

WEDNESDAY, 2 AUGUST 2023

ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE—STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PLANNING; OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES INFRASTRUCTURE

Estimate Committee Members

Mr CG Whiting—Chair

Mr JJ McDonald

Mr MJ Hart

Mr RI Katter

Mr JE Madden

Mr TJ Smith

Members in Attendance

Mr JP Bleijie

Dr A MacMahon

Mr MC Berkman

Ms A Leahy

Mr JM Krause

Mr SSJ Andrew

Mr AJ Perrett

Mr DR Last

Mrs DK Frecklington

In Attendance

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

Ms K Wright, Chief of Staff

Mr B Wecker, Senior Policy Advisor

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning


Mr M Kaiser, Director-General and Coordinator-General

Ms N Wilde, Deputy Director-General, Strategy, Insights and Advisory Group

Queensland Reconstruction Authority

Major Gen. J Ellwood (Retd), Chief Executive Officer

The committee met at 9.00 am.

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

My name is Chris Whiting. I am the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. With me today is Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Mr Michael Hart, member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, member for Traeger; Mr Jim Madden, member for Ipswich West; and Mr Tom Smith, member for Bundaberg. The committee has granted leave for a number of non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today. Other members may seek leave over the course of the proceedings.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2023 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.

While the use of mobile phones and electronic devices is not ordinarily permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting our witnesses here today and who have been permitted the use of their devices for this purpose. I do ask, however, that all phones and electronic devices be switched to silent mode to avoid any interruptions to the proceedings. I also remind everyone that food is not permitted in this chamber.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: state development, infrastructure, planning and local government from 9 am to 12.30 pm; agricultural industry development, rural communities, fisheries and forestry from 1.30 pm to 4.45 pm; and water, regional development and manufacturing from 5 pm to 7.45 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the portfolio of the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympic and Paralympic Games Infrastructure until 12.30 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine the Deputy Premier's portfolio areas as follows: state development from 9 am to 10 am; infrastructure and planning from 10 am to 11.15 am; and local government from 11.30 am to 12.30 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 11.15 am to 11.30 am.

The following non-committee members have sought and been granted leave to participate in the hearing in accordance with the standing orders: Mr David Crisafulli, member for Broadwater; Mr Jarrod Bleijie, member for Kawana; Ms Fiona Simpson, member for Maroochydore; Ms Ann Leahy, member for Warrego; Mr Tony Perrett, member for Gympie; Mrs Deb Frecklington, member for Nanango; Mr Dale Last, member for Burdekin; Mr Brent Mickelberg, member for Buderim; Mr Andrew Powell, member for Glass House; Mr Jon Krause, member for Scenic Rim; Mr Stephen Andrew, member for Mirani; Mr Michael Berkman, member for Maiwar; and Dr Amy MacMahon, member for South Brisbane.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply to 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 the proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Deputy Premier, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Deputy Premier or the

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

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The committee will begin with the examination of the estimates for the state development portfolio. Deputy Premier, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. Committee members and guests, good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today. I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respect to elders past, present and emerging.

Queensland is booming. The numbers I released on Sunday show that the Sunshine State is where everyone wants to be. Six million people will call the south-east home by 2046. This means we will need more than 900,000 homes, and that is in a climate where supply and affordability are already impacting the lives of too many Queenslanders. Palaszczuk government funding and partnerships with the private sector have already helped unlock more than 25,800 housing lots in the south-east, but we know we can do more. To manage growth well and help build more of the Queensland we love, we are today launching the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan for public consultation, with the final plan to be released by the end of the year. This is a strong plan that delivers on our commitment made at the recent Housing Summit. More important than that, it demonstrates that as a government we are prepared to act now to prepare for growth, to plan ahead and to grow well and in a way that protects our lifestyle and environment and benefits Queenslanders, younger, older and future generations.

It is all supported by Queensland's Big Build. Some \$20 billion of this will be built over the next year, supporting 58,000 jobs. That is in addition to the \$96 billion of infrastructure already delivered, taking the total to \$185 billion over 12 years. Queensland is embarking on the biggest decade of infrastructure delivery in our history. We are delivering new hospitals and more roads, trains, energy infrastructure and police stations. We know the world is shifting towards cleaner, greener and more sustainable products and services. Our budget includes an additional \$53 million to continue the highly successful Industry Partnership Program. The IPP helps grow priority industries, strengthen local supply chains, encourage collaboration and leverage private sector investment, and this new funding injection will focus solely on opportunities and projects that will contribute to decarbonisation.

In support of our commitment to inviting more industries to call Queensland home, we have also delivered \$125 million to unlock more land for industry development. Our budget shows our commitment to plan for and build the world-class infrastructure that will shape our state's future. It includes the funds needed to start building venues for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We have said all along that Brisbane 2032 will be the anchor for economic opportunity across the state. All eyes will be on Queensland in the run-up to 2032, and the Palaszczuk government is determined for all of Queensland to benefit from this golden decade of opportunity.

CHAIR: I will go to the deputy chair for questions. Do you want to defer to anyone?

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

Mr BLEIJIE: Good morning. Deputy Premier, in your opening statement, you spruiked building trains. Can you advise the committee please when you were first advised that the \$7.1 billion Train Manufacturing Program had blown out to \$9.5 billion?

CHAIR: Just before we start, I note this was dealt with yesterday and it is not directly part of your portfolio, but I invite you to answer the question, Deputy Premier.

Dr MILES: You are right, Chair. It is not part of my portfolio. It was addressed at length by the Premier. If there are further questions, they should be addressed to the transport minister during his estimates.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, you mentioned train-building in our opening dialogue in your three minutes of the biggest priorities of the government, so I am responding to your opening dialogue about train-building which you spruiked yourself only three minutes ago. When were you advised that a media release, issued with a photo of yourself in it, incorrectly stated the project at \$7.1 billion?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair. I wonder if this is not tedious repetition and also irrelevance to the portfolio of the Deputy Premier.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Bundaberg. As noted, that is not directly part of the portfolio, but the Deputy Premier wishes to respond to that. Thank you for your point of order.

Dr MILES: First of all, the member is absolutely correct, the Palaszczuk government is very proud of the steps we have taken to build trains here in Queensland. I am sure all Queenslanders will recall that the government that the member was a member of exported our train production to India, and when those trains arrived, they were not fit for use on our network and needed to be repaired. We are not going to make those same mistakes. We are going to build our trains here in Queensland and, in the process, we will employ Queenslanders and get trains that are suitable for our state and for our public transport network. However, as I have said, if the member has questions beyond what the Premier said at estimates yesterday, he will need to save those for the transport minister's estimates later.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, I asked when you were aware of the blowout. You refused to answer. I asked when you were aware that the press release issued by the Premier and the minister was incorrect, but there was a photo of yourself in that press release issued by the Premier's office; you have refused to answer. It is now reported that the Premier herself said she knew about the blowout, but still chose to put out a media statement with an incorrect figure in it. Considering a photo of yourself was sent out with an incorrect media release, what have you done to ascertain the facts of the matter about the \$2.4 billion budget blowout?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, that question had quite a lengthy preamble and some of the language could be construed as argumentative. You have asked the question now for a third time. Deputy Premier, do you have anything further to add to what you have already given?

Dr MILES: This continues to go to matters that are not in my portfolio or in my SDS or budget papers, but the Premier was very clear yesterday. The member has asked what steps I have taken to ascertain the facts. The minister has accepted that an error was made. He has apologised for that. I think that is entirely appropriate. When mistakes are made, ministers take responsibility, and that is what he has done. That is what the member for Kawana has never done for the mistakes he made as minister between 2012 and 2015.

Mr BLEIJIE: I never had a \$2.4 billion blowout in my—

CHAIR: Order, members.

Dr MILES: If you want to open up the list of errors, we can do it.

CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr BLEIJIE: What is he doing? He is not resigning—

CHAIR: Order, members! Members, order, through the chair.

Dr MILES: It was an error in a press release and he has apologised.

CHAIR: Members! Deputy Premier, member for Kawana, can you halt there?

Mr BLEIJIE: What are the consequences?

CHAIR: Members! I have called for order. I just remind people that under the standing order 247, comments are to go through the chair. Deputy Premier, have you finished your answer?

Dr MILES: I have.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, do you have another question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, yes. I want to keep prosecuting this issue because it is directly relevant to the SDS. The Deputy Premier says it is not, but I can turn to the whole SDS which talks about economic development in the state of Queensland, and I would suspect \$9.5 billion train manufacturing is pretty relevant to economic development, so I will keep asking questions on this. Deputy Premier, you have refused to tell this committee when you knew about the blowout. You sit on CBRC. I ask you again: when were you first made aware of the cover-up and the \$9.5 billion budget blowout?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: I will pull you up on that, member for Kawana. I ask you to avoid argumentative language or hypothetical language. You have made your point with that; that is the fourth time you have asked the question. Deputy Premier—

Mr BLEIJIE: It is separate. I want an answer. He is not answering.

CHAIR: Member, do not talk over the top of me. I am calling the Deputy Premier. Sorry, there was a point of order?

Mr SMITH: Chair, point of order under standing order 112, no debate on asking questions.

CHAIR: The member is correct on that. Once again, I draw everyone's attention to 112 and I ask people, when asking questions, to keep that in mind. We have dealt with that. I will go to the Deputy Premier.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: Yes?

Mr McDONALD: Chair, the Deputy Premier is being responsive to the questions by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and he does not need the protection of the member for Bundaberg who is being argumentative.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Hopefully we have dealt with that point of order. I remind people sitting at the table here to adhere to standing orders. Deputy Premier?

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. I simply observe for the committee that an error in a press release is a much smaller mistake than exporting all train construction to India and buying a bunch of trains we cannot use.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

CHAIR: Order, members!

Dr MILES: You have never apologised for that.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

CHAIR: Members!

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Dr MILES: You have never apologised for buying cheap trains in India.

CHAIR: I am calling the Deputy Premier.

Mr BLEIJIE: Disgraceful.

CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections or you will be warned.

Mr BLEIJIE: He is interjecting.

CHAIR: Cease your interjections. I remind both members—I will pull you up again on this particular matter—that there will be no arguing. You know the standing orders: there will be no arguing across the chamber and all comments are to go through the chair. Deputy Premier, have you finished your answer?

Dr MILES: Yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, it was reported just last night that the transport minister has admitted that he deleted the correct figure of \$9.5 billion from the media release. As minister ultimately responsible for attracting, for facilitating investment opportunities and industry development in Queensland, is the Deputy Premier concerned that a senior minister in the Palaszczuk government has admitted to lying?

CHAIR: I will pull you up there, member for Kawana. Rephrase your question without offending standing orders in regards to that last part.

Mr BLEIJIE: As the responsible minister and Deputy Premier, is the Deputy Premier concerned that a senior minister in the Palaszczuk government has admitted to misleading Queenslanders?

CHAIR: One moment. Deputy Premier, you can answer this as you see fit. I point out that we are continuing down a line of questioning that is getting increasingly harder to justify as being part of the examination of the portfolio in front of us. I will allow the Deputy Premier to answer this and then we will see if we can go on to further questions because this is the fifth time this question essentially has been asked. Deputy Premier?

Dr MILES: The minister has acknowledged that an inaccurate figure was included in the media release. He has publicly apologised for that. The Premier addressed this at length yesterday and there will be an opportunity to question the transport minister at his estimates. I think that is all entirely reasonable. Let's get to the premise of these questions. This really comes from the fact that the LNP has never supported Queensland manufacturing.

Mr BLEIJIE: Rubbish.

Dr MILES: They did not want to make trains here.

Mr BLEIJIE: Rubbish. This is about a cover-up.

CHAIR: Member, you will cease your interjections, especially one that continues to contain such an imputation.

Dr MILES: They are critical of our efforts to make trains in Queensland.

Mr HART: You are not making trains in Queensland.

Dr MILES: That is what is at the heart—

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, where are they being made, by the way?

Dr MILES: That is the premise of these questions. They think we should still be ordering our trains from India, even if we have to fix them up here.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, this is about transparency.

CHAIR: Members, cease your interjections!

Dr MILES: Even if we have to fix them up here.

Mr BLEIJIE: This is about transparency.

Dr MILES: Well, there is a lot more—

CHAIR: Members, cease your interjections.

Dr MILES: We can be a lot more transparent when we are making the trains here in Queensland, rather than—

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, you can and you should.

CHAIR: One moment. Member for Kawana, I have directed you to cease your interjections. I have told you that you will be warned under the standing orders. You are currently warned under the standing orders.

Dr MILES: The LNP has never supported our plans to make trains here in Queensland, and that is why they continue to criticise our efforts to make trains in Queensland. They think we should send that money and those jobs overseas rather than keeping them here. This is a long-term contract to make trains here. It gives young people the certainty to go into a career in train manufacturing, knowing that that contract is here for the long term, that that factory will be here for the long term, that their government is committed to buying trains made in Queensland for the long term. The only thing that puts that at risk is the LNP's ongoing criticism of it and the prospect that they might at some stage in the future again try to buy our trains overseas, trains that ultimately were not fit for purpose when they arrived in Australia. This is all about us tidying up that mess that they have never taken any responsibility for.

CHAIR: Do you have any further questions?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, Chair. Deputy Premier, you are the infrastructure minister, the Deputy Premier and the left's factional leader. You could call time on dodgy Mark Bailey. Why haven't you?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: One moment. Member, rephrase that question or I will rule it out of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, you are the infrastructure minister, you are the Deputy Premier, you sit on CBRC and you are the left factional leader. Why have you not counselled or recommended to the Premier that Mark Bailey be sacked?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair. This line of questioning is relevant to the ALP caucus, not to the state of the budget and the Service Delivery Statements.

CHAIR: I agree with the point of order. This is not relevant. The things you mentioned in this question are not relevant to the expenditure in this portfolio or the public affairs for the Deputy Premier.

Mr McDONALD: It is in the estimates.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, point of order. You have just stated this is not relevant in the interest of public affairs. We are talking about a \$2.4 billion budget blowout that was covered up. I think this is pretty relevant to the estimates—

CHAIR: Member—

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, I have not finished my point of order. Secondly, if I look at the departmental highlights that the Deputy Premier's own department have produced on page 2 it says 'implement programs that assist with industry development with a strong focus on emerging industries, investment attraction'—tick—'utilise place-based approaches and grow new and traditional industries by seizing the opportunities to support industry'. Train manufacturing is industry. I would put to you, Chair, that train manufacturing and budget blowouts under the Deputy Premier's portfolio in his own SDS are pretty relevant to this portfolio committee's deliberations.

CHAIR: Thank you, but as you know, your question ranged broader than that, touching on institutional organisations and other elements outside of that SDS. I am going to give the Deputy Premier some latitude to answer this as he sees fit instead of ruling it out of order.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. The minister has done three things that the member for Kawana, himself a former minister, could never bring himself to do. He has admitted a mistake was made, he has apologised and he is buying trains built in Queensland. I think doing those three things that the member for Kawana could never do mean that the transport minister is a far better minister than anyone on the LNP side ever was or ever will be.

CHAIR: Do we have any further questions?

Mr BLEIJIE: Is the Deputy Premier aware that these trains he is talking about are actually manufactured in Korea, not Maryborough? Are you aware of that?

Dr MILES: We are manufacturing trains in Queensland and we are fixing the trains in Queensland, too.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is the Deputy Premier aware that they are put together in Maryborough, but they are manufactured in Korea? How can the Deputy Premier keep justifying that these trains—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you know standing orders. This is increasingly falling outside the minister's portfolio of state development and should perhaps be asked of the Minister for Transport.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I am responding to the Deputy Premier who was talking about trains.

CHAIR: Indeed you are, and I was just about to say the Deputy Premier will answer that as he sees fit.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. I have been to that factory. I have met those workers.

Mr BLEIJIE: In Korea?

CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections.

Dr MILES: I have been to the factory—

Mr BLEIJIE: Have you been to the Korean factory?

Dr MILES:—where they are making the trains. I have been to the factory where they are making the trains. I have met with hundreds of the workers who are providing for their families with the income derived from their work making those trains. For the member for Kawana to talk them down—

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I did not do that.

Dr MILES:—to talk down the value of their skills, the value of their jobs—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order. I take personal offence. I ask the minister to withdraw.

Dr MILES: He said they were not making the trains. How offensive!

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order. I take offence. I ask the minister to withdraw.

CHAIR: One moment, Deputy Premier. The member for Kawana has taken personal offence at that and has asked that that be withdrawn.

Dr MILES: I withdraw. There are 800 workers at that factory in Maryborough making trains. We know the LNP have never wanted that. We know the LNP have never supported that. It might be reasonable for them to come in here and criticise me or the transport minister, but to come in and criticise those 800—

Mr HART: They are Korean. They are making the trains. Have they made a mistake?

CHAIR: Members, cease your interjections.

Dr MILES:—highly skilled workers in Maryborough, who are feeding their families, sending their kids to school with the income that they get from proudly making trains here in Queensland. We stand with them. We support their jobs. We think their jobs should exist here in Queensland. That is a pretty stark difference to those who oppose this contract and these efforts.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, can the Deputy Premier please explain then the \$5.1 billion paid to Hyundai Rotem in Korea and what is that contract?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, is that directly part of the Deputy Premier's portfolio?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, he just mentioned all the trains being manufactured. I asked if the Deputy Premier had been to the factory in Korea and he did not answer. Now I am asking: as part of 'investment opportunities in Queensland' he mentioned the specific contract that was signed by the government. My understanding is that a \$5.1 billion contract was signed by the government with Hyundai Rotem, and trains are being built in Korea. So can the Deputy Premier explain—

CHAIR: I understand what you are saying, but is that particular contract something that falls under state development?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, the Deputy Premier specifically mentioned the contract. I am asking him to tell us what that contract was and specifically the \$5.1 billion. If he has mentioned it, I am entitled to ask him to expand on it.

CHAIR: Indeed he has mentioned it. I am pointing out that it may not be part of his portfolio, but I am asking the Deputy Premier if he wants to furnish an answer on this particular aspect.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, it is also about the economic development for Queensland.

CHAIR: It is indeed. As I have said previously, this line of questioning will be very fruitful to ask the Minister for Transport. Deputy Premier, would you like to furnish an answer?

Dr MILES: The member for Lockyer is right; this is about economic development for Queensland. The member for Kawana might not support that, but I know the member for Lockyer does. This contract secures that factory in Maryborough and the 800 jobs that it supports. The contract itself is a matter for the transport minister, and you will get a chance to ask those questions. I am advised that the reference the member has made to trains made in Korea refers to the two prototype trains that are being built there. They are not part of the 65 trains that we are discussing and that will be built at the new Torbanlea facility. Given that, I think the member for Kawana owes the committee an apology for misleading the committee. The two prototype trains will come from Korea, but the 65 Queensland-built trains that we have commissioned—

Mr BLEIJIE: Different contract.

Dr MILES:—will be made here in Queensland.

Mr HART: Are they making all trains—

CHAIR: Members, cease your interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a different contract.

Dr MILES: He should apologise. He has misled the committee.

Mr BLEIJIE: Rubbish!

Dr MILES: He has misled the committee.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, I know there is some provocation through argument here, but I remind you that you are on a warning this early in the day. Can we continue our questioning, member for Kawana? Do you have another question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, I have asked you a series of questions today about the press release that was issued with the incorrect figure. I am asking you to explain to the committee for the purpose of transparency and accountability when you became aware that the figure issued by the government for this train manufacturing contract was incorrect?

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, I think this question is a repetitive one. For perhaps the last time is there anything you can further furnish on this, or do you want to keep it to what you have said?

Dr MILES: The minister made a very fulsome public explanation. He acknowledged that an incorrect figure had been used; he apologised for it. They are qualities of a good minister to acknowledge when a mistake is made and to apologise for it, and that is what he has done and that is what the member for Kawana has never been able to do. He has never apologised to all of the workers whom the LNP sacked. He has never acknowledged the lives that were ruined. The scale of the impact of those mistakes is so much greater than an error in a press release.

CHAIR: We have time for one more question, member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, you are speaking a lot about previous governments that will shortly have been 10 years in the wilderness. I am asking you to come back to my questions with respect to transparency and accountability. You sit on CBRC. My question is this: did you approve the \$9.5 billion expenditure on the Train Manufacturing Program in CBRC? The Premier confirmed yesterday that it did go to CBRC. You sit on CBRC—

Mr MADDEN: Chair—

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I finish my question, Mr Chair? Deputy Premier, you sit on CBRC. Did this matter go to CBRC? Can you confirm, as the Premier did yesterday?

Mr MADDEN: Chair, point of order. Clearly this line of questioning offends standing order 236, irrelevance or tedious repetition. I would ask the member to move on to another issue.

CHAIR: I think this is about the sixth or seventh time this question has been asked in a similar fashion.

Mr HART: It is a different question.

CHAIR: I ask the Deputy Premier, once again, is there anything further that he might want to add, bearing in mind it is a link, but a tenuous link, to the expenditure before us that we are examining?

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order: With respect, I am not asking the Deputy Premier to further expand. My question was very specific about the CBRC which he sits on. It is not capacitive for him to further not answer the question; I am asking a direct question about the CBRC which he sits on.

CHAIR: I understand where you are going with that question, but my reply still stands. I am still asking the Deputy Premier if he wishes to furnish further answers or further expand on that?

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair. I do not think it will surprise anyone on the committee that I do not intend to disclose the deliberations or discussions of a cabinet subcommittee.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, were you aware of the train manufacturing blowout?

Mr Kaiser: I have nothing to add to what the Deputy Premier said.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is not what I asked. I asked you if you were aware of the train manufacturing blowout.

Mr Kaiser: I have nothing to add to what the Deputy Premier said.

CHAIR: I might start questions from government members myself. The first question is about the Industry Partnership Program. Deputy Premier, referencing page four of the SDS, can you update the committee on the Palaszczuk government's additional investment in the Industry Partnership Program and how that will create good and secure jobs in Queensland?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Bancroft for his question. On our side of the House we support using the state's budget to create jobs here in Queensland—it appears the LNP does not. This year's state budget includes an additional \$53.5 million to continue our highly successful \$350 million Industry Partnership Program. The Industry Partnership Program is a flagship state development program that is focused on growing Queensland's priority industries, strengthening our local supply chains, encouraging collaboration between all levels of government and industry and leveraging private sector investment. Since the launch of the IPP in 2021, 18 projects have been approved, representing an investment in Queensland of over \$1.1 billion and creating over 1,850 Queensland jobs.

The program has also leveraged over \$150 million in Commonwealth government funding for Queensland. Projects approved under the IPP include: Fortescue Future Industries' green hydrogen facility near Gladstone; Visy's upgrade to its Gibson Island material recovery facility; and the creation of the translational manufacturing facility at the Translational Research Institute to supercharge our biomedical manufacturing capabilities. IPP has supported Vecco Group's vanadium battery electrolyte manufacturing facility in Townsville; the construction of the Alpha HPA commercial plant for high purity alumina and related high purity alumina precursor products; and the Queensland University of Technology's upgrade of their Mackay renewable bio-commodities pilot plant.

Our government's further investment of \$53.5 million in the Industry Partnership Program supports the vision that we outlined in the recently-released Queensland New Industry Development Strategy. These programs focus our efforts on the development of industries and supply chains in Queensland that will be in demand as the world decarbonises. This includes renewable energy manufacturing, critical minerals, developing a battery industry, green hydrogen, resource recovery, recycling and the bio-economy, including biofuels and sustainable aviation fuel. The IPP will also invest in Queensland's growing biomedical industry.

Queensland is already a powerhouse when it comes to Australia's clean energy future, and this further investment strengthens that position. To be a clean energy superpower we will deliver our ambitious Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, while making sure that we create as much of the industry, supply chains, value and jobs that we need to deliver it right here in Queensland. That opportunity is something that will not last forever as countries around the world race to do the same thing. A great example of the IPP growing jobs and growing the industries and supply chains we need as the world decarbonises is our support for Australia's first commercial-scale vanadium flow electrolyte manufacturing facility in Townsville. Vecco Group's \$26 million Townsville vanadium battery manufacturing facility will start production later this year. When operational, the facility will employ over 20 people and produce nine megalitres of electrolyte annually for use in vanadium flow batteries, equating to energy storage capacity of 175 megawatt hours annually and growing to 350 megawatt hours. The new vanadium battery electrolyte production facility will support the development of Vecco's Debella critical minerals mine, leading to downstream manufacturing and creating a new link in the supply chain.

To achieve our decarbonisation targets we will need to charge and discharge electricity on an industrial scale through grid-scale batteries. This facility in Townsville means that these batteries can be Queensland made and will form part of a new vanadium supply chain right across North Queensland. Queensland-made vanadium-flow batteries can deliver grid-scale storage so that Queensland's abundant renewable energy resources like wind and solar can reliably power Queensland's homes, businesses and industries. Whenever I travel across Queensland, the response to the IPP across industry is overwhelmingly positive. Our new \$53.5 million investment and our clear focus on taking the opportunities available to us as the world decarbonises means more good, secure jobs in Queensland, more secure supply chains and more batteries stamped with 'made in Queensland'.

Mr MADDEN: Deputy Premier, I recently had the opportunity to attend CS Energy's Kogan Creek Power Station where a grid-scale mega battery is under construction by the Downer Group. Referencing page four of the Service Delivery Statements, can you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting the creation of the battery industry and its associated supply chains in Queensland?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Ipswich West for his question. It is great you got to see that facility. Our goal is for Queensland for an industry battery industry leader as global demand for new energy storage surges. The Palaszczuk government has a clear vision to take advantage of the global shift to clean energy as the world decarbonises. This is the vision of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, the Queensland New Industry Development Strategy and Queensland's battery industry strategy that is under development. One of Queensland's huge natural advantages is our globally significant critical mineral reserves. We are fortunate to have plentiful vanadium, cobalt, copper and rare earth elements. These elements are essential to the development of clean energy technologies like solar panels, battery storage and electric vehicles.

As demand for electric vehicles and batteries continues to accelerate, Queensland stands to either take advantage of this opportunity by creating industries, economic development and good, secure jobs right across these supply chains, or to just be the resource supplier as these supply chains are developed overseas. We are focused on growing a battery industry in Queensland right through the supply chain from pit to product as global demand skyrockets. In the electric vehicle battery market alone, annual global investment is predicted to surge by more than \$550 billion by 2030 in order to meet this demand. Queensland's expertise in battery minerals and advance manufacturing already puts us in a strong position to grow our industry and to meet the forecast demand for energy storage and batteries that has been created by our government's SuperGrid and the \$62 billion Energy and Jobs Plan.

To capitalise on this opportunity, my department is leading the development of a multi-technology battery industry strategy that will help us grow Queensland's battery value chain over the next five years. It will look right across the value chain to help create a sustainable battery industry that is at the forefront of battery technology, commercialisation and advance manufacturing. On 16 January this year, I released the *Battery industry opportunities for Queensland* discussion paper which focused on identifying what competitive advantages Queensland already has as part of the rapidly expanding global battery ecosystem. What we heard from industry was that there are significant opportunities for Queensland and that to build a battery industry in Queensland will require collaboration across all parts of the supply chain.

Queensland has a strong ecosystem of battery technology entrepreneurs and strong capabilities in advanced manufacturing. When you set that beside our globally significant critical minerals reserves and our commitment to energy and jobs to the Energy and Jobs Plan, Queensland is already on a path to becoming the preferred supplier for advanced battery materials and batteries themselves, both in our region and around the world. Building Queensland's battery industry is also being supported by the Albanese federal government with their commitment to invest up to \$100 million to establish an Australian-made battery precinct in Queensland, and \$15 billion in the National Reconstruction Fund.

I had the opportunity to meet recently with the federal industry and science minister and it is clear in the work that he is doing to deliver Australia's first National Battery Strategy and the Australian-made battery precinct that we have a strong partner in this work with the Albanese federal government.

Queensland also has another advantage in being well ahead of the pack when it comes to the research and development of innovative battery technologies. In the 2022-23 state budget the Palaszczuk government committed \$15 million to expand energy and storage technology research at the Queensland University of Technology's facility at Banyo, establishing QuestHub. The Queensland government's investment in QuestHub will leverage a further \$35 million from universities and industry, helping to support more local businesses and position Queensland as Australia's gateway for battery innovation. The work that is going on at QuestHub and our support for battery manufacturing at Vecco in Townsville and ESI Asia Pacific in Maryborough are all part of our strategy to make Queensland an international battery industry leader just as demand for energy storage surges around the world. I am looking forward to releasing Queensland's battery industry strategy later this year.

Mr MADDEN: Deputy Premier, biomedical research in Queensland continues to impress. Referencing page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting economic development to make Queensland a globally competitive Asia Pacific biomedical hub?

Dr MILES: It is over two decades now since Queensland set out to become a world-leading biomedical hub. While the strategy has evolved over time, the vision has remained the same—to become a state where knowledge and innovation drive economic growth to improve prosperity and quality of life for all Queenslanders. Now, 25 years on, our biomedical sector is booming and set to grow even further, with Queensland fast becoming a global research and innovation hub thanks to the Palaszczuk government's investment in state-of-the-art facilities, talent attraction and partnerships. For example, the Queensland government recently invested \$60 million to support the establishment of a scale-up manufacturing facility, the Translational Manufacturing facility, at the Translational Research Institute to enable local researchers and biomedical companies to scale up production of their products for clinical trials. Once its construction is completed, we will have increased capability from early science through to clinical trials to manufacturing.

Last year global healthcare company Sanofi, the Queensland government, the University of Queensland and Griffith University announced a partnership to establish the Translational Science Hub—a world-first mRNA research centre and vaccine hub in Queensland. The hub will bring more expertise, supply chain capabilities and clinical investigations to Queensland. In June 2023 Queensland biotechnology company Vaxxas officially opened their new facility. It was constructed with Queensland government support. The Vaxxas brand new state-of-the-art facility at Northshore Hamilton will support them to develop and manufacture their revolutionary needle-free vaccine technology in Queensland. These successes and others put Queensland at the forefront of vaccine development globally. We are home to more than 300 research centres, institutes, research hospitals and innovation precincts and everybody who visits remarks on the collaboration between our universities, so it is little surprise that more people want to tap into our market.

Earlier this year I had the privilege of joining some of our greatest minds at the world BIO International Convention. Queenslanders were out in force at BIO 2023, which attracts more than 14,000 industry figures from across the globe. Delegates from 50 Queensland companies, universities and research institutions joined me to talk up Queensland's successes in biomedicine, setting our state up for the next 25 years of opportunity. Atlanta's Emory University, the University of Queensland and Sanofi announced plans to join forces to set up the Queensland Emory Vaccine Centre, bringing together the best and brightest minds to accelerate the development of vaccines. Partnerships like these position Queensland to take a greater share in the world's multibillion dollar biomedical sector and build on investments the Palaszczuk government has made to grow this high-value industry.

Professor Ian Frazer will continue shaping our bright future in biomedicine as the Queensland government's new biomedical adviser and chair of the Translational Science Hub Statement of Cooperation Steering Committee. Professor Frazer is recognised globally for his contribution to medical science, the most significant being the creation of Gardasil, the cervical cancer vaccine. Because the Gardasil vaccine was invented in Queensland and we were the first to embrace it, Queensland is projected to be the first place in the world to eliminate cervical cancer. Professor Frazer's incredible work has led to thousands of lives saved and I have no doubt his guidance in this area will mean more groundbreaking developments will come out of this great state. He will get straight to work chairing the steering committee and the statement of cooperation.

Our government is doing what good governments should do—that is, investing in our experts and boosting intergenerational prosperity by building high-value industries. Only a Palaszczuk Labor government is sticking to the plan to deliver better lives for the next generation of Queenslanders.

CHAIR: With reference to page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government—and you have talked a bit about this—is supporting the decarbonisation of the aviation industry and are there any alternative approaches that you are aware of?

Dr MILES: When it comes to decarbonising our skies, Queensland is the place to invest. As we move towards a decarbonised future, the world's airlines have committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. This will only be possible using sustainable aviation fuel. That is why our government is already taking steps towards making Queensland the home of sustainable aviation fuel. Thanks to our rich supply of feedstock and our skilled workforce, Queensland is internationally recognised as an ideal location to establish an Australasian SAF supply chain. That is why we are working with industry leaders to further develop a sustainable aviation fuel industry right here in the Sunshine State. To accelerate the growth of Queensland's sustainable aviation fuel industry, an industry round table was held in November 2022 to bring together key supply chain participants, including feedstock providers, technology developers, aviation, airports and refiners.

We have already seen meaningful advances in Queensland's growing sustainable aviation fuel industry. This includes attracting Oceania Biofuels to Gladstone for its sustainable aviation fuel biorefinery, supporting Jet Zero to establish its sustainable aviation fuel biorefinery in Queensland, signing a memorandum of understanding with Qantas to work together to further grow a local sustainable aviation fuel industry, and signing an MOU with Ampol and ENEOS to explore biofuels production in Brisbane. In Australia Qantas is targeting 10 per cent of its fuel to come from sustainable aviation fuel by 2030 and around 60 per cent by 2050. Right now this fuel is coming from overseas. The Palaszczuk government's commitment to sustainability has given Qantas the confidence to support us as a sustainable aviation fuel hub. This is possible because we have set the state up for success with the right mix of investment, government support and industry collaboration.

Members may recall that in March of this year the Palaszczuk government announced support for Jet Zero Australia to start a feasibility study for a new biorefinery in Queensland which could produce up to 100 million litres of sustainable aviation fuel a year. In addition to this, we have also partnered with Ampol and ENEOS which will assess the feasibility of delivering an advanced biofuels manufacturing plant at Lytton and in Central Queensland Oceania Biofuels plans to build a commercial aviation fuel biorefinery in Gladstone. It is clear Queensland has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to play a key role in a decarbonised future and our vision and pragmatic approach has already attracted investment throughout the state. I have no doubt sustainable aviation fuel made right here in Queensland will be powering planes across the globe in years to come. Queenslanders know that we will capitalise on this world-changing opportunity, creating new jobs and bringing billions to the state's economy.

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

Mr KATTER: Referring to a statement in the SDS that talks about growing new and traditional industries by seizing opportunities to support industry in the regions, can the minister advise whether he supports the attempts by the Hughenden Irrigation Project, known as HIPCo, which has been funded by the Commonwealth government to the tune of \$164 million and supported by the Premier publicly on several occasions, to gain coordinated project status?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for the question. I am advised that the Coordinator-General has not received requests for greater assistance at this stage, but I am advised that they stand ready to assist if required. I understand that they are awaiting a water release from the department of water and

I am certainly happy to raise with the water minister, and I am sure the Coordinator-General can raise with the director-general of water, your interest and are happy to get what information we can available for you. I have got some background here I can take the committee through. The water department released 10,000 megalitres from the general reserve in January 2023 and the process for allocating that is yet to be finalised. These general and strategic reserve releases are in addition to the more than 220,000 megalitres already allocated in the Flinders catchment to support irrigated agriculture and industry. I understand it needs to go through that process. There is federal funding allocated, as the member says. We are not in the business of not making sure Queensland gets those kinds of federal funds so we will work on it.

Mr KATTER: Obviously I have had the opportunity to be specifically focused on this with a lot more detail, so I appreciate I am putting you on the spot with a lot of this. The feedback from the Coordinator-General is that you need more information when they went to get more money from the fund to do more studies. But more specifically, the Coordinator-General's office said, 'Go to Infrastructure Australia', who then said, 'Well, we need more information before we can advance you.' So there was a refusal loop, whether by design or by accident, that is being created that makes it impossible to meet for the project. Therefore my question is: will this be addressed, because as I understand it it had nothing to do with the water, it was about having more information on the project itself which required access to the funding which Infrastructure Australia refused based on getting more information? There seems to be a real contradiction in the position of the government on this project.

Dr MILES: You are right, member, it goes to a level of detail I am not across. I might see if the director-general has anything to add, but otherwise he can perhaps commit to reach out to the proponent.

Mr Kaiser: We are happy to have discussions with you, member. The Coordinator-General's function is not a funding mechanism, so I am not surprised at the advice that a funding source was required and there is definitely a threshold of information required before we can prescribe a project or declare a project a coordinated project, but I am happy to have further conversations with the proponent and/or yourself.

Mr KATTER: Thank you. The other question I had was there is a reference in the SDS about supporting impacts in communities of projects and specifically with the Coordinator-General again there was the Genex solar, wind and pumped hydro. It smashed the local roads in the Etheridge Shire and there was no provision there for any obligation on the developer to contribute to the local road system through that process. There is still a large part of that project to be built, as I believe, with some 500 truck movements proposed on already severely damaged roads with no obligation that came through the approval process supported by coordinated projects. So my question is: how does the Deputy Premier intend to rectify that situation to ensure that community support?

Dr MILES: I again thank the member for his question and his interest in these projects. The Coordinator-General does have a role in all of them. The wind farm is a prescribed project, the pumped hydro is a coordinated project, the solar farm was a prescribed project and a critical infrastructure project. The state is not party to the infrastructure agreement with them. That is between Genex and the council, but we will look to see what further scope there is for the Coordinator-General or the state to work with Etheridge to address that.

I am advised that there is a requirement for some road upgrades to be undertaken. One of the major upgrades that the project and surrounding community will benefit from is the sealing of around 50 kilometres of Gregory Highway from the Lynd to Gilberton Road. The road has significant access and maintenance issues during wet weather, as I am sure the member is aware. So there is some return there, but given those concerns about the impact already on existing roads, I might get the director-general to undertake to contact the mayor and see where we can assist, noting that the infrastructure agreement is with the council.

CHAIR: We will go to one brief question from the opposition, then one from the member for South Brisbane.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have some questions with respect to Wellcamp, aka 'Wastecamp' or, as many Queenslanders are calling it now, 'the white elephant'.

CHAIR: The question is ruled out of order. Start again.

Mr BLEIJIE: I hadn't asked a question.

CHAIR: I know when you are breaching standing orders. Try again without breaching standing orders.

Mr BLEIJIE: As I said, I have some questions with respect to Wellcamp.

Mr SMITH: Chair, there is a prop.

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, you are warned under standing orders for bringing in a prop like that. Do that again and you will be out. Put it away. Get rid of it.

Mr SMITH: You could make use of our free kindy program you know, Michael.

CHAIR: Let us try again.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Auditor-General report says the Queensland government, with respect to Wellcamp, should have considered disclosing the total value of arrangements once the agreements were signed. Why didn't you?

Dr MILES: I was advised at that time that those details continued to be commercial-in-confidence. Members of the committee will recall that when asked for detail on those arrangements at the last estimates hearing I was very detailed and fulsome in providing them. I note that the QAO's report confirmed that the details I provided to the committee were fulsome and accurate.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, considering the report from the Auditor-General confirms that Wellcamp cost \$223 million, do you stand by your original comments that you have no regrets or do you now consider Wellcamp was a waste of Queensland taxpayers' money?

CHAIR: Do you want to recast that question without that last part?

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, the Auditor-General report confirms that Wellcamp cost \$223 million of Queensland taxpayers' money. Do you stand by your original comments that you have no regrets, or do you consider Wellcamp was good value for money for Queensland taxpayers?

Dr MILES: I note that the member for Kawana is very selectively quoting the Auditor-General's report. For the benefit of the committee, allow me to point the committee to more of what the Auditor-General had to say in that report. The report found that the government's procurement process was reasonable and that the centre represented value for money. I quote—

Our review identified that the government assessed relevant, available information in its decision-making processes, including risk assessments, valuations, and alternative options.

On page 6 it notes that the—

Quantity surveyor advises the Queensland Government that the capital costs for QRAC represent value for money.

The report also notes that all costs were included in the disclosures in the financial statements. On page 10 it says—

From our review, we did not identify any significant costs that were not disclosed in the financial statements.

The report notes that the disclosure of the contract for construction and lease of the facility was made in accordance with the Queensland Procurement Policy 2021 and it also acknowledged how difficult the circumstances at the time were and how uncertain the future of the global pandemic was. On page 5—

We acknowledge the circumstances and uncertainty associated with a global pandemic

It is unreasonable to selectively quote that report. Taken in its full, it is a much more balanced assessment of the decision-making surrounding that project.

Mr BLEIJIE: In the quite substantial Auditor-General report there are plenty of quotes. The Auditor-General also said yesterday at estimates the arrangements for Wellcamp, where the cost of a short-term lease substantially represented the cost to build it, was 'novel'. Did the government pay too much for the short-term Wellcamp lease and is it currently owned by Queensland taxpayers who paid for it?

Dr MILES: All members will recall that the circumstances we found ourselves in at that time were unusual. They were circumstances that no government had ever found themselves in, at least not for 100 years. In those circumstances we sought to find a solution that would allow us to open our borders while keeping our community safe and one that could be built very quickly. I note that this facility was built and opened in less than half the time and for less than half the cost of the Pinkenba facility.

CHAIR: We will go to the member for South Brisbane. You have time for a quick question.

Dr MacMAHON: Deputy Premier, in correspondence to me you have said that property developers have no information regarding the Gabba PDA, yet developers Trenert seem to know that their \$1.2 billion development site is definitely within the PDA. How do Trenert know this before there has been any community consultation or even a finalised PDA map?

Dr MILES: I have seen that concern that you have raised with me in correspondence. I can advise that that developer has no additional information other than what I have disclosed publicly. They might be inferring they know more or predicting what decisions might be made, but they are not privy to any confidential information or anything that has not been made public.

Dr MacMAHON: Deputy Premier, you co-announced that development so you are essentially endorsing that the development will go ahead under the PDA before there has been any community consultation or a finalised map. That site might not end up being in the final PDA site but somehow Trenert know that that is the case.

CHAIR: Member, there is an argumentative element to that question but I will ask the Deputy Premier to respond very briefly.

Dr MILES: I attended the launch of that developer's project at their invitation. I was careful not to express a view on the project that would jeopardise my ability to make decisions about it or the PDA or other proposed developments. I simply expressed the view that it was in keeping with the kinds of developments that we would expect to see.

Dr MacMAHON: Surely co-announcing a development is tacit endorsement.

CHAIR: Thank you, member. That concludes the committee's examination of estimates for the state development portfolio area. We will now examine the estimates for the infrastructure and planning portfolio areas. Would any officials who are changing places at the witness table and in the chamber please do so quickly. As I said, we will now examine the estimates for the infrastructure and planning portfolios until 11.15 am. Deputy Premier, if you like you can make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Dr MILES: I covered my opening statement in the first one. I am happy to use the time for committee member questions.

CHAIR: We will go to questions and I note that we will go to the member for Traeger early on in the piece. I will now hand over to the deputy chair to see if he has any questions on the portfolio of infrastructure and planning.

Mr McDONALD: I look forward to hearing from the member for Kawana and, thank you, Deputy Premier.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have a question to the director-general. I refer to reports that Deloitte was commissioned to conduct a review into the structure of infrastructure delivery for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and recommended the state government take this work in house. What date was that report commissioned?

Mr Kaiser: It was not commissioned by this department.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect, I did not ask who commissioned it. I asked what date it was commissioned.

Mr Kaiser: I do not have any information about reports commissioned by other departments.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, we are in budget estimates for the Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympic and Paralympic Games Infrastructure and you have just advised the committee that you are not aware of the Deloitte report about who delivered—

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you have some imputations there. Keep on with your question.

Mr Kaiser: I am generally aware that Deloitte did a report into Olympic governance. That is the responsibility of the Premier's department. We are responsible for infrastructure.

Mr BLEIJIE: The report, as I understand, was on the coordination of the infrastructure. That is what the whole report was about—the Deloitte report.

Mr Kaiser: I do not believe so.

Dr MILES: No.

Mr BLEIJIE: Have you seen the report, Director-General?

Mr Kaiser: I have seen some of the outcomes of the report, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: You have seen the outcomes but have you seen the report?

Mr Kaiser: Yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: How many pages is that report?

Mr Kaiser: I have no idea. It is not the responsibility of this department. It was a report primarily into the governance arrangements associated with games partners including local government, the Commonwealth government and the state. This department fits into that governance process in quite a small way because we are responsible for the delivery of infrastructure.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, you have confirmed that you have seen the report. Can you recall whether it was a big report or a few pages?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana—

Mr BLEIJIE: I am asking for his recollection of the report.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, we are examining expenditure that relates to this department. There is no need for trivial questions such as that. Continue with another question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, are you aware of how much the Deloitte report cost?

Mr Kaiser: No.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, I can advise that the report cost nearly \$800,000, was approximately 18 pages long and cost \$44,000 per page, which is an extraordinary amount of money, even to Labor standards. Is the Deputy Premier of the view that this was good value for money for Queensland taxpayers?

CHAIR: Member, you know the standing orders. I ask you to rephrase that question and relate it to the expenditure that relates to this department.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, it is about Olympic infrastructure.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Chair. The report, as the Director-General said, relates to governance, which is under another department. Member for Kawana, did you want to rephrase the question?

Mr McDONALD: Chair, with respect, it is governance arrangements about decisions regarding Olympic infrastructure.

Mr Madden interjected.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Ipswich West. We are debating and arguing within this question. Member for Kawana, did you want to rephrase the question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, have you read the Deloitte report?

Dr MILES: Yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for confirming that. Is the Deloitte report 18 pages long?

CHAIR: Member, I have already asked you—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, point of order.

CHAIR: One moment; I have not finished. Member, can you please relate your questions to the examination of the expenditure of the budget instead of commenting on the size of things.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Deputy Premier has confirmed that he has read the report, which means it is relevant to his portfolio because—

CHAIR: I have invited you to recast your question and I am waiting for it.

Mr HART: Point of order, Chair. The Deputy Premier is the minister assisting the Premier on this matter so that falls directly into his portfolio.

CHAIR: Indeed. As we have heard he is the Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympic and Paralympic Games Infrastructure. Member for Kawana, did you want to continue with your question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, you have advised the committee that you have read the report. We understand that the report cost \$800,000 approximately to commission and it was 18 pages long. Can the Deputy Premier confirm whether he is aware that the cost of that report was in fact \$800,000?

Dr MILES: I am not aware of that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, who came up with the original cost for the \$1 billion Gabba redevelopment?

Mr Kaiser: That was the work of the then Olympics task force sitting in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, would you be able to provide the committee with a copy of the business case with respect to that \$1 billion announcement?

Mr Kaiser: No.

CHAIR: Director-General, is that a part of your portfolio?

Mr Kaiser: The original work done for the bid was undertaken by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Olympics task force is part of that department.

Mr HART: Is there a business case?

Mr Kaiser: A business case for the Gabba is under development at the moment.

Mr HART: So there was no business case?

Mr Kaiser: I do not know on what basis that figure was provided. It was not work conducted in this department.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I am really trying to ascertain then, because this is now the second time that the department has said that it is not really relevant to them, this is the department that is now overseeing the infrastructure delivery for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and they will have been briefed. I want the witnesses to answer these questions. Director-General, on the \$1 billion that was announced by the government for the redevelopment of the Gabba, my understanding from your answer is that you are not aware that a business case was conducted. You have said there is one being conducted now.

CHAIR: Member, I think you are being argumentative and impugning there but keep going.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I understand there was no business case for the \$1 billion for the Gabba redevelopment. The Auditor-General has confirmed that that cost actually came from a press release. Is the Director-General aware of that press release issued at the time? We are talking about \$1 billion of taxpayer money being announced and spent. I would hope that the Director-General would have inquired.

Mr Kaiser: By another department prior to my becoming director-general.

Mr BLEIJIE: Right. Director-General, it is now in your department. The Gabba redevelopment is now costing \$2.7 billion. How did the cost of \$1 billion in the Premier's department become \$2.7 billion when it was handed over to the Deputy Premier's department?

Mr Kaiser: The original estimate was prepared on the basis of a preliminary concept design for the purposes of the Olympics bid by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It was also prepared in 2021 dollars as per the requirement of the bid. Since that time, we have done a number of things. They fall broadly into three categories: one is that we have escalated the costs to convert the 2021 dollars to out-turn dollars, and once you take into account out turn dollars—when the money will be paid and the impacts of inflation—that already takes the cost to \$1.9 billion. The two other categories are: global economic circumstances in terms of market constraints, skill shortages and supply chain disruption; and also work undertaken since the bid provided a greater level of detail about the work required from a design and engineering perspective; for example, the application of six-star green-star standards which are quite new and untried and which we anticipate to cost in the order of \$211 million to apply. They are the three components that take you from that original, quickly-prepared estimate for the purposes of an Olympics bid through to the current estimate of \$2.7 billion.

Mr BLEIJIE: What you are saying is that for the \$1 billion announced by the Premier's department there was no business case or structure around it. It came to your department, you then put structures around it; but what I am—

Dr MILES: Chair, can I just—

Mr BLEIJIE: Excuse me, I am asking questions.

CHAIR: No, you are straying into hypotheticals and imputations there. Deputy Premier, do you have a point of order?

Dr MILES: I think it is important to note that that announcement was not made by the Premier's department; it was made in a joint announcement between the Premier and the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison.

Mr BLEIJIE: It's the Premier's fault.

CHAIR: It is not a point of order.

Dr MILES: With the Prime Minister at the time, Scott Morrison.

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

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, we now have a figure at the Gabba that has blown out to \$2.7 billion. You have just confirmed to this committee that in fact a business case has not been completed. It is ongoing.

CHAIR: Member, that is not what I am hearing here.

Mr BLEIJIE: Sorry? Chair—

CHAIR: Member, you have hypotheticals and imputations there. Can you cast your question without making judgement?

Mr BLEIJIE: The director-general confirmed that there is an ongoing business case; is that correct?

Mr Kaiser: Yes, we are preparing a business case.

Mr BLEIJIE: Okay. So we have the Gabba with a \$2.7 billion figure now. Surely your department would have done a business case before the announcement of \$2.7 billion, learning from the mistakes of the \$1 billion announcement. Why is a business case being conducted after the fact of the announcement?

Mr Kaiser: A budget is only a relatively small component of a business case. The budget was completed and it came in at \$2.7 billion for the reasons that I outlined—broadly three categories: out-turn dollars, cost escalations because of global economic circumstances and six-star green-star standards which are relatively new. That budget is a component of the business case. The business case goes to other issues as well such as constructability, risks.

Dr MILES: The stage of the business case—

Mr BLEIJIE: Sorry, I did not ask the Deputy Premier.

CHAIR: One moment there. Has the director-general finished that answer? This will come from government time. Did the Deputy Premier want to add to that?

Dr MILES: I wanted to say for clarity that the stage of the business case that is determining the cost and the preferred option has been completed, and that is why those details have been made public.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy-Premier, could the business case uncover that the \$2.7 billion Gabba will in fact be more than \$2.7 billion?

CHAIR: That is a hypothetical. You are asking for an opinion there.

Mr HART: It is a business case.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General—

CHAIR: One moment, I am speaking here. Deputy Premier, did you want to furnish anything on that? You have a brief, wide-ranging opportunity.

Dr MILES: Yes, I would like to provide some more detail there because, as I outlined, the process to determine the budget allocation for the Gabba rebuild has been completed and some of that detail has been made public. What I am keen to do for the benefit of the committee is assure the committee that we assessed and costed four options for the Gabba redevelopment. That was done in very great detail before settling upon the option that we have outlined. That option assessment was informed by the government's key project objectives which were: that it should deliver a stadium offering to support year-round use and activation that meets sustainability targets, improves amenity of the site, is welcoming for people of all ages, abilities, genders and ethnicities and provides exceptional experiences that attract and increase visitors. When the four options that were available to us were assessed, only the option we have settled upon met all of those objectives. The other three options were costed at roughly the same amount as the option that has been settled upon but with a far worse outcome. The challenge there for members of the LNP is: if they are saying that we should not adopt the preferred option at a cost of \$2.7 billion, which of the other three options are they proposing, all of which cost roughly the same amount with a far worse outcome for the state?

Mr Hart: So it was done with the same rigour as the rail train builds program, was it?

CHAIR: Order member! I will just pause it here and go to the member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: Deputy Premier, the Palaszczuk and Albanese governments agreed to jointly invest \$7 billion in infrastructure to prepare South-East Queensland for the 2032 games. Previously, the figure from the Morrison government of \$6 billion was to go towards a \$12 billion joint fund. Given the current economy and inflationary pressures, can the Deputy Premier advise what cost savings have been found?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Traeger for his question. It relates to the partnership agreement signed between the Queensland and the Australian governments to fund the Gabba redevelopment, the Brisbane Arena concert hall and the 16 minor venues. It does represent what we now anticipate the delivery costs of that program will be. More detail about each of them will be made available as they progress through that project validation process. I have just outlined where the one for the Gabba is up to. We are undertaking one for the Arena as well as the minor venues program.

Mr KATTER: Given the substantial investment by Queensland taxpayers towards that for the south-east corner, new projections show that the population of Mount Isa will decline by 2.4 per cent, Charters Towers by 6.3 per cent and Flinders by 25 per cent. What is the Deputy Premier doing to allocate infrastructure strategies to address those declines so that all of Queensland goes forward together?

Dr MILES: Throughout this period we will continue to substantially invest into regional infrastructure across our capital program. I think roughly two-thirds of that investment is outside of the south-east, and we will continue to see that. While the member is correct in saying that much of the venue investment is in the south-east, not all of that is in the south-east. There are projects in Cairns and other places, but the infrastructure program in its totality will continue to be weighted in favour of the regions—as I say about two-thirds in regional Queensland. I think 90 per cent of our renewable and jobs plan in terms of that \$62 billion investment is in regional Queensland too.

CHAIR: We will go back to questions from the Opposition.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, could the Gabba redevelopment now sitting at \$2.7 billion go higher than \$2.7 billion?

Dr MILES: At this stage, that is what it is costed at in escalated dollars.

Mr BLEIJIE: The \$1 billion was in 2021 dollars. In what dollar year is the \$2.7 billion calculated?

Dr MILES: It anticipates completion in 2030.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy-Premier, ordinarily you would do a business case before you announce the project, but the business case is now happening after the announcement of the \$2.7 billion. It could very well be the case that the business case raises issues with the Gabba in terms of whether it is even constructible or feasible. Has the Deputy-Premier considered—or what is the analysis so far of the business case in that regard?

Dr MILES: Initially we had just a few weeks provided by the IOC to complete the host questionnaire. The information that needed to be prepared for the joint announcement with then prime minister Morrison and the Premier was only a few weeks. We sought the best information that was available in those few weeks. It was a requirement of the IOC bid process that everything included in that host questionnaire was in current-day dollars rather than escalated dollars, so there was always going to be a need to escalate to dollars within the years that the projects were being delivered.

Since then we have undertaken a much more detailed process—a stage of the business case process. It assessed four different options, looked at the pros and cons of each of those options and costed them out. They all came out at between about \$2.3 billion and about \$3.2 billion. We selected the best option from those four. That project validation process is continuing, which is effectively the rest of the business case process, and we will continue to provide information out of that process over time.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, in terms of the billion dollars that you just talked about with three weeks notice, is it essentially that the billion dollar figure was plucked out of the air and put on a document by the Premier—just a made-up figure by the Premier to get the deal?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you have an argument in there. Can you rephrase your question?

Dr MILES: I understand that Scott Morrison had scheduled to—

CHAIR: Do you want to take that, Deputy Premier?

Dr MILES: I am providing more details for the member for Kawana. Scott Morrison had scheduled to travel to Queensland for an announcement with the Premier regarding the bid. The government—it was not my department at the time—had to have material available for that announcement. It was based on the advice that we were provided at that time by the stadium architects. As I have said, it was prepared within a matter of weeks.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, is it the case that the government and the Premier claim all the good stuff about the Olympics but for the bad stuff—like making up figures of a billion dollars—they just blame the former prime minister?

CHAIR: Member, I am ruling that out of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, in 2021 the International Olympic Committee made recommendations that the existing Gabba be used for ceremonies and that athletics be hosted at Carrara Stadium. Was that considered by the government?

Dr MILES: I do not think you could get a clearer indication of the support for this plan than what John Coates has said publicly. He has said that this is the appropriate plan to deliver not just a fantastic stadium for the Brisbane 2032 games but also a new stadium for Brisbane to replace one that is at the end of its useful life.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. It is interesting that you mention the Olympic committee and Mr John Coates, because I have here the International Olympic Committee's *IOC feasibility assessment—Olympic Games: Brisbane*, February 2021. In the particular document it talks about the venue master plan for Brisbane centre, 14 venues. No doubt you have seen that. In relation to the Brisbane Olympic Stadium the International Olympic Committee comments state—

- Consider using existing Carrara Stadium ... in Gold Coast for Athletics
- Consider using The Gabba ... for Ceremonies

The government keep claiming that they are doing everything based on the advice from the International Olympic Committee. Is it the case, Deputy Premier, that that is not correct because the International Olympic Committee has advised the government of alternatives?

CHAIR: You are asking the Deputy Premier to comment on a document that he has not seen.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a public document, Chair.

CHAIR: It is a public document, but it would have been useful to provide that. That is probably your only copy; is that correct?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I put it to you that the minister responsible for Olympic and Paralympic infrastructure would be well aware of and should have read this document.

CHAIR: I understand that, but the point is that you are referring to a document that only you have at the moment, even though it is a publicly available document. I will ask the Deputy Premier if he wants to comment on that particular question.

Dr MILES: It is not unusual for the IOC to suggest that between us we should consider things. That matter was—

Mr HART: And save \$2.7 billion.

CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections. Member for Burleigh, you are already under a warning for use of a prop.

Dr MILES: As I have said, the project validation process considered what options were available and settled that the best outcome for the games, for the city and for the region is to redevelop the Gabba. That is what we intend to do. This opposition from the LNP to the Gabba redevelopment is really quite disappointing.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, there is no opposition; we support the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2032. Deputy Premier, was it not considered because the option analysis was only undertaken in the second half of 2022—that is, over a year after the demolition of the Gabba was already announced?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, bearing in mind that the minister is Minister for Infrastructure and not overall coordination, is this something that relates to his portfolio as Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympic and Paralympic Games Infrastructure?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, the Deputy Premier or the director-general can correct me if I am wrong, but I understand now the infrastructure delivery of the Olympic and Paralympic Games is in this department.

CHAIR: Indeed they are. For clarity, can you repeat your question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, talking about the International Olympic Committee giving comments to the government to consider other options in terms of the cost of things—the Premier keeps talking about the new norm. The new norm is to utilise existing facilities and save money, but the government is knocking down the Gabba. Were the International Olympic Committee's comments not considered because the option analysis was only undertaken in the second half of 2022—that is, over a year after the demolition of the Gabba was already announced?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for the question. I understand that the document the member for Kawana is referring to predates the host questionnaire and the decision-making that was undertaken by the Queensland and Australian governments in the lead-up to making that bid. I can assure the member, though: at that stage—again, this was prior to my or my department's responsibility—all options were appropriately considered. The result, though, of abandoning the Gabba redevelopment would have left us post the games with a stadium beyond the age of its useful life, only able to accommodate around 37,000 seats for AFL and 34,000 seats for cricket, without proper disability access, without female change rooms and without appropriate, modern back-of-house facilities.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, the Premier said yesterday at estimates that the *Stadium Taskforce report* said that the Gabba would reach end of life by 2030. Can the Deputy Premier advise whether that statement is correct?

Dr MILES: I certainly understand that we have been advised that the stadium is approaching the end of its useful life. I can go away and confirm the 2030 figure. In 2018 the Gabba was assessed as having 11.6 years remaining of its useful life, so around 2030.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to the *Stadium Taskforce report*, I cannot find the statement made by the Premier yesterday in that report. Report recommendation 11.1 talks about an internal upgrade or improvement, not a knockdown job. Can the Deputy Premier advise why the report would talk about an internal upgrade for a stadium that is claimed to be reaching end of life?

Dr MILES: As I noted earlier, four options were assessed for the redevelopment of the Gabba. They included refurbishment options. Options 3 and 4 were refurbishment options. Option 4 was costed at a capital cost of \$3.174 billion. Option 3 was assessed with a capital cost of \$2.554 billion. Both of those options delivered much poorer outcomes for the stadium. As you would note, that is roughly the same costed amount as option 1, which we have determined to proceed with because it is the option that addresses all of the objectives that I outlined earlier. We set out the objectives, we asked for four options and we had those options drawn up and assessed, both for their outcome and for their cost. They are all roughly the same cost with a much better outcome from option 1. Given those options, it is open to the LNP, I suppose, to suggest that they would choose option 3 or 4 even though they would cost roughly the same amount with a poorer outcome.

Mr McDONALD: Chair, I wonder whether the Deputy Premier could table that document. I do not think we have seen that document with the different options available.

CHAIR: No. In estimates there is no requirement for the minister to table documents.

Mr McDONALD: They would be pretty important options. The Deputy Premier could table them.

CHAIR: Indeed. Thank you for your opinion on that, but you have the information that you need.

Mr BLEIJIE: Will you table it?

CHAIR: Do you have a further question?

Mr McDONALD: Yes.

Dr MILES: Chair, I am happy to take the committee through in more detail the options that were assessed.

Mr McDONALD: No. We are just happy to see the document tabled, Chair.

Dr MILES: Even better than that, I have them laminated. I can take you through them all and then I will table them once I am done.

Mr BLEIJIE: Oh, props. You are allowed to use props, are you?

Dr MILES: Option 4 had the highest cost estimate of all options—

Mr McDONALD: I have a question, Chair.

CHAIR: Just a moment.

Mr McDONALD: We do not need to hear any further, Chair. He has answered the question.

Honourable members interjected.

CHAIR: Quiet please, everyone.

Dr MILES: Just because you fell for it does not mean—

Mr BLEIJIE: It is not a joke.

CHAIR: I just point out that the committee cannot order the minister to table the document. Also, the Deputy Premier is very well aware of the standing orders regarding props which the member for Burleigh has been warned—

Mr HART: I have been warned. Is he going to be warned?

CHAIR: You have indeed but yours was a much graver breach of the standing orders.

Mr McDONALD: I have a question, Chair.

CHAIR: I know you have a question.

Dr MILES: I was asked for mine.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Premier. Did you want to continue? Then I will go to a question from—

Dr MILES: Yes, please.

Mr McDONALD: I raise a point of order, Chair. The Deputy Premier had—

Dr MILES: I have been asked.

Mr McDONALD:—answered the question about the options. I did not ask for discussion about options. I asked if the Deputy Premier could table it. I did not ask him to outline the options. I would like to go on to my next question please.

CHAIR: Next question please.

Mr McDONALD: The Olympic and Paralympic Games were sold to Queenslanders as being able to provide a legacy of infrastructure for the next 20 years. When will the government provide a list of those infrastructure items and a plan that will deliver infrastructure before 2032?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question and he is right. While there is a focus at this stage on venue infrastructure, the true legacy benefit for the region is the ability to bring forward transport infrastructure that will unlock connectivity between the Gold Coast and Brisbane and north to Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast, throughout the entire region, as well as connecting the precincts that we will see develop in the CBD. I know there is substantial interest in transport links out to Toowoomba and beyond.

Mr McDONALD: Hear, hear!

Dr MILES: Today we released the South-East Queensland regional infrastructure supplement, which is a document that sits alongside the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan. It seeks to set out the region's infrastructure needs including transport infrastructure needs to 2032 and beyond. That is a useful guide document for the kinds of projects we will be looking to bring forward in conjunction with the Australian government in our Olympic transport infrastructure plans.

I understand that the transport minister is in ongoing discussions with the Australian government about those plans, particularly and of most interest funding arrangements for those plans. Unfortunately those discussions have not been able to progress while the Australian government completes their review of infrastructure projects across the nation. We need to see that concluded first. We do hope to eventually settle a transport infrastructure agreement with the Australian government that aligns with our Olympic and Paralympic Games ambitions as well as our ambitions for the region beyond that which is outlined in the infrastructure supplement. I would urge the member to review that and make a submission to that process. I am certainly happy to arrange for the team to brief you or other opposition members.

Mr McDONALD: Does that supplement contain the list of transport infrastructure items?

Dr MILES: It does not, no. What that supplement does is it speaks to the infrastructure that we have that is planned and that is needed not just for the Olympics but for the growth of the region. The detail of the projects that will be delivered between now and 2032 is still the subject of negotiation with the Australian government.

Mr McDONALD: At estimates last year the Deputy Premier said he was negotiating or negotiations were occurring with the federal government. How have those negotiations progressed? Are we closer to getting the list for Queensland?

Dr MILES: As I said, they have been delayed or suspended while the Australian government reviews their infrastructure program across the nation. They have said that they are not in a position to negotiate that list until they have settled their infrastructure program nationally. That has all been suspended, members might be aware, for their infrastructure review. We would certainly hope to be able to move quite quickly once that infrastructure review is completed, but clearly much of that is up to the Australian government. The transport minister is the lead negotiator, if you like, for the Queensland government because the bulk of the infrastructure we are discussing is transport related.

CHAIR: We will have one more question from the opposition before we go to government questions.

Mr McDONALD: Before I go to the member for Kawana, when do you think Queenslanders will see that infrastructure list?

Dr MILES: As I said, we have provided as much detail as we can in the infrastructure supplement that I released today. The transport minister will continue to engage with the Australian government. They have suspended discussions around new commitments while they assess the status of their existing commitments. You will be aware that in other states they are seeking to reverse or cancel a range of very substantial infrastructure commitments. I saw Victoria announce more of those today. Understandably the Australian government wants to settle their infrastructure plan nationally. We certainly hope that the projects that are abandoned in other states will provide additional funds that can come to Queensland given how quickly we are growing.

CHAIR: Briefly, member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to the Gabba blowout of \$2.7 billion from \$1 billion, the Premier at the Gold Coast blamed things including the Ukraine war. Considering the Ukraine war is still on foot, will the Deputy Premier rule out any increase to the \$2.7 billion Gabba redevelopment?

Dr MILES: The figures that we have provided are on the basis of the expert advice that is contained in the project validation report process.

Mr HART: Similar to the train building exercise.

CHAIR: We will go now to questions from government members. I will start. Deputy Premier, I saw the press conference happening on the Speaker's green earlier today and this question relates to it. With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government is planning for South-East Queensland's predicted population growth?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question. As he says, our population is growing rapidly. Almost 2.2 million more Queenslanders will call South-East Queensland home by 2046, taking South-East Queensland to a total of six million people. That is faster than anywhere else in the country. We need to get the planning right now or we miss the opportunity to manage that growth. We need to do better in how we plan for that growth to deliver housing where it is needed faster and at the same time protect our way of life, environment and amenity.

Good planning will support all levels of government to work together—council, state and federal—and also industry and service providers. To manage growth well and help build more of the Queensland we love, we are today launching the draft South-East Queensland regional plan update for public consultation, with a final plan to be released by the end of the year.

The headline is that we will need another 900,000 homes by 2046. This is a strong plan that delivers on our commitment made at the recent Housing Summit. But, more than that, it demonstrates that as a government we are prepared to act now to prepare for growth, to plan ahead, to grow well and in a way that protects our lifestyle and environment and benefits Queenslanders—younger, older and future generations.

The plan will generate more jobs throughout the region, supported by priority infrastructure investments. It will deliver on-the-ground solutions that meet each local government area's unique growth need and it will ensure there is more diversity so that younger generations can buy their first home.

We also want to provide opportunities for our older Queenslanders to downsize and still have a great quality of life living in connected, active and open environments. Importantly, our plan makes sure our key workers like nurses, teachers, hospitality and retail workers—the beating heart of our frontline service industries—have options to live near where they work. We know that it will not be easy. We released this plan in a climate where housing supply and affordability is already impacting the lives of too many Queenslanders.

We have also committed, through the National Housing Accord, to address these housing challenges with targets for new affordable and well-located homes. The ShapingSEQ 2023 update is a core deliverable to address this federal requirement with a public commitment. It will make sure we are at the table to receive our fair share of funding from the federal government for the critical services and infrastructure needed to accommodate this growth. That is why we have included a 20 per cent affordable housing target to assist with the delivery of the national target of 30,000 new social and affordable dwellings within five years set under the 2022 National Housing Accord. I certainly do not think it is an unreasonable goal that one in five new properties should be able to be sold or rented in a price range that a nurse or a teacher can afford.

The Regional Planning Committee, comprising mayors of the region, me and the housing minister, has been working on this plan all year. The mayors were briefed on the draft yesterday. Of course, I expect from here there will be robust debate, questions and differences along the way. That is what a meaningful plan to tackle a challenge of this magnitude should involve. This is a critical time, and the alternative of not working together would mean letting down the communities that trust in all of us to represent their interests.

Collaboration does not stop with the release of the draft plan for public consultation. We will need the help of local government to do the planning at a local level, understanding what this expected growth may look like for their local government. We want to know where the areas of primary concern in achieving the housing supply targets are and why, and we want to work with local government to help them achieve those targets. We know there may well be blockages along the way that the state can help them clear. We also want the community to have their say, so I encourage all of the South-East Queensland MPs to talk to your communities and encourage them to get involved and give us their thoughts.

Mr MADDEN: Deputy Premier, as you would be aware, it is estimated that the population of Ipswich will double in the next five to 10 years, which would increase the population to about half a million people. This urban sprawl means the loss of habitat for native animals. With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government is planning to house more people in South-East Queensland while protecting the region's unique biodiversity?

Dr MILES: Updating the South East Queensland Regional Plan was one of the actions we agreed to at the Housing Summit, and that was because a lot has changed since 2017. In 2017 the existing plan was before COVID-19, before the rapid population growth we have seen, the unprecedented housing pressures, and of course it was before Queensland won the hosting rights to the 2032 games. There are already about 3.8 million Queenslanders living in South-East Queensland, which is the state's most heavily populated region, and that figure is projected to be about six million by 2046. That is an additional 2.2 million people requiring almost 900,000 new homes and just over one million new jobs.

It is not just that South-East Queensland's population is getting bigger; households in the region are getting smaller and more diverse. People have different housing needs throughout their lives and our population is ageing. The number of one-person households will increase substantially from 23.4 per cent in 2021 to 40.5 per cent in 2045. These projections demonstrate the significant challenges ahead, particularly considering the pressures already being experienced in housing. If we do not plan now, we know that the outcome will be more dispirit communities with services spread thinly and more urban sprawl.

Unchecked urban sprawl damages the environment, increases transport costs and spreads services thin, which is why we cannot just rely on developing greenfield sites. We need a mix of housing, including higher density in built-up areas, especially around existing services and transport. That is why

the plan includes greater emphasis on consolidation, moving towards an overall 70-30 consolidation expansion dwelling growth ratio for South-East Queensland. This is a shift from the current 60-40 consolidation expansion dwelling growth ratio in ShapingSEQ 2017.

It also contains an increased focus on density and diversity in and around centres and along high-frequency public transport routes and an increased focus on, and support for, achieving well-designed density in our suburbs—things like townhouses and low-rise apartment blocks. For the first time it puts in place supply and diversity targets for each of the 12 local government areas in the south-east, recognising the unique growth profiles of each region while ensuring the right mix of housing is delivered. Like many parents, I want to make sure the regions stay liveable and affordable for generations to come.

The plan also contains a tree canopy target for the south-east broken down by location: city centre, urban residential and regional employment areas, and suburban residential. High temperatures in urban environments can lead to heat related health issues. By reducing the heat island effect, tree canopy targets can help alleviate heat stress and improve public health. Since 2017 Queensland has committed substantial new spending to create more national parks and advance environmental and sustainable development principles.

The draft ShapingSEQ 2023 update recognises that transformational change is needed in how biodiversity and nature are considered and managed. This is important to meet international and national ambitions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and achieve sustainable use, sustainable development and human wellbeing. The draft ShapingSEQ 2023 update continues to protect, restore and promote biodiversity, balancing growth needs with achieving better biodiversity outcomes. This aligns to the Australian and Queensland government's bioregional planning approach, the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Queensland. Bioregional planning replaces the strategic assessment committed to in ShapingSEQ 2017 and will result in the development of bioregional plans across Queensland, including for South-East Queensland. Ultimately, bioregional planning aims to achieve better biodiversity outcomes and greater development certainty in Queensland through providing clear guidance on areas to be protected from development, areas that may be prioritised for development, and areas where development can proceed subject to agreed rules.

In 2020 the Queensland government launched the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020-2025 along with improvements to the South-East Queensland koala habitat regulations under the Planning Act 2017. The 2020 koala regulations increased the planning controls that protect high-quality koala habitat within the South-East Queensland region from the impacts of clearing. Additionally, enhancements to the mapping technology significantly increased the extent of koala habitat areas regulated in South-East Queensland. At the commencement of the regulations koala habitat areas covered 713 hectares of South-East Queensland, with the greatest level of planning protections afforded to over 331,000 hectares of large connected areas of high-quality habitat known as koala priority areas. The draft ShapingSEQ 2023 update integrates the 2020 koala protections and supports continued improvements to the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy. With this plan we can accommodate all of our new Queenslanders while also protecting our unique environment.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Bundaberg. My apologies, member for Bundaberg, for not calling on you earlier.

Mr SMITH: My question is for the Deputy Premier. With reference to page 5 of the SDS, can you please outline how the Palaszczuk government is catering for Queensland's growing population and if you are aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: It has been a long wait, but that is a good question. More and more people are choosing to call Queensland home, but it is not just the south-east that is benefiting from this growth: it is every corner of our state. As we welcome these new Queenslanders, it is clear that we need to carefully consider how population growth will impact Queensland's regional centres, creating not just the homes they will need but also the jobs and infrastructure. This is where our regional plans come in.

I have asked my department to review Queensland's regional land use plans that are over five years old and align them with our planning for jobs and infrastructure. This ensures that the development of land is strategically connected to employment opportunities. It promotes efficient resource allocation, maximises economic potential and enhances the overall wellbeing of residents in the region.

The department is currently reviewing regional plans for Far North Queensland and Cape York. I am pleased to announce that the North Queensland Regional Plan has entered its implementation phase, while the member for Bundaberg will be most interested that the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan is set to be finalised later this year. I know the member has been actively engaged with the regional planning committee there.

We know that good planning means more industries and better services and protects the world-class Queensland lifestyle that is generating the growth in the first place. For instance, the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan responds to economic shifts, while leveraging what makes the region so great. Tourism and manufacturing are at the heart of the plan, with the regional plan backing both in. They will help us to deliver the schools our kids need, the houses our families will need and the roads to connect our communities.

The member would be aware that the existing Wide Bay plan predates our announcement of a brand new hospital in Bundaberg and predates our train manufacturing in Maryborough. A lot has changed in that region since then that needs to be accommodated in a new regional plan. These plans are done in collaboration with state agencies and local government—all of us working together to create the best possible outcomes for Queensland's regions.

CHAIR: Deputy Premier, one of the things in terms of planning and growth that people are constantly talking about is the need for infrastructure. In reference to pages 2 and 21 of the SDS, can you update the committee on how the government is funding the catalytic infrastructure to unlock those residential lots across Queensland and especially South-East Queensland?

Dr MILES: This is actually really important. The Palaszczuk government is committed to tackling the current housing pressures and ensuring every Queenslanders has a place to call home. Currently, Queensland is experiencing Australia's highest growth rate of interstate migration and we know that is not slowing any time soon. By 2046 about six million people will call the south-east home. With the great lifestyle we have on offer in this beautiful part of the world, it is no wonder. We know we need to take action now so we can accommodate our new residents.

One thing the Palaszczuk government is doing to address the impact of housing pressures is providing critical infrastructure funding to unlock new residential blocks. I am happy to tell the House that the Palaszczuk government has invested more than \$320 million in funding support since 2021 and \$359 million since 2015 to provide the critical infrastructure needed to develop residential lots and new communities. These funds have mostly been distributed through three funding programs: the Catalyst Infrastructure Fund, the Building Acceleration Fund and the Growth Acceleration Fund. We are working in partnership with developers, local councils and utility providers to make sure essential trunk infrastructure is delivered throughout greenfield sites so together we can unlock new developable lots.

I am happy to announce today that the Palaszczuk government is committed to unlocking new residential land, with an additional \$21.2 million to be released through our Catalyst Infrastructure Fund. That funding will be supporting road and trunk upgrades at Greater Flagstone and Ripley Valley to unlock 13,000 and 8,900 residential lots respectively. Applications for the Catalyst Infrastructure Fund have totalled over \$200 million and identified over \$85 million in developer co-investment to develop this critical trunk infrastructure in quickly developing areas. This is only set to rise as more infrastructure agreements are finalised moving forward.

The Palaszczuk government's Building Acceleration Fund has seen \$122.7 million made available and split across nine projects. Some of the successful projects include water and sewerage infrastructure at Caboolture West and now completed road access works at Bahrs Scrub Road and Yarrabilba Drive. In total the infrastructure projects funded under the Building Acceleration Fund will unlock more than 11,700 residential housing lots in South-East Queensland.

Our Growth Acceleration Fund supports the delivery of essential infrastructure such as roads, water supply, wastewater and stormwater which is required to unlock land for housing in high-growth areas of South-East Queensland. Funding is made available to eligible residential developers and local governments through an expression of interest round. The funding is provided as a low-interest loan to help get critical projects off the ground. Today's announcement is evidence that more infrastructure projects are on the drawing board for these three funds so that we can continue to roll out the critical infrastructure that is laying the foundation for new Queensland communities. A lot of people are coming to live in the Sunshine State, so we are investing in these funds to make sure we have the lots to keep them here.

CHAIR: Following on with a very similar question, Deputy Premier, I have a question about planning for growth. In reference to page 2 of the SDS, a key action from the Housing Summit was to undertake an audit of state government owned land and buildings to find opportunities for future residential use and to partner with local governments and non-government organisations for that. Can you give an update on the progress of this work and the potential impact this will have on reducing the current housing affordability challenges that we see?

Dr MILES: Thank you for the question, member for Bancroft. The Queensland government, as you know, is addressing housing supply and affordability for Queenslanders. We are drawing on expertise available across government to assess available land and identify appropriate development opportunities. I can confirm that the land audit was commenced by State Development immediately after the summit. The department has reviewed over 2,000 parcels of state government land. Local governments were also asked to submit any underutilised land and buildings they owned that may be suitable for residential development.

We received over 870 submissions of land ranging in size from 100 square metres to 70 hectares from 39 local governments across Queensland. These sites were reviewed to determine likely suitability for housing based on a range of factors. Of the 870 submissions, 171 have been identified as suitable for further analysis. We have now commenced discussion with councils on how these opportunities could be progressed as part of the local housing action plan consultation process led by the Department of Housing. In addition, 887 trustee holders of government land were invited to identify possible housing opportunities on their trust land. There were 17 responses received and reviewed. Five of these proposals were considered suitable for further investigation, and these investigations are continuing. As for the state land audit, 27 parcels of land were short-listed with potential for significant redevelopment for potential housing, including social and affordable housing. The shortlist has changed as investigations progress or other opportunities are identified.

Economic Development Queensland, the Queensland government's land use planning and property development agency, has leveraged its property and development capability as well as its cross-government relationships to complete initial investigations on 17 sites. These sites are located as follows: four on the Gold Coast, six in Brisbane, two in Fraser Coast, one in Townsville, one in Rockhampton, one in Bundaberg, one in Moreton Bay and one in Logan. While investigations into these sites continue, I am pleased to note that the first project from the land audit has already been brought to market.

As announced yesterday by the Premier, a dedicated social and affordable housing development site at North Shore Hamilton was released by Economic Development Queensland to the market. This dedicated social and affordable housing development will be on an 8,000 square metre site and is expected to provide up to 200 homes, supported by a community housing provider. A second opportunity was also announced for a market housing development on approximately 4.1 hectares of land across three super-lot development sites directly adjoining the social and affordable housing site. It includes approximately 1,300 affordable homes to be delivered in phases over the next decade. These state-led social and affordable housing opportunities advance our commitment to building more homes for all Queenslanders.

I am also pleased to note that \$7.5 million over two years has been allocated in the 2023-24 state budget to enable Economic Development Queensland to continue its successful program of detailed investigations into these and other sites as they are identified. Over the next 30 years, another 20,000 Queenslanders will call North Shore home, and of course housing supply at North Shore will be further bolstered following the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, providing a lasting legacy from the Brisbane athlete village.

Mr SMITH: My question is to the Deputy Premier. With reference to the better planning for Queensland service area which is identified on page 8 of the SDS, could you please provide greater detail as to what work has been undertaken to address the impact of short-term rental accommodation on housing supply and affordability?

Dr MILES: As part of our planning reforms to create more housing supply, the Queensland government made a commitment to look into the impact of short-term rental accommodation. While short-term rental accommodation, or what is sometimes known as holiday letting, has been around for a long time, the advent of digital platforms like Airbnb and Stayz has made it more accessible, convenient and widespread. We wanted a clearer picture of whether sites like Airbnb and Stayz are affecting the rental market. The department partnered with the University of Queensland as an

independent body to undertake an analysis into the impacts that short-term rental accommodation has on housing affordability and availability across different communities. I am pleased to say the review is now complete.

I am advised that in the first quarter of 2023 there were roughly 19,773 active short-term rentals across Queensland. Of those, 11,193 were estimated to be used on a permanent basis. Two-thirds of these dwellings are located within the south-east. It is no surprise that the review revealed short-term rentals are most prevalent in high tourism, coastal local government areas like the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Noosa, Douglas, Whitsundays, Cairns, Moreton Bay and Townsville. Interestingly, the review found no clear alignment between the suburbs with the highest rent increases and the percentage of dwellings devoted to short-term rental. Instead, dwelling stocks emerged as the significant contributor explaining rental prices. The review revealed that an increase of 10 per cent in the total number of short-term listings could lead to a contribution in the range of just 0.2 to 0.5 per cent towards rent price changes. On the other hand, a 10 per cent increase in the overall stock of dwellings could lead to a decrease in rent prices ranging from one to two per cent. These findings show that while short-term rental accommodation can affect rental affordability to some extent, its impact is relatively limited. On the other hand, they emphasise the vital role of housing availability and supply in shaping rental prices, highlighting the importance of having enough housing options for our community.

In light of these findings, the review also found that statewide restrictions would fail to account for the diverse nature of short-term rental dynamics across Queensland, and a one-size-fits-all solution could miss the mark in addressing local challenges. That is why local councils play a crucial role in understanding the unique needs of their communities, and they are well positioned to determine and implement short-term measures to address local challenges. Brisbane City Council, Noosa Shire Council and Sunshine Coast Council have all introduced a new general rate category for transitory accommodation, and council may also require STRA landlords to obtain a development approval for the dwelling if used for STRA.

I am pleased to share a key recommendation that has emerged from the review—the implementation of a short-term rental registration system, inspired by successful models in other Australian states, particularly in New South Wales. A registration system could serve as a tool to support local governments in monitoring STRA activity and could provide invaluable insights into the impact of STRA on our housing market over time to inform evidence-based regulation. The Queensland government will now consult with the short-term residential accommodation industry reference group and the LGAQ on the review's findings and recommendations.

Mr SMITH: My question is one that is close to me because the Deputy Premier and I earlier in the year met with new residents of some community housing in Bundaberg. Deputy Premier, could you please outline an example of how the Palaszczuk government is helping community housing providers deliver social and affordable housing for Queenslanders?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. I know he has taken a real interest in housing and homelessness issues, having seen how it is impacting his community in Bundaberg. Through the Housing Investment Fund and the streamlined infrastructure designation pathway, the Palaszczuk government is supporting community housing providers to create social and affordable housing in our communities. At the Queensland Housing Summit, the HIF was boosted to \$2 billion to support social and affordable homes across Queensland. This significant investment, which amounts to \$130 million annually, shows our government's commitment to providing secure and affordable housing for those in need. Thanks to the streamlined infrastructure designation pathway, which was opened up to CHPs by the Palaszczuk government, the delivery of CHP projects is now more efficient and seamless than ever before.

Today I am happy to announce that I have approved Brisbane Housing Company's social and affordable housing project in Woolloongabba. This transformative development includes 81 thoughtfully designed apartments. Of the 81 apartments, 41 will be dedicated to social housing, creating safe and stable housing for those at risk of homelessness, women and children escaping domestic violence, First Nations people, single older women, families, young people, seniors and people with a disability. The remaining 40 units will be dedicated to affordable housing, ensuring our dedicated essential workers have a cost-effective option to live close to their place of employment in nearby retail and health precincts and in the CBD. This project directly addresses the pressing demand for secure, affordable and well-located apartments in Brisbane's inner south. The location provides easy access to local retail,

recreational facilities and high-frequency public transport. This ensures that future residents will not only have a place to call home but also the means to stay connected and engaged within the broader community.

The success of this project is a testament to the dedication and expertise of the Brisbane Housing Company, a community housing provider with a proven track record since 2002. It sets an inspiring example of what can be achieved through collaboration between government and community housing providers. This government will continue to work with CHPs, making most of the Housing Investment Fund and the streamlined infrastructure designation pathway to create thriving communities with affordable homes.

CHAIR: On that topic, we will go to the member for South Brisbane.

Dr MacMAHON: I will hand over to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: My question is to the Director-General. The Energy and Jobs Plan requires a review of the planning framework as it relates to renewable energy development, and I understand this review has commenced. Can you provide any detail on the scope of that review, particularly in terms of who has been consulted to date and the expected outcomes, and whether we might include legislative reforms, regulations, new state codes and the like?

Mr Kaiser: The Deputy Premier asked the department to conduct a strategic review of the planning framework for renewable energy. This review is focused on integrating projects, preserving the environment, promoting social equity, and attracting investments for a greener future. By aligning regional land use plans, infrastructure plans and local economic development plans with renewable energy zones developed by the Department of Energy and Public Works, we will maximise the potential of renewable energy infrastructure while minimising environmental and social impacts. Additionally, we are piloting a bioregional planning approach with the Australian government aimed at unlocking suitable development areas while safeguarding environmental values within Renewable Energy Zones.

Mr BERKMAN: Beyond the answer you have just given, DG, will the review include public consultation on adding social impact assessments and buffer zones around national parks and World Heritage areas for wind farms or specifically, as I asked before, that development of a state code for solar developments as opposed to the current mix of local government approvals?

Mr Kaiser: I think we will be asking wideranging questions, and members of the public and organisations and stakeholders can make suggestions along those lines. We are open to all suggestions as we review the wind code and as we look at the implications of renewable energy for Queenslanders, particularly Renewable Energy Zones. We really want to get this right as a government. I know the Deputy Premier is passionate about making sure that we meet our renewable energy target while also minimising the impacts on local communities and local environments.

Dr MacMAHON: Deputy Premier, today you have approved the LNP Brisbane City Council's Kurilpa TLPI. Can I clarify will the 20 per cent target for affordable housing be a mandatory target with contributions to social and affordable housing, and will the community consultation that you have conducted be made public?

CHAIR: Before that is answered, member for South Brisbane, I think this also covers a private member's bill that you have introduced that is now currently before the committee. Bearing in mind we do not want to anticipate debate, I do not know if the Deputy Premier can furnish some further information on that.

Dr MILES: I am happy to, Chair, and I will take care not to contravene any standing orders. The member is correct in that this morning I announced that the state government and Brisbane City Council have agreed on conditions for the temporary local planning instrument for Kurilpa. The members will recall that the Brisbane City Council put forward the Kurilpa TLPI as a proposal to address inner-city housing supply after significant community feedback. I asked the department to undertake public consultation which they have done and concluded last week in response to that, and to concerns raised by stakeholders that the proposal might not deliver housing supply that was affordable. I indicated to the Lord Mayor that we would be willing to consider the TLPI if it strengthened its affordability conditions. He agreed that that was a good idea, so we will now go ahead and make that as a state TLPI, including the affordability targets that really mirror what we have suggested in the draft regional plan, that we should be aiming to see at least 20 per cent affordable in the 900,000 new dwellings that we expect to deliver.

We are in the process of determining what will make up that 20 per cent. The 20 per cent will be the total social and affordable housing. That will then be made up of some public housing, some social housing and possibly other discount-to-market type products. If the Australian government gets their Housing Investment Fund through, then you might expect to see some of that product delivered there and then the remainder will be affordable housing at market prices to keep workers. We have not broken down that 20 per cent, but in total we are setting that as a target for the council in developments they approve.

Dr MacMAHON: That will be mandatory for developments in the TLPI?

CHAIR: Sorry, we are out of time. I will go to the LNP for a question.

Mr HART: I would like to talk about the recent ministerial infrastructure designation that the minister has made on a property at Pine Road and Archerfield Road, Richlands. This application was made on behalf of Smart Capital, a company whose sole director is former MP Bernie Ripoll. Can the minister explain why the letters of support for this Smart Capital ministerial infrastructure designation were made out by the Premier and other ALP members to Inala Primary Care rather than Smart Capital or Bernie Ripoll and why these letters of support are no longer available on the minister's website? I table one of those letters of support.

Dr MILES: Can the committee can give me a minute to see if we have any information. Can I have a copy of the tabled document?

CHAIR: Yes. What is the central thrust of your question, member for Burleigh?

Mr HART: The letters of support are made out to Inala Primary Care, but this is a ministerial designation. That means that the council are no longer involved in the rezoning and infrastructure charges are not paid, so there is a big benefit to the proponent in doing this. I would like to know why those letters were made out to Inala Primary Care.

CHAIR: I am not sure what the Deputy Premier can furnish. This is a letter of support from a local MP even though it is the Premier. I do not know if you can help with that, Deputy Premier.

Dr MILES: Perhaps in the break I might be able to seek some further information and report back at the start of the next session. Is that okay?

Mr HART: You will take that on notice? I will follow up with another question then. It appears that after Mr Ripoll bought this land at Richlands your ministerial diary on 20 July 2021 shows that your chief of staff met with the SAS Group about a secret matter on behalf of their new client Smart Capital. Can the minister confirm that Mr Ripoll attended that meeting? If he did, was it as a director of SAS, as a director of Smart Capital, as a board member of Inala Primary Care or just as your mate?

Dr MILES: I am not aware of that—

CHAIR: Hang on, you were going pretty well right up until that last bit.

Mr HART: I will leave that last bit out.

CHAIR: Ignoring that last bit, once again, I do not know what the Deputy Premier can add to that.

Dr MILES: I was not in that meeting.

Mr HART: Your chief of staff was. Can you come back to us with those details?

Dr MILES: I will see what information we can find in the break and come back to the committee.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Premier, since 2015 when the Palaszczuk government was elected, housing lots have reduced by 31 per cent and building approvals have fallen to 31 per cent. Last year—

Dr MILES: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: We have a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will finish my question if I may.

CHAIR: No.

Dr MILES: That figure is made up by the LNP. I ask the member to verify it.

CHAIR: I was going to say that as well. You have some claims in there about figures, member for Kawana. You are going to have to substantiate that. Can you rephrase your question perhaps avoiding those contentious bits?

Mr BLEIJIE: Last year in estimates the Deputy Premier turned up with a big map and props about Caboolture West. He promised at the estimates last year that in approving Caboolture West, he was going to fast-track 3,000 lots. Can the Deputy Premier advise this committee how many people are now living in homes on those 3,000 lots?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question. What I can advise the committee is that the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which is a much more reliable source of statistics than the 'LNP bureau of statistics', confirmed that there has been a dramatic increase in dwelling commencements—

Mr BLEIJIE: Rubbish!

Dr MILES:—and approvals in Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: Cherry-picking!

CHAIR: Member, cease your interjections.

Dr MILES: No, cherry-picking is taking two years and not looking at any of the years in between, which is what you do when you compare—

Mr BLEIJIE: Like the Treasurer did yesterday with months.

CHAIR: The member will cease arguing across the chamber.

Dr MILES: Dwelling commencements rose 18.8 per cent; dwelling approvals, 28.3 per cent; housing finance is up 2.2 per cent; and finance to investors is up 5.4 per cent. We have seen a very dramatic increase in attached dwellings. That is while across the nation we continue to see a decline in dwelling approvals. Australia wide they are down 7.7 per cent, and attached dwellings are down 6.2 per cent. I am pleased to update the committee on the progress of development in Waraba, which is the name that has been chosen for Caboolture West.

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order. We are slowly running out of time. I asked how many people now are in those. The point I am trying to make is that the government is very good on announcements and glossy brochures but not very good at delivering. I want to know how many people now—

CHAIR: Member, that is not a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE:—have a roof over their head.

CHAIR: We have your point of order. That comes to relevance and the Deputy Premier is very briefly addressing that before we go to a break.

Dr MILES: The latest progress at Waraba is that in June Stockland was approved for the first 2,050 new homes as well as infrastructure to support them—so a neighbourhood hub, green corridors, parks and open space. Local roads and infrastructure will also be upgraded to deliver the first 200 lots.

Mr HART: So none?

Mr BLEIJIE: No. Nothing in a year? Zero?

CHAIR: Members, cease your interjections.

Dr MILES: Construction—

Mr BLEIJIE: In a housing crisis you cannot deliver. You cannot fix it.

CHAIR: Member, you are already under a warning.


Mr BLEIJIE: He is not answering the question. He is good on announcements but not good on delivery.

CHAIR: You have the answer. You may not like it, but you have the answer. I think it is a good time to have a break.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have another question, Chair.

CHAIR: No, time is up. That concludes the committee's examination of the estimates for the infrastructure and planning portfolio areas. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and the meeting will resume at 11.32 am to consider the estimates for the local government portfolio area.

Proceedings suspended from 11.17 am to 11.32 am.

 **CHAIR:** The hearing is resumed. Before we start, the letter that was provided at the last session will be tabled; it does not offend standing orders. Welcome back Deputy Premier and officials, and welcome to any new officials who might have joined us. The committee will now examine the estimates for the local portfolio area until 12.30 pm. I notice that we have been joined by the member for Scenic Rim and the member for Warrego who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions. Deputy Premier, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Dr MILES: I do not have an opening statement, but I do have an answer to the question the member for Burleigh asked at the end of the last session. Thank you for the chance to seek some further information and advice. The Ministerial Infrastructure Designation process is available to private and public entities that provide community infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, aged-care facilities and emergency services. All applications for MIDs go through a rigorous and fair process. The process includes input from the relevant local government and surrounding community and considers the range of potential impacts that may arise such as traffic, impacts to surrounding amenities and the environment.

Regarding the MID application that the member is referring to, it is a residential care facility in a community that has a growing and ageing population. I approved the Ministerial Infrastructure Designation after a recommendation from my department and a thorough assessment. I confirm that the letter tabled by the member was not a formal submission and, therefore, was not considered as part of the assessment process. A summary of how the submissions were considered is provided in the decision notice which is available online. It is normal process to provide this summary in place of all submissions once a MID has been declared. I can table the advice from my department, which recommended that I approve the MID. I note that the proposal changed substantially from what was initially intended to what was finally approved and so the primary care facility—the medical component—was not approved. What was approved was the residential care facility based on a determination of need. I am happy to table the briefing note on the basis of which I approved that MID.

Mr HART: Are we going to answer the diary question?

Dr MILES: I am not aware of what happened at that meeting, no.

CHAIR: We will lay that on the table and have a look at it with a view to accepting that document and tabling that in a moment. Thank you, Deputy Premier. I will now call the opposition for the start of their questions.

Ms LEAHY: My first question is to the minister. I refer to the unprecedented floods in the Queensland gulf earlier this year that flooded Burketown and many other communities. How many flood-impacted homes did you visit in Burketown following the April 2023 floods?

Dr MILES: As the member is aware, I undertook an itinerary at the request of the mayor. I met with community members; I toured the town. I am happy to go back and get a more detailed itinerary, if the member is that interested.

Ms LEAHY: I have a follow-up question to the minister. How much time did you spend on the ground in Burketown following the floods?

Dr MILES: As the member is aware, I had a very limited window of time in which to visit those communities. I was pleased to do so, though. I was pleased to be joined by the member for Traeger and the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. He has returned, I think more than once, to do that deep engagement with the community.

Ms LEAHY: Did you visit any flood-impacted homes?

Mr MADDEN: A point of order: I would be grateful if my friend could indicate where this appears in the Service Delivery Statements and how it relates to expenditure.

Mr McDONALD: It is regarding disaster management responses to record floods in Queensland.

CHAIR: I understand, thank you. The member for Ipswich West has a point. We have talked about a travel itinerary. Member for Warrego, you will have to tie this questioning to expenditure.

Mr HART: Point of order, Chair. There is no requirement to point to an SDS. This falls into the minister's portfolio and that is the basis for the question.

CHAIR: It is indeed. As you know, we are examining the efficiency of what is actually spent here—it is all about context. I remind members that we are looking at the efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure. You are looking into an organisation's expenditure and assets, a funded policy, what is being spent and how it is being spent. It is all about context. At the moment, the context of the question from the member for Warrego is tenuous, but I am cautioning or directing her to connect her questions to the expenditure we are examining.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Chair. The Capital Statement outlines \$1.2 billion of disaster recovery funding; this question speaks to the management of that funding. The question is: how many flood-impacted homes did the minister visit in Burketown during his visit?

CHAIR: Member, I do not think you are getting the gist of this. I ask the Deputy Premier if he wants to furnish an answer that is as broadranging as possible.

Dr MILES: I am happy to ask the CEO of the QRA to provide an update on flood recovery in the gulf and Cape York communities. I can confirm that on my visit I undertook an itinerary agreed between the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and the affected local governments. That included visits to the town hall as well as the flood affected caravan park.

Ms LEAHY: Let the record show then that the minister did not visit any flood impacted homes.

Dr MILES: Apart from those at the caravan park, yes.

CHAIR: Just for clarity, Deputy Premier, are we asking for the Recovery Authority—

Ms LEAHY: No.

Dr MILES: Mr Ellwood is certainly available if you would like an update.

Ms LEAHY: No. We can—

Dr MILES: So you do not care about the flood recovery? You just want to make a point about my itinerary?

Opposition members interjected.

Ms LEAHY: We have further questions—

CHAIR: Members, cease. There is no need to be argumentative on this.

Mr HART: This is us questioning you.

Ms LEAHY: My next questions are to the director-general of the department. During the 2020 election campaign the current government committed \$40 million towards 50 per cent of the Bundaberg flood levee, making a total project cost of \$80 million. The recent announcement that that project will finally go ahead listed a total project cost of \$175 million. To what does the director-general attribute this 119 per cent cost blowout?

CHAIR: Member for Warrego, just confirming that this is part of the responsibilities of the department in front of us?

Ms LEAHY: Yes.

CHAIR: Yes? Director-General.

Mr Kaiser: These are not the sorts of escalations, unfortunately, that are unusual in this current construction climate. The increasing construction costs are driven by a number of factors including significant cost increases across key project materials and resources, allowances for civil contractors' margins and design fees and contingency for further cost escalation. The Department of Energy and Public Works advises that the construction cost modelling is in line with the Queensland procurement policy, including best practice principles.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, will the levy be built by 30 June 2024 as promised by the government?

Mr Kaiser: The construction phase of the project is expected to commence in 2024, with an anticipated completion end date of 2027.

Ms LEAHY: 2027; was that right?

Mr Kaiser: Yes, that is what we anticipate.

Ms LEAHY: Has the director-general been provided with any advice in relation to council gravel pits that require native title clearance and will he share that advice with the committee?

Mr Kaiser: I recently undertook a trip of the North West Minerals Province travelling from Townsville to Mount Isa over a three-day period and met with mayors and deputy mayors across Flinders, McKinlay, Cloncurry and Richmond shires and I think on a number of occasions during that trip that issue was raised with me. There is a concern about a number of quarries needing to have their approvals and assessments updated and there is a concern about that triggering native title and the impact that that may have on the future viability of those quarries.

Ms LEAHY: Has the director-general been advised of the number of council gravel pits in Queensland that are expected to cease operation by 2026 on the expiry of the existing sales permits? Do you have any idea of the number that will cease?

Mr Kaiser: No, but I do understand that it is a real concern for regional Queensland at the moment and I only returned from that trip about 10 days ago and it is something that I intend to follow up. The Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities has portfolio responsibility for the regulation of quarries, so questions about the ongoing impacts of Indigenous land use agreements on quarries would be best directed to him, although I do intend to follow that matter up with that portfolio.

Ms LEAHY: Does the director-general know or were you advised during that trip about the number of council gravel pits across Queensland that will require an Indigenous land use agreement by 2026?

Mr Kaiser: No. No-one on that trip would have known how many across all of Queensland require it, but I do understand it is a significant issue and I intend to take it up with the portfolio of agriculture and fisheries.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, the Donohue Highway road project in the Boulia shire has blown out from \$176,000 to \$5.6 million due to these unresolved agreements. Has the local government department investigated or modelled the potential cost impact on Queensland local governments' road maintenance and upgrade projects?

CHAIR: That is a pretty big claim. Can you verify that—

Ms LEAHY: Yes.

CHAIR:—in terms of the cost blowout there?

Ms LEAHY: Yes.

CHAIR: That might help us at the table here and the witnesses. What we have here is a *Courier-Mail* article about a western road project where expected costs have blown out to \$5.6 million. This is your only source, member?

Ms LEAHY: It was actually quoted at the Bush Councils conference as well.

CHAIR: Okay, so we are talking about a *Courier-Mail* article. Please hand this on to the witnesses so they can understand what we are looking at.

Ms LEAHY: Yes, that is fine.

CHAIR: Director-General, with that information, can—

Mr Kaiser: Could I have a look at the article?

CHAIR: Yes. With that information, could you perhaps quickly peruse that?

Mr Kaiser: The article appears to talk about the cost of a road project which is not the responsibility of this portfolio and neither is the quarry matter which is suggested as the cause of the blowout, so neither of those things are matters for this department. Despite that, I understand it is a concern to regional communities and I intend to take it up with the appropriate agency.

Dr MILES: I can also update the committee that I have organised a meeting for the LGAQ with Minister Furner next parliamentary sitting, so a couple of weeks away.

Ms LEAHY: This question is to the director-general: has the local government department investigated or modelled the potential cost impacts to councils on road maintenance and upgrade projects from these unresolved agreements?

Mr Kaiser: No, because the local government department has no responsibility for road costs. The local government department would not be modelling potential impacts on road costs as neither of the matters that the member is raising are the responsibility of this department—neither the quarries matter nor the road matter. Despite that, given the representations made by mayors that I have spoken to, as the Deputy Premier has said, we intend to involve ourselves in this issue.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, I note that there has been the creation of a cross-agency working group with reference to the gravel supply shortage. To what extent is the local government department involved in this process and how many times has that working group met?

Mr Kaiser: I do not know. It is not a working group that we have established. If the local government division is not involved, I will seek to have them involved. I understand the seriousness of this issue and I intend to play a role in its resolution.

Ms LEAHY: Do you know if the local government department has been invited to participate in that—

Mr Kaiser: I do not, but if they have not been I will ask whoever is organising the committee to get us involved.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you.

Mr Kaiser: I am just informed that, yes, the local government department is a member of that committee.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, do you know how many times that working group has met?

Mr Kaiser: I do not.

Ms LEAHY: Does anyone have any—

Mr Kaiser: Not sure.

Mr McDONALD: Could you come back to us with that?

Mr Kaiser: Sure.

CHAIR: We will see if we can get an answer to that. The question is how many times a particular working group has met.

Ms LEAHY: Director-General, why is Queensland the only state which has made these council gravel pits subject to land use agreements? Do you have any insight?

Mr Kaiser: I do not know. Indigenous land use agreements are the responsibility of the Department of Resources.

Ms LEAHY: Can the director-general advise if there will be any impact on councils' duty of care due to their inability to make timely road repairs because of the gravel supply shortage? Is there any impact on councils' duty of care?

CHAIR: That is a hypothetical question, member for Warrego, but I think the director-general may or may not have something to furnish on that particular question.

Mr Kaiser: No, I am not sure I am qualified to answer the question.

CHAIR: True: the member for Ipswich West points out that that is a legal opinion.

Ms LEAHY: I have a question to the chief executive officer of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. Can the Queensland Reconstruction Authority advise if there are any emergent works or reconstruction projects that have been delayed or cancelled due to the gravel supply shortage being experienced by Queensland local governments?

Major Gen. Ellwood: At this stage we are aware it is an issue and we are in liaison with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, but at this stage I am not aware of any emergent works that have not been able to be conducted as a result of these pit issues. But if I can say, having been up in the north-west to see the emergent works that were undertaken in the wake of the terrible floods, the work has been impressive that councils have undertaken, and TMR, to reconnect communities.

Ms LEAHY: You are not aware of any cancellation of any projects because there is not sufficient funds to undertake those due to the gravel pit shortage and the increased costs?

Major Gen. Ellwood: I am not aware of that, no.

Ms LEAHY: What financial impact does the Queensland Reconstruction Authority expect the gravel shortage will have on disaster recovery works for Queensland local governments?

CHAIR: Member, you are straying into the hypothetical. I do not know if Major General Ellwood can give any further information on that. I will just ask him to bear in mind that is a hypothetical question.

Major Gen. Ellwood: I cannot speculate, what I can say is that each council has obviously different issues. The other thing that I can say is that in terms of projects generally, as a result of labour costs and material costs there has been a routine increase.

Ms LEAHY: Have any Queensland councils made direct representations to the Reconstruction Authority about their difficulty that they have with completing projects or attempting projects? Have they made representations to the QRA?

Major Gen. Ellwood: Indeed, for several reasons. Obviously we have had impacts and re-impacts in different areas where areas have been flooded and then re-impacted which has caused delays. Shortage of labour is another reason. There are a host of reasons behind delays. Obviously we will provide extensions on time if they are required to make sure that they are able to undertake their works in time.

Ms LEAHY: Can you advise how many extensions the Queensland Reconstruction Authority has granted to Queensland councils in the last financial year?

Major Gen. Ellwood: I can. We have 317 extensions on time, equating to \$358 million. But what I would also like to say in that regard is that we are currently managing a program of works of \$7.3 billion. We have not seen this scale since 2011 so it is significant and councils are under pressure given the scale of the works and again I would like to express my admiration for what they do.

Ms LEAHY: Assume what you heard at bush council, would you say that this is the No. 1 concern—the gravel supply—for councils in relation to being able to complete their projects?

Major Gen. Ellwood: For several councils it is. Different councils have different concerns, having heard what I heard at the bush council, but indeed weeks prior to that I had started to hear about the issue so we have been engaging with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, because I think we all want communities to recover as quickly as they can.

Ms LEAHY: In relation to that intergovernmental working group, is the Queensland Reconstruction Authority part of that intergovernmental working group?

Major Gen. Ellwood: I am not familiar with the group, I am sorry. I will get back to you, but at this stage I am unfamiliar with it.

Ms LEAHY: We would be happy to take that on notice.

Major Gen. Ellwood: I will check and I will come back to you.

CHAIR: We will see if we can get the information before the end of the session.

Ms LEAHY: If we could get the information that would be very good. I want to foreshadow calling the Office of the Independent Assessor.

CHAIR: Member for Bundaberg, you have something to say about the question on notice?

Mr SMITH: Yes. I want to clarify whether or not the minister has to actually accept that it be taken on notice.

CHAIR: The minister would, but we are going to see first if we can get that information before the session has finished.

Ms LEAHY: I have a question to the Office of the Independent Assessor.

Dr MILES: You have to address questions to me and I will determine whether they get it.

Ms LEAHY: I am happy to address the question to you, Minister, but I think you might need the help of the Office of the Independent Assessor to answer this one. I refer to the QCAT decided case, the Independent Assessor v. FJS (QCAT 244). I am advised this case was dismissed by the Councillor Conduct Tribunal then appealed by the Office of the Independent Assessor to QCAT. Can the Office of the Independent Assessor or the government advise of the total legal costs involved in pursuing this case, including the costs to QCAT?

CHAIR: Member, you may well have been advised, but it would be very useful to see some verification for this.

Mr McDONALD: We have verification, Chair.

CHAIR: Let us have a look at that.

Ms LEAHY: It is a decided case.

CHAIR: What we are talking about is a QCAT determination.

Ms LEAHY: A QCAT determination and we are seeking the total legal costs involved with pursuing that case.

CHAIR: I do not know if the judgments by QCAT are published. I am assuming they would be. I may be wrong.

Ms LEAHY: It is and we have a copy of the publication.

CHAIR: Let us have a quick look. That was delivered on 11 July. I do not know if there are any details there, but let us pass this over to the witnesses at the table so they can refer to that.

Dr MILES: If we can take those details we can see if we can get a dollar figure for those legal costs.

CHAIR: Bear in mind this is legal costs for—

Ms LEAHY: The Office of the Independent Assessor. I have a further question in relation to that particular case and other cases that have been appealed to QCAT. Can the government advise how many other cases the Office of the Independent Assessor has appealed to QCAT?

Dr MILES: Again that is something we should be able to locate between now and the end of the session.

CHAIR: We have seen the OIA's report and that is available on the website, but let us see what we can get for you on that. Do you have a further question?

Ms LEAHY: That is fair.

Mr HART: The committee's report on its inquiry into the Independent Assessor and the councillor conduct complaints system made 40 recommendations. How many of those have been fully implemented?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question and I thank the committee for their efforts on that review. In January I tabled the government's response to those recommendations. We accepted all 40 in principle or fully. The department is currently working with stakeholders to implement the recommendations. Six have been fully implemented—that is, recommendations 3, 5, 7, 22, 26 and 38. Six are operational matters for ongoing consideration by the Office of the Independent Assessor and the Councillor Conduct Tribunal—that is, recommendations 2, 6, 9, 11, 31 and 32. Seventeen recommendations require legislative amendment, which are currently being considered by the government. They are recommendations 1, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 27, 29, 30, 36 and 39. Ten recommendations are operational matters that require further consideration by the department. They are recommendations 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 33, 34, 35 and 37. One recommendation is for the SDRIC to undertake and that is recommendation 37.

CHAIR: Excellent. We look forward to seeing all those numbers in the transcript. We will go to government questions.

Mr MADDEN: Deputy Premier, the acute housing shortage affects Ipswich as it does many other communities in Queensland. It is not always clear what the role of the three levels of government is in addressing the housing shortage. With reference to page 6 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government is supporting local governments to deliver additional housing and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: With more and more people choosing to call Queensland home combined with recent trends to smaller households, we have seen significant pressure on the housing market. The Palaszczuk government is taking these pressures seriously and we are working with all levels of government and with industry to deliver more homes. We are delivering more social and affordable housing and unlocking more lots to bring more supply online, but we cannot deliver the housing Queenslanders need without our local governments playing a significant role. Following the second housing round table in March of this year, we made a commitment to work with local governments across Queensland to facilitate the delivery of housing action plans. These action plans are all about finding local housing solutions that will meet the individual needs of local communities. We know that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work when it comes to delivering housing in all corners of our state.

Affordable housing remains an issue across Queensland and our rural and remote communities face unique challenges. These plans will equip councils to better respond to a range of immediate, emerging and long-term housing challenges. I am pleased to advise the committee that 22 local housing action plans have now been completed thanks to those western Queensland councils and the \$200,000 in funding that we provided to them and the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils. These plans will

further boost housing supply and increase housing and homelessness supports across Queensland. Councils know the needs of their communities better than anyone and I applaud the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils for the work that they have carried out to get these plans complete.

We are now focused on the development of a further 38 housing action plans, with those plans to be completed by mid-2024. Following the March round table we announced \$600,000 in further funding to the Local Government Association of Queensland to develop those additional 38 and I look forward to seeing those deliver more houses across the state. I also take a moment to acknowledge the support of the LGAQ in delivering these plans and for their endorsement of the action under the Queensland Housing and Homeless Action Plan 2021-2025. The LGAQ referred to these plans as critical work and I would like to thank them for their support and advocacy.

I thank the mayor of the Balonne Shire and chair of the South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, Councillor Samantha O'Toole, for her work and support. I think she said it better than anyone else could when she said, '... they will have the potential to make an enormous difference to the sustainability and liveability of our communities, and show other councils the positive benefits of having a Local Housing Action Plan in place.'

Mr SMITH: Chair, my question is for the Deputy Premier. Dr Miles, recently I was able to visit Cherbourg and engage with elders, councillors and council staff in that community and I really got to see some of the good work that the local council is doing. Can you please outline how the Palaszczuk government is supporting Queensland's Indigenous councils and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: It is great that the member for Bundaberg had the chance to see firsthand in Cherbourg what our Indigenous councils do. All 16 of our Indigenous councils do a great job of delivering frontline essential services to some of the most remote parts of Queensland. I was up in Pormpuraaw a couple of weeks ago.

It is hard to imagine anywhere more remote than communities in Cape York and the Torres Strait as well as Cherbourg, Palm Island and the Gulf. Many of those are some of the most remote communities in the country where it is the most difficult to deliver health and education services with huge distances to cover and yet they go well above and beyond what we expect of other councils to deliver, often delivering everything from child and aged-care services to banking and postal services and even internet and telecommunications. Without grants to assist them, many of Queensland's Indigenous councils would not be able to deliver those core services for their communities. It is critical that those councils are sustainable so that they can continue their good work and deliver for our First Nations communities.

In our 2023-24 budget, the Palaszczuk government is proudly boosting funding for those councils and the work they do. The budget delivers a funding boost of \$25.8 million for those councils, bringing the total funding pool to \$69.85 million across the next financial year. This funding boost will address unfair imbalances in the way funding is currently distributed. Critically, no council will be any worse off; all 16 will benefit. They provide world-class services and they have a state government that supports them. Chair and members, this is what our budgets do: deliver for every Queenslanders no matter where they live in the state.

Mr SMITH: Dr Miles, could you please further elaborate on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting local governments to build infrastructure and create jobs as part of that and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: Queensland's 77 local governments do a great job delivering essential services for communities in every corner of our state. Some of those councils do this work across vast, sparsely populated geographic areas. Other face different challenges with booming populations creating pressure on community infrastructure. Regardless, the Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting local governments to deliver the things Queensland communities expect and deserve.

Across Queensland we are delivering substantial financial support for our 77 local governments. At the last state election, the Palaszczuk government promised to continue our signature council infrastructure programs, Works for Queensland and the South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program. I am very pleased to advise the committee that these programs are delivering jobs and infrastructure in every corner of the state.

Works for Queensland is now a \$1 billion infrastructure building program that has created infrastructure across regional Queensland and supported more than 26,000 regional jobs. Councils across Queensland enthusiastically support the Works for Queensland program. When I travel to many

communities in regional Queensland they proudly show me the projects they have delivered, made possible thanks to eight years of Works for Queensland. The 2021-24 program has delivered significant pieces of infrastructure for regional Queensland—projects like the North Rockhampton sewage treatment plant upgrade, creating 81 jobs with a \$6.4 million investment. Quilpie Shire Council received \$1 million to build residential dwellings in Quilpie and Eromanga, creating 14 jobs. Works for Queensland is a proud legacy of the Palaszczuk government. I am looking forward to working with local governments ahead of the next round to deliver more good jobs for locals and build the next generation of region-changing infrastructure.

Regional Queenslanders are the beneficiaries of the Works for Queensland program and we were proud to extend this program into the south-east with the SEQ Community Stimulus Program. In March 2021, I announced the return of the \$100 million program across 12 South-East Queensland councils. The member for Bancroft will be pleased to know that the SEQCSP is currently helping to deliver projects in his electorate such as the upgrade to the Kinsellas Sports Complex and I saw the works underway just last weekend; and a park-and-walk facility at Bounty Boulevard State School. Across Moreton Bay the program has delivered 227 good jobs for locals and nearly \$14 million in investment. For the member for Ipswich West's benefit, works are underway on upgrades to Richardson Park and Cameron Park, two projects that are creating jobs and making the Ipswich lifestyle even better. I am sure even the member for Lockyer will be pleased to know that we are delivering \$4.4 million in investment across 13 projects creating 40 good jobs there.

Mr HART: And Burleigh?

Dr MILES: I can take that on notice, member for Burleigh, if you would like me to. The Palaszczuk government is proudly delivering for Queensland's local governments in every corner of our vast state.

CHAIR: Member for Bundaberg, I believe you have another question.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Chair. I am making up for the previous session. This question is for the Deputy Premier. It is worth noting that it is in the *Hansard* or *Record of Proceedings* that the former Morrison government deliberately delayed the Queensland government's completion date for the Bundaberg East flood levee and, therefore, is solely responsible for that delay. Could the Deputy Premier—

CHAIR: Member, I caution you about your long preamble.

Mr HART: Point of order, Chair. There were inferences.

CHAIR: I have cautioned the member. I know what he said.

Mr SMITH: With reference to page 28 of the SDS, could the Deputy Premier please outline how the Palaszczuk government is building flood resilience in Bundaberg, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: Chair, it was hard to hear the member over the interjections. I wonder if the member could start his whole question again?

Mr SMITH: Is that without regard to the *Hansard* record?

CHAIR: Without the argumentative bit or the long preamble.

Mr HART: Point of order: Chair, your rulings about inferences have been pretty effective on this side. Can we also move such rulings to the government side?

CHAIR: Member, as you have heard, I have just done that as well. I have asked the member to recast his question without the argumentative part or the long preamble.

Mr HART: Stick to the script.

CHAIR: Thank you, member; that is what I was going to say.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Chair. Could the Deputy Premier please outline how the Palaszczuk government is building flood resilience in Bundaberg, and is the Deputy Premier aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. I know that it is a topic he is especially passionate about. It is great to finally have a federal government willing to work with us to protect Bundaberg residents from flooding. Earlier this year, the Palaszczuk and Albanese governments announced joint funding of \$174.7 million for the Bundaberg East flood levee. Queenslanders throughout the state have seen the devastating impacts of floods on their communities. In 2013 Bundaberg saw significant flooding and devastation following ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and again

last year with heavy rain and flooding throughout the region. We are investing in the people of Bundaberg to make their community more flood resilient, to mitigate future flood damage and to save lives. The Bundaberg East flood levee is a large infrastructure project with floodgates, pumps, flood doors and 1.7 kilometres of concrete running parallel to the Burnett River to keep Bundy residents safe when the next big rainfall or flooding event happens. Not only will it help to safeguard homes, businesses and the local economy from the devastation of major flooding; it will also create good local jobs and business opportunities during its construction.

This is a significant investment in Bundaberg's future and it will deliver more than 100 jobs for locals. The investment will not just protect communities; it will also drive down insurance premiums for hundreds of Bundaberg households and businesses. Suncorp CEO Steve Johnston said that the levee could save affected locals an average of more than \$1,000 a year on their home insurance premiums. This is cost-of-living relief for locals. We have worked together with the Bundaberg community on the concept design which will protect Bundaberg East, Bundaberg South and the Bundaberg CBD. I acknowledge the efforts of the member for Bundaberg to deliver the Bundaberg East flood levee.

CHAIR: In reference to page 28 of the SDS, can the Deputy Premier update the committee on how the Resilient Homes Fund is helping flood affected Queenslanders, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Bancroft for his question. The decision to pursue a buyback program as part of the Resilient Homes Fund really came from that visit I did with the member to Deception Bay and seeing those low-set houses on slabs where nothing else could be done for them other than buying them back. It was great to go back there recently with the mayor and yourself to see the number of homes that had been bought back, demolished and returned to riverine parkland.

As all members will know, Queensland is the most disaster impacted state in Australia. It is not a title we wanted, but we are committed to helping flood-impacted Queenslanders improve the resilience of their homes to future flooding and remove impacted home owners from harm's way. That is why we introduced the \$741 million Queensland Resilient Homes Fund—the first resilience program of its kind to be offered in Australia. We are rolling out this program collaboratively with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and our public works and community support agencies. These groups did work hard to design and implement the Resilient Homes Fund. It is a program that is both accessible and available to the wide range of southern Queenslanders directly impacted by the 2022 floods. We have already seen the positive impact this program has had in flood-impacted communities.

Since the program began in May 2022 there have been over 5,000 households actively pursuing retrofit, house-raising or buyback options. We are tackling the current challenges in the building industry through developing tools, processes and materials to support builders and encourage participation in the program. On 10 August we will host a building industry forum to provide information about the program and the potential opportunities to deliver building works to flood-impacted home owners. To further support Queenslanders in accessing the program, we have a team of dedicated case managers who are helping households navigate the program and get their building works completed as fast as possible. This ensures the mechanisms are in place so Queenslanders can access the program easily and when they need it most.

The QRA is working closely with councils to deliver the buyback part of the program. So far, I am pleased to confirm that as at early July 771 properties have been selected for buyback, and we are working with owners to undertake property valuations and present buyback offers. This is a large number of houses that were most severely impacted and at the greatest risk of future flooding. The buyback of these homes will transform these low-lying areas into parkland and other open spaces. More than 273 contracts have now been settled, allowing home owners and their families to move on with their lives free from the risk of future flooding. In the wake of the flooding disaster last year, we acted quickly to set up the Resilient Homes Fund. We made sure it was designed to ensure that we could protect Queenslanders from future disasters as well.

CHAIR: We have talked a bit about the OIA today. With reference to page 7 of the SDS, could the Deputy Premier outline what measures the government is taking to support the Office of the Independent Assessor, and, once again, are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: As a large, decentralised and diverse state, Queensland faces significant challenges when it comes to delivering services for our rural and remote communities. Queensland's local governments do a fantastic job delivering those services. The mayors and councillors serve their communities sometimes under difficult circumstances. Queenslanders deserve to have faith in their

local governments. Our councillors deserve to have any complaints made against them assessed fairly and reasonably. Unfortunately, we have seen some instances of politically motivated complaints to the OIA and a number of frivolous and vexatious complaints which have bogged down the important work of the Independent Assessor. This budget supports the work of the Office of the Independent Assessor and enhances it with additional funding of \$6.894 million over the next four years. With that ongoing funding, the OIA will be able to operate with the certainty it needs. That funding will allow eight temporary positions to become full time, bringing the total FTE to 19.

As you are aware, in 2021 I made a request to the committee to conduct a review into the functions of the Independent Assessor. I would like to, as I did before, acknowledge and thank the committee for its hard work. As we noted, the committee made 40 recommendations. I have outlined where each of those recommendations is up to. In addition to that and in response to council concerns about conflict of interest legislation, a number of amendments are being considered to further clarify and simplify the councillor conflict of interest requirements. It is the Palaszczuk government's intention for these changes to be finalised by the end of the year so that they can be in effect ahead of the next local government elections in March 2024.

Mr MADDEN: As it should be, council financial sustainability is an issue important to the residents of Ipswich. With reference to page 6 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government is supporting Queensland's local governments to be more financially sustainable, and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: Local governments in Queensland do an important job delivering services to their communities and, especially for the remote councils, they sometimes have to do this in challenging circumstances. Many of our smaller councils rely on grants from the state and Commonwealth governments to deliver their day-to-day services and infrastructure projects and upgrades. To ensure they can deliver essential services into the future, we are working with councils to ensure their financial sustainability. On 1 July, we launched the new local government sustainability framework. It was designed in consultation with local governments across Queensland and sets out the financial ratios that the department will monitor for each council to ensure their ongoing financial health. It is a new holistic approach to financial sustainability which takes into account a number of factors to ensure that each council is assessed appropriately.

Implementation of the new framework will provide councils, the Queensland government and other stakeholders with greater insight into the sector's challenges and support the development of more proactive, tailored solutions for councils. The framework will give confidence to councils to set solid foundations, deliver practical and affordable infrastructure for the needs and wants of their regions and help them to invest for the future.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Queensland Audit Office in their *Local government 2022* report to parliament, tabled on 22 June 2023, which highlighted the challenges local government face in their ongoing financial sustainability. While the report to parliament raised the possibility that some councils would have a higher risk of sustainability issues in the short and medium term, I am confident that the work we are doing through the local government sustainability framework will place those councils in a much stronger position in the longer term. The report made eight recommendations—one for local government and seven for the department. The Palaszczuk government has accepted all of these recommendations and is currently working on implementing them. Perhaps most importantly, recommendation 8, which was to publish a framework to assess the sustainability risk of councils by 1 July 2023, was already under development and was published on 1 July 2023.

CHAIR: We will now go to questions from the crossbench. We will go first to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: My question is to the minister. You will recall that back in May you confirmed through a question on notice that the Brisbane City Council had not notified the state government in relation to any upcoming review of the Brisbane City Plan and that the department was not aware of any work undertaken to date on any such review. Is there any update in this regard? If not, will the government be seeking an update from council, given the statutory requirement to review the city plan by 2024?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Maiwar for the question. He is correct in recalling the question on notice response that I provided. We would have expected to see Brisbane commence that review in advance of 2024 so that it could be in place from then. To some extent, though, that expectation is

probably superseded by the review of the South East Queensland Regional Plan and the fact that they would probably need to review their planning scheme in light of that anyway. We will be looking to all of the local governments in the south-east, once the regional plan is finalised, to review their planning scheme to make sure that it aligns with all of the objectives, targets and goals of the regional plan. We would expect, then, Brisbane to undertake that review subsequent to the regional plan being finalised. If we finish the regional plan at the end of this year, we would hope that they could commence the planning scheme review next year.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. I understand that the Brisbane City Council has not applied to the federal government for funding for the Toowong to West End Green Bridge or any other bridge aside from the two that are already underway, at Kangaroo Point and Breakfast Creek. Minister, can you please confirm whether BCC has applied to the state government for funding for the Toowong to West End Green Bridge?

Dr MILES: I am not aware of any request—and in the past when I have asked if there was such a request I have been told that people are not aware of one—but can I take that question on notice so that we can consult across government and make sure there is not something I am not aware of?

Mr BERKMAN: That would be very much appreciated, thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, welcome to the table. Do you have a question?

Mr ANDREW: Yes. Page 2 of the SDS mentions the department's role in accelerating the delivery of large-scale water and resource projects. I found that there was no money allocated in the budget for Mount Morgan's water pipeline. It is critically needed. Obviously it is costing the Rockhampton council to bring water there all the time, on a daily basis. What is the expected time line for delivery, Minister?

Dr MILES: The pipeline itself rests with the water department, so you would need to address the question of where it is up to to them. I was pleased to be able to secure funding for the council to assist them with the cost of water haulage, because that cost is continuing to impact greatly on the community there. We were pleased to find a way that we could assist. Obviously, we want to see the longer term solution as quickly as we can. I know that the member for Gladstone is working very hard on that, but I do not have to hand an update. He will be able to provide one in his estimates, though.

Mr ANDREW: Director-General, with reference to the expenditure caps on local government mentioned on page 2 of the SDS, what was the total amount of consultant or external adviser fees incurred by local governments for the 2022-23 year?

Mr Kaiser: Consultant costs incurred by local governments?

Mr ANDREW: Yes, consultant or external adviser fees.

Mr Kaiser: I am not sure that we would know what local governments spent on consultants, sorry.

Dr MILES: It would be in each of their annual reports.

CHAIR: Out of the 77 local governments, that would be quite substantial.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you.

CHAIR: Before we wrap up, do you have a brief question, member for Warrego?

Ms LEAHY: I have one further question. Will the minister, as the advocate for Queensland local governments, advise when the gravel shortage is expected to be resolved for Queensland councils? Do you have any idea of the time frame in which you can resolve this, because it is certainly at a crisis point for councils now?

Dr MILES: I do not have that, but I can advise the member that the quarry native title working group has met three times. It was established by the department of agriculture. Representatives of the local government division have attended all of the meetings. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority has now been invited to participate and will attend future meetings. That is in response to your earlier question about this matter. It is clearly a priority, but I cannot predict when it will be resolved.

Ms LEAHY: Have there been any outcomes from those meetings?

CHAIR: Member, you are asking the wrong minister. You have just heard it is for the minister for agriculture. Perhaps that is a question that would be go to the minister for agriculture in the next session.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: the Deputy Premier has advised that the department of local government is on the working group, so there would be some expenditure there.

CHAIR: The member has just asked about the outcomes. Because the department of agriculture is in charge of that—

Ms LEAHY: Chair, there would be outcomes. What has actually happened? What has been done so far?

CHAIR: I understand that, member. I do not know if the Deputy Premier or the director-general can furnish any further information on this.

Ms LEAHY: So let the record show that they have met three times and there has been no outcome.

CHAIR: Member, I have asked if we can get an answer on that particular question. I am happy to get any further information on that, bearing in mind this is probably about the ninth question we have had on this issue.

Ms LEAHY: It is an important issue, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: It is indeed. That is why you have asked so many questions about it.

Dr MILES: Coming back to the other couple of matters that we undertook to find some more information on, I am advised that the Office of the Independent Assessor's costs related to the case the member tabled were \$24,062.50. I am also advised that there are no other matters referred to QCAT. That is in response to the member's question about how many had been. I believe that leaves the only outstanding matter the member for Maiwar's question about requests for funding from the Brisbane City Council for the Green Bridges Program. We will take that on notice.

CHAIR: We will get back to that one.

Dr MILES: In follow-up to the member for Burleigh, I can advise that we made a grant to the council for construction of Changing Places facilities at Tallebudgera Creek Park. That was \$800,000 and 20 jobs. I am also advised that elsewhere in the budget there is funding for the Pacific Motorway Varsity Lakes to Tugun upgrade and Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3, which we know he is a big fan of.

Ms LEAHY: I have a question to the director-general.

CHAIR: Member for Warrego, you were chasing an answer on the outcomes in relation to the gravel working group. I do not know if that answer has been fully furnished to your satisfaction.

Dr MILES: That will have to be dealt with in DAF's estimates. I urge you to raise it there.

Ms LEAHY: I have a question to the director-general.

CHAIR: We are just about to wrap up. Do you have something really quick?

Ms LEAHY: Yes, I do. Can the director-general advise how many councils will no longer be categorised as financially unsustainable following the implementation of the new Financial Management (Sustainability) Guideline?

CHAIR: That is a big one.

Mr Kaiser: I think you are asking me to predict an outcome from a framework.

Ms LEAHY: Is there any modelling done?

Mr Kaiser: The sustainability framework that we have implemented is designed to assist local authorities to achieve sustainability and retain sustainability, but I think it is quite challenging to ask for a prediction about the impact it will have.

CHAIR: Yes. It certainly strays into the hypothetical. Deputy Premier, would you like to make a closing or a summing-up statement?

Dr MILES: Thank you, Chair, committee members and visiting members of parliament for the interest you have shown today in my portfolio areas. Thank you to Hansard and all of the other supporting parliamentary staff. We appreciate your efforts.

Preparing for the annual estimates hearing is an extensive undertaking. There are many people in the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning who have contributed to today's proceedings. I would like to thank Director-General Mike Kaiser; Queensland Reconstruction Authority Chief Executive Officer Major General Jake Ellwood; and South Bank Corporation Chief Executive Officer Bill Delves. I would also like to thank the deputy directors-general and all of their staff in my department but especially Deputy Director-General Natalie Wilde and the estimates coordination team including Jodie Meerten, Davina Suttie, Bree Linklater, Christine Marshall and Maria Pei.

Fast-tracking an update to the South East Queensland Regional Plan was also no small feat. I would like to place on record my thanks to everyone in the department who worked on this plan, particularly State Planner Tess Pickering, Acting Deputy Director-General Chris Aston, Deputy Director-General Leah Kelly and Michelle Cottrell.

Finally, I thank my assistant minister, Nikki Boyd, for her support and I thank my staff, beginning with my Chief of Staff, Katharine Wright, and advisers Benton Wecker, Amy Hunter, Pete Spencer, Alyssa Van Butzelaar, Chris Hinton, Riley Lang, Anna Dwyer, Reuben Grantley-Davies, Luke Kjeldal, Virginia Dale, Zoe Bos, Will Akol, Annette Dew and Holly Walker. They have all worked very hard to ensure we were able to answer the committee's questions today.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Deputy Premier. We are going to table the document you gave us in the last session. It is so tabled. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed estimates for the portfolio areas of the Deputy Premier has expired. We have one outstanding question on notice from the member for Maiwar. Could we have an answer to that provided to the secretariat by 5 pm on Friday, 4 August? We will get the exact wording of that question from the hearing.

Deputy Premier, on behalf of the committee, I thank you, your director-general, your staff and officials for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for lunch. We will resume at 1.30 pm with an examination of the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities.

Proceedings suspended from 12.32 pm to 1.30 pm.

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

In Attendance

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

Mr D McIntyre, Chief of Staff

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries


Dr C Sarra, Director-General

Ms B Ditchfield, Deputy Director-General, Agriculture

Dr R Chay, Deputy Director-General, Biosecurity Queensland

Ms J Clark, Acting Deputy Director-General, Corporate

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

 **CHAIR:** Good afternoon. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine the estimates in the minister's portfolio areas as follows: agricultural industry development and rural communities from 1.30 pm to 3 pm, and fisheries and forestry from 3.15 pm until 4.45 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 3 pm to 3.15 pm.

A number of non-committee members have sought and been granted leave to participate in the hearing in accordance with the standing orders. I note that we have been joined by the members for Burdekin and Gympie, who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions.

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

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. I ask all present to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode, if not turned off. I also remind everyone that food is not permitted in this chamber.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers, ministerial staff and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of agricultural industry development, rural communities, fisheries and forestry open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The committee will begin with the examination of the estimates for the agricultural industry development and rural communities portfolio areas. Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair. Firstly, I welcome my new director-general, Chris Sarra, to his new role—a very important role—as well as Ian Mackie, my new DDG to Agriculture and Fisheries.

Agriculture and Fisheries play a critical role in the lives of all Queenslanders. The importance of Agriculture and Fisheries to Queensland was reinforced last month with the new release of the latest AgTrends data. The data shows Queensland hit a new record of \$23.44 billion in 2022-23 in terms of gross value production. Lockyer Valley GVP soared to a massive 41.96 per cent to \$483 million—

Mr McDONALD: Doing the heavy lifting.

Mr FURNER:—with GVP in Toowoomba and Western Downs both eclipsing \$1 billion. Bundaberg was another prime example of a success story, with the region coming in third for GVP with a total of \$837 million.

Beef remains king of the commodities in Queensland, with cattle and calves valued at over \$6 billion in 2022-23 and meat processing estimated to be worth almost \$2.8 billion. Sugarcane and sugarcane processing reached a combined valuation of almost \$2.5 billion, while the GVP of raw cotton soared 26.4 per cent to over \$1.5 billion. These home grown success stories paint a glowing picture of Queensland's lucrative world-class produce and follows sustained strong investment in agriculture by the Palaszczuk government.

Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to update the committee that discussions to finalise arrangements of Queensland's National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program funding are ongoing. These arrangements, once concluded, will see an uplift in the overall budget of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries—and what a great budget for agriculture, fisheries and rural communities. The budget includes further funding to help primary producers prepare for drought under the Drought Assistance and Reform Package. This means up to \$48.5 million over three years to be invested in programs and grants and \$100 million over two years allocated for loans.

Biosecurity is also a strong focus in the budget, with more than \$21.7 million to be invested over five years and \$2.8 million each year thereafter for action against current and emerging plant pests and diseases. The budget also invests in people with the creation of 15 new permanent jobs with Biosecurity Queensland.

We are also investing \$61 million over the next four years through this budget in the critical fight against fire ants through the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. This is in addition to funding for that program that was brought forward in our previous budget.

The budget also delivers increased funding of \$11.7 million over three years to continue the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027. Our highly successful Rural Economic Development Grants program will also continue, with \$3.3 million committed for the future.

The budget locks in increasing funding of \$9.2 million over five years and \$3 million per annum ongoing for our Shark Control Program to ensure our beaches remain the best and safest in the world. The budget also commits \$2.1 million to continue delivering our Native Timber Action Plan.

The cost-of-living rebates delivered through the budget—from power bills, free kindy, learn-to-swim vouchers to accommodation and fuel subsidies for rural and regional Queenslanders who are travelling for essential health care—all support rural communities. This is yet another example of the Palaszczuk government tackling cost-of-living pressures and governing for all Queensland. Chair, I look forward to taking questions from the committee.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now go to questions. Deputy Chair, do you want to ask a question or pass it on?

Mr McDONALD: Chair, I hand over to the shadow minister.

Mr PERRETT: Just before I proceed—and as I do every year—in accordance with my registered interests, I advise the committee that I am a landowner and livestock producer. I have a registered biosecurity entity and may be eligible for drought and natural disaster assistance.

Minister, I refer to the fire ant eradication program in the SDS on page 2 and the Queensland Auditor General's report *Managing invasive species*, which questioned DAF's leadership. The director-general's response was—

The ... QAO report espouses a hierarchical or "leader-follower" model of leadership, which is questionable in today's society and modern biosecurity system ...

Minister, does the minister agree with the director-general's rejection of the criticism of DAF's leadership in dealing with fire ants?

CHAIR: There is an argumentative element to that question, but I will allow the minister to answer that. I am sure you want to talk about fire ants as well.

Mr FURNER: I note the report by the QAO that he referred to. *Managing invasive species* was the title of the report which DAF, including me, were involved, meeting with the Auditor-General prior to the final report pointing out some areas in the report that would be most reflected on—in particular, red imported fire ants. Later on during this hearing, Chair, I would like to expand more, giving the committee a greater understanding, on this particular super pest.

Notwithstanding that, the QAO report provided recommendations to improve how entities assess, prioritise and mitigate the risks of invasive species and design their strategies and use data to inform those decisions and report their progress. The report did make recommendations to DAF which we are working through: strengthening its leadership and coordination role for the biosecurity system, and providing greater education and awareness to local councils about how they can use the powers of the Biosecurity Act 2014 to regulate the risk of invasive species.

This is an area that no doubt the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce identified early in the piece, with funding last year of \$37 million for the greater education for councils. The FAST program was an area that QAO did not necessarily focus on. I cannot answer for the QAO as to why that was not the case; nevertheless, the report did pick up on the need for greater involvement and working with local councils. The report does state, 'To date, the eradication efforts have had isolated and limited success.' Despite significant effort and funding, fire ants do remain eradicable. We are working through that. In terms of the comments that the director-general made, I am sure he would be happy to respond to those. Notwithstanding that, we will work with the recommendations in the QAO report and report back to them very shortly.

Mr PERRETT: My question is to the director-general. Mr Pianta of the Invasive Species Council warned last week that fire ants are now five kilometres from the New South Wales border, the same distance a queen can fly. Media reports show that early in June they were found at Broadwater Parklands. By late June they were found 11 kilometres further south at Robina Common, and last week they were found at Tallebudgera. Director-General, have fire ants crossed the border this week?

Dr Sarra: Let me just consult with regard to the latest information, because obviously this is a moving feast. Your question specifically asks has it crossed the border. Let me just clarify with my colleagues so that I can give you an accurate answer on that.

CHAIR: This is not a game changer, but in relation to reports could you perhaps in future provide some verification as to whether they are media reports or official reports?

Dr Sarra: Member for Gympie, you noted their proximity to the New South Wales border. I have just checked with our chief biosecurity officer, who informs me there is no evidence they have crossed the border at this point. I note that we are confident with the strategy. I further note that when it rises in various places it is detected, identified, and dealt with effectively.

Mr PERRETT: This question is to the minister. Since 2003 successive estimates were told that eradication was working. The Beattie government's minister Henry Palaszczuk said that it was successful, slashed fire ant staff and promised the all clear by 2006. In 2016 Minister Donaldson said, 'The eradication strategies are working.' In 2019 the director-general said—

It is too early to declare success, but at least that is a very promising on-the-ground report from what we have been doing, and we will continue to do it.

In 2020 the minister said that how Queensland has dealt with red imported fire ants 'is a glowing example of how we have been able to contain it'. Minister, can Queenslanders have confidence in the fire ant eradication program?

CHAIR: That is a very long preamble, member for Gympie, but I will allow the minister to talk about the effectiveness of that program.

Mr FURNER: As I alluded to earlier in response to the member's previous question, I said that I looked forward to an opportunity to talk about the program. That opportunity has arisen, so I thank the member for his question. I will ask for the committee's indulgence to be allowed adequate time to respond to the question and elaborate on the program. It is a very broad-reaching program but it is also complex, so I would ask for the committee's indulgence to allow me time to do that.

This pest reached our shores in 2001. It originated in South America. As many people have indicated, it is a superpest. Notwithstanding that, a variety of different governments—including the LNP government for a short period of time—sought to deal with that pest. Since that time many factors have come into play with regard to not only science but also our capabilities in terms of how we manage it. There has been review after review. Notwithstanding that, I want to make a number of points.

Firstly, the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program is a national program. It is not run solely by Queensland. It is a national program; it is funded nationally. The Commonwealth funds up to 50 per cent of the cost of the program. That is subject to each state. New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the other smaller states provide funding. The Agriculture Ministers' Meeting a few weeks ago endorsed the new program and the new plan of eradication in a horseshoe manner—up to an area in the north in your particular seat, Chair; out to the west around the member for Lockyer's area; and south below the member for Burleigh's area towards the border at Tweed Heads. The new plan that has been endorsed includes surveillance, suppression and eradication. This government has always been of the belief that we can achieve that.

As I indicated earlier in my response, fire ants are still confined to about 0.4 per cent of Queensland. Had this and previous governments not taken efforts to combat this superpest it would have spread as far north as Bowen, as far west as Longreach, and as far south as Canberra. We have taken the initiative in how we deal with this particular pest. There are many challenges in terms of dealing with it. Human assisted movement is only one of those challenges. Whether you are a nurseryperson, a landscaper or a person shifting hay or produce, there are challenges in dealing with those carriers. Last week I met with my team and we looked at enhancing the regulations around this particular biosecurity threat. We will act on making enhancements for the control of carriers a lot stronger. Fire ants can fly up to five kilometres if they are assisted by winds and they can raft down flooded rivers. There are other challenges in terms of entry into many properties because of the need to have police assist with entry. In fact, over the last year in area 1 there were 341 requests for police to assist with entry onto properties; in area 2 there were 882 occasions of police having to be involved with providing assistance to enter those properties.

Mr McDONALD: That is enough.

Mr PERRETT: It is eating into our time.

CHAIR: No, I know what you are going to say. The minister is being responsive. There is going to be a lot of focus on fire ants. It was a long and comprehensive question and we are getting a long and comprehensive answer. Do not worry, you will get a couple of extra minutes.

Mr FURNER: Yes, there is some spread of the red imported fire ant in South-East Queensland, some four kilometres per annum. If you compare that with the United States it is 48 kilometres per year, in China it is 80 kilometres a year. That is why we say this is the best program in the world. In fact, it is the only program in the world that is succeeding in terms of dealing with this particular pest. The Agriculture Ministers' Meeting has endorsed this. There is a communique out which I am prepared to table if the committee wishes. The national program and the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce is combating this pest and we are winning.

Mr PERRETT: This question is to the director-general. I refer to last week's media release titled 'New response plan has fire ants surrounded'. Director-General, how are the fire ants surrounded?

Mr FURNER: In my last response I indicated to the committee the new horseshoe plan—

Mr PERRETT: No. I have asked the director-general.

Mr FURNER: It is a repetition of what I have already provided to the committee.

Mr PERRETT: I have a point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: I think they can pursue that a little bit further. Member, you referred to a statement. Was that a statement or a document—

Mr PERRETT: It is a government media release.

CHAIR: A government media release? And did you say that was from last week?

Mr PERRETT: Yes.

CHAIR: If we can get a copy of that, it would be good. Did the member for Bundaberg have a point of order?

Mr SMITH: It was just along those lines about whether or not the member could provide the article.

Mr PERRETT: It is a government media release.

CHAIR: It is, but it would help the members of the committee here so that we know what you referred to.

Mr McDONALD: We can get it but the question was to the director-general.

Mr PERRETT: How are the fire ants surrounded?

CHAIR: We will allow the director-general some latitude in answering that. We are talking about a media release.

Dr Sarra: In part, I want to reflect upon the comprehensive answer provided by the minister. Your question is around the perimeter and how we are establishing that. If I may, Mr Chair, I might refer to our chief of biosecurity who can give us some very specific information in relation to that.

Dr Chay: What that refers to is explaining obviously what is a complex new response plan and that horseshoe shape that the minister described. We are explaining it to the broader public and informing them of how we are approaching this pest. Under the new response plan, we are talking about a 10-kilometre treatment band in that horseshoe shape. As it has been described in the media, we are surrounding them and, with the new response plan, that horseshoe gradually comes in as the pest is eradicated in that treatment band.

Mr PERRETT: I have a further question to the director-general. Last week, the New South Wales agriculture minister triggered the New South Wales Biosecurity (Invasive Ant Carriers) Control Order 2023, ramping up restrictions on high-risk businesses. How many high-risk businesses are in the infested area in Queensland?

Dr Sarra: There are some very specific details that you are looking for. I do not know if I have those on hand. Let me just check, if you do not mind.

CHAIR: Just clarifying: did you ask for the number of properties?

Mr PERRETT: It is high-risk businesses within the infected area that the New South Wales government have identified.

CHAIR: I am not sure what we can do. Let us see what New South Wales has said on the particular—

Mr PERRETT: They have said plenty, I can assure you.

CHAIR: Of course they would have.

Mr PERRETT: I have the reference here if you are not sure of it, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you. It is going to be a bit hard for us to clarify what they have said.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: it is about Queensland businesses, not New South Wales businesses.

CHAIR: Thank you for that clarification.

Mr PERRETT: I am happy for that to be taken on notice.

Dr Sarra: Just to reflect, the kinds of high-risk businesses we are talking about are nurseries, turf providers and those sorts of things. I do not have those numbers in front of me.

Mr PERRETT: I am happy for that to be taken on notice.

CHAIR: If we can get an answer before the end of the session, that would be great.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, given the prevalence of fire ant infestation in Queensland, are you aware of any consideration for building codes to be amended, therefore adding to the cost of construction?

CHAIR: Member, you have got some—

Mr PERRETT: Yes or no?

CHAIR: No. You are asking them to form an opinion on that and that involves some hypotheticals as well.

Mr Hart interjected.

CHAIR: Wait for it. Bearing in mind it is asking for an opinion and there are some hypotheticals, I will give the director-general some latitude.

Dr Sarra: I believe so. I am not aware of any specific plans of the nature that you are describing, and that would push us into the realms of policy which might involve discussions that probably would occur at the cabinet table. It is not appropriate for me to discuss such things. I do not know if the minister would have a view on that.

Mr FURNER: Obviously, any matters relevant to a building code would sit outside the realm of this portfolio, so I do not think it is appropriate for the director-general of this portfolio to answer that sort of question.

Mr HART: So it is not part of your eradication program to liaise with other departments about their situations, like planning?

Mr FURNER: Chair, I am not sure which person that question is directed to.

CHAIR: That was directed at you, I believe, Minister.

Mr HART: It was to the director-general.

CHAIR: I think we have already covered that. I am not quite sure how you can answer that.

Dr Sarra: I am happy to speak to some of that. I can inform the member for Burleigh that we are always in dialogue across departments. An example is our conversations with the education department. The education department has a lot of school grounds and we need to be in a dialogue with them about identifying in those such places. The department of housing and public works looks after building codes. If it was considered relevant, then we would be more than happy to have those conversations with that department.

Mr HART: Coming from the Gold Coast, what about the department of tourism? Have you done any modelling to see how fire ants may affect the tourism situation, especially on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast?

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, that is a pretty broad one. You are asking if they have done modelling for the tourism industry. Should that have been asked to the tourism minister last night?

Mr HART: No, it is about the eradication strategy and whether they are dealing with other departments. Tourism is a major one that could be affected by fire ants. I would hate to get stung while on a beach. Imagine laying on a beach and fire ants attack you.

CHAIR: I understand that one. The director-general has talked about liaising with some departments. Director-General, do you have anything further to add on how you work with other departments on eradication?

Dr Sarra: I can reiterate the points I made earlier. This is a national program led by the whole of the Queensland government, specifically led by our department. That invokes a circumstance in which we are having to talk across all government departments in Queensland. We are having to talk with our counterparts in other jurisdictions. I do not have it in front of me, but I can assure the member that there has been a good range of economic modelling to determine the cost of not addressing this as required.

Mr HART: Can you provide that economic modelling to the committee?

Mr FURNER: That modelling—

Mr HART: It was to the director-general. Director-General, can you provide that modelling to the committee?

CHAIR: I think he has answered that. This is a question from me to the minister. Minister, can you furnish some information about that?

Mr FURNER: I can. That is publicly available in the 2021 report and that has been out there in the community. In terms of liaising with other departments, through the FAST program, the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce, we liaise with the likes of the education department and the defence department because some of the area in the zone is the Canungra training area. We liaise with the government. The Gold Coast city council is one of those local governments we are liaising with, assisting them with 8,000 hectares of bait for cane fields around Pimpama and 800 hectares of land around the Gold Coast.

Mr HART: This is a very important issue on the Gold Coast. After 22 years of a failed fire ant eradication program—

CHAIR: Member, you know the standing orders. You have an argument in there. Can you rephrase that without the argumentative part in it?

Mr HART: Well, it has been going on for 22 years and so far it has failed because these fire ants are out of control.

CHAIR: That is your argumentative part. Can you rephrase the question?

Mr HART: I am wondering if we should change the minister's nickname to 'Furner, the friend of the fire ants'.

CHAIR: That is ruled out of order. I gave you a chance.

Mr FURNER: So immature.

Mr McDONALD: 'Furner, the fire ant friend'.

Mr HART: We will change his nickname to 'Friend of the fire ant'.

CHAIR: Order!

Mr FURNER: Chair, through you, I am prepared to educate the member for Burleigh.

CHAIR: I do not know if there was a question, but I will assume there was.

Mr HART: I do not need any education.

CHAIR: Member, I have asked you to cease interjections.

Mr HART: I have seen fire ants in my electorate.

CHAIR: Member, I have asked you to cease interjections.

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his statement. In the strategic review of August 2021 with respect to tourism, the report indicated that international and domestic tourism in 2018-19 contributed \$122 billion, or 9.3 million tourists visited Australia. In the words of the report, fire ants are 'barbecue-stoppers', at a cost of \$49 per affected tourist per year. Beaches are important drivers for tourism. The overall cost is more than \$200 million. As I indicated, that report is publicly available. Had the member taken the opportunity to read that report, we would have been able to answer more suitable questions at this hearing.

Mr HART: Seriously?

Mr LAST: Minister, I refer to SDS page 17—sustainable regions and rural communities. I note with interest your ministerial charter letter which states, 'Work with the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services and contribute to delivering health care to rural areas.' Minister, how many formal meetings have you had with Minister Fentiman to specifically discuss the delivery of rural health care since the cabinet reshuffle in May?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question and no doubt he is correct—it is in my charter letter, as well as other ministers, including the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. We meet, as the member would know, every Monday as a cabinet, and discuss a variety of things and those things are Cabinet-in-Confidence, but you can be assured that I take a strong interest in terms of rural Queensland, in particular the health of rural Queenslanders, and that is the process that we deal with at present. On many occasions also, I have been fortunate enough, as the Minister for Rural Communities, to travel throughout rural Queensland. In fact, I was down at Southern Downs just last week—

Mr LAST: Point of order, Mr Chair, on relevance. It is a very direct, very specific question: how many meetings has he had with Minister Fentiman?

CHAIR: Thank you. I am sure the minister is coming to a complete answer. Certainly I would ask the minister to do so.

Mr FURNER: The number of meetings are recorded in my diary. They are cabinet meetings, but in addition, as I was alluding to, Chair, I travel around the state and last week I was in Southern Downs. The member for Southern Downs was at that Labor for the regions forum meeting as well, in which he took great interest hearing about some of the initiatives that the Labor Party is doing and this government is doing. We get around. It is great to see members of the opposition showing an interest in the good work that the Palaszczuk government is doing in regional Queensland.

Mr LAST: Minister, in the last two financial years, how many formal meetings have you had with former health minister D'Ath to discuss delivering health care to rural areas?

Mr FURNER: Once again, those meetings are recorded in my diary and are publicly available.

Mr LAST: Minister, your diary suggests only one meeting, from 17 June 2021, so over two years ago, and not in the last two financial years?

Mr FURNER: As I indicated, through you, Chair, those meetings are cabinet meetings. They are every Monday that cabinet sits. Those meetings involve a variety of different things and some of those meetings are related to health.

Mr LAST: To be clear, Minister, you are telling me here today that you have not met with the Minister for Health in the middle of a health crisis since June 2021?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair, under 115(b), lengthy or subjective preamble. It is subjective to say that there is a health crisis.

CHAIR: It did contain more of an argument than an inference. Member for Burdekin, did you want to ask your question in a slightly different manner that does not offend standing orders?

Mr LAST: Minister, can you confirm that you have not met with the health minister since June 2021?

Mr FURNER: I refer to my previous answer.

Mr LAST: Minister, let me ask you this question: has rural health care improved since you have been the Minister for Rural Communities?

CHAIR: Thank you, member. That is a big opinion you are asking for, and that probably relates to the Minister for Health. Minister, you might want to answer that in a broad-ranging fashion seeing it was a broad-ranging question.

Mr FURNER: Absolutely, yes, it has improved. In fact, I was—

Mr HART: Wow!

Mr LAST: Big call.

CHAIR: Order, members.

Mr FURNER: I was in the Torres Strait only a few weeks ago with the federal minister for the department of agriculture, fisheries and forestry and one of the questions I asked up there was how the recent forum and the visit of the health minister was in that region, and I got a very favourable response. It is one of those areas where the Palaszczuk government has heavily invested in. Roma Hospital, Blackall Hospital, Monto, the new hospital out in the member for Nanango's electorate of Kingaroy—there are copious examples of where this government has put money. Bundaberg Hospital, as an example, will be utilised. There is example after example. I wonder sometimes, Chair, what this LNP opposition do in their pastime. Rather than read the *Courier-Mail*, it would be beneficial to seek briefings from ministers to give more relevant responses of how things operate in this government.

Mr Hart interjected.

Mr Perrett interjected.

CHAIR: Members, I do call you to order. I do believe there is some provocation there, but certainly over to yourselves for the next question.

Mr LAST: Minister, you have never thought it important enough to call a specific meeting about health; is that what you are saying today?

CHAIR: Member, there is an argument and an inference there. Minister, did you want to answer?

Mr FURNER: Chair, I would like to answer that question in this manner: when we faced the most difficult time in Queensland's history for over 100 years—I am referring to the COVID pandemic—one of the meetings my department had—no doubt it was with a previous director-general—was engaging with health to make sure our borders were open to allow produce to get across our borders, to make sure the guidelines were put in place so we could export our produce domestically across the borders into other states and territories. That could only have been done through engagement with the Department of Health and the health minister to ensure those supply chains were put in place to make sure we fed our nation. I do not accept the premise of that question. We have met many times with the Minister for Health and the Department of Health, and we will continue doing that to make sure not only our Queenslanders remain healthy but also our produce gets across borders domestically and internationally.

Mr PERRETT: Back to fire ants and a question to the director-general. The eradication program employed 20 compliance officers when the footprint was 40,000 hectares. The independent auditor found it employed seven between 2018 and 2019 when 912 compliance checks were conducted, and 30 per cent of cases were not resolved in a month. How many compliance officers are there currently, and how many will be needed to do the 12,000 audits a year?

CHAIR: To clarify, member for Gympie, the essence of your question is how many people are doing that work?

Mr PERRETT: The government says they are going to ramp up the compliance measures, so I need to know those figures.

CHAIR: For fire ants?

Mr PERRETT: Fire ants.

CHAIR: We have some questions on notice to be answered on that. So it is an expansion on that?

Mr PERRETT: Yes, it is, because this is additional. I want to know how many there are currently and how many will be needed for ramping up to these 12,000 audits a year.

Dr Sarra: Thank you, member, for your indulgence. It is very specific information you are after, so if it is okay with you, Mr Chair, we will have to get that particular information and hopefully get it to you by the end of the session.

CHAIR: Let's see if we can get that information by the end of the session.

Mr BERKMAN: I was going to ask a question very closely related to the member for Gympie's question. I was essentially going to ask the same question except, if it is possible, I was hoping for the department to give us a comparison of the number of officers doing this work on the ground in 2021-22 financial year, the previous financial year and forecasts for the coming year. It really is essentially the same question with a slightly wider time frame. If we are chasing after extra information, I wonder if that might be included.

CHAIR: We can come back to you, if you like, Director-General.

Dr Sarra: Sure.

CHAIR: That is the number of people there now, in the future and in the past.

Dr Sarra: If I may, I would like to get better clarity on the numbers sought by the member so that my guys can come back before the end of the session with the right numbers.

Mr BERKMAN: The member for Gympie asked about the number of compliance officers. I was hoping to get a breakdown of that for the last two financial years and then, beyond that, a forecast of how many officers will be retained by the department in this current—

Dr Sarra: Compliance officers in the fire ant program for the last two years and the forecast for the next couple of years?

Mr BERKMAN: That is right. Thank you.

Dr Sarra: We should be able to get that for you.

CHAIR: I am clarifying that it is fire ants and not just general compliance officers?

Mr BERKMAN: Specifically for fire ants, yes.

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, are you still going?

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. I will be done after this I promise.

CHAIR: Okay. We will let you go.

Mr BERKMAN: Again, I think this is a question for the DG, if not, for another departmental officer. Are you able to provide a breakdown of the expenditure by financial year for that \$37.1 million committed to continue the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce over five years from 2021?

Dr Sarra: I am quite certain that we can provide that. We may even be able to provide that now. I will just check with our DDG Corporate Services. Our Deputy Director-General of Corporate Services can speak to that specific question. I will put you in the hands of Justine Clark.

Ms Clark: The \$37.1 million—the original year was last financial year. In 2022-23 it was \$3 million—I am rounding here a little—in 2023-24, \$8 million; in 2024-25, going into the forward estimates, \$12.2 million; and a further \$13.7 million in 2025-26.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks very much, Chair.

CHAIR: Members of the opposition, do you have a question?

Mr PERRETT: I have a question to the director-general. I refer to SDS page 1, Queensland biosecurity services and the closure of the highly visible Coen biosecurity facility in Cape York, a decision which AgForce warned leaves Australia exposed to a potentially catastrophic risk of disease. It could also have a catastrophic impact on red meat exports from Australia. How does closing a highly visible facility increase the capability of biosecurity surveillance across the cape?

CHAIR: That is a long preamble. I ask the director-general if he has an answer for that.

Dr Sarra: We are very committed to managing those risks in partnership with the federal and local governments, which are also delivering biosecurity services in Northern Australia. The federally funded Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy outlined the framework for national border control. Those funded activities provide the first line of defence against potential border incursions and underpin a well resourced workforce in Northern Australia, including the many islands of the Torres Strait. The Cape York Biosecurity Centre has played a role in that defence since it was established more than 20 years ago following the detection of spiralling white fly in Cape York. The spiralling white fly is now found as far south as Bundaberg.

Through our department's evaluations a limited number of vehicles have been inspected at that centre during its operation—for example, in 2021 only 40 per cent of almost 30,000 southbound vehicles. An estimated 90,000 people visit the northern peninsula area each year, mostly from May to November. That inspection rate was considered too low in terms of a return on investment. We evaluated that there are more contemporary and more effective ways of delivering biosecurity services to that region and we did make the decision to close that facility. As a result our department will broaden and better target the services and programs it delivers across the Far North to address the biosecurity risk pathways in the region.

In addition to that increased biosecurity surveillance activities in the region the Queensland government invested in a targeted workforce of 10 new biosecurity officers across the state who are tasked with increasing capacity and capability in the event of a plant or animal biosecurity incursion anywhere in Queensland. That increased workforce is part of a broader \$22 million five-year investment to boost preparedness for biosecurity emergencies including foot-and-mouth disease, lumpy skin disease and African swine fever.

We are a partner in the collaboration between industry and government through the Northern Australia Plant Capacity and Response Network. That response network will build capacity and capability across the north which will increase surge capacity, assist with early detection preparedness and response, and enhance biosecurity outcomes for industry as well as on-country programs with First Nations people. Under that new collaborative model, three positions will be funded to engage with stakeholders more effectively, to respond to new emergency plant and pest detections, and conduct effective and timely diagnostic activities. Those positions are in place until July 2024.

In addition to those measures, our department continues to deliver the Far Northern Biosecurity Initiative established in late 2018 to increase the department's footprint in the region and focus on biosecurity issues relevant to the Torres Strait and the northern peninsula area. This initiative involves significant engagement with local stakeholders including other government service delivery partners, First Nations communities, land and sea rangers, businesses and traditional owners. We think that this more contemporary and collaborative approach to delivering biosecurity services actually strengthens Biosecurity Queensland's partnership with local communities, particularly those in the north, developing capacity in local government and increasing public awareness.

CHAIR: Thank you. I think we have covered that.

Mr PERRETT: I have a question to the director-general. I refer to SDS page 2 'to deliver key biosecurity initiatives'. The Queensland Audit Office found 'the Queensland government has no strategy to manage feral cats across the state', and that CSIRO estimates that between 2.1 and 6.3 million feral cats kill 1.8 billion Australian animals every year. Why does Biosecurity Queensland not have a plan to manage feral cats?

Dr Sarra: Thanks for the question. If you allow me to consult with my colleagues I will come back to you with an answer.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, I know you do not need to furnish a copy of that Auditor-General's report. I am asking for some kind of verification that that is exactly what they said.

Mr PERRETT: Absolutely. It was a key finding in that report: that there is no plan to manage feral cats in Queensland and they kill 1.8 billion Australian animals.

CHAIR: I understand that, but even a one-page extract from that Auditor-General's report—

Mr PERRETT: I want to know why the department does not have a plan.

CHAIR:—would help us get to the nub of the issue.

Dr Sarra: Since 2015 there have been seven rounds of Queensland Feral Pest Initiatives. In total, the initiative has allocated \$27.1 million to assist regional communities with the construction of cluster fences and other control mechanisms for the management of invasive plants and animals. That

investment was complemented by a \$14 million investment by the federal government for a total of \$41.1 million. Projects delivered under that initiative are diverse and provide a round of on-ground management programs across invasive plants and animals. Programs within that initiative include those for wild dogs, feral pigs and cats as well as yellow crazy ants, Hudson pear cactus, rubber vine and cat's claw.

CHAIR: We will go now to some questions from government members.

Mr SMITH: I want to welcome Dr Sarra today and I also recognise his strong ties to the lands, winds and waters of the Bundaberg region. Minister, you mentioned in your opening statement the \$3.3 million in the 2023-24 financial year for the Rural Economic Development Grants program, which increases employment and agribusiness development in Queensland. Could you please outline the success of this program to date?

Mr FURNER: I thank the honourable member for the question. No doubt the rural economic development grants, which are known as RED Grants in the industry, are one of the great innovations of the Palaszczuk government. RED Grants have made a real difference across the \$23.44 billion agriculture sector in this year's *Queensland AgTrends* announced in Queensland. Every time I visit a RED Grant recipient they have been thankful for that assistance provided by the Queensland government.

It is not just the primary producers of Queensland who benefit from these grants; every day Queenslanders have benefitted from the more than 2,548 new direct and indirect jobs in rural and regional areas over the lifetime of these projects. In fact, as well as over \$13.6 million in funding since the first round in 2018, RED grants have been available for up to \$200,000 reciprocated, with a 50 per cent cash contribution requirement from applicants to fund projects which provide unique opportunities to generate economic and employment opportunities related to primary production and value chains across rural and remote Queensland. RED grants have delivered in the past, and they will continue to deliver in this budget.

As the honourable member identified in the Service Delivery Statements, \$3.3 million in 2023-24 for the Rural Economic Development Grants program to increase employment and agribusiness development in regional Queensland has been budgeted for. I am pleased to announce that round 6 will officially open later this year as part of our budget to assist Queensland primary producers. These additional funds will make a difference to businesses across Queensland, and will increase the number of good jobs in the agricultural sector.

When it comes to expectations, I will give some indications on the success of the past program rounds to highlight what we can expect. Under round 4 in 2021-22, QRIDA received a total of 172 shortlisted expressions of interest and 48 businesses were invited to submit full applications. QRIDA awarded RED grants to 16 regional agriculture businesses totalling \$3 million. The successful round 4 projects are expected to create approximately 156 direct jobs during construction, 217 direct jobs after completion and 278 indirect jobs over the whole period.

Businesses in this round were located across Queensland, including in the Lockyer Valley. I know the member would be fully aware of the RED grant recipients in that region who were very thankful to the Palaszczuk government for that assistance. In Southern Downs, as well, where both myself and the member for Ipswich West were present last week. In Western Downs, in Bundaberg in your electorate, the Cassowary Coast, Mareeba, Moreton Bay, Cook, South Burnett and the Tablelands. The successful round 4 projects covered a range of agriculture industries including vegetable tree crops, citrus, bananas, nursery production, oil processing and agricultural manufacturing.

Today, I am pleased to announce the outcomes for round 5. There have been a \$3.9 million boost to 24 Queensland agriculture businesses, creating up to 215 direct long-term jobs. There were 24 successful applicants for round 5 of the RED grants program located across 13 local government areas—Barcaldine, Cairns, Cook, Gold Coast, Livingstone, the Lockyer Valley again, Mareeba, Moreton Bay, Somerset, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Townsville and the Whitsundays. Queensland businesses have benefited from this program that was conceived and funded by this government and which will continue under this government. I call on the opposition members of this committee to publicly support RED grants in their electorates and to welcome this government's ongoing success in the agriculture sector.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, as we all know, biosecurity is critical for the future of agriculture in Queensland. I refer to page two of the Service Delivery Statement under the 'Department highlights' section in which it states that it will 'continue to deliver key biosecurity initiatives including ongoing Emergency Animal Disease preparedness'. Can you outline the details of the far northern biosecurity

initiative projects from Torres Strait to the Northern Peninsula Area via a biosecurity strategy to build capability in early detection and response to a range of biosecurity pests and the diseases program? Specifically, how this will address the closure of the Cape York Biosecurity Centre at Coen and the biosecurity threats from the north.

Mr FURNER: I thank the honourable member for his question. It is good to complement the previous response provided by the director-general.

Mr McDONALD: A point of order: it is a second question. It is a question we just asked.

CHAIR: I was listening carefully. I think there was further information. We are going to be covering fire ants again, too.

Mr McDONALD: We will be keeping notes.

CHAIR: Members, order! Thank you for your commentary, but we have a question being answered here.

Mr FURNER: Firstly, I would like to note that the closure at Coen has brought with it enormous amounts of speculation and, of course, misinformation. People have attempted to peddle political gain rather than address real issues, real biosecurity policy and real science. Biosecurity threats change and, therefore, we must adapt. The approach to biosecurity must also change. With biosecurity threats forever changing and challenging, it makes sense to review the processes and services and, therefore, Biosecurity Queensland regularly reviews its services to ensure the best use of biosecurity resources by targeting those risks.

The Torres Strait and Cape York Peninsula have been targeted for review through this process, as it is a high-risk pathway for exotic pests and disease incursions. The Cape York Biosecurity Centre in Coen was considered as part of the broader review. The Far Northern Biosecurity Initiative commenced in June 2019 to increase DAF's footprint in Far North Queensland and to address those biosecurity issues that are relevant to the Torres Straits and Northern Peninsula Area. The initiative includes \$3.7 million in funding over five years to enhance biosecurity capability in the region with a strong emphasis on stakeholder empowerment, education and partnerships.

In August 2022, the Queensland government announced the allocation of \$1.473 million in funding to reposition capability to address biosecurity threats in northern Queensland. This announcement was part of a broader \$22 million, five-year investment to boost preparedness for biosecurity emergencies including foot-and-mouth disease, lumpy skin disease and African swine fever. Additional resources will build on the capabilities of both DAF and its local partners to detect biosecurity threats and to respond in a timely and coordinated manner. It is important to have the ability to coordinate and implement an effective emergency response using local stakeholders and traditional owners. This will be strengthened by DAF's active partnership with local communities on skills development and public awareness.

This new, more contemporary and effective way of dealing and delivering biosecurity services raises the issue of the future role of the Cape York Biosecurity Centre at Coen. The decision has been made to close the centre following the review. Across Cape York and the Torres Strait there is a different strategy and there will be a broader staff presence. It is important to note that even with the closure of the Cape York Biosecurity Centre, Biosecurity Queensland has increased the number of personnel in the Far North compared to this time last year. I would like to commend DAF, in particular BQ, for being able to adapt to current biosecurity threats. In a time of labour shortages, they have managed to secure and increase staff in the region.

Mr MADDEN: As I have stated, biosecurity is critical to the future of agriculture in Queensland. Minister, I refer to page four of the Service Delivery Statement and the 'Budget highlights' section states that funding has been allocated 'to further uplift our biosecurity preparedness and capability'. Biosecurity incursions do not just stop at the border. Can you advise if Biosecurity Queensland works with other jurisdictions to keep our borders safe?

Mr FURNER: Firstly, I would like to thank Biosecurity Queensland for their commitment not only to Queensland, but to the other jurisdictions we assist. DAF and BQ give support to our international neighbours through science, research and partnership engagement. DAF is a member of the interstate deployment arrangement for biosecurity responses and naturally, DAF considers requests for assistance from interstate jurisdictions that require assistance.

Any requests will be weighed up against Queensland's own needs, current biosecurity threats and delivery of our own services. DAF has a biosecurity response-ready workforce across all incident team management roles and field operations and, specifically, staff who have experience and expert

technical knowledge in responding to emergency disease such as white spot disease in prawns. New South Wales is currently responding to several significant biosecurity threats, all of which, if not effectively contained or eradicated, could have a negative impact on Australia and Queensland's economy, environment and our way of life. These concurrent responses have meant that New South Wales have reached out for assistance and support for their response efforts.

Varroa mite was detected in New South Wales in June 2022. When it comes to varroa mite, we are not talking about shades of grey. Bees need protection from these mites. It is black and white. The pests present a significant threat to Australia's honey and pollination service industries and these industries are worth more than \$14 billion annually. When New South Wales called and asked for assistance, Queensland was more than happy to help. A total of eight staff from across DAF responded to the call for assistance and were deployed south. Queensland has successfully eradicated varroa jacobsoni from Townsville after being detected in 2016, 2019 and 2020. It is no surprise that other jurisdictions should ask for BQ's expertise in this area. DAF responded to the New South Wales DPI's requests for assistance in the outbreak of white spot in prawn farms near Yamba on 12 February 2023. Again, DAF are well equipped and well versed in the response to white spot. To date, Biosecurity Queensland has deployed nine staff to assist with the New South Wales white spot response. In addition, virtual expertise has been provided to assist in the development of response plans and procedures using the extensive experience of our subject matter experts.

Queensland always stands ready to support any of our interstate colleagues through our response readiness, expertise and capabilities. On the subject of red imported fire ants, no doubt Queensland has assisted every state bar Tasmania where they have found red imported fire ants—not from South-East Queensland, all bar one incursion in Victoria with one queen found there in a pot plant consignment. That gives you an example of what Queensland does beyond its borders in terms of assisting other states and territories on incursions such as that particular pest. We will always be there to assist and ready and prepared to assist the nation with regard to the expertise that Biosecurity Queensland has.

CHAIR: Minister, page 4 of the SDS talks about the department's focus on building relationships with stakeholders and communities to assist industry in relation to animal welfare. Can you describe how the department is helping producers, industry and communities to address animal husbandry issues, especially for those in remote and regional Queensland?

Mr FURNER: Our government and my department can be proud of the work which has been done in supporting Queensland communities. Working with producers and industry bodies such as AgForce and the Queensland Farmers' Federation allows us to keep in touch with the issues that are important to regional and remote communities. One of the issues raised in the first few weeks was spaying or lay pregnancy testing and how the shortage of cattle pregnancy testers puts north-western producers at a disadvantage to Northern Territory and Western Australian producers where those governments already directly accredit lay pregnancy testers.

In November 2019 I announced our government's decision to make it legal for laypersons to carry out pregnancy testing or ovarian scanning of cattle for fee or reward. Previously only veterinary surgeons could legally charge for this service and allowing accredited persons to perform these procedures provides producers with a greater choice of service providers, particularly in remote areas of the state where there are recognised shortages of veterinarians in addition to significant travel costs. I was proud to be able to stand in this parliament last year and speak to the amendments to the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 and see those amendments pass in December last year.

They will allow accredited persons to perform cattle procedures, providing producers with a greater choice of service providers, particularly in remote areas of the state where there are significant travel costs for veterinarians. However, the right to conduct businesses in these circumstances must be balanced with ensuring that the risks to the welfare of an animal that is having the procedure undertaken are minimised, with a requirement for a layperson to be accredited to perform these procedures. As the committee knows, one of the amendments was prohibiting the pregnancy testing of cattle for fee or reward unless it is done by a veterinary surgeon or an accredited person. A layperson may still perform pregnancy testing for free—for example, a producer would be able to test their own cattle. The act now provides the legislative framework for accreditation schemes allowing pregnancy testing of cattle by rectal palpation or a transrectal ultrasound scan. Accreditation schemes may also be provided for the spaying of cattle using the Willis Dropped-Ovary Technique.

Accredited schemes are intended to be designed, owned and managed by industry. The person who wants to gain accreditation will deal directly with the accreditation scheme owner. Our good friends from AgForce were recently approved to operate an accredited scheme for lay cattle spaying and are

developing a lay pregnancy testing scheme with a view to seeking approval in the near future. DAF and AgForce liaise regularly on this matter, as we do with all industry representatives. In fact, the department and I met recently with the Agricultural Ministerial Advisory Council. Our door is always open to hear the issues of importance to regional and remote communities and as long as we are here we will continue to build on the relationships with our industry partners and communities and assist where we can.

Mr SMITH: Minister, on page 4 of the SDS Queensland biosecurity services described its focus as—

... building government and stakeholder biosecurity capability in awareness, prevention, preparedness, incident response, and pest and disease management based on robust science.

Minister, the state has very different ecosystems and climates. Can you please outline how the department supports local areas focus on their specific biosecurity issues?

Mr FURNER: One of the most effective ways we are building our biosecurity capability is through the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative. It was this government that introduced the grants in 2015. Since that time, the Palaszczuk government has announced over \$27.1 million for projects through seven rounds of funding to assist regional communities in managing invasive plants and animals. Our government recognised very early in our first term that weeds and pests needed urgent attention and that it would take a whole-of-community effort with regard to feral pests and weeds across Queensland.

Since the first round of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative, regional communities have used the grants to address feral pigs, weeds in the Desert Channel, wild dogs, rabbits, deer control, cactus control, Koster's curse and cat's claw. All across Queensland, from the Far North to the Desert Channel to the border towns, these grants have enabled communities to address feral pests and weeds that are a priority to these communities. We have granted funding to 10 community or industry groups and 56 councils and one regional organisation of councils to address the issues that cause them the most pain. We know that this money has gone to priorities for those communities. Whether it is in Logan or Longreach, Cape York or the Cassowary Coast, the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative is delivering for these communities. I know I have said it on numerous occasions, but funding for the cluster fencing in rounds 1, 2, 3 and 5 have seen lambing rates increase since the cluster fencing began. I understand in some circumstances I have heard it to be up around 88 per cent.

The Palaszczuk government will continue the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative this year. Round 8 will again offer \$1 million of grants programs and will invite applicants for innovative research and development projects to deliver effective and enhanced feral pig management development or improving control tools or improved methods. This will be a welcome injection of funds to address the issue of feral pigs. I look forward to the announcement later this year and to the outcomes in terms of feral pig problems.

Mr MADDEN: Along those lines, Minister, I refer to page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements where it states DAF will 'continue to deliver key biosecurity initiatives including ongoing Emergency Animal Disease preparedness'. Minister, could you outline what actions are being taken in relation to tackling the feral pig problem in Queensland?

Mr FURNER: There are a number of ways in which the government addresses the issue of feral pigs. As the committee knows, there are ongoing studies into the movement of feral pigs and their populations. The committee is no doubt aware of the National Feral Pig Action Plan. Their updates on pig populations were recently amended on their website to reflect the updated national feral pig population estimates, which are much lower than previously expected. That, of course, should not detract from the fact that feral pigs do incredible damage to the environment and cause havoc to producers, which is why we will continue to invest in this area.

In 2005, feral pigs were assessed as costing the Australian economy \$106 million; today the cost is estimated to be almost \$140 million. Under Queensland legislation the responsibility for feral pig control rests with the landholder. Local governments are responsible for ensuring that feral pigs are managed by landholders, who take responsible and practical actions consistent with local plans and strategies. DAF also has a responsibility to assist and does so by undertaking feral pig research to improve available control options such as trapping or baiting methods.

DAF is well respected in this field of research and actively promotes the benefits of its expertise through publications and engagement with local governments and landholders. DAF advocates a collaborative approach to feral pig control. Best results are achieved when landholders work together to manage feral pigs in their local areas at a landscape scale. Queensland is enhancing its coordinated

feral pig control capability with a \$3.474 million investment to reduce the risk of feral pigs spreading biosecurity threats and the costs and complexity of emergency control measures in the event of an outbreak.

CHAIR: Minister, on page 2 of the SDS we talk about biosecurity and working closely with stakeholders. Can you describe what the department is doing in working with local government to protect people from dangerous dogs? I think this is a hugely important issue.

Mr FURNER: That is a good question. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring Queensland has appropriate strong laws that minimise the risk posed to local communities by dangerous and aggressive dogs. In August 2022 we established the animal management task force with members from local government, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the RSPCA and myself as the chair. The aim of the task force was to identify and prioritise the key issues to reform, focusing on a targeted review of the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008.

I cannot thank enough the members of that task force and, of course, my department for their diligence and for the collaborative and cooperative way they have approached this task. Change does not happen without people who are passionate about what they do and without the commitment they show. My department and the task force showed that they are passionate and totally committed to improving community safety and dog management.

In April 2023, the task force endorsed a proposed reform agenda that includes: increased penalties for irresponsible dog owners including imprisonment for the worst offenders, statewide bans on restricted breeds, the development of community education programs and streamlining processes to reduce time lines for appeals. To the member's question, while all of these proposed reforms will assist local governments, there is also a review of technical issues to support councils to manage dogs in their jurisdictions. After all, it is the local governments that have the day-to-day business of managing dogs in their communities. I think we should acknowledge that their insight into day-to-day dog management has proved invaluable.

We are now seeing community input into the proposed reform and, on Sunday 25 June this year, I announced the release of a discussion paper. I encourage everyone to get online and either complete the survey or upload a submission. To date we have had a tremendous response with over 27,000 hits on the DAF eHub web page, over 2,300 survey feedback responses and 304 uploaded written responses from people making their views known. That is a very encouraging response and I look forward to being appraised of the outcomes of the review. The Palaszczuk government has committed to implementing the legislative amendments as soon as possible with a bill scheduled to be introduced in parliament this calendar year.

CHAIR: I now go to the crossbench and the member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: Can the minister explain why in 2018 he accepted a public audit report claiming that there was no demand for services provided by the Longreach and Emerald pastoral colleges and then in 2023 rejected an opportunity for an industry-led proposal in the asset sale of those same premises to reinstate the training services previously available at the facilities?

Mr FURNER: No doubt that is a matter of interest for not only himself but also many others. I know that the member for Gregory has a keen interest in this. Without delving into the history of the Longreach and Emerald colleges, I will go directly to the response to his question.

In July 2022 we announced the property would be put to the market and the property was placed on the market in December 2022 through a tender process of six different configurations to give buyers options to purchase various parcels. Following the closure of the tenders on 23 February this year, an assessment panel met and reviewed each tender with conforming tenders assessed against the advertised criteria, which was price offered and the community benefit to Longreach and the regional community. Those were the two criteria to reach. DAF engaged a probity adviser at the start of the tender process to support the department through the full sale process.

Following the closure of those tenders in 23 February this year, an assessment panel met and reviewed each tender with conforming tenders assessed against the advertised criteria, which was, once again, price offered and regional community benefit. DAF received 17 offers from 10 tenders. Of those a number of the tenders were classified as non-conforming for a variety of reasons, including non-payment of the tender deposit, offering to lease but not purchase, unsigned or incomplete contracts and an unsigned director's guarantee. Those were the four failings, unfortunately, of those tenders.

The successful tenders were PJ & CR Britton for the campus and grazing land south of the Landsborough Highway for \$7.6 million; JH & SJ Milson for the grazing land north of the Landsborough Highway for \$3.6 million; and Unleashing Australia Fund Pty Ltd, Outback Pioneers, for the improved

farming land adjacent to the Thomson River for \$1.2 million. The combined sale price of the three successful tenders is a total of \$12.4 million, which exceeded the market valuation. The property settled on 5th June this year with net proceedings returned to Queensland Treasury.

The community benefit proposed to be delivered by the successful tenders include—and this is a good story—tourism operations, growing tourism products and experiences resulting in greater visitation and economic return for the broader region and communities; the re-creation of historical Chinese gardens on the Thomson River, delivering cost-effective market garden produce to service local restaurants and community groups, and providing multicultural cohesion within an educational horticultural environment; the expansion of sheep, cattle and goat production; sustainable, locally grown and cost-effective hay production for the local and wider community; making campus facilities available for training activities; and growing local jobs through tourism, education, horticulture and livestock production activities. The successful tenderers are proposing to engage with local schools, restaurants and cafes, the community and First Nations people, organisations and various universities, contractors and other agribusinesses.

Mr KATTER: Notwithstanding the tourism benefits from that move—and as I understand it the industry-led tender was \$2 million above the next nearest, had led community consultation and had the support of the local government authority. Bearing in mind those factors and through the lens of the labour shortages in agriculture in Queensland, which is a really big issue, is the minister aware that only six students graduated from TAFE with a Certificate III in Agriculture in North Queensland in the past five years? Does it make this a bad decision on behalf of the government as we have forgone that opportunity to reinstate a training facility?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question, but it seems to be a bit of a double up on what I had previously answered about the—

Mr KATTER: I am probably just after a response only on the six traineeships and the shortage?

Mr FURNER: It probably relates back to the decision to close both the Longreach and Emerald colleges. As the member may have known, in that period of time that decision was made. When I travelled to Longreach, my recollection is that only approximately 10 students were attending that college. The number was slightly greater in Emerald, but, nevertheless, the decision unfortunately had to be made. I also make this point: when the opposition were in government they received an Ernst and Young report that indicated that the Longreach college should certainly be closed. The LNP government did not act upon that advice.

Nevertheless, going to the specifics of the training aspect of the question, there is a variety of things we are doing in that respect. We have allocated \$12.55 million for state-of-the-art agriculture training facilities in TAFE across the board, namely: free TAFE positions—another hallmark of the Palaszczuk government; \$2.7 million for stage 1 of the Rural Centre of Excellence at Toowoomba, officially opened in February 2020; \$1.1 million for stage 2 of the Rural Centre of Excellence in Toowoomba; \$3.4 million for the new Agricultural Centre of Excellence in Bowen, which I officially opened; \$3.35 million for the new Agricultural and Horticulture Centre at Bundaberg; and \$2 million for the Aquaculture Centre of Excellence at Cannonvale TAFE campus. All of that funding is put aside to assist in the growth of that area. This year we have seen a record 76 schools take part in next generation agriculture through the flagship Agribusiness Gateway to Industry Schools project. Certainly, by 2029 more than 40 per cent—

Mr KATTER: I am happy with that. In terms of biosecurity, what frequency of sentinel herd testing is occurring as part of Queensland's National Arbovirus Monitoring Program and how is it comparable to other states and territories?

Dr Sarra: The minister has asked me to refer to our chief biosecurity officer to get to the specifics of that question.

Dr Chay: Through the director-general and the minister, I suggest that we take that on notice and come back to the member with the specifics of the requirement.

Mr ANDREW: As a declaration, I am a holder of a current master fisherman's licence. I own a business called CQ Feral. Minister, recently we spoke about the \$106 million in feral pig damage. Last time we spoke, there was \$925,000 allocated to that which is about 0.73 of a per cent. Now that you have re-looked at those figures and it is now \$140 million worth of damage, what will the government actually be spending to make correction and try and reduce this number of feral pigs and the damage for Queensland?

Mr FURNER: As I indicated in my response to the member for Ipswich West, we have allocated an investment of \$3.47 million to reduce the risk of feral pigs.

Mr ANDREW: On the ground? The studies have been done and done and done. The people out there in the electorate are saying, 'Can we get rid of these pigs on the ground?'

CHAIR: It is alright, member for Mirani, the minister has just started to answer that.

Mr FURNER: It also includes \$2.16 million for the placement of four feral pig coordinators in regional or industry organisations and \$1 million in grants. We will facilitate those grants through QFPI. I remember you showing me a technique and capability in the chamber one day. It is important to engage with people like you and stakeholders in the agriculture industry to appreciate and understand the effects of feral pigs. They are a pest. That is why we have allocated millions of dollars of funding to address that particular pest.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, you referred to funding of \$14 million for bees in Queensland. We have identified about 140 different bees in my electorate. At this time of the year, African tulips are flowering and everyone takes their beehives over the range so that they do not kill the bees. What is the department doing in terms of removing African tulip trees from within Queensland to stop the bees from dying?

Mr FURNER: No doubt, African tulip trees are a biosecurity threat. Certainly under their general biosecurity obligations local governments would be wise to make sure they advise people who have those particular trees to get rid of them. In fact, one of my neighbours had one. I alerted him to the issue and he allowed me to jump the fence and cut it down with a chainsaw. It is important that people take up those opportunities to rid their communities of particular plant pests such as that. In this year's budget, from memory, we have allocated \$21.7 million over five years along with \$2.8 million of additional funding each year for plant pests and diseases. We will work with local governments. Once again, everyone has a general biosecurity obligation to address those plant pests in their communities.

Mr ANDREW: Do NRM groups have access to that funding?

Mr FURNER: I am pretty certain that they do.

Mr McDONALD: I have a question for the director-general. With regard to the employment problems across Queensland, one solution was the federal PALM scheme. I am sure the department has had many approaches about difficulties with that scheme. What representation has the state made to its federal counterparts in regard to fixing those problems, particularly around absconders?

Dr Sarra: The PALM scheme is no doubt an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to ensuring an adequate workforce to be able to allow our producers to harvest as they need to harvest. To go to the nub of the question, we are in a continuing dialogue with the Commonwealth. In the context of our department, we are supporting the PALM scheme through the engagement of two workforce liaison officers to complement the existing regional pastoral care providers. These officers keep our department informed of any emerging issues as they arise with Pacific Islander and Timor Leste workers in the agriculture sector. We have one officer based in the north and another in the south. Those folks are the kind of folks I would describe as 'culturally agile' and able to understand and respond to those challenges experienced by those people participating in the PALM scheme. The welfare and wellbeing of those workers under the PALM scheme continues to be a priority. We are working collaboratively with the government to ensure the smooth implementation of the expanded scheme.

Mr McDONALD: With regard to that scheme, the employers actually hold the risk in terms of employing each employee. When 30 per cent of the 9,000 workers are absconding and the employers have to continue that employment contract, it is a very big burden. I cannot stress enough to you to continue that dialogue with the federal government.

CHAIR: We will take that as a statement.

Dr Sarra: We will do that, thank you.

CHAIR: There are three outstanding issues that we need answered. One is around compliance officers for fire ants in different financial years. Do we have any information on that one?

Dr Sarra: In relation to the question regarding compliance officers, the information at hand enables me to inform the committee that in 2021 there were 10 compliance officers; in 2021-22 there were 10; in 2022-23 there were 16; and in 2023-24 we are proposing to have an additional 22. That would take that number up to 38, but that is pending favourable budget outcomes.

The other question was in relation to the number of businesses impacted in your zone. We recognise the New South Wales number that was provided. There is an estimation as of July 2023 that approximately 54 businesses within that zone could be affected. That is based on businesses accredited to trade interstate.


CHAIR: I think the last one was from the member for Traeger on cattle testing.

Mr KATTER: The sentinel testing.

Dr Sarra: We do not have those answers just yet. We could try to get those before the end of the next session.

CHAIR: If we could get that when we start the next session, that would be good. If not, we will talk about that being a question on notice. The time allocated for the consideration of estimates for the agricultural industry development and rural communities portfolio areas has expired. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and the hearing will resume at 3.16 pm to consider the estimates for fisheries and forestry.

Proceedings suspended from 3.01 pm to 3.16 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the fisheries and forestry portfolio areas until 4.45 pm. Minister, if you wish you can make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Mr FURNER: Queensland's world-class fisheries and forestry sectors are renowned both here and abroad. The tantalising seafood and aquaculture produce produced in Queensland has long delighted international connoisseurs while adding tremendous value to Queensland's economy. According to the latest AgTrends data, released in June, fisheries and aquaculture produce generated \$564 million in value for the Queensland economy in 2022-23. Mindful of this important economic contribution, the Palaszczuk government through the latest state budget is continuing its proud, strong record of investing in fisheries. The budget delivers increased funding of \$11.7 million over three years to continue the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027.

The safety of people enjoying Queensland's beaches remains paramount, which is why the budget delivers increased funding of \$9.2 million over five years and \$3 million per annum ongoing on the Shark Control Program. This investment will include further research into how best to keep swimmers safe while protecting the welfare of marine life, with technology trials such as the use of drones continuing. The budget also earmarks \$22 million over four years for the implementation of independent data validation on monitoring of commercial fishing activities to provide more accurate data on protected species interactions.

Forestry is a growth industry and is one of the key aspects of the Palaszczuk government's approach to secure the future of Queensland workers in rural and regional communities. The industry has an annual turnover of around \$4 billion and includes the growing, processing and manufacturing, and pulp and paper sectors. The forestry industry directly employs around 12,000 people, most of those in the Gympie, Fraser Coast, South Burnett, North Burnett and Maranoa local government areas. That is why the budget includes an uplift in forestry industry development funding in support of our ongoing industry development efforts. We are pressing full steam ahead on a raft of initiatives to responsibly manage the allocation and use of state owned forests and related resources. This includes implementing the native timber action plan to build a sustainable future for the native timber industry that also ensures the conservation outcomes that Queenslanders expect. Chair, I look forward to taking questions from the committee.

CHAIR: I am going to go to the member for Traeger first. Then we will go to the opposition.

Mr KATTER: The World Wildlife Fund has long campaigned for the end of net fishing. Recently the department announced a former World Wildlife Fund employee of nine years as head of the independent Future Fishing Taskforce. Given that this task force was formed to deal with the fallout from Queensland's and the Commonwealth's ban on commercial gillnets from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by mid-2027, this appointment has alarmed members of the commercial fishing industry. Does the minister have any concerns about this appointment?

CHAIR: Member for Traeger, that is regarding an appointment of someone from WWF. Is that correct?

Mr KATTER: Yes.

CHAIR: Was that to you, Minister?

Mr FURNER: I believe so. In regard to the reference the member made to the World Heritage Committee and the decision to phase out gillnet fishing in the Great Barrier Reef, that was a decision made on 28 November last year by UNESCO and the IUCN released its Reactive Monitoring Mission report which identified 10 priority areas and 12 additional recommendations for urgent implementation to address its concerns.

In particular, recommendation 10 recommended the phasing out of gillnet fishing in the GBR. I note that on 31 July 2023 UNESCO released its draft decision recommending the World Heritage Committee not inscribe the Great Barrier Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger which is positive news not only for Queensland but for the tourism sector. This acknowledges the actions undertaken and the commitments made to implement the Reactive Monitoring Mission recommendation in relation to phasing out gillnet fishing and to also accelerate the implementation of our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027.

The reef's economic, social and iconic value was estimated to be \$56 billion in 2015-16. Prior to COVID, it supported more than 64,000 jobs and contributed \$6.4 billion annually to the Australian economy. The vast majority of that comes from tourism, with a value of \$5.7 billion annually. Protecting the reef is a priority of our government as well as the Commonwealth government.

To address that, no doubt the Queensland government had to consider the result of that particular decision, along with the federal government. The Queensland government committed \$1 million through the CBRC process. The federal government put forward \$60 million to protect the reef but also mainly to invest in the process of those fishers.

In respect of the part of the question about the task force, the government has appointed a member who will chair the task force with regard to its operation. We have people from Fisheries on the task force as well as people from the Department of Environment and Science.

We are served by people who have experience. We have also met with the Queensland Seafood Industry Association on a number of occasions this year. They will be invited to attend, as well as other people, as advisers to the committee process. I am assured that the chair and the expert senior representatives on the committee and industry people like the QSIA will be beneficial in providing the best advice to government in regard to the actions that will be taken as a result of the UNESCO decision.

Mr KATTER: Given feedback from the commercial fishermen saying anecdotally that they have never seen more mackerel in 30 or 40 years and the reports saying that the biomass is down to 17 per cent, has the minister read Dr Simon Hoyle and Alistair Dunn's independent review commissioned by the Queensland Seafood Industry Association into the east coast Spanish mackerel stock assessment?

Mr FURNER: Before I answer that, I may have made an error—and I apologise to the committee—in my previous answer. I may have said \$1 million as opposed to \$100 million that the Queensland government has put forward in assistance with regard to the outcomes of UNESCO decision.

In regard to Spanish mackerel—in particular, the Queensland Seafood Industry Association's review—I will say this from the outset: you will always get differing opinions when you put scientists together in relation to outcomes and looking at any aspect of science. In particular, with fisheries, we explored and examined the QSIA's report into the stock assessment of Spanish mackerel. Some of those technical issues raised by the department related to differing scientific opinion on various parameters in the model and were not incorporated in the final report.

The department has examined the QSIA funded review and does not consider the matters raised to be significant enough to rescind or reconsider the recent changes to the east coast Spanish mackerel fishery. However, as a result of reviewing the stock assessment, in early 2025 we will work with industry to consider and incorporate technical feedback from both reviews to make sure we are in a better place.

I make the final comment that, had we not taken action last year when the assessment of east coast Spanish mackerel was considered at 17 per cent—which is below the national trigger of 20 per cent to take action—people were calling out to close the fishery. We did not take that step. We could have done that but we took a considerable step in regard to striking a fair balance in Queensland between commercial fishers and recreational fishers to end up with the arrangements we have in place at present.

Mr KATTER: So you specifically acknowledge the misspecification that has been outlined in that review?

Mr FURNER: The misspecification refers to the situation where the model assumptions or specifications may not fully capture the true dynamics of the fishery population being assessed. Misspecification can occur due to various reasons including simplifying assumptions, inadequate data

or lack of understanding of the underlying biological process. For example, if a stock assessment model assumes that there is a lineal relationship between fish population size and specific environment variability but the relationship is actually non-lineal then it may be misrepresented.

Mr KATTER: Are there people ground-truthing this? They are saying that threadfin salmon are down to seven per cent in the gulf. Everyone is catching them off the beach which suggests they are maybe at 30 per cent. You would not find one if they were down to seven per cent. There are clear disparities between what is being fed as this data and what people are experiencing out in the water. Are you getting any of that feedback fed through to you? It is hard to understand what you are saying now from what I am seeing on the ground.

Mr FURNER: No doubt you get that quite regularly in terms of the fisheries sector. People say, 'I'm still catching fish.' Until you do a stock assessment and get the true value of what is there—

Mr KATTER: Seven per cent is like—they are gone.

Mr FURNER:—you are not in a privileged position to make a decision based on that. We act upon science. The more and more we get into the methodology and certainly the science and have engagement with our fisheries sector we will be in a better position in terms of future evaluations. We are getting there. The fish monitoring expert working group do a fantastic job collecting the scales of fish, doing the measurements and determining the sex and the age of fish. The science in terms of assessment is advancing. Through the DG, I can refer to the DDG of fisheries to elaborate more on king threadfin, if that is the question you are asking.

Mr KATTER: I would be happy to hear it. I do not know how you could reconcile the two at all in any conceivable way, but I would be happy to hear it.

Mr Bolton: If I can paraphrase the question asked, you were asking about the difference between people out fishing on the water catching lots of fish versus what the stock assessment says, which is 17 per cent. Spanish mackerel is a type of fish that demonstrates what is called hyperstability. They come together to aggregate each year to spawn, particularly during those peak fishing seasons of September through to November, and they form large schools. When you fish those schools you still catch lots of fish, but what you are not seeing underneath the water is that those schools are slowly reducing. It is not until they reduce to a size that the population collapses that you feel it. That is called hyperstability. Through the stock assessment we have catch per unit effort, historical records and age length data that gives us an indication of how that stock is going, which is why we know through the modelling that it is somewhere about 17 per cent.

Mr KATTER: I am sorry, I thought you were taking about threadfin at Kurumba in the gulf. That is what I was more interested in. It was just that you were talking about the gulf and king salmon.

CHAIR: I understand where you are going, member for Traeger. The opposition has some questions along the same line as well, so I will hand over to the member for Gympie.

Mr PERRETT: My question is to the director-general. I refer to page 2 of the SDS and the management of Queensland fisheries. How did the east coast Spanish mackerel and gulf king threadfin stock assessments diminish so quickly, resulting in drastic management changes?

Dr Sarra: With your indulgence, Chair, I might refer that question to our deputy director-general.

Mr Bolton: King threadfin is an important commercial and recreational species found on the Queensland east coast and in the Gulf of Carpentaria. In 2020-21 we completed our first stock assessment of king threadfin to determine its sustainability and inform future decisions around how we would manage that fishery, particularly within the Gulf of Carpentaria. While the stock assessment estimated that king threadfin on the Queensland east coast is at a sustainable level, the stock assessment did identify that the Gulf Carpentaria had stock levels of approximately five per cent. Under federal and Queensland harvest strategy guidelines a biomass of less than 20 per cent is the national trigger for urgent management action to be taken to rebuild those stocks. We are engaging with the working groups to determine what an appropriate level of management action should be. We have taken on board some of the concerns or observations raised through the reviews of the Spanish mackerel stock assessment, and we are currently looking at that and how that may or may not apply to the Gulf of Carpentaria king threadfin stock assessment. We will be releasing that in the near future.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, I refer to the 2020-21 east coast Spanish mackerel stock assessment, which has been questioned by three leading scientists as mentioned previously. Why has DAF not undertaken a review, given widespread concern with the integrity of the data?

Dr Sarra: If you will give me a moment, I will make sure I come back to you with the right answer. As I go looking for it, I can assure you that the department is determined to have data that has integrity. If there are questions raised about the integrity of such data or the methodologies used, then we are more than willing to accept feedback and consider how we can make our processes better as they evolve.

Departmental feedback provided on the draft report was noted by the reviewer and only minor changes were made to the report. Some of the technical issues raised by the department relating to differing scientific opinions on various parameters in the model were not incorporated into the final report. The department examined the QSIA funded review and the department funded review and does not consider the matters raised to be significant enough to rescind or reconsider the recent changes to the east coast Spanish mackerel fishery, as the minister indicated previously. That said, in response to those reviews we will bring forward the next full stock assessment to early 2025. We are determined to work with industry to consider and, where appropriate, incorporate their technical feedback from both reviews.

Mr PERRETT: I have a follow-up question in relation to that. What implications will these data integrity concerns have in relation to other stock assessments that have been done using the stock synthesis model?

Dr Sarra: Member for Gympie, if you do not mind, I am going to refer that to the deputy director-general for further explanation.

Mr Bolton: With everything that we do the department is very much about continual improvement. We will look to incorporate the observations that were made on the construction of the Spanish mackerel stock assessment in other stock assessments that we do. It is important to note that the Klaer review did not find any fault with the data. That was the original review we commissioned through the ex CSIRO scientists. The data was used appropriately. There were concerns raised through the industry funded review around the misspecification, as you identified earlier. We will look at that as we bring forward the next stock assessment. In addition to that, we have a number of research projects underway through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. We expect the first parts of that research to be available towards the end of this year, so we will look to incorporate that data as well. In addition to that, we will have an additional four years worth of catch data, biological data, which we can feed into the new stock assessment, and that will give us a much more robust assessment as we move forward.

Mr PERRETT: I have a further question to the director-general. I refer to DAF's website, which states the following management changes for Spanish mackerel. It states—

A new education and awareness program will be introduced to promote best practice catch, release, and handling techniques for recreational fishers.

If Spanish mackerel stocks were so threatened, why hasn't DAF educated recreational fishers previously?

Dr Sarra: I will just take a moment to consult with my colleague. Member for Gympie, I think we can acknowledge that these matters are complex. As a department, we are committed to ensuring that we have the best methodologies. As my colleague talked about earlier, we are committed to learning about making such processes better. On the question of education, we are always committed to working with the public and other fishers to ensure they are adequately informed. On this particular matter we have to be committed to our own learning as we go as well. We do not always get it right, I suppose, but we are committed to learning from previous reports, other technical experts and taking stakeholders like industry people and the public on that journey with us.

Mr PERRETT: I have a follow-up question to the director-general. Has DAF's modelling identified the downstream and upstream effects this decision will have on local businesses such as ice manufacturers, retailers, net makers, wholesalers and communities?

Dr Sarra: Again I will consult with my colleague to determine the extent to which that type of work has occurred.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, just to clarify. You are asking about broader economic modelling, not just in the professional fishers' sector?

Mr PERRETT: Regarding the previous question. It was a follow-up, Chair.

Dr Sarra: I am going to let my deputy director-general speak to that.

Mr Bolton: We have done some modelling on that. I guess the key thing there is that the Spanish mackerel fishery in 2020-21 contributed about 100 FTE jobs and \$8.5 million to the gross state product. Adjustments to commercial limits, whether they are increases or decreases, happen all the time as part of good fisheries management. While changes will have an impact on commercial fishers, the impacts of doing nothing would be significantly greater. As the minister said, if no action was taken the fishery collapses and we have pretty much put that entire industry out.

Furthermore, it would have a long-lasting impact on both the commercial and recreational sectors plus the supply chain. It would likely take decades for the fish to recover. The action that was taken was a managed response. It is looking at rebuilding the Spanish mackerel biomass to a resounding level or the appropriate target level we are looking for while minimising the impacts on commercial fishers. We have offered some impact mitigation, including fee waiving for Spanish mackerel quota unit fees, temporary and permanent primary commercial fisher licence transfer fees, temporary and permanent quota transfer fees, Spanish mackerel tender movement fees and Spanish mackerel symbol movement fees.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, will the government compensate for the financial losses experienced by small and family businesses affected by these government changes?

Mr FURNER: Can I get some clarity through you, Chair, on whether the question is related to Spanish mackerel?

Mr PERRETT: Spanish mackerel.

Mr FURNER: The simple answer to that is no. I should qualify. That is a provision under the act. It might be worthwhile if the member went to the act to see that. Section 44 says that compensation is not payable for decisions made to protect fish.

Mr PERRETT: Chair, I will move on. Director-General, I refer to the acknowledgement that changes have been instigated by international pressures. This is on the gillnet ban. It says that the changes address concerns raised by UNESCO. Why is the inshore fishery, including creeks and rivers, included in the net ban when it was not included in the UNESCO recommendations?

CHAIR: Just on that, member for Gympie, I do not know if anyone can point us to where that is. You talked a lot about UNESCO. I would like to see some more information at some stage. It is probably a massive report.

Mr PERRETT: I think the minister referred to it.

CHAIR: I know but people here at the top of the table would very much like to see this.

Mr FURNER: There have been questions prior to the member for Gympie's question about UNESCO. It has been well ventilated. I am more than happy to table the report if you wish to see that.

CHAIR: That is fine. I am just saying as a general point that there is verification but people at the top of the table need to see a lot of this information.

Mr HART: Is this a new standard that you are introducing, Chair? That we have to prove everything that we ask about?

Mr PERRETT: I just want to know why they were included.

Dr Sarra: The answer is that the World Heritage property includes catchments which includes creeks and rivers.

CHAIR: So that is in the UNESCO.

Dr Sarra: As I am informed, yes.

Mr PERRETT: As a follow-up to that, what is the time line to fully remove all net fishing in the Great Barrier Reef?

Dr Sarra: In terms of the time line—

Mr PERRETT: I just want to know the time line.

CHAIR: That is what we are trying to do.

Mr FURNER: I am able to—

Mr PERRETT: The question is to the director-general.

CHAIR: The minister can give you the answer.

Dr Sarra: The answer is: buyout and remove all N2 and N4 licences by 31 December 2023; buyout, remove and condition a limited number of N1 licences by 31 December 2023; and phase out the remaining limited N1 licences to make the reef gillnet free by 30 June 2027.

Mr PERRETT: As a follow-up, will netting used by traditional owners also be affected by the changes to gillnetting?

Dr Sarra: I will just check with the minister but I am quite certain that is the case.

CHAIR: Do you have a further question, member for Gympie?

Mr PERRETT: Is that a yes?

CHAIR: Hang on. If there is a further clarification, we can pick that up in a moment.

Dr Sarra: It is yes for commercial operators and no for cultural activity.

Mr PERRETT: Okay. Minister, why did the federal government need to contribute \$60 million to speed up the implementation of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy?

CHAIR: You have an argument in that but I will ask the minister to answer that one.

Mr FURNER: There is no process in regards to speeding up anything here, but there is a commitment by the federal government because the Great Barrier Reef is a shared asset by the Commonwealth and the state. Therefore, that is why there is involvement with the state and the Commonwealth in terms of the phasing out of gillnet fishing. That is a process that should be recognised by anyone who is aware of the Great Barrier Reef.

Chair, I would like to table some documents, if I may. The first is a media release by the Hon. Tanya Pliibersek titled 'Tackling the risks to the reef'. The second concerns the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The third is an extract from the *Report on the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN reactive monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef (Australia) from 21 to 30 March 2022*. It certainly identifies the recommendations of that decision.

CHAIR: We will leave it on the table and table that when we examine it.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, how was the \$100 million for the structural adjustment for the abolition of gillnetting in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park calculated?

Dr Sarra: If you will just give me a moment, I will come back to you with an answer.

Mr FURNER: Through you, Chair—

Mr PERRETT: No.

CHAIR: The minister has got the answer.

Mr FURNER: I think this is a question that the director-general is not able to answer because it is a policy decision through CBRC.

Mr PERRETT: I am happy to receive the answer from the director-general.

CHAIR: I know, but we are just about to get the answer.

Ms LEAHY: On a point of order: under standing orders the minister can only answer questions put directly to them.

CHAIR: That is exactly right and, as you well know, as chair I can ask the minister if he can provide more information and that comes off our time. First, let us see if the director-general wants to say anything.

Dr Sarra: I would be happy to answer the question if I was privy to the design of the \$100 million, but it has emerged, as the minister is trying to say, as a result of CBRC collaborations and I am not privy to those collaborations.

Mr PERRETT: Surely there would be some input from the department.

CHAIR: Minister, can you give us some more information on that? This will come off our time.

Mr FURNER: On the interjections from the member for Gympie, no doubt it would have had involvement through the department through the director-general of fisheries. That is how CBRC operates. It was prior to the director-general being appointed to the position he holds as well, so I make that point.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, is the appointment of the former WWF international director to chair the task force due to international pressures?

Dr Sarra: Chair, I think that has been referred to by the minister previously.

CHAIR: Member, did you just ask if it was due to international pressures?

Mr PERRETT: Yes.

CHAIR: I could pull that up as being argumentative but I will let that through.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair: standing order 115(d) states—

Questions shall not be asked which reflect on or are critical of the character or conduct of those persons whose conduct may only be challenged ...

I just wonder if that is a question that is actually making a critical determination of one's character who put that person to the task force.

CHAIR: If I remember correctly, that is about people whose behaviour can be challenged on a substantive motion. Bearing that in mind, my earlier point was about it being argumentative. I think we are at the point of getting a response.

Dr Sarra: Only to say, Chair, that we put advice to the government for the government to make decisions and so I would think that is probably more a question for the minister than for me as director-general.

Mr PERRETT: I will move on, Chair. Directly with the taskforce, who is responsible for deciding the members of the taskforce? Is it the independent chair or the government?

Dr Sarra: The taskforce was established by the government to advise on the best approach obviously, and that comes as a result of a process of formulating what we consider best policy advice. Other members of the taskforce include senior representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Department of Environment and Science, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Queensland Treasury and the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority. I note that we are seeking input from them about how to wrestle with the issues that lay ahead of us. To go to your question about how it is put together, they are processes of us as a department formulating what we think is the best possible advice to provide to the minister. I note that other departments will be doing the same.

Mr PERRETT: How many industry representatives will be part of the taskforce?

Dr Sarra: I listed the range of folks who are sitting at the table, and I further note that we are very determined that that taskforce whose deliberations are set to conclude at the end of August, that part of their terms of reference, if you like, is to have targeted consultation with affected commercial fishers and processors.

Mr FURNER: Chair, can I—

Mr PERRETT: No, I will move on.

CHAIR: Do you have anything to add, minister?

Mr FURNER: I myself as minister answered this question in regards to who was on the taskforce, but also who were advisers, and the advisers will be invited. As I indicated, I already met with QSIA. They will invited to be part of the advisers to the taskforce, rather than representatives.

Mr PERRETT: I refer to SDS page 2 and the management of Queensland fisheries and the closure of commercial fishing from the rezoning of the Great Sandy Marine Park. Given that the fishing in the Great Sandy Marine Park will cease by December and the government had 10 months to prepare for this, where is the budgeted allocation for the compensation package?

Mr FURNER: No doubt this has been a process for several years now—since 2019, in fact. There were more than 6,588 pieces of feedback received during 2022 through consultation, and the key changes announced by the Minister for Environment and Science was only recently on 13 July. That process to the final zoning plan will include change to zoning to represent 12.8 per cent of the area of the marine park. Green zones are contributing to a total of 28.6 per cent of the marine park. In highly protected zones, green and yellow zones, removal of large commercial mesh gillnets and ring nets operating under N1 and N2 fishery symbols from the conservation park zones with Baffle Creek, Elliot River, the Burrum River system, the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Bay Inlet. We will work with those respondents through the process, as we will with the previous matter where we were discussing the UNESCO decision. I want to make this point: we were very thorough from the outset in terms of any attempt to remove tunnel netting to allow for that continual supply in the seafood produce out of that particular area. We will work with the commercial fishers through the consultative process like we will with the other areas that we are dealing with currently with our sustainable fishery strategy.

Mr PERRETT: With respect, the question was about where is the budgeted allocation for the compensation package. I know the government has made mention of that, but I just wonder where the budgeted allocation is that was determined?

Mr FURNER: That will sit with the Minister for Environment in terms of that particular portfolio.

Mr PERRETT: So it is being funded out of the Department of Environment and Science, not out of the—

Mr FURNER: Once again, Chair, this is a marine park. We manage the fisheries that are in the park. It is as simple as that.

Mr PERRETT: But they were referred to DAF for the compensation by the direct links.

CHAIR: We have the answer.

Mr PERRETT: They were referred to DAF and this is no information.

CHAIR: We have the answer.

Mr PERRETT: They were referred to DAF for compensation and there was nothing there.

CHAIR: Do you have another question?

Mr PERRETT: I have plenty, Chair, you do not have to worry about that. I will move on and, given the time constraints that we have—

CHAIR: You have a bit of time.

Mr PERRETT: I realise that and I have pages and pages of questions. Director-General, I refer to SDS page 2 and the native timber action plan. Since the Premier's commitment in 2019 to undertake a two-year study to identify sustainable future options for timber supply, the severe shortage of timber is pushing up renovation and building costs with the Premier telling the parliament that structural timber has 'massively gone up in price'. Given the housing crisis, why has the study been delayed, and when will it be completed?

Dr Sarra: Thank you for your patience, chair and panel. To address those challenges the department brought together key stakeholders through the native timber advisory panel to provide views to the government on policy options for moving towards a more sustainable future for the native timber industry. The panel includes a broad range of stakeholders with divergent interests and backgrounds from the native timber industry, the conservation movement, unions, First Nations people and research. Over the eight meetings held to date, the panel was briefed on the native timber industry in Queensland along with background on historic policy decisions on native forestry. They also considered and provided views on several matters such as the draft revised managing a native forest practice, accepted vegetation clearing code which regulates harvesting of privately owned native forests, modelling of timber scenarios on private and public land, climate change drivers and context, conservation values, and First Nations people's views on the future.

At their September 2022 meeting, the panel chair presented several potential futures for native forestry in Queensland to generate discussion and obtain panel member views on key issues. These views were documented after healthy discussion and members were invited to make written submissions on potential futures. The views and written submissions of the panel, have informed the panel chair's report that was provided to the government for consideration. That report will inform policies to deliver a sustainable native timber industry that balances commitment to the environment and also to jobs. The next step in that native timber action plan is the release of a directions paper on the government's proposed future policy direction for native forestry in Queensland for public consultation.

Mr PERRETT: It has been obviously four years, as I mentioned previously, and DAF's website indicates in its most recent communique which was in October 2022 that that committee has met eight times. Obviously we have not seen anything. Why has it not released any recommendation to date given that it was announced by the Premier in 2019?

Dr Sarra: I think all I can do is reflect on my previous answer and note that that public discussion paper is imminent, but that is a matter for cabinet to consider when it is released.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, the Deputy Premier said on the weekend that South-East Queensland's population will double to six million by 2046. 'Even without counting the massive population increase, we will need more homes.' Given the current housing crisis and increasing cost of structural timber, how and will the government increase the supply of local timber to build the houses we need?

Mr FURNER: No doubt, we will continue our focus and engagement with the timber industry, as I indicated in my prelude of this particular section of the hearing. Our focus is on the timber industry—a very important industry, supporting thousands of jobs and no doubt readying for supporting the growth of those houses. Along with those houses come the need for power poles as well. Both softwood and hardwood will be a focus for this government into the future with the growth and expansion of the population as they move to Queensland—at this stage, some 100,000 per year already.

It is an area that we will be discussing with cabinet very soon as to whether there will be a new timber action plan or other focuses on supporting the growth of timber but also the growth of housing. I was very pleased to acknowledge and hear from Mick Stephens, the Timber Queensland CEO, about legacy for the Olympic Games and seeing the growth and the inclusion of Queensland timber. You only need to go to Maryborough, for instance, and see the only fire station built out of timber. Queensland has a strong record and commitment in terms of forestry into the future. We will not be going down a path like other states; we are focused on the sustainability of our forestry sector.

Mr PERRETT: I have a further question. I refer to SDS page 1 and the objective ‘to empower the state’s forestry industry to grow sustainably’. Given Queensland is currently a net importer of timber, how will the government improve Queensland’s ability to supply structural timber products for Queensland’s growing housing needs without importing more timber?

Mr FURNER: With due respect, Chair, we have been importing timber for decades. In fact, back in my younger days when I used to drive trucks I used to cart timber off the wharf. It is an unfortunate position that timber takes 35 to 40 years to grow in many cases. It is an area where, once again, we will be focusing on the sustainability and growth of this particular industry. It is good to now have a federal Labor government that is focused on timber as well. Recently we held the first engagement of a panel of forestry ministers. It is pleasing to see a focus overall on the support of forestry and timber products in Queensland.

Mr PERRETT: What representations has the minister made to ensure the imported timber is sourced from countries with sustainable forestry practices?

Mr FURNER: Anyone with common sense would realise the federal government is responsible for the importation of anything into this country.

Mr PERRETT: It is about the representations.

Mr FURNER: Notwithstanding that, it is good to have people like Mick Stephens from Timber Queensland focused on that area. It is also good to have a federal Labor government that recognises the need to support the growth of the timber sector in this country. I have made representation and I did that, as I answered previously, in regards to the first forestry ministers meeting for many, many years. We will continue focusing on the industry and the good jobs it supports throughout the region.

Mr PERRETT: I have a question to the director-general. DAF’s website states that the hardwood timber plantations failed and that—

In 1999, as part of the SEQFA, the government ... This was to provide an alternative timber resource for the native hardwood industry.

Director-General, how many hardwood sawmills closed or are at risk of closing because of the failure of this program?

Dr Sarra: It is an issue that has been raised with me in my discussions with various timber stakeholders around the place. As to the specifics of your question about how many have closed as a consequence, let me check for you.

Mr PERRETT: Or are at risk of closure?

Dr Sarra: I can also report that some have opened up or are about to open up.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, are you talking about closure for a variety of reasons?

Mr PERRETT: No, I referenced specifically the hardwood program that was announced by the Beattie government in 1999 about what was to supply the hardwood needs into the future. The DAF website says that it has failed. I want to know—

CHAIR: Did you say failed?

Mr PERRETT: Failed. It is on the DAF website. I want to know how many businesses are at risk—

CHAIR: I understand that.

Mr PERRETT:—have closed or at risk because of that failed program.

CHAIR: I understand that. We have got it.

Mr PERRETT: There is no native timber action plan.

CHAIR: I would question whether that creates an argument on a variety of reasons for what you have says 'has failed'. I will ask the director-general to shed some light on what this may be about.

Dr Sarra: Can we seek some clarity? You provided the date 1999?

Mr PERRETT: Yes, 1999. That is when it was announced, the agreement between the state and Timber Queensland.

Dr Sarra: The information I am getting from my colleague is that it refers to a 2019 announcement. I am seeking to clear up some confusion here.

CHAIR: We need a bit of clarity around this.

Dr Sarra: If it pleases, I might hand to my Deputy Director-General Graeme Bolton, who has been around for quite a long time in this area, to seek that clarification and offer a response.

Mr PERRETT: That is when the Premier made the announcement—the native timber advisory—

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Gympie.

Mr Bolton: The decision you are referring to—yes, it was announced in 1999 with the SEQ forest agreement, but the decision that determined that the hardwood plantation was a failure was made in 2019. In the last 12 months no sawmills have been closed as a result of that program being deemed a failure.

Mr PERRETT: Or at risk?

Mr FURNER: Sawmills have been opened in fact.

Mr Bolton: Or at risk, not from that—

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, was that part of your question, about at risk or closure? We have just heard there has been no closure. Did you want a follow-up question?

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, would a greater supply of local structural timber reduce the cost of timber to the end user?

Dr Sarra: I think the most obvious answer is yes.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, does Queensland need to grow the current forest footprint to reduce reliance on imported timber to build the houses Queenslanders need?

Mr FURNER: Point of order, Chair. I think that is a bit of a hypothetical.

CHAIR: Yes, I was about to say that. I would say that does include a hypothetical situation. I know what the member for Gympie is trying to get at.

Mr HART: It is about forward planning.

Mr PERRETT: It is about forward planning.

CHAIR: Let me help you. Are you asking about further planning to expand any forestry areas?

Mr PERRETT: Does Queensland need to grow its current forest footprint to reduce reliance on imported timber—

CHAIR: I think we are talking about planning, but can anyone enlighten me?

Mr PERRETT:—to build the future houses we need?

Dr Sarra: I do not know how to answer the question. What I can report is that we are in continuing dialogue with those in the timber industry about contemplating the best ways forward, recognising the challenges that lie ahead. We accept that within the department we as public servants do not have all of the answers. It would be nonsensical for us to imagine that the answers exist within the department and that we can embrace or traverse those challenges ahead with regards to timber supply without being in a sturdy, respectful and robust dialogue with those stakeholders because their interests are our interests. We are prepared to try as much as possible to get on the same page as them to embrace those challenges together.

CHAIR: One last question before we go to the member for Bundaberg?

Mr PERRETT: To the director-general: given the current intense land use pressures in some areas of Queensland and the long-term forest estates, how will the government balance the value of forests and other competing land use pressures like housing?

Dr Sarra: Again, I reflect on my earlier answer that no doubt the population increases and the urban sprawl in the South-East Queensland area, a commitment to a carbon-neutral Olympic Games—those things create challenges alongside global pressures. We continue to be in a close, at times robust, and respectful dialogue with industry stakeholders to contemplate how we take on those challenges together. No doubt in the discussion paper that we talked about earlier there will be room for input about how best to attend to some of those challenges.

CHAIR: I am going to go to the member for Bundaberg for a question.

Mr SMITH: Minister Furner, there has been some discussion about sustainable fisheries in the reef marine park. Could you please further elaborate on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting sustainable fishing practices in the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef Marine Park?

Mr FURNER: As I indicated earlier, Queensland and the Commonwealth have announced a joint commitment to phasing out gillnet fishing in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by 2027. Industry assistance totalling \$160 million will be delivered to transition to a gillnet-free Great Barrier Reef over the next four years. Under the industry assistance package, voluntary commercial fishing licences will be facilitated by us. That will mean the removal of N2 and N4 licences and a limited number of existing N1 licences from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by 31 December 2023. We have already started engaging with the industry. It was only just recently that the new CEO from QSIA and the DDG of Fisheries were talking about proposals to complement a new N1 licence. We will be adding to that process and supporting Fisheries to transition to that limited number of N1 licences, which will be created as a temporary process.

We have arrived at this joint decision with the Commonwealth following the release of the UNESCO report which specifically recommended the cessation of gillnet fisheries on the reef. I make no apology for taking this decision as the long-term protection of the reef is needed to ensure it will be sustainably fished for generations to come. Queensland, and the reef in particular, produce some of the world's best seafood. Long may that continue, along with the good jobs and the economic activity that comes with it. To this end, we have established—as previously indicated—a Future Fishing Taskforce chaired by John Tanza to advise government on how to best manage the transition from industry and the implementation of the \$100 million state funding for the structural adjustment package. We will be inviting advisers to this industry to come along to engage with their professional knowledge about the effects it may have upon them as we transition gillnets out of the Great Barrier Reef.

CHAIR: I have a question with regard to page five of the SDS. We have talked about stock assessments, particularly by other parties. Regarding sustainability and stock assessments in fisheries, can you specifically expand on work the department is doing in this regard?

Mr FURNER: Thank you Chair for your question. It is a good question because you often hear the phrase 'there is plenty of fish in the sea', despite the observations and examples that have been provided in today's hearing. As a recreational fisher who does not go fishing as much as I would like—maybe once a year—I assure members of the committee that the Palaszczuk government is doing everything possible to ensure there is plenty of fish in the sea. We understand that we need to have a sustainable fisheries that will be there for our children and our children's children into the future. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has a range of methods, including the use of recreational fishing data and commercial logbooks to determine how stock is going and whether it is sustainable.

Since 2017, my department completed 36 stock assessments for 26 species and 36 fish stocks. Stock assessments are under way for 13 species and 16 stocks. The development of routine stock assessment for key species will help inform the national stock status process. This is in line with the commitments under the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027 for better data and regular stock assessments. Scientists in my department undertake modelling of this data which is used to help inform our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.

I acknowledge the great work done by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' scientists in evaluating the fish stock data. Fisheries management routinely rely on these stock assessments which inform their decisions around commercial and/or recreational limits. Industry participants need to have confidence that stocks are being sustainably harvested and managed. I believe they can have that confidence thanks to our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, because it is underpinned by the best available science.

Mr MADDEN: My question is directed to you with regard to your forestry portfolio and specifically one tree located at Barcaldine—the Tree of Knowledge. The scientific name is *Corymbia apararrerinja* and appropriately the common name is 'ghost gum'. I refer to page five of the Service Delivery Statements. Can you update the committee on the Tree of Knowledge clone, and how it is providing new knowledge for the Queensland forestry department?

Mr FURNER: It is certainly a great question. I, for one—and I am sure others in this hearing today—have had the privilege of standing under the Tree of Knowledge, the birthplace of the Australian Labor Party. I was privileged to be in the Southern Downs last week with the member for Ipswich West and to be gifted a piece of the original tree. I carry that and display it in my office with pride. The Tree of Knowledge is a key part of Queensland's history. It is no surprise that many on my side of politics are quite interested in the tree as it was under the Tree of Knowledge that the Labor Party was formed. It is also very meaningful to Barcaldine. It is quite the sight as one drives or flies into town, especially at night. The former mayor Robbie Chandler was a key supporter of the tree and its memorial, which I encourage the committee to visit. After the tree was poisoned, it was treated by the former department of primary industries to preserve the timber.

What it is not well known is that there are clones of the Tree of Knowledge, including the original clone, at the Australian Workers Heritage Centre in Barcaldine. The department propagated several clones. One was planted in the Ecosciences Precinct; another is planted in the National Arboretum in Canberra. One of the clones was seen to be suffering. DAF's staff identified and addressed key nutrient deficiencies in the tree at the Ecosciences Precinct which led to new healthy plant growth. DAF also examined the tree's RNA using high through-put sequencing and found the genome fragrance of three potentially new undescribed viruses. Further study of the viruses is needed to determine the healthy impacts of this tree and other Queensland ghost gums. This just goes to show some of the great work that is done to support forest science in Queensland and what it means for timber production in this state.

DAF researchers and scientists are looking at research both here and overseas that will have a far-reaching impact on forestry in Queensland. Although the Tree of Knowledge is now dead and immemorial, its clones are still providing important knowledge when it comes to Queensland timbers. Health checks on a surviving clone has uncovered new viruses affecting ghost gums. This will expand our knowledge of plant health factors affecting our iconic Australian gums.

Mr SMITH: My question is for the minister. Page five of the SDS references educating fishers. Are there any specific measures to educate Queensland fishers currently being implemented?

Mr FURNER: Queensland has some of the best fisheries in the world and we want to ensure it is continued to be enjoyed by future generations and that Queensland's estimated one million recreational fishers can continue to enjoy our great fisheries. We want to provide them with the best available information, as well. I am pleased to say that fishers have all of that information right at their fingertips. Our new, improved Queensland fisheries app 2.0 has now hit 100,000 downloads. It is little wonder, given that it has so many great features. This app is a one-stop shop for recreational fishers with a plethora of handy tools, including helping fishers to identify their catch, check the rules and receive reminders about closures. In fact, I received one today on my app.

The app recently underwent a suite of improvements, including the 'Can I fish here?' feature updated so you can see when you are near or have reached a marine park zone; hyperlinks created from 'Can I fish here?' to relevant 'Know your rules' sections, with symbols added for pest fish and species with temporary restrictions; fish aggregating devices, FADs, locations updated; Great Barrier Reef Marine Park estuarine conservation zones added; headings updated to know the rules and stock impoundment permit scheme prices; and Australia Post outlets updated. The strategy uses digital technology to better inform fishers in a great boon for everyone who loves to cast a line. If you have not downloaded the Queensland app 2.0, download it today.

CHAIR: Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS and specifically the role of the department to continue to support the development of the aquaculture transformation that we are seeing in Queensland. Can you outline what this means to the industry in the fact that we are transforming through industry development, engagement, regulatory reform, research and the like?

Mr FURNER: I know that the chair is a great supporter of the aquaculture industry in this state, especially the ongoing need to meet community demand through aquaculture. My department is a big supporter of aquaculture which should be a surprise to no-one and the very fact is that page 1 states—

continue to support Queensland's aquaculture transformation through industry development, stakeholder engagement, regulatory reform, research, development and extension

I will take the committee through some of the work that we have been doing, but I think it is worth reflecting where we have been in the last few years. In 2016 white spot was detected. It had a devastating impact on the industry, but we as a government were there to support that sector and I think there can be no clearer indication of that support than to compare the industry then and now. In the 2016-17 Lobegeiger report page 1 noted—

Despite white spot disease and other pressure, industry production has remained steady at around \$120 million ...

As a government we put the accelerator down and the latest Lobegeiger report has the industry based at \$225 million.

This budget continues on the legacy of backing aquaculture jobs in Queensland and only last month I was at an event where many aspiring apprentice chefs were being taught by experienced chefs with strong industry support how to cook and prepare fish, including some great aquaculture examples. I want to thank Umar, known as the Fish Girl, for inspiring our next generation of chefs. The other inspiration is what they have done with the industry to date. In March 2023 I announced \$7.5 million for the aquaculture transformation project. I announced that just north of Townsville at a site that this government certainly encouraged to come to Queensland in terms of Ornatas, along with other companies, to sell this up here, adding to the \$225 million that supports the growth of aquaculture in Queensland. This will be invested over five years to boost research, development extension, improve regulation and establish an aquaculture incubator. I will be establishing a ministerial aquaculture forum to oversee and drive improved industry engagement and the identification of priorities.

One of the previous election commitments has been the one-stop shop with the department that assists investors, assists in planning for aquaculture and advocates exploring innovative technologies and approaches so that environmental impacts can be minimised while growing this industry. So far over 9,000 hectares of land-based aquaculture development areas have been identified. Those ADAs were identified because there are fewer constraints which will streamline the approval process for aquaculture developments within these areas. As well as the ADAs, at the Bribie Island DAF research facility great work is happening to promote seaweed and oyster aquaculture. I have spoken to producers who have utilised this service and all of the feedback has been positive in terms of DAF science and Queensland primary produced efforts. You only need to go to locations like Hope Vale where we are seeing trials for oyster growth and Badu Island in the Torres Strait seeing aquaculture in terms of pearl harvesting through the facilities and research that have been provided through DAF and the Bribie Island Research Centre. As a state we have a lot to be proud of and we should be proud of ongoing success in aquaculture. From prawns to fish, oysters to seaweed, my department is at the cutting edge of research, industry engagement and promotion of great Queensland produce.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, my question relates to your fisheries portfolio and I refer to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements where it states that a focus of the department is the great relationships with stakeholders. Can you advise how DAF is collaborating with industry and the community to ensure they are having their voices heard?

Mr FURNER: The Palaszczuk government continues to listen to Queenslanders through the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027, an election commitment which has seen the establishment of fisheries working groups. There are now 16 fisheries working groups in place across the state as well as the Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel providing operational advice directly to government on the management of our wonderful fisheries. As we all know, the Palaszczuk government is committing to managing our fisheries resources in a sustainable and responsible manner, recognising the interests of all Queenslanders. It is an important part of fisheries management with stakeholder engagement through these working groups.

Recently in June we appointed 10 members to the newly formed Cape York Special Fisheries Working Group. This working group will work closely with key stakeholders in identifying new economic pathways for First Nations communities in Cape York through charter fisheries and tourism opportunities. The establishment of the new competitive grant program, the Cape York Fisheries Economic Pathways Grants Program, has been approved to support the startup costs associated with these opportunities. Funding of up to \$200,000 has been identified for the grant initiative which will help communities apply for Indigenous fishing and charter permits, boosting access to scale up opportunities and infrastructure. The working group are refreshed with new members every two years, so 14 of our current 16 working groups will be refreshed from the most recent expressions of interest process in May 2023. We are determined to continue forging ever stronger stakeholder relationships with the fisheries sector, and that is exactly why we are doing this.

Mr SMITH: Minister, we all enjoy Queensland's great lifestyle. Indeed, it is referenced on page 1 of the SDS. Minister, could you please outline how the Palaszczuk government is enhancing lifestyle opportunities for women in fishing?

Mr FURNER: Great question. The Palaszczuk government has a proud history of backing women into traditionally male dominated industries, and fisheries is no different. I am proud to update the committee that in June 2022 Fisheries Queensland launched the Women in Recreational Fishing Network. This network was established to encourage and support women of all backgrounds, skill levels and ages across Queensland to participate in recreational fishing activities. We know that women make an invaluable contribution to all areas of government and this working group aims to make more women feel comfortable sharing their acquired unique knowledge and tips in fishing without gender bias. In fact, I have been fishing with women before when they have caught all the fish and I have missed out, so they are great leaders and people who are committed to this sector.

Ten leaders from across Queensland are chosen each year to be part of the network where they promote, educate and encourage women to participate in recreational fishing. After 10 months the network initiative has increased the profile of women in fishing and led to greater diversity at the Moreton Bay Fishery Workshop in December 2022 and the network is expected to attract a stronger pool of potential recruits to the business teams with Fisheries Queensland. A Women in Recreational Fishing Network Queensland Facebook group has been established to keep members up to date with events, workshops and other information related to fishing in Queensland. The Facebook community has over 1,200 members and is going strong from week to week and in this budget DAF has allocated \$140,000 to support this network and community. I encourage all women and girls to get on board and join this highly supportive community.

CHAIR: Minister, the seat of Bancroft is home to many timber-processing industries that rely on state forestry products. With reference to page 5 of the SDS, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government is responsibly managing the allocation and the use of state owned forests and their related resources?

Mr FURNER: The Palaszczuk government is committed to the responsible management of state owned timber forests or native forests because, unlike other states, we intend to see the native forest industry continue long into the future. Here in Queensland we pride ourselves on our sustainable harvest practices. There is no clear felling in native forests on either state or private land for timber production purposes. Native forest harvesting operations in Queensland are undertaken on a sustainable, selected basis with individual trees only harvested that satisfy the commercial requirements. This limits disturbance to the surrounding forests, promotes revegetation and ensures that broadscale clearing does not occur.

Queensland has no regional forest agreement unlike other states that have RFAs and have no exemption from the federal government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This means that timber harvesting operations in Queensland state forests must meet the code of practice for native forest timber production on Queensland's state forest estate and all of Queensland's environment and heritage laws such as the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 as well as the federal government's EPBC Act.

Queensland's native hardwood forests are well adapted to selective harvesting because they have a store of advanced regeneration that is ready to respond when selected harvesting removes competitive trees and provides access to sunlight and soil nutrients. On state land more than half the forest is retained because the remaining trees provide habitat, are not commercial or are required to meet tree retention requirements in the code. Most state forests have been subject to multiple selective harvest events over the decades, with products such as sawlogs, power poles, bridge girders, railway sleepers and fence posts being harvested on a cyclical basis. These multi-use state forests also continue to supply a range of other services such as the protection of biodiversity and water catchments and recreational opportunities as well as contributing positively to the carbon cycle. We intend to protect our state forests because timber is one of the best sustainable resources.

Mr MADDEN: My question relates to your forestry portfolio. I refer to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements where it states that DAF is empowering industry to 'innovate, diversify and grow sustainably'. Minister, can you outline what opportunities there are for private landholders in forestry?

Mr FURNER: Forestry is a growth industry and is one of the key aspects of the Palaszczuk government's approach to securing the future of Queensland workers in rural and regional communities. The industry has an annual turnover of around \$4 billion and includes forest growing,

wood product manufacturing, and the pulp and paper sectors. The forestry industry directly employs around 12,000 people, most of those in Gympie, Fraser Coast, South Burnett, North Burnett and Maranoa local government areas.

In 2014, the Land Act 1994 was amended to adjust the process required for a leaseholder to apply to convert their leasehold property to freehold tenure through an application made by the Department of Resources. As part of the legislative amendments to the Land Act, changes were also made to the Forestry Act 1959 to introduce forest consent areas. A forest consent area is created through a forest consent agreement that is registered on the land title as a profit a prendre. The forest consent agreement allows freehold title to be granted in the land while reserving ownership of certain commercial timber species on the land to the state.

Under the administrative process for considering freehold applications, the Department of Resources seeks advice from DAF about whether a forest consent area might be required to reserve any commercial native timber to the state. If DAF identifies that state owned commercial native timber may be present, DAF may require an applicant to either pay the value of the timber that would be foregone by the state or, in most circumstances, establish a forest consent area over all or part of the land. Where a forest consent area is required, it becomes a condition of the state acceptance of an application to convert a lease to freehold.

There has been an increase in lodgements of freehold applications in recent times. I understand that many of those applications have been concentrated in South-West Queensland where the majority of state owned forests are located on leasehold land. Forest consent agreements are vital to improving future state owned timber resource security. They also ensure that the contracted supplies can be met under DAF's compensatable long-term sales permits.

Mr SMITH: Minister, I refer to SDS page 5 and ask: how is the Palaszczuk government securing a sustainable future for the native timber industry now that demand is increasing in Queensland?

Mr FURNER: I note that the Western Australian and Victorian state governments recently made decisions to end the harvesting of state owned native forests within their respective jurisdictions. Native forestry will cease on publicly owned forests in the south-west region of Western Australia by the end of 2024. I understand this decision has been made in response to the impacts of climate change, biodiversity and forest health as well as declining timber yields. In Victoria all harvesting operations in state owned native forests will cease by the end of 2024. I note that the Victorian government has stated that the reduction in available native timber resources resulted from the fires and wildlife protection as well as a change in consumer preferences, which were key reasons for their decision.

Through the native timber action plan the Queensland government is committed to building a sustainable future for the native timber industry that also ensures conservation outcomes. I was glad to meet the federal, state and territory forestry ministers on 12 July to discuss the future of the industry. We shall continue to engage with our counterpart agencies in other states and territories to ensure best outcomes for Queensland.

Queensland's native forests supply about 20 per cent of Queensland's domestically sourced timber, unlike other states where harvest timber is predominantly used in single-use timber products such as paper. Native hardwood timber sourced from Queensland has more permanent uses. Native hardwood sourced in Queensland is unique in its characteristics, namely strength and durability, making it highly sought after. DAF authorises plans and monitors selected timber harvesting operations to ensure they comply with sale permit conditions, including relevant state and federal legislation, codes and standards. With strong supporting research in technical capabilities, the Queensland industry is also well positioned to meet growing demand for innovative engineered wood products, creating circular economies and carbon sequestration to deliver structural, environmental and performance benefits. This growing demand for engineered wood products will be underpinned by projected strong population growth, particularly in the south-east part of the state where around 40,000 power poles will be needed to ensure Queensland's ongoing electricity supply. It is always part of the Palaszczuk Labor government's plan to support a sustainable industry, securing the future for our children and our grandchildren.

CHAIR: We have time for a couple of questions from the crossbench.

Mr KATTER: Minister, David Wren in Karumba is the biggest single private local fisherman and the biggest local private employer. He consolidated about 13 leases for growing mackerel to about three, which is a maximum that is going through the gulf. Like many other fishermen, he is saying that there is no future here given the trends or the current decision-making on mackerel. I think it is a

reasonable assumption. What advice would you give to him about investing in the future? He has just invested in a \$1 million crumbing machine worth around \$1 million. From this point on what advice would you give him to offset the negativity created from recent decision-making?

Mr FURNER: No doubt there have been investment warnings on many areas of the fisheries, unfortunately, as a result of the lack of sustainability in many areas of our fisheries sector. We will continue engaging with fishers in our sector to make sure they have a future. That is why in the current process with the gillnet decision we are engaging with the QSIA in regards to looking at other advices that might be suitable for those N1 changes to see that particular sector sustainable into the future. I am happy to advise the member along the course of the discussions through the task force and give regular feedback to you so that you, in turn, are able to provide that information to your constituents.

Mr ANDREW: Has the minister's department put together any regulatory impact statements on the removal of the gill net fisheries and/or the reduction in the Spanish mackerel fishery?

Mr FURNER: The decision was made by UNESCO. It is a joint decision for the Commonwealth and the state. I think it would be fair to say that there has been concern about gillnet fishing for many years not only in this state and nation but also in other parts of the world.

Mr BERKMAN: I have a question about the shark control program. There were 15 humpback whales entangled in government shark nets last year and there have been at least four entanglements so far this year. Director-General, what information does the government collect on the outcomes of these entanglements, including the injuries and survival rates of released whales, and the environmental and safety impacts of unrecovered shark control equipment?

Dr Sarra: I understand that we do have detailed information in that regard. I will just check with my department on the specifics of that information. I am informed by my department that we monitor the release of whales. The member already is across the numbers. We do not pursue them or track them after that. We are continually committed to the improvement of that shark control program. To answer your question, I cannot give you a number on that because we do not track them subsequent to their release.

Mr BERKMAN: Minister, since there is no evidence that sharks nets actually reduce the risk of shark bites to swimmers and that other governments like New South Wales have changed practice to minimise harm to other species, are we keeping shark nets in place during whale migration season purely for political reasons?

CHAIR: That question contained an argument or an opinion. Is there something the minister wants to quickly add?

Mr FURNER: We make no decisions based around political advantage. They are decisions based on protecting Queenslanders from shark attacks. The program has been in existence since 1962. Certainly, there have been two unfortunate deaths during that period. Beyond those two, most were outside the areas of the shark control program. We are working with Surf Life Saving Queensland around drone technology, other technologies and catch-and-release drum lines. Technology is moving here as in other states. It would be great to see advancements in the future where we can ensure that people are free from sustaining shark bites upon entering the ocean, but we cannot prevent people from swimming outside the zones where they are, to a large degree, provided. Certainly the member for Burleigh and I know that, given that we were formerly surf lifesavers. One is better served swimming in patrolled areas where there are Queensland Surf Life Saving people who protect people from the likelihood of shark attack.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, I refer to page 5 of the SDS, 'ensuring quarry resources meet community and government expectations'. Can the director-general advise the committee of the agencies on the cross-agency working group established by DAF for council gravel pits now subject to native title or land use agreements?

Dr Sarra: Within our department we have: the ED of forestry, the director of strategic policy, the manager of native title agreements, the director of native title agreements, and the secretariat is to be confirmed. We also take into account the Department of Resources. The LGAQ is at the table. The departments of state development, local government; treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships; communities and arts; transport and main roads; and the QRA are also invited.

CHAIR: The time allocated for consideration of the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities has expired. I do not believe we have any outstanding questions on notice. All information has been provided in that regard. Minister, did you want to give a brief concluding statement?

Mr FURNER: I do; very briefly. Obviously, I would like to thank the committee for not only its indulgence but also its interest in this particularly important portfolio and the examination of its proposed expenditure. I have always been very proud to represent the agriculture and fisheries sector and rural communities and to be able to be part of a government that prioritises these areas with expenditure in the state budget. I thank my director-general, deputy directors-general and all of the public servants of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for putting together the information for today's hearing. No doubt there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes. I know that they work very diligently in preparing that. I also thank my ministerial staff for their hard work in assisting me through the entire estimates process. Obviously, I thank Hansard for giving our words meaning and I also thank all the members of the committee for their interest in this great portfolio.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. I thank your officials, departmental officers and ministerial staff for their attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and the hearing will resume in 15 minutes at 5.02 pm to examine the expenditure in the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water.

Proceedings suspended from 4.47 pm to 5.02 pm.

**ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES
COMMITTEE—REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURING; WATER****In Attendance**

Hon. GJ Butcher, Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water

Mr B Driscoll, Acting Chief of Staff

Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water

Ms L Dobe, Acting Director-General

Mr J Cowley-Grimmond, Acting Deputy Director-General, Water Resource Management


Ms B Zerber, Deputy Director-General, Regional Economic Development

Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority (Seqwater)

Mr N Brennan, Chief Executive Officer

Sunwater

Mr G Stockton AM, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine the estimates for the minister's portfolio areas as follows: water until 6.30 pm; and regional development and manufacturing from 6.45 pm to 7.45 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area as was agreed by the House. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break between 6.30 pm and 6.45 pm.

A number of non-committee members have sought and been granted leave to participate in the hearing, in accordance with the standing orders. I note that we are being joined tonight by the member for Nanango, who has been granted leave to attend and ask questions. 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 this evening so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members on 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. I ask all present to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode if not turned off. I also remind everyone that food is not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers, ministerial staff and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of water, regional development and manufacturing open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The committee will begin with the examination of estimates for the water portfolio area. Minister, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. It is certainly a privilege to be here today to speak about what we are delivering in the water portfolio here in Queensland. We saw in the state budget the Palaszczuk government's unprecedented \$8.2 billion to ease cost-of-living pressures recently, using our publicly owned assets to deliver a dividend for Queenslanders. This financial year we provided a \$55 water bill discount for households connected to the South East Queensland Water Grid. The \$120 South-East Queensland pensioner water subsidy will provide \$20.5 million in relief to our pensioners this year.

The Palaszczuk Labor government will always do more to tackle cost-of-living pressures here in Queensland, so I am pleased to announce tonight that we are extending cost-of-living support through a new concealed leak remission scheme and debt relief package. This means we are stepping in and offering a remission on concealed leak charges. This budget is all about supporting families with national cost-of-living pressures on them, and this is another important measure from the Palaszczuk government.

Delivering water security, jobs and regional economic development is a top priority for this government. That is why in this year's Big Build we committed more than \$1.7 billion for water infrastructure and the planning that goes with it. This includes some game-changing projects for regional Queensland. The Toowoomba to Warwick Pipeline is part of a more than \$300 million investment to deliver long-term water security to Toowoomba and the Southern Downs, supporting more than 400 jobs during construction. The Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline is powering ahead, with \$548.5 million flowing from this year's budget supporting 400 construction jobs and new job-creating industries along the way. On top of this, critical activities are underway right now, and there are workers on the ground delivering the Paradise Dam Improvement Project. This will support around 250 jobs during construction.

The Palaszczuk government is also increasing the investment in Rookwood Weir to keep the project on track for construction completion by the end of the year. At its peak, 363 workers were onsite. I am excited to announce that more than two million man-hours have been worked on the weir so far and more than \$216 million of projected costs have been spent in Central Queensland.

In the north, a further \$440 million, on top of the \$100 million already committed, is locked in to progress the upgrade and raising of Burdekin Falls Dam. This project will futureproof water security, set existing industries like agriculture up to grow, provide the foundation for new industries like hydrogen and provide more than 350 jobs during construction. These are just some of the projects the Palaszczuk Labor government is delivering on, and I look forward to sharing more about these game-changing, job-creating projects tonight.

CHAIR: I will now go to questions from the opposition.

Mr McDONALD: I will hand over to the shadow minister for water.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My first question is to the director-general. It has been revealed that the water department was made aware that Yarrabah's automatic pH system, which controls the acidity of the town's water supply, was broken in July 2022. If the director-general does not dispute that date, I will ask: when did the department first brief the minister on that faulty pH system in Yarrabah?

Ms Dobe: I thank the member for the question. The pH system was not faulty in 2022. In 2022 the Drinking Water Quality Management Plan was undertaken and sent to the department. In that Drinking Water Quality Management Plan they have to identify all of the risks that could contribute to water quality issues for their drinking water system. Low pH is a risk that may be realised or not realised. The risk is that there is potential for leaching of metals from pipes. It was not until March this year that there was any evidence of metal leaching from pipes from water samples.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a further question to the director-general. From that answer, do I take it that the minister was not notified until March this year? Was the minister notified of that issue in March this year?

Ms Dobe: Yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How many medical incidents—and this is to the director-general—have occurred as a result of the water contamination at Yarrabah in May of this year and how many residents have been hospitalised?

Ms Dobe: Firstly, no people have been hospitalised that I am aware of. However, that question would be best directed to the health department. The health department undertook blood testing sampling. They found that there were no issues related to water quality from that blood sampling.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My follow-up question is to the director-general. So the water quality in Yarrabah is 100 per cent fine and drinkable. There is no issue.

Ms Dobe: The water in Yarrabah is safe to drink. The water being produced by the water treatment plant has consistently tested safe to drink and in accordance with the Australian drinking water quality guidelines.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the minister. Given the issues around Yarrabah's water supply and the contamination that has been raised by the department—I am assuming you were briefed at some stage—when did the minister first either speak to Mayor Ross Andrews about the issue?

Mr BUTCHER: As you have just heard, I can confirm that water from the council's water treatment plant meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and it is certainly safe to drink for that community. One of the instructions that they have been given by the health department is provided that they flush the taps regularly.

The Palaszczuk continues to support the Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council with its drinking water needs. I was in Yarrabah a few weeks ago and met with Mayor Ross Andrews at that time. We got on the ground and went out and inspected their plant and the water supply network in Yarrabah.

I want to commend the council and certainly the workers who work on the water treatment plant—the operations staff—who continue to provide safe water to that community. Critical short-term works have begun—that is what we were there inspecting a few weeks ago—on the water treatment plant with funding of \$275 from this government. That includes a pH control system which has been installed and began operating on 25 July. Further works in progress include installing a chlorine analyser and the reservoir being upgraded and cleaned at a later stage as they move forward with their project.

Mr HART: '\$275'—is that a mistake?

Mr BUTCHER: \$275,000—thank you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I think the question was: when did the minister speak to Mayor Ross Andrews?

Mr BUTCHER: The first time I talked to the mayor was when I visited the council a few weeks ago.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This issue has been going on for over 12 months and the first time the Minister for Water has made contact with the mayor is some 12 months later.

Mr BUTCHER: As the acting director-general said, they had approached the department. The department had set them up on a plan and they were acting to the plan, making sure that drinking water was safe at the time.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You drank their water while you were there, Minister, or did you take your own bottle?

Mr BUTCHER: I drank the water that was provided to me, just like I am doing right here.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Excellent. That is good to see. I would like to ask a further question to the acting director-general. In 2017, the then water supply minister, who was Minister Bailey, committed to building hydroelectricity on the Burdekin Falls Dam. Acting Director-General, why has this commitment not been delivered six years after the government's announcement?

Ms Dobe: I note that that was a question on notice that was received. The Queensland government has released the Energy and Jobs Plan. That identifies the pumped hydro projects that are priority projects for the government.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So not on Burdekin Falls Dam.

Ms Dobe: Pumped hydro is the responsibility of the Department of Energy and Public Works. We do not progress pumped hydro projects in our department.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will ask a question to the minister then. In 2017, your colleague and, I understand, factional ally, Minister Bailey, committed to building hydroelectricity on a dam that is within your portfolio—the Burdekin Falls Dam. Is it the case that the department or you as the minister, as policy, are no longer progressing pumped hydro on Burdekin Falls Dam?

Mr BUTCHER: The government has made a decision to get on with a dam improvement project which needs to be done. At the same time we have made a decision—which you are probably quite aware of—to raise Burdekin Falls Dam by two metres. That is economically and environmentally important for us because the needs of that community were certainly part of that.

The proposed pumped hydro at Burdekin Falls Dam is a private proposal moving forward. As the director-general has already stated, the Queensland government has now made a decision on the Energy and Jobs Plan to put two large-scale pumped hydros—one near Mackay and one near—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Gympie.

Mr BUTCHER: Gympie—thank you, member—as a decision under our Energy and Jobs Plan. That Energy and Jobs Plan is providing the state of Queensland with over \$62 billion of investment including those two humped hydros—one of them being, from my understanding, one of the largest pumped hydros in the world.

To answer your original question, we are continuing with the works that we need to do for Burdekin Falls Dam. Raising the dam by two metres is included in that which will give that dam an extra 150,000 megalitres for new industries like hydrogen in Queensland which is what we certainly are supporting in places like Townsville and Gladstone. The need for water security for that region is really important to this government.

In answer to your question, we have made a decision on the back of the Energy and Jobs Plan to move forward with the two pumped hydros that I have talked about before and to continue raising Burdekin Falls Dam.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So that I am really clear: a government election commitment made in 2017, reiterated again in 2020, is now a breach of promise to the people of Queensland. The minister is confirming that.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair, under standing order 115: there is series of inferences and imputations.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is not an imputation; it is a fact.

CHAIR: Wait a moment. The member for Nanango has made a claim—I am not sure where that stands: we do not have the paperwork in front of us—about status of this particular project.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Here it is.

CHAIR: That is always useful.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have the documents here.

CHAIR: Bearing in mind, you have asked that question in a different way. Minister, did you want to add anything?

Mr BUTCHER: I certainly do. I want to know whether the LNP actually support the Energy and Jobs Plan here in Queensland because this is what we are supporting with a big decision that we have made with a \$62 billion investment. We are building two pumped hydros that will be owned by Queenslanders. These are pumped hydros—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The minister is refusing to answer the question.

Mr BUTCHER:—that will be kept in Queensland's public hands, not delivered to private providers to give us pumped hydro.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The minister has just said that this is going to be a private provider.

CHAIR: Member, the minister is still answering. Please do not interject.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: He just said a private provider.

Mr BUTCHER: As part of our Energy and Jobs Plan, supporting thousands of jobs here in Queensland, we are building two pumped hydros. The question of the member is: do you support these new industries moving forward with our Energy and Jobs Plan and the jobs that come with them?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, if I can take that question—

CHAIR: One moment. You will get a chance—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—when I am the minister and you are the shadow—

CHAIR: Member!

Mr BUTCHER: I don't think that will happen.

CHAIR: If the minister is finished his question, you will get—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There is the arrogance.

Mr SMITH: You'll be the premier, won't you!

CHAIR: Members, order! If the minister has finished his answer, we can go back to the member for a question. Have you finished your answer?

Mr BUTCHER: I have not quite finished, Chair. Previous business cases for that pumped hydro have confirmed that the Burdekin Falls Dam pumped hydro scheme does not stack up. There have been multiple studies done over the years. It is not a good site for pumped hydro.

Mr HART: You spent a lot of money and got nowhere.

Mr BUTCHER: We will listen to the experts, not to member for Burleigh, on pumped hydro and the dam-raising options.

Mr HART: You will never build any.

Mr BUTCHER: Over Townsville LNP delegates, every day I will listen to the experts and not them.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, it is clear that the government goes out at election time, makes commitments around water projects and then just—poof!

Mr HART: It doesn't stack up.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It does not stack up.

CHAIR: Member, you are being argumentative. Can you get to the question, please?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have another question in relation to the same dam. Again there are several election commitments, so who knows if it is ever going to happen. I refer to the government's new announcement in relation to the Burdekin Falls Dam, which the minister has just talked about, in relation to increasing the height of the wall by two metres. My question to the minister is: how can the people of Queensland trust this announcement given there is no business case? Minister, where is the business case?

Mr BUTCHER: As I said, we are continuing on with the two-metre raise of Burdekin Falls Dam. This government is doing that as we speak. As you would know, the dam already holds 1.8 million megalitres at full capacity; however, an independent assessment found that the demand may exceed that supply by 2031. The two-metre raise makes sense both economically and environmentally. Sunwater already owns more than 98 per cent of the land needed to deliver that project. The two-metre raise will create an extra 150,000 megalitres. For the committee's information, this will increase the dam's capacity by the equivalent of more than six Rookwood weirs, which is the biggest weir built since World War II. To put that into perspective, six Rookwood weirs will be going into the raising of this dam.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair. The question was pretty specific. It asked about a business case, not a history lesson.

CHAIR: I am sure the minister is coming to the answer to that question.

Mr BUTCHER: Sunwater is currently progressing the EIS for that project which will enable a final investment decision going forward. I can confirm—and this is the commitment from this government on this project—that the Palaszczuk government is contributing an extra \$440 million in the budget, as we have seen, adding to the \$100 million. This takes the total commitment now to \$540 million—money put down for this project and this raising.

I would ask the committee to be mindful that, when we make the decision to do a dam improvement project, we look at other opportunities as we do these projects. The opportunity has now come. We need to do the dam improvement project on this dam. Any optional raising should be done at the same time to make sure we get the best value for our dollar moving forward. We are getting on with the job.

As I said before, following the environmental impact statement Sunwater will revisit the business case to determine whether amendments are required to that detailed business case on the back of the EIS, which is common practice. Once an investment decision has been made then the detailed business case will be made available, which is consistent with previous projects.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: In relation to that, with last year's \$100 million and this year's \$140 million and no business case, has the minister just confirmed that that money is going to dam improvement and safety, not raising of the dam wall?

Mr BUTCHER: The draft detailed business case has been done. The second stage of that is that the EIS gets done. That includes the two-metre raising of the dam as well as the dam improvement project. We want to make sure that we get the best advice with the best outcome for Queenslanders as we are doing this, so we put down \$540 million to do that project. The question that I need to check with the opposition is: what would you do with it? Do you want it raised or do you not? There will be jobs on the ground—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Chair. The minister is continually asking us the questions. Please remind the minister that it is his job to answer the questions.

Mr BUTCHER: The questions are coming so I'm—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This was a clear question around—

Mr BUTCHER:—concerned for Queenslanders about what you are going to do—

CHAIR: Order, members! I remind the minister to avoid an argument within the answer, but that goes equally for the questions. Avoid the placement of argument in the questions. Where were we?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I had a very clear question. It came from the minister's previous answer. Is the \$540 million that has already been budgeted last year and this year for Burdekin Falls Dam to go towards improvement and dam safety or raising the dam wall?

Mr BUTCHER: Both.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I look forward to receiving confirmation of that. What year, Minister—

Mr BUTCHER: Are we going to make false accusations like federal—

CHAIR: Order, please!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, what year does the minister anticipate we will see the extra two metres on top of the Burdekin Falls Dam?

Mr BUTCHER: I certainly know that works will be starting very shortly on the preworks once we get the finalisation of that project. We are mindful of the fact that the Burdekin Falls Dam is an in-river dam, as you would know. As with the project we are doing at Rookwood Weir, we are building that dam in-river. These projects are large and can have inundations, as we have seen.

At this point in time the detailed business case is still ongoing. The detailed design is ongoing. We will have a clearer picture once that is done and we can envisage how many wet seasons we will go through. We will get in and build that dam up two metres and do those dam improvement projects at the same time.

As I said, I think it is important that we make sure we get the best bang for our buck, but we have to try and get it done in a large river system. I have been out there when it has been in full flood and it is very impressive, but we want to make sure that we keep our workers safe while we do it. We want to make sure that we have every opportunity to get that project completed as soon as possible. We have to be mindful of things that can get in the way such as overflowing dams.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This is a question to the minister. I refer to the Pioneer-Burdekin dam announcement and note the significant water storage element of that proposal. Minister, when were you first briefed about that dam? Was it before the Premier's media announcement?

Mr BUTCHER: I was at the announcement when it was made and I was certainly briefed by Minister de Brenni prior to that. As I have said before, the Pioneer-Burdekin project involves the construction of two water storages: one on the southern headwaters of the Burdekin catchment and another in the Pioneer catchment—the Burdekin pumped hydro project along with both water plans at the same time. We were absolutely focused on making sure that happens as this project goes forward. The pumped hydro project is being delivered by Queensland Hydro, so I was aware of it before the media.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: More than others. Mr Chair, I have a question to the CEO of Sunwater, Mr Glenn Stockton. I again refer to the Pioneer-Burdekin Dam announcement. In relation to those storages I ask: has Sunwater ever done a study, whether it be a desktop study, a business case or even scratched something out on a piece of butcher's paper, in relation to the Pioneer-Burdekin dam proposal or recommended a dam in that exact location?

CHAIR: Member, you have some imputation in there with the 'scratch it out on a paper' comment.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Butcher's paper.

CHAIR: Oh, I get it; it's a pun!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thanks for making sure everyone got it. I am happy to reword my question. Has Sunwater ever done any study, whether it be a desktop study or a business case, about the Pioneer-Burdekin dam proposal or recommended to the government a dam in that exact location?

Mr Stockton: Sunwater has not undertaken a desktop study in relation to a dam at that location.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Had you or Sunwater been briefed or heard about that dam proposal, or was it the case that Sunwater found out about it via the Premier's media?

Mr Stockton: Sunwater was not engaged in the project. The project is being delivered by Queensland Hydro and other departments within government.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, how much water storage capacity will that dam have and how much will actually be used for the growing of food and fibre?

Mr BUTCHER: Obviously questions relating to this pumped hydro should be directed to the minister for energy and public works and Queensland Hydro which are running the project.

Mr McDONALD: Is there no water involved?

Mr BUTCHER: I am not answering questions across the table.

CHAIR: I think you have got the answer to the question. Are there any further questions?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a question to the CEO of Seqwater, Mr Brennan. The SEQ bulk water cost in 2017 was \$2.82 per kilolitre. In 2019 it was \$3.02. I have those reference documents if required. Now in 2023 the bulk water cost is \$3.37, an increase of 20 per cent whilst we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis presided over by the government. My question is: we know the government is not planning any new bulk water sources in South-East Queensland. Is this the reason water prices for Queenslanders are increasing?

Mr Brennan: Seqwater is committed to delivering safe, secure and cost-effective bulk water for 3.6 million people. To recover the costs of providing those services, Seqwater charges the bulk water prices to five water retailers operating across 11 council areas. To ensure Seqwater's bulk water prices are fair to consumers and price increases are as low as possible, the Queensland government periodically directs the Queensland Competition Authority to review prices and make recommendations. The Queensland government considers the recommendations by the QCA and sets prices.

The Queensland government last directed the QCA to recommend SEQ bulk water prices for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026. The Queensland government accepted the QCA's recommended 2.1 per cent average on-year increase in bulk water prices from 1 July to 30 June 2026. The increase in bulk water prices is below the forecast and actual inflation, and represents an additional \$3 per quarter to the average household water bill. The increase reflects the importance of investing in water security and the SEQ Water Grid in response to the millennium drought. It enables the repayment of associated customer price path debt by 2028 in line with government policy. Investments in the SEQ Water Grid and water supply infrastructure are made so we can strengthen our water security for future generations.

Mr McDONALD: Director-General, how much additional water capacity will South-East Queensland need to ensure supply for the Brisbane Olympic Games in 2032?

Ms Dobe: My understanding is that for the one month of the Olympic and Paralympic Games there is an approximately five per cent increase in water demand estimated to be needed.

Mr McDONALD: With our population growth between now and then, how much extra water capacity will we need to ensure we still have capacity for the extra population and that five per cent?

Ms Dobe: The extra water that is needed for the population projection is some detailed work that is underway for Seqwater through their Water Security Program at the moment.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have another question for Mr Brennan while he is at the table. It has now been four years since Seqwater closed Cormorant Bay Cafe on the beautiful Wivenhoe Dam. In 2019 Seqwater announced a spend of \$500,000 to renovate the building. These works have never occurred and the business has not been open and the building has become decrepit. What has happened to that half a million dollars that was promised for the refurbishment? What are the plans for the building, given it is a state owned building?

Mr Brennan: Seqwater is supportive of Somerset council's investigations into the future use of the Cormorant Bay Cafe building. Seqwater has provided consent and financial support for council to undertake an engineering review of the condition of the existing building to inform future commercial use. Seqwater is prepared to undertake the required structural remediation works to the building, provided council agrees to enter a lease of the building, undertake the fit-out, secure a tenant and reopen the building for commercial use. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the council and keeping the community informed. The previous cafe lease expired in March 2019 and the tenant did not take up the offer for a new lease. The option to lease the building was put to public tender twice and there were no suitable submissions received.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Can I please clarify? So the \$500,000 that was announced by Seqwater has not been spent on the building?

Mr Brennan: We are waiting on the Somerset Regional Council to respond to us. The money is available to do the existing building works that need to be done.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I think that creates more questions than answers. Director-General, page 7 of the SDS states 'reduced spend for grants related to water infrastructure projects including the Lakelands Irrigation Area, the Urannah Water Scheme, Big Rocks Weir and sub-projects of the Rookwood Weir'. I want to make it clear. The department has reduced funding for water infrastructure projects in this budget; is that correct?

Ms Dobe: I will just get the SDS out.

CHAIR: What was the question in relation to?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was in relation to clarifying the reduced funding for water infrastructure projects in this budget.

Ms Dobe: There are a number of projects where the projects that you were listing—Lakelands and those other projects—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That are listed there. I just read direct from the SDS.

Ms Dobe: I do not have that on page 7.

CHAIR: We are having a bit of trouble locating that at the moment.

Ms Dobe: Here it is. They are grants that are funding from the federal government's National Water Grid Fund that we passed through to those projects.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That leads me to a further question. Have you or your department ever written to the federal government asking for funding for Queensland water projects to be withdrawn?

Ms Dobe: No.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, have you or your office ever written to the federal government asking for funding for water projects to be withdrawn?

Mr BUTCHER: We have not asked for any funding to be withdrawn, but we certainly have asked the previous federal government for funding to come forward on a certain project and we never received any response. That is our legacy. We actually wanted funding to come forward and no money came forward on one of these projects. We have never written to them and said that we want them to remove funding from any projects that we have put forward in Queensland. The department has moved projects forward with support of the state government. We actually supported the projects that go through to the national water infrastructure grid because it is part of the structure on the way that these grants get moved forward to the feds. We wrote to them a lot of times but none of them was to remove funding from any projects that were there.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, can I follow on and ask why have any new dam projects been taken off the table by your department?

Mr BUTCHER: Sorry, why—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Why have any new dam projects that rely upon federal funding been taken off the table? I direct the minister to his previous budget and the federal government's previous budget, which is a Labor government.

Mr BUTCHER: We are delivering dams here in Queensland, the weirs and the pipelines that Queenslanders need. I think it is really critical that you are mindful of what we are doing. Rookwood Weir, as I said, one of those projects, is moving forward. It is the biggest weir built since World War II. There is the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline, expanding the South-East Queensland Water Grid, providing supply to Toowoomba communities and the Southern Downs. We are raising Burdekin Falls Dam, which we have already talked about.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: When?

Mr BUTCHER: This is our record: \$5.2 billion in water infrastructure since 2015, Chair, and creating over 3,400 jobs in the process.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You have ripped the dam wall down and—

Mr BUTCHER: I have mentioned it a few times, but there are more big projects we are delivering. Paradise Dam we are delivering.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: After you ripped it down.

Mr BUTCHER: Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline we are delivering.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: When?

Mr BUTCHER: Haughton Pipeline we are delivering, and the Cairns Water Security Stage 2, and these are all co-funded with the federal government. We are investing in water infrastructure projects that drive regional development, we know that for a fact, and provide more water security for those regions. Certainly one of the passions of mine is creating those jobs that are going to be on the ground in those projects. These projects, as I have said many times, need to stack up economically and environmentally. It is that simple, Chair; it is that simple that they have to stack up environmentally and certainly economically.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I refer again to the SDS. Last year's SDS included funding to facilitate the completion of feasibility studies. The minister may recall last year when I asked how many feasibilities were actually being undertaken. This year there is no funding to facilitate completion of feasibility studies. It has been cut in this year's budget. Why has the funding for any future feasibility studies been cut completely from your budget? Who would have given you the direction to cut any future planning for water in Queensland?

CHAIR: You put a fair bit in that question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I had to condense three or four into one.

CHAIR: I know. You did pretty well in that case. There may be a couple of subjects there. Minister, you can answer that question as you may see fit.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is in relation to why there is no feasibility funding.

Mr BUTCHER: This is a review of the state government and the budget, not the federal budget. This funding was in there in relation to—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order. It was remiss of me, I apologise; I should have referred the minister to page 1 of his SDS where it has disappeared completely out of his departmental highlights, out of the minister's budget in the state of Queensland.

CHAIR: You may be being slightly argumentative there, but the minister is continuing the answer to the question.

Mr BUTCHER: In answer to the question, we are continuing to progress a number of assessments, as the member has asked, on projects. The Lakeland Irrigation Area detailed business case is still in process. The Burdekin Regional Water Assessment is in process. The Bowen Pipeline's detailed business case is still in process. The Dawson Valley Water Supply Scheme water security options preliminary business case is still there, including Paranui Weir in that region. The Burdekin Haughton Water Supply Scheme modernisation detailed business case, the Nogoia Mackenzie Water Supply Scheme water security options preliminary business case, and the Southern and Darling Downs Regional Water Assessment considering Emu Swamp Dam are still ongoing. The statement that was made in the big preamble as part of the question is not correct.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I wish to ask a question of the Sunwater CEO, Mr Stockton, again. Mr Stockton, in the past 10 years, Sunwater has reduced the total water entitlements across Queensland by 8,910 megalitres. In the same 10 years, Tasmania, as an example, has provided an extra 85,000 megalitres in water entitlements in a state that is 27 times smaller than Queensland. Has Sunwater been directed by the government to supply less water for food and fibre productions by way of water entitlements?

CHAIR: Just before we start, I will ask you to verify where you got that information from.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to. I have it.

CHAIR: I will allow Mr Stockton to answer that as he sees fit.

Mr Stockton: We received no direction to reduce water entitlements within the state of Queensland. In fact, we are growing the water entitlements and the availability of water in the state.

CHAIR: I will go now to the member for Bundaberg for questions.

Mr SMITH: Minister, thank you for all your support for the magnificent Bundaberg region. With reference to page 15 of Budget Paper 3, can you please update the committee on the Queensland government's statewide water infrastructure investment?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. I know how certainly passionate he is about the Bundaberg region and the infrastructure there. The Palaszczuk government continues to invest in water infrastructure to support local communities right across regional Queensland and drive that economic growth. This is a government that is certainly getting on with the job of delivering for regional Queensland.

Since 2015, the government has invested more than \$5.2 billion, as we talked about tonight, towards new water infrastructure and extending the life and capacity of existing infrastructure. This investment is supporting 3,400 construction jobs across the state. This includes \$568.9 million total funding for Rookwood Weir construction which received a \$183.6 million funding contribution from the Australian government. I am pleased to see so many jobs created at Rookwood Weir. I have been out there multiple times to see the work that is going on and talk to the workers, and at its peak there were 325 jobs on site. A lot of those jobs are held by local people. It was good to see people from the local regions of Yeppoon, Rockhampton and Gladstone working on that project.

Additionally, the state budget confirmed a \$550 million funding commitment to the Burdekin Falls Dam improvement and raising project. This important project will support 350 jobs during construction. The Toowoomba to Warwick Pipeline, as part of a \$300 million-plus overall package, will improve Southern Downs and Toowoomba water security into the future. This important package of work will support 420 jobs during construction. I might take this opportunity to thank the previous mayor, who is now retired, for the work he had done during that project. I also look forward to working with the new mayor. I am led to believe the member for Lockyer's brother is now the new Acting Mayor or Mayor at this point in time in that region.

For the Paradise Dam Improvement Project, an additional \$600 million has been committed which will support 250 jobs during construction to rebuild the dam and improve dam safety which we know is important to the member. \$983 million has been committed to the Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline. The \$420 million funding for stages 1 and 2 of the Townsville Haughton Pipeline will support over 300 jobs during construction. Never forget the Palaszczuk government came to the party to support this project ourselves when the federal LNP were no help.

The \$70 million funding for the Building our Regions program will support our regional communities with urban water supply and water treatment infrastructure. \$30 million is on the table for Big Rocks Weir. \$40.4 million funding for the construction of a drinking water pipeline from Gracemere to Mount Morgan. We have \$25.6 million on the table for Hughenden Water Bank project to support irrigated agriculture and industry development. There is \$107.5 million in funding on the table for stage 1 of Cairns Water Security program to support the growing needs of the Far North. This year's state budget confirmed more than \$1.7 billion of water infrastructure and planning. The LNP like to whinge, but I am proud of this state's Palaszczuk Labor government record of delivery in this project. We will continue to deliver water infrastructure projects right across Queensland. As I said, and I will keep saying it, \$5.2 billion invested since 2015 supporting 3,400 construction jobs with it.

CHAIR: Minister, my question relates to the announcement you made in your opening address and also in reference to page 2 of the SDS. Can you explain to the committee how this concealed leaks policy that you have just mentioned is going to support families with cost-of-living relief?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the honourable for the question. When it comes to cost-of-living pressures, Queenslanders know that they can always count on the Palaszczuk Labor government to deliver. We saw \$8.2 billion in concessions and cost-of-living support in our most recent budget—and I think that is critical for the state, to give them that support—delivering hip-pocket relief across all of Queensland. This includes the \$120 South East Queensland Pensioner Water Subsidy which is lowering the cost of water for pensioners right across South-East Queensland, an important cost-of-living measure that the previous LNP government tried to cut. I announced earlier today the new concealed leak remission scheme and debt relief package for South-East Queensland residents which is really important. A concealed leak comes from a property owner's plumbing meaning it occurs after the water meter and is often hidden from view of the owners of those properties.

Of course, we encourage residents to be diligent and certainly to monitor their usage, but concealed leaks can and do occur. By their very nature, concealed leaks are often not obvious to Queenslanders until they get their water bill. We have had quite a lot of feedback not only from government members but also from the opposition in relation to people in their communities who have had exactly this happen to them. Getting an unexpectedly large bill due to a concealed water leak on your property is a shock to a lot of South-East Queensland residents.

Over a decade ago Labor introduced the South-East Queensland Customer Water and Wastewater Code which required water providers to have a concealed leaks policy in place and to offer a remission on those concealed leak charges. Each water service provider has their own policy associated with their consumption component. However, most do not provide a remission on the state bulk water charge. In some cases people had concealed leak bills amounting to tens of thousands of dollars. In the current climate and with national cost-of-living pressures, the Palaszczuk Labor government is taking action to put this scheme in place to help remit these costs that were not already covered by water retailers. We can introduce a scheme like this because we kept Seqwater in public hands.

The concealed leak remissions scheme will be delivered by the five South-East Queensland water service providers through existing billing arrangements and will provide remissions on the excess state bulk water charge of 100 per cent for eligible pensioners and 70 per cent for all other customers. The five South-East Queensland water service providers will continue providing concealed leak remissions on retail water charges in line with their current policies. This package will save thousands of impacted households thousands of dollars. The concealed leak relief is further proof that Queensland families can always count on the Palaszczuk Labor government to tackle the cost-of-living pressures using our publicly owned assets.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Ipswich West.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, my question relates to your opening statement where you discuss the raising of the dam wall at Burdekin Falls Dam. With reference to page 15 of Budget Paper 3 can you update the committee about how raising the Burdekin Falls Dam will provide water security and economic growth for North Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. As the member well knows, Burdekin Falls Dam is Queensland's largest dam, holding more than 1.8 million megalitres at full capacity. That is very impressive to see firsthand. Sunwater is progressing planning activities to raise the dam by two metres, which will create 150,000 megalitres of additional water for customers and support long-term agricultural, industrial and urban growth in North Queensland. We are getting on with the job of raising Burdekin Falls Dam. This is supported by the experts and supported by science.

The state budget secured a further \$440 million on top of the \$100 million already committed to progress the upgrade and raising of Burdekin Falls Dam. The Burdekin Falls Dam is part of the Palaszczuk Labor government's Big Build, our record infrastructure pipeline, ensuring Queenslanders have good jobs and better services now and certainly into the future. This is a down payment on the full cost of the project which will be determined after planning activities are finalised including the environmental impact statement.

This upgrade option is supported by the Burdekin basin water plan, which is critical in a lot of these large-scale projects and upgrades, which already holds 150,000 megalitres in this strategic reserve. The design for the two-metre raise will include strengthening works to comply with dam safety standards here in Queensland so that those downstream communities can be confident that in the future the dam will continue to operate safely during extreme weather events—and we certainly see them in that part of the world.

I am thrilled to see six contracts have already been signed for planning works at the site. There are three Queensland-based businesses, Contract Drilling, Drilling Solutions and GeoDrill Australia, contracted to provide specialist drilling capability onsite. We also have Townsville-based Simmonds Enterprises doing access tracks and earthworks for that project already and Townsville based Every Cultural Heritage working with Sunwater and the traditional owners on the ground to deliver cultural heritage surveys and management agreements.

Those who have been out to Burdekin Falls Dam will know it is a long drive from Townsville, so safety always needs to be the first priority on these projects. I am pleased to see regional Queensland firm National Mobile Camps contracted to build a temporary workers camp onsite. While the LNP get bogged down in whingeing about the height of the dam wall and talking about old studies, the Palaszczuk Labor government is getting on with the job.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We just want a business case.

Mr BUTCHER: I look forward to seeing the Burdekin Falls Dam two-metre raising continue to progress, creating jobs and providing more water security in North Queensland.

CHAIR: Minister, before I go to the next question can I remind—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Let me finish first. I remind the minister about standing order 118, which is about debating the issue when you answer the question. Was that going to be your point of order?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take personal offence and I ask the minister to withdraw.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: Personal offence?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I do. I take personal offence at—

Mr SMITH: The member was not referred to.

CHAIR: It has to refer to you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am part of the LNP.

Mr BUTCHER: I do not recall mentioning you, member. I can if you want me to!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You are welcome to and then I will ask you to withdraw!

Mr SMITH: There is no need to.

Mr BUTCHER: Chair, do you want me to withdraw something I did not say or not?

CHAIR: No, wait a moment. Member, he made a party political reference, not a personal reference. I do not think it is—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take your guidance.

Mr BUTCHER: If you take offence to being in the LNP, I will apologise.

CHAIR: Minister, thank you. Minister, we do not need to argue the issue.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: He is a bit testy today.

CHAIR: Members, please no cross-chamber arguments. Member for Bundaberg?

Mr SMITH: I will bring back some decorum; that is what I am known for. My question is for the minister. Minister, I note that there is a reference to Paradise Dam on page 1 of the SDS which, of course, demonstrates the importance of that project to yourself and the greater Palaszczuk government. Could you please update the committee on progress to restore Paradise Dam?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. As I said before, I know how passionate he is about Paradise Dam in his electorate and I will certainly continue to work with the community and the growers in that region.

The Palaszczuk government committed to rebuilding Paradise Dam and making it safe. The Paradise Dam Improvement Project is one of the most complex engineering projects in the region's history. We owe it to irrigators and the Bundaberg community to get this right. The Paradise Dam rebuild will deliver long-term water security for the Bundaberg region by restoring full supply to the 300,000 megalitres it had previously. The project will also improve the dam's resilience against major flooding and extreme weather events. The Palaszczuk and Albanese governments have each committed \$600 million to rebuilding Paradise Dam and making it safe.

Sunwater is working to complete the final engineering design and detailed business case on that dam. Further critical works are underway on the dam's outlets with workers progressing this work right now. Tenders are currently in the market for access road upgrades with work commencing later this year. Planning for the workers camp is underway with more tenders to be released very soon. This is a challenging undertaking and it is critical that these important works are completed properly and set us up for the successful delivery of this project. The Sunwater team will schedule and manage major activities around wet seasons to ensure its customers have reliable water supply for the duration of that project.

A total of \$116.4 million has been allocated to the project this year for these important activities moving forward. That is nearly five times the \$25 million quick fix that the LNP proposed and we are just getting started on this project. This is a complex project. I make no apology for taking our time to get this right informed by experts. The rebuild will support around 250 jobs during construction and, once back in full operation, it will create thousands of jobs and deliver significant flow-on benefits to the local community and those local businesses that rely on it.

Sunwater commenced water releases from Paradise Dam in early April 2023 to enable the necessary dam outlet investigations and repairs to be undertaken. These water releases did not impact the announced allocations for the 2022 water year. Sunwater will continue to engage with key stakeholders and customers as the project progresses, including Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable

Growers, Canegrowers Isis, Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group, Avocados Australia, Citrus Australia, Queensland Farmers' Federation and Australian Macadamia Society. The Paradise Dam Improvement Project is further proof that the Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job of delivering water infrastructure for Queenslanders. We have invested \$5.2 billion since 2015, creating 3,400 direct jobs right across Queensland.

Mr MADDEN: A question for the minister: with reference to page two of the Service Delivery Statements, can you update the committee on the role of regional water assessments? I understand that they apply to five priority areas. How important are those assessments in informing future water investment needs?

Mr BUTCHER: The Palaszczuk government will always invest in planning work to make sure that water infrastructure stacks up both economically and environmentally. Through our four regional water assessments, RWAs, we are carefully looking at future water projects that can drive long-term water security, unlock economic development and create jobs. The assessments are focused on the Southern and Darling Downs, the Tablelands, the Bundaberg and Burnett regions and recently the Burdekin region—some of Queensland's most significant food bowls. When complete, these assessments will identify the best infrastructure and non-infrastructure water options to support water security and regional development. The assessments build on previous work and take a comprehensive view of regional water needs across the state. These assessments are informed by extensive stakeholder engagement that brings councils, irrigators, water providers and other key stakeholders along as part of this process moving forward.

Public consultation on the draft Tablelands assessment has already finished. I would like to thank the community up there for their valuable feedback which will now help to shape the final assessment, which the Queensland government will consider in due course. Both the Southern and Darling Downs and the Bundaberg and Burnett assessments are being prepared for public consultation in the coming months. We have commenced preparatory work for the Burdekin region water assessment which will be delivered in partnership with the Albanese government, and I acknowledge the Albanese government for their contribution of \$5.5 million.

Occurring alongside the Burdekin water plan review, this RWA will result in the most comprehensive catchment-wide planning ever undertaken in the Burdekin which, as we have heard tonight, is one of Queensland's largest catchments. We are working with the Albanese government on the Southern and Darling Downs RWA. This is enabling further investigation of the Granite Belt Irrigation Project and a comparison of all of the potential options for water security in that region. Big water infrastructure must be properly planned and built. We owe it to local communities and Queenslanders to get these big projects right. That is exactly what the regional water assessments are doing—identifying future infrastructure and non-infrastructure at the same time on water projects in important food bowl areas right across Queensland.

Mr SMITH: A question for the minister on a topic that I know is close to his heart and his home: can you please explain how the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline will support both community and industry throughout Central Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: The Palaszczuk Labor government is delivering a Big Build for Central Queensland, with the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline being approved for construction. The \$983 million pipeline will provide long-term water security for Gladstone's community and a large industrial base, while supporting ongoing economic development in the region. This includes servicing the water demands of emerging clean industry, including hydrogen, in the area. Gladstone's economic success depends on the security and reliability of water supply to industrial customers which is integral to the operations of multibillion-dollar job-creating industry plants in the region, with more than 80 per cent of all water supplied in Gladstone being for industrial use.

The Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline is possible because Labor is building Rookwood weir—another big job-creating infrastructure project for Central Queensland. Works on the pipeline have now moved into the construction phase, with the pipeline's expected completion in 2026—weather permitting. The 117-kilometre pipeline will run from the Lower Fitzroy River near Rockhampton and connect into Gladstone Area Water Board's water network at Yarwun. The Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline is clear evidence that the Palaszczuk Labor government is serious about listening to experts and taking action to ensure water security in Queensland. The pipeline will create more than 400 jobs at the peak of construction with more than 25 apprenticeships and traineeships to be provided throughout that construction phase, which I think is really important. The Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline is also delivering on the recommendations that were made by the Bradfield regional assessment and development panel

to use water closer to where it falls and to create regional water grids. As members of the committee will know, the Palaszczuk Labor government is also prioritising local procurement and local jobs on that project, ensuring our investment delivers on jobs right down the supply chain. This is exactly what we are doing on the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline.

The pipes, which have already started arriving, are being made in Australia. The specialist fittings are also being fabricated by Queensland manufacturer HVAC. Some \$10 million will be spent with suppliers and businesses owned by First Nations people as part of this project, in addition to providing 10,000 hours for workforce participation and creating more valuable opportunities for our First Nations Queenslanders. Engaging local businesses provides the security of good jobs, and the delivery of reliable water services enhances the liveability of Central Queensland. The Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline is another example of the Palaszczuk Labor government building the water infrastructure that Queensland communities need.

Mr SMITH: I can hear Central Queensland colleagues yelling through the screen right now if I do not ask the minister to please provide details of the progress on the delivery of Rookwood weir.

Mr BUTCHER: As a regional member, I can certainly give you feedback on the Rookwood weir construction. It is powering ahead. The latest update is that project is 90 per cent complete. Construction completion is scheduled for late 2023. Weather permitting, water from the weir could be available from early next year. If you are interested in that project, you can have a look at the Facebook site for Rookwood weir which has the latest updated pictures of how advanced that project is. Rookwood weir will provide significant opportunities for increased agriculture and industrial development and it will boost water security for the Central Queensland region.

I am proud to advise the committee tonight that Sunwater and its alliance partners recently achieved a peak of more than 325 workers on site. More than 30 apprentices and trainees have worked on the weir since it commenced, with 13 currently working on site. These local benefits, including for apprentices and trainees, is only possible because Sunwater is a publicly-owned bulk water provider and we kept those water assets in public hands. Rookwood weir really is the Big Build in action. The Palaszczuk government is delivering a key piece of water infrastructure, but is also delivering good local jobs.

I am also pleased to advise that once the new Foleyvale bridge crossing is completed later this year, the local community will have safer and easier access locally and connectivity well into the future. It is pleasing to see the benefits of this project stretching right across Central Queensland, including into the Central Highlands. The Palaszczuk and Albanese Labor governments have each committed \$183.6 million to fund the construction of Rookwood weir. As a result of multiple wet weather events over the past 18 months which inundated the construction site on six separate occasions and due to escalating supply costs, the 2023-24 budget included an additional \$187.5 million funded by Sunwater to support the completion of this vital infrastructure project. At least 50 per cent of the water from Rookwood weir will be used for agricultural industry development in Central Queensland.

Water sales have been progressing well, with the completion of a second tender in June 2023 targeted to support local farm development and a transition to high-value agriculture. On a recent visit, I saw pipes on the ground ready for those new projects to move forward. The Palaszczuk government is delivering Rookwood weir. As I have said, it is the largest weir built in Australia since World War II. This is a legacy project which will benefit Central Queensland for generations to come.

CHAIR: I will go to a brief question from the member for Ipswich West and then I will go to the member for Traeger.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, with reference to page two of the Service Delivery Statements, can you provide an update on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting irrigators and job creation by providing discounted water to irrigators?

Mr BUTCHER: The Palaszczuk government continues to back our irrigators right across Queensland. Irrigated agriculture is one of Queensland's traditional economic strengths. It is a major pillar of our economy and provides jobs for regional Queenslanders. With so many jobs in the industry, supporting our irrigators is a priority for the Palaszczuk Labor government in Queensland. During the four years from 2021-22 to 2024-25, the Palaszczuk government has allocated \$104.4 million to support irrigators which includes funding to provide discounts to irrigation prices. This total funding to support jobs in agriculture includes an additional \$22.8 million in this year's budget. The discounts reduce irrigated water prices for horticultural crops by 50 per cent and by 15 per cent for all other irrigators in eligible SunWater and Seqwater schemes. We can do this because we kept our assets in public hands.

The 50 per cent discount for 2020-21 and 2023-24 to support horticulture irrigators recognises the thousands of harvesting, picking and processing jobs this sector creates and sustains across the state. In May 2021 I appointed the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority to administer the horticultural rebate program because they have a long history of providing these types of services to Queensland irrigators. Applications for the rebate opened in August 2021 and I am advised that at the end of June 2023 more than 800 applications had been approved for this rebate, which is good news for them. Irrigators have until December 2024 to make their applications for the horticulture rebate and can choose to make application for any part of the three-year period up until the applications close. If you are a horticultural grower and you have not applied, apply tonight.

I am pleased to advise the committee that this year the Palaszczuk government has also extended the broader 15 per cent irrigator discount for one more year in 2024-25. The 15 per cent discount is automatically applied to bills for the 2021-22 to 2024-25 period and irrigators do not have to do anything to access this discount. It automatically goes to them. This Palaszczuk government will continue to support irrigators and job creation in this sector. Whether it is supporting irrigators by helping keep costs low or supporting the industry's development by building critical infrastructure like Rookwood Weir, the Palaszczuk Labor government will always support our irrigators.

CHAIR: Member for Traeger, over to you.

Mr KATTER: Minister, with reference to the competitive tender process for water rights along the Flinders River, will the minister explain the absence of a compulsory arbitration trigger for the downstream water user agreements which apply to the impossible, as I would view it, tolerance threshold that prioritises placement on the river over price? I am not sure I made that clear. What I am saying is that there is an impossible threshold of 0.1 per cent for everyone downstream, so you need to ask everyone downstream to say, 'We feel that you don't impact us,' when I know that HIPCo has tried to negotiate and they have said no because it is clearly in their own interests to say no because if there is water left over they get it and there is no trigger. I do not think any dam in Australia would have ever been built on that same basis.

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, we are currently going through the tender process and as the rules were set for that tender process that is the department's way that they have done that process at this point in time. Whoever is in line for the tender process will have to abide by the department's guidelines as far as that process goes. When the tender came out that was quite clear in the detail of any projects moving forward at that stage during the process period. I can hand over to the director-general to give you a little bit more info on that, if that is all right.

Ms Dobe: On 30 November 2021 the department commenced a release by competitive tender for 110,000 megalitres of water from the Flinders River general reserve. The release is still underway. In terms of the process for the tender, a market-based tender with a confidential reserve price is being used because interest in water for new agriculture proposals was known to exceed the remaining volumes available in the catchment. Using a competitive process protects existing investment decisions while ensuring water goes to its highest value use. The tender process was broken down into three stages to enable flexibility while ensuring only projects that could deliver on the purpose of the release will proceed. The staged approach distinguishes itself from previous water tenders by allowing only projects that demonstrate a clear water usage plan to advance to the next stage. It uses features such as computer modelling, eligibility criteria and a call options deed with conditions which ensures any water sold will be used. The assessment considers the project against criteria which protect environmental, social, economic and cultural outcomes as well as the reliability of existing entitlements stated under the gulf water plan. This framework ensures the release of unallocated water remains competitive and aligns with water plans, and that is why a structured process is so important.

Mr KATTER: I am happy with that. I am aware of all that. What I was getting at was a trigger to what I see as impossible conditions for anyone upstream like Flinders shire that is facing a 20 per cent population decline. The conditions for them at the time is that 0.1 per cent are not affected, as you are outlining there. Do you not see that as an almost impossible barrier for them to ever comply with?

Ms Dobe: For all water projects, including the ones that are underway—for example, Rookwood Weir—at the moment, they have to build those projects so that they do not impact downstream existing water entitlement holders. That is what compliance with the water plan means.

Mr KATTER: If there was an irrational downstream user that would flat out refuse and you need 100 per cent compliance, then that dam that could help supply to hundreds of people would never go ahead because then we would never build a road or a bridge in Australia if you cannot impact on someone else in the process.

Ms Dobe: It is a process that is occurring up in that particular catchment because of the way the river behaves where it is dry a big period of time and then has flood events.

Mr KATTER: I want to move on then. Would you consider amending the thresholds of the tender so that there is some chance of an outcome, because at five per cent it is tolerable but at 0.1 per cent it seems like a ridiculously small tolerance that I am sure would be unprecedented for impact on downstream users?

Ms Dobe: When somebody has a water entitlement—so a water licence or a water allocation—it is like a property right. You have pretty much a guarantee for that water.

Mr KATTER: Yes, like someone had a compulsory road acquisition or anything else.

Ms Dobe: Yes. So to do what you are suggesting erodes away the—

Mr KATTER: Yes, in which case you have compulsory arbitration through a compensation agreement, and that is what I am getting at. Is there any trigger in your process, because otherwise they have all the bargaining power downstream?

Ms Dobe: We do not have a trigger in our process. The National Water Initiative—

Mr KATTER: That answers the question. I think that is a flaw in the process. When we are talking about the entitlements and the measurements, is the minister confident of the information that you are getting on the flow stream records?

Mr BUTCHER: I have all faith in the department and what they do with the water tender process. As the director-general just said, it is a very competitive tender process. That tender process is still in play and the people in the department who are doing the assessment of that do it internally. I have no record or no idea of what that is that you are talking about because it is a competitive tender done by the department, not by me.

Mr KATTER: Yes, sure. I am not so much reflecting on the tender process now; I am talking about the data that everyone so critically relies on to calibrate this. Three per cent of the water is the only water that is being taken out at the moment anyway of an entire average annual flow, but when we are talking about average annual flow in the 2019 floods, for instance, there were reports that flow stream records have been reported to councils that did not know they had to pass it on. There is the inner source that has been used as the water modelling basis. There have been licences allocated in the wrong position—that is, they are in the wrong position when they are doing the modelling. It was probably a rhetorical question in that there seems to be flaws in it. Was the minister aware that there are a number of flaws and limitations and busted flow meters that are not working? Given the size of the 2019 floods which impacts on the average annual flow and any other future ROP, is the minister concerned about some of these irregularities such as busted flow meters and non-reporting?

Mr BUTCHER: Certainly I am not aware of busted flow meters or any misreporting to me. The department might have some of that detail and information. I can say that there is an opportunity coming up in relation to the Flinders water plan and we may be looking to do that review shortly. Obviously, the opportunity for allocating more water can be part of that process. People will have their say on the demand that they are looking for as part of opening up the water plan to make sure that even the small players—and I know you are passionate about the small irrigators in the region—have an opportunity to apply as part of that process under the water plan, to get that water if they need it into the future. At some point in the near future we will be looking to open that water plan as we are doing right across the state for different water plans at the moment. Certainly, the people you are talking about may have an opportunity for extra water if they want to apply for it at that time.

Mr KATTER: Under this tender process, given that there are downstream users competing in the tender who will benefit from HIPCo falling over and then having access, would the minister advise HIPCo that it is pointless pursuing the tender any further given they need that 100 per cent compliance of their water users?

Mr BUTCHER: As I said before, I am not aware of people who are still in a tender process. It is a departmental process. I am not aware of which companies are still in it or which projects are still in it. It would not be good for me to start to dig in and look at those types of things inside that tender process.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, could you give me a completion date for the pipeline from Gracemere to Mount Morgan?

Mr BUTCHER: I think the member knows that that is a project that is being delivered by the Rockhampton Regional Council. We certainly know that urban water security is their responsibility and delivering these projects. It is a council project. We have a good track record of supporting councils

with these types of projects and water infrastructure, certainly through investments like Building our Regions, as you know, the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline as we have talked about, Cairns water security and so many more. The Rockhampton Regional Council is no different to any of them.

As you know as the local member, Mount Morgan is home to over 2,000 people in a region that has been significantly impacted by high-level water restrictions that have been in place—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair. The question was quite simply when will it be delivered, not a whole rundown. We have only eight minutes to go.

Mr BUTCHER: I am pretty sure the member for Lockyer did not actually ask the question. If the member asking the question has a problem—

Mr McDONALD: It is relevant, though, to the wasting of time. It would be good if you gave a direct answer.

Mr ANDREW: If there was direct answer it would be good. I understand the demographics.

CHAIR: The minister is being responsive. I am sure he is coming to a direct answer as best he can on this question.

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, the Palaszczuk government has put \$40.4 million on the table to support the Rockhampton Regional Council to deliver that pipeline to Mount Morgan. The proposed 29-kilometre pipeline from Gracemere to Mount Morgan will connect Mount Morgan's water supply to the Rockhampton Regional Council network. That pipeline will provide a reliable water supply, avoiding the need for restrictions in severe weather. The Australian government has also committed \$3.5 million to that project.

As I said before to the member, this is a local government project moving forward. They are still completing their detailed business case to get to the final point of where they are at. They are going to a tender process, I am led to believe, in the near future. That will certainly give us an idea and the council an opportunity to tell us how long this project will take to build.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, you get a couple of minutes to finish off.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a question for the minister in relation to the Rockwood Weir project. The government's budget papers reveal a damning 54 per cent blowout for that project—

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—with the total project now costing Queenslanders over \$201 million more than initially costed.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, we have a point of order. I know what the point of order is. It is certainly about that imputation or argumentative bit. Keep on going, but please avoid argumentative language.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is the fact that this project is costing \$201 million more the reason why HIPCo, Urannah and Hell's Gates dams have been cut—because of this budget blowout?

Mr BUTCHER: Certainly I will focus on Rookwood Weir. It is one of our significant projects, as you know, here in Queensland. The fact is that Rookwood Weir is continuing its construction. It has been inundated six times, as we talked about, since the start of construction, which adds not only to the costs of making sure that we get all of those people out of the weir build itself but also making sure that their equipment is out in due time so that there are not more costs involved in removing their equipment out of a live river that is starting to flood. I can also tell the member that, as I said, the completion of the construction is due for late 2023 with the weir being at 90 per cent of construction, weather permitting again in relation to that. The project is certainly supporting local jobs and those ancillary works will be completed on that as well.

As we said, we have a record of delivering these projects and we want to make sure that we do them safely. You look at the inundations—six of them—plus during the start of construction we had a lockdown on site because of COVID, which added significant costs to the build as well because they were out of the river for two weeks. Obviously, as you know, everything is getting more expensive across not only Queensland but the world and there were additional costs to building that weir. The member can talk all she likes about what happened with Rookwood Weir but those are the facts: inundations and costs have gone up. We want to build the dams. We do not want to cut them or sack the people on them. We want to finish the build by the end of the year.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: What is the minister talking about?

Mr HART: Minister, we have just heard from Sunwater, a group that normally would do business cases and arrange EISs for regional dams, that they have never looked at the possibility of building a dam at the Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro site. Queensland Hydro did not exist for three months after your government made an announcement that they were going to build a dam there. As the water minister, can you tell us exactly who did decide that a dam could be built there?

Mr BUTCHER: Is this a follow-up from—

CHAIR: Yes, it sounds familiar.

Mr BUTCHER: Have we finished with the member for Nanango's question?

Mr HART: Yes, we are done with that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: If the minister would like me to clarify? He must only like questions from me. It is a follow-up question.

Mr HART: It is my question.

Mr SMITH: Point of order.

CHAIR: This is a follow-up question to the one earlier; the same question?

Mr SMITH: Chair, I do have a point of order. The CEO for Sunwater did say that that particular project was in a different department, the Department of Energy and Public Works—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No. That has nothing to do with it.

Mr SMITH:—and is therefore not related to the minister's portfolio.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Do not put words into his mouth.

CHAIR: If that is the case then that is something that the minister could include in the answer.

Mr HART: No, this is the water minister.

CHAIR: It is not a point of order. Let us get back to the question. Minister, I will give a broad ranging—

Mr HART: Sunwater never looked at it—

CHAIR: Hang on, I have not finished talking yet. Minister, could you answer that question or delegate it and a broad sweep of an answer should suffice.

Mr BUTCHER: As I was confused as to the question could the member ask it again, please?

Mr HART: Sunwater never looked at it and Queensland Hydro did not exist at the time your government made the announcement. As the water minister, who did look to see whether a dam could be built there?

Mr BUTCHER: As we have talked about previously, in the previous answer, the Department of Energy and Public Works is certainly responsible for the pumped hydro projects in Queensland and they have been leading those projects to date.

Mr HART: It did not exist.

CHAIR: Member, the minister is answering the question. There is no need to be argumentative.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have another question to the CEO Seqwater, Mr Brennan. Next year I should line them all up; I apologise. I refer to the Seqwater payroll debacle.

CHAIR: Try again.


Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I refer to the Seqwater payroll issue that impacted approximately 800 staff. It was reported that \$7 million has already been back paid to those staff. What is the total amount that had to be paid out to those staff, and has this matter now been resolved?

Mr Brennan: Paying out people correctly is of the utmost importance. Unfortunately, a large-scale review by Seqwater identified instances where our people were historically not receiving correct entitlements. We identified an initial issue with common law contract employees in April 2020 and quickly after commenced a large-scale review of our entire workforce, industrial relations framework and remuneration practices to determine whether there were any further areas of concern. We have been working closely since this time with the Fair Work Ombudsman, our people and our unions. On 28 September 2022 we entered into an enforceable undertaking with the Fair Work Ombudsman. The amount rectified under the 2016 and 2019 enterprise agreements was \$7.8 million, inclusive of interest and superannuation where applicable. Approximately 800 employees, current and former, were impacted under the 2016 and 2019 enterprise agreements that relate to the Fair Work Ombudsman enforceable undertaking.

The underpayment issues have largely been a result of complex and ambiguous enterprise agreements and a payroll system that lacks the ability to interpret complex arrangements. All rectification payments to current and former employees have now been finalised. A comprehensive suite of controls have been implemented to ensure we pay our people correctly moving forward. Controls include: interpretation guidelines, leader and employee education sessions and resources, increased payroll exemption reporting and additional payroll resourcing. Seqwater is also working to improve the payroll system. Seqwater has met all enforced undertaking requirements to date. As part of the enforced undertaking, the Fair Work Ombudsman will undertake two annual independent audits as well as independent assessment on non-assured payments. The independent assessment will be undertaken by Grant Thornton. The independent audits will be undertaken by KordaMentha.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of estimates for the water portfolio area has expired. We do not have any questions on notice. The committee will now adjourn for a short break. We will resume at 6.47 to examine regional development and manufacturing.

Proceedings suspended from 6.32 pm to 6.46 pm.

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the regional development and manufacturing portfolio areas until 7.45 pm. Minister, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

Mr BUTCHER: Manufacturing is one of Queensland's biggest job-creating industries. The industry employs more than 180,000 Queenslanders and has consistently contributed more than \$20 billion to the state's economy. In the coming decades Queensland's manufacturing industry will face new challenges, realise new opportunities and continue to diversify in its businesses. We are making the investment needed to support this job-creating industry. We are investing in our Made in Queensland and our Manufacturing Hub Grant Program with \$48.9 million allocated in this year's budget. Some 189 projects have been funded since these programs commenced and they have created and supported other 6,500 jobs in the process. That number is projected to grow to over 10,000 jobs in the next five years.

We have also just finalised round 5 of Made in Queensland and I am thrilled to share tonight that 33 grants will be awarded—\$20.5 million—to Queensland manufacturers. We have invested \$56.25 million across six manufacturing hubs. The hubs are providing targeted business support designed to help regional manufacturers grow and to create more of those important jobs. We updated our Advanced Manufacturing 10-year Roadmap and Action Plan so that our manufacturers can respond to future opportunities, including from the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is expanding the capacity of local industry to realise the benefits from Labor's Big Build all the way down the supply chain. We are looking for more ways to increase our manufacturing workforce, which is why on International Women's Day this year I launched our Women in Manufacturing Strategy to attract and retain women in the industry. The member for Nanango has a pair of Women in Manufacturing earrings. Regional Queensland is at the heart of everything that our government does, with 65 per cent of the Big Build occurring outside of South-East Queensland and 95 per cent of our Energy and Jobs Plan being delivered in regional Queensland.

Regional Queensland keeps this great state moving. Our commitment to regional Queensland includes our highly successful Building our Regions program. Some \$417 million has been approved towards 370 projects across 69 local governments, supporting an estimated 3,180 jobs and attracting additional investment of over \$609.2 million collectively. Across Queensland, mayors tell me that without this program the vital infrastructure upgrades their communities need just would not get done. Water and sewerage are not sexy but they are crucial, and they open doors to economic development in our regional communities. Regional Queensland is the lifeblood of our great state, so we will take every opportunity to listen and deliver the right projects in the right places at the right time. We are continuing to deliver the investment needed to generate jobs and economic growth across Queensland because that is what good Labor governments do.

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

Mr McDONALD: Thank you, Chair. I hand over to the shadow minister.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I just want to confirm that you are the minister responsible for manufacturing.

Mr BUTCHER: Yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: As the minister responsible for manufacturing, when were you first made aware of the Premier and the Minister for Transport intentionally misleading the Queensland people about the \$2.4 billion train blowout?

CHAIR: Thank you, member. Try again.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: As the minister responsible for manufacturing, when were you first made aware of the Premier and the Minister for Transport's misleading comments in relation to the cost of the billion dollar train blowout?

CHAIR: Actually, I am going to let that one go. Minister, you can answer that how you see fit.

Mr BUTCHER: As the member knows, the Palaszczuk Labor government has brought rail manufacturing back to Maryborough. The Queensland Train Manufacturing Program will build and operate 65 trains, returning Queensland to a rail manufacturing powerhouse after the LNP sent those contracts overseas. The contract is signed, sealed and delivered, creating 800 new jobs in the Maryborough region over the next decade. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads is responsible—

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: the member's question was specifically about when the Minister for Manufacturing found out about the inaccuracies.

CHAIR: Member, I am letting the minister go on here. I could have pulled up that question on the imputation it contains with the word 'misleading', which is an adjective at the centre of the sentence, but I am letting the minister go on. I am sure the minister, who has just started his answer, will come to the answer but it is early days. Minister, continue.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. As I said, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads is responsible for procurement and delivery of the QTMP and other major rail projects. My department is responsible for the Rail Manufacturing Strategy for Queensland, which was developed to strengthen, transform and rejuvenate the rail manufacturing sector including the critically important local supply chains. From maintenance in Townsville and Brisbane to research and development in Rocky and, of course, the Big Build in Maryborough, the strategy is about the whole of Queensland. We are already working with local suppliers to assist in building their capacity and their capability to compete for the work.

Following the government's purchase of the former Rockhampton railway workshop, the Palaszczuk government is working to see the facility transform to underpin local manufacturing and a critical supply chain for our rail manufacturing industry. As part of that, the first two tenants have now signed agreements to take up industrial space in that process.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Chair: we have given leniency.

CHAIR: Minister, if I could direct you back to the question and answer the question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Which was very specific.

CHAIR: Thank you, member. I do not need help. The minister knows how to answer that now with my direction.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. The line of questioning that has come so far—and it is only early in the night—raises the question: does the LNP support train manufacturing in Queensland and building them in Maryborough?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Just wait your turn. You'll be in opposition soon enough.

Mr BUTCHER: I am the minister responsible for the manufacturing supply chains in Queensland, making sure manufacturers get their fair share of this pie.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am going to ask my next question if he is not going to answer it.

Mr BUTCHER: We are already working with local suppliers to assist in building their capacity so they can take advantage of that supply chain and those opportunities. There is a pipeline of rail infrastructure projects, and we want to make sure that our local subbies, the tradies, get every chance they can with this Big Build.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is obvious that the minister—

CHAIR: Careful.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Okay. The minister has alluded that he is responsible for delivering a rail manufacturing strategy—which is straight out of his charter letter and he has reiterated that. Was the \$2.4 billion blowout part of the minister's strategy?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair.

Mr BUTCHER: Do you support us building trains in Queensland or not?

CHAIR: Just a moment. Member for Bundaberg, what is your point of order?

Mr SMITH: There are two. There is standing order 115 in terms of imputations and inferences. Also, with regard to relevance, the minister has just made it very clear that the procurement that the member is asking about falls under the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

CHAIR: I understand.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is the strategy.

CHAIR: Could you reiterate your question, very briefly?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The minister has said that he is responsible, as per his charter letter, for delivering rail manufacturing strategy. Therefore, is it the minister's strategy, as manufacturing minister in Queensland, to have a \$2.4 billion blowout of the Train Manufacturing Program?

CHAIR: Member, that is a difficult one. I am going to let that one go through with the minister having some—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: He is the minister for manufacturing.

CHAIR: Yes, thank you. The minister has some latitude in answering that.

Mr BUTCHER: As I said to the member before, my role as the Minister for Manufacturing supports those businesses that are trying to get into the supply chain for manufacturing parts for Queensland-made trains. We are not getting them made overseas. We are manufacturing trains here in Queensland.

As the manufacturing minister, I am proud of our local businesses and our local companies that are now changing the way that they do their business to get a piece of this pie to make sure that they are successful into the future. As well as that, there are the jobs that are going to come on the back of the manufacturing industry coming back to Queensland—putting supply chain goods into our trains that are built here in Queensland by this Palaszczuk Labor government.

I am not sure where the member is going with this line of questioning, but my role as the minister here in Queensland is to make sure that our manufacturers that are based here in Queensland have every opportunity to manufacture supply chain goods for these trains to be built here in Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I refer to the statement by Hyundai Rotem, a South Korean railway system maker, said it has won the major contract in Australia. It goes on to say that its 'responsibilities will encompass all aspects of electric train delivery, including vehicle design, procurement of materials' et cetera. With this in mind, Minister for Manufacturing, are the trains actually being manufactured in Queensland or in South Korea?

CHAIR: This is repetition from earlier in the day.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This is my first estimates today. I was not at the hearing this morning.

CHAIR: Minister, could you answer that one please?

Mr BUTCHER: To be quite clear, all 65 trains will be built at the Maryborough-Torbanlea manufacturing facility providing hundreds of jobs for Queenslanders. None of the 65 trains that will be built will be manufactured anywhere else and flat-packed to Australia.

Two prototype trains will be built in Korea while the new facility in Maryborough is under construction. These trains are prototypes and not part of the 65 train sets that we will be building here in Queensland, particularly in Maryborough. When the new facility is completed, this means that Downer will be ready to build these trains in Queensland by Queenslanders. The QTMP will create hundreds of manufacturing and supply chain jobs in Queensland, particularly in the Maryborough region.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, the Deputy Premier disclosed in estimates today that Hyundai Rotem were manufacturing those prototype trains—and you have just said that—in South Korea, not Queensland. Where has that been disclosed to the people of Queensland before today? I refer the minister to his media release of 30 June and his statements within it. Is this part of the \$2.4 billion blowout that the minister is responsible for? Where has that ever been disclosed to the people of Queensland?

CHAIR: I assume that first part of the question is about any disclosure and the second part is about cost?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is.

Mr BUTCHER: The simple answer is that the government's contract with Downer—and you can ask the transport minister when he is up for estimates—is to build trains in Maryborough. Questions about the arrangements between Downer and its subcontractors are a matter for Downer.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Doesn't it sound like the other trains previously?

CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr BUTCHER: We have committed to building 65 train sets here in Queensland—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It does not matter what the contractor does.

CHAIR: The member for Nanango will cease her interjections.

Mr BUTCHER:—at Maryborough. We are committed to that. As I have said again and again tonight, we are committed to building trains here in Queensland at Maryborough and not sending them overseas to be built. Sixty-five of those trains will be built by our people in Maryborough.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister for Manufacturing, in all of the PR in relation to trains supposedly being manufactured—not assembled—in Queensland, when were you and your government colleagues planning to talk about that? How has it taken the estimates process to force the government to be honest with Queenslanders about where the prototype trains are being built?

CHAIR: Member, you are repeating the question. Minister, do you have anything to add to that?

Mr BUTCHER: As I said, we are doing the supply chain manufacturing for the trains to be built in Queensland by Queenslanders. Sixty-five train sets are being built here in Queensland in Maryborough. It is a fantastic facility. I have visited the Downer site several times. It is great to be onsite talking to people who not only work there now but their brothers worked there, their fathers worked there. There is over 100 years of experience in the Downer facility in Maryborough. We want to make sure that, while they are building them, there are also opportunities for new manufacturers. As I said before, we have allocated two positions in the train manufacturing facility in Rockhampton with the manufacturing hub we have set up in Rockhampton to guide them through how they can get into the supply chain to make those trains here in Maryborough.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Can the minister confirm that the seats are being made here, the handles are being made here and the doors are being made here, or are they coming, as the minister alluded to, in a flat pack and being assembled here in Queensland?

CHAIR: I was about to say—no, I will not say anything. I am not going to prolong this.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is a relevant question in relation to the supply chain.

Mr BUTCHER: As far as I am aware, every part of those trains will be manufactured here in Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We look forward to hearing that, Minister.

Mr BUTCHER: As far as I am aware. We want to make sure that every company in business in Queensland, whether it be small, medium or large, has every opportunity to build the seats, the wheels, the frames and the nose cones in Queensland. The process that is happening right now is to make sure that our manufacturers are competitive to get these jobs and that we have processes in place to make sure we can build parts for these trains. Yes, our manufacturers will stand up, and they always do stand up when it comes to these type of projects. This is a large project and we want them to be part of it.

CHAIR: Member, I was going to say that a question with those specifics would fall outside of the remit of the minister in charge of the strategy and should go to the Minister for Transport, but no doubt he will be—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: At least this year he is giving it a red-hot go to answer my questions.

CHAIR: Isn't it great to take some benefits from this time of the night. I was going to say that you should ask the Minister for Transport about this.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I want to move on to Manufacturing Skills Queensland. Minister, I refer to the establishment eventually of Manufacturing Skills Queensland. How many times has the minister met with the CEO and board of Manufacturing Skills Queensland since it has been established?

Mr BUTCHER: I have met with the new CEO. She is a fantastic person. I have met with the chair and I have met with the members of the board during the early process of getting Manufacturing Skills Queensland up and running. I have met with those people on the board and the interim CEO and now the new CEO.

Mr HART: I have a question for the minister responsible for train manufacturing strategy. On the Gold Coast we have just had five sets, I think it was, of light rail trains delivered. I understand they were not built in Australia. Can the minister tell us where they were built and why?

CHAIR: As I alluded to, that is outside the remit of expenditure for this minister.

Mr HART: He is the minister for train manufacturing strategy.

CHAIR: Member, I think that question should go to the Minister for Transport, but I will allow the minister to answer that.

Mr BUTCHER: I am only going to back up your story, Chair. That is a question for Minister Bailey.

Mr HART: You do not know why they were built or why they were built there when you are supposed to be building trains in Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: As I said, Chair, this is a question for the Minister for Transport and Main Roads.

Mr HART: The transport minister has a lot of questions to answer, doesn't he?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: As a point of order, the minister has repeatedly talked about being the minister for manufacturing strategy. The question that my colleague put to the minister was simply around why those sets were made outside of Australia. Is that part of the minister's strategy?

CHAIR: Member, I think you are stretching it there. Minister, would you like to furnish some kind of answer?

Mr O'CONNOR: Is that a point of order?

CHAIR: No, it was a question.

Mr BUTCHER: Did you want me to continue?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I want you to answer it.

Mr BUTCHER: We are interested in making sure that every Queensland business and manufacturer has opportunities to provide parts of these trains that we are going to be building back here in Queensland. I am not sure of the details of the contracts that went through. That is why it is a question for the Minister for Transport and Main Roads.

Mr HART: You slipped through that one.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am just conscious of the time. I would like to ask the minister a question about the Building our Regions program, noting that this will be the third consecutive year at estimates I have asked about this funding. Minister, it has been reported that a water pipe bursts every 80 minutes in rural communities—which is what I put to you last year—thanks to ageing infrastructure that has been inherited by local councils to maintain. As you know, many of these councils do not have the capacity to fund the replacement infrastructure needed to ensure safe drinking water for their communities. My question to you, Minister, is how many applications for Building our Regions funding did your department receive—and I am happy if you want this question to go to the director-general—in the last financial year?

Mr BUTCHER: I will certainly hand over to the acting director-general shortly, but I just want to touch base again on the importance of Building our Regions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There is no point repeating, Minister. Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: The minister has just started.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: He has just said he is going to remind us. He just read it out before.

CHAIR: He has literally just said a few words.

Mr BUTCHER: Across the six rounds of Building our Regions we have approved over \$470 million in funding for 370 projects across 69 local governments in regional Queensland, supporting 3,180 jobs. Round 6 of the Building Our Regions program provides funding to improve councils' water supply and sewerage systems in regional and remote communities. Round 6 awarded \$69.2 million for 99 projects across 50 councils. These projects leveraged an additional \$70 million in co-contributions, resulting in a total expenditure of \$139.2 million. Round 6 provides funding to improve councils' water supply and their water sewerage systems in regional communities. It also provides much needed economic, social and environmental benefits to these communities. For example, \$2 million in round 6 funding awarded to the Bundaberg Regional Council towards the Bagara-Rubyanna trunk sewer main will unlock services for coastal growth. This project involved delivering a 6,900-metre trunk sewer main and submersible sewer pump station to divert sewage to a larger capacity regional plan.

As part of the Palaszczuk government's 2023 budget, Building our Regions will invest \$28 million as part of round 6 this financial year—this all being part of our Big Build. I will hand over to the acting director-general. I have just been informed we will get that information by the time this session is over.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So that will be taken on notice?

Mr BUTCHER: Not taken on notice. I will get it to you by the end of the session.

CHAIR: Hopefully by the end of this session we will have that information.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a follow-up question to the minister. Given the current funding is finishing this financial year, at what stage will the minister decide on future funding and long-term infrastructure replacement and renewal for these local governments?

Mr BUTCHER: The mayors of regional Queensland know how passionate I am about supporting water and wastewater infrastructure for their areas. Every time I travel, when I go and speak to the mayors of those communities and certainly the councillors and their water management teams, we get an understanding—which I think I mentioned last year—that there is certainly a large cliff that is coming with regional councils and there is a need to upgrade those important projects. As I said before, the current Building our Regions program funding will be provided to councils until those milestones are complete. The 2023-24 budget, as I said, invested \$28 million as part of the \$70 million round 6 allocation.

I will continue to make sure I am advocating for Building our Regions into the future. At the same time, the department is undertaking an urban water risk assessment to help us inform this government of exactly what is out there. As the member has said, when talking to different areas around their water infrastructure and water delivery and wastewater, there are multiple councils and multiple areas with multiple issues that they need addressing into the future. We will wait until after this round 6 is completed and the funding is allocated. In next year's budget, we will have a better understanding of what the risk assessment has told us and which councils need that support. That will be done for future rounds of Building our Regions to support our councils in regional Queensland.

CHAIR: The member for Nanango can have one more question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, I have a quick question in relation to the community forums. I appreciate you will defer to the Premier's office because that office organises the events. My question is around the non-Labor local members not being included or invited. I put to the minister that the member for Pine Rivers, which is in Brisbane, is actually the chair I believe of the Western Queensland community forum. Minister, how is it appropriate that a non-Labor member is not invited but the member for Pine Rivers is the chair of the Western Queensland community forum?

Mr BUTCHER: The member you are talking about is also the Assistant Minister for Local Government.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Does she live in Western Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: The member for Pine Rivers certainly has a broad range of support that she gives to regional communities in Queensland, including Western Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How?

Mr BUTCHER: I do not know if you have actually had a talk to her or a conversation, but the amount of ground she covers talking to councils and talking to mayors in regional Queensland—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Does she ever listen?

Mr BUTCHER: She certainly has a knowledge of what is going on in regional Queensland. The regional forums are designed to have community members involved from all aspects of those communities—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: As long as they are Labor.

Mr BUTCHER: They are delivering and supplying information to the forums in relation to what affects their communities. The chair role, as we have here today, is all about guidance and making sure they support the forums moving forward—so wise people doing this job. It is important that we have these people in place to support them. We want to come up with a plan and then we want to come up with actions for our community members as part of these forums to deliver for those communities and let government know what we are doing in regional Queensland. As part of that, each of the forums has ministers attend every one of those forums, including me. I move through the different forums, but other structured ministers stay with that forum and make sure they help deliver on the results that are coming out of the forums in those communities.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, where are the minutes of meetings—

CHAIR: No, that is enough. Member for Nanango, if there is time left over you will get another question.

Mr SMITH: My question is of the minister. One of my favourite programs is the Made in Queensland grant program. Could you update the committee on the progress of the Made in Queensland grant program and include how many businesses have been supported, jobs created and private investment generated?

Mr BUTCHER: Manufacturing is one of Queensland's top job-creating industries, employing over 180,000 people here in Queensland so it is critical. When we came to government, the manufacturing industry in Queensland was shrinking, jobs were being lost and more and more items were being made overseas. We unashamedly support a future made in Queensland by Queenslanders for Queenslanders, and I hear that loud and clear when I travel to regional Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: With trains made in South Korea.

Mr BUTCHER: The member over there continues to interject, but I notice that she continues to go where I go. Every time I put a post up that I am going to a manufacturer, it is not long after that that the member turns up herself.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Oh, rubbish. It is the other way around. I went to the earring place first and then you popped in there.

Mr BUTCHER: Check your dates, Member. I think I was there before you were. The Made in Queensland grants program supports Queensland manufacturers to adopt industry-leading technology, equipment, processes and systems. It is all about creating more manufacturing jobs. Grants provided by this program empower manufacturers to invest in machinery, software and systems that will improve their production processes—just like Aletek in Bundaberg. With thanks to \$1.36 million in round 4, they were able to purchase and install a punch laser combination machine, a hydraulic press, a flatbed cutter and a handheld 3D scanner. I had the opportunity to visit with the member a little while ago. Aletek's new equipment will support the creation of 29 new local jobs in Bundaberg over the next five years. It was great to talk to some of those new workers who were already on the ground on the back of this funding. Adopting cutting-edge equipment can be costly, especially for our small to medium-sized manufacturers. Made in Queensland grants help to alleviate some of the financial burdens involved and speed up technology adoption. Accelerating the adoption of innovative technologies makes our manufacturers more productive and more competitive both locally and internationally.

All of our work in manufacturing is about creating and supporting jobs in Queensland. Made in Queensland does just that, in creating more than 5,400 jobs and generating more than \$100 million in private sector investment. Adopting the latest technologies allows our manufacturers to upskill their workforce, ensuring that they are equipped with the knowledge, the expertise and the experience to have rewarding careers and a secure job in manufacturing. There is a pipeline of work for manufacturers as part of our Big Build. With the Palaszczuk government's commitment to reshoring capability—not offshoring it—the opportunities are abundant. We are working to ensure that more of the items we use in Queensland are made by Queenslanders.

Mr HART: Except trains.

Mr BUTCHER: I will take that interjection. We are building trains in Queensland—65 sets to be exact. In 2023-24 the Queensland budget delivers \$32 million out of a total commitment of \$101.5 million for the Made in Queensland grant program. Funding for round 5 of the program was recently awarded, bringing the total number of projects supported across the state to 136. If you are a manufacturer, watch this space because there are more rounds of Made in Queensland coming soon, including a special energy efficiency round, helping manufacturers keep their costs low and emissions down and creating those new jobs. Made in Queensland will continue to support Queensland manufacturers because the Palaszczuk government supports a future manufacturing in Queensland.

CHAIR: Minister, in reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you update the committee on how the Queensland manufacturing hubs are supporting manufacturers, especially in rural Queensland?

Mr BUTCHER: The Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to supporting Queensland manufacturers. This commitment is demonstrated through the extensive range of programs, grants and initiatives to support the growth of the manufacturing sector in Queensland which is creating jobs and driving investment right across this great state. Our Queensland manufacturing hubs are central to delivering on this commitment.

The hubs are engaging with regional manufacturers and rolling out programs every day to support this critical industry's growth. Our hubs provide local manufacturers with expert advice and support, helping existing businesses to grow and to expand into new markets whilst supporting new jobs in manufacturing. The hubs deliver workshops and forums on workforce attraction and retention, leadership and workforce development skills, capability and capacity building. In 2022-23, 130 workshops, events and seminars were delivered across Queensland. These attracted 3,216 attendees.

Queensland manufacturing hubs are collaborating with the Ecoefficiency Group to deliver a series of decarbonisation workshops for Queensland manufacturers. Last week the manufacturers across the Mackay region attended the first of seven series of decarbonisation workshops to help business gauge their carbon footprint and to help them set the path to delivering a net-zero plan for their business. Berg Engineering in Gladstone received \$161,719 under round 1 of the Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program, creating five jobs—another example of how the manufacturing hubs are creating more secure manufacturing jobs in Queensland.

Every time I travel regionally, I meet with manufacturers that have been supported by our hubs. It is such an exciting time for the manufacturing industry in Queensland. Whether it is the Palaszczuk government's Energy and Jobs Plan or the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program and right through to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, there is opportunity for Queensland manufacturers in every part of this state. Our manufacturing hubs are already helping bolster the capacity and capability of the Queensland manufacturing sector to ensure our manufacturers are in the best possible position to win these major contracts, and work their way right down the supply chain. Manufacturing hubs are a key part to our industry's future because the Palaszczuk government wants to see the future made in Queensland and particularly made in regional Queensland.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you update the committee on how the government's Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan is growing the Queensland manufacturing sector?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government's Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan was updated in October 2022 to respond to emerging issues facing the industry and support manufacturers to take advantage of those new opportunities that are coming. These include responding to supply chain disruptions, labour and skills shortages, adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies and the transition to net zero. Initiatives in the road map were the foundation for successful programs like Made in Queensland and the Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program which we have talked about. The road map and the initiatives coming from it have helped many manufacturers to adopt cutting-edge technology and create more high-skilled jobs. These programs are hugely successful and have come a long way since being cut by those opposite. Over 6,500 jobs have been created and supported from the grant program with 189 projects and an overall \$90.3 million in grants awarded.

Earlier this year, I attended Australian Manufacturing Week which is a major drawcard for manufacturers from all over the world. It was a great opportunity to promote Queensland manufacturing. The updated road map will support Queensland manufacturers to make the most from supply chain opportunities, delivered by the Palaszczuk government's \$62 billion Energy and Jobs Plan. It is not just the Energy and Jobs Plan; there are supply chain opportunities from the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, as I have said, bringing train manufacturing back to Maryborough. The opportunity for Queensland manufacturers leading into the 2032 Olympic Games will be huge. We are not just hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Queensland, we want to make them in Queensland.

A further emphasis on the road map is about improving skills through Manufacturing Skills Queensland and promoting diversity and manufacturing through our Women in Manufacturing Strategy. When we support our manufacturing industry to grow, we create good, secure jobs for all. Not only are we hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Queensland, but we want to ensure that Queensland-based businesses will be in the box seat to share in \$180 billion in government procurement between now and 2032.

Throughout the delivery of the road map, the Queensland Manufacturing Hubs have supported manufacturers to adopt advanced technologies, growing their business and creating those jobs. The Manufacturing Ministerial Council is also an initiative of the road map which provides an important consultation forum between industry, unions and also government. The Palaszczuk government will always support the manufacturing industry and also the jobs that it supports. Our road map is all about supporting the industry now and preparing our world-class manufacturing industry for the future.

Mr SMITH: Minister, with reference to page 79 of Budget Paper 3, could you please update the committee on how the Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program is supporting manufacturers, and again if you could please include how many businesses have been supported and jobs created?

Mr BUTCHER: This Palaszczuk Labor government's \$28.5 million Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program is driving economic development and creating jobs by supporting local manufacturers get to the next level, and we have seen that through Ellatech, when we visited that company, starting to export those products. In February this year, I opened round 3 of that program. Some \$16.7 million has been budgeted this year to continue to assist regional small to medium sized manufacturers to become more productive, build their advanced manufacturing capabilities and create more manufacturing jobs in Queensland. Since its launch in 2020, the program has invested more than \$13.9 million in 53 projects across Queensland, spanning from Cairns to the Gold Coast and Emerald to Gladstone. These projects are forecast to generate \$24 million of private sector investment by regional manufacturers into equipment, technology, training and further job creation. The 53 projects have created and supported over 1,200 jobs in Queensland. This is just one of the programs created under Labor that is generating jobs in the manufacturing sector, an industry that was in decline when we took office with stalled investment and contracts awarded overseas.

Businesses like Status Signs in Cairns receive funding through MHGP. The investment of \$130,000 allowed them to support a CNC routing machine and laser cutter, 3D UV printer and software, creating five new jobs, including two apprentices as part of that. The new machinery has transformed Status Signs, enabling them to capture bigger jobs and produce literally bigger signs. In fact, Status Signs have manufactured the signage for the Cairns Convention Centre where we held regional sittings of parliament earlier this year. I met Status Signs' two apprentices when I visited in February. The excitement these two young apprentices had for a future in this career in manufacturing was an important reminder of why we invest in local manufacturing here in Queensland. This story is echoed across Queensland including the Gold Coast where Fresco Cheese is one of the local projects that has been funded. They were awarded \$84,000 to integrate an end-to-end enterprise resource planning system, creating 10 jobs on the back of that. Upton Engineering in Gladstone were awarded more than \$600,000 to purchase a five-axis horizontal machining centre, creating 12 jobs in Queensland. These are real people in good, secure jobs in workshops across the length and breadth of this state. Whether it is purchasing machinery, process upgrades or software development, this grant program supporting by our manufacturing hubs is delivering fantastic outcomes across our diverse manufacturing sector here in Queensland.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, I have a further question with regard to the advanced manufacturing road map. I reference page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can you update the committee on how the government is working to increase the participation of women in manufacturing as part of the advanced manufacturing road map?

Mr BUTCHER: A more diverse manufacturing industry means a bigger manufacturing industry. We have delivered on our commitment under the Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan to develop the Women in Manufacturing Strategy. I launched the Women in Manufacturing Strategy on International Women's Day, and I am proud to say that Queensland is the first Australian state to do so. The strategy will attract and retain women into manufacturing with particular focus on increasing participation in traditionally male-dominated roles. Women make up a quarter of the current manufacturing workforce, but we know that they are over-represented in administrative roles in those businesses. Women only make up 11 per cent of the workforce on the tools in our manufacturing sector.

We also know that the manufacturing sector needs a huge injection of labour over the next few years, which presents a great opportunity for women in manufacturing. Under the strategy we aim to attract women with a range of backgrounds to manufacturing including First Nations women and people with different lived experiences such as people with disability and those with culturally diverse backgrounds. It is all about building an inclusive manufacturing sector here in Queensland. In July 2023 we started delivering the Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Toolkit to assist businesses to look at different ways to recruit and retain women in their businesses. Toolbox Talks have also been delivered to promote a respectful and inclusive environment for apprentices and trainees.

A mentoring series with a school to industry focus has been developed where female students are paired with a female manufacturing worker to share their experiences and knowledge and to offer support along their journey. We are developing a women in manufacturing award, leading female apprentices to showcase women working across the industry who show leadership, break down barriers and step up as role models to others. Since 2018 we have also held women in manufacturing events that have promoted women in manufacturing. We have held 41 events attended by over 2,700 people.

We are doing this because we know that diversity boosts the bottom line, fosters more creativity and can improve morale and certainly retention. We are doing this because we know in order to grow our manufacturing industry, we must ensure that women and girls are able to fully and freely participate in all opportunities that Queensland has to offer.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: Minister, there is strong potential in the biofuels industry, and I make reference to the automotive industry as opposed to aviation. In recent years any reference to it seems to have disappeared from the vernacular of the government and no fines have been applied in the application of the ethanol mandate to stimulate manufacturing in the biofuels. Has any effort been made by your department to stimulate the industry insofar as it applies to the automotive industry?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. As you know, we certainly support manufacturing in biofuels here in Queensland. The opportunities that are around for this new industry moving forward certainly have created opportunities for those vehicles that you are talking about. The overall structure of the mandate and those matters do not sit under my portfolio. I am certainly making sure that we try to create all avenues for those types of industries moving forward here in Queensland, particularly in regional Queensland. We know of the opportunities in places like Mackay. In particular, if we can locate these industries in places in our state where the cane is grown that would be beneficial for a lot of people and not just manufacturers.

Mr KATTER: Would the minister be agreeable to advocating that position to the relevant minister for the mandate?

Mr BUTCHER: Outside of this sitting I can certainly organise a catch-up with both that minister, Mark Bailey and myself.

Mr ANDREW: With reference to the budget highlights on page 2 and the funding of \$8 million to develop a detailed business case for a long-term bulk water supply source to meet the hydrogen industry's water requirements in Gladstone post 2030, what subsidies or rebates, if any, is the government providing the Gladstone hydrogen project to help offset its substantial water costs?

Mr BUTCHER: I think that question probably would have been best served if it had been asked during the last session.

CHAIR: In terms of water? Yes.

Mr BUTCHER: Water for the hydrogen industry would have been in the last session.

Mr HART: You do not have the answer to that one? You did before.

Mr SMITH: The standing orders are quite clear.

CHAIR: Just clarifying, Minister, that is a water question instead of a manufacturing question?

Mr BUTCHER: Obviously I will take this opportunity to continue to talk about manufacturing opportunities with the new industries like hydrogen as you just talked about. We have seen in the Gladstone region Twiggy Forrest set up and start to make the electrolyzers that are needed for the hydrogen industry moving forward.

Mr ANDREW: Will you be subsidising them?

Mr BUTCHER: In the part of our region where Gladstone is located there is a state development area where we want to ensure we continue to have these new developments coming forward and new opportunities for manufacturing. We have seen in Gladstone the opportunities come with the LNG. Now we are seeing the opportunities come with the renewables sector and particularly the hydrogen sector. We have seen that in terms of the opportunities in those industries it is the manufacturing side where the good long-term jobs are. I will support any manufacturing business coming to town to make sure we give them the opportunity to come.

Mr ANDREW: Are we subsidising any of that?

Mr BUTCHER: Our department does not subsidise industries that come to any part of Queensland in relation to hydrogen moving forward. However, we certainly support them through the government to make sure we get new opportunities for new workers here in Queensland, and we will do that every day of the week.

CHAIR: That may be something for the energy minister.

Mr BUTCHER: I think so.

CHAIR: Any further questions from the crossbenches?

Mr ANDREW: With reference to the department's objective on page 2 of improving water resource management, what steps are being taken to extend the rollout of non-urban telemetry water meters more widely across Queensland by 2025 in line with the national framework?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Chair. I think the member missed the boat. Water was in the last session.

CHAIR: No. I think it may well be a water question. Once again, Minister, do you have anything—unless the member wants to take it up with you at a different stage.

Mr BUTCHER: Certainly. There is always the opportunity to have a conversation outside of this.

Mr HART: It is not the right time.

Mr BUTCHER: I can keep talking about manufacturing if you like.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I know you are really keen, so you will get five minutes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. I have a question to the director-general. In relation to the name of the department, it is the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water. In the SDS the term 'regional development' is not mentioned as a departmental highlight and the term 'regional development' is not mentioned in a departmental budget highlight. My question to the director-general is: why does regional development not feature at all in the SDS in the departmental highlights or the budget highlights? Where does that rate?

CHAIR: I think the first part of the question was fine.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will get another question. Thanks.

CHAIR: Do not dig yourself deeper.

Ms Dobe: All functions of the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water contributed to regional development. The department is supporting the growth, investment and infrastructure to grow our regional economies through all functions of the department. We are the co-lead with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to deliver regional community forums, which are an important mechanism to facilitate discussion by the community, elected officials and the Queensland government to identify and implement local solutions to local challenges. We are also co-lead with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and we work closely with local stakeholders to develop regional infrastructure plans. Infrastructure is the backbone to boosting productivity, growing our economy, creating jobs, improving liveability, driving innovation, and building strong and resilient communities. Place-based infrastructure plans for the regions help to make this happen.

In addition to this, the department supports the minister on the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum which is tasked with driving initiatives to develop Northern Queensland and Northern Australia. Department officials engage with officials from other jurisdictions to progress actions that diversify and strengthen the north's economy by promoting the liveability and the attractiveness of living, working and investing in the north with a particular focus on engagement with First Nations peoples, human capital-enabling infrastructure, and economic development and diversification. The department also supports the growth of Queensland's manufacturing sector and is supporting the re-establishment of regional industry like the rail manufacturing sector.

CHAIR: Thank you. I think—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will ask the question again. The term 'regional development' is not mentioned in the departmental highlights. The term 'regional development' is not mentioned in the budget highlights. My question was: why?

Ms Dobe: Regional development is supported by all of the functions of the department and the 'grow the economy' parts of the department, in particular.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The words 'grow the economy' are not in there either. My question is: for an entire department, how do the people of regional Queensland think they are being listened to when it is not even a highlight of the department and it is not even highlighted as a budget item? That is the bit I am struggling with and that is the reason I was asking why.

CHAIR: Member, you have asked that question again.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to ask the minister why.

CHAIR: This will be the last question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, in relation to the priorities of your department, we understand that, without a doubt, water is a huge issue and manufacturing is a huge issue—given that you are the boss of manufacturing in Queensland—but the department of regional development does not even factor in your SDS, and my question would be why?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the member for the question. As the acting director-general mentioned, my portfolio covers many of those projects that are going on and, as we have talked about tonight, Building our Region's funding.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Put it in the departmental highlights.

Mr BUTCHER: The Building our Region's budget is in the budget papers in relation to supporting regional communities to make sure that they develop. We are certainly supporting those regions through other things like manufacturing hubs which are based in regional Queensland supporting regional Queensland communities, which is developing regional Queensland. We continue to support many of the regional opportunities in this state.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: You have a dedicated deputy director-general just for regional development, but it did not even make a departmental highlight or a budget highlight; that is what I am trying to point the minister to.

Mr BUTCHER: There is money in the budget for Building our Regions which, in my role of regional development, is supporting regional councils along the way. There are other portfolios—and you can go through all of the budget papers—in support of regional development. It is across every one of the portfolios of the other ministers. I go out to communities, talk to people in these regional areas and feed back to the relative ministers on the issues they have right across the state. There is funding in every portfolio in this budget in relation to regional development.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So the minister is happy to answer questions from all of those other departments.

CHAIR: Member, this is your last shot at this.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take the minister's answer just then, because he consistently defers to other ministers. The minister just said that his department of regional development co-funds with all of these other departments so is the minister going to answer questions—

Mr BUTCHER: I never said 'co-funds' at all, Chair. She is making this into a different story. I never said that at all.

CHAIR: I understand that the choice of words may not have been accurate.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Will the minister next year answer questions in estimates from all those other departments that you co-lead with?

CHAIR: You blew it. That question was so close. It is unfortunate, but there we go. Before we wrap up, there are a couple of different issues to deal with. One was the question of how many applications there are for Building our Regions. Were there any other issues that we needed to have answers for?

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair. In terms of the Building our Regions applications, there were 135 applications and 99 of those applications were approved. Councils are now delivering those projects, as per the awards that have been granted. Earlier, I indicated that 100 per cent of the supply chain for the new trains would be local. Of course, we are working hard to make that the case. We are making sure that we maximise the local content. I indicated before that this would be the case. We are working towards getting 100 per cent of manufactured products onto those trains.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. There are no more questions on notice. The time allocated for consideration of the minister's portfolio has nearly expired. Minister, did you want to make a final wrap-up statement?

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you, Chair, I would love to. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for the opportunity to be here this evening. It is important to have this chance to explain to the committee the work the Palaszczuk government has been doing across its portfolios. I am so passionate about every one of these projects, and I am so proud to be part of a government that is committed to delivering the best outcome for Queenslanders.

Thanks to everyone for staying back for this later session. I know it is always tough on the committee; they go all day. I know that estimates is a long process and it would not be possible without the parliamentary staff who are here with us tonight bringing all of this together, as well as the work of the department and certainly the corporations that turned up with us earlier on.

Thank you to the hardworking staff in the department, particularly my acting director-general Linda Dobe and the DGG's Bernadette Zerba and Jarrod Cowley-Grimmond. Thank you to Sunwater and Seqwater for their involvement today. Both these organisations have been incredibly busy throughout the year from day-to-day operations to completing major infrastructure that will provide water security for Queenslanders for years to come.

Thank you to the staff in my office; they have been absolutely amazing this year. I know that, despite the stress of estimates, we looked forward to talking at length about the important work we do for these portfolios. I once again thank the committee and all the staff who have stayed back to help us tonight. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of estimates for the minister's portfolio areas has expired. That concludes the 2023 hearings of budget estimates for the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and the visiting members who have contributed so much today and participated in the hearing. On behalf of the committee, I thank Hansard, the parliamentary, ministerial and departmental staff, as well as the committee secretariat and all other parliamentary staff who have supported the hearing today. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 7.46 pm.