a 30-year vision for Queensland resources to lay the foundations to responsibly unlock and realise the potential of our state's resources into the future. The plan outlines that an important contribution Queensland can make to efforts to meet emissions targets is to find, mine, process and manufacture the minerals, metals and equipment needed to decarbonise the global economy. This is supported by a number of initiatives to support mineral exploration and to get more value out of our minerals.

The plan highlights the work being done by our Geological Survey of Queensland as it continues to deliver the successful Collaborative Exploration Initiative, which encourages new and innovative exploration in underexplored areas of Queensland. As the minister, I am incredibly proud of this program and I have spoken to many explorers about why it is so important to them. That is why this government is delivering a budget boost of \$17.5 million to the Collaborative Exploration Initiative program. This means the program will deliver \$22.6 million in support over the next five years. The initiative is a grants program to support explorers to make new discoveries of mineral resources in frontier areas of the state in unexplored regions or to apply novel techniques and tools to discovery.

We all know that mineral discoveries can be high-risk activities in financial terms. Exploration is becoming more difficult as the low-hanging fruit has already been mined; however, the global demands of population growth and decarbonisation mean that exploration into these high-risk, higher cost frontiers is critical to help meet the demand for new economy minerals. The collaborative grants program has yielded many exploration successes, including Aeon Metals' Walford Creek copper and basalt deposit, Vecco Debella's vanadium deposit and Novonix's Mount Dromedary graphite deposit. We have also announced \$10 million to invest in large aerial geophysical surveys to help build a big picture understanding of the state's geology and better target our exploration efforts. It is worthwhile mentioning that Ernest Henry was discovered through one of those aerial geophysical surveys. Guess

what, members? This data—the member for Gregory is not here—is free. Through the plan we are also investing \$5 million to fund research on existing new economy mineral deposits to better understand their nature and distribution. We have also allocated \$5 million to circular economy programs to determine the extent to which valuable minerals can be extracted by re-using waste from existing or abandoned mines.

In driving investment in exploration, governments have an important role to play in sending the right signals. We have been sending the right signals since 2015. I can advise that my department has seen a significant increase in exploration activity and applications for tenure since 2015, with the most significant increase over the last two years. As of July there are approximately 2,440 exploration permits for minerals in application or granted across the state. I can advise that the Department of Resources has not seen this volume of tenures since 2011, and if the trend continues we will see an all-time high for exploration permits in the state.

These exploration permits are targeting our new economy mineral deposits, with explorers focusing on copper, vanadium, cobalt and tungsten as well as some of our lesser known minerals such as molybdenum. Our explorers are not looking in the same place either, with the concentration of permits across the state from the North West Minerals Province to the North East Minerals Province inland of Cairns all the way out to the Queensland and New South Wales border and along the Great Dividing Range. It is an incredibly exciting time to be the Minister for Resources. I hope to see the trend continue as explorers of all sizes seek Queensland's new economy minerals potential.

Mr WALKER: Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Can the minister please update the committee on the continued development of the domestic gas supply for the east coast market?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. This is a crucial question at this particular time. You would have seen all of the media hype. We know that gas is a critical enabler to Queensland's economy in terms of royalties, direct jobs in the petroleum and gas industry and the jobs it enables in the manufacturing sector. We also know that there is a very tight balance between demand and supply in the east coast market, with the ACCC predicting a shortfall for 2023 in their midyear interim report. We have seen this winter that the southern states need more gas from Queensland to keep the lights on, and we have seen the Australian Energy Market Operator intervene to manage demands in the east coast market.

Here in Queensland we know that additional supply is the best mechanism to ensure the reliability of gas supply to the domestic market, and our policy framework reflects this. This government has released more than 20,000 square kilometres for gas exploration which is conditioned with our Australian market supply condition. This means that all gas produced from these tenures must be sold exclusively to the domestic market. In March 2018 Senex was awarded the first Australian market supply condition tenure to ensure gas from that tenure is supplied only to the Australian market and not exported. Since then we have continued to release land through our Queensland exploration program conditioned with the Australian market supply condition, including almost 900 square kilometres near Injune north of Roma earlier this year to AusGasCo. In addition to releasing more land for exploration, we are also looking at ways we can facilitate unlocking additional gas reserves, such as determining the feasibility for a pipeline in the Bowen Basin.

Clearly, Queensland is pulling its weight here. We have found a healthy balance between supplying gas to the domestic market as well as the international market—a \$70 billion LNG export industry that we are particularly proud of for the benefits it has brought to Queenslanders. However, from a policy perspective we cannot say that other states in the east coast market have the same appreciation of the importance of a strong gas supply that Queensland does. I am going to use a metaphor because I think some of the opposition committee members might be 1990s pop fans, so this should help them understand the contribution of each state to the east coast gas market a little more clearly.

Each band is only as strong as its weakest link. The Spice Girls was a great example of this at their peak. They were the penultimate pop band of the late 1990s. At their worst they were unable to operate as a collective after years of infighting and patchy, dodgy performances. When everyone is working together and pulling their weight, the collective benefits. The east coast gas market functions in a similar way. Queensland has long been doing the heavy lifting. When it comes to domestic gas supply in the east coast market, we are the lead singer. We are Ginger Spice. Out of all the Spice Girls, it is unsurprisingly that Victoria has let the team down by refusing to develop their own gas reserves. Good old 'Not So Sporty Spice', aka New South Wales—and you just need to look at the State of Origin result—is also exacerbating the issue by imposing restrictions on the development of their gas. Victoria and New South Wales are both now reliant on Queensland gas—Ginger Spice particularly—during the

winter months to keep their lights on. I will end the metaphor there by saying zig-a-zig-ah, but it is important to understand the impact that Victoria's and New South Wales' moratoriums and restrictions are having on the east coast gas market.

Queensland will always be willing to work collaboratively with other states and the Queensland government on solutions to this issue, but Queensland cannot do it all alone. I would like to encourage all states to work together, with each other and the new federal government, to ensure Australian households and manufacturers continue to have access to affordable gas. They need to tell us what they want—what they really, really want.

CHAIR: Thanks for that trip to 'spice world', Minister. The member for Mundingburra has another question. I am mindful of the time because we are due to have a break at 7 pm.

Mr WALKER: Minister, will you please provide an update on the work of Resources Safety and Health's Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate, specifically its support of the growing hydrogen industry?

Mr STEWART: That is a great question, member for Mundingburra, because I know that as a current hydrogen champion you take a great deal of interest in this emerging industry. We both know the opportunities that hydrogen offers for us in the north. There is huge potential not only in our hometown of Townsville but across Queensland for hydrogen to create new jobs and more renewable energy. Our state is leading the country in preparing the workforce for emerging jobs in the green hydrogen industry. That is why it is so important that we get the safety aspect of this right. The Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate continues to engage industry and government stakeholders to ensure safety compliance for hydrogen fuel projects. In May the inspectorate launched their draft Hydrogen Safety Code of Practice. I am proud to say that Queensland will be the first state to develop a clear pathway for hydrogen safety system compliance.

The draft code targets applications that use hydrogen as a fuel and will provide guidance to industry about safe operations, regulation compliance and approval processes. More than 160 stakeholders participated in a webinar as part of the inspectorate's consultation with industry, including representatives from the Australian Hydrogen Council, the Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries. Submissions were received from a broad range of 23 stakeholders: six from industry bodies, such as the Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland and the Australian Hydrogen Council; 13 from companies and interested parties, including AECOM, Hyundai, GHD and Risk and Energy Services; and four from government agencies, including Queensland's Department of Resources, Energy Safe Victoria and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

The draft code will deliver a framework to outline minimum safety requirements and give businesses certainty that they are compliant and will be the first step in modernising our legislation. The draft code provides businesses with certainty for their hydrogen projects by outlining minimum safety requirements. This is the first step in modernising Queensland's hydrogen safety legislation. The draft code proposes alternate means of achieving safety where existing obligations in the current legislation are problematic for hydrogen fuel applications. Legislative amendments are proposed to finalise the draft code of practice later this year. I am advised the code will continue to be reviewed and revised as industry grows and new standards, national competencies and applications are developed.

I am also advised that the Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate is maintaining its focus on safety in petroleum and gas operations across Queensland. This includes inspections and audits of drilling rigs, petroleum wells, biogas facilities and the state's major pipeline infrastructure. It also includes safety of gas use and appliances through the licence of gas workers and gas device approvals so that gas is used safely by industry and the public. Following recent gas safety incidents in commercial kitchens, the Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate is developing a campaign to commence late this year to promote gas safety with onus on staff and lessees of commercial kitchens and takeaway food venues.

CHAIR: The committee will now have a break. The hearing will resume at 7.15 pm with the continued examination of the estimates for the resources portfolio area.

Proceedings suspended from 7.01 pm to 7.15 pm.



CHAIR: Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will continue its examination of the estimates for the resources portfolio area. We have no new members here, apart from the member for Lockyer who is still here. Minister, there were some questions that you were going to get back to us on and you also want to make a brief statement.

Mr STEWART: Thank you. I will go first and then the director-general will answer some questions asked of him. I wish to correct the record. In relation to tourism island resort leases, I said that there were four resorts that were nonoperational. I wish to correct the record and make that six that were nonoperational.

Mr Cridland: I was asked a question about the number of people who left the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan team before it was final. The answer is two people both accepted new roles, promotions.

CHAIR: Were there any more questions? The DDG had one about a breakdown.

Mr STEWART: I think we are still getting that information for you. We will keep an eye on it. We have one hour.

CHAIR: We will now go to the member for Condamine to continue questioning.

Mr WEIR: Director-General, I refer to SDS page 3 where it says 'provide modern and effective land administration and property services'. With respect to the Shute Harbour marina development, is the director-general aware of any breach in lease obligations or noncompliance milestones pursuant to the terms of that lease?

Mr Cridland: I will make the observation that, as the minister referenced earlier, my department manages a substantial part of the state covering about 60 per cent, which is the total area of New South Wales and Victoria combined. There are approximately 19,000 leases in that portfolio, ranging from a small size to large 100,000-hectare stations. In relation to Shute Harbour, I do not have that detail to hand but I will seek to find some information before the end of the session.

Mr WEIR: That would be good. Minister, given your recent announcement in relation to Double Island, which I welcome on the eve of the inquiry, will you take the same interest in the issues that appear to be unfolding at Shute Harbour, and are you aware of them?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. This is the first I have heard about the Shute Harbour claims that you are making this evening so I will get a briefing from the director-general. As the director-general has already outlined, we manage around 19,000 leases across the state, which is a significant piece of work. When it comes to breaches of leases, on top of our regulatory compliance plan that we have to ensure that a number of leases are complying with their lease conditions and lease arrangements, we also rely on a complaints process. When we receive a complaint, that starts to activate a process as well, on top of our regular processes. Like I said, this is the first I have heard about it. I will need to get a briefing from the director-general and our deputy director-general of lands around what those issues are and we will pursue it from there.

Mr WEIR: This question probably will not surprise you. Noting the minister's refusal not to grant approvals for New Acland stage 3 until legal action is finished, when will the mining lease be granted?

CHAIR: I was waiting for that one. Thank you very much for that.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The New Acland mine located north-west of Toowoomba is a project that has received significant community interest. The proposed stage 3 expansion has had a protracted legal history. I note judicial review of the Queensland court's recommendation for stage 3 proceeded through the court system and ultimately reached the High Court. In February last year, the High Court handed it back to the Land Court.

The Land Court handed down its recommendation on 17 December last year and recommended that the mine lease applications be granted and the environmental authority be approved subject to changes required to the Coordinator-General's environmental conditions, as you are no doubt aware.

In line with the Land Court's recommendation, New Acland Coal submitted a change request application which was approved by the Coordinator-General on 26 May this year. Subsequently, on 22 June this year, I advised the Department of Environment and Science that the Land Court's recommendation continues to be current and that I must receive a decision on the environmental authority before I am able to decide the associated mining lease applications. The Department of Environment and Science issued its decision to approve the environmental authority on 28 June of this year. My department has now finalised its submission for my consideration of the mining lease application. I will make my decision once I have considered the large amount of information associated with this complex matter, and I can tell you there are thousands of pages. I am aware that mining ceased at New Acland Coal Mine in November last year and the site is now under care and maintenance, after I went out and visited the site. I received all that large volume of work on my desk on Thursday of last week.

Mr WEIR: The concern that is held by the proponents and the previous workers is that the government's position has always been that it will not be approved while there is legal action pending. It is only a matter of time before there is another appeal on whatever. The objectors have already stated that. When is the earliest that we can expect you to grant the mining lease?

Mr STEWART: It is a matter of me giving it the attention that it requires, and I give you that guarantee. I am going through each page to make sure that I am absolutely satisfied. This has had a long, protracted history, as you know. I want to make sure that my decision is absolutely right, based on everything that is presented to me. We said that we would follow the court's processes. That has happened. I now have it on my desk. I can guarantee that to you, but I will also give you this guarantee: I will make that decision with the fullest information that I have.

Mr WEIR: The process is that the mining lease has to be granted before it goes to the next step of the associated water licence.

Mr STEWART: Which is the water, yes.

Mr WEIR: It is not dependent on that? The mining lease is the next step, so we are just awaiting your decision?

Mr STEWART: Correct. As I said, we received all of the information on Thursday afternoon. It was actually brought in on a trolley, there is that much information.

Mr WEIR: That would not surprise me.

Mr STEWART: It is significant—boxes and boxes of information.

Mr WEIR: Director-General, I refer to the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan and carbon capture and storage. The International Energy Agency identifies carbon capture and storage as a key technology required to meet global emissions targets. What actions are being taken to facilitate the development and deployment of these technologies in Queensland?

Mr Cridland: We recognise that carbon capture and storage has the potential to be important greenhouse gas emissions reduction technology that could be applied across our energy system. Once captured from large emission sources such as power generation industrial facilities, the carbon dioxide is transported to a suitable geological site for storage. I can advise you that we did release the greenhouse gas storage tender on 2 December of last year and that closed on 7 March this year. Those tenders are currently being evaluated by my department, as we speak. I could read the rest, but I might run out of voice.

Mr STEWART: I can add to it if you like.

Mr WEIR: Minister, how many tenures have been granted to facilitate carbon capture and storage in Queensland?

Mr STEWART: I will ask Deputy Director-General Shaun Ferris if he might be able to add further onto the number that we have received in that space.

Mr Ferris: This detail I do have, member. In relation to the number of greenhouse gas storage tenures currently that have been granted in Queensland, there is an exploration tenure that is held by CTSCo. CTSCo is a subsidiary of Glencore. CTSCo are actively progressing their tenure to potentially a higher form of tenure, to a production tenure. As we sit here right now, CTSCo are going through an EA amendment process for their exploration tenure which will enable them to undertake a test injection of CO₂. Up until this stage, the activities that have been carried out on their tenure have been of an exploration nature, so understanding the geological formations, undertaking seismic survey, undertaking drilling to understand the nature of the materials that they would look to inject into, and also to understand some of the environmental considerations—for example, whether there is water in the formations that might be useful for either drinking water or stock and domestic purposes. At this point in time, that is the only tenure that has been granted, but, as I say, they are actively progressing their tenure through an EA amendment process which will enable them to go to a testing phase and then in the future look to progress towards a production tenure which would enable them to commercially and more completely inject and store CO₂ into those formations.

Mr WEIR: So I am clear, they have to go through an EA process just to do the testing, and then for the next stage, to go to approval, they would have to go through the same process again, on a broader scale, no doubt? What sort of time line would you be looking at for an approval to do the test and then get to production?

Mr Ferris: I think that is actually probably a question for the Department of Environment and Science, who are managing that particular EA amendment process. However, I can say that CTSCo are actively progressing both their environmental studies and the EA process. Again, that would be a question for the Department of Environment and Science.

Mr WEIR: I would suggest that process will be watched very closely.

Mr HEAD: Director-General, I refer to page 15 of the board of examiners' annual report for 2020-21, chart 1, dealing with the average age of certificate of competency holders by class. These charts show an ageing workforce who hold critical safety positions. What strategies is the government putting in place to ensure we do not have mine shutdowns due to labour shortages going forward?

CHAIR: Is that more a question for the minister, asking for government policy? I am just clarifying. Was that asking for government policy? The minister will answer if it relates to policy, that's all. Can we direct that to the minister? It seemed like a policy question.

Mr HEAD: Yes, thank you, Chair.

Mr STEWART: Sorry, I wandered off when you weren't asking me the question. Can I ask you to ask the question again, please, member for Callide?

Mr HEAD: I refer to page 15 of the board of examiners annual report, chart 1, dealing with the average age of certificate of competency holders by class. These charts show an ageing workforce who hold critical safety positions. What strategies is the government putting in place to ensure we do not have mine shutdowns due to labour shortages going forward?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Highlighted in our QRID plan is workforce and the importance of developing skill sets in workforce. You heard one of my responses to the member for Stretton about developing skill sets, particularly when it comes to what is needed in the mines not only now but well into the future. We are investing money into training programs to ensure that we are attracting people to that workforce. You have raised an issue that I know Ian Macfarlane, the CEO of Queensland Resources Council, has highlighted to me.

We are also working with the department of training, in Minister Farmer's area, looking at developing a workforce plan as part of our QRIDP. How do we actually work together to attract, firstly, the next age of mineworkers into our mine sites, how do we sustain that and then how do we ensure they have the skill sets now and well into the future? I might pass to the CEO of RSHQ, Mr Mark Stone, who might be able to add to your question around certificates.

Mr Stone: Just to complete the picture, the functions of the board of examiners as defined under the Coalmining Safety and Health Act are to set the competencies for statutory certificate holders, set exams, issue certificates of competency, and today and into the future implement a practising certificate scheme to ensure that there is continuous professional development. The piece that we hold and we have responsibility for is really the assessment of competency and the continuous professional development.

That said, the board of examiners holds webinars. It travels to regional locations. It comprises members from industry, union and the regulator. I think there is a general promotion of the statutory positions and holding them, and helping industry understand the value of them and the need to continuously develop. We are not in the attraction part, but we are definitely in the verification, competency and examination part.

Mr HEAD: I do have a follow-up question also to Mr Stone. How many staff have left the mine safety inspectorate in the last 12 months?

Mr Stone: That is a very specific question, so I would need to come back. I think that is something I can do within the time frames of this estimates session.

Mr WEIR: I will test the DG's voice again. I understand the mine safety levy was increased substantially in January last year. Why was there no consultation on the quantum of the fee increase or the justification for the fee increase prior to industry receiving notice of the new fee to be applied from 1 January?

Mr Cridland: Luckily for me that is a question I will throw to Mark Stone as the head of Resource Health and Safety Queensland.

Mr STEWART: I will add that RSHQ is an independent statutory body. It is not a government body, so it is more appropriate for the CEO, Mark Stone.

Mr Stone: I thank you for the question. In general terms, it is important to take a step back for context. I will do that very briefly. The 2017 parliamentary Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee made a recommendation that there should be a revised model for the regulator. That was one of its many recommendations. Government appointed an independent project management officer to assess the different types of regulatory model. In doing so, it also assessed and consulted in 2018 on different funding models for the regulator. It published a number of papers and met with industry, workers representatives and other stakeholders.

It received submissions from stakeholders on the different funding models. There was quite a varied response in terms of funding models that were based on risk and other funding models that were based on the existing model which had been in place since 2011. The model that was recommended to government in the 2019 time frame was the model that was implemented earlier this year through regulation amendment, that is, adjusted tiers and adjusted dollar values per worker.

Consultation certainly did happen. It happened in the 2018-19 time frame. From memory, prior to the regulation amendment becoming effective, a communication was made to the industry on what the changes were, both to the funding model and the census that industry prepares under regulation.

CHAIR: We might hold that thought and go to government questions now.

Mr MARTIN: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 1 of the SDS and the department's commitment to continue supporting the development of new economy minerals, projects and supply chains, can the minister please provide an overview and an update on the previously announced common user vanadium-processing facility?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for Stretton for the question. I know the member is a huge supporter of the state's mineral potential and is just as excited as I am—and I am sure the member for Mundingburra is just as excited as I am—about vanadium's renewable energy applications as the world continues to decarbonise. Here in Queensland we are blessed with high-quality mineral deposits right across the state, particularly in the north and in the North West Minerals Province, which has significant deposits of a range of new economy minerals such as copper, vanadium and cobalt.

The importance of the North West Minerals Province cannot be understated not only to the local economy but for the state's economy more broadly. Discovery and exploration of minerals in the region has the potential to increase prosperity, create jobs and assist with the transition to renewable energies. If we harness the skills of our workforce here in Queensland to find these mine deposits, Queensland will be well on its way to becoming a leading producer and exporter of new economy minerals including vanadium, as the member for Mundingburra well and truly knows.

Vanadium is the new economy mineral with a large existing market in the specialist steel industry. It is used as a component in the rapidly growing market for redox flow batteries meaning that demand is absolutely soaring. These batteries are large-scale, often the size of shipping containers, and are placed in an array beside each other. They are now starting to be used in electricity networks as a renewable energy storage solution.

Here in Queensland we have half of Australia's endowment of vanadium, with Australia having the third largest amount of this valuable resource anywhere in the world. A significant amount of Queensland's share of vanadium is in our North West Minerals Province, particularly in our backyard of Julia Creek. Just last year I approved the mining lease for Queensland's first vanadium mine proponents, Multicom Resources, whose Saint Elmo project will extract vanadium from shale near Julia Creek, just over 650 kilometres to the west of our great city of Townsville. Saint Elmo is initially forecast to produce up to 5,000 tonnes per year of vanadium pentoxide, supporting at least 150 operational mine jobs and operating for up to 20 years with potential expansion creating even more jobs and producing even more vanadium.

It is not just Multicom Resources that have hit the ground sprinting, with Horizon Minerals' \$242 million Richmond-Julia Creek vanadium project now a coordinated project. I am advised that they are working in conjunction with the Queensland Coordinator-General to help make this project a reality.

I think members of the committee can tell just how excited I am by how much potential we have right here in Queensland. However, we know that for junior and midsize exploration and mining companies, realising that potential can bring with it some economic and technical difficulties. We recognise that when it comes to demonstrating the viability of extraction and processing for new economy minerals like vanadium, government can provide assistance to ensure Queensland's potential is fully realised. Recognising this and after meeting with potential producers of vanadium, this government made a commitment of at least \$10 million to build a vanadium common user infrastructure facility in Townsville to ensure our vanadium-processing industry gets the best start it possibly can.

I am advised that extensive research has been undertaken and a process to investigate suitable site options in Townsville to locate the facility is ongoing. I am also advised that this process has included consultation with Townsville City Council and the Department of Environment and Science to ensure any impacts from the plant are negligible and within required limits. I can advise that my department is currently meeting with potential users of the facility to discuss their needs and expectations for how the facility will operate.

As detailed discussions with proponents continue, design details of the final facility are being developed to support an anticipated go-live date for the facility in late 2023. Once commissioned for use, the facility will be able to trial vanadium production processes with the aim of accelerating the development of commercial vanadium projects, promoting investment in advanced mineral manufacturing opportunities and enabling development of supply chains and supporting industries. This is an exciting time for both future investment in Queensland industry and, as the member for Mundingburra knows, the Townsville region and I cannot wait to see the facility up and running in due course.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr STEWART: I am excited.

CHAIR: I think we all are.

Mr STEWART: The Big Kev of the resources industry.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the continued implementation of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, can you please outline the importance of Queensland's ESG credentials?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for Mundingburra for the question. I know that the member is a big supporter of our Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan and the opportunities it will help to create for Queenslanders and Queensland but particularly up our way in North Queensland. We know that the world is changing and trends such as decarbonisation, economic and social governance and emerging technologies are certainly impacting Queensland's resources industry today, and this impact will continue to develop going forward. These trends create challenges for the resources industry—there is absolutely no doubt about that—but they also present even greater opportunities for transformation and diversification. New markets and opportunities will be created as the globe moves towards decarbonisation, and here in Queensland we have a role to play by providing ethically sourced and produced resources on global markets.

The concept of ESG itself can be outlined into three respective concepts. First, the E, or 'environmental', relates to components which focus on the impact of operations on the natural environment, including emissions and climate change, cumulative impacts on groundwater and the use of energy. Second, the S relates to social components which constitute the quality of a company's relationship with its workforce and with the communities in which it operates in terms of inclusion and diversity and relationships with First Nations communities. I want to add that when we talk to people about the social impacts some companies really get this, but other companies believe that their social licence means that they sponsor the A-grade footy team with their name across the jersey and they buy the jerseys. That is not acceptable. Third, the G relates to governance, which refers to business ethics, stakeholder satisfaction, internal transparency procedures and overall compliance with regulatory standards and frameworks.

ESG is an increasing priority for investors and markets as they want new economy minerals, metals and energy sources that Queensland supplies to the world. We have already cemented our reputation as an ESG leader over jurisdictions by maintaining our competitive advantage as a politically stable, equitable society with a well-regulated, sustainable and highly skilled economy. This government is 100 per cent committed to furthering our strong ESG brand for our resources industry to ensure that we maximise the inherent strength of how we do business.

We know that failing to respond to the growing need for demonstrable ESG accountability would put Queensland at the risk of failing to catch the next wave of mining investment driven by global decarbonisation. That is why as part of our QRIDP we are establishing a Queensland resources industry ESG expert advisory panel to provide advice on how government and industry should respond to emerging ESG needs and embed Queensland's ESG competitive advantage. This work would include further investigation into emerging technologies such as mineral traceability to assist our resources industry in demonstrating to potential customers the journey of their product from an ESG focused mine in Queensland to a battery in an electric car in places like Europe.

My department has been working in collaboration with Trade and Investment Queensland to promote Queensland's mineral supply and investment opportunities to European markets, and we will not be stopping there. We will be ensuring our ESG credentials remain strong and ahead of our competitors. Queensland's resources sector will be well positioned for long-term growth and seize the opportunity to diversify and transform.

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister. I am going to ask a question for a change.

Mr STEWART: And welcomed.

CHAIR: I want to talk about the abandoned mine sites program. Minister, would you be able to update the committee on the progress of this program and how this work protects Queenslanders?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is very appreciative of the work the Technical Services team in my department undertakes, as work in abandoned mines is highly specialised work. I know that you have had some experience in the mining industry in the Pilbara region.

CHAIR: Yes, the Pilbara region of Western Australia. There were a lot of abandoned mines around there and I am particularly interested in hearing what we are doing.

Mr STEWART: Strap yourself in. Buckle up. I can advise the committee that in 2021-22 my department delivered \$25.6 million in works to address the management and mitigation of significant public safety, health and environmental risks at abandoned mine sites. This year's budget also included an announcement of increased funding of \$11.7 million over the next two financial years to continue the risk mitigation and remediation work at former underground coal gasification sites at Hopeland Linc Energy and Bloodwood Creek to plug all abandoned wells. This additional funding builds on my department's work to manage risks at abandoned mines in line with the Queensland government's Abandoned Mines Management Policy. It also supports the government's resources sector financial assurance frameworks.

I can advise the committee that the successful 2021-22 program of works included \$7.7 million for work at the former Linc Energy site at Hopeland, which included the decommissioning of 42 legacy wells; \$3.3 million for stage 2 of remediation works at the Collingwood Tin abandoned mine site, to be completed in 2022-23 at a total cost of \$7.38 million; \$2.87 million for a small-scale works program at Charters Towers, Herberton, Irvinebank and Rubyvale, member for Gregory; work with Heritage Minerals to facilitate a tailings processing plant project at Mount Morgan, where the department's active water management strategy has greatly contributed to reducing water levels in the open-cut pit which, at the end of last month, was 4.915 metres below the spillway level; the next stage of remediation works at the Goondicum mine site and continuing investigations into contamination on Minjerribah, North Stradbroke Island; and 19 mine shafts remediated in Charters Towers and Gympie—just out the back of our backyard, member for Mundingburra.

This work is vital to ensure that these sites are safe and secure as well as potentially productive, with my department now conducting a pilot program to release one of our abandoned mines for recommercialisation via competitive tendering. I can advise the committee that we have commenced a pilot program to recommercialise the area that includes the former Wolfram Camp mine and Bamford Hill mine and surrounding exploration areas. Learnings from this competitive tender process will help to inform the process of future releases. I believe that our abandoned mines portfolio has considerable potential for recommercialisation. It is a growing area of commercial interest as investors consider how to mine with reduced impacts and the benefits of the circular economy, and I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this pilot program.

I can also advise that the department has improved the availability and transparency of abandoned mines data with additional layers on the Queensland government's GeoResGlobe and launch of free undermining reports on any lot on plan in the state. Member for Gregory, it is free. This work helps keep Queenslanders safe and minimises risks across the state on a range of challenging sites. I take this opportunity to thank the teams in my department who work daily to manage these really complex legacy sites. I can advise that the Department of Resources expects to invest approximately \$17 million in 2022-23 to continue addressing public safety, health and environmental risks at our abandoned mine sites. I hope that has helped give you a better understanding.

CHAIR: That is fantastic, Minister; yes, it did.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the department's facilitation of domestic gas supplies, can you please provide an update on the Bowen Basin pipeline study?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for Mundingburra for this question. The recent events of Queensland's energy market, which has seen unprecedented demand for Queensland's gas, just shows how important it is to bring more gas supplies to the market. Here in Queensland we continue to do that heavy lifting on gas policy. I am walking evidence. We have continued to release land for gas exploration and development while New South Wales-spice and Victoria-spice have placed restrictions on new development and as a result become reliant on gas from Queensland.

Since 2015 we have released more than 20,000 square kilometres of land for exploration and production with conditions that any gas produced must be supplied to the domestic market. We know that unlocking more gas and supplying it to the domestic market will be critical to secure energy supplies

and provide flexibility as the percentage of renewables in the market increases compared to traditional energy generation methods as well as keep downward pressure on gas prices. That is why our commitment in 2020 to provide \$5 million to investigate the opportunities for a pipeline to connect gas reserves in the Bowen Basin to the east coast gas and export markets is so important. Gas reserves in the Bowen Basin were first defined in the mid-1990s but since then a lack of infrastructure has continued to be the primary obstacle in bringing this gas to market.

Last year we commissioned KPMG to undertake a concept study to investigate a gas pipeline to connect the gas reserves in the Bowen Basin to the east coast gas market and export markets as well as examine options to reduce fugitive emissions from coalmines in that same area. The concept study found that there is a need to secure additional gas supplies to meet future demand shortfalls and that the Bowen Basin contains significant gas reserves that could provide meaningful volumes to the market if the pipeline was, in fact, put in place. Further, the study also found that capturing fugitive emissions from coalmines in the basin could supplement supply to the market while also reducing the state's emissions. This would mean that the pipeline would be able to bring affordable gas to market and manufacturers while also contributing to emissions reduction targets.

Given the current demand for Queensland gas there is no time to waste. We are acting now on the concept study's findings and I am pleased to advise that we have moved to the next phase of work which is a structured market engagement, with work already underway. This structured market engagement process being led by KPMG will give government a detailed understanding of the commerciality of the pipeline from the market's perspective and improve private sector confidence. I look forward to reading the final report due to the government before the end of this year.

Members of the committee, it is worth noting that the former Morrison government did not manage to formalise the agreement for their \$5 million in committed funding to the concept study before they were kicked out of office. So much for their gas-led recovery. I am greatly looking forward to working with the new federal government to see the potential for the Bowen Basin realised as the Albanese Labor government understands just how important increasing gas supply is for securing our future energy.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Stretton?

Mr MARTIN: My question is to the minister. With reference to the Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan, can the minister please provide the committee with information about the consultation he undertook as part of the plan's development?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. This is a very similar question that I was asked by the opposition. We know that Queensland's resource industry has historically been a key contributor to the success and prosperity of our great state. The resource sector in Queensland is worth tens of billions of dollars, generates royalties and directly employs around 80,000 people and supports more than 15,000 businesses. We are committed to continuing to develop the resource sector in Queensland which is why the Palaszczuk government launched our Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan in June of this year. The plan identifies six key areas with 43 short- and medium-term actions that the government and industry must focus their efforts on to ensure we achieve that vision. The plan is also supported by a total of \$68.5 million in funding.

This plan is an important step in positioning the Queensland resource sector for the future because we know that the world is changing and we want to ensure that Queensland is able to seize those opportunities available and ensure that our resources industry can successfully grow as it transforms. Chair, these opportunities, particularly in the new economy mineral space, are incredibly exciting, which is why I have been out on the road over the last year engaging with regional communities, industry and stakeholders about this long-term vision for the future.

Even though the plan is unashamedly focused on new economy minerals, the QRIDP highlights the importance of Queensland's traditional resources like coal and gas and how they will continue a role in our energy mix going forward and that is why we have held consultation sessions across the state in traditional coal and gas communities as well as where our new economy mineral deposits are located. In addition to the official consultation sessions we held in regional Queensland, each and every time I have been out on-site or at an industry event I have been talking with stakeholders and communities around our QRIDP.

With your indulgence for a moment, Chair, I enjoy the classics and each time we go out on the road I become the 'everywhere man'. I've crossed the whole state bare, man; I've breathed the northern air, man; of travel I've had my share, man; I've been everywhere, man. I've been to Bundaberg and

Roma, Ravenswood and Weipa, Collinsville, Blackwater, Emerald and Moura; I've been to Baralaba, Rolleston, Cairns and Barcaldine, Charters Towers, Dalby, Cloncurry and Beaudesert; I've been to Mackay, Townsville, Mount Isa, Moranbah, Gladstone, Chinchilla, Rockhampton and Toowoomba.

Since I became the Minister for Resources I have travelled over 80,000 kilometres across Queensland listening to resource communities and workers, visiting sites and talking to industry about the opportunities in our sector. Let me tell you, those kilometres will only keep going up because it is only this government that supports the resource industry and will help develop the opportunities in front of us.

Mr MILLAR: Why do you let him do that?

CHAIR: Thank you. We might have a ban on dad jokes. No, they are all appreciated. I could see the fixated stare from the member for Gregory excited at hearing that song again.

Mr STEWART: Sporty Spice again.

CHAIR: Member for Mundingburra?

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister with reference to page 4 of the SDS and the department's role in actively administering Queensland's mineral resources. Can the minister please update the committee on the regulatory reform work being undertaken as part of the Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for Mundingburra for the question. I appreciate this question from the member for two reasons: first, because it highlights the shift I have witnessed in my department from purely being a regulator to a facilitator of economic activity. I know both myself and the acting director-general are particularly proud of the ambitious reform program the Department of Resources is undergoing, a program which will better position our department as a driver of good economic outcomes on behalf of Queenslanders by better utilising the state's natural resources. Secondly, because it allows me to talk about the important role reflection plays on our Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan and the work being done in relation to our legislation, our frameworks, our internal processes and how we can best support industry through effective regulation.

Our recently released 30-year vision for Queensland's resources industry is for a resilient, responsible and sustainable sector that grows as it transforms. We know that over the next three decades the industry will be reshaped by some significant long-term global trends. These include decarbonising gathering pace, the focus of global growth on the Indo-Pacific region and the rising level of scrutiny by global capital and consumers on the environmental, social and governance performance of our miners. The scarcity of some resources as well as the increasing complexity of extracting others will drive miners to adapt. Our industry must evolve alongside these global trends and they are rising to this challenge. As part of the QRIDP the Department of Resources is also adapting, with work on an ambitious suite of reforms to regulatory frameworks and legislation to ensure industry is as well positioned as it possibly can be.

There are several actions in focus area 6 of the plan which promote efficient, effective and transparent regulatory processes, including action 36, to improve resource project assessment processes and the following one, action 37, to improve land release processes. I can advise that work on these actions is already underway internally. We recognise that transparent and efficient assessment systems which are easily understood and respected by industry and the community are an essential element of effective government. That is why as part of the QRIDP we have committed to collaborate with stakeholders on the implementation of the business process of reform to ensure our resource project assessment processes are fit for purpose and customer focused.

In relation to action 37, our land release program, I can advise that we will consult stakeholders on reforms to the land release process and implement potential improvements which could include changes to the land release model, tendering timing and frequency, in addition to investigating streamlining of decision-making and reduction in time frames. Further, focus area 6 will also focus on potential regulatory and legislative change.

Actions 38, 39, 40 and 41 identify both inconsistencies in current action frameworks and potential opportunities to streamline processes to achieve better outcomes for communities and for industry. These actions highlight potential regulatory reform across the broader resources industry and include the mining, petroleum and gas, small-scale mining and extractive sectors. I am advised by my department that they are hitting the ground sprinting across these actions. I look forward to seeing the entirety of our Resources Industry Development Plan implemented in due course. Thanks, team, for the great work that you do.

CHAIR: We will now go to non-government questions.

Mr WEIR: Minister, regarding consultation with industry and the EPOLA Act, I refer to the extraordinary step that the government has taken through confidentiality deeds that stop representative groups from being able to consult with their members on the impact of potential legislative changes. How is this an open and transparent consultation process?

Mr STEWART: I advise the member that this is actually being led by the Department of Environment and Science. Therefore, it is probably a question better directed to Minister Scanlon.

Mr WEIR: Minister, once again, this goes to confidence in the industry. There are other ministers who have a significant impact on that, as we talked about earlier with the royalties. As the minister who represents an industry that can be significantly impacted by this legislation, you would have some input into how this process is run, surely.

Mr STEWART: As I have already highlighted, this is directly the responsibility of Minister Scanlon and the Department of Environment and Science. As the member may or may not know, we do not use agreements of that nature and we will not.

Mr WEIR: You do not support that form of consultation?

Mr STEWART: I just highlighted that we do not do those sorts of agreements. I can assure the member for Condamine that we have spoken to Minister Scanlon in consultation extensively on a number of occasions around the EPOLA Act.

Mr WEIR: Initially, there was a commitment for a 12-week consultation period. The government granted a further review of three weeks with a slightly modified but still restricted confidentiality deed. Why did the government continue to set timetables for rushed legislative changes?

Mr STEWART: I will again say that that is a question for Minister Scanlon as the Department of Environment and Science are leading that consultation. I am happy for you to ask questions on any of our resources bills but that is not in our purview.

CHAIR: Yes, that does seem to be outside. The minister has answered that several times.

Mr WEIR: I will go back to carbon capture and storage, because you mention it in your development plan. It is an onerous process and I understand there has to be an EIS and the whole kit and caboodle. What are the government and you as the minister doing to encourage this industry to progress?

Mr STEWART: This is a really good question. Queensland's potential for carbon dioxide storage has been highlighted in the Queensland resources industry plan, as you have mentioned. In June of this year the government committed to identifying areas suitable for greenhouse gas storage, including areas for carbon storage feasibility exploration, in the Queensland Exploration Program. The 2021 Queensland Exploration Program, released in November of last year, identified four areas across more than 14,500 square kilometres for greenhouse gas storage exploration across the Surat/Bowen, Galilee and Eromanga basins.

The greenhouse gas storage tender opened on 2 December last year and closed on 7 March this year. These tenders are currently being evaluated, as you heard from the director-general. This evaluation considers the tenderer's financial and technical capability to explore the sites as well as important criteria regarding environmental, social and governance credentials such as environmental compliance, safety and coexistence. Before any tenures for carbon dioxide storage exploration are granted, applicants must meet their environmental, native title and other requirements under Queensland's strict regulatory framework.

As you heard from Shaun Ferris, the deputy director-general, there are a number of factors that will impact on this. We only get one go at getting this right because, as you would know from your area, you do not want to contaminate water supplies. We have to make sure that we get this right. We will take our time. As I said, we have released over 14,000 square kilometres. We want to do everything we possibly can in this space.

Mr MILLAR: I have an off-the-cuff question.

Mr STEWART: I love those from you, member for Gregory. They are the best.

Mr MILLAR: Minister, as you just said, we have only one chance to get this right and I am talking about foot-and-mouth disease. As the department responsible for natural resources, you are one of the biggest land owners or custodians of land through stock routes.

Mr STEWART: Yes.

Mr MILLAR: I would ask the director-general this question but because of his voice I do not want to put him through any more pain so I will ask the minister. What preparedness, what proposals have been put in place, what briefings have you had and how do we combat what could be potentially a disastrous disease if it gets in here?

Mr STEWART: I agree that the ramifications of foot-and-mouth disease, as we are hearing more and more, are a key factor. As you will have seen through the media, the federal government are certainly working in that space. I know that the minister for agriculture is certainly well aware of that and is working closely with our department around measures that we would need to put in place should that happen. Again, it is a bit of a hypothetical, but I understand what you are saying. This could potentially impact your area and your constituents in huge way. We know this and we understand it. Minister Furner and I have had many conversations around this and we will continue to do to that.

Mr MILLAR: Are there any budgetary options, given that pests and weeds come under natural resources and, obviously, one of our biggest fears will be feral pigs? Is any consideration being given to increasing the budgetary opportunities in the department of natural resources to clean up the pests, being the pigs, on the stock routes?

Mr STEWART: The feral pig problem certainly is not something that comes under our jurisdiction. That would be something that would come under the agriculture minister's jurisdiction. As you know, we have a lot of work ahead of us with the stock routes. We have done a lot of work already. It has been investigated by the committee. We did a lot of consultation on that work. We initially went out your way, to Longreach, and did the release of the stock routes. The feedback that we are getting from all the stakeholders in that area is that this is a good move. As you know, the suggestion in the legislation is to give 100 per cent of those fees back to council as well as top up with additional funds. I can tell you that in this year's budget, as I said, concerns came from a number of council mayors who said, 'This is great but do not leave it as the only source of revenue.'

In the 2022-23 budget my department is expected to allocate approximately \$900,000 in capital investment, and that will go to the management of the stock route network. An additional \$140,000 will be allocated for maintenance projects on stock route water facilities. When I was at Longreach I had a great look at the water facilities just outside of town. I spotted that Gough Plastics, which is based in Townsville, was supplying a lot of those water troughs. That is great work and we will continue to support it.

Mr MILLAR: Obviously there is a collaborative approach with Desert Channels and those NRM groups.

Mr STEWART: Yes, and that is part of our NRM program.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will go to the questions that needed to be answered. We missed some of them. There were two taken by the deputy director-general. One was on EOIs.

Mr Cridland: For the 2021 exploration program, there were 57 petroleum and gas EOIs received; 10 coal EOIs received; and 26 greenhouse gas storage EOIs received.

CHAIR: Thank you. The next one was also to the director-general—a breakdown of consultation plans and travel costs.

Mr Cridland: The consultation over the two-year development of the 30-year plan was quite extensive. We had 18 engagement sessions across the state; over 1,300 submissions. I think you asked for a breakdown, so I will provide that: the contractor costs totalled \$450,628 over the two financial years; travel costs at \$27,580 excluding GST for the two years; and venue and catering was \$15,057 over two financial years.

CHAIR: Thank you. The next one was also to you, Director-General. The member for Condamine might be able to give us some context, but the question was: what is the lost economic opportunity for the state? What is the lost potential supply of gas and coal to the market? I am not sure to what this is pertaining. Member for Condamine?

Mr WEIR: No, that is my mistake. I just led you up the garden path. It was the question regarding coal and gas tenures which was just answered.

CHAIR: Okay, no worries. The other one was to the CEO: how many staff have left mine safety? You did answer that one. We are early. Gee, that is awesome.

Mr MARTIN: Can I just check? Did he answer that one?

CHAIR: Yes, he did. We just agreed to that; that was answered. We are right. There are no questions on notice. Minister, just before we wind up, are there any thanks you would like to give or any final statement that is not a poem—although we do appreciate it?

Mr STEWART: It was not a poem; it was a song.

CHAIR: Oh no. Come on!

Mr STEWART: I've been everywhere, man. Before we close, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the staff from the Department of Resources, Resources Safety and Health Queensland, the GasFields Commission Queensland and the Land Access Ombudsman for the tremendous amount of work that they do and that has gone into preparing these hearings. I am extremely grateful for your tireless commitment, dedication and late-night phone calls. To my Acting Director-General, Mark Cridland, who has soldiered on this evening—I am impressed—and to my deputy directors-general Shaun Ferris, Suzanne Stone, Celia Venables and their teams: thank you for your leadership and boundless knowledge of this portfolio.

I acknowledge the members of the committee and thank you for your questions. I would also like to thank the parliamentary staff, Hansard and the attendants for all your work. Estimates hearings are an incredible and important part of our democratic parliament and accountability process in this state. I thank all members for their engagement this evening. I would especially like to thank my team; namely, Paul Keene, Stephanie Kameric, Belle Brookfield, Travis Dawson, Bella Hickson, Chris Lees and Ruby Wallace. They have worked hard to ensure that this minister is up to speed on every aspect of this important and wide-reaching portfolio on issues that impact people throughout Queensland. I thank them for helping to carry out our government's vision for the people of Queensland. A sincere thanks also go to you, Chair, for facilitating this exhaustive estimates process. To everyone, it is good night from me and thank you once again.

CHAIR: Sorry, Minister; I have made a mistake. It is not quite 'good night'. There was that one question to the CEO that I thought was answered but it was not: how many staff have left the mine safety directorate in the past 12 months?

Mr Stone: Thank you. I was not sure in that respect. Thank you for the clarification. I will need to come back with precise numbers, but I would like to say to the member that the net of leavers and joiners in the Mines Inspectorate in financial year 2022 is plus two. We currently have 49 inspectors of mines, the most we have had in 10 years. I will come back with a precise number.

CHAIR: Minister, are you happy to take that on notice?

Mr STEWART: I will take it on notice if the members particularly want those numbers and get back to you in due course.

CHAIR: All right. The time allocated for the consideration of proposed estimates for the portfolio has expired. The committee has resolved that answers to questions on notice must be provided to the committee secretariat by 3 pm on Thursday, 4 August. Thank you. You can confirm the exact wording of any question taken on notice in the proof transcript of this session of the hearing which will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website within approximately two hours or by watching the archive broadcast.

Minister, on behalf of the committee I thank you, directors-general and officials for your attendance. I also would like to thank my fellow committee members and visiting members who have participated in the hearings today. I would like to thank Hansard, our parliamentary staff who have kept us watered and everything else—I really appreciate that—and the secretariat staff as well. On behalf of the committee, thank you all; I really appreciate it. I declare this hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 8.14 pm.