

# TUESDAY, 8 AUGUST 2023

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## ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS; DIGITAL SERVICES

### Estimate Committee Members

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

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### Members in Attendance

Mr SJ Minnikin  
Ms FS Simpson  
Mr JP Bleijie  
Mr MC Berkman  
Mr PT Weir  
Mr SSJ Andrew  
Mr TL Mander  
Ms A Leahy

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### In Attendance

Hon. MC Bailey, Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services  
Ms A Tibbitts, Chief of Staff  
Mr S Stark, Senior Policy Adviser  
**Department of Transport and Main Roads**  
Ms S Stannard, Acting Director-General  
**Cross River Rail Delivery Authority**  
Mr G Newton, Chief Executive Officer  
**Queensland Rail Limited**  
Ms K Stapleton, Chief Executive Officer

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### The committee met at 9.00 am.



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

I am Shane King, member for Kurwongbah and chair of the committee. With me here today are Mr Lachlan Millar MP, member for Gregory, who is our deputy chair; Mr Bryson Head MP, member for Callide; Mr James Martin MP, member for Stretton; Mr Les Walker MP, member for Mundingburra; and Mr Trevor Watts MP, member for Toowoomba North. The committee has granted leave for the following non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today: the members for Broadwater, Kawana, Warrego, Maroochydore, Chatsworth, Condamine, Everton, Buderim, Glass House, Scenic Rim, Mirani, Maiwar and South Brisbane. Other members may also seek leave over the course of today's proceedings.

The committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2023 and 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 broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

While mobile phone use is not normally permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses here today and who have been permitted the use of their devices for this purpose. I do ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: transport and main roads from 9 am to 11 am; transport and main roads and digital services from 11.15 am to 1 pm; energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2 pm to 3.30 pm; public works and procurement from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm; and resources from 5.30 pm to 7 pm and again from 7.15 pm to 8.15 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the portfolios of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services until 1 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the portfolios as follows, and as I just mentioned: transport and main roads from 9 am to 11 am, and transport and main roads and digital services from 11.15 am to 1 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolios can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 11 am to 11.15 am.

I remind those present today that committee 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, relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so the relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. I also welcome the following non-committee members: the members for Maroochydore, Kawana and Chatsworth. I hope I have not missed anybody. Welcome. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of transport and main roads open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Mr BAILEY:** Good morning. I acknowledge the traditional owners, the Yagara and Turrbal people, and offer my respects to elders past and present. It is an honour and a privilege to serve Queensland as the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and now Minister for Digital Services.

The Palaszczuk government is acting to reduce cost-of-living pressures due to the high inflation left by the former Morrison LNP government with \$8.2 billion in concessions in this state budget including an eighth record infrastructure commitment to Queensland. This includes \$165 million annually for the School Transport Assistance Scheme, which recently expanded to include students who live at two residential addresses in shared care arrangements. South-East Queensland transport fares have increased slower than the CPI over the last six years, with fares about seven per cent cheaper than if we had followed the CPI increases.

Whether it is your weekly grocery shopping or building a multibillion dollar rail network, cost pressures from high inflation are impacting every sector of the economy, every household and every business. Global supply chain impacts and labour availability are tight around Australia and an extraordinary escalation in construction costs—for instance, 62 per cent increase for gravel and 36 per cent increase for concrete—is prevalent. With 1,700 people moving to Queensland every week, our \$32.1 billion four-year road and transport investment is a central part of the government's \$89 billion Big Build. Queenslanders need a state government to keep building infrastructure—not cuts, not sacking, not selling and not sending manufacturing jobs overseas. Since coming to office in 2015 we have completed 459 Bruce Highway upgrades.

Our \$371 million Smart Ticketing project unites 18 different public transport payment systems into one, with all trains and light rail now activated and buses underway across the whole state. Our \$200 million Digital Economy Strategy is improving digital connectivity across our vast state, improving productivity and growing our economy. Our Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy will accelerate the move to decarbonise transport with electric and zero emission buses, affordable electric vehicles and more electric vehicle charging stations.

Last week we saw six fatal crashes on Queensland roads. Road safety remains one of our top priorities and we have \$1.8 billion committed in the budget over the next four years. We have now repaired more than half of the 75 disability noncompliant NGR trains, which were ordered from overseas by the Newman government, at a cost of \$332 million to taxpayers. We will complete those repairs next year. We are delivering more than 30 fully accessible train stations.

Not only have we kept Queensland ports in public hands but also we are investing in them to grow our economy. The biggest upgrade in the history of Townsville port is underway, as is the Common User Infrastructure Project at Bundaberg port, and we are investing more than \$128 million in Cairns port. Our \$21 million Queensland Maritime Jobs Taskforce is building the maritime industry through training, jobs and locally flagged shipping routes.

In the Torres Strait, the gulf and the cape we are delivering a \$64 million freight subsidy package to ease cost-of-living pressures and an \$80 million joint funding commitment for critical marine infrastructure upgrades with the Albanese government. The second five-year Cape York region package jointly funded is transforming road access and safety in the cape.

The Edmonton to Gordonvale six-laning of the Bruce Highway and the Townsville Ring Road stage 5 are both on track for completion this year. The \$1 billion Bruce Highway Gympie bypass will be completed mid next year and the Rockhampton Ring Road is soon to be underway, with the first packages of work awarded in June.

We are delivering the \$550 million Sunshine Coast rail duplication, with early works advanced and the business case funded for the direct Sunshine Coast rail line. There is a record \$5.5 billion for the Gold Coast Coomera Connector—second M1—only under this government; Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3; three new fully accessible train stations; huge upgrades on the M1 at the Gateway, Springwood, Varsity Lakes to Tugun, exits 41, 45, 49, 54, 57, 85 and 87, as well as the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail. In the metropolitan region there is \$4.5 billion.

The safety incident at the Cross River Rail Boggo Road work station in late July was shocking. Every worker deserves to go home safely every day. My thoughts and those of the department, the DA and the contractors remain with Nation Kouka, his family and co-workers at this time. A Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation continues. The project supports nearly 3,000 workers across many work sites. A safety reset on all sites has been conducted with input from workers, unions and contractors to prevent further incidents.

Bringing train manufacturing back to Queensland will only happen under the Palaszczuk government. It will provide well-advanced manufacturing jobs for hundreds of Queenslanders for the next 35 years. There is one 35-year figure for the cost of this program to build and operate 65 new trains at a purpose-built facility at Torbanlea. That figure is \$9.5 billion. That followed an independent procurement process. This information was made public on the TMR website on 30 June.

The capital cost to build the 65 new trains during the manufacturing phase of the project is set out in the budget paper as being \$4.869 billion. That includes \$4.6 billion for the signed contract with Downer. Via road, rail, digital connectivity and infrastructure, public transport, active transport, accessible transport, safer roads, resilient freight routes, productive ports and a thriving maritime sector, the Palaszczuk government delivers the record infrastructure that a booming population in Queensland needs via this budget. I commend it, and I look forward to this estimates procedure.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I will now commence questioning.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My first question is to the minister. Minister Bailey, why should Queenslanders believe anything that you say today?

**CHAIR:** We are not starting well. The question is a bit argumentative. I will allow the question, as is my practice, but, Minister, you talk about what you need to talk about because the question is very diverse.

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you, Chair. The simple answer to this question is that I am doing all the things that the member failed to do when he was the assistant minister for public transport in the Newman government. We are building trains in Queensland; we are upgrading the M1; we are building a second M1 that was blocked by the honourable member who asked the question; and we are upgrading the Bruce Highway. There have been 459 upgrades in this term versus two across the three years of the Newman government. We have kept our ports in public hands. They would have been sold off on the honourable member's watch, if he had had another turn.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Gonna, gonna, gonna. You failed, Minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** We are investing in ports and we are expanding the ports that we have kept in public hands. I am answering the question that the honourable member asked. We are expanding the Townsville port and we are expanding the Cairns port because we have kept them in public hands. We are investing in infrastructure—not cutting it. What we saw under the Newman government were deep cuts.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Under the Bligh government, you sold assets.

**Mr BAILEY:** Deep cuts. You asked the question, you want to get the answer.

**CHAIR:** Member, you have asked a question and it was a very leading question. The answer is just as leading in return. Let's see where we go with this answer.

**Mr BAILEY:** When I became the minister we had industry lining up saying, 'Please give us some work—any work—after the deep cuts of the Newman government.' The economy had gone down to 0.7 per cent growth. Unemployment had spiked to 7.1 per cent. The state was a joke under the Newman government, which is why the honourable member's government lost a record majority after only one term. This government is delivering the infrastructure that a booming population needs. We will make trains in Queensland, and nothing the LNP does will stop us from making trains in Queensland. They seem to hate making trains in Queensland. We have signed the contract; we have locked it in. They still did not budget for making trains in Queensland in their last election commitment, because they do not believe in rail manufacturing jobs in Queensland. You will get that under this government. They cut Cross River Rail. Transformational projects are the foundation—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** Well you miss 100 per cent of the shots.

**CHAIR:** Minister and member, stop arguing across the chamber. Member, please do not interject. You will have a chance to ask questions on all of these things. Let the minister answer the question. Minister, if you could wind up this answer.

**Mr BAILEY:** I will finish on this—I say to the honourable member: you miss 100 per cent of the shots you do not take. When you cut, that is what happens. That is what they did when they were in government—they cut. We are building. I am happy to be 'builder Bailey' because we need the infrastructure that a booming population needs.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Minister, last week you said you were transparent because the real cost of the train manufacturing program was disclosed on the World Wide Web. At any time, did you or your office direct the department to delay or not publish the real \$9.5 billion figure on the website?

**Mr BAILEY:** I am not aware that that ever occurred, no. It appeared on the department website on 30 June. That was the same day that I announced that train manufacturing was coming back to Queensland with the signing of the contract the night before to ensure the next 65 trains would be built here in Queensland by Queensland manufacturing workers. The estimated figure over the full 35-year period went on the website for the department on the same day of my press conference and it has been there ever since.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** A further question to the acting director-general, Ms Stannard. Did Minister Bailey's office ever direct the department to delay or not publish the real \$9.5 billion figure on the website?

**Ms Stannard:** With respect to the member's question, there was no direction from the minister to change our publication on the website. We did have some advice and suggestions about ways to clarify the scope of work that is in that \$9.5 billion, but there was no direction to change the figure.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, was that discussion with the minister's staff or department, or internal?

**Ms Stannard:** I am sorry; I do not understand the question specifically.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** When you said you had 'internal discussion', was that within TMR or with the minister's office as well?

**Ms Stannard:** The minister's office made some suggestions as to the way that the material was conveyed, but they did not make any direction.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, on 19 June you received a draft media release from your department with the correct figure of \$9.5 billion in it. Your office took the figure out—why?

**Mr BAILEY:** I addressed this fully in a very long media conference last week, but I am happy to go over it again.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**CHAIR:** We will not have these interjections please. You will have a chance to ask questions; all questions will be answered. Please do not interject.

**Mr BAILEY:** The honourable member should have some sense of it because he was a member of the Newman government which ordered 75 trains to be made overseas on an extended contract—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order: my question, with respect, had no imputations. It was a factual question. I am after an answer, not government's 10 years in the wilderness. He has been the minister of the department for a long time. I would ask you to bring him back to the question that was directly asked by me.

**CHAIR:** I will do that, member. I will say this has been ventilated at length over the past week. We have all heard different things. Minister, if you could—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It gets murkier by the day.

**CHAIR:** I am ruling, member. If you stop talking over me you, will hear the answer from the minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am happy to answer that directly and I will be answering it directly; I am simply giving context. The broad structure of having a train contract that involves both capital and operating costs is what we are talking about here. The previous 75 trains had not a dissimilar process, which the honourable member would have had cabinet briefings on. He would know that until a contract is signed, you do not have a figure. The contract was signed after the close of business on 29 June by the acting director-general on behalf of the department. This then set off a very formal process about the notification of the stock exchange, because with such a significant contract, the stock exchange needed to be notified first thing at the opening of business the next day on 30 June.

What we saw was a draft media release come up with a proposed figure. That figure was not confirmed. It could well have changed based on further negotiations. There were another 10 days of negotiations between Downer and the procurement process which is entirely separate and independent from government, as it should be. The reason that the figure was taken out, as I previously explained, is that there was no confirmed signed number because the contract had not yet been signed. In the end, it was still 10 further days off being signed. So that number could have been any number, depending on what was finally agreed to through negotiations with the preferred supplier, which was Downer. It is a logical thing. I have explained this in a media conference. We can have conspiracy theories from those opposite. We will be making trains in Queensland under this government, and only under this government. What we get is continued interference from the LNP, who still do not believe in building trains in Queensland. The contrast is very stark.

This government will back rail manufacturing workers and long-term blue-collar jobs to build the latest high-spec trains here in our state and grow that manufacturing sector. We have confirmed it. We are very proud of that and you know with the LNP that they do not believe in that.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Acting Director-General, with regard to the \$9.5 billion figure provided by your department to the minister's office on 19 June, where did that figure come from?

**Ms Stannard:** The figure is a provision for the future cost of maintaining the trains for a full 35-year period as well as the scope we have contracted to Downer as well as some additional scope which is not yet contracted. I have some information about that scope which I can read for the committee.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** That is okay, Acting Director-General. I will move—

**CHAIR:** Member, is it okay if we do hear that? As long as it is not too lengthy, I would be interested. I think the more information we can get on this the better, as long as it is not too lengthy, Acting Director-General. Is that okay? It is your question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The acting director-general has answered my question; I am happy to move on to my next question.

**CHAIR:** Okay; all right.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** On the \$9.5 billion, was it an estimate?

**Ms Stannard:** The \$9.5 billion provision provides for maintenance over 35 years. We have not yet contracted that maintenance, so on that basis it is an estimate of a future cost that we expect to incur for the maintaining of those trains over their full life. We have signed one contract with Downer for \$4.6 billion, and that includes the scope to build the manufacturing facility at Torbanlea, build the rail facility at Ormeau and manufacture the 65 trains at Torbanlea and maintenance of those trains for 15 years. The remaining funds outside the \$4.6 billion include additional scope items the state has funding for, including cost for Queensland Rail and Transport and Main Roads to participate in and manage the program. There is some additional scope for on-network stabling—places to put the trains when they are not in service. There is the provision for a network connection. That means connecting the operating train line to the facility at Torbanlea. There is also provision for a 10-kilometre test track. During the bidding process, bidders advised that a test track can reduce the risk of time to introduce new trains into operational service and, as a result, the state has provided for that investment in a test track. There is also the provision in the \$9.5 billion for 20 years of additional maintenance, currently envisaged as four five-year increments. That is not currently contracted. We do have a small amount of contingency which we reserve also within that provision.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** When did the department first come up with the \$9.5 billion figure?

**Ms Stannard:** We did have an early estimate of the total program cost which was published on our website in October 2021. That figure was \$7.12 billion. We then went through a procurement process where we received three conforming bids from the bidders that were participating and those bids included optional additions beyond the required scope. It is only at the time when we could see those bids come to us that we had the opportunity to review the alternative options that were provided and, in the process of then negotiating, select which alternatives and additions we wanted to take forward. It is important to note, as the minister outlined in his opening statement: there was significant cost pressure on the market in the period between our original estimate and the receipt of those tenders. The minister has outlined a number of those increases on input costs and no project is immune from the nature of those escalations, particularly projects that include significant civil works, as this project does.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So, Acting Director-General, when? When did the department settle on the \$9.5 billion figure?

**Ms Stannard:** The investment decision for QTMP was a matter for the consideration of the cabinet and, due to the requirements of the Cabinet Handbook, I am unable to talk to the nature of cabinet decisions.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You can give the date to the committee without disclosing what was discussed at cabinet, though. What date? I see the minister shake his head, because obviously he does not want the answer and he does not want Queenslanders to know the truth to this cover-up.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, please.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Acting Director-General—

**CHAIR:** Member, you are running a commentary here. Ask a question, by all means. That is what you are here for.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Acting Director-General, my question was very specific: when did the department settle on the \$9.5 billion? You have said it was a Cabinet Budget Review Committee decision so you can tell the committee, without disclosing what was discussed at the cabinet review committee, when that decision was made—on what date that decision was made.

**Ms Stannard:** There was an announcement by the government about a preferred tenderer and from that period we were able to negotiate with the individual supplier, who is Downer. During that period of negotiation we negotiated with Downer the cost of a number of additional items, which included significant accessibility upgrades to the trains. There is—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Acting Director-General. I am after a date, just the date.

**Ms Stannard:** Certainly. We executed the contract on 29 June with Downer and that was the point at which we confirmed the total cost of the Downer scope within that program of work.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So in terms of the \$9.5 billion, the contract was signed the day before the media release was put out?

**Ms Stannard:** The contract with Downer is \$4.6 billion and that was signed on 29 June.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is about the \$9.5 billion and when the department settled on the \$9.5 billion cost. It was in your press release, so you must have settled on a figure somehow. I am just asking when the date was.

**Ms Stannard:** It is certainly true that the draft media release prepared on 19 June included that estimate. At that point we were nearing completion of the negotiations with Downer.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** And you were confident that that \$9.5 billion was not going to change? Obviously you put it—

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Mr Chair: he is asking for an opinion. It is clearly against standing orders.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister, but I will chair this one. I will go to that, member for Kawana. You are—I will not say ‘badgering’, but you are persisting with a question that the acting director-general has answered again and again and again.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. Acting Director-General—

**CHAIR:** We can ask it all day.

**Mr BLEIJIE:**—the figure you said you settled on 29 June; the press release was then issued on 30 June. The draft release by the department—the document—had the \$9.5 billion, so had the department settled on the \$9.5 billion confident enough to advise the minister?

**Ms Stannard:** In the process of executing contracts we prepare draft media statements. As the minister outlined earlier, once we executed that contract it set in chain a time-required process for that successful bidder to advise the stock exchange, so it is too late for us to then draft communications materials post that signing. We prepare a draft and that is not finalised until we execute that contract.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It is reported that in early July Minister Bailey’s office requested communications and messaging be changed to conceal or take out the actual cost of \$9.5 billion. What request was made to your department about those communications and when? On what date?

**CHAIR:** Member, I would just caution you: were you putting words in there? You were saying about concealing or something. Do you have proof of that?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Do I have proof Minister Bailey covered up a \$2.4 billion blowout? Yes.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: what a nonsense!

**CHAIR:** Member, we will not go there.

**Mr BAILEY:** What a nonsense.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Do I have proof of the cover-up? Yes.

**Mr BAILEY:** What a nonsense.

**CHAIR:** Member, do not be misleading—

**Mr BAILEY:** What a nonsense. Your record is on the record, mate. You were the worst minister in history.

**CHAIR:** Minister, we will not have this—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You should not even be here, mate. You should not even be sitting in that chair.

**CHAIR:** Both of you, please, stop right now. I do not want to start warning people this early.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I can rephrase the question—

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I am speaking and when I am speaking I will ask you to remain silent. I will hand the questioning back to you in a moment, but this is going to be respectful today. I have seen some over the past week which were less than, and that will not be happening today. It might be a very short turn for some people in here if we keep going this way. Please, member for Kawana, ask a question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Acting Director-General, it is reported Minister Bailey's office requested communications and messaging be changed. When was that change requested and what were the changes? To an earlier question you talked about suggestions or directions or so forth. You said it was not a direction; it was just suggestions. How were the suggestions made and what was the language used in the communications and when were the communications given to your department?

**Ms Stannard:** I can advise that we received an email on 3 July. That email made some suggestions about messaging. It provided a couple of things to consider and the email refers to a number of matters, including a reference to jobs. We did then engage in some discussions about how we were reporting the jobs benefits from the program of investment to ensure that we were specific to the jobs in Maryborough as distinct from the jobs that will be delivered through other locations of the program such as at Ormeau. So, the messaging was for consideration—a couple of things to consider.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I have a question to the minister. Is the minister familiar with the Westminster principle of ministerial accountability?

**CHAIR:** Really? Okay, Minister, can you answer that?

**Mr BAILEY:** I certainly am, Chair, and I have taken responsibility for matters coming under my department and when an error has been made I have apologised. That is something that no LNP former minister can say in this place. The member for Kawana—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Chair—

**Mr BAILEY:** It is a very open-ended question. You will get a very open-ended answer. The member for Kawana—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Chair, I have another question for the minister.

**Mr BAILEY:**—had an extraordinary, incompetent period—

**CHAIR:** Minister and member for Maroochydore—both of you—stop right now. It is my turn. You did ask a very leading and open-ended question and I will give the minister latitude to answer it. You asked him—

**Ms SIMPSON:** I have a supplementary to that, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** And we will get to that supplementary question once the minister completes his answer.

**Mr BAILEY:** There was a reason why the Newman government was tossed out after one term: because they did not understand the separation of powers. They did not understand good practice—

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

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** I am getting points of order everywhere, Minister. I know what they are about. I will ask you to complete that answer.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Chair, the minister issued an incorrect price in a document—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore!

**Ms SIMPSON:** And there has been no consequence for his misleading—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore! It is a simple rule. You above all should understand. When the chair is speaking you do not speak. It is a simple rule, member. Minister, that will be the end of that answer.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am happy to leave it at that.

**CHAIR:** Now, member for Maroochydore, it is your turn.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Minister, you have admitted you were responsible for issuing a document with an incorrect price. Responsibility is one thing, but what are the consequences for your failure in this?

**Mr BAILEY:** The consequences are we make trains in Queensland. We are very proud of that. We know that would not have happened under the LNP because they ordered dodgy trains from overseas.



**Ms SIMPSON:** The minister still fudged—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore! Stop your interjections.

**Ms SIMPSON:**—fudged and no consequences for misleading the public.

**CHAIR:** I am cautioning you, member for Maroochydore, to stop interjecting.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am answering the question very directly. The reality is the previous government ordered dodgy trains that were not disability compliant from overseas and we are making sure these trains are best practice, they lean in at the stations, they will have a test track so that we can test them off line, they will be fully respectful—I make this point: we are fully respectful of every Queenslander with a disability because we have involved every kind of disability group in the design of these trains from the ground up. So not just people who have physical disability, but visual disability and cognitive. These trains are made for all kinds of people, not the disrespectful behaviour under the previous government who disrespected people with disabilities.

**CHAIR:** I am about to get a point of order. So, Minister, whatever the question was—

**Mr MILLAR:** We do not even know what the question was.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My question is to the minister. Minister, I refer to the parliamentary website which states 'Ministers are individually responsible to Cabinet and the Parliament for their own actions, and also for those of their departments.' Minister, given the multiple failures on your watch, isn't it time you resigned?

**CHAIR:** Member, that question is really asking for opinion. While I will allow it, you have got to expect the answer that probably will be coming. Minister, let us not turn this into—

**Mr BAILEY:** I am happy to answer the question. This is a question from the former assistant minister allegedly for public transport—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Time to go.

**CHAIR:** Stop it.

**Mr BAILEY:**—who cut Cross River Rail, who ordered dodgy trains that were not disability compliant from overseas that we are still fixing today, Chair. We are still fixing these NGR trains, the dodgy trains ordered by the member for Chatsworth, and he has the temerity to say I should resign when he has never even apologised for the incompetence of the Newman government and their disrespect to people with disabilities and their disrespect to the town of Maryborough.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Queenslanders have seen through you.

**Mr BAILEY:** Maryborough was looking like a dying town because their work had been taken away from them by the member for Chatsworth, the member for Kawana and all their colleagues who sent the jobs overseas to be made by other people in other countries and this government is bringing back train making to Queensland.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Point of order under 118(b).

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order. You did ask a very open-ended question.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** But it is relevance. The question was—

**CHAIR:** I would like to go to some government questioning, but we will let the minister quickly wind up on this.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My point of order was—

**CHAIR:** Relevance, and that is why I am saying—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Yes, relevance. When will the minister resign?

**CHAIR:** I could have ruled the question out of order.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is a silly question.

**CHAIR:** I did not rule the question out of order, but it was argumentative and asking for opinion.

**Mr BAILEY:** And you need help from your mates.

**CHAIR:** Minister, are you—

**Mr BAILEY:** Just to finish off, the interesting observation so far, Chair, is that the member who asked the question—his own colleagues do not have confidence in him. They have the member for Kawana and the member for Maroochydore doing his job for him this morning. His own colleagues do not have confidence in his terrible record on public transport under the Newman government and he is still their shadow. It is incredible.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** And you are still the minister! Incredible. Unbelievable.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Chatsworth. We will now go to government questions.

**Mr MARTIN:** Just following on from the issues of disability standards, page 93 of budget paper 3 refers to accessibility modifications to the NGR to comply with disability standards. Could you describe the sorts of modifications being applied and update the committee on that progress?

**Mr BAILEY:** Absolutely. Thank you, member, and I thank you for your support of people with disabilities and their right to public transport that is made fit for purpose to allow them to get around. For many of those people it is their only option for transport and sadly we have seen 75 trains ordered by the Newman government—the members for Chatsworth, Kawana and Maroochydore were all there supporting these trains that were cheap—and we are still repairing them to this day. We have now repaired more than the majority of them, we will complete the repairs next year and, of course, it means that we have got eight of them out at a time from service which is not optimal.

It is costing the taxpayer \$335 million for the Palaszczuk government to fix the dodgy trains ordered by the LNP. That is being done by our magnificent rail workers in Maryborough. I cannot thank them enough for all of their work. That town will prosper now that we are ordering the next 65 trains from Maryborough where we are building a purpose-built, publicly-owned rail manufacturing facility. It will be one of the biggest and best in the country where we will be doing a lot of manufacturing there to make these trains. But to give you an idea of the rectification work that we have had to do, and we had to go through a whole process of involving all the different disability groups about how to fix the cheap trains ordered by the members for Kawana, Maroochydore and also Chatsworth, what we have been able to achieve is the size of the toilet modules are being progressively increased.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Chair, point of order.

**CHAIR:** There has been a point of order.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I take personal offence. I was not a member of cabinet. I ask that the comment be withdrawn.

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Likewise, I was also not a minister so I have not been signing any contracts. The minister is the one who has been involved in this contractual arrangement.

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw. But I make the observation that all members of the Newman government voted for these things in parliament. They can try to distance themselves embarrassingly from the bungle here. Look, they are trying to run like scared—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Coming from mangocube!

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** We have another point of order, Minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** Trying to distance themselves from the—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** How embarrassing. They voted for it.

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, stop the commentary. Minister, please stop. We have a point of order from the member for Gregory.

**Mr MILLAR:** Relevance.

**CHAIR:** It is very relevant to the question that was asked so there is no point of order. Minister, please continue.

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you. The members seem to be saying, 'It is not our fault, but I voted for it.' That is what they just said—pretty much what they just said.

Let us get back to rectification of the cheap trains made overseas. The size of the toilet modules are being progressively increased by 10 per cent to an extended footprint to meet dimensions and improve functionality in line with the federal Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Act 2002. This is something that should have been done at the beginning and was not and that is shameful in the 21st century.

These gender neutral toilets will ensure wheelchair accessible spaces have access to accessible facilities. The upgrades will also reconfigure seating and allocate spaces in both accessible cars, increasing the number of priority seats for people with disabilities throughout the train. Additional grab

rails will be available inside the toilet modules and improved signage, including wording and braille, will be included so that people who have visual issues can obviously negotiate it, and things like there is a light in there so that if there is an emergency someone who cannot hear can actually see that there is an emergency. These sorts of things should have been put in these train contracts from the very beginning and shamefully were not.

All rectification works are being delivered at the Downer facility in Maryborough. We have delivered a pipeline of work to that facility to maintain ongoing good jobs on the Fraser Coast. I note recent reporting that 43 of the NGR trains have been subject to the upgrade and are now back in service in the South-East Queensland network, including in the honourable member's area of Stretton, with the remaining six-car carriage sets expected to be completed over the course of this year and 2024. As the program is progressed, the pace at which the trains are upgraded has increased, with 15 carriages completed over the six months to June.

At any given moment there are eight NGR train sets offline at the Downer facility being fixed by workers in Maryborough. Again, I thank you them for their work. This means we are on track to deliver the remaining carriages, as I said, next year. From the commencement of services of the Cross River Rail project, the NGR trains will be the only trains in the fleet equipped to an appropriate fire standard and also equipped with the combined European Train Control System, platform screen doors and automatic train operation capability.

I thank the disability sector and I also thank former judge Michael Forde, the chair of the disability group. He has done magnificent work. I was able to meet with him and thank him on Friday of last week. He was the person who, in the Fitzgerald inquiry, asked about the separation of powers of former premier Bjelke-Petersen. He has had a sterling career as a judge. His forensic work in this regard has been of the highest calibre and quality. Disability groups have been so supportive of the process and the outcome.

These trains are lined up there in Maryborough to be fixed. There is still plenty to go but we are getting it done. That is good news for everybody: senior citizens, people who cannot move around so well, people with visual impairment—and in my electorate I have plenty of those who access the rail system. We took them down to the fully upgraded Yeronga station as an ABC disability reporter wanted to look at the design. They were so pleased that the station layout is done in braille for people who cannot see. All of those things are really important not only for safety but also for a sense of inclusion for people who have disabilities. When things are designed for them they feel much more part of the community. They are much more likely to get around and be part of the community if they feel safe and things are designed for them. That is what we are doing not just with the trains but also with the station upgrades, whether on the network or as part of Cross River Rail.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, following on about overall investment in rail infrastructure and what that means for Queensland, page 8 of Budget Paper No. 3 refers to QTRIP, which includes the Palaszczuk government's investment in rail infrastructure in the new Queensland-made trains for South-East Queensland passengers. Could you outline how the government's investment in rail is contributing to a rail revolution?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for his support. There are many train stations in his patch so he knows how important rail is. We are absolutely committed to expanding the rail network—not like the previous Newman government when Cross River Rail was cut, there was not a single upgrade to the trains, there were dodgy trains. We know their record: nothing happened in three years to benefit commuters whatsoever across South-East Queensland under the previous government.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Best on-time running.

**Mr BAILEY:** Our four-year Queensland transport—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** Chair, come on. Sensitive!

**CHAIR:** Yes, member.

**Mr BAILEY:** Our four-year Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program shows we are investing \$9.6 billion towards rail infrastructure. This is a sustainable investment in rail and continues to deliver on the key priorities set out in SEQ Rail Connect, the Queensland's government's blueprint for preparing the South-East Queensland rail network for the future. Of course, with a booming population you need public transport to be more competitive and that is what we are doing. This delivers not just the new trains and the new stations—those trains made in Queensland—but also lays the foundation for a modernised network including critical track upgrades, signalling improvements, which

is what European train control is all about, and station upgrades for accessibility. The investment in rail continues to drive our economic recovery, supports jobs and is something that promotes economic confidence and community inclusion.

Key projects include the \$2.6 billion Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail, jointly funded with the Australian government, between Kuraby and Beenleigh. That will benefit not just people in that area but also people beyond that area who will get a faster trip in, making it quicker and taking people out of their cars, letting the train driver do the driving and making it more competitive. There is the \$550 million Sunshine Coast rail duplication. Early works are advanced. That project is jointly funded with the Albanese government. We have new stations at Pimpama, Merrimac and Hope Island, which are really high growth areas. That will get people onto the rail network and give them options that do not involve driving their cars. Of course, this means we get more out of our road infrastructure as well. Almost \$300 million in accessibility upgrades are to Banyo station, Bundamba station, Burpengary station—and I know that you have advocated for that one, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am keen on that one, Minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** Also Lindum and Morningside stations. Cross River Rail will unlock the transport bottlenecks at the heart of the system and improve our rail network with four new underground stations, at Boggo Road, Woolloongabba, Albert Street and Roma Street. People see that those stations will have a real wow factor. They will be the best designed stations in the world. It is very clever design. They will be very open despite being considerably underground. They will be fully accessible. I think these stations will be heavily used very quickly. Everyone will be saying, 'You've got to check them out,' because this is going to change the way we think of our city and our region. They are not just important for population growth but also, of course, we have a significant event coming in the Olympic and Paralympic Games and this will be fundamental to moving people between venues.

I am advised we have almost 3,100 workers across more than 15 work sites, and that injects more than \$3 million into the economy from Cross River Rail. The Ekka station will go full-time. That will transform that area, which has seen a lot of new residential development in the past 10 years. The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital is just across the road. Thousands of health workers will be able to get to work on rail whereas currently they cannot. The Ekka station is only opened for a week or so a year, although, unfortunately, not this year because we are rebuilding it from the ground up. I think people will be very impressed when they go to the Ekka and see what we have done there already. People will be very excited to see how great that station will be.

Of course, we are doing a whole range of other station upgrades on the south side between Salisbury and Dutton Park. Anyone who has been through there will know that Yeronga station is done, Fairfield station is almost done, and Dutton Park and Rocklea are being constructed at the moment. We have a policy of not closing two stations together at the same time, so as other stations are completed we will move on to Yeerongpilly, Salisbury and Moorooka. That is a very old section. You will get a bit of a template when you look at Yeronga station, which ABC covered very well. A lot of the stations will be relatively similar to it.

In terms of the rail revolution, we have Sunshine Coast rail. We are doing the necessary business case now that we have a federal government that is interested in doing a Sunshine Coast direct rail line. They committed the first funds through federal parliament in the budget last year, October 2022. We are getting the business case done to give a costing and a scope. It is the third largest city in Queensland and the ninth largest city in the nation. The Sunshine Coast is growing rapidly. We are doing the hard yards there because we now have a partner in Canberra whereas we did not for a decade. That business case and that work are really important.

To close, the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail, between Kuraby and Beenleigh, will be a huge project. All the way along we will see station upgrades to make them accessible and level crossing removals. There will be the straightening of a track, which is quite an old section of track that means the speed has to be quite low by modern standards. We will straighten that up to get trains through there faster. It will mean rail will be a lot more competitive.

If we want to invest in infrastructure, it cannot just be in roads; it needs to be in public transport and rail. I think the member understands that that is a wise investment for a booming population. You need a balanced transport network. You cannot bias towards just one form. The rail revolution that is happening is one that we are very proud of and it is one that we will deliver under this government.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, in respect to the Big Build and Budget Paper No. 3, which outlines several important investments in North and Far North Queensland, can you advise how the budget is delivering infrastructure in that region and how it impacts North and Far North Queenslanders?

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you member for Mundingburra. Can I say what a great job you are doing as the member for Mundingburra—and your predecessor as well—but going further back there less so. I know that you are committed to North Queensland and it is always great to work with you. I know that you advocate very strongly. In Townsville, projects such as our \$96 million investment in the Townsville Connection Road, which I know you have advocated for, will make a massive difference to your constituents. There we will see the capacity of the road increase to four lanes between University Road and Bowen Road Bridge. It will also make the road safer for pedestrians and for cyclists by providing wider paths, better connections and safer crossings. I have been on site with you a number of times. It is very exciting with all those sporting fields nearby. For people to be able to get there more easily by using different modes will be really good for the community there in Townsville. Our investment in North Queensland is extensive. There will be \$280 million in joint funding into the Townsville Ring Road which now is very advanced. That is the last piece of the ring road to be duplicated as part of the Bruce Highway upgrades. I know both yourself and the member for Thuringowa have been big supporters of that upgrade. With more than 17,000 freight and passenger vehicles passing through that area every day they will benefit from better connectivity.

In terms of going up to the Far North and Cairns—a bit beyond the member's area—we have a \$1.5 billion commitment with 1,300 jobs as part of that. I refer to the six-laning of the Bruce Highway. We have done our third upgrade south of Cairns since we were elected in 2015, which is a \$535 million joint commitment with the Albanese government to six-lane the Bruce Highway from Edmonton to Gordonvale after we did Robert Road to Foster Road and Kate Street to Aumuller Street in previous terms. That is 10 kilometres of better Bruce Highway, capacity and safety as well as active transport. You will be able to go all the way into Cairns on separated cycleways, and this will be a real game changer for school kids and for people who just like to get some exercise on their way to work. We have to keep building active transport as we do major road upgrades. We find that when we do that it is very popular with the local community and it gives people options that they did not have and would not risk beforehand.

In Far North Queensland there is: \$359 million in joint funding to the Captain Cook Highway; \$300 million towards the Cairns Western Arterial Road—again, joint funding with the Albanese government—\$265 million committed towards the Kuranda Range Road—again, joint funding—and getting out beyond the Gulf Developmental Road gets \$12 million as well. We have the intelligent transport system going into Kuranda Range Road to manage that piece of road much better—a \$35 million joint commitment driven by us—and of course we have kept our ports in public hands. We are widening the channel into Townsville, the member's city. That allows bigger ships to go directly into the Townsville Port rather than having to go to the Brisbane Port in terms of all the products being shipped up and freighted up to North Queensland with the extra costs that come with it. I would like a dollar for every press conference I have had with the member at Townsville Port as there have been quite a few, but we love keeping that port in public hands because we can then develop it for the benefit of North Queenslanders. As a matter of public record, it was to be sold off under so-called 'Strong Choices' by the previous government. It was saved by this government, kept in public hands but developed further as well. That will be of benefit.

Products in North Queensland will be cheaper because fewer freight costs will be handed on by all the people importing various products. We are very committed. Of course, in terms of Cairns Port we delivered the \$127 million Cairns shipping development previously. Now we have commitments to work with the maritime industry and the defence industry in Cairns. Anyone who has been to the Cairns Port, the restaurants and the brewery there knows it is a fantastic part of Cairns. It is one that we have developed through Ports North because we believe in keeping our assets in public hands. Member, thank you for your advocacy for North Queensland. The member is very passionate about it. As the member can see, we are not cutting; we are investing. That is what North Queensland needs.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I believe the member for Kawana has a question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is for the acting director-general. Director-General, would you consider a communication from the minister asking to 'please do something' a direction from the minister?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: is that a hypothetical?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will rephrase.

**CHAIR:** Member, could I ask you to rephrase it?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Acting Director-General, if the minister said to you, 'Please do something', would you do it?

**Ms Stannard:** The minister speaks to me regularly about matters that we are considering. A direction needs to be in writing and it needs to be a request. It is generally accompanied by a 'please' in order to be appropriate and respectful. But I think the full context of any written request needs to be considered, so words to the effect of 'a couple of things to consider' also need to be considered in that response.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** If we consider the niceties of the word 'please' or whatever the case or suggestion is, is it fair to say that if you received the same request from the minister's office you would also consider that a direction and act on that?

**Ms Stannard:** We regularly receive suggestions from the minister's office and advice regarding documents that we are preparing which are drafts, documents that are provided for approval or for noting. When we receive directions, it is very clear when they are a direction. Typically in an approval process, that would be a written direction to do something.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** At any time have you acted on a request that came from the minister's office sent by his staff? Does that happen routinely?

**Ms Stannard:** No, I have not.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have not acted on a request from the minister's office if it is in the same vein as I said in the previous question?

**Ms Stannard:** I apologise. We act on requests where they are appropriate and consistent with what we are doing. My response was that I have not acted on a direction from a minister's office staffer or member of the minister's staff. Directions can only come from the minister.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, I go back to the email in question to your department about removing the \$9.5 billion. What action did your office take following that email?

**Ms Stannard:** We clarified some matters with our office related to jobs figures. There were suggestions about clarifying where jobs were occurring as a result of the program. We focused on creating clarity around those job numbers and we considered that in our team in terms of how do we represent appropriately the contract that we had executed and the jobs that would occur in that local area. We did in the end 'NFA' that brief, which means 'no further action'.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** That particular email you received on 3 July with the suggestions—clarification—did that come from the minister or the minister's office? I think you said the minister's staff, is that correct—with the suggestions of changing the \$9.5 billion?

**Ms Stannard:** The minister's office provided feedback.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Did any of that communication contain the word 'delete'?

**Ms Stannard:** After the word 'consider', the email contained the word 'delete'.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So the minister's office did ask the department to delete the \$9.5 billion figure for the train manufacturing program?

**Ms Stannard:** The minister's office provided a couple of things to 'consider' in that email request.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have just said that it contained the word 'delete' though. Was the 'delete' with respect to the \$9.5 billion train manufacturing project which in essence would be deleting that from the media release, website or any communications? It would conceal the \$2.5 billion budget blowout.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am going to allow the question but, acting director-general, there are some quite leading words and terms in there. I will give you some leniency in answering that.

**Ms Stannard:** The feedback was about a comms brief. It provided a couple of things for us to consider. One of those considerations was to review the reference to the contract value with Downer.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** With the word 'delete'—delete all references to the contract value—correct?

**CHAIR:** You are putting words, member—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The director-general is reading an email. I am just asking her to confirm that is correct.

**Ms Stannard:** The advice said, 'There are a couple of things to consider' and one of those was to update the reference to match the contract value with Downer.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** And use the word 'delete'? You said that you were—

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

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am just really trying to clarify that you have confirmed to this committee—

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana! There is a point of order.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: the member is clearly hectoring the director-general by—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You don't want to answer, do you?

**CHAIR:** I will allow the point of order to be heard in silence.

**Mr BAILEY:** He is clearly hectoring the director-general—

**Mr MILLAR:** Looking for clarification.

**CHAIR:** Stop it.

**Mr BAILEY:**—and I just simply ask for him to show some respect.

**Mr MILLAR:** Looking for clarification.

**CHAIR:** Member, please do not interject. There was a point of order being raised. Thank you for the point of order. Member for Kawana, can you continue your questioning, please.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** For one last time, Director-General. The communication you received from the office of the minister did contain the word 'delete' references to the \$9.5 billion Train Manufacturing Program; correct?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: again another question which is repetitious.

**CHAIR:** Minister, it is very repetitious. We are getting the same question again and again. Acting Director-General, can you please answer the question? Sorry, had you finished the question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes.

**Ms Stannard:** We were given a number of matters for consideration. One of those included updating the project value to reflect the contract value and others were to the jobs value. They were all phrased as 'feedback for consideration'.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Could you read to the committee the sentence that started with 'delete'? Could you read the paragraph that talked about 'delete' to the committee, please?

**Ms Stannard:** I can read the notes in front of me. I do not have the—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Just the deleting reference.

**CHAIR:** Member, we have gone over this again and again. I am not going to stop this question. I understand what you are trying to do. The acting director-general has answered again and again—

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

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Chair, it is pretty important.

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is the role of members to ask questions and not to direct witnesses to do certain things. That is outside the standing orders and it is clearly a stunt from the member for Kawana.

**CHAIR:** No. I understand—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** It is trying to uncover the truth.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is a stunt.

**CHAIR:** I will not allow these interjections. Minister, that is not really a point of order. I will ask the member for the Kawana to be careful with his wording.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Will the director-general read to the committee the reference to 'delete' in what she is reading from, please?

**Ms Stannard:** The minister's office provided feedback for consideration. The content of that feedback for consideration included a couple of things to consider. It specified considering the Queensland government is investing in rail. It considered deleting the reference and talking about the \$4.6 billion contract with Downer as well as the capital investment over the forward estimates period and—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Acting Director-General. The minister's office asked you to delete references, thank you.

**CHAIR:** No, you will not pass comment on it, member for Kawana. Do you have another question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Yes, I do. You have had some more time now to consider it during government questions. On what date was the very first time you learned that the project scope for this project was now \$9.5 billion—not when it was released to the public; the very first time the department became aware the project would now cost \$9.5 billion?

**Ms Stannard:** The \$9.5 billion is a provision for the future cost of the full program. Until we work our way through that I could not say for certain what the future costs will be, but there is a provision for \$9.5 billion over the 35 years of that maintenance program. Our estimate of the future cost is informed by the bids that we received and our assessment—and it is quite a detailed assessment—of all of the offers that are made.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** And after that detail—

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, give me a moment.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is a follow-up question.

**CHAIR:** You continue with this line of questioning. I am going to ask you to wind it up soon. Do you have a question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** After the detailed consideration of all the assessments—everything the department would go through with nearly a \$10 billion contract—on what date did the department learn and settle on \$9.5 billion?

**CHAIR:** And we will finish it with this one.

**Ms Stannard:** As you can imagine with a program of this kind, I do not have the power to approve that level of investment. There are steps we need to proceed through, including the government's consideration of that. We provide advice to the government and they consider that value. There are a number of processes that we need to step through for that purpose.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, considering all the information attest to me before this committee today and the revelation that your office—as you put it—made a suggestion to the department with the word 'delete', how can Queenslanders trust anything you say on any of these matters when you have concealed a \$2.5 billion budget blowout—

**Mr BAILEY:** Given it is coming from the member for Kawana, this is a bit of joke.

**Mr BLEIJIE:**—in the Train Manufacturing Program?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, this is not an opportunity for a speech. You are asking a very hypothetical question. Minister, if you wish to respond to that, please do.

**Mr BAILEY:** Sure. In terms of the member's question, can I say a couple of things. We have had an independent procurement process that is separate from government. We saw negotiations happen from early February with the agreed preferred supplier—Downer—that ended on 29 June. It involved a lot of negotiations around best practice, benefit for the public, test tracks, leaning trains, best technology, best outcomes. There has been one procurement independent process and there has been one outcome of that in the current market. As the acting director-general outlined before, the first time the department put out a figure—quite an early figure—was October 2021. The contract was signed on 30 June 2023, after a year and a half of a high-inflation economy. The outcome of that process is that there has only been one figure, so suggestions by the opposition are inaccurate. It is a \$9.5 billion figure in the current market—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Then why didn't you tell Queenslanders?

**Mr BAILEY:**—that went up on the website. On the day of my press conference there was a stuff-up. I have accepted responsibility for that stuff-up.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** And you should have resigned.

**CHAIR:** In your opinion. Stop it.

**Mr BAILEY:** Staff have been counselled. That is appropriate. Compare that to the record—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** You're still there.

**Mr BAILEY:**—of the member for Kawana, who had scandal after scandal—never apologised; never accepted responsibility for it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Never had a CCC investigation.



**Opposition members** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Members, we will not let this descend into—

**Mr BAILEY:** Look at the interference they are running here. They appointed a chief justice who was an embarrassment to the state. That is his record.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order on relevance.

**CHAIR:** Members to my left, I will chair this hearing. I have had a point of order from the member for Gregory, which you would not have heard because you were so rude, asking about relevance. I will ask the minister to be relevant to the question.

**Mr BAILEY:** The question coming from the honourable member whose record of a lack of integrity is well known in this state. I will put my integrity up against the member for Kawana any day of the week anywhere.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Is there a question from the member for Kawana?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. Minister, the director-general has said that the contract for \$9.5 billion was finalised on 29 June. You have previously said that you could not include \$9.5 billion on the media release because the contract was still being finalised. Given the release did not go out until the day after the contract was finalised, why did you not include the \$9.5 billion figure in that release?

**Mr BAILEY:** I answered this extensively in a press conference last week, but I am happy to go over it again, Chair, given the honourable member—

**CHAIR:** And as well today, but please go over it again.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am sure he would have watched the press conference, but I am happy to cover the same territory—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, point of order.

**CHAIR:** Minister, we have a point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The revelation today is that the director-general said the contract was finalised the day before the document was released—on 29 June. The press release was put out on 30 June.

**CHAIR:** It is not a point of order. You are arguing—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So it is different and it looks like the minister has deliberately concealed the blowout.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, it is not an opportunity to debate this. You have asked the question. I will allow the minister to answer the question. We have gone over this again and again.

**Mr BAILEY:** We are making trains in Queensland. We are paying the market rate. The honourable member for Kawana does not agree with building trains in Queensland. That is very clear.

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

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It's is a cover-up. Minister Bailey is a liar.

**CHAIR:** I beg your pardon!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister Bailey is a liar.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I will ask you to withdraw that.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I withdraw.

**CHAIR:** I will warn you. Please do not do that again or it will be a short stint in here for you. Member for Chatsworth, you had a point of order that was not able to be heard because the member for Kawana was doing what he did.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Chair, it relates to 118(b), relevance.

**CHAIR:** I call the minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** Chair, in response to the question, the contract was signed after close of business on 29 June. That is when a figure was confirmed. The next day, as I have outlined previously, I should have seen the press release on a very busy morning when I was doing two major regional releases on the same day in different parts of the state.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You tweeted six times in a day—six tweets in the same day.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, you have been warned. Be careful, please.

**Mr BAILEY:**—different parts of the state.

**Ms SIMPSON:** So busy—all the time on social media.

**Mr BAILEY:** Here we go—more interference.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore!

**Mr BAILEY:** More disrespect for the chair and the parliamentary process.

**CHAIR:** Allow the minister to answer the question, for goodness sake!

**Mr BAILEY:** Chair, I am answering the question quite specifically and relevantly. I have apologised for the fact that the wrong figure went in there. Staff have been counselled about this.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Deleted at the instruction of the minister's office.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, I will caution you again. You are very close.

**Mr BAILEY:** What I have done, as the Deputy Premier said, is something the opposition have never done. I have taken responsibility. I have apologised—

**CHAIR:** Minister, I ask you to cut the argument too.

**Mr BAILEY:**—and I am building trains in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** We are through that. Do we have another question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, did it concern you at all that the department had settled on the \$9.5 billion—the contract was finalised on 29 June. Did it not concern you as the department that the minister's office was trying to conceal a budget blowout in the order of \$2.4 billion?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, you know that question is so full of conjecture.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I will rephrase.

**CHAIR:** I would ask you to and do not ask for the opinion of the acting director-general either.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Director-General, were you concerned when the minister's office—

**CHAIR:** Straightaway!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We can ask if they were concerned.

**CHAIR:** It is an opinion.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Did the director-general have concerns that a minister's office would—I use the word 'direction' but you have used the words 'suggestion' or 'clarification', but you have confirmed that that 'clarification' or 'suggestion' did contain the words 'delete references to the \$9.5 billion'. Did you have concerns when that came through the minister's office that you would actually act on that suggestion?

**CHAIR:** I have let the member ask that question, which I believe is asking for an opinion. I will give you leeway to answer that question, Acting Director-General.

**Ms Stannard:** Our website was updated on 30 June and has not been updated since that point.

**CHAIR:** Is there any other line of questioning you wish to pursue?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** We may revisit that point, but I want to move on to the digital driver's licence. My question is to the acting director-general. Ms Stannard, it has been over 1,700 days since the minister promised Queenslanders a digital driver's licence. Why are most Queenslanders still waiting?

**Ms Stannard:** The Department of Transport and Main Roads has developed a digital licence, as the member has identified. It does allow customers to store, display and share their driver's licence, their photo identification and marine licence from their mobile device. As the member would be aware, any compromising of a customer's identity documentation is a very serious matter, and we have seen that play out this year. As a result, the digital driver's licence has been rolled out through a process of trials, which we always do with very significant IT programs, to ensure that at each stage all information that we are managing on behalf of our customers is safe and secure.

There is a very lengthy process that we have gone through in order to ensure that the Queensland digital licence meets the international standard for mobile driver's licences, making it the first of its kind in Australia to meet that standard. Meeting the international standard means that Queenslanders when they travel internationally will be able to have their credentials validated where others are also built to that standard globally. That digital licence therefore was subject to very significant testing and a rigorous process to ensure that customers were able to be confident that their data is safe.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I have a further question on the digital driver's licence. I am advised that the emergency vehicle priority system, the SCATS, which is being hosted on the TMR server, is running on Windows 2008 operating system. Microsoft's extended support providing essential security patches ended in January 2020. How many servers run by TMR are being operated outside the extended support window?

**Ms Stannard:** I do not believe with that level of detail that I would have that information to hand.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Would you be able to come back and furnish that to the committee please? Can you take it on notice?

**CHAIR:** I will ask if we can get it before the end of the DTMR session.

**Ms Stannard:** Can I clarify the question?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Yes, certainly. It is in relation to Microsoft's extended support providing essential security patches which ended in January 2020. The TMR server is running on Windows 2008 operating system. I can rephrase the question, if you want.

**Ms Stannard:** Windows 2008 operating system. Your question was the number of—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** How many servers run by TMR are being operated outside the extended Microsoft support window?

**Ms Stannard:** Thank you for the clarification.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have a follow-up question to something I raised before to the minister. I want to go back to the \$9.5 billion train manufacturing contract. My understanding, Minister, now is that the contract was signed and finalised. The Premier knew, in her own admission, about the \$9.5 billion figure. She knowingly released the incorrect \$7.1 billion figure despite the contract being already signed.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: you are now making it up.

**CHAIR:** I will hear the question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am asking the minister: is it the case that the Premier of Queensland knowingly put out a press release document with the incorrect figure to mislead Queenslanders?

**CHAIR:** Member, you cannot ask that. That is a stunt.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, point of order.

**CHAIR:** You are asking a question of the Premier, not of the minister.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No. Point of order, Mr Chair.

**Mr BAILEY:** The Premier's session was last week. You should have asked it then.

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

**CHAIR:** I will hear the point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The Premier and the minister were at a press conference and the Premier confirmed that Minister Mark Bailey had discussed with her and advised the Premier of the \$9.5 billion figure. He knows whether the Premier of Queensland put out a press release that misled Queenslanders.

**Mr BAILEY:** This is now debating the issue. It is not a question.

**CHAIR:** Member, I will rule that question out of order. That is a question for the Premier, not the minister. Do you have a question for the minister?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** When did the minister advise the Premier of Queensland that the contract had gone from \$7.1 billion to \$9.5 billion? On what date did the minister advise the Premier?

**Mr BAILEY:** The information would have flowed through between our offices subsequent to the signing of the contract. The issue here was that a mistake was made and the correct number was not included. The updated number was not included.

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

**CHAIR:** He is answering the question, member. There is no point of order.

**Mr BAILEY:** I have covered this issue extensively.

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

**Mr BAILEY:** I am getting continued interference to me actually answering.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, Minister. We have a point of order. Let me rule on this point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order, Mr Chair. With respect to relevance under the standing orders, I did not ask whether information flowed from your office to the Premier's office. I asked the date.

**CHAIR:** The minister was in his first few seconds of answering the question, member.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I asked the date, Mr Chair, that his office or the minister told the Premier about the blowout.

**CHAIR:** Yes, and let's let the minister furnish the answer to your question instead of jumping in the second he starts answering the question. He might be providing context.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I want a date.

**CHAIR:** This line of questioning is going on and on and on. I will ask the minister to answer the question.

**Mr BAILEY:** These matters are normally handled between members of staff of respective offices, as it was this time. I had discussed it with the Premier. I do not remember what date that was. It has been a stuff up. I have apologised for it. I have accepted responsibility which the member for Kawana has never done for any of his stuff-ups under the Newman government.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, the minister said he had discussed it with the Premier. Can the minister advise the committee, if he does not know, if his memory cannot recall, by the close of this session when that discussion took place?

**Mr BAILEY:** I do not recall when that was.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am asking you to come back with it.

**CHAIR:** The minister has answered the question. You might not like the answer. The minister has answered that question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am asking the minister to take it on notice and get back to the committee.

**CHAIR:** I do not believe he is.

**Mr BAILEY:** I have answered the question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** He is refusing to answer the question.

**Mr BAILEY:** No. I have answered the question. I have honestly answered the question which is more than you do most of the time.

**CHAIR:** The minister has answered the question to his satisfaction. If you are not satisfied with the answer, member for Kawana, that is up to you.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I take the point that the minister cannot recall.

**Mr BAILEY:** You were dishonest in previous estimates.

**CHAIR:** Members, please no quarrelling.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I take the point that the minister cannot recall. The minister has a few hours left in estimates. Will the minister—

**CHAIR:** The minister has answered your question to his satisfaction, member.

**Mr BAILEY:** I have answered the question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Oh, to his satisfaction.

**CHAIR:** You might not be happy with the answer but the question has been answered.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, this is budget estimates.

**CHAIR:** Yes, it is.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Ministers have gone to jail—

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

**CHAIR:** There is a point of order here.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have a point of order.

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

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, there is a point of order here.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair. The member for Kawana is on a warning. He continually talks over me and the chair and has disrespect for this whole committee process.

**CHAIR:** I will chair this, Minister. There is no point of order.

**Mr BAILEY:** He is a disgrace.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order, Minister.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I had the call.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I will ask you to stop arguing with me. I have told you that the minister has answered the question. The minister is satisfied that he has answered the question. This is budget estimates. The minister has answered that question. Do you have another question on another line or topic?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, my point of order was that ministers have gone to jail for misleading budget estimates. That is why I am asking the questions.

**CHAIR:** Yes, I am sure they have. This is not time for a speech. I ask you to stop now. This is not time for a speech, member. Do you have a question? No.

**Mr BAILEY:** No—got nothing.

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

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My question is to the minister. Minister, how was it a mistake if directions are coming from the office to delete numbers? How can that be deemed to be a mistake?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for a very distorted question because he has conflated two different periods of time. On the 19th a draft media release came up, which was 10 days before a contract was signed and we did not have a final figure. There were negotiations ongoing so—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Yet on 29 June—

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, you have gone well over on your time. I am about to go to government questions. I will allow the minister to answer the question.

**Mr BAILEY:** I have covered this many times. We did not have a final contract figure until 29 June because negotiations were continuing. We did not have a figure; therefore, that is why that was taken out so that, in case the number shifted, it would be correct and inserted. There was a stuff-up. I have apologised for it. I have taken responsibility, which is a lot more than the member for Kawana or the member for Chatsworth have ever done over a series of Newman government botch-ups. The member for Kawana made it very clear that the deletion of emails in his office was pretty normal. We know what their record is. I have explained this extensively. They are going over and over a matter that has been fully explained. I have apologised for it. If there was a mistake made, I put my hand up as the line minister and take responsibility for it. That is what decent ministers do when that occurs.

**CHAIR:** I have a question in relation to QTRIP, Minister. QTRIP refers to a number of significant investments in the region I represent, the Moreton Bay region. Can you outline the investments that will benefit Queenslanders who call Moreton Bay home like myself?

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you, Chair, for a question on a substantive matter, which is refreshing. You have a growing region out there. Moreton Bay is one of the fastest growing regions in South-East Queensland, and we are keen to ensure they have the infrastructure they need for their very strong population growth. Nearly 2,000 people a week are moving to Queensland, and of course a proportion of them are moving to your community.

We have a commitment to upgrade a fully accessible Burpengary train station so that people can access the rail network. When completed, the station will have: a new footbridge with lift access so that people who use a wheelchair or walking stick or who cannot get around can get onto the platforms easily; improved accessible parking; and a full-length, high-level platform so you can walk straight into the train carriage. The new Queensland-made trains will lean a little to make that gap tight and we have fingers that come out from the platform. The gap between the train and the platform will be the smallest it has ever been. That is great not only for safety but also for people moving around who might be in a wheelchair, for instance. There will also be: upgraded hearing augmentation loops and tactile ground surface indicators, which are really important to help guide people with visual impairments; upgraded security cameras and lighting; new wayfinding and platform signage for people of all abilities; and a new station office and facilities, which our staff and commuters will no doubt benefit from. It is great to see that work is underway on this upgrade. We have a \$3.1 billion commitment to the TMR north coast region, supporting jobs and infrastructure.

Up your way as well, Chair, we have the jointly funded \$662 million six-laning of the Bruce Highway between Caboolture-Bribie Island Road and Steve Irwin Way. We have seen part of that opened already, which is great to see. It is great not only in terms of capacity but also for the people who use it every day as well as those going to the Sunshine Coast on the weekend. It will also make the Bruce Highway through there much more flood immune because we are rebuilding bridges to a higher level. The King John Creek Bridge is a notoriously low bridge that in freak weather events goes under and causes havoc for everyone travelling on the Bruce Highway. That will be replaced with a much higher bridge to current spec, which means that people will have a much more flood-immune Bruce Highway in the Moreton Bay region because of the investment of this government and the Albanese government.

We are also seeing the upgrade of Steve Irwin Way. A lot of people go to the Steve Irwin Crocodile Museum, so that is going to be terrific. We are duplicating the rail line up there and there is a bit of realignment with Steve Irwin Way as well. In the middle of this year we completed the Deception Bay Road interchange on the Bruce Highway. That is a fantastic jointly funded project, and I know that many constituents through there are enjoying that. We have \$57 million going to the Eatons Crossing Road upgrade and an \$80 million investment in Caboolture-Bribie Island Road, which I know the member for Pumicestone is a very strong advocate for and is delivering down that way.

We are also seeing very strong commitments to planning in that Moreton Bay area. The Bruce Highway Western Alternative is an important piece of road infrastructure for those growing areas where there will be new houses, and people there need better infrastructure in that growth area. I know, Chair, that you have been a strong advocate for the Bruce Highway Western Alternative, working with the council and the local mayor. There are two sections confirmed and planning is ongoing on another two sections. It is a \$20 million commitment with joint funding between us and the Albanese federal Labor government. We are getting infrastructure done, with good local representation from our state MPs up there. We are very happy to work with you and the council—Mayor Flannery, who is a get-things-done kind of guy. We like working with people who like to get things done.

We also have \$75 million going to Strathpine Samford Road. I am pleased to advise the committee that construction on the \$75 million upgrade of Strathpine Samford Road—known locally as Eatons Crossing Road—and Mount Sampson Road will be kicking off later this month. I know that you and the member for Pine Rivers will be very pleased to hear that, because 14,000 motorists use this route every day. That is why we are improving safety along this stretch of road. The project will deliver safer intersections at more than 10 locations along Eatons Crossing Road, with dedicated turn lanes and new signals at the Eatons Crossing and Lilley roads intersection to better manage traffic flow. These works not only improve safety but also support our commitment to deliver good jobs and better services for Queenslanders. There are about 115 jobs on that project, so that is a very good benefit for people there who are paying off their mortgage et cetera. There is strong representation from our state MPs, who are working with the council. The federal government is also keen to work with us.

We acknowledge the importance of Moreton Bay. We have to keep working to keep up with population growth. We are not going to do that with cuts; cuts will not help with that. Infrastructure and building are what will help, and we are very keen to keep doing that. Thank you for your advocacy in that regard, Chair.

**Mr WALKER:** My question is of the minister and it pertains to Queensland ports and maritime jobs. Page 3 of the SDS refers to the Backing Queensland Maritime Jobs program. Can the minister update the committee on the government's investment in Queensland government owned ports and the maritime jobs it is supporting?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for the question. I also welcome the member for Callide, who has joined us on the committee. It is good to see you here, member for Callide.

Of course, Queensland's trade coast is vital to the state's economic recovery. In the past years more than 50,000 vessels have travelled through Queensland coastal waters, supporting our economy and obviously key parts of our supply chain. That is why the Palaszczuk government has kept our ports in public hands. The first thing we did when we were elected in 2015 was to stop the Strong Choices privatisation program of the former government. We are now investing hundreds of millions of dollars into making sure those assets are kept in public hands so they continue to benefit the people of Queensland.

We are investing in the port of Cairns with \$128 million to support the Cairns Marine Precinct, an additional \$39 million injection for road and bridge infrastructure, and local shipyard upgrades up in Far North Queensland. The Deputy Premier also announced that the state government would match the

\$150 million commitment of the federal government to build the common user facility at the port. We will position Ports North as a key hub for ship maintenance and facilitate further growth opportunities, particularly with Defence. This investment builds on the existing \$127 million Cairns Shipping Development project, which we have already delivered. That project will see more than 2,700 jobs supported in Tropical North Queensland by 2031, allowing larger ships to enter the port. That work has already been completed.

Just south of Cairns, the biggest upgrade in the history of North Queensland's largest port, the port of Townsville, is already underway. There is significant progress on the rock wall: 750,000 tonnes of rock has been supplied by seven local firms and suppliers, so that gives you an idea of the scale. We are not just widening the channel to get bigger ships but also using dredge spoil and local rock to expand the port's capacity as North Queensland continues to grow. Thank you, member, for all of your support in keeping the port in public hands and developing it, because it is a key economic enabler for North Queensland; for example, in relation to the seven suppliers, what a great contract to have with the port of Townsville, which is owned by the people of Queensland.

With the Townsville port expecting threefold trade growth over the next 30 years, upgrading its capabilities is absolutely critical. Upgrading the rail line between Mount Isa and Townsville is really important as well. That will support 120 jobs additionally. At the port of Mackay, we have been doing some planning there. I know there has been some advocacy from the local community around the North Wall beach, which is a beautiful beach just north of the port quarters. The member for Mackay, Julieanne Gilbert, has been talking to me about how special that habitat is and I know the community has been very interested in it. There is a turtle habitat there. It is a really lovely part of the world.

I am very happy to announce today that the turtle habitat at the North Wall beach will be determined as environmentally significant and will be protected as part of the master planning for this port. We take environmental responsibility seriously and I am proud of our record on protecting Queensland's diverse and unique environment. I would like to thank all those people who have campaigned and cared for this area, including our state member for Mackay and assistant minister, Julieanne Gilbert, for their submissions and for advocating for this part of the world. I know they will be pleased with that announcement.

Works are well underway for the common user infrastructure project at the port of Bundaberg, which I know the member for Bundaberg is a big advocate for. It is great to work with him. It will see \$10 million locked in for new trade opportunities by utilising the existing bulk sugar terminal wharf and ship-loading facilities to export and import new products. To support this pipeline of work, the Premier announced we would invest \$16 million to expand TAFE Queensland at the Cairns Great Barrier Reef International Marine College. This is part of our \$21 million Backing Queensland Maritime Jobs commitment at the last election to build the maritime industry through more maritime training, jobs and locally flagged shipping routes. The pandemic made it very clear that having stronger supply chains and stronger capacity of Australian mariners and sea men and women is very important. This investment means for the first time our maritime workers in Queensland will be able to complete key maritime tickets without having to travel interstate, for instance, to Launceston and Fremantle. That is growing that maritime capacity.

Supporting maritime jobs to strengthen our local supply chain also means we are more resilient and less likely to be affected when there are international supply chain disruptions, as we have seen in the last few years. We have kept them in public hands for the benefit of Queenslanders and we are now focusing on increasing domestic shipping along the 7,000 kilometres of Queensland coastline to create new regional jobs that can support our strong economic performance. Making better use of coastal shipping gives businesses more transport options and can improve road safety on the Bruce Highway and other regional roads as well. More use of Queensland crews has safety benefits as well, with better trained and experienced local crew operating in the area.

Recently I announced the successful applicants for the training and employment grant programs. The first grant program is supporting 10 jobs for a total of \$1 million to two companies. All of these roles are on-water jobs that will support coastal shipping. Roles range from shipmaster, engineers and general purpose hands through to trainee ratings. The Maritime Training Grant Program is supporting a total of 29 training packages, which is at the value of just over \$300,000.

The Palaszczuk government will always back Queensland ports, keep them in public hands and work with the maritime industry and mariners. I will have more to say on coastal shipping services in the near future. I can assure you we will not be trying to sell them off, as they did opposite. We need those ports in public hands.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Bligh government.

**Mr BAILEY:** That is absolutely key.

**Mr MILLAR:** Didn't you sell Queensland Rail?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** You sold Queensland Rail, Aurizon.

**CHAIR:** Members, enough!

**Mr BAILEY:** We will not be making preference deals with Clive Palmer. We will keep our ports in public hands and we will always look after Queenslanders. You can see by the continual sniping by those on the committee that they do not like our assets being kept in public hands, but that is what this government will do.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. I know this committee has a healthy interest in maritime and will continue to do so.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, my question is about investment in the Gold Coast. I am sure you are aware that the Gold Coast line goes through my electorate. In particular QTRIP refers to a number of significant investments that will benefit Gold Coast commuters, including the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3, the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project and the Coomera Connector. Can the minister outline how these investments will benefit within the Gold Coast and also between the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland?

**Mr BAILEY:** I do know the Gold Coast quite well. I was born on the Gold Coast, and I spent my first years there and I went to Broadbeach State School. I have always had an affinity for the Gold Coast. It is amazing to see its growth from when I was a kid to become the second largest city in Queensland, the sixth largest city in the nation and bigger now than many capital cities. It is bigger than Canberra, bigger than Hobart and bigger than Darwin. A lot of people do not realise what a big show and big concern the Gold Coast is. I know that though, and this government absolutely knows it.

It has a lot of population growth and a lot of pressure on infrastructure so we have to keep building and we have to work with the community there and that is what we have been doing. We are working with the council there. I want to acknowledge Mayor Tom Tate who has been a great supporter of light rail and other infrastructure upgrades as well and has been working with us. Now we have a federal government also working with us, and that is always positive too.

Gold Coast Light Rail stages 1 and 2 have been resounding public transport success stories. We built round 2 in record time before the Commonwealth Games. We saw a lot of hysteria in the months leading up to the Commonwealth Games that our transport plan would not work, that the world was going to end, and actually it worked perfectly and light rail was a really important part of that success—not just for the week or two of the games but for the whole of the Gold Coast now. Light rail is connecting to the heavy rail at Helensvale with a very seamless transfer—boom, you can get from Broadbeach to Brisbane by rail with one quick transfer from light to heavy rail. That is fantastic. Gold Coasters themselves have embraced light rail in a large way. What we are seeing is that it is the first light rail across the country to get back to beyond 100 per cent patronage from pre-COVID levels. That shows you how successful light rail has been.

We are now building stage 3 of light rail and there is funding in this budget for stage 3. There is actually a big substantial allocation in the budget for this financial year and people can see that as they move around the Gold Coast. Between Broadbeach—my old stomping ground—and down to Burleigh, we have 6½ kilometres of new track going in, eight new stations and five new trams. A lot of the work will happen underground. We will be moving services and all sorts of things so it will look a bit like that for quite a while. Obviously, when the Gold Coast Highway happened, it was not envisaged that we would be putting a light rail down the middle of it so a fair bit of the cost goes underground before we get to the track laying, stations, et cetera. There will be a bit of that to continue but it will be worth it because you need to give people a strong public transport system so they are not just driving everywhere, otherwise it will be gridlock and that is not what we want to see in our second largest city.

Light rail is really important. We are also doing the planning for light rail stage 4 beyond Burleigh. There has been some work already on that early planning. It makes sense to connect the whole of the strip of the Gold Coast to the light rail system, including the airport where we have not just passengers but a lot of workforce there and growing, as well as the campus and the local residents. You need them plugged into your light rail and also the heavy rail system.

Our Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project is a \$2.6 billion commitment in joint funding between us and the Albanese federal government. The department commenced the registration of interest phase for Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail. That is an important milestone in terms of



signalling our government's commitment to improving rail services between Brisbane, Logan and the Gold Coast. We know that people commute regularly from the Gold Coast to Brisbane and from Brisbane to the Gold Coast for jobs. When someone else like a train driver is doing the driving and you are not on the M1, that is time when you can be productive. It is a good service. During peak periods, the track between Kuraby and Beenleigh is already at capacity—with a small number of all-stop services already having to move aside to allow express services to pass. This also means that Queensland Rail can deliver more express services when we complete it, reducing the waiting times on platforms along the line for express services that go through. You have to make public transport more competitive, and that is what investing in the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project is all about.

I note that one of the accessible stations is Kuraby station, in the member for Stretton's electorate. The station upgrades, level crossing removals and expanded park-and-ride capability will particularly benefit the commuters in his electorate and also down in the Logan area, where they will see a much more modern rail system and a much more attractive system for people.

The M1 is a really important priority of this government. We are seeing unprecedented levels of investment in the M1: all of those interchanges that we have been doing—54 and 57 complete, 41 complete, 45 complete, 49 underway, planning on 38—and completing the upgrade around the Gateway Arterial. We are advancing well there through Springwood. We also have the southern Gold Coast, six-laning from Varsity down to Tugun. We have opened a section there already—the first package, exits 85 to 87. Interchanges have also been upgraded there.

The second M1, which was blocked under the previous government, is underway under this government. It will be the largest single road project in the country. We had the foresight. After we had not one square metre of land to build it on when I became elected, I asked my then director-general to get cracking to gazette and secure a corridor for it, which we did in a very short amount of time for a new highway, by 2019. We fully funded it in 2020 and we are now seeing heavy construction underway. I was really excited to be down at the Coomera River to see the river piling that is going in already. There is a lot of work already in the corridor. We will see the Coomera Connector second M1 take 60,000 cars a day off the M1. The people in that northern Gold Coast area need to get to where they want to go without getting on and off the M1, and this will allow them to do that. It is only happening because of the vision and the commitment of the Palaszczuk state Labor government after it was blocked by the previous Newman government.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Three terms.

**Mr BAILEY:** It was well reported. I will take that interjection. Three terms! We did not have a single square metre of land because of the incompetence of the member for Chatsworth—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** You had three terms!

**Mr BAILEY:** Not one square metre.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth and Minister, stop your quarrelling, please.

**Mr BAILEY:** We gazetted the whole 45-kilometre corridor, including this first section of 16 kilometres, in only three years—that is incredible for a new highway—and then we funded it and we got heavy construction underway. It would never have happened under the LNP.

The second M1, M1 upgrades, rail upgrades, light rail upgrades—an incredible commitment to the Gold Coast by the Palaszczuk Labor government. To give you an idea, for exit 41, Yatala South, there is \$82 million in joint funding. Exit 49 is due for completion late next year. That is \$110 million in joint funding. Exit 45 opened at the end of 2022.

As an old Gold Coast boy, I never forget my home town. I always look after them because they need a government that is committed to infrastructure so they can keep track with the population growth down there. To do that you need a balanced transport network, which includes active transport. We are doing these M1 upgrades at the southern Gold Coast. There will be a whole new cycleway all the way along so that kids can get to school without being driven, and people can get around on a bike and be healthy. We will be doing that along the second M1 as well. There will be 16 kilometres of new bikeway as well as new roadway.

I want to correct a statement that was made in the parliament by the member for Chatsworth, who said that we are only doing four lanes. No, that is not right. We are doing a six-lane section, as I have announced, on the second M1 because we were able to negotiate that and achieve that. The whole second M1 is capable of six lanes and as other sections come on line—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Yes, it chops and changes.

**Mr BAILEY:** The opposition can quibble. They are gold medallists at quibbling. We will build. They can quibble; we will build. We will keep building.

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** We will keep building. Building—that is what we do.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, you are eating into your time by interjecting. You have just lost about two minutes because of that.

**Mr BAILEY:** ‘Bailey the builder’.

**Mr WATTS:** Can the acting director-general advise if there are any immediate family members of ministers currently working in the department?

**Ms Stannard:** I have no information in front of me that would indicate that I have immediate family members working in my department, but it is a department that employs, I think, 9,000 people at this stage, so I could not say that I know every one of those employees.

**Mr WATTS:** Acting Director-General, could you confirm that proper processes regarding advertising and appointment are followed for filling positions in the department?

**Ms Stannard:** We do have very clear procedures and policies for our recruitment processes. Panels are required to declare any relationships or knowledge that they have of candidates. That is a written process and we take that very seriously.

**Mr WATTS:** Those processes would be available through RTI if required?

**Ms Stannard:** Yes, it is my understanding that processes and procedures are available to be viewed at request, as you described.

**Mr WATTS:** Minister, are you aware of any immediate family members of other ministers working in the department?

**Mr BAILEY:** I am not aware of any, but as the acting director-general just outlined, it is a vast department. Even with thousands being sacked under the Newman government, we still have thousands of workers right across the department. I do not keep track of who is there. That is a matter for the director-general. The director-general and the department run the department. I do not employ people in the department. People are appointed on merit. I am not aware of any. There could be some; I would not know. How would I know that?

**Mr WATTS:** To clarify, no ministers have mentioned anything to you?

**Mr BAILEY:** Not that I am aware of, no.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I have a couple more questions, if I may, to the acting director-general, Ms Stannard, in relation to the digital licence. Ms Stannard, when I created my QGov account I had to establish a digital ID. I supplied the required 100 points of ID et cetera. If I already have a QGov digital ID with the Queensland government, why do I need to set up a separate digital ID for a digital driver’s licence?

**Ms Stannard:** It is my understanding that we needed to establish processes that were compliant with the international standard that I referred to earlier about credentialing of drivers’ licences. I am not aware of whether the QGov digital ID meets those requirements. As I understand it, our enrolment process for the digital driver’s licence has been designed to meet all of those requirements for identity.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, are there any security concerns with the QGov system—any security concerns at all?

**Ms Stannard:** I do not have any advice that would suggest there are concerns.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, with the ministerial reshuffle recently, Minister Bailey has responsibility for both the QGov system and the digital licence system; does he not?

**Ms Stannard:** That is correct.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** We have one government with two different digital ID systems that do not talk to each other. It is not very user friendly, is it?

**CHAIR:** You are seeking an opinion, member. Can you rephrase that, please?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, we have one government with two digital ID systems that do not talk to each other. What will the department be doing to rectify the situation?

**Ms Stannard:** The machinery-of-government change occurred very recently, as you would be aware. We have taken the time to ensure that staff can transfer into that new structure with certainty and confidence and understand what that means for them. Our focus on the programs of work will ensue over a number of years to ensure we make the most of that bringing together of agencies.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order, Chair: the digital session is the second session. I am happy to do digital licences, but I think it is the second session where we are dealing with—

**CHAIR:** Thank you. There is no point of order. Sorry, Minister. I was getting advice there. We will have a whole session where you can ask questions on digital licences.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** That is fine. That is not a problem at all.

**CHAIR:** If you would like to finish that on digital licensing.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** That is fine.

**CHAIR:** You are done?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I would like to talk now in relation to the Cross River Rail Project. I ask for the CEO to come forward, please. Mr Newton, my question relates to the \$960 million cost blowout of the project announced earlier this year. How long has the Cross River Rail Development Authority known—

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: I think there is an imputation in that question. Could it be asked directly?

**CHAIR:** I was going to allow the question to be finished before I called that and ask for it to be rephrased. Could you to rephrase it now?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Just on that imputation, if it relates to the word 'blowout' here is an extract from the Collins Dictionary, and I will quote, 'a blowout in an amount or a price is sudden increase'. It is in the dictionary.

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: the member is really taking the mickey.

**CHAIR:** Let's not debate. Can you please just rephrase the question?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Newton, my question relates to the \$960 million cost increase of the project announced earlier this year. How long has the Cross River Rail Development Authority known that the project could not be delivered for the original budget?

**Mr Newton:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The question relates to a lot of what was going on at the time. In 2019 when the contract was first let, that was prior to COVID instances happening around the world. This did not happen overnight and it was not something that happened on a particular date; it happened over some period. We saw COVID come into being in 2020 and we started to see impacts across all infrastructure projects. We were monitoring what was going on, but I would have to say that in Queensland not shutting down the construction sector, it allowed us to maintain momentum on our project and be able to move forward. It was something that was evolving.

In 2021, as you are aware, we were able to keep the tunnelling project going, and using social distancing and masks allowed that to happen. Contractors were incurring costs through that period but the materialisation of those costs really was not evident at that early stage. In 2021 and 2022 COVID obviously continued. It was difficult to predict where that was going to end. Then in early 2022 we had the flood impact on the project. We started to end up with this confluence of a whole range of different impacts on the project. That did affect a range of different sites, particularly those low-lying sites at Clapham Yard, Main Yard and Fairfield station and those sorts of things. Yeronga station was particularly impacted by rain.

There has also been talk about supply chain impacts. They did not really start to materialise until the latter stages of the COVID impact. We were seeing that around the world different impacts were happening. The supply chain for material out of Europe was being affected. China going into lockdown over an extended period of time started to impact and we saw shipping container prices increase dramatically. We saw delays in program coming through. Again, it was difficult to tell what that was affecting on the ground.

We were monitoring it and we started getting external advice. In early 2022 we started to look a little bit closer and we got some external advice from Queensland Treasury Corporation to try to get some understanding of what the forecast was going to be.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** In early 2022?

**Mr Newton:** We were monitoring the situation, but none of this had actually materialised on the ground because there is obviously a lag to how these things start to materialise. We do have a contained risk or a contingency within the program and we were monitoring whether that was going to be sufficient to cover what was going on.

As we progressed through, we started seeing escalation. That started to really show itself in the mid to latter parts of 2022 and we continued to look at mitigation measures like pre-purchasing of material, stockpiling, alternative procurement models and so forth. In the latter part of 2022 it became quite evident what the material impact was going to be on the project. That is when we started sitting down with the contractors and having more in-depth conversations.

The key to that was to look at how is that materialising on the ground? How is that starting to flow through? We were looking at other projects around the world and in Australia. We saw particularly Sydney and Melbourne, who are one to two years ahead of us as far as delivery goes, and we saw that in their last year's budget their costs have increased. We started to look at how did that flow through and then we got the advice around that. To be honest, it really was not until we sat down in the latter part, in November and December, with the contractors that we got an understanding. Then we started shaping up and went through a negotiation process that culminated—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** The back end of last year?

**Mr Newton:** That was the back end of last year with materialising to a figure in the first quarter of this year.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you. A further question, Mr Chair?

**CHAIR:** I am conscious of the time. Do you want to hold that line of thought?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** It literally is a very quick question. Mr Newton, what date was the minister first advised that the original budget could not be met? What date?

**Mr Newton:** I thank the member for the question. I do not have the specific date. I would say that we were continually providing information to the minister as we were speaking to our contractors in the latter part of the year, but we did not actually have a figure until we started going through the detailed commercial negotiations.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** But eventually you arrived at a figure. Could you please provide the date? If you cannot do it now, which I appreciate, could you take it on notice and come back and let us know the date?

**Mr Newton:** It really comes down to when we actually prepared the documentation for the consideration of cabinet, and that would have been in March of this year.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar?

**Mr BERKMAN:** I want to put my first question to the acting director-general. You would be aware that there are a number of stations in the Queensland Rail network, including Taringa station in my electorate, that are not compliant with federal disability standards despite the deadline for compliance having passed last year. I understand that many, including Taringa, have no upgrades planned at all at this stage. My question is: does the government have a time line or a target for full compliance across the network?

**Mr BAILEY:** Point of order: is this question better asked of the Queensland Rail CEO? I am trying to be helpful.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am more than happy to put it to the Queensland Rail CEO unless the acting DG is able to—

**CHAIR:** I will ask the director-general if you wish to defer. I am conscious of the time, member for Maiwar. I will give you time in the next session as well.

**Ms Stannard:** The Queensland Rail CEO will be able to talk to the detail of the disability upgrade program. I can confirm that there is a strong commitment to removing barriers to passenger transport use for people with a disability. We do publish interim disability action plans that state our intended program of work. They are developed in consultation with members of the TMR Accessibility Reference Group and they focus on high-impact new initiatives and programs of work that can improve accessibility for our customers.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar, if you have questions for the acting director-general while she is here, please continue.

**Mr BERKMAN:** If you would suggest there is value in putting the question to the Queensland Rail CEO—

**CHAIR:** We probably do not have time, but I will allow you time to do that in the next session if that is okay.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Sure. I will jump on to another topic quickly. Back in May of last year the *Brisbane Times* reported that the government was in negotiations with Airtrain regarding the future of its services to the Brisbane Airport and integration with the network in light of the planned Cross River Rail. I ask the acting DG: is the department in any ongoing discussions or negotiations with Airtrain around changes to their monopoly over public transport services to the Brisbane Airport?

**Ms Stannard:** Airtrain is a private company responsible for rail services, as the member is aware, to and from the Brisbane Airport on the Brisbane Airport rail link. The elevated railway was constructed under a deed which commenced in 1998 and when the deed expires, the infrastructure will revert to the state at nil cost.

As for negotiations that are underway, when planning for the integrated South-East Queensland rail network, we have of course considered Airtrain. The *SEQ Rail Connect* document that was released about this time last year is our published blueprint and describes the new three-sector network post Cross River Rail. As that documents outlines, we have developed a three-sector configuration and it is the most efficient and effective way to benefit the largest number of customers on the South-East Queensland rail network. It does open up new public transport connections and opportunities for many residents and visitors to South-East Queensland.

After Cross River Rail opens, the Airtrain line will connect to the growing Ipswich line rather than the Gold Coast line. The network remains fully integrated through new stations which are being delivered through Cross River Rail. Customers access Airtrain right now from right across South-East Queensland, and a significant portion of Airtrain customers currently travel from Brisbane city and surrounding suburbs.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Chair, I might follow up with a quick question to the minister before this session is over.


**CHAIR:** It will have to be really quick. We have about a minute.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Minister, I am keen to hear from you whether the government is interested in bringing the Airtrain back into public hands before the expiry of that contract in 2036 when that monopoly condition would cease to apply.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am advised that any discussions with Airtrain are subject to strict commercial confidentiality provisions, so I am not able to make any further comment at this point. What I can say to the honourable member is that the Queensland government will always consider our available options based on merit, delivering value for money and enhancing the rail network for the majority of customers. That is probably all I can give you at this point.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. With that, the committee will now adjourn for a break. This hearing will resume at 11.15 am with the examination of the estimates for the transport and main roads and digital services portfolio areas.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.00 am to 11.15 am.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will continue its examination of the estimates for the transport and main roads and digital services portfolio areas. Minister, I understand that you have a few slight corrections to make.

**Mr BAILEY:** While I was answering a question from a government member I mentioned \$57 million for Eatons Crossing Road. The Palaszczuk government is in fact investing a lot more than that. It is actually \$72.5 million in this QTRIP, so I undersold ourselves there. Secondly, there was the simple misreading of a figure. While answering a question from a government member I mentioned a figure of \$265 million for the Kuranda Range road safety upgrade. The correct figure should have been \$262.5 million. I just wanted to correct the record. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** I would like to welcome back the member for Chatsworth; however, we will go to government questions now.

**Mr WALKER:** My question is to the minister. With reference to Budget Paper No. 3 and page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements, which states that a key objective of a digital economy is to benefit Queenslanders, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government approach is to digital transformation, and is the minister aware of any other approaches?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for Mundingburra for the question and for his interest in our digital economy. In April the Palaszczuk government announced *Our thriving digital future: Queensland's digital economy strategy* under the previous minister. The strategy provides the vision, directions and actions required to further accelerate the growth of our state's digital and broader economy. It invests \$200 million to implement our 2023-2026 action plan. Funding will deliver new initiatives across three focus areas and six enabling priorities including \$130 million for digital market initiatives, including \$120 million to improve digital connectivity across the state focusing on remote and First Nations communities, and supporting Queensland businesses to excel in the digital economy by attracting, retaining and growing digital businesses, especially in regional centres. As a member in Townsville, I know that you will be interested in that. It will support and create a pipeline of talent for those interested in digital careers. That is especially important at the moment, with a full employment situation. Workers are hard to find, so you have to have a strategy.

Funding of \$26½ million for digital customer initiatives will help close the digital divide through the development and implementation of a digital inclusion strategic plan, additional Indigenous knowledge centres, the engagement of regional digital development officers and the delivery of contemporary digital government services. There is \$43½ million to further enable digital government through statewide cybersecurity and First Nations digital strategic plans. These initiatives are integral to closing the digital divide and making sure that all Queenslanders—no matter where they live in our vast, decentralised state—can take full advantage of the digital economy revolution.

The strategy ensures Queensland continues to invest in digital transformation that supports good jobs and better services. It also plays an important role in the delivery of the Brisbane and Queensland 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is central to ensuring Queensland has the right digital infrastructure, capability and services for the most digitally connected games in history. One of the most central parts of our Digital Economy Strategy is the support it provides for First Nations communities. This area is one that I am particularly passionate about. I want to ensure our First Nations communities can take full advantage of the digital economy here in Queensland.

Priority activities will build on the work already underway to further improve digital connectivity in First Nations communities to ensure they are connected and can economically benefit from digital developments. We are already seeing incredible success through the Cherbourg digital business. Opened in only April of last year, we partnered with the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, the Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, community and TAFE Queensland to facilitate a three-year pilot with Fujitsu Australia as its foundation partner. The program provided the community with digital training and guaranteed employment in the digital business. Already in a very short space of time the First Nations digital business centre at Cherbourg is the No. 1 centre for customer service in the Asia-Pacific region for Fujitsu and is providing good, secure digital jobs in community for First Nations people in Cherbourg—a great outcome and one where they have taken the opportunity there and really gone for it, and good on them.

The digital business centre in Cherbourg has been an outstanding success and more partners now have come on board. This includes industry partner DB Results delivering user acceptance testing, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries delivering ICT support services, and Smart Service Queensland providing social housing outbound service calls. This was such a resounding success that we are replicating that model on Palm Island, which I know is obviously very close to the member's electorate. Partnering with Telstra, we are standing up another First Nations digital business with the community on Palm Island currently undertaking training to learn the relevant digital skills to work in the digital business.

Our digital transformation does not stop there. Our trial of the Queensland digital driver's licence in Townsville is currently underway and available to all residents in Townsville. The Queensland digital licence is the first digital licence in the nation that is compliant with international standard. This will enable Queenslanders to travel internationally and have their licences validated where other jurisdictions have built to the standard. Other states are looking to the Queensland model in terms of those standards and adopting that international standard, and that is a tribute to the work of the transport and main roads department for being thorough and comprehensive about the quality of the product. New South Wales and other states are now looking to us as the digital licence standard.

Expanding the trial to Townsville has allowed the department to test the app with a much larger user base, including the largest population of young Queenslanders outside of South-East Queensland and in safe night precincts. The Flinders Street area and surrounds is certainly a vibrant one in Townsville. While the rollout in Townsville was later than expected, the Optus data breach earlier this

year meant that additional resources were required to complete the necessary testing. The Palaszczuk government is committed to getting this right and ensuring that we not only have a world-class digital licence but one where Queenslanders can feel confident that their data is secure.

We will not cut corners to meet a deadline. Our commitment here is very strong in this regard given the standard there and given that other jurisdictions are now looking to Queensland. I know that New South Wales rushed out of the gate, but they had problems with their digital licence. We have got it right from the get-go. I have used one as part of the trial. It is very good. Virtually everywhere accepts it very well. It is great to see everyone in Townsville who wants one as part of the trial can now get one. We are very pleased with how it is progressing and of course it will be rolled out further during this year.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, as referenced on page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements, can the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government is supporting Queenslanders experiencing cost-of-living pressures and is the minister aware of other approaches to address these pressures?

**Mr BAILEY:** The cost of living is the No. 1 issue in our state and in our country at the moment. We have now had two years of record inflation left by the Morrison LNP government that has caused problems for people. Everyone who walks down a supermarket aisle knows that prices and inflation are something that are increasing costs. Whether it is at the supermarket or whether it is construction or wherever it is, anyone who goes to a fruit and vegetable shop knows that prices have been going up and as a government we are conscious of that to help people deal with that in a whole lot of different ways.

The member would be aware of the incredible success of the student transport access scheme. It is one of the largest assistance programs provided by the Palaszczuk government. This \$180 million program transports approximately 130,000 school students in Queensland on rail, bus and ferry services every year. At this time of increasing costs, that is why the Palaszczuk government recently acted to help struggling families to receive the cost-of-living relief by expanding the STAS scheme, or the student transport access scheme. The investment has increased eligibility criteria so it allows support for children in shared care arrangements living between two addresses to now be eligible to access the program from both addresses. This is where you have a child or children who may have parents who have separated and they have different addresses and they are at different addresses at different times of the month or the week. Previously they could only nominate one address. We have sorted that out and at both addresses they get the STAS subsidy, and I think that that is appropriate.

Most struggling families are now able to benefit from STAS due to our expansion of the \$180 million scheme. Some \$18 million is funding the expansion over the next three years, with the Palaszczuk government committing a further \$4.3 million to continue growing the scheme. The STAS program is designed to help overcome barriers such as distance, income or isolation that may prevent a student from getting the education that they need. Single parents do an incredible job, and I certainly know that my mother as a single parent did and there are hundreds of thousands of kids in the same boat. In those difficult circumstances to be able to get some help in terms of making ends meet is a really important role of government and it is a really important role for this department. Households can apply for up to five children to be covered by the student travel assistance scheme. We encourage families to apply and to check out the full eligibility and guidelines available via TMR's website. I would certainly encourage not just the honourable member but all honourable members to let people know about this because people find out about it in different ways. We can all help to get the good news out.

We are also making it easier for commuters to leave the car at home and take public transport to reduce their impacts on our road network. We understand that public transport is essential in connecting people to the things that they need to visit and we are very aware of that balance. That is why we undertook one of the state's biggest boosts to bus services with the \$9 million Bus Services Growth Program and we have continued our investment in rail. The Bus Services Growth Program was targeted towards communities experiencing significant population growth and has introduced bus services to many areas for the first time. This is a terrific investment and has brought public transport closer to home for tens of thousands of Queenslanders. This has brought public transport within 400 metres of home for close to 40,000 Queenslanders. This means that 40,000 Queenslanders have better access to public transport than before and can opt to take public transport to reduce their transport costs. We understand that the cost of living is difficult for many people at the moment, including fuel costs for instance as well as other costs, and 40,000 Queenslanders are better off as a result. On the northern Gold Coast we are already seeing impressive uptake, with a nearly 70 per cent increase in commuters using some of the bus services each week. That is hundreds of extra people.

Expanding the student transport access scheme and increasing services comes at an important time when families are doing it tough with increasing cost-of-living pressures. We know that vehicle registration fees are a major household cost and we have in place extensive concessions to support vulnerable Queenslanders in this regard. We continue offering concessions for pensioners, seniors, charities, community organisations and primary producers. In this budget the Palaszczuk government has committed an estimated value of \$8.2 billion to fund concessions across a variety of services and products. From July of this year registration for a four-cylinder vehicle for private use for individuals with a pension concession or Seniors Card issued after 1 July 1994 is \$243.20 for 12 months, an increase of only \$8. When factoring in CTP insurance, the total cost of registration would be \$612.80. We also recognise that a range of other factors have come into play. We have also halved the cost to replace your licence, photo ID or industry authority cards to \$35, so we have been able to do some measures there.

We are very keen to help people with the cost of living. Outside the portfolio there is the power rebate, which has been very well received, for every single household and an additional level for people who have a concession card or who are receiving help. Of course, there is free kindy as well. There is a very strong cost-of-living focus in this budget, including in the area of transport and main roads. I thank the member for his interest in helping the people in his community where cost of living is an issue.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, page 8 of Budget Paper 3 refers to the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, QTRIP. QTRIP refers to a number of significant investments in regional Queensland. Can you outline how these investments will benefit regional Queenslanders?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Being a regional member, he knows how important this issue is. That is why we have our eighth record QTRIP—\$32.1 billion on investment in infrastructure across Queensland. This is nearly double the previous government's infrastructure spend only eight years ago after the deep cuts of the Newman government.

Our investment outside of the metropolitan area is estimated to support an average of 14,850 direct jobs over four years. Communities in Townsville, Cairns, the cape, Mackay, Whitsundays, Rockhampton, Maryborough, out west, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Darling Downs, Mount Isa and many more will benefit from these jobs and these upgrades across a very big state. Our Bruce Highway Upgrade Program is something we are very proud of, jointly funded with the federal government—a \$13 billion program. As at the 10-year mark, approximately 64 per cent of the total \$13 billion in joint funding has been successfully delivered. We are not going to cut these projects, as happened under the previous government, where only two projects got done in three years. We have done 459 Bruce Highway upgrades. Anyone who has driven the Bruce Highway recently can see just how many upgrades there are. I have been doing a lot of that this year and late last year. There are a lot of roadworks, reduced speed zones at times and what have you, but it is worth the short-term pain for the long-term gain.

Our state controlled road network, covering more than 33,000 kilometres, is Queensland's largest publicly owned physical infrastructure asset and we have been investing in it. We certainly took the opportunity to seal a lot of roads as part of the pandemic stimulus. I know that around the corridors of this place the member for Gregory has complimented me on how much sealing has been going on in his electorate. Thank you, member for Gregory, for all of your compliments.

**Mr MILLAR:** How is the inland highway going, Minister?

**Mr BAILEY:** Even if I do not get them in the parliament, I get them around the corridors.

**CHAIR:** I will allow that interjection.

**Mr BAILEY:** So thank you, member for Gregory. In terms of regional roads, we see many other important regional road projects as well: the Gore Highway flood upgrade, \$46.6 million in the Darling Downs district; Toowoomba to Cecil Plains road safety improvement, \$27 million; Bollon Road, \$15.4 million in the south-west district; Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road, which the member for Keppel is a big advocate for, \$85.4 million in Central Queensland; Capricorn Highway, Emerald to Alpha, \$45 million—the member for Gregory will be very happy to see that.

**Mr MILLAR:** It needs it desperately, Minister. I was on it yesterday.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is right there in the budget. Isn't that good?

**Mr MILLAR:** It is not a very good road at the moment.

**Mr BAILEY:** The funding is there so I look forward to another compliment around the corridors.

**CHAIR:** Stop this back and forward. Point taken, member.



**Mr BAILEY:** It is probably the friendliest little engagement we have had all morning. There is also the Walkerston Bypass, \$187.4 million; Kennedy Developmental Road, The Lynd-Hughenden, \$50 million in the north-west district; Captain Cook Highway in the far north district, Cairns CBD out to Smithfield, \$359 million in joint funding with the Albanese federal government; and the Cairns arterial road, \$300 million with the Albanese government. That is an extensive list. That is, obviously, a small list on the QTRIP. Anybody who has been through the full QTRIP document can see the extent of our commitments over the next four years.

I could not talk about regional roads without mentioning my indomitable and relentless Assistant Minister for Train Manufacturing and Regional Roads, who is with us here today. He is a great local member, but he is also a great assistant minister who racks up the kilometres out there on regional roads. He loves getting out there and working with communities. I want to thank him for all his support of me. I do not know where he is, but I thank the assistant minister.

**CHAIR:** For the record, he has been here.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is not just trains; he is also big on regional roads. He knows Queensland as well as anybody, I think it is fair to say.

We are also investing in the regional train network with \$51 million to the regional station accessibility upgrade program, with works to be delivered at Rockhampton, Townsville—the member will be very happy to hear that—Bundaberg, Maryborough West—the assistant minister will be keen—and Cairns, of course. Our station accessibility upgrades are achieved through the delivery of accessible station entrances and pathways to the assisted boarding points, full-length platform raising, upgraded accessible parking and essential station and customer facilities including improved accessible toilets. People deserve that kind of dignity on our regional network and we are investing in that to ensure the upgrades align with the needs of the local community. Queensland Rail has completed an initial round of community consultation, with concept designs to be shared with the community once complete. I certainly look forward to working with the member for Mundingburra, and the members for Townsville and Thuringowa for that matter, about the train station in Townsville.

Just quickly, in terms of maritime, we are also committed to delivering new boating infrastructure. I will not go through any list for you, mercifully, but I do note that the Yorkeys Knob boat ramp in the electorate of Barron River is a very substantial piece of infrastructure for Far North Queensland boaties. It is nearing completion. There are 490-plus boating infrastructure assets across the state. This one is going to massively increase access to the water in Far North Queensland. I want to thank the member for Barron River and minister, who has been a huge advocate and worked with the boating community there to get this done. It has a huge car park capacity for everybody to leave their trailers and what have you with, I think, six ramps there, if I am not wrong—five or six. It is pretty substantial. It is beautifully located near the golf course. Getting boaties out onto the water is really key and we are happy to do that in the maritime space. Well done to the member for Barron River for getting it done, working with the boating and fishing community.

**CHAIR:** This committee loves nothing more than regional roads and marine infrastructure and we will be sure to check it out at some stage. Thank you for that. We will now go to non-government questioning.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I have a series of questions to Ms Stannard, the acting director-general. I refer to the Transmax website, which says—

Transmax's award-winning Emergency Vehicle Priority (EVP) functionality enables emergency vehicles to safely reach their destination up to 26% faster.

Media reports indicate that the state's EVP system was not communicating with traffic lights operated by the Brisbane City Council between September 2022 and March of this year, meaning that emergency vehicles were being delayed. Acting Director-General, can you please advise the reason for the outage?

**Ms Stannard:** Transmax is a proprietary company and it does work for us on traffic signal systems. My understanding is that there was an upgrade, and the result of that work was incorrect IP addresses were coded in that upgrade which impacted the Brisbane City Council server for their road intersections.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Can you confirm when Transmax became aware of the issue?

**Ms Stannard:** I do not have a date in front of me as to when Transmax became aware of that issue. There was some reporting of this issue recently.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Chair, would we be able to get that information furnished to the committee? Could it be taken on notice? I would be keen to get that date.

**CHAIR:** The minister is the only one who can approve it to be taken on notice.

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

**CHAIR:** Or we could get that before the end of this session.

**Mr BAILEY:** If the member would like some information, I am happy to—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you.

**Mr BAILEY:** Let me just outline: Transmax, obviously owned by the state of Queensland—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Chair, sorry, I am continuing my line of questioning with the acting director-general.

**CHAIR:** He did not ask you, Minister.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am offering the information if he wants it.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, can you confirm that it was actually Brisbane City Council that made Transmax aware of the problem in March of this year?

**Ms Stannard:** The minister has recently asked me to conduct an independent investigation—sorry, not to conduct but to commission an independent investigation into what occurred at what point and who was involved in that so I probably could not comment on that until we complete that investigation.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, can you confirm that the issue was traced to a TMR managed server? Are you aware of that at this point in time?

**Ms Stannard:** Yes, I am aware of a managed server and that we provide services to Brisbane City Council intersections through that server.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Acting Director-General, are you satisfied that Transmax are adequately monitoring their system?

**CHAIR:** I understand, once again, that is seeking opinion, but answer as you will.

**Ms Stannard:** We have taken some time to discuss this matter over the past few days. It has become clear to me that, as TMR, we do not have visibility of the functioning of the Brisbane City Council and of that system so it would be important for our teams to work together in order to have that visibility of an end-to-end system.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, when was the inquiry requested to the department?

**Ms Stannard:** This weekend I received a call from the minister requesting that I act upon that and seek that independent—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** So that would have been after it came out in the media? If it was that weekend, it would have been after it came out in the media?

**Ms Stannard:** Yes, I am sorry, I do not have the media reporting in front of me.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Acting Director-General, the Transmax website says that every second counts in an emergency. Have ambulance delays due to these outages resulted, to the best of your knowledge, in any deaths or serious injury to any members of the public?

**Ms Stannard:** I can advise that the state controlled road network EVP system continued to function as normal. That relates to a very significant road network in Brisbane. Gympie Road and Sandgate Road are the state controlled road network and that system was functioning—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** But we have established that it was not talking with Brisbane City Council's system. I get that, thank you.

**Ms Stannard:** That is correct.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Acting Director-General, can you advise how many ambulances may have been delayed during that period of roughly six months?

**Ms Stannard:** I do not have any information about ambulances being delayed—any quantitative information.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Acting Director-General, does Transmax or the department advise emergency services when there is an outage of the system?

**Ms Stannard:** I do not have that information to hand. We will, as part of our independent review, confirm what our processes are for escalation of system outages such as this one. At this stage, I do not have that information to hand about what our current processes would be.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** So you do not know whether emergency services are advised if there is an outage?

**Ms Stannard:** No, I could not advise the committee at this stage.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Minister, an objective of the department according to this budget is to provide, and I think you said it yourself, a safe and secure transport system. Delaying emergency service vehicles, and it would seem that the problem is being swept under the carpet, is not very safe, is it? What is going on here, specifically?

**CHAIR:** There was a little bit of conjecture and imputation in that question. Minister, answer please.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am very happy to answer this question and I will answer it very specifically. At the heart of this is the decision by the Brisbane City Council to have an entirely different software system for their traffic management to all other councils and the state government and so it is necessary to have an interface between their system and our system. What has happened here is Transmax have done an upgrade that is unrelated to the EVP system and there they have received what is known as a negative-positive or something along those lines. It has caused a problem with the Brisbane City Council system, but it is undetectable on our end because they have a separate system that sits below our system. There was a fault that occurred. The Brisbane City Council did not see the fault for five months. When they informed us that there was a fault we acted immediately to rectify it based on their representations.

There are two issues here. One: there was a Transmax upgrade. I had Transmax senior leaders in to see me yesterday about it. I was only made aware of this when there was a media report. I had not been briefed on this by the department because the advice I received is that they were considered an operational issue. My expectation is that it should have been briefed up to me and I have made that clear to the Acting Director-General. It is not detectable on our end; that is the advice to me from very senior members of the Transport and Main Roads department. It was only detectable by the Brisbane City Council, which did not detect it for five months. When they detected it we rectified it with them as quickly as possible.

I have texted and been in contact with the Lord Mayor of Brisbane today and offered a meeting with our Transmax people and with the City Council people running their system. Already I have asked Transmax and they have already acted to ensure this does not happen again. There is obviously something they need to do in terms of their procedures as well as notifying me. Because it is an emergency vehicle situation I would expect that briefing to come up to me fairly promptly and it did not on this occasion. I am happy to work with the Brisbane City Council to make sure that this situation does not occur again.

In terms of the Ambulance Service, I have also confirmed with the Queensland Ambulance Service that the outage of the EVP system on the Brisbane City Council roads did not have any impact on operations or response times. The Queensland Ambulance Service does not directly rely on the EVP system and has strict emergency driving procedures to ensure the safety of their staff and the patients that they are carrying.

As I outlined before, I have been briefed by Transmax and I have been in touch with the Lord Mayor. This matter obviously needs to be looked at to be rectified. I am very happy to work with the City Council given that they have an entirely different system to ours, which is at the core of this issue. I look forward to the member for Chatsworth raising these matters with the Brisbane City Council as well as us.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Minister, to the best of your knowledge, no ambulances were delayed for that six-month period?

**Mr BAILEY:** I have just outlined the advice I have from the Queensland Ambulance Service. I have been very clear about that.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** If you have a state system and a Brisbane City Council system, almost like an Apple and Windows situation here, that are not talking or compatible with an upgrade, wouldn't it be good if there was literally the one system for Brisbane, an integrated system?

**Mr BAILEY:** The answer is absolutely, yes. This is a Campbell Newman decision. When he was the lord mayor of Brisbane he decided to have an entirely different system to the rest of the councils in Queensland and the state government. It would be better to have the one system. We would not need to have any interface because it would all be united. That is something that I am happy for us to look at if the council is willing to do so.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you, Minister. We will come back to this issue.

**Mr HEAD:** Acting Director-General, the government has cited the need to upgrade sites due to safety concerns as the reason why they are withdrawing support from the driver-reviver program on TMR sites. On 26 May, the Queensland Police Service had a sausage sizzle for Fatality Free Friday at the Gin Gin rest stop, alongside TMR and the SES. They were also doing weight safety checks on caravans. Can the Acting Director-General advise why the site is safe for the QPS, SES and TMR but is not safe to be used as a driver-reviver site?

**Ms Stannard:** We take fatigue on the road network very seriously. It is one of the fatal five. We are very focused on ensuring that all rest areas remain open for members of the public so that they can take appropriate breaks when they were travelling.

The member has cited the safety of the driver-reviver locations for volunteers. It is true that that is one of the considerations in ensuring that all rest areas remain open but closing some of the driver-reviver facilities. Other considerations, though, are about the availability of volunteers to continue to support those facilities and, indeed, the choices that the travelling public are making about how they take their rest breaks. We understand that approximately 80 per cent of customers are not using those. I am just checking for the figures; I may have quoted that inaccurately. I am sorry, I do not have a figure of the number of people who are choosing alternate methods but we understand that the majority of the community are using other facilities when they take breaks. The volunteer run coffee-and-tea facilities have been less popular to date and the availability of volunteers has been less, so we are transitioning all of those driver-reviver facilities to local councils, to community groups or to rest areas that members of the travelling public can continue to use.

**Mr HEAD:** TMR staff were using the site very recently, since this decision. Is it a safety concern? Is safety part of the reason why the Gin Gin driver reviewer is being closed?

**Ms Stannard:** It is important to note that all rest areas will remain open. That facility will remain open at Gin Gin, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year as a rest area. If we have one-off programs—a sausage sizzle, as the member referred to—we would do the appropriate risk assessment for being on that site at that time, but maintaining the safety of those facilities over a longer time period would require us to manage those facilities in an ongoing way. For a one-off barbeque, we could conduct a risk assessment and ensure it was safe to do so—that would be my expectation of any one-off event that we conducted—but our concern is about maintaining those sites for the long term.

**Mr MILLAR:** Acting Director-General, QTRIP shows that of the \$1 billion budget for the Inland Freight Route only \$4 million has been spent to June 2023. The *Progress report on 2020 government election commitments*, released in September 2022, clearly shows the election commitment to spend a billion dollars on the Inland Freight Route as completed. Can you clarify which document is correct?

**Ms Stannard:** The Inland Freight Route is a nationally accredited north-south key freight route, as the member is aware—1,184 kilometres in fact. In April 2020 it was recognised as a priority initiative and, as part of the Real Bruce Plan, the Palaszczuk government has committed \$200 million towards that \$1 billion upgrade of the Inland Freight Route. That is based on an 80-20 federal-state funding arrangement to establish that viable north-south alternative.

**Mr MILLAR:** What I am asking here is: how much has been spent? Is it \$4 million or has it been completed?

**CHAIR:** While the acting director-general gathers her thoughts, I was quite confused by the question. There was a really lengthy preamble and I was not sure where you were going, but thank you for clarifying that. The acting director-general will probably just need to get those figures that you have asked for, so we will give her a moment.

**Ms Stannard:** I do not have a percentage completion in front of me. I note that we, of course, are subject to the Australian government's review of its infrastructure pipeline. The reviewers are expected to report back to the Australian government within 90 days with the findings of that review. The Queensland government would need to see the outcome of that review to understand what it means.

**Mr MILLAR:** Would it be possible to take that question on notice or to come back to the committee at the end with what has been spent on the inland route?

**CHAIR:** That would be up to the minister if he wishes to take that on notice.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am happy to do that.

**CHAIR:** We have a few questions that we will need to come back to at the end of the session or take on notice. We are keeping track of them here.

**Mr WATTS:** My question is to the minister. I thank the minister for answering a letter in relation to the Toowoomba North South Transport Corridor in my area. The community has some outstanding questions. Minister, would you be prepared to hold a public forum and/or attend a community forum in Toowoomba regarding this corridor prior to the closing of submissions?

**Mr BAILEY:** It has become a common tactic of the opposition to try to personalise consultation around me as the minister when consultation should be about the community—not about ministers or politics. It should be about engaging the community. I note, for instance, that the Toowoomba *Chronicle* quoted one local resident—

Ms Clark ... bemoaned how the furore had spiralled in what she described as a political "circus", citing opposition spokesman on transport Steve Minnikin's speech at the Monday forum.

"It's turning—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** They were certainly bemoaning your absence, Minister!

**Mr BAILEY:** This is quoting an article. It is highly relevant to the question. It states—

"It's turning into a little bit of a circus, the shadow minister got up there and grandstanding," she said.

"While I thought it was important for him to be there, it's now turning into a circus, and I want it to be brought back to the community."

I absolutely support Ms Clark's call. There is substantial interest in this project. The member had information given to him over the last 12 months, as did the council. He knew this was coming—as did other members up there, I understand. I have extended the consultation by a month to ensure we can do more consultation in local areas with our planners and our department people. I have contacted the member for Condamine and offered senior members of Transport and Main Roads, who did attend a public meeting. I did that in good faith and I thank the member for Condamine for chairing the meeting appropriately. That is in stark contrast to the southern Gold Coast, but that is another story. Let's stick to this question.

It should not be about politics. This is something that affects people. Of course, if your property is in the line of the draft corridor, you will be very stressed about it. Let's have a proper consultation process where we give people information. That is why I have extended it. I am not going to become some sort of political distraction from what should be a community process. I acknowledge that this is a sensitive issue for people in this area—not just if they are in the corridor but also if they are near the corridor.

I say to the local community: tell us your views in the formal process. As a lot of people get on social media—that is great; people have a right to do that and should do that—I say to them: make sure we have your submissions, whether you are for, against or not sure or you want more information. We want to hear from the community. There are lots of ways to do that. They can go to the Transport and Main Roads website. We will have people out there whom people can talk to one-on-one. Some people do not want to stand up at a meeting and talk about their personal property; they want to have a quiet, one-on-one conversation so their privacy is maintained. I am working with the department to ensure we have plenty of those. We want that to occur. That is my approach to it. I hope that is fairly comprehensive in terms of the question. I am happy to keep working with you on it.

**Mr WATTS:** Just to clarify, the question specifically came from the community forum and was with regard to the minister's attendance at a community forum. The question is not from me, Minister, and I am not trying to politicise it; the question is from my community directly to you. Are you prepared to come to a community forum?

**Mr BAILEY:** As the comment from local resident Ms Clark outlined, I am not going to politicise a community consultation process on sensitive matters for a whole range of people. They need to let us know their views. I have extended the consultation, I think at the member's request, to ensure people have that opportunity. I want them to have that. I can assure you that, as the minister, I take community consultation very seriously. People often raise very legitimate issues that may not have been

considered, despite all the best efforts of the department. If we are aware of those, we can make decisions that are better informed. I say to people in Toowoomba who are interested in this issue: let us know your views. I will be well briefed on the matter, but I do not intend to be grandstanding at a public meeting like the member for Chatsworth did. I do not think that is helpful to the process.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to government questions. Minister, regarding the capital allocation to the Bruce Highway, can you fill us in further on what that investment means for jobs and economic activity in regional Queensland, and are you aware of any alternatives?

**Mr BAILEY:** Obviously, the Bruce Highway is a key piece of infrastructure in your electorate. There are nearly 1,650 kilometres of highway all the way up to Cairns.

**CHAIR:** Moreton Bay is a region, too.

**Mr BAILEY:** Moreton Bay absolutely is a region. I agree with you. We have seen 459 Bruce Highway upgrades completed in eight years—I think that is an outstanding record—versus the two over three years under the Newman government. There are 87 projects still underway. There is a lot more in the pipeline. We are happy to work with the Albanese federal government in that regard.

We are seeing very strong progress not just in terms of safety but also in terms of capacity. I will give you some of the key safety outcomes: 109 new bridges—that is pretty amazing as we are over the ton there; 235 kilometres of wide-centre-line treatment; 95 new overtaking lanes—that is really important to reduce driver frustration, if you can get past that big truck or someone driving a little slower than you prefer, and is a big road safety benefit; 72 township entry treatments, which are very helpful for local communities; 189 protected-right-turn slots installed—that is very helpful to get you out of the firing line if you are getting off the highway; 63 new rest areas constructed—that is very helpful in terms of fatigue and to support our truckies in the freight industry; 102 kilometres of pavement rehabilitated; 420 kilometres of road safety barriers installed—if something goes wrong it protects you and keeps you from being in danger; 42 kilometres of highway duplication—certainly the Gympie Bypass will be an extraordinary addition to the Bruce Highway but equally up in Townsville we are doing the ring-road and there are works south of Cairns and in many other places right throughout regional Queensland; and seven flood-immunity upgrade projects completed.

I am very proud of the fact that we are dealing with some of the most flood-prone parts of the Bruce Highway. We have finished the Haughton River flood plain upgrade valued at half a billion dollars or thereabouts. It is a very flat part of the highway south of Townsville. It is sugarcane area. When the Gympie bypass opens you will be able to get around a notorious part of the Bruce Highway that gets cut off when there are extreme weather events in Gympie.

The upgrade at Saltwater Creek, in the member for Maryborough and assistant minister's area, was completed a year early and on budget, which in this high inflation environment is an incredible outcome. Well done to the contractors. Well done to the member for Maryborough who advocated for that. That is an area that caused a lot of disruptions in 2013 during extreme weather events. I have been through there a number of times with the member. The highway goes much higher over the creek. We have had a lot of positive toots from people going past as we have done a number of media conferences there.

In 2022 there was a jointly funded boost of \$883 million for targeted upgrades of the Bruce Highway between Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Proserpine and north of Townsville. Many of the projects along the Bruce Highway have been completed in the last year. I have mentioned the Haughton River flood plain. The correct figure for that was \$514 million. That is one of the largest Bruce Highway upgrades in North Queensland and addresses one of the worst spots for flooding between Ayr and Townsville. The price tag for Saltwater Creek was \$103 million. I correct myself there. It came in under budget. In this environment that is a great outcome by the contractors. Good on them.

There was \$163 million for the Deception Bay Road interchange upgrade, as previously mentioned. The Maroochy Road and Mons Road interchange upgrade was recently completed. That is basically at the Nambour turn-off. That is great for the Sunshine Coast and Nambour. There are new service roads and new interchanges. There is greater capacity. It is much better.

Contracts have been awarded for the \$1 billion Rockhampton Ring Road, with the first \$280 million package of construction works to start in the coming months. We have been working with the contractors to spread the work to maximise local benefit. Initial proposals were for fly-in fly-out workers, which we did not want to do. We have been working with the contractors to re-profile it to maximise the local job benefits in Rocky and Central Queensland. I thank the member for Rockhampton

and the member for Keppel for working with us to do that. That will have a great outcome on top of the Rockhampton northern access and the Capricorn Highway duplication out to Gracemere. There have been a lot of roadworks in the Rocky and Central Queensland area. There have been upgrades to the Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road. There will be a lot more.

There is so much going on. It helps when you have two local members who are positive, active, connected to their communities, want to get things done and do not grandstand. Our record on the continued delivery of upgrades to the Bruce Highway is in stark contrast to that of the opposition who did two in three years—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** How did that Bruce Highway Trust go, Minister?

**Mr BAILEY:** They did two upgrades in three years.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Real well.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth.

**Mr BAILEY:** We have done 459. That 459 to two sounds like a cricket score, and it probably is. So there you go! I will put my record on the Bruce Highway up against the member for Chatsworth or anyone else any day of the week.

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Chatsworth.

**Mr BAILEY:** That 459 to two is a cricket score.

**Mr MARTIN:** My question is of the minister in relation to mobility and active transport. Minister, can you advise what the Palaszczuk government's approach is to active transport and if you are aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mr BAILEY:** We are very committed to getting more Queenslanders more active than ever before. In the past active transport has often been seen as a nice add-on or something that is terrific to have occasionally whereas I believe that active transport is a fundamental part of the transport system and you need to be investing in it when you thinking about road, rail and light rail. You have to get active transport in when you are on the ground.

For every person who is using active transport it means that they are not driving a car and they are not part of the traffic issue. It does not suit everybody but it does suit some people. I have to say that I enjoy, not every day, cycling to work and back when I can. It gets you some exercise. It gets you out of the traffic. It is a great experience. More and more people are doing that. We have to be investing in that. When we do large road and rail upgrades we usually do active transport.

There is a record \$328 million over the next four years for cycling and walking infrastructure. It is not just for those. There are scooters and other ways of getting around as technology changes. That is on top of the \$362 million we have invested since 2015 to support active transport infrastructure, adding hundreds of kilometres of infrastructure across our state.

We restored the fifty-fifty program with local councils that was cut by the Newman government. We have built literally hundreds and hundreds of jointly funded cycleways and shared pathways right throughout regional Queensland, giving people options, making a healthier community and getting more out of our other infrastructure when people choose active transport. We are very proud of that. It is also a zero emissions transport option. You do not have a combustion engine pumping out carbon emissions. You are being incredibly healthy not just for yourself but for the environment as well.

Queensland is leading the nation in terms of the regulation of personal mobility devices such as e-scooters. These are becoming more common. They can be a little controversial at times. As long as people operate them safely and with respect to other people, it should be seen in a relatively similar regard to bicycles, in my view.

In June last year I released the Personal Mobility Device Safety Action Plan that was developed in consultation with key stakeholders. The plan aims to improve the safety of both users of PMDs and Queenslanders using our cycleways and shared paths and footpaths. I can update the committee that in less than one year we have already achieved 16 of the 18 actions set out in the safety action plan.

Part of this plan was an important package of reforms to our road rules that came into effect on 1 November last year. These new rules we developed with safety as the key priority and were the result of extensive road safety research and consultation by the department. These new rules reduced the

speed limit to 12 kilometre an hour on share paths and footpaths and 25 kilometre an hour on separated cycleways or on street cycleways where the signed speed limit is less than 50 kilometre an hour. I want to thank the shared e-scooter providers for their support in rolling out these reforms. They want to see safety out there as well by ensuring these devices were compliant with the new rules.

We also increased the penalties for high-risk offences, including speeding. We do not want to see dangerous riders any more than we want to see dangerous drivers. We have had the tragic death of one or two people on e-scooters. Safety has to be No. 1. Transport and Main Roads supported these changes with a safety campaign from October to November last year to make sure all personal mobility device users were aware of the new changes before they were enforced. A lot of that was online. Plenty of it was at bus stops and that sort of thing. We were getting that message out about what the rules are and what our expectations are. Other states have shown an interest in our reforms in this regard as a template.

Transport and Main Roads, in conjunction with police, have conducted several high-profile enforcement blitzes. Occasionally I get someone on social media saying, 'What are you doing to make sure that that happens?' Police go out and do enforcement. That is good to see. I do not want to see speeding and I certainly do not like seeing people without helmets. You really need a helmet if you come off and hit something hard. It is absolutely essentially. Already 1,600 infringements have been issued to PMD riders who have been doing unsafe things out there.

An important part of the plan is the e-Mobility Parking Plan. We are underway with phase 1, which is expanding the e-mobility parking trials with local councils to ensure there are dedicated spaces for riders to park their PMDs at the end of a trip. This is a really important issue from my point of view. It is human right for people with disabilities to be able to use footpaths to get where they want to go without being blocked by inconsiderate e-scooter parking. I have moved some e-scooters myself while I have been out running when I see them dangerously parked or in the way of people.

People in a wheelchair have a fundamental right to get around our community without being blocked by scooters. We work with councils. I have personal interest in this. I thank the councils that have worked with us on this. The councils are key because they own the footpaths: it is their asset. They have shown a lot of interest. I thank local government for working with us on this. Clearly, you should have to park your scooter out of the way. It is not too much to ask.

Over the next 12 months we will continue to deliver the long-term actions of the safety action plan and the parking plan as well as look into options to crack down on drink riding, which is very dangerous. This is still an evolving area. It is still new technology. There are all kinds of new technologies. There are single wheels—you see all sorts of contraptions out there on bikeways and shared pathways. As long as people are doing it safely, that is what we want to see.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, page 8 of Budget Paper No. 3 refers to the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, QTRIP. Can you outline how the projects outlined in QTRIP will support our growing population and can you outline how these investments will support the transportation task for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games?

**Mr BAILEY:** We are the growth state. There is no doubt about it whatsoever. Our population growth is far ahead of other states. Our proportion of the population in Australia will continue to grow. In 2021-22 an extra 104,000 people called Queensland home—often driven by interstate migration. While growth is being experienced throughout the state, the majority of that growth is in South-East Queensland, although I know regional Queensland is getting some, too.

I am often asked about which transport projects we are likely to see committed in order to deliver the Queensland games. In many cases these projects are already listed in delivery or in the planning phase in QTRIP—indeed, in Budget Paper No. 3. It is well known that the Palaszczuk government's commitment to Cross River Rail, for example, underpinned our bid for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. We made the decision in 2017 to 100 per cent fund it ourselves after some shenanigans with the then federal government meant that we did not get much cooperation. How good is it that we decided to do that, because we are going to need it for the growth but we are also going to need it go the games?

New high-capacity stations are being built—one at the Gabba and another for the proposed Brisbane Arena at Roma Street. The IOC knew that our state would be able to deliver on high-frequency mass transit to key venues. They obviously would have looked at our Commonwealth Games record, which was extremely good, despite trenchant criticism from people I will not mention. They were very trenchant for months before and they looked a bit silly when the games commenced and the transport plan worked incredibly well.



In looking at other projects that are relevant, the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project will be important to make rail more competitive and increase capacity. We are doing the hard yards, now that we have a willing partner in the Albanese government, to get a costing and a scope for a Sunshine Coast direct rail line business case, after having no interest of note for a decade of federal LNP governments and no interest from the Newman government back in the day.

There is \$150 million in funding from the federal government, as well as the council and Palaszczuk government, for the \$450 million Woolloongabba busway station. We also executed the contract a while ago on the \$1.2 billion Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3, which will further increase capacity down there. Of course, we are making the trains in Queensland. People are very aware of that—in some respects, they are more aware than ever. People really support Queensland-made trains that are compliant and that are excellent. That is what they will get.

The Coomera Connector, the second M1, is a \$2.16 billion commitment. Heavy construction is already underway after not having a square metre of land when we were first elected.

The \$32.1 billion QTRIP program is continuing to grow. That shows our commitment to building the infrastructure that we need. While we are increasing QTRIP by billions, the member for Chatsworth said he wants billions in cuts only a few months ago in his press conference.

**Mr MILLAR:** That is not true.

**Mr BAILEY:** That is the contrast—cuts or infrastructure.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Minister, you have your own hashtag. Let's get fair dinkum here.

**Mr BAILEY:** That is the choice.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, stop the interjections. Minister, please do not be argumentative.

**Mr BAILEY:** That is fine. Just to finish—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** What a legacy!

**Mr BAILEY:** The quote was, 'There are a range of areas that we know already that we can prune things back.'

**Mr MILLAR:** Prune a mango tree.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Yes, mangos alright!

**CHAIR:** Come on! Member for Chatsworth, I am about to offer you a question.

**Mr BAILEY:** The member for Chatsworth said, 'We have already identified a couple of billion dollars worth of savings.' There you go. They have not learned.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** One of your projects would do it.

**Mr BAILEY:** They have not learned from the Newman government. After three terms in opposition they still want to cut, which is pretty sad.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** With respect, Mr Chair, in a robust democracy, if the minister wants to dish it out he has to also receive it.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, I will speak for a moment on that. You are sitting there niggles, niggles, niggles and the minister gives a bit back. I allow a lot of it, but when you are yelling across the table that is unseemly and will not happen. Member for Chatsworth, do you have a question?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I do. I invite Mr Newton, the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, to come back to the table. Issues around fall risks were identified by the safety regulator back in 2020. What specific actions did the delivery authority take in response to fall issues?

**Mr Newton:** Could you clarify the question?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I will repeat it. Issues around fall risks were identified by the safety regulator back in 2020. What specific actions did the delivery authority take in response?

**Mr Newton:** I am sorry. Could you clarify the source of the issues for fall risks? You are saying the safety regulator.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Newton, I again will ask the question. There have been fall risks identified by the safety regulator as far back as 2020. Is the delivery authority aware of them at all? Has anything been done to mitigate fall risks onsite?

**Mr Newton:** I am trying to understand the context of where you are referring to fall risks. In relation to the project, what was the context of the raising of the issues?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Newton, footage was captured in April of some pretty dangerous activities onsite with an employee not using a harness while working from heights. Was the delivery authority aware of that footage prior to it appearing in the media?

**Mr Newton:** We receive regular reports from the contractor in relation to safety matters. Each one of those safety matters is provided to us under a regime of information being provided. As part of that process, we make sure that the contractor takes all of those into consideration. That particular incident that you are referring to was one that was addressed by the contractor. They did, as I understand it, have communication with Workplace Health and Safety in relation to that and the subcontractor. I do not have the specific details on that dialogue because it was between the contractor and the safety regulator. That said, the imagery shown in the footage is not something that either the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority or the contractor condone. The individual stepped outside a safety barrier and took it upon himself to put himself at risk. The key premise that safety starts with the individual is really the case in point with this particular individual.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Newton, the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority has a compliance unit that, amongst other things, monitors safety performance onsite. How many times in the past 12 months has the chief compliance officer personally briefed the minister about safety issues onsite?

**CHAIR:** Would that be a question for the minister?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I would have thought that Mr Newton was in a position to answer that.

**CHAIR:** If you can answer that, Mr Newton, please do.

**Mr Newton:** The Cross River Rail Delivery Authority briefs the minister on a monthly basis on progress with the project. The chief compliance officer participates in those briefings to the minister. In those briefings safety is discussed and the safety record of the project is discussed.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Minister, how many serious safety incidents have there been on this project to your knowledge?

**Mr BAILEY:** As the CEO just outlined, I get regular monthly briefings from the delivery authority in terms of injuries. In fact, I get regular updates from the CEO via text if something occurs. Obviously we are all thinking of Nation Kouka, the gentleman who is in care at the PA at the moment. I thank the health staff and responders and who helped him. Our thoughts are with his family. We want him to have a full recovery and we wish him all the best. We do not want to see another incident like that on the job. Before that incident the injury rate on Cross River Rail was well below industry standard. Every month we talk about safety when I am briefed by the CEO and everybody else. The CEO is the interface directly with me most of the time except for those monthly meetings where the chief compliance officer is in attendance.

I am advised that 16 lost-time injuries have occurred in more than now 25 million hours of work across 17 different sites. Safe Work Australia data shows that the heavy engineering construction sector averages 9.2 lost-time injuries per one million hours worked on average. Cross River Rail is significantly below that, with a lost-time injury frequency rate, as at the end of last month, of 0.63 per one million hours worked on average across the three major packages of work. That said, the incident involving Mr Kouka is a shocking one. We take it very seriously. There was another incident two hours or so before that.

The safety reset that is going on right now one is being done collaboratively between different unions and workers, primarily the contractors and workforces onsite, but there are regular updates to the CEO and myself. We do not want to see another incident like that. There is a very thorough safety reset across every site. We are back to work on the majority of sites now. The larger sites where there are a lot more things to see—the work spaces are a lot longer and larger often down below—are taking a little longer, understandably. We have taken safety seriously from early on and we will continue to do that. The safety reset is something we are committed to and I know the DA is committed to. We do not want to see another incident like this. We want our workers to go home safely every day.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Minister, if that is the case, why is the CFMEU calling for your resignation?

**Mr BAILEY:** Only recently the LNP was calling the CFMEU ‘thugs’. That is on the record. The deputy leader—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Meanwhile, back to the question.

**CHAIR:** It was a speculative question that asked for opinion, but the minister is answering it.

**Mr BAILEY:** There is confusion in the opposition: they allege that I am best buddies with the CFMEU when there is evidence to the contrary. They seem to forget that. The CFMEU represents workers on that site. I respect them in that role. We may not agree on everything—one might say it is a robust relationship at times—but we will always work with the representatives of the workers because I legitimately see that as an important thing. I do not go around bashing unions like the opposition does regularly; I work with them. Construction is a dangerous job and the recent incident really accentuates that. We knew that from the beginning. You have to work with the representatives of the workers even if you do not agree with them on everything. You may not agree with their interpretation. There are plenty of things that I will disagree with the CFMEU on, but I will work with them on safety every single time. I am happy to work with the representatives of workers. There is a lot of danger in construction on every job site in every jurisdiction in this country.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** If I could now call up the CEO of Queensland Rail for a few questions. Ms Stapleton, thank you for your time today; I appreciate it very much. The South Korean media is reporting that the first train for the Cross River Rail project will be delivered in late 2026. Is that consistent with what Queensland Rail is being told?

**Mr BAILEY:** Prototype.

**Ms Stapleton:** I have not had the opportunity to see the article myself, however, I do understand that 2026 will be the delivery of the first units.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I have a further question, if I may.

**Mr BAILEY:** Chair, point of order: are these questions being asked of the appropriate person? It is actually TMR that oversees this.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Chair, this is in relation to preparation for the Cross River Rail opening.

**Mr BAILEY:** That is fine. No problem.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stapleton, how long will it take to test and undertake operational testing and commission the trains once Queensland Rail receives them?

**Ms Stapleton:** We do have a team allocated from Queensland Rail to engage with the Department of Transport under a cooperation agreement and a number of other interfaces. At this moment I am not able to confirm exactly how long it will take to do so, but the teams will be working diligently with the Department of Transport and the builder of the trains to ensure that appropriate testing is done thoroughly before the trains are put into service.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Just to clarify: if the first of the trains will be delivered in late 2026, you are not quite sure of the length of time required for commissioning and testing once Queensland Rail receives them?

**Ms Stapleton:** I would have to seek advice from the team as to how long it will take to test the trains. Obviously, we will ensure the trains are tested very thoroughly before they are put into service to carry not only revenue but also customers.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** The minister has previously advised that the existing electrical multiple units, the EMUs, that started entering service in the 1970s would be retired from 2025. Can you confirm that is still correct?

**Ms Stapleton:** At this moment the composition of the Queensland Rail fleet includes 71.5 six-car units or, you multiply by two, 143 units. Of these, 11.5—or 23 units—are EMUs. The intention is for us to continue maintaining them in service, or at least some of them, past 2025.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** There is obviously going to be a gap between when the old trains leave and the new ones start coming online. Will this mean any potentially cancelled services?

**Mr BAILEY:** Chair, point of order: that is clearly a hypothetical question. We will have an additional eight trains once we have finished fixing their disability compliance issues.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I suspect we do not know when they are going to be commissioned.

**CHAIR:** Answer as best you can.

**Ms Stapleton:** May I seek repetition of the question, please?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** There will be a gap between when the old trains leave service and when the new ones start coming online. Will this mean any cancelled services?

**CHAIR:** That is where the hypothetical bit comes in. Answer as you see fit.

**Ms Stapleton:** I certainly would not want to speculate on this. I can confirm that we have quite a significant fleet of rolling stock. In addition to those we have access to the NGRs, of which there are 75.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** The government has committed to more frequent services once Cross River Rail opens—now delayed—in 2026. Based on your fleet projections and without the 65 new trains, can you confirm that Queensland Rail will be able to provide a train: every 15 minutes on the Nambour line; every five minutes on the Caboolture, Gold Coast, Ipswich and Springfield lines; every 5½ minutes on the Cleveland line—

**Mr BAILEY:** Chair, point of order.

**CHAIR:** I am just letting him finish before I pull that up because there is so much detail that the member is asking for. That is probably better for a question on notice. Is there a point to this that you can wrap it up with?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** There will be. We want to check, given the billions of dollars that are being spent on the Cross River Rail project, whether the government will be able to make sure that when the additional trains arrive those service delivery times will be in fact adhered to.

**Mr BAILEY:** My point of order is that the honourable member is asking a hypothetical question. He is asking without the additional 65 trains, which will be progressively brought in as they are built. It is clearly a hypothetical question that is against the standing orders. We will have an additional eight NGRs coming into the system once we stop fixing them because of the problems he caused.

**CHAIR:** Minister, that is your point of order and I will rule on that in a moment. Member for Chatsworth, you are asking a question that had multiple parts that are very difficult to answer on the spot. They would be better in a question on notice. Can you rephrase that question?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Chair, what I will do is go straight to a question to the minister.

**CHAIR:** I understand where you are trying to go with it.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you, Ms Stapleton. Minister, at the 2020 estimates hearing, when the then director-general was asked whether the new trains would be ready for the opening of Cross River Rail, he said in a direct quote, 'Yes, they will.' What went wrong, Minister?

**Mr BAILEY:** There is this thing called an independent procurement process that occurred over a more-than-two-year period that is separate from government, that is not controlled by government. We will have an additional eight NGR units on top of what is available right now as soon as we stop fixing them because of the problems that the member for Chatsworth caused—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Eight years.

**Mr BAILEY:**—by ordering them when they were not disability compliant.

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

**CHAIR:** Minister, there is a point of order. Member for Chatsworth, just remember that you did ask this question and the minister is answering the question, but I will take your point of order.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My point of order is very specific. I ask for that to be withdrawn, because the minister again has referred to it being part of my decision-making. I was not part of cabinet. I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr BAILEY:** You just voted for it.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you withdraw?

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you continue, please?

**Mr BAILEY:** Let me step it out for the shadow minister. What we are doing at the moment is ordering Queensland-made trains that will come through into the system in service uplifts as they are constructed. What we will see is that the Cross River Rail project will open and we will not see a significant service uplift there, because you want to minimise your risk. That was the learning out of the Redcliffe line opening. That is, opening a whole new line and also having a massive timetable upgrade is not a good idea to do all at once. What you need to do is minimise your risk. You open up a new line, and you let that settle down and bed in before you then do your service uplift. That is the international best practice advice that comes to us, and we also see that from our direct experience here in terms of the Redcliffe line. That is how we will approach it. That is logical and the most effective way of doing it. At the moment, we have fewer units available to us because we are on a cycle of eight NGR units out of service at any given time because they are all being repaired in Maryborough to make them disability compliant. That is costing us \$335 million—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Eight years.

**Mr BAILEY:**—because of the previous LNP government

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Three terms ago.

**Mr BAILEY:** Member, you asked the question and let me just finish.

**CHAIR:** Yes, he will let you finish.

**Mr BAILEY:** It took some time for us to establish a process that should have been in long ago to work with the disability groups on the design to rectify it. We do not just go in there and whack it together. You work with all the disability groups to get all of that work right—and that took some time—and then you need to do the first one to get all your work processes lined up. That first one always takes a bit of time. Then your pace of rectification increases as the workers get used to it. That is what is going on. We will have eight additional units when that work is complete for the whole of the network come next year. This question is really an own goal from the member for Chatsworth, especially given he caused the problem in the first place—

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Eight years.

**Mr BAILEY:** You voted for it.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Mr Chair, I am trying to ask my question.

**CHAIR:** Member for Chatsworth, please ask your question.

**Mr BAILEY:** You were an assistant minister for it.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** That is quite rude. May I ask a question to Ms Stannard? I am after an explanation of the project Cross River Rail integration works with an investment ID 2818078.

**Ms Stannard:** As you can imagine, implementing a very significant infrastructure project in the heart of the operating rail network and transforming the line pairing of every line on the rail network will have broad impacts for the public transport network—impacts that need to be managed and integrated by my department together with Queensland Rail and the delivery authority. We have an operational readiness framework that focuses on that integration. That project is about resourcing all of the teams that need to deliver that change to the network. That includes: changes to the rail timetable—and as the minister has outlined we separate that from the opening of infrastructure; the delivery authority delivering the infrastructure; and Queensland Rail preparing their business for the operation of a new network. There is very significant training of drivers that needs to occur. In Transport and Main Roads, we are responsible for the communication with customers of a rail network that will be very different from the one that is there today. That is an example.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Thank you. Mr Chair, if I can further probe.

**CHAIR:** Yes, you can.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, could you please clarify who is funding this \$185 million project? Is it the department or Queensland Rail specifically? Who is funding it specifically?

**Ms Stannard:** The Department of Transport and Main Roads has allocated the \$185 million for us to expand testing, commissioning and integration activities. Some of that work will be done by Queensland Rail; some will be done by Cross River Rail. As we have just talked about in terms of testing, we need to test all ends of the operational system. Some of that will be activities in Queensland Rail's operational centre, some will be in the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority delivered infrastructure, and some will be my team in the Department of Transport and Main Roads. We will have significant integration scope relating to testing and commissioning of that new infrastructure.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Ms Stannard, can you confirm that it is outside the \$7.848 billion budget for Cross River Rail?

**Ms Stannard:** This is a discrete aspect of the work and it is separate and funded. We have allocated that in our budget.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Discrete and separate. So why isn't this project in QTRIP?

**Ms Stannard:** We have provided this funding for future work. The funding is identified in an item under 'Statewide: other works: construction works'. It is on page 182 of the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program. There is significant work that we are doing in association with the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority to introduce this infrastructure into operational service.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a further question on that?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** To the minister. Minister, is this another example of a Cross River Rail cost increase that has been hidden from Queenslanders?

**Mr BAILEY:** Absolutely not. What the honourable member continually and persistently fails to understand is that increases to European train control systems are network-wide benefits; they are not just a Cross River Rail thing. We will have eventually—long after both of our respective times—a European train control system across the entire system, but it will be done gradually as you upgrade different parts of the system. When we do Kuraby to Beenleigh, we will do a European train control there. We will gradually migrate it out.

There is a system-wide benefit from running more trains closer together but in a safer way. We have a reliable signalling system but it is old and it does not allow trains to travel as closely together as ETCS, which has automatic controls to it. You will see a lot less SPADs under ETCS. It is an important part of the Cross River Rail program, because you have a tunnel and you will need to deal with safety in a tunnel. It is obviously a particular environment if there is a problem. We are testing the Shorncliffe line with ETCS now. It is a network-wide benefit, so some of the funding has come from in terms of bringing it together. You have to integrate, not complicate. That is the key thing in rail. We have integrated a range of things here collaboratively between the DA, Queensland Rail and TMR because integration is the key. It is one of the key things that came out of the Redcliffe line inquiry. Complicating is not where you want to go. You want to integrate, not complicate. What we are seeing here is a network-wide benefit for Queensland Rail and for the system, and it is not just related to this project. This funding has come into the sequence alliance on that basis.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** The minister would have seen media reports of significant HR issues involving sexism and misogyny at the Queensland Rail control room. Can the minister advise what he has personally done to deal with the issues raised?

**Mr BAILEY:** I have absolutely zero tolerance for any misogynistic or sexist behaviour that goes on in any organisation under my portfolio or indeed anywhere. I ask the CEO of Queensland Rail to comment further on it. This is something that is being managed by Queensland Rail. I think she will have more details for you. I make it really clear that we want a fully inclusive workplace where women and people from diverse backgrounds are welcome, that they are valued as members of the workforce and they are free from any bullying and harassment. We have strong policies in this regard. I will hand over to the Queensland Rail CEO to outline some specifics in relation to that.

**Ms Stapleton:** Certainly. As the minister has outlined, we have absolutely zero tolerance for bullying, intimidation and harassment. We want to make sure that Queensland Rail is the place to be, as we are all competing for talent not just in Queensland but across Australia. Every complaint is investigated thoroughly, and we make sure that we follow through with these matters. Specifically, since I have taken on the role, with support from the team and support from the whole company, I have put in a very comprehensive program—quite a significant framework. This includes programs such as QR Signal Respect—‘Record it, report it, don’t support it’. In fact, as at the end of June, we had trained over 1,500 people across the company as part of this.

We have strengthened bullying and harassment protocols and procedures. We have established ‘Safe Station’ which is focused on improving reporting, supporting and triage of complaints.

I am quite proud to announce and recognise that we have also appointed a chief mental health officer. I think we are one of the few companies around that has done so. This is to ensure that not only are we supporting all the new risks that have been highlighted with psychological safety, but also making sure we create a place where people want to be at.

There are a number of initiatives as part of the framework that we are putting in place. I would also say that we are 7,500 people—a reflection of the community—and therefore I would expect that there will be instances of behaviour that we want to call out and that we want to stop, and make sure people select us as the place to be.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I want to revisit the earlier question I asked, now that we have the QR CEO with us. I assume you heard it earlier, but the general gist is the number of stations in the Queensland Rail network that are awaiting upgrades to reach federal disability standards. I do have a particular interest in Taringa, as you would have heard, given that it is in my electorate, but the overarching question is: does QR have a time line or a target for full compliance across the network with disability access standards?

**Ms Stapleton:** Queensland Rail is absolutely determined to provide safe, reliable and customer-focused services across South-East Queensland and the regions. Last year, we carried 42.8 million or close to 43 million customers, which was an increase of over 30 per cent year on year.

We want to attract people to our network. In particular, we understand clearly that we want to make sure that stations are accessible for people with disability, for parents or carers with prams, for senior citizens, as well as for active transport. We have 152 stations, and some of them are actually quite old. In order to deliver the full program, we have do it in a programmatic fashion and in tranches. I am pleased to report that we have already completed 12 of them. In addition to platform upgrades at South Bank, an extra five have now been contracted out. This is part of tranche 4 and this includes five different stations which are Banyo, Buranda, Bundamba, Burpengary, Lindum and Morningside—actually, six of them; Buranda was signed last week. We are getting on with it, but it is a big task ahead of us.

As the minister mentioned earlier as well, we have the benefit of Cross River Rail which is upgrading a number of stations as well as building new stations for us which we look forward to operating.

In terms of Taringa itself, I understand that we have had a number of engagements with yourself and your office in the past. The topography and location is actually quite challenging at Taringa. I also understand there are a couple of stations nearby which are fully accessible, being Toowong and Indooroopilly, so people may have a choice with that. However, having said all that, I can advise that Taringa station is under consideration for the next tranche of stations. Obviously the way we prioritise has a number of factors in there and that includes, for example, current patronage, the current conditions, the topography, the level of access and constructability, and we feel we also need to consider other matters such as surrounding population demographics, future patronage, how it fits with the Cross River Rail combinations and changes to the network design. As such, we work very closely with the Department of Transport, and we expect them to provide our recommendations for consideration by the Department of Transport and funding availability as well so that we can deliver on those.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you. I appreciate the detail on Taringa. To that original question, though, am I to take it from your answer that there is not an overarching target? I understand it is a big network, it is a big job, but there is not a target or time line to achieve compliance across the network?

**Ms Stapleton:** Noting the 152 stations, we are working very diligently to ensure we progress as quickly as possible. That is why we go through tranches and we try very hard to take a programmatic tranche approach to those, but I think it would be difficult for me to speculate when all 152 are done.

**Mr BAILEY:** The DG has supplementary information.

**Ms Stannard:** Very briefly for the benefit of the committee, the member asked about the standards. I want to inform the committee that we have an interim disability action plan. The reason it is interim is that one of the key actions is working with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions on the modernisation of the disability standards for accessible public transport. That review is underway. Once the outcomes are known, then we will be able to co-design with those with lived experiences a new action plan, together with our stakeholders.

**CHAIR:** We will go to the member for Stretton. Minister, because we are getting close to time, there were some questions on notice that we will then go to if they are able to be answered. Obviously you might want to thank some people as well.

**Mr BAILEY:** Of course.

**Mr MARTIN:** In respect of Sunshine Coast investment, can the minister advise what the Palaszczuk government's plan is regarding roads and transport in the region and whether you are aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mr BAILEY:** It is left to the member for Stretton rather than any Sunshine Coast members to ask questions about the Sunshine Coast, it seems, but I am very happy to answer your questions in that regard. As I outlined earlier, the Sunshine Coast is a very fast-growing city, the ninth largest in the country, third largest in the state, and rapidly growing. The members for Caloundra and Nicklin are both doing a fantastic job out there, getting things done, as opposed to posturing and grandstanding. We have a commitment there of \$3 billion in terms of this budget as part of our Big Build. I have been on site many times with the members for Caloundra and Nicklin. The mighty Bells Creek Arterial is getting pretty close to completion, co-funded by their developer and the state government, and brought forward by 10 years so that we can get the infrastructure in place. It also has active transport there as well. Anyone who has been to Aura and Caloundra South can see how many people are calling that home now, and they need the infrastructure.

The Bells Creek Arterial Road will link the Bruce Highway with Caloundra Road and give people a different way into those communities. It will take quite a bit of traffic off Caloundra Road, giving people better options. The early works on the Sunshine Coast rail duplication are quite advanced now in terms of duplicating the line from Beerwah to Beerburrum as well as other upgrades north of there.

Local Sunshine Coast residents and communities are already supporting the Big Build in this budget, having a say in the planning projects for the future. We have consultation underway. There are four big projects coming, all at the one time roughly, and we wanted people to see them all together. It makes no sense to do four separate consultations, so we have done one complete one with the Sunshine Coast public transport project, Kawana Motorway planning, Mooloolah River Interchange and the direct Sunshine Coast rail line. We are doing the necessary yards now that the Albanese government passed through parliament the first federal capital funds for a Sunshine Coast direct line only last year, and we are happy to work with them. That is a \$14 million commitment in the budget.

We also jointly committed \$320 million for the Mooloolah River Interchange stage 1 under a plan to transform the major roads between Caloundra and Mooloolaba. This is much needed work in terms of the pressure on infrastructure. Preliminary design layout has already been developed and early works for stage 1 started earlier this year. The preliminary design reflects the community feedback received during project planning.

I would also like to thank the community and key stakeholders for feedback. We are investing in helping to shape the future of the Sunshine Coast. I urge all Sunshine Coast residents to give us their views as part of this consultation. We want that local intel and feedback so that we can make it as effective as we possibly can. It is really refreshing to see how many people already have done so.

The Kawana Motorway planning is on top of the planning already underway for the \$2.6 million Kawana Motorway business case. Options are being investigated for a new motorway link between Parrearra and Meridan Plains. There is also the \$15 million Sunshine Coast public transport project detailed business case, funded equally by the Albanese federal government, the Palaszczuk state government and the Sunshine Coast Council.

I say a big thank you for the collaborative and positive approach of Sunshine Coast Mayor, Mark Jamieson. He is serious about getting things done. He has been a very good working partner and a very strong advocate for public transport on the Sunshine Coast as well as for road upgrades. It is a pleasure working with him and the councillors and we will continue to do that, because that is what the city needs: working together. Building on the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Options Analysis, it is important that this work considers all options without ruling options in or out based on the thought bubbles of any of the federal MPs, who have been very ineffective, one has to say, over a number of terms in getting anything substantial funded in the area. We are very happy to be working with them.

We have recently completed the Ridgewood Road upgrade at Caloundra. There is funding of \$18 million for the Six Mile Creek bridge; \$18 million for Steve Irwin Way, Beerburrum to Palmview; and \$19 million for upgrades on the D'Aguiar Highway. I have just outlined the costings.

Our commitment to the Sunshine Coast is very strong. It will be an important city ongoing in this state with a fast-growing population. Again, what the Sunshine Coast needs is infrastructure. It does not need cuts, which is what the member for Chatsworth promised in his press conference a few months ago—that there would be billions in cuts to infrastructure here in Queensland.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Rubbish!

**Mr BAILEY:** This government is not going to cut; we are going to build. That is our policy. The Sunshine Coast will benefit from that.

**Mr HEAD:** Is it going to be on time and on budget?

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Doubt it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members. The minister is just winding up.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am just winding up, but I am very passionate about infrastructure on the Sunshine Coast.

**Mr MILLAR:** Not in Western Queensland.

**CHAIR:** He said the Sunshine Coast. Can we stop that, please? He is talking about the Sunshine Coast.



**Mr BAILEY:** That is not exactly controversial, but the members for Caloundra and Nicklin are both doing a fantastic job on the ground. I look forward to more MPs up there being elected in the future who will work like those members do to get good outcomes for the Sunshine Coast.

**CHAIR:** We will now see if we can answer some of the questions on notice. The first one—hopefully they will not be on notice—was to the acting director-general with regard to the Microsoft Essential Security patches which expired in 2020.

**Ms Stannard:** The member for Chatsworth asked me a question about how many TMR servers are operating on the 2008 Microsoft operating system. I can advise the committee that TMR manages approximately 1,500 servers. Of these 1,500 servers, 32 servers are operating on Windows 2008. One of these is due to the Brisbane City Council SCAT system, the Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System. It is due to that system not being managed by TMR that it remains on that server. TMR has had ongoing discussions with Brisbane City Council regarding future system requirements. As to the other 31 servers operating on Windows 2008, I can advise that they support Smart Service Queensland's internal telephony systems. They are being replaced by a Genesys Cloud solution, to be complete by the end of this year.

**CHAIR:** Also the member for Chatsworth asked: when did Transmax become aware of the outages in the EVP system with a potential to result in delays?

**Ms Stannard:** The member for Chatsworth asked a question about Transmax and when it was advised of the issue with the EVP on the Brisbane City Council network. I am advised Transmax indicated that it noted something was wrong on 1 March 2023 when undertaking other routine work. The exact nature of this interaction will be the subject of the independent review. Whether Transmax was also advised by Brisbane City Council will also be determined by the review.

**CHAIR:** The member for Gregory's question—I think it might have been to the minister—was: how much has the government spent—

**Mr MILLAR:** No, it was to the acting director-general.

**CHAIR:** It was to the acting director-general: how much has been spent of the \$1 billion commitment to the Inland Freight Route?

**Mr BAILEY:** I can respond to that.

**CHAIR:** I thought it was to the minister because you said, 'How much has the government spent?'

**Mr BAILEY:** It will need to be in a question on notice. I am happy to do that.

**CHAIR:** We will take that on notice.

**Mr MILLAR:** Take that on notice. That is fine.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The last one was: how long will it take for the first train to commence testing? I think it was to the CEO of Queensland Rail, if you are able to answer. If not, we can place it on notice.

**Ms Stapleton:** Talking about testing time lines, they are obviously not done in isolation. We need to consider the program as a whole, noting the contract has just recently been signed. We are working through this with the delivery authority and would be obviously supporting delivery of these trains onto the network in the required time lines.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, do you wish to thank anyone before we finish?

**Mr BAILEY:** I do. I also want to clarify one other thing. Earlier today when answering a question of a government member I inadvertently advised that the Cairns Western Arterial was \$350 million. I misspoke. It is still substantial, but it is actually \$300 million. I just wanted to correct the record on that.

In closing, I thank all of the members of the committee; all of the staff, who do a great job; and all of the officers across all of the different agencies, departments and delivery authorities for all of their work leading into estimates. It is always a very busy time of year, one might say in a very understated way. I can say that the officers in Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Rail, the delivery authority, all of the agencies and our ports all work very hard. I appreciate all of the work they do. I thank them for all of their contributions and preparations for estimates. I cannot thank them enough. I thank the committee for their deliberations here today.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed estimates for the portfolios of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services has expired. There was a question taken on notice that is yet to be answered. We have resolved that answers to questions taken on notice must be provided to the committee secretariat by 3 pm on Thursday, 10 August. Minister, on behalf of the committee, I thank you, directors-general and officials for your attendance.

**Mr BAILEY:** Chair, I forgot to thank my own ministerial staff, who are magnificent, for all of their help. I would be in big trouble if I forgot them, so I will sneak that in before the end.

**CHAIR:** I would like to thank them, as well as the committee members and non-committee members who attended today. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 2 pm for the examination of the estimates for the portfolios of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.58 pm to 2.00 pm.**

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

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

Mr N Heath, Chief of Staff

Mr I Perez-Smith, Senior Policy Adviser

Mr G Sottile, Senior Policy Adviser

Mr S Reimer, Policy Adviser

**Department of Energy and Public Works**

Mr P Martyn, Director-General

Mr D Shankey, Deputy Director-General, Energy

Mr G Atkins, Deputy Director-General, Public Works

**CS Energy**

Mr D Busine, Chief Executive Officer


**CleanCo Queensland Limited**

Mr T Metcalfe, Chief Executive Officer

**Queensland Building and Construction Commission**

Ms A Levy, Commissioner

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 **CHAIR:** Good afternoon. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement until 5.15 pm. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the minister's portfolio as follows: energy, renewables and hydrogen from 2.00 pm to 3.30 pm and public works and procurement from 3:45 pm to 5:15 pm.

I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area as agreed by the House. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 3.30 to 3.45 pm. I remind those present today that 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, 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. While mobile phone use is not normally permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses here today and who have been permitted the use of their devices for this purpose. I do ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. I also welcome the following non-committee members along today: the member for Condamine and the member for Mirani.

For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves for 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 energy, renewables and hydrogen open for examination. The question before the question is that—

The proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair and committee. Firstly, I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respect to elders past, present and emerging. It has been customary to thank agencies and for that thanks to be buried in the conclusion of those proceedings, but the privilege of being in this chamber today with such a strong budget for Queenslanders is thanks to their efforts, so today I would like to open with those acknowledgements. In doing so, I give the respect that we should all show to those who are working on the frontlines of policy development, commercial negotiations and field operations. Their contribution makes Queensland's Big Build possible—from renewable energy to affordable housing and essential services to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is due to their success that we are now in the biggest decades of this state's history.

I acknowledge the director-general Mr Paul Martyn and his team of highly skilled professionals. I acknowledge the leadership of Queensland's publicly-owned energy and building organisations. I extend that acknowledgement to the authorities and commercialised business units that deliver best-in-breed services to Queenslanders. Most importantly, chair and committee, I acknowledge the tens and thousands of men and women who come to work for the Palaszczuk government every day to deliver a better future for Queensland.

Since we last met the energy policy team have worked tirelessly with industry, stakeholders and agencies. They have delivered the most comprehensive, accountable, realistic, transparent and effective plan for the state's energy transition—not just in Australia, but quite possibly in the world. Through the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, we are taking real action on climate change, on cost of living and on energy security. It is my understanding that this assessment is shared amongst all respected commentators and observers. Now through the teams and our publicly-owned energy corporations and their partners, we are delivering Queensland's Big Build. The Big Build, through this budget, delivers the best funded energy plan anywhere in the nation and, per capita, potentially anywhere in the world. An incredible \$19 billion for our plan—Queensland's plan—for 70 per cent renewables by 2032. It is the largest investment in history by a factor of nearly 10. They are already getting on with the job. Right now they are rolling out the biggest transition network in the nation; the biggest build of renewables in the nation; the biggest private and wind farms in the nation; the biggest green hydrogen project in the nation; the biggest battery building program in the nation; the biggest solar farm in the nation; the biggest pumped hydro build in the world; and the biggest jobs opportunity in the nation.

In public works, our Queensland Building Plan is also the most comprehensive of anywhere in this country. Queensland's building policy team is recognised nationally as the pre-eminent hub of ideation, innovation and intellectual excellence. It is because of their leadership that consumers and industry can build with more confidence under better conditions and to a higher standard. QBuild is not just building and repairing fire stations and classrooms and building more homes for working families, they are building opportunities for whole communities. They are the difference between whether there is an ambo, a nurse, a police officer or a teacher in the farthest reaches of this vast state.

Members, if we are going to deliver Queensland's Big Build, we need to attract and develop the best workforce, supply chains and contracting industry in the nation. Across the entire Department of Energy and Public Works, works occurs every day to build confidence in our project delivery, in the construction industry and in the benefit multiplier of our annual \$20 billion procurement investment. These agencies collectively drive Queensland forward and they need to because, with the eyes of the world on us all, the real work has already begun.

This budget provides real support today with the largest cost-of-living relief package in the nation. It delivers for working families tomorrow through Queensland's big build of infrastructure, affordable housing and essential services and it gives us a big plan for the future by investing in good jobs and new careers for our kids and theirs. This budget sets Queenslanders up for prosperity for generations to come. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I will now turn to non-government members for questions.

**Mr WEIR:** My first question is to the director-general. Director-General, the incident at Callide has severely lessened supply into the Queensland electricity grid; what impact has this had on electricity prices?

**Mr Martyn:** What I can say is that following the May 2021 forced outage of Callide C4, a range of issues contributed to the sustained high electricity wholesale prices which occurred throughout most of 2022. The electricity market is a complex system with over 5,000 registered generators, nine million customers, five state-based transmission networks linked by cross-border interconnectors and 13 major distribution networks in the traded financial market.

It is a long bow to draw to say that one single generator could cause prices to increase without also taking into account the actions of all the other market participants. What we do know is that a range of broader events have had an impact, such as the high international coal and gas prices clearly caused by Russia's invasion of the Ukraine; the upgrade work on the Queensland-NSW Interconnector limiting transfers of electricity; reduced NEM-wide generator availability; and the domestic coal supply issues due to rain and flooding. Wholesale prices eased towards the end of 2022 due to milder early summer temperatures reducing demand; improved generator availability; the easing of international fuel prices; increased renewable generation; the fuel price caps announced in December; and the completion of QNI upgrade works.

On May 29, 2023 the Callide C Power Station joint venture made up of CS Energy and Genuity—formerly InterGen—revised and extended the return-to-service dates for Callide units C3 to 18 February 2024 and C4 to 6 July 2024. ASX Energy futures markets appeared to react to the March 2023 news of the revised return to service dates for Callide C3 and C4. Short-term modest increases of around \$5 a megawatt hour to \$10 a megawatt hour were noted for futures products covering the remainder of 2023.

There was also an increase of around \$5 a megawatt hour for 2024 Queensland base futures. These increases were from a previous base of around \$80 to \$95 per megawatt hour, well below the highs of over \$250 a megawatt hour for the same futures products traded the previous year. In December 2022 the Commonwealth government issued a price cap for certain types of contract gas in concert with state governments making interventions to address the impact of coal commodity prices on power generation. In Queensland the latter was implemented via directions to government owned businesses Stanwell and CS Energy that own and operate various coal-fired generation assets.

**Mr WEIR:** Director-General, both the Auditor-General and the Queensland Competition Authority have directly stated that the outage of Callide has contributed to higher electricity prices. Do you agree with that?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Point of order, Chair. If I may, Chair, with the indulgence of the member for Condamine: I think it is very important, as we saw when the Auditor-General responded to a question which I think was about retail electricity prices—

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

**CHAIR:** I am listening to a point of order at the moment.

**Mr de BRENNI:**—to be sure that when the member for Condamine puts questions in relation to electricity prices he is specific about whether he is talking about retail electricity prices or wholesale electricity prices. I think that is important.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. Member for Gregory, you had a point of order as well?

**Mr MILLAR:** No, you have sorted it out.

**CHAIR:** Okay; thank you.

**Mr WEIR:** I go back to my question. The statements made by the Audit Office and the Queensland Competition Authority stated that the outage of Callide did contribute to higher electricity prices.

**Mr Martyn:** It is important, honourable member, to consider that wholesale prices are different to retail prices. In my reading of the Auditor-General's remarks earlier in the estimates period, he, in a similar way to my answer, indicated there were a range of factors contributing to price increase, one of which was the outage of Callide. What is important to remember, though, is that a spike in wholesale prices does not necessarily directly flow into a rise in retail prices for energy. As you know, the government has provided significant cost-of-living support for consumers that enables them to enjoy significantly lowered electricity prices.

**Mr WEIR:** Director-General, at the estimates hearing last week CS Energy's CEO, Mr Busine, told the Economics and Governance Committee that the price CS Energy purchased coal for at Kogan Creek and Callide are under long-term agreements and have not been materially impacted by international factors. Noting Mr Busine's confirmation to the parliament at estimates last week that coal prices are not the reason electricity is increasing, will the director-general confirm coal is not impacting rising electricity prices at the Queensland government owned generators?

**Mr Martyn:** It is important to remember how prices are set in the National Electricity Market. Prices are traded in at five-minute intervals and there is what is called a merit order created in terms of the price so that, through the AEMO dispatch engine, the lowest price is dispatched first. What we have seen is a complex interplay where it has actually been gas—expensive gas—that has been setting the

price for the majority of last year, and now what we have seen in recent trends is that coal is coming back and setting the price, and obviously with the price cap in place NEM-wide that has led to the lower NEM-wide prices for coal. I think it is again prudent for us to avoid taking isolated pieces of information and applying them to a complex system.

**Mr WEIR:** Director-General, I just want to clarify that Mr Busine stated that the war in Ukraine and the sanctions on Russia were not responsible for driving up coal prices, given that we have had it again confirmed that Queensland coal prices at government owned generators are not affected. Is that correct?

**Mr Martyn:** The price is set by a range of factors. What we know, for example, is that coal-fired power producers in New South Wales are buying off the spot market, so their prices were significantly impacted, which had a NEM-wide effect of driving up prices. Also, we must remember that—

**Mr WEIR:** Point of order, Chair. My question, Director-General, is specifically around the government owned generators in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** I think there is some context here that the whole committee could benefit from, but I understand if we could keep it relevant. I think we are all benefiting from hearing the broader scope of this, but thanks, member for Condamine.

**Mr Martyn:** When we think about how the wholesale price is set, coal-fired generators bid in their energy. As Mr Busine indicated last week, we are fortunate that those coal-fired power stations are mine mouth. The fact that they are bidding in at that level does not necessarily mean that that is the price that is dispatched. Other factors come—

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair. It is a pretty simple question. What the shadow minister is asking is: is Mr Busine correct or not correct in what he said? We seem to be going around and around.

**CHAIR:** By all means that is your point of order. I think we are all benefiting from understanding how these prices are set. If not, the director-general has answered the question and we will move on.

**Mr MILLAR:** He has not answered the question.

**CHAIR:** According to you. Please continue, Director-General.

**Mr Martyn:** I am not trying to be argumentative or difficult. What I would say is, regrettably, it is not a simple question. There are a range of factors that come into play.

**Mr MILLAR:** Is he correct or not?

**Mr Martyn:** Mr Busine has indicated that—

**CHAIR:** Please do not interject, member for Gregory.

**Mr Martyn:** When Mr Busine indicated that the cost of coal from mine-mouth mines into the C4 generator was at long-term contract rates, which I think is what he indicated, that is my understanding.

**Mr WEIR:** Director-General, are electricity prices reducing in Queensland?

**Mr Martyn:** Again, if I can make some comments. Probably the most definitive statement issued by the Australian Energy Market Operator is the quarterly dynamics report, which I commend to the committee. The last report for quarter 2 of 2023 said there were, in AEMO's conclusion—

**CHAIR:** Just stop for a second. Do you require a copy of that or do you have access to a copy?

**Mr WEIR:** No, it is online.

**CHAIR:** So you are happy for the director-general to continue?

**Mr WEIR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, Director-General.

**Mr Martyn:** No, that is all right. Significant price reductions have occurred compared from quarter 2 of 2022 to quarter 2 of 2023, and that is just obviously after the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. Queensland's average quarterly price was \$126 a megawatt hour. This is \$196 a megawatt hour lower than 12 months ago. There was a slight increase, of \$22 a megawatt hour, between quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2023. Importantly, the New South Wales equivalent price was \$137 a megawatt hour—\$11 a megawatt hour higher than Queensland. The price in Queensland declined more steeply than in New South Wales comparing 12 months—so \$196 down in Queensland versus \$165 in New South Wales—and, additionally, prices were less volatile than quarter 2 of 2022.

**Mr WEIR:** I have a question for the CS Energy CEO, Mr Busine, if he is here. Mr Busine, noting that Callide B and C are still out of service, is there a surplus of coal available that otherwise would have been used while the generators were in service and what arrangements have been made for the additional coal that has not been used? Is it stockpiled or has it been onsold?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Yes, I was going to say, could you repeat that question, maybe a bit slower? I struggled to understand. There is a lot of information there. Can you go through that one again, please?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Point of order, Chair. I wonder if the member for Condamine can validate his assertion. I think he said in his question that Callide B is out of operation. I wonder if he can validate that.

**Mr WEIR:** I will repeat the question. Noting that Callide C3 and C4 are still out of service—

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you.

**Mr WEIR:**—is there a surplus of coal available that otherwise would have been used if these generators were in service and what arrangements have been made for the additional coal that has not been used during that period?

**Mr Busine:** At Callide C, CS Energy has commercial arrangements with Batchfire Resources for the purchase of coal. It is Batchfire's commercial decision as to what they will do with that coal. I understand that, in some cases, it has been available for export based on available transport, but it is not coal that we would take and stockpile at this time.

**Mr WEIR:** So there are no penalties to Callide for not taking that coal?

**Mr Busine:** No, there have been no penalties for Callide for not taking that coal.

**Mr WEIR:** Director-General, other than important short-term relief through subsidies, what guidance has the minister given to reduce electricity prices for Queensland families and small businesses now, in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis?

**Mr Martyn:** In terms of the minister's guidance, at the minister's discretion and at the behest of government, the department worked with Queensland Treasury to develop a multilayered package. The first aspect of that was the directions issued to both Stanwell and CS Energy in terms of how they should trade coal-fired generation assets. These directions were consistent with the Commonwealth's price cap of \$125 on coal used for power generation and to implement relief measures agreed to by national cabinet. Future prices for electricity dropped by about one-third following the announcement of the price caps. The data shows that retailers were paying about 40 per cent less to lock in 2023-24 future electricity prices from 21 December 2022 compared to 30 December 2022, that is, after that intervention.

In addition, the department has worked, as I said, with Queensland Treasury to develop energy bill relief packages that are now being implemented. All Queensland households and eligible small businesses will receive the following bill relief for 2023-24: vulnerable households, that is, your existing Queensland electricity rebates recipients, will receive a \$700 cost-of-living rebate that equates to \$175 a quarter; all other households will receive a \$550 cost-of-living rebate.

**Mr HEAD:** Point of order. The question was specifically 'other than' the short-term relief through subsidies.

**Mr Martyn:** I have talked about bidding directions. The other thing that the minister and the government have directed the department to do is to finalise, last year, the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan that seeks to deploy new renewables into the electricity grid, leading to longer term lower prices.

**CHAIR:** For the record, I did not hear that in the question. I did not hear that that was excluded from the question, I am sorry.

**Mr ANDREW:** This question is to do with procurement. Could I speak to Mr Peter Lacey, the Queensland government procurement policy executive director?

**CHAIR:** That will be in the next session.

**Mr ANDREW:** This question is to the minister or director-general, concerning renewable energy and the situation with the Queensland Hydro project. I have been told by the Minister for Science that there is no EIS and there is no business case. We are buying up areas and we are buying up housing and we are pushing forward. How much have we spent on that project at the moment?

**Mr de BRENNI:** This also goes a little to the member for Condamine's inquiries about what long-term strategies the government is putting in place to provide cost-of-living relief to Queensland households. Of course, the director-general indicated there are significant amounts of renewable energy investment under our government. We announced today that Queensland had achieved 25 per cent renewable energy, so we are halfway to our 2030 target with, of course, seven years to go. There

are significant amounts of investment in wind and solar generation. Of course, it is important to make sure that electricity is reliable, as well. Queenslanders want to see their electricity clean and they want to see it reliable. I am coming to your question. I am trying to provide some context, Chair.

The most effective, efficient and technologically sound way to provide deep storage and significant energy storage to deploy clean energy back into the market to households and businesses when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing is to deploy that from pumped hydro-electricity. Pumped hydro energy storage has been a key part of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. The member for Mirani is making specific inquiries in relation to the Pioneer-Burdekin project. It is the single largest contribution to the energy transition in the nation. The budget this year that we are here to examine commits \$1 billion to the Pioneer-Burdekin project. That \$1 billion is committed from progressive coal royalties to ensure that Queensland Hydro, the new entity that has been established to build both of the hydros—as the member for Mirani would be aware, there is also one on the western ranges of the Sunshine Coast. There is work underway now.

The member asked about a couple of things. He asked about EIS and I will go to that in just a moment. He also asked about how much has been spent to date. \$1 billion is invested in this budget. There is work right now. Queensland Hydro has committed contracts to a number of firms based in the region. Of course, under our procurement rules, which you do want to ask about later, it is important that Queensland Hydro and all of the other GOCs are compelled to invest in local businesses to create local prosperity. The examples of contracts that are currently being deployed, so funds that are currently being expended, include a contract to the value of \$110,000 to Mackay based Twin Hills Engineering and Drilling. They are currently conducting geotechnical drilling services. There is a contract to the value of \$1.25 million with the Water 2 Wire joint venture, which is located in its office in Mackay. They are responsible for the front end engineering and design services. There is \$1.27 million to GHD, which has a permanent office in Mackay and is leading the stakeholder engagement services. This significant renewable energy project, the largest of its kind anywhere in the world, is generational infrastructure. This will literally change the nature of Australia's economy to a clean economy.

I want to address the question in relation to environmental impacts. In consideration of the sites selected under the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, the committee would be aware of the Pioneer-Burdekin project and the Borumba project. In respect of environmental impacts, due to the typical co-location of pumped hydro energy storage sites with areas that have a range of values when it comes to the natural environment, the government required a strong preliminary understanding of potential environmental impacts at the proposed sites to support our options analysis. Higher environmental impacts, of course, were less favourable for project progression so those projects that had high environmental impacts were knocked out. Indicators used to understand potential environmental impacts included interactions with matters of national environmental significance so there is particular terminology for those types of matters and also—

**Mr ANDREW:** Point of order, Chair. I did not want to understand the environmental impact. It was more whether or not we had one in place. I did not need a rundown of the environmental impact and what that meant as a whole.

**CHAIR:** The question is being answered. If you are satisfied with the answer, I am sure—

**Mr ANDREW:** I am satisfied with that answer. What I would like to know is: what is the return on investment? What has the department found as a return on investment for the hydro project? Does it stack up?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Absolutely. These projects stack up. The member would be aware that the government in this year's budget announced that we had made a final investment decision on the Borumba project. That is a two-gigawatt, 24-hour pumped hydro storage project just west of the Sunshine Coast. That is due to provide first power in the early 2030s. That is a well-progressed project. Pumped hydro energy storage is the most scientifically and technologically proven method of deep storage. It is the cheapest form of doing that. For example, we announced that the cost, including a significant contingency, for the Borumba project was \$14.2 billion. To deliver that with an alternative—say, for example, with batteries, member for Mirani—I think the advice that we received was that it would be in the vicinity of \$32 billion and those batteries would need to be replaced approximately every 15 years. It is a substantially higher cost. There is no cost-effective way to deliver deep storage other than through this proven technology.

We are working towards a final investment decision on the Pioneer-Burdekin project. Of course, we will undergo all of the appropriate studies. Advice will come to government. Whether the member is interested in them or not, there will be very well considered and public processes around environmental



impact statements and assessments against the EPBC Act. Those will be public processes. I invite the member for Mirani and his constituents to remain fully engaged in those processes so that they are aware of the circumstances. I am very confident that the site selection process we have undertaken is thorough. I am confident in the ability of Queensland Hydro and its contracting partners to deliver the project successfully and on time.

**Mr ANDREW:** What has the department invested in cybersecurity in relation to energy assets here in Queensland? What is the budget for that this time?

**CHAIR:** That is probably to do with digital—

**Mr ANDREW:** I can place that on notice.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I can make some general remarks in relation to that. The critical infrastructure framework that is established by the Australian government places specific requirements on those entities within the electricity sector to ensure their systems are of the highest standard. I can assure the committee: whilst I do not have the specific figures in relation to the—

**Mr ANDREW:** I am happy for you to take it on notice, Minister, so we can preserve time.

**CHAIR:** You probably do not need to place it on notice. The minister is answering the question.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I can assure the member that I have sought and received assurances from the chairpersons of the respective entities in Queensland that they have met their obligations with respect to cybersecurity. By virtue of that, their investment would meet the test of a reasonable, adequate and appropriate investment in their cybersecurity. When I meet regularly with the chairs of those entities, I continue to receive assurances from them around their cybersecurity investment and protections.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thanks, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. There are Auditor-General's reports, which this committee goes into, regarding all of that. They are out there publicly for members to look at. Minister, I know that we have touched on this before but I would just like to flesh it out further. Can you update the committee on what actions the Palaszczuk government is taking through this budget and through the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan to help keep energy affordable for households? Can you outline how public ownership of the energy systems is still supporting Queensland households?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank all members of the committee for their interest in the cost of living for Queenslanders. The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan that the director-general referred to earlier is our plan to deliver a future of cheaper, cleaner and more secure energy for Queenslanders. This budget, importantly, provides a \$19 billion investment in the implementation of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan.

The member for Condamine asked about what else we were doing other than immediate relief for households. I think immediate relief is important and is welcomed by households. I know that households I have heard from have welcomed that. It also provides medium-term and long-term actions to ease household energy affordability. In fact, the 2023-24 budget delivers the largest cost-of-living relief package in the nation. We are very proud of that. The evidence is that household energy will always be more affordable under Labor. Under this government, energy is more affordable here in Queensland. Power bills for equivalent usage are lower here in Queensland than anywhere in Australia. It is cheaper to boil your kettle in Brisbane than in Sydney. It is cheaper to put on your air conditioner in Longreach than in South Australia. I can update the committee on how that has been achieved.

As I said, we have among the cheapest electricity of any of the states in the entire nation. When you apply our cost-of-living rebates they are the cheapest power bills. That is what matters to Queensland households: how much they have to pay. They pay the least. A big reason for that, Chair and committee members, is that Queenslanders themselves benefit from their ownership of the electricity system. It is the Palaszczuk government that is delivering that immediate relief that I alluded to earlier and about which the member for Condamine was asking. In fact, this year every Queensland household will receive the \$550 Cost of Living Rebate. However, if you are one of the 620,000 households across Queensland who is a senior, a pensioner, a veteran or a low-income Queensland, your household will receive nearly double that in immediate relief—\$1,072.

That support does not stop there. Tens of thousands of Queenslanders will also be given the opportunity to save on their power bills and their cost of living by being able to replace inefficient appliances with new, energy-efficient appliances. We have announced that around 40,000 Queenslanders—thanks to this year's budget—will be able to claim a new rebate up to \$1,000 for eligible households. We will support them to bust bills with the \$22 million Climate Smart Energy Savers

Program. This offers rebates for a range of eligible energy-efficient appliances. It has been very popular. I can report that over 17,000 Queenslanders have already registered their interest in that program in just a few days. It is no wonder, of course, because making the switch from a two-star to a four-star appliance could save households hundreds of dollars a year. We have targeted this investment and this support so that the lowest income households will be able to claim the most on these appliances. However, the program is open to all Queenslanders.

Finally, I want to make a remark around our investment in renewables. The data is settled: renewable energy is the cheapest form of new generation. Under our plan—funded with \$19 billion in this year's budget—we will be 70 per cent renewable by 2032. I am pleased to update the committee that, as of this month, we sit at over 25 per cent. In fact, I can update the committee that Queensland has achieved 26 per cent renewable energy. It is our investments from this year's budget for a Big Build that ensures that electricity is not only cheaper and cleaner but also more reliable, in particular with those significant projects that the member for Mirani was so interested in—our big pumped hydros in regional Queensland—right down to our neighbourhood batteries across South-East Queensland and regional Queensland that are storing cheap, renewable energy produced by that incredible Queensland sunshine produced during the day and employing it at peak demand to keep costs down.

**Mr WALKER:** My question is to the minister. With Queensland embarking on the biggest decade of infrastructure delivery in our history, can the minister update the committee on how the Palaszczuk government is delivering power for generations through the Big Build of our Queensland SuperGrid?

**Mr de BRENNI:** That is a terrific question because we are building the infrastructure a growing state needs. It is all part of Queensland's Big Build—the biggest investment in infrastructure delivery in our history. The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan is building the Queensland SuperGrid. That will be Australia's largest. With CopperString 2032, it be over 2,000 kilometres of transmission to transport renewable energy from the regions to power our industry, our services and, of course, households. You do not just need to take it from me. Respected commentators on this like former US vice-president Al Gore said, 'We need to see more action like this around the world.'

The Palaszczuk government's budget has allocated capital investment of \$19 billion to deliver on the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan to ensure we meet our renewable energy targets and put us on a pathway to delivering on our desire to establish Queensland and Australia as a renewable energy powerhouse. Our publicly owned energy businesses are leading Queensland's energy transformation. They are investing—as I mentioned earlier—in new wind, solar, storage and transmission. That is all supported by our \$4.5 billion Queensland Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund.

In the 2023-24 budget alone the state's six publicly owned energy entities are making a capital commitment of \$5.465 billion, significantly strengthening their capability to lead the sector's transmission to cleaner sources of supply. Importantly, the budget also demonstrates the Palaszczuk government's commitment to maintaining 100 per cent public ownership of Queensland's electricity transmission and distribution networks as well as 100 per cent ownership of large scale, long-duration energy storage schemes. It is that public ownership that has ensured profits from the state's major electricity assets—revenue over any costs—are funnelled and directed back into the pockets of Queenslanders not shareholders that are invisible overseas somewhere. It is Queenslanders who own that system and they reap the rewards of that.

As well, this year's budget accelerates the build out of the backbone transmission. Powerlink will invest \$594 million on behalf of Queenslanders—again, funded by progressive coal royalties—to kickstart the CopperString 2032 high voltage link. That takes our Queensland SuperGrid from around 1,500 kilometre to over 2,000 kilometre, unlocking billions of dollars of new critical minerals mining in the North West Minerals Province and new renewables around the area of Hughenden.

I am pleased to report to the committee that work has started. A \$20 million early works package for engineering and geotechnical work has been awarded to CIMIC Group companies UGL and CPB. Powerlink will also invest \$193.8 million this year to support the connection of major renewable projects to the Queensland SuperGrid. That includes the two-gigawatt Borumba pumped hydro energy storage and Australia's largest onshore wind project, the one-gigawatt MacIntyre wind precinct south-east of Warwick.

This year Energy Queensland will deliver \$2.042 billion through their capital program, focused on network reliability and renewable hosting capability. That includes \$150 million to continue the rollout of network batteries, decarbonisation of isolated networks and supporting renewable generation across Australia. Stanwell Corporation will invest a further \$221.2 million towards their development of the 252-megawatt Wambo Wind Farm and \$200 million to commence construction of its 100 per cent owned and operated Tarong West Wind Farm.

The budget will see \$251.8 million for new grid scale batteries within Queensland southern and central renewable energy zones. This year CleanCo will continue to grow its renewable energy portfolio with a \$171 million down payment on the \$500 million announced to support development of new wind and solar projects in Central Queensland. After recently celebrating its 50th anniversary—and I know that the member for Bundamba is a big support of this project—the Future Clean Energy Hub at Swanbank will benefit from \$41.5 million to build and install a 200-megawatt big battery, growing the potential for onsite solar and green hydrogen production facilities.

Queensland's three publicly owned generators are also investing \$384 million in upgrades and all important maintenance at state owned power stations, safeguarding supply while, at the same time, ramping up our renewable generation. Finally, new player this year, Queensland Hydro, will invest \$183.7 million at Borumba. At the same time, they are undertaking the detailed feasibility and early works at Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro energy storage west of Mackay—the battery of the north, as we like to call it, that will completely transform the state through \$1 billion invested in this budget, again funded through progressive coal royalties.

**Mr MARTIN:** My question is of the minister. Can the minister please outline for the committee how the Queensland government is investing in the state's publicly owned electricity generators with sustaining capital over the last three years, what it intends to spend in the current budget period and what results it is delivering for Queenslanders in reliability and affordability?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The three publicly owned generators, as I indicated, are investing around \$384 million this year alone for upgrades and maintenance at existing state owned power stations. Every request by a government owned corporation of the government for investment into maintenance and upgrades of these publicly owned stations is always approved. In fact, on average the Palaszczuk government is investing 70 per cent more in asset maintenance and upgrades than the previous Newman government did, including at Callide C.

For Queenslanders who only care about one number—and I think that is the number on their bill—there are three facts they need to know. Firstly, our electricity prices are down. The director-general spoke to this earlier. The Australian Energy Market Operator, in its Quarterly Energy Dynamics report for quarter 2, 2023, reported that the average year-on-year quarterly price is down by 61 per cent. Secondly, the CSIRO's latest GenCost report reaffirms that renewables are by far the cheapest form of generation. Thirdly, we believe that the number that really matters to Queenslanders is the one on their bill.

I am pleased to report that with our cost-of-living rebates Queenslanders are paying the least of all states in the nation. I want to take this opportunity to provide an important reassurance to Queenslanders as we head into what could potentially be a very hot summer. I think we have already started to see the early signs of summer over the last couple of weeks. The reassurance is this: their energy system is safe, stable and secure. In fact, this year's Electricity Statement of Opportunities report provides that advice to us. That advice is provided by the Australian Energy Market Operator. That advice is that the Queensland energy system has the greatest reliability of major energy producing states on the mainland of Australia. I think that is because clearly this energy system remains in majority public ownership. That means that Queenslanders can control the transition in their own interests.

The report identified that Queensland requires 780 megawatts of additional firmed capacity by 2030. The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and the investments announced in the budget will smash that. I am advised that we will be adding about 690 megawatts, or nearly all of that, by Christmas this year. The Palaszczuk government's nation-leading plan will deliver 22 megawatts of renewable energy and six gigawatts of energy storage plus seven gigawatts of deep pumped energy storage by 2025.

Our Queensland SuperGrid infrastructure blueprint—a companion to the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan—confirms that at all times our dispatchable energy in Queensland will exceed our peak demand, even accounting for transmission to and through the interconnector to New South Wales. Our soon-to-be-established energy system advisory board will have very specific checkpoints along the way. Only when reliability of our system is guaranteed will we make changes to the way that it operates because it is a plan that is designed to serve people not a plan that is designed to make profits.

To underscore the reliability and ensure investments, there are already national legal requirements on generators to ensure maintenance of electricity assets. Those requirements are not a slogan; they are a law. They appear in the National Electricity Law, the National Electricity Rules and the Electricity Regulation 2006. For example, section 16 of the Electricity Regulation states—

An electricity entity must ... periodically inspect and maintain its works to ensure the works remain in good working order and condition.

While I and many other Queenslanders are proud of their publicly owned energy system, it is just that: it is publicly owned, not operated. Under the Government Owned Corporations Act 1993, the boards are responsible for operations—and their CEOs are here today as well. Those boards are responsible for ensuring the assets perform their functions in a proper, effective and efficient way.

I do not stand idly by either. I make regular visits to our power station sites including Callide, which seems to be of interest to the opposition. I have visited many times in this role and many times since the incident in 2021. I have met with the board. I have met with the management. I have met with OEMs. I have met with the workforce. I have met with union representatives. I have spent hours in open forums with community members answering all the questions that I can because these are important questions to be asked and answered, and we treat them with a great degree of respect.

**Mr HEAD:** You didn't show up to the one in Bilo.

**CHAIR:** Member for Callide.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I am happy to take the interjection. I have been at a community forum in Biloela and spent many hours at the bowls club on two occasions meeting with the workforce and representatives of the community and answering those questions.

**Mr HEAD:** You didn't come to the one you were invited to this year.

**CHAIR:** Member for Callide.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I want to pay tribute to members of that Callide team and the local community and the local workforce for their efforts in rebuilding those assets. Callide will provide our system with greater strength when required as we build out the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan—the SuperGrid. It has been truly an extraordinary effort from the local workforce and I want to commend them for it. We have seen time and time again in this place that the opposition wants to raise criticisms about whether they can do it on time, whether they have done it on time, whether they have done enough. Instead, our government wants to provide our support to that workforce and commend them for their efforts.

Before I conclude, it is because Queenslanders have kept assets like that in public hands that we have this unprecedented control over the destiny of the energy system. Queensland is in a position to guide the transformation of its energy system, not to have it guided by the interests of overseas shareholders. We are in a position in Queensland uniquely to listen to the advice of experts to ensure the system always remains secure and reliable. It is the Energy and Jobs Plan, funded \$19 billion in this year's budget, that will ensure we have cheaper, cleaner and more secure power for generations.

**CHAIR:** We will now turn to the member for Callide.

**Mr HEAD:** My question is to the CEO of CS Energy. The Auditor-General, the mining and energy union, and the QCA have all stated that a lack of maintenance has resulted in unplanned outages at generators. In turn, this instability has led to higher electricity prices for Queenslanders. Was there any backlog in maintenance at the time of the C4 explosion at Callide in 2021?

**Mr Busine:** CS Energy maintains asset management systems and continues to work on a prioritised basis, including regular inspections and risk assessments of work that is required on the plant. Backlogs are a normal part of managing the work and priority is given to the highest risk areas, particularly the statutory requirements to ensure they are maintained. The work that gets done gets done on a regular basis, a prioritised basis, to ensure we are giving the highest priority to the work.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Excuse me, Chair. The member for Callide asserted three organisations that have made specific remarks—

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

**CHAIR:** I am listening to a point of order from the minister.

**Mr MILLAR:** I did not know he had called a point of order.

**Mr de BRENNI:** It has become practice in this place that members are required to validate those statements. I have not seen those specific statements made by those entities.

**CHAIR:** I ask the member for Callide, when making assertions like that—you mentioned unions and other people saying things—to validate them in future. Do you have another question?

**Mr HEAD:** Yes, I do. Has there been a review into maintenance and upkeep of CS Energy owned assets to ensure maintenance schedules have been and are being adhered to?

**Mr Busine:** We have recently undertaken a review by an external firm, Advisian, to assist us in understanding the state of our plant and where our priorities need to be placed. We have increased our levels of particularly technical expertise to ensure we are able to continue the work that is required on

the plant. We have the budget in the year ahead which gives us the full scope that we require to do the work. We are obviously seeking to ensure we have the plants as reliable as we can, so we have undertaken improvements to ensure that is the case.

**Mr WEIR:** I have a question for the CEO of Queensland Hydro, Mr Cusack.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, just for the benefit of the member for Condamine, the CEOs are not covered by the standing orders to present as witnesses. However, if it makes life easy for the committee, I am happy to indulge the member for Condamine and ask the CEO to come to the table. Perhaps the member could put the question and then I will determine whether or not it is appropriate for the CEO to come up. Could we proceed that way, Chair?

**CHAIR:** I am aware of that, Minister.

**Mr MILLAR:** He is not a witness?

**CHAIR:** He is not on the witness list.

**Mr de BRENNI:** He is not a schedule 7 witness.

**Mr MILLAR:** Why would he not be on the witness list?

**CHAIR:** He is not. Member for Condamine, so that you do not lose more of your time, do you want to ask the minister the question, as he has offered?

**Mr WEIR:** I will ask the director-general, I think. I refer to the proposed Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro announcement. What will happen if the environmental approvals for this project are not approved?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Point of order, Chair: isn't there a standing order in relation to questions that they cannot be hypothetical questions? It is clearly a hypothetical question.

**Mr WEIR:** Point of order: I would not say that is hypothetical.

**CHAIR:** Can I ask you to repeat the question? I will judge whether it is hypothetical or not.

**Mr WEIR:** I refer to the proposed Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro announcement. What will happen if the environmental approvals are not approved for this project?

**CHAIR:** That is hypothetical because you are asking what will happen if they are not approved. It is a hypothetical question. Can you rephrase the question?

**Mr WEIR:** Let's go this way: Minister, given that Minister Linard said in estimates that the project will only proceed if the appropriate approvals are given, do you stand by your commitment that the Pioneer-Burdekin will open in 2032?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Yes. It will be operating in accordance with the schedule that we have outlined, subject, of course, to all of those approvals occurring.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, it does seem that the government is determined to push this project through. Given the Treasurer is on the record as saying he is 'absolutely confident' this project will go ahead, does that mean environmental issues will be overridden by the government?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I am happy to take the question, Chair.

**CHAIR:** There is a lot of speculation in that question. Minister, you can answer it however you see fit.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Certainly, Chair. I am happy to answer that. Every project of significance in this nation goes through significant approvals processes. The state processes in respect of the environmental impact studies and Australian government processes in respect of their assessment against the EPBC Act are required on every single project.

I refer the member to my previous statements about site selection and why our government is so confident in the sites we have selected. That might provide some comfort to the member for Condamine. I did not go through all of this before because I think the member for Mirani lost interest, but the member for Condamine probably does have a little bit more substance behind him than the member for Mirani on this particular matter.

In the site selection process indicators were used to understand potential environmental impacts by looking at matters of national environmental and ecological significance. We looked at interactions with not just of the project itself but the transmission required to connect it to the SuperGrid. We considered that longer transmission lines would have greater impacts et cetera. We looked at the types and extent of environmental approvals required for each project. We looked at a thorough review of

those. We looked at the approvals pathways that were required and we discounted projects that had problematic environmental or ecological impacts. Based on the advice of experts, the projects that we chose were the ones that had the least environmental and ecological impacts and a high likelihood of being able to succeed through those processes.

We are embarking on this nation-building and intergenerational infrastructure for a very important reason. We have seen global temperatures rise by 1.5 per cent. Over the last few weeks any Queenslander who has turned on the news has seen that the Northern Hemisphere is experiencing its hottest summer. They are recording the hottest ocean temperatures. We are seeing unnatural disasters. We are seeing unmitigated bushfires in parts of the world. We have seen disasters like we have never seen here in this state and on the eastern seaboard, including flood, fire emergencies and heating of the oceans. That is why we are embarking on this transition. The rest of the world is embarking on this transition. We have moving to a clean energy system that is controlled by Queenslanders. Pumped hydro energy storage will ensure that the lights stay on and that power is reliable, secure and cheap.

We have analysed literally every site across the state and narrowed it down through a process to determine the two most favourable sites with the fewest impacts across considerations, including environmental impacts on water, impacts on the energy system and local economic impacts. We have looked at constructability. These are the most easily constructible sites. We are very confident across all of the bases on which these projects have been assessed. We have looked at social impacts around these particular projects. That is why members of this government are confident this project will pass those thresholds with flying colours; however, those processes will be public processes. All of the members of the committee and any Queenslander will be able to observe the public processes around those approvals, and we encourage them to remain engaged.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, are you aware if Sunwater or any other entity has commissioned any environmental study about the proposed Pioneer-Burdekin dam?

**CHAIR:** Sunwater is under the Minister for Water. I am sure you are aware of that. Minister, I understand it is potentially not under your portfolio.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The member needs to refer matters in relation to Sunwater to the Minister for Water.

**Mr WEIR:** You never received any environmental impact report from Sunwater?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Sunwater does not report to me or this agency.

**CHAIR:** I did not know if there was anything you could add to that.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, given the size and scale of this to the whole energy plan there is no business case, no feasibility study, no traditional owner consent, no environmental impact statement, no investment decision and still very little in the budget. How can Queenslanders be sure of this project and how can you be so sure it is going to proceed?

**CHAIR:** You are saying that you not are able to substantiate any of those things?

**Mr WEIR:** Yes.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Member for Condamine, I think most Queenslanders would not describe a billion dollar investment as not much money or not much investment.

**Mr WEIR:** There isn't a billion dollars in there yet.

**CHAIR:** Member, do not interject.

**Mr de BRENNI:** There is a billion dollars committed to this project. I know that Queensland Hydro has met with traditional owners, local stakeholders and local stakeholder reference groups on many occasions. In the presence of Queensland Hydro and representatives of the department I have met with local stakeholders, local governments, local contractors and affected members of the community. The next stage of project development is supported by the billion dollar investment in this year's budget that is funded by progressive coal royalties. The next stages include the development of the project's exploratory works, which include further geotechnical drilling, exploratory tunnelling and a range of other matters. We are very confident that, if the member is in fact referring to the Pioneer-Burdekin project, that process will put our government in a position to reach a final investment decision to proceed with that project.

The work to date done by experts in their fields has assessed this site as the best site. It will be the largest pumped hydro energy storage project in the world. It will serve to store accessible renewable energy and deliver it into the grid at the times we need it most. It is fundamental to ensuring that we are

able to take real action to mitigate climate change and act against global warming. It is important for members of the committee to recognise that the development of mega projects like this proceeds in this way. I can understand that members of the committee will be unfamiliar with large infrastructure projects.

**Mr MILLAR:** I do not think so. I think I am very familiar with them.

**CHAIR:** You did not need to interject, member. He is going to furnish you with some more information. I have also worked on large construction projects but I am still very keen to hear, Minister.

**Mr WEIR:** Chair, point order: is the minister able to table the documents to which he refers that substantiate his faith this project will be approved?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The stakeholder reference group at both of our projects has been closely engaged with the Department of Energy and Public Works and Queensland Hydro, and we have committed to provide them with the details that we can. We are working through a process of compiling the appropriate information to provide to them.

As I indicated to the member for Condamine, those environmental impact processes, which I understand you are interested in, are still to come. They are public processes so the documentation will be there for all to see. In fact, as I understand it, the documentation goes through a draft process. All stakeholders, including members of the committee, will have an opportunity to provide feedback long before it is considered by the authorities for approval. That documentation will be well and truly available for you to see with respect to those environmental processes.

**Mr WALKER:** Chair, point of order: the minister was answering a question—

**CHAIR:** The minister was answering a question and he was responding to a point of order. Minister, would you like to finish your initial question or had you finished? I think that covers what you were saying, member for Mundingburra. I was going there.

**Mr de BRENNI:** As I was saying, we really want the committee to understand that we are taking a very planned and measured approach to project development. There are detailed studies that are conducted and reviewed along the way. They are reviewed by a technical review panel which is chaired by the president of the International Hydropower Association, Roger Gill. The project, as I said, will undergo environmental assessments, full environmental impact statements and compliance. We are very confident. There is no inundation of national park at the Pioneer-Burdekin project. There is no infrastructure on or near Broken River. It is nine kilometres away.

I have been meeting with local residents there and they are supportive of our government taking this action on climate change. They want to see energy independence. They want to see their public institutions building and operating these assets. We have explained to them that replacing this with another technology of batteries would be in the vicinity of \$80 billion replaced every 10 years. They understand that pumped hydro is the clean energy solution for the future and we have been working closely with those local community members about their options if their property is affected.

**Mr HEAD:** Point of order, Chair: I believe the question was pretty specific—that is, does the minister stand by his commitment that the Pioneer-Burdekin will open in 2032? It is a very specific question.

**CHAIR:** Yes, and the minister has been answering it. There is no point of order. Minister, if you have finished that one, we have some questions as well.

**Mr de BRENNI:** It is important for me to clarify for the committee that the planned approach to Pioneer-Burdekin has it generating in a staged approach, so it will scale up from 2032 to 2035. We are expecting first power in 2032 and full power in 2035.

**CHAIR:** Minister, we have talked today about ending our reliance on coal-fired power and converting our existing power stations into clean energy hubs. I am keen to hear about the new jobs and opportunities for my fellow past co-workers in the energy supply industry and to understand how they will deliver cheaper, cleaner and more secure energy for Queenslanders in those clean energy hubs.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, I admire your interest in the welfare of your former colleagues. I know that everybody on the committee will have constituents who are involved in the Queensland energy system. We will never hit our state, national and international obligations if we do not transition out of coal-fired power. That is why we are taking this action. That is why we have delivered the most comprehensive, transparent, accountable and funded plan anywhere in the world to do that.

As for the 100,000 jobs that are expected to be created through this clean energy transition, they will not be here in Queensland unless we lead the transition, unless we manage this transition, unless we actively lean into it with projects like Pioneer-Burdekin. I note the leader of the Nationals just last night expressed a view that it is up to the political leaders—it is up to politicians—to identify visionary projects and make them happen in the interests of the nation. Pioneer-Burdekin is one of those. Significant projects under the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan are some of those as well. If we do not take those actions on this plan and manage that transition actively for Queenslanders, those job opportunities will go to other jurisdictions. We want to see those jobs here because they are about jobs for Queenslanders now and jobs for generations to come.

At the core of the Energy and Jobs Plan is this commitment that all publicly owned coal-fired power stations will be operating as clean energy hubs by 2035. That will be supported by a legislated job security guarantee for energy workers. We intend to bring to the Queensland parliament—

**Mr HEAD:** Will it have relocation packages?

**CHAIR:** Member for Callide, can you not interject please. You will have time to ask your own questions.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I will be looking to the member for Callide's support on this important legislative reform. I know that he is interested in it and I am pleased that he is, and I hope he supports and votes in favour of this legislation. The publicly owned coal-fired power stations will of course continue to play an important role in our future energy system as clean energy hubs. They will remain in that local community. We are not talking about whole towns having to move or people needing to move. We are not going to force anybody to go anywhere, member for Callide—

**Mr HEAD:** You will just close their jobs

**Mr de BRENNI:**—so to assert that is not the case. We will not shut the gate on these power stations.

**CHAIR:** Member for Callide, I am just cautioning you to stop your interjections. You constantly do it, not just in this room but in other rooms. I am not going to put up with it today. If you asked a question that would be good, but it is not your turn.

**Mr de BRENNI:** We will not shut the gate on these power stations. We will not turn our back on that workforce or the communities who play a leading role in their energy transition. We know that these power stations are located in very strong parts of the Queensland electricity network. They hold incredibly strategic advantages, like grid connection, a highly skilled workforce and established community relationships. They have land on site. Our government will work with publicly owned energy businesses to develop proposals that ensure we are able to reserve, repurpose and reinvest to modernise those coal-fired power stations.

We are already delivering that. We are working directly with those GOCs currently to develop proposals for clean energy hub investment. I want to talk about that clean energy hub investment that is supported through the \$4.5 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund. I want to give a brief overview of Queensland's clean energy hubs. I am advised that the hubs at Tarong and Stanwell, in accordance with the Energy and Jobs Plan, will provide synchronous condensers, battery storage and new energy technologies that will supply clean energy to the grid and provide firming to the market. Clearly, it will require a significant workforce to operate and maintain those assets.

To get there, we have already publicly announced large-scale battery development, along with the joint venture Wambo Wind Farm and the nation's largest publicly owned wind farm, Tarong West. For the CS Energy assets, I am advised that work has started on the Kogan Creek hydrogen demonstration plant, ahead of major works on its hydrogen gas peaking plant. These are new assets that will require an operations and maintenance workforce. I am further advised that the large-scale battery and solar farm at the Chinchilla site will soon be going through commissioning phases. I am advised that the rebuild of the generating units and cooling towers at Callide—we spent a fair bit of time talking about that today—while a complex project, is on track. Again, I commend that workforce.

Our government has always supported the CS Energy board's proposed capital investments for major overhauls and the CEO has responded to questions about that today as well. We have always supported operating expenditure for plant maintenance. Our government has never declined a request for maintenance expenditure.

Meanwhile, CleanCo's Swanbank precinct has been rebuilding its capacity after it was mothballed by the Liberals and Nationals. I am pleased to report that recently it celebrated 50 years of power generation by charging towards its clean energy future. The site is set to be transformed into a



clean energy hub that will deliver jobs and economic opportunities for the region for many generations to come, starting with its 250-megawatt battery, charged with the cheap, clean, publicly owned CleanCo energy from the wind farms the Palaszczuk government is funding with \$500 million. The Swanbank Clean Energy Hub draft master plan is being informed through a community co-design process.

In conclusion, I will have more to say on these assets in the coming financial year and I look forward to updating all members of the House on those developments. While I and many other Queenslanders are proud of this publicly owned energy system, it is important to continue to recognise that the local workforce are ultimately the ones who operate and maintain that. We are delivering the job security guarantee for them and ensuring their workplace is able to successfully transition to a clean energy hub with the support of this year's budget.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, the Palaszczuk government has committed to spending 95 per cent of investment from the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan in regional Queensland. Can you update the committee on what this budget provides towards these communities? What programs are being rolled out to ensure regional Queensland communities benefit from the clean energy transformation?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The member is correct: approximately 95 per cent of investment under the Energy and Jobs Plan will be invested in regional Queensland. This budget commits \$19 billion, enabled through progressive coal royalties in the rollout of this leading, comprehensive, detailed and funded plan. It is also supported, importantly, member for Mundingburra, by a range of other initiatives. They include the Queensland SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint. That is the guiding document for where, when and what should be built across the state in terms of the SuperGrid. It is supported by the SuperGrid Landholder Payment Framework, the best framework for landholders in the nation. The Regional Energy Transformation Partnerships Framework is in draft at the moment. We are consulting with local governments and regional stakeholders about that. There is the Queensland Renewable Energy Landholder Toolkit, the best in breed of its kind to support landholders in negotiations with proponents of renewable energy projects. We have released a draft Queensland Renewable Energy Zone Roadmap to provide certainty to investors and local communities about how they will benefit. We have delivered the Queensland Energy Workers' Charter and, most importantly, I refer to the earlier question about the Job Security Guarantee as well.

Through the Renewable Energy Zone Roadmap that is out in draft at the moment, we seek to establish Queensland as the nation's best practice for the rollout of renewable energy projects. It is really about setting a high benchmark for local benefits. The draft road map identifies 12 potential future Renewable Energy Zones to be developed and connected to the Queensland SuperGrid in three phases by 2035. Those zones are designed to deliver large-scale wind, solar, connected pumped hydro and green hydrogen projects under the plan. The plan enshrined in legislation, the zone enshrined in legislation, will deliver global best practice as we move towards 80 per cent renewables by 2035.

Importantly, the plan also commits to undertaking strategic REZ readiness assessments across those regions—the north, the central and the southern regions—in which those Renewable Energy Zones will fit. They will enable considered responses that ensure benefits flow through to local community. The local benefits include infrastructure, transport, housing, accommodation, workforce, making sure there are local supply chains, dealing with waste management, biodiversity protection, other land uses, social infrastructure, as well as local industry and, importantly, First Nations considerations.

Because Queenslanders have kept the network in public hands, we have an extra layer of accountability to regional communities in particular. The member asked about the substantial commitment under the plan to regional Queensland. As part of that commitment to keep regional Queensland thriving, this year's budget provides cost-of-living support to regional Queenslanders in particular through the community service obligation. It means each and every year our government acts decisively to reduce regional power bills to be on par with South-East Queensland. That is before we provide the nation-leading Cost of Living rebates.

I am pleased to update the committee that in this year's budget, we will provide \$541.2 million through that community service obligation. That is hundreds of millions of dollars going to regional cities, towns and communities—Bundy, Byfield, Roma, Cloncurry and the Cape. Whilst those rebates from retention of public ownership are the quickest and most effective way, we know that the cheapest form of generation are renewables. That is why we are investing heavily in new renewable generation in regional Queensland.

I will conclude by quoting the Queensland Conservation Council in respect of the Renewable Energy Zone road maps and what they mean to regional Queensland. It said—

We welcome the release of this road map. Renewable Energy Zones must rapidly turn into plans. We need to speed up the construction of new renewables to bring down both emissions and electricity prices.

That is exactly what we are doing with this significant investment in regional Queensland. It means job security for the workforce as well.

**CHAIR:** We might go to the member for Maiwar for a couple of questions.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Director-General, I understand that when I asked this question last year, the public ownership percentage in the electricity generation sector was 65 per cent. Can you give me an updated figure of what it is currently? We are at the end of the last financial year.

**Mr Martyn:** It was 65 per cent last year on the same basis. This year it is slightly higher at 66 per cent.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Does that include the generation capacity of those Callide units that are offline at the moment?

**Mr Martyn:** It is actually an output measure, so it only measures the energy that is produced.

**Mr BERKMAN:** That is interesting. I thought from previous years that there was a nameplate generation capacity figure.

**Mr Martyn:** There are different ways to calculate this. The problem with an output measure is that it is inherently variable, so the capacity measure might actually make more sense in the long run, but that is a decision that we need to look at.

**Mr BERKMAN:** If I could, Chair, I am hoping to put a couple of questions to the CleanCo CEO.

**CHAIR:** Sure.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you, Mr Metcalfe. An update question: can you confirm whether at this point CleanCo owns any renewable generation assets itself, excluding PPAs and CPAs?

**Mr Metcalfe:** We do not currently own any renewable generation assets ourselves, but we have a pipeline of projects in our portfolio that we will bring into market over the next three to five years.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Can you confirm, though, does CleanCo have a clear staged plan for achieving the government's policy objective of maintaining majority public ownership as we transition to meet those renewable energy targets?

**Mr Metcalfe:** Absolutely. We have a 2030 set of goals that absolutely support the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, starting with a target of owning or operating up to five gigawatts of variable renewable energy and five gigawatts of firming.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Back to Callide C4, given that it has been out of action for more than two years, which I understand is longer than the business continuity insurance period, and IG Power remains in administration, can you provide an estimate for the committee of what is the quantum of losses that will have to be met by CS Energy?

**Mr Martyn:** That question is better directed to the CEO of CS Energy.

**CHAIR:** We have to be really quick here. While the CEO of CS Energy is coming to the table, because this is government questioning time, I ask the minister if you wish to clarify a response there?


**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair. I do want to provide some additional information to the member for Maiwar. The CEO of CleanCo is correct that they are still working towards the construction and ownership of renewable wind and solar projects, however they do own and operate hydro projects—both the Wivenhoe project and the North Queensland run-of-river project. So, if your definition of 'renewable projects'—and I would say my definition of 'renewables' would include that; some others might not—they do have the state's largest pumped hydro project operation at Wivenhoe and it does, from day to day, pump up using substantial amounts of renewable energy to be released to displace high-priced fossil fuels later in the evening.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will repeat the question for Mr Busine, if that is helpful. Given that the C4 unit has been out of action for more than two years, which I understand is longer than the business continuity insurance period, and also IG Power remains in administration, can you provide an estimate of what is the quantum of losses that CS Energy has had to meet?

**Mr Busine:** We are currently in the process of seeking insurance claims on the event, the estimated costs for the rebuild being \$90 million for our share and estimated revenue of \$150 million. We are still in the process of, as I say, working through that with our insurers and we believe that we have a very strong case for the recovery of those moneys. We are not impacted by the administration process of the joint venture party. Their insurance is a separate item. We are continuing to work with the administrators to get the units back on line as quickly as we can.

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

**Proceedings suspended from 3.29 pm to 3.45 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the estimates for the public works and procurement portfolio areas. I would like to welcome the member for Everton, who is joining us here at the table. We will commence questioning. I call the member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** I would like to call the commissioner of the QBCC, please. During last year's estimates hearings—it was actually after we had our hearing—the opposition was told that there were 30 complaints made to the Crime and Corruption Commission in relation to the QBCC. I want to ask a number of questions about those complaints. Can you tell me how many staff have been stood down or terminated in the last 12 months as a result of those 30 complaints, if there are any at all?

**Ms Levy:** There have been no staff stood down in the last 12 months as a result of CCC investigations.

**Mr MANDER:** Are you aware if any of those 30 complaints related to a member or a former member of the QBC board?

**Ms Levy:** I am aware.

**Mr MANDER:** Can you give us details of how many complaints there were?

**Ms Levy:** Due to them being public interest disclosures, I am not sure that I am at liberty to talk about those.

**Mr MANDER:** Just a number, that is all.

**Ms Levy:** I am aware that there are two relating to board members.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you. Out of those 30, do you know how many remain open?

**Ms Levy:** No, I do not know. The CCC do not update us on those figures.

**Mr MANDER:** Are you able to advise what actions were taken as part of the 11 matters that were referred back to the QBCC for action and the nature of those complaints?

**Ms Levy:** I might have to refer to my notes on that one.

**CHAIR:** Please feel free. Take your time.

**Ms Levy:** I do not have the specific number in relation to those 11. I cannot really talk to the specifics of individual cases. A number are still under investigation and a number have been closed out by the CCC, but I could potentially come back to you before the end of the hearing with the actual numbers.

**Mr MANDER:** Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Are you satisfied, member, to come back before the end of the hearing?

**Mr MANDER:** Yes, I am. Just repeating what you said earlier, there was nobody stood down as a result of those 11 matters?

**Ms Levy:** Nobody was stood down as a result of those matters.

**CHAIR:** Just for clarity, member—and I am not trying to waste your time—just so we can note the question so we make sure we get the answer later, of the 11 matters that were—

**Mr MANDER:**—referred back to the QBCC from the CCC, what was the result of those matters? How were they resolved?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr MANDER:** With regard to those matters, again speaking generally, were there any changes to internal QBCC policy or procedures necessary after resolving or processing those complaints?

**Ms Levy:** There was nothing specifically relating to those individual complaints around the 11 referred; however, we have stood up a new integrity and risk division within the QBCC and we are undertaking a review across a range of our policies and procedures including those in relation to integrity and conduct matters.

**Mr MANDER:** Noting that a majority of the complaints that were referred to the CCC last financial year were actually referred by the QBCC, how many complaints or matters has the QBCC referred to the CCC in the last 12 months?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Point of order, Chair. It is interesting—and I am not seeking to waste the member for Everton's time, either—but he is asserting that he has a level of awareness of—

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

**CHAIR:** I am listening to a point of order at the moment.

**Mr de BRENNI:**—investigations of a regulatory authority that I do not think he speaks for or has that information.

**Mr MILLAR:** This is not for debate.

**Mr de BRENNI:** If you are saying this is the percentage or number—

**CHAIR:** I understand your point of order.

**Mr de BRENNI:**—how could he possibly know if he does know or should know?

**Mr MILLAR:** This is not for debate. Point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am listening to a point of order. Now, your point of order?

**Mr MILLAR:** The point of order is that he is debating a point of order. He cannot debate it.

**CHAIR:** No, he has a point of order questioning—

**Mr MILLAR:** The question is to the—

**CHAIR:** Excuse me—questioning the veracity of the member for Everton's question and knowledge about an assumption that he has made. I will allow the question but, member for Everton, I ask you to furnish proof when you ask your questions. However, please answer that one.

**Mr MANDER:** Let me ask it a different way.

**CHAIR:** Certainly.

**Mr MANDER:** Have there been any complaints or matters that the QBCC has referred to the CCC in the last 12 months?

**Ms Levy:** Yes, there have been complaints referred to the CCC in the last 12 months.

**Mr MANDER:** Can you tell us a number?

**Ms Levy:** Seven.

**Mr MANDER:** Have you as the commissioner ever forwarded a complaint or matter to the CCC in relation to any members of the previous QBC board?

**Ms Levy:** Yes, I have.

**Mr MANDER:** You have? Are they with regard to conflicts of interest?

**Ms Levy:** No.

**Mr MANDER:** Are they with regard to undue influence on officers?

**Ms Levy:** No.

**Mr WALKER:** Point of order under standing order 115, sub judice. We do not know if anything is currently under investigation. How do we start commenting about—

**Mr MANDER:** We are talking about the regulatory body.

**Mr WALKER:** Sorry—

**CHAIR:** Member for Mundingburra, you have the raised your point of order. Member for Everton, stop arguing with the member who is raising a point of order. I am allowing the questions. Sorry, member for Mundingburra, but I am allowing questions. Just be very careful, and obviously the commissioner will not answer anything that is subject to sub judice and may implicate something.

**Mr de BRENNI:** On a point of order: I think all of the questions that the member for Everton is putting are sub judice if they pertain to actual individuals or matters, because if they are actual individuals or matters then they must be.

**CHAIR:** I will ask the commissioner to be very careful with responses that may implicate a current case and may affect someone. Feel free, if you cannot answer something, to just let us know.

**Mr MANDER:** Absolutely. I will recap what I asked and what you said to make sure that I heard it right. There were seven complaints referred to the CCC; one of them referred to a board member. You said something about two.

**Ms Levy:** I said one matter. You asked how many matters I referred to the CCC that related to a board member and I said one.

**Mr MANDER:** I asked the detail for that.

**Ms Levy:** You asked if it was a code of conduct and I said no.

**Mr MANDER:** Yes, okay.

**CHAIR:** If you cannot answer further, that is fine.

**Mr MANDER:** I appreciate that.

**Ms Levy:** I cannot go into details.

**Mr MANDER:** Commissioner, I do not know of too many statutory bodies that had 30 complaints one year and seven the next to the CCC; does the QBCC have a systemic issue with integrity?

**CHAIR:** You are asking for an opinion. Can you rephrase the question? I am going to allow the question.

**Mr MANDER:** That is a yes-or-no question. Does the QBCC have a systemic issue with integrity?

**CHAIR:** Every organisation is different and the dynamics change, so there is an imputation there. Please, if you can answer, answer.

**Ms Levy:** I do not believe the QBCC has a systemic issue with integrity. In fact, after the last estimates hearing I contacted the CCC with regard to their queries around the number of cases and I asked that question of the CCC—did they have any concerns about QBCC and did they believe there were any systemic integrity issues in relation to the matters that they had before them—and they indicated to me no.

**Mr MANDER:** Has any board member been stood down as the result of an allegation?

**Ms Levy:** No board members have been stood down.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you. Changing subject but still with the QBCC: how many full-time-equivalent staff does the commission have as at 30 June this year?

**Ms Levy:** Five hundred and seventy-nine.

**Mr MANDER:** Five hundred and seventy-nine is consistent, I think, with the question on notice that we received pre estimates. I refer you to page 37 of the SDS. I am trying to reconcile these figures, with the actual figure for the QBCC quoted as 640. Can you explain the difference?

**Ms Levy:** Yes, I can. The point of time of the reporting of the SDS measures was earlier in this calendar year and that was our estimated staffing levels at the end of the financial year, based on what we thought we would achieve at that point in time. We had a number of vacant positions in the organisation that we anticipated filling; however, we were not able to fill all of those. We did make significant headway in terms of increasing our staff members by 67, but our end of financial year result was actually 579.

**Mr MANDER:** The budgeted figure in the SDS for 2023-24 is 741. Is that figure still the same?

**Ms Levy:** That is still our estimated figure, so that consists of 120 new budgeted positions in the financial year, in addition to where we still have a shortfall on our existing annual year figures.

**Mr MANDER:** Can you explain what areas the 120 positions will be going into?

**Ms Levy:** Yes. There is a significant emphasis on improving our effectiveness and efficiency as a regulator, with a particular focus on areas where we need to improve our service levels, particularly around inspection wait times and claims around the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme due to the increase in demand for these services over the last several years. We have included an additional 19 roles in a newly established building and technical inspectorate. That includes eight building inspectors—one of which is a senior building inspector—and six new technical inspectors across plumbing, fire, mechanical and a range of other services. Overall, the vast majority of our roles are in our operational areas, in our regulatory services group. There will be 61 additional roles across our regulatory services group: 27 across the regulatory support services area and 32 across what we refer to as our corporate services area. That also includes our customer and strategy division, which has functions like our customer experience areas and our data and analytics teams that will provide

important information to make sure we can become a more risk-based and outcomes focused regulator. In the regulatory support services that includes our new functional area—the integrity and risk division—which was stood up as a result of the recommendations in the governance review to stand up an independent and quarantined area. It will include functions like our new mediation and conciliation service as well as a range of other new functions.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you. So if I have this right, 640 was the figure that you hoped to have but it has come in at 579?

**Ms Levy:** Correct.

**Mr MANDER:** So you have quite a challenge ahead of you with regard to going from that figure to 740. What is your confidence level with regard to filling those vacancies?

**Ms Levy:** It certainly is a challenging environment at the moment, with unemployment at its lowest. It is certainly a challenge, but we have seen a significant turnaround over the last several months in terms of the number of applicants we are receiving across all of the roles that we have been advertising. Also in the previous year we were rebuilding our HR function. We had very little capacity in terms of our recruitment capacity. We have brought on board partners to support us in the recruitment activities and have now filled permanent roles across our HR team in our recruitment. We have a dedicated team with a focus on recruitment activities. I meet with that team on a weekly basis so that we have a laser focus on our recruitment activities, and it is a KPI for all of my senior leadership team to achieve the staffing levels because we need to ensure we are able to provide those additional services. So it is a challenge, but we believe we have done the work to set ourselves up for greater success this year in being able to recruit across those areas.

Broadly in terms of a range of other initiatives that we have undertaken across the QBCC, we think we are in a stronger position to attract talented people. We have a whole new senior leadership team across the organisation who bring with them a new range of skills and passions and diversity across the organisation and they have a broad network that they are also utilising to reach out to encourage people to come and work at the QBCC.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you. Minister, at the end of 2015-16 there were 400 staff at the QBCC. At the end of next year there will be 740 staff if everything goes according to plan. That is an 85 per cent increase in the number of staff—nearly double—and, as we will point out shortly when we look at some of the results, the increase in staff seems to have had little effect on the effectiveness of the organisation. Can you explain that?

**CHAIR:** I was going to ask if there was a question there somewhere.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair, and I reject—outright reject—the criticism of that workforce. The member for Everton would do well to cease belittling members of the Public Service. He consistently does it.

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Chair: I take offence at that and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**CHAIR:** Minister, he has taken offence. Will you withdraw?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I withdraw. The member for Everton consistently undermines the character of people involved—

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Mr Chair: I take personal offence and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**CHAIR:** Minister, he has taken personal offence. Would you withdraw?

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair. What I can inform the committee of is the substantial increase in the volume of work and the expectations of the workforce at the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. I, on behalf of Queenslanders—the tradies and Queensland home owners—want to thank them for turning up each and every day and doing their best to support this industry, and it has grown significantly. Just to give some examples of the increase in the type of work that has been required of them, the member for Everton referred to the rate of their effectiveness. In 2015 there were 87,820 significant building projects in Queensland. That is 87,820 projects that needed to be regulated, administered and overseen by the building commission. Last year there were 150,164. That has been an increase of 83,000 building projects, so the assertion that the members of that workforce have not been attending to the task is patently false and I reject it.

I repeat my comments that I reject that criticism of that workforce. They have led the nation in terms of supporting tradies with nation-leading security-of-payments reforms. The building commission is now responsible for overseeing project trust accounts. Queensland has the leading framework for making sure tradies are paid on time in full every time. That workforce at the Queensland Building and

Construction Commission has ensured they play a vital role in keeping those workplaces safe, too. They play a role in respect of safety on the job, too. They have overseen the management of combustible cladding. We have seen significant tragedies around the world, most notably is the Grenfell disaster. Those employees at the Queensland Building and Construction Commission who members opposite—

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Mr Chair: thanks. You have given your answer. You support the organisation. That is great to hear. Can we move on please from this rambling on and filibustering—

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, do not use the term 'rambling on'. That is—

**Mr MANDER:** Sorry; filibustering then.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, you asked a question. I was actually quite interested. You asked the minister what all these extra staff were doing. The minister was furnishing us with that information. If you are satisfied—

**Mr MANDER:** Can he do that within five minutes, please?

**CHAIR:** Excuse me. If you are satisfied with that answer—

**Mr MANDER:** Yes, I am; thank you.

**CHAIR:**—I will ask you to ask another question.

**Mr MANDER:** Thank you; I am satisfied.

**CHAIR:** Ask another question.

**Mr MANDER:** Let us go to some of these results. Commissioner, according to prehearing question on notice No. 20, across South-East Queensland it is taking nearly half a year for a QBCC officer to inspect defective building work. Is that an acceptable standard?

**CHAIR:** You are asking for an opinion there.

**Mr MANDER:** Does that fit within the QBCC's standards of service?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms Levy:** We do not have set standards or time frames for building inspection wait times. However, we have been putting in a concerted effort and we have implemented the building inspection wait time reduction program over the last 12 months, which is continuing. We have invested a significant amount of effort and resources into our building inspection wait times. I would just like to put this in context. Over the last two years we have seen a 29 per cent increase in the overall number of cases that are referred through our resolution services area, which includes our building inspectors. Included in that is a 554 per cent increase in non-completion cases. It is the same team who are dealing with those referrals through those teams.

In terms of the work that we have been undertaking to improve the status of the building inspection wait times, we have increased the number of building inspectors over the last 12 months, so from this time last year we have increased the number of inspectors from 45 to 56. We have implemented a new triage process which includes a trial of new steps around allocating those building inspectors and to see whether those inspections are always necessary. This has also included facilitating conversations between building owners and contractors on cases with a large number of complaints to see if we can reduce or eliminate a number of those complaints to reduce the complexity of the cases.

We have also implemented a statewide operating model where we are now better able to move our resources around our regions. Some of our biggest problem areas and our highest demand are in South-East Queensland. We do have building inspectors allocated to each regional office across the state, but the demand can fluctuate and so we are now better able to reallocate some of those building inspection resources to areas that most need it. We have also brought on board additional administrative and customer service resources to make sure we are freeing up our building inspectors to be committed to the most important tasks before them, which is building inspections and the reports associated with those.

There are things that we are now implementing and continuing to do. As I mentioned earlier, we have stood up the building and technical inspectorate. As I mentioned, there are 19 additional roles going into that inspectorate including dedicated assessment officers to support the building inspectors with their work. We are also implementing a mediation and conciliation pilot service. That pilot will commence in October this year. We hope that will be able to divert a number of cases away from building inspectors and resolve those matters through mediation services rather than them requiring the services of a building inspector.

We are also considering some temporary capacity uplift through augmenting our resources with some external resources. This is a proposal that we are still consulting with our staff and unions in respect of. We are providing additional information to customers by way of a video and further information so that when they put their applications in they give us the best possible information that helps us to assess their case quickly and not have to go back to them and ask for additional information. We are also using our data and analytics more effectively now to identify those areas that result in the greatest number of complaints or resolution areas so that we can use our education and our compliance and enforcement teams to try to, over the long term, effect a change across those areas.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We will now go to government questions. I call on the member for Stretton.

**Mr MARTIN:** I have a question about housing for the minister. Can the minister outline how this budget and the department is contributing to the largest investment in new social, affordable and government employee housing in Queensland's history?

**Mr de BRENNI:** The Palaszczuk government is delivering a record \$5.5 billion investment into social, affordable and frontline worker housing. It is the largest investment in Queensland's history, delivering 13½ thousand homes. It is comprised of \$3 billion to support the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025, \$2 billion through the Housing Investment Fund and more than half a billion dollars for government employee housing. Chair and committee members, there has been some significant progress. Our QBuild Rapid Accommodation and Apprenticeship Centre in Eagle Farm is helping to slash the construction time of homes by 40 weeks for homes in remote Queensland. Not only has that factory completed its first prototypes ready to be installed in new homes, but through our industry partners—and I pay tribute to and thank them—we will build up to 116 homes using this method by the end of the year. I can also update the committee that the procurement process for the Cairns rapid accommodation and apprenticeship centre is due to be concluded imminently.

Chair, given that there is a lot to take in, I will go to some details. I will first provide some details in relation to the QBuild Rapid Accommodation and Apprenticeship Centre funded in this budget. It is our first Queensland-made approach not just to housing construction but also to workforce training. It operates as a design sprint incubator, a prefabrication prototype factory and a hub for project management for its many industry suppliers. The methods it has designed can cut project delivery times by up to 75 per cent with cost savings of up to 20 per cent based on volume and reduced downtime on site due to weather and trade coordination. Whilst it is producing prototypes that are used as homes, the multiplier benefit is where it really hits another gear. Their designs are being used by more than a dozen industry partners that together will build 118 new homes this year, 65 for our frontline workers and 53 of which will be social housing. Of course, they will also meet the new seven-star energy efficiency standards and silver-level accessibility standards before it is law in the new National Construction Code.

In respect of those modern methods of construction by the industry partners I congratulated earlier, I want to update the committee on the progress of our prefabricated rollout. BLD Oly Homes in Yandina has produced six homes for social housing in Longreach. Tenancy is going to be imminent on those. I recently visited Saltair Modular in Coolool with the member for Nicklin. They are building 21 homes that will go to frontline essential workers in Thargomindah, Blackall and Wondai. James Energies in Heathwood is building three homes for government workers in Julia Creek, Birdsville and Marlborough. Westbuilt Homes at Warwick will build 12 homes for essential workers in Texas. We are even building them in other states to contribute to Queensland's housing stock. We have partnered with Modscape Commercial in Victoria. They have built a three-bedroom home for government workers in Julia Creek. It is to be shipped to a Queensland family on the back of a truck. It will be finished off at our Eagle Farm site. Ausco Modular at Redbank has eight homes for essential workers in Injune, Saint George, Surat and Mitchell. Eco Cottages in Cooroy will build homes for government workers. One will go to Alpha and another is in the pipeline. Even industry leaders Hutchinson Builders is in on the effort. They have 29 residences being constructed in Toowoomba, in their factory. VOLO Modular at Yatala are building 18 duplexes including 11 for Gympie and seven for Eidsvold. Finally, ModnPods Australia at Arundel, which welcomed the Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Housing yesterday to announce their factory expansion, will build two homes for educators in Coen. That is just for starters, of course.

I mentioned earlier that the Cairns rapid accommodation and apprenticeship centre will ramp up capacity when it is opened by adding up to 26 homes to North Queensland per annum, employing 39 tradies and QBuild apprentices. That will be an incredibly important asset for Queensland, especially for North Queensland and those regional and remote communities where, as we would be all be



familiar, when the wet weather sets in it creates significant challenges for building and construction. Through this rapid initiative we can deliver homes more quickly and at better value, freeing up Queensland tradies to build even more homes for other Queenslanders.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, with your champion team of staff and nine years until the Queensland Olympic and Paralympic Games, can you outline how this budget for the Big Build and the Buy Queensland procurement strategy is making Queensland businesses the big winners in the lead up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympics, putting them in the box seat to share in \$180 billion in government procurement between now and 2032?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I am, indeed, surrounded by a champion team. They are supporting us to embark on the biggest decade of infrastructure delivery in our history—work that will generate jobs, improve services, protect our enviable lifestyle in Queensland, grow economic investment, boost our regions and help secure a future for the next generation of Queenslanders.

Our Buy Queensland procurement approach, which we are so very proud of, prioritises Queensland businesses for government contracts. It has been an incredible success since it was first adopted by this great sporting state in 2017. It really acts to multiply the value of the budget and government investment and ensure that benefits resonate and reverberate around Queensland communities, particularly regional communities. It creates more jobs and greater community benefits because every dollar that we spend here in Queensland circulates throughout our economy many times over. Seizing the opportunity is something that Queenslanders have always been good at, ensuring each generation of Queenslanders gets an even better go at making a better life for themselves than the last generation did.

In the lead up to the Brisbane 2032 games, when the gaze of the international community will be upon us, our vision is to build a Queensland that is an attractive place for a truly global audience. We want to ensure the value created from the games will ripple throughout Queensland. We want to ensure that Queensland businesses will be in the box seat to share in what we have announced, which is \$180 billion worth of government procurement between now and 2032. With nine years until the Queensland Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Premier recently released the government's *Q2032 Procurement Strategy*. I want to talk about how this will help local suppliers—responding to the member's question—make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The proof is in this policy document. Chair, I seek leave to table a copy of the policy document for members of the committee.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Yes, leave is granted. I cannot wait to read it. Good on you.

**Mr de BRENNI:** What members will see is the application of our successful Buy Queensland approach to the period up to the 2032 games and beyond—an approach that has already seen 70,000 Queensland businesses share in \$61 billion worth of Queensland government procurement and an additional \$1 billion uplift through this policy to small and medium enterprises across Queensland. That is a \$1 billion injection into small businesses since 2019. That has now been written into the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games arrangements, ensuring Queensland businesses benefit from Queensland hosting the games.

The policy includes a published procurement pipeline, plus special advisers who will be appointed to be available to Queensland businesses, including regional businesses, to help them engage with the government and get games ready. Underpinning this new procurement strategy, the Buy Queensland approach gives the Sunshine State's businesses a clear advantage in the race to reap the rewards of hosting the world's biggest sporting event. It includes targets and policies maximising the involvement of small and medium businesses, Indigenous businesses, regional and local businesses and businesses with clear plans for lower emissions. This strategy is about futureproofing Queensland businesses by ensuring they are match fit to supply to the games, which means that they are match fit to supply to government more broadly and are capable of winning business not just here in Queensland and Australia but also in some of the most internationally competitive markets that there are.

Not only will the games bring a business boom to Queensland but it will be regional Queensland and small businesses that will benefit the most. The policy already boasts outstanding results on the scoreboard by increasing regional involvement to more than 31,000 regional businesses. The vast array of opportunities will extend far beyond the games as well. They will include multiple supply chains spanning infrastructure, new housing, essential goods and services, technology solutions and more—all with the opportunity to importantly be branded 'Made in Queensland'. The *Q2032 procurement strategy* outlines how more than \$180 billion in procurement opportunities are estimated to be available,

and it is the Queensland government agencies that will work with Business Chamber Queensland to develop 'Team Queensland', a business community that is sustainable, ethical, diverse and, most importantly, local.

I urge Queensland-based businesses to ensure they are games ready by registering for supply opportunity updates and then following the three-step game plan that is set out in the policy—to get ready, set and go. In conclusion, whilst Brisbane 2032 will be historic in terms of supply opportunities for Queensland business, this strategy is about catalysing the investment we make in regional Queensland every single day to grow local businesses, foster collaboration and deliver a real capacity uplift. It will ensure the whole state can compete on the international stage.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, I have a question about the Big Build and in particular the satellite hospitals. Members in my community are looking forward to the completion of the Eight Mile Plains satellite hospital. Could you outline how the Department of Energy and Public Works is taking the investments in this budget for a Big Build to help deliver facilities and infrastructure that will provide better health and services for Queenslanders, particularly those in the outer suburbs of South-East Queensland?

**Mr de BRENNI:** People are moving to Queensland in droves. They are coming for this incredible lifestyle and our growing industries. There are more jobs in more industries right across the state. We are creating tens of thousands of jobs every month. That growth gives us an opportunity for more and better infrastructure to maintain our lifestyle and our economic prosperity. We know that that work generates jobs, improves services—it is there to protect that lifestyle that we hold so dear—and helps secure a future for our kids. The Palaszczuk government is delivering on that commitment.

This year's capital works budget funds more big builds from the record investment in our Health and Hospitals Plan that, among others, will expand the services that you refer to. It is, member for Stretton, a perfect example of how we are investing in communities through our satellite hospitals—a program that I know that you and other members are incredibly proud of, one that will improve the lives of families in many outer suburban communities.

It has been optimised through the experience and skills of members of the department of public works and our procurement strategy. We know that each site will include a range of services: chemotherapy, wound management, radiography, fracture treatment, renal dialysis, minor injuries and illness treatment. I am pleased to report that the Department of Energy and Public Works, working with the major contractor, has secured terrific outcomes in terms of delivery of this program. Caboolture, as we know, is now open to the public. Ripley in Ipswich and the satellite hospital at Redlands have reached practical completion. Bribie Island, Kallangur, Pine Rivers, Tugun on the Gold Coast and Eight Mile Plains in Brisbane's south are all ahead of schedule.

We are also working with Hutchinson Builders, the major contractor, to ensure the hospitals are built by locals for locals and for the good of those local economies. That includes training and development programs for the next crop of construction industry workers. I am pleased to report that, as of 24 July, 4,942 workers have been inducted across the program on satellite hospitals. This program—in particular the satellite hospital closest to the community I represent; there is one at Redlands and one at Eight Mile Plains, but I will take a moment to speak to the Redlands hospital—is one of the Palaszczuk government's record \$23.6 billion healthcare investment initiatives delivering more beds, more services and more frontline health workers. I know from the members of the community that I represent that it is incredibly important for them to be able to use those facilities at Redlands and soon at Eight Mile Plains. The Redlands project was completed on 12 May and is handed over for commissioning.

While Queensland Health is the lead budget agency on this, it is the nation-leading expertise of the major project team within the Department of Energy and Public Works that is driving these projects to successful completion. That means delivering more good, local jobs for Queensland tradies, apprentices and project managers.

In conclusion, the Big Build of our satellite hospitals will take pressure off emergency departments and major hospitals, helping to meet the increasing demand for services from our growing communities—an initiative I would encourage all members of this place to get behind.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, I know that the Palaszczuk government believes that Queenslanders in regional and remote parts of our state deserve the same frontline services as those in the south-east but, as Queensland is the most decentralised state in the nation, can the minister outline how this budget for a Big Build is delivering more homes for more frontline staff and putting downward pressure on rents across regional Queensland?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I spoke a lot in the previous session about our Big Build, particularly in relation to nation-building projects such as the Borumba and Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydros. Members will be familiar with our big build of initiatives such as Cross River Rail and CopperString 2032, and I just spoke to our satellite hospitals. This Big Build really stretches across every corner of the state. It delivers benefits every day to Queenslanders and their families. It helps to deliver better frontline services as well.

I am talking about the Palaszczuk government delivering the largest ever investment in government employee housing. That is designed to take pressure off regional housing markets and bring down the cost of renting in those communities. The 2023-24 state budget makes a \$118.2 million commitment to the next instalment of a \$519 million four-year program—a program that will deliver more than 400 homes for frontline workers in regional communities. We know that the rental market is tight in many parts of Queensland, so this \$118.2 million dedicated to building new houses for essential workers is absolutely crucial. It means that essential workers in those communities are not putting extra pressure on the private market. As we deliver these new homes, that effectively puts downward pressure on rents, especially for the hardworking men and women who work to protect, help and better lives across Queensland.

The homes will attract more critical workers to remote parts of Queensland in important and key roles—health professionals, doctors, nurses, paramedics as well as teachers, police and fire personnel—who would otherwise have to rent privately in those tight markets and otherwise push up the prices of renting there. The investment will also fund the maintenance of an existing portfolio of around 3,000 homes. Just like any home, regular maintenance works like painting and roof repairs are par for the course, especially in regions prone to extreme weather. Providing suitable accommodation at an affordable price helps ensure those critical frontline workers stay in those communities, not to mention the multitude of flow-on benefits such as local trades jobs that come with delivering more than half a billion dollars of construction works.

I am happy to provide an update to the committee on the capital funding results being delivered. In May 2022, capital funding was approved over four years towards provision of new residence upgrades and improvements. As of 30 June 2023, 2,906 general purpose residences were owned and managed by the department and leased to agencies, predominantly in regional and remote areas. We work closely with government agencies not only to ensure supply of housing aligns with demand for service across communities but also to keep the pace needed for growth in delivery.

I am happy to provide an update to the committee on the frontline worker housing stock we are managing by electorate, in particular for regional members of the committee. I am pleased to inform the member for Gregory that the program means we will have up to the 468 homes managed under this program in the electorate of Gregory—a significant contribution to that community.

For the member for Callide, 212 homes are managed through that program. This budget's investment in more government employee housing is, we think, a real win for the front line, a win for tradies, a win for communities, particularly like those represented by the member for Gregory. We are very proud that as the Palaszczuk Labor government we are delivering this Big Build and making sure that, no matter where you live in Queensland, there are frontline services that all Queenslanders deserve.

**CHAIR:** We will now go back to non-government questions. Member for Everton, do you have a question?

**Mr MANDER:** My question is for the Commissioner of the QBCC and I go back to building defect inspections. I was surprised when you said that you do not have a standard for that. Last year you mentioned that a KPI would be a good idea. What goal or target do you have for the end of this year with regard, for example, to building inspections being reduced from 20 weeks in Brisbane?

**Ms Levy:** We do not have a formal target in place, but personally I am aiming for this reduction program to see us come back to eight to 12 weeks for a wait time across the state.

**Mr MANDER:** I refer to page 35 of the SDS and the service standards outlined there. For the service standard 'Percentage of insurance claims for defective work assessed and response provided within 35 business days', the target is 50 per cent and the actual was 23 per cent. Is that a clear failure when it comes to one of the QBCC's most fundamental functions?

**Mr de BRENNI:** There is a note.

**CHAIR:** There is quite an imputation in there.

**Mr MANDER:** Excuse me, point of order.

**CHAIR:** I was just making a ruling then. I am sorry, I did not hear what the minister said.

**Mr MANDER:** I am not interested in what the minister said; the question is for the commissioner.

**CHAIR:** Yes, but there is an imputation in the question when you call something a failure. Can you reword that question?

**Mr MANDER:** Are you satisfied with a 23 per cent actual compared to a 50 per cent target?

**CHAIR:** That is much better, thank you.

**Ms Levy:** I think it is really important to put these measures in the context of the situation that we are facing. Obviously the building industry in Queensland has been facing some unprecedented challenges over the last several years with the global pandemic, global material shortages and inflationary pressure. This has seen the prices of materials significantly increase. There are labour shortages. There is an increased demand for services.

Our numbers of insurance policies is reflecting a significant growth in the number of projects that are being undertaken. We know that many of our building companies are under significant pressure at the moment. When the industry is under pressure so is the regulator. We have seen significant increases in the number of cases that we are dealing with. We have seen an increase in licensing applications. We have seen increases in a range of things, but in particular, as I mentioned earlier, we have seen an overall 29 per cent increase in the last two years in the number of total cases referred to the QBCC in relation to disputes and claims and a 554 per cent increase in non-completion claims.

It is one assessment team that triages all of these matters before they are then sent out. Part of the challenge is our internal resources. I have talked through the building inspection wait time which we are dealing with—that is, our attempt to reduce wait times. Once we have moved through a defect process that then moves us on to a claim component. That means we have to identify a scope of work and we have to go to market and tender for that work to ensure we get prices before we can approve a claim.

There are significant delays in the industry in terms of its ability to respond to the demand that we have in terms of insurance work. With significant numbers of both defective work and non-completion work we are seeing significant increases in the time that industry is able to respond. We have been working with our partner that assists us with our insurance work and they have increased their resourcing. They are going back out to market to get additional builders onto their panel. We, like everybody else in Queensland, are finding it hard to get builders to do the work. That also means it is hard for them to tender. If we push them on tenders, we could push prices up. It is a balance. We are not happy with those results, but we are working very hard to bring them down.

**Mr MANDER:** I refer to note 5 which provides some explanation. It says that the QBCC forecast a 32 per cent increase in insurance claims, which includes a 579 per cent increase in homes that have not been completed since 2021. Is that a dire warning for anybody who is contemplating building a house over the next 12 months?

**Ms Levy:** As I said, the building industry is facing some unique challenges at this point in time. It is important that home owners make sure that they are using licensed builders and they have contracts in place. We encourage them to contact us to check the licence register of builders before they undertake that work. There is a significant number of builders out there who are doing the right thing.

We estimate more than 97 per cent of building insurance policies do not end up in a defect claim. Our scheme actuary has estimated that over the last 10 years of results it is less than one per cent of insurance premiums that end up as a claim. It is still a relatively low number, but we are seeing, I suppose, a blip at the moment due to the unique circumstances that industry is facing. We encourage home owners to do their due diligence before entering into a contract with a builder.

**Mr MANDER:** Commissioner, just changing tack a little, the QBCC governance review noted that it should be a priority for your organisation to establish a sustainable funding model, which included a fixed revenue base. Commissioner, have you recommended a levy on builders as one of the options for that revenue source?

**Ms Levy:** That area is a matter for the department. They are leading that work. The QBCC is providing input to the department. We are providing data and information to support that work by the department, but we are not responsible for leading that work.

**Mr MANDER:** I might direct that question to the director-general. Is a levy on builders one of the options that the department is looking at to increase the revenue of the QBCC?

**Mr Martyn:** The QBCC has and continues to be central to the Queensland government's response to a rapidly changing industry over the last decade. The Varghese review last year identified that increased and expanded efforts have placed significant pressure on the QBCC's budget position. The revenue model that the QBCC inherited in 2013 was then already decades old and it is true that the gap between—

**Mr MILLAR:** Point of order, Mr Chair. It is a simple question; the answer is just yes or no.

**CHAIR:** Director-General, we understand that we probably need a bit of context, but there has been a point of order.

**Mr MILLAR:** Straight to the answer.

**CHAIR:** Okay, you have raised your point of order. Thank you for the context. Could you please continue.

**Mr Martyn:** The department is providing advice to the government through its deliberative processes on options to address the problem of a gap between revenue and expenses.

**Mr MANDER:** And is a levy on a builder one of the options?

**Mr Martyn:** The department is providing advice to government through its deliberative processes on its options.

**Mr MILLAR:** It is yes or no.

**CHAIR:** You might not like the answer, but the director-general is answering the question.

**Mr MANDER:** So, Director-General, you do not want to answer that question directly?

**CHAIR:** The director-general has answered the question. You might not like the answer. Can we move on? Have you got another question?

**Mr MANDER:** That is obviously on the agenda. I seek leave to table a document, if I may.

**CHAIR:** Let us have a look at it first. I understand there has been a little bit of a redaction. There is the identification of people in there. Can you talk to it without tabling it?

**Mr MANDER:** I can do that.

**CHAIR:** I will seek some advice. Can we have the document again with all the names redacted?

**Mr MANDER:** Good point.

**CHAIR:** There is an ability maybe to identify someone in that email, member for Everton. I ask you to be very careful with your questions. We might have to get a copy to whoever you are asking the question of as well.

**Mr MANDER:** The minister.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted to table the document? There being no objection, it is so tabled. Do you have another line of questioning while we sort this out? We are in your time.

**Mr MANDER:** I will go back to the previous question answered by the director-general. Minister, will you rule out a levy on builders as an additional revenue source for the QBCC?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I was specifically asked to rule out any levy by the LNP during a parliamentary estimates hearing—I think it must have been last year. My remark was that the government does not have a firm position on how we will resolve the sustainable funding of the QBCC. What I can say is that the government continues to support the building commission, including through this budget, to deliver its functions effectively and we approved additional—

**Mr MANDER:** Point of order, Chair: I am not interested in the rest. It was a simple question. You have answered it. Thank you.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Apologies, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am still going through this document. I did not hear any of that. Minister, if you can continue your answer.

**Mr MANDER:** We know that you are supporting the QBCC.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, I will not be verbally by the member for Everton.

**Mr MANDER:** That is why there is alternative source of revenue.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, stop talking. There is a simple rule. When I am talking, you do not. You called a point of order. I did not hear the answer because I am still going through the last thing you did—and I hope that was not a tactic to make me do this so I am not listening. Minister, if you could be more succinct—

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, you urged me to ask another question.

**CHAIR:** I did.

**Mr MANDER:** You suggested I ask another question.

**CHAIR:** I just did not want to waste your time.

**Mr MANDER:** I appreciate that, but do not then say that I have tried to do this as a tactic.

**CHAIR:** No. I said I hope it was not; I did not say you did.

**Mr MANDER:** I just did what you asked me to do.

**CHAIR:** Minister, you are answering the question. I was apologising because I was not across what the question was or following it because I am going through this last thing that you did. The minister will need some time to go through that and digest that as well. Do you have a copy yet, Minister?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I do. Shall I finish answering the first question?

**Mr MANDER:** You have finished.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, I have further to add.

**Mr MANDER:** You are about to go into alternatives. I am not interested in alternatives.

**CHAIR:** I did not hear any of it, Minister.

**Mr MANDER:** Sorry, Chair, just to let you know: it was a direct question about whether the minister supported a levy on builders. He answered the question and said that it was the same answer he gave last year: they do not have a firm position on it. That is fine. It is answered.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, I have context to add to that.

**Mr MANDER:** That context is fine.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, I think I am entitled to the opportunity to respond to the question. The member for Everton comes into this place and consistently tries to verbal me.

**Mr MANDER:** No. We do not want to hear it.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, we will let the minister finish and then we will go on to your other question. If you can be really quick, Minister.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair. What I have indicated and put on the record previously—it has been reported in the public domain—is that work on the financial sustainability of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission continues. We have provided funding for the QBCC centrally to be able to conduct its affairs. The attempt by the member for Everton to verbal me into denying this or saying that is completely unacceptable.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Minister. I will give you a few minutes to familiarise yourself with this email.

**Mr MANDER:** I will save you time. Go to the bottom paragraph. That is what I am referring to.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, it is in very fine print and a poor copy, so if I can have a moment.

**CHAIR:** Yes, I am quite happy for you to have a moment.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I have read that.

**Mr MANDER:** Chair, to give context, this is some correspondence between a disgruntled home builder and Mr Robert Schwarten, a former minister for public works, a former board member of the QBCC, a Labor Party stalwart and a regular *Courier-Mail* columnist.

**CHAIR:** Yes, okay. We have that context.

**Mr MANDER:** He is answering a request from a constituent. He said—

Overall being on that board—

the QBCC board—

was one of the worst things I've ever done ... There's so many issues re governance today it makes it nigh on impossible to get to the bottom of the issues.

Minister, how can you have confidence in the operations of QBCC—how can Queenslanders have confidence—when one of the people who has been responsible for the QBCC for years under its former name and function, and until recently a board member, makes comments like that?

**CHAIR:** Minister, it is a very broad topic and subject, so I will give you quite a bit of leeway in answering that.

**Mr de BRENNI:** It is quite ridiculous. Mr Schwarten says in the email that there is too much governance. I do not have a problem with governance. I support good governance and I support thorough and rigorous governance. At the point Mr Schwarten decided that there was too much governance, that was the appropriate time for him to move on. He has moved on.

**CHAIR:** We have time for one more question.

**Mr MANDER:** Minister, I am asking this question on behalf of the building industry. Why will you not listen to the pleas of the building industry and defer the significant changes to the National Construction Code, as has occurred in every other state—changes that will add tens of thousands of dollars to the construction of a new house through one of the biggest cost-of-living challenges we are facing at the moment—and allow the industry time to cater for these significant changes?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I will make a couple of points at the outset. The independent economic analysis reveals the assertion made by the member—that there are costs in the tens of thousands—to be completely false. That is not the case.

**Mr MANDER:** \$60,000 to \$70,000 for some.

**Mr de BRENNI:** That is not the case.

**CHAIR:** Member, you have been given a bit of leeway in asking these questions.

**Mr de BRENNI:** It is also not the case that Queensland is out of step with every other jurisdiction. I can confirm for the committee that Queensland remains in lock step with New South Wales and the ACT—jurisdictions in the same climatic zone as Queensland—on the implementation of the energy-efficiency reforms. They have already been delayed until October 2023.

These are important reforms to ensure Queenslanders can put downward pressure on the cost of living. Independent economic analysis revealed that moving to a seven-star home would save Queenslanders \$185 a year on their electricity bills. That is why we have, as building ministers nationally, adopted a change to the National Construction Code that was to commence from late 2022. There was agreement by building ministers, due to supply chain issues being experienced at the time, to delay those further until October 2023.

Since the original date of the National Construction Code amendments in 2022 we have remained in discussions on a regular basis with industry and advocates to ensure that Queensland tradies are ready to implement these reforms. With regard to energy efficiency, in Queensland, ACT and New South Wales implementation time frames remain in place for the majority of NCC reforms, but we have always indicated that we will consider proposed sensible exemptions and reasonable transition time frames. To accommodate stakeholder concerns, and in the spirit of ongoing collaboration with industry, an 18-month extension from 1 October 2023 is proposed for some design and implementation provisions. The exemptions proposed by government have been developed in close consultation with industry, leaders of industry and key stakeholders. It means that the implementation date of some provisions could be as late as March 2025. The proposed exemptions and sensible transition periods include: exemptions for smaller lots equal to, or less than, 12.5 metres in frontage; exemptions for house and land package contracts signed prior to 1 October 2023; exempting accessibility requirements for renovations, repairs and maintenance where compliance would be impractical—

**Mr MANDER:** They are minor matters, Minister. The industry is laughing at that.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, you asked a question; you are getting an answer. You are well over your time as well, I might add. Minister, please complete your answer.

**Mr de BRENNI:** These are significant proposals that we have put forward. We propose to retain the outdoor living area credit to reflect Queensland's unique climate and lifestyle. We have provided significant design exemptions for Queensland-style homes. We are proposing—

**Mr MANDER:** Five per cent of houses.

**Mr de BRENNI:** We are proposing tolerances for bathrooms, including step-down showers, and ensuring guidelines and certainty for the building industry, including for certification. In relation to jurisdictions proceeding with accessibility arrangements, these transition arrangements are already the most generous in the nation. With regard to energy efficiency provisions, industry in Queensland has access to the software tools required to model, assess and certify their homes.

I want to provide some context in relation to this. I am going to provide a third-party perspective. The Institute of Architects recommends no more delays to the National Construction Code. They say there is no more time to delay or change the goalposts and they believe there is broad agreement to get this done. Last October a coalition of the Queensland chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects, the Queensland Council of Social Service, the Climate Council of Australia, the Property Council of Australia, Energy Consumers Australia, the Green Building Council of Australia, the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, the Energy Efficiency Council, Climate Voice—

**Mr MANDER:** We are talking about the timing, not the actual policy.

**CHAIR:** Member for Everton, stop it now. You have been given so much leeway in asking your questions. The minister is answering a question. I will ask the minister to finish his answer because we have some questions as well. Minister, please continue.

**Mr de BRENNI:** They all gave public support for the timely implementation of the sustainability provisions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you Minister. The member for Mundingburra has a question.

**Mr WALKER:** Can the minister outline how the Rebuild QBuild partnership with Queensland trade unions will ensure that government returns to its all-important in-house capacity to deliver critical projects and respond to and meet challenges in the industry? Can the minister outline what investments the Palaszczuk government is making to deliver new QBuild depots after being decimated between 2012 and 2015?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I think the word ‘decimated’ during 2012-15 is an apt description. I do not think anybody involved in, or with any knowledge of, what happened at QBuild during the period of the LNP administration would describe it as anything else. We are rebuilding QBuild to support building the infrastructure our growing state needs. We have talked a lot today about Queensland’s Big Build. Rebuild QBuild is an initiative announced in 2019—further supported by this year’s budget—to strengthen QBuild and restore its capacity. We needed to; it was coming from a low base. You mentioned the decimation in 2012-15 when 1,600 jobs were slashed from that organisation under the former Liberal National government. Those jobs were primarily targeted at regional workers and female workers. The LNP closed 10 depots and one district office.

The Palaszczuk government is working through QBuild to develop a pipeline of tradies with good jobs. We are doing that in-house. In this year’s budget the Palaszczuk government gave publicly owned QBuild the green light to double to 1,000 tradies by 2026, including 200 apprentices. We have plans to further increase to 1,500 by 2029. We are not just rebuilding our tradies either but also the infrastructure they work out of, including funding in year’s budget to progress brand new depots on the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast as well as a replacement depot on Thursday Island. The program will grow apprenticeship numbers, creating new skilled labour for the state’s building industry. With more tradies on hand not only can the government build more housing more quickly but also the largest concentrated investment in social government employee housing in Queensland’s history. Rebuild QBuild will also support Queensland’s construction sector in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Our program aims to: create jobs for trade qualified staff; provide education and training for people looking for a trade career; help deliver construction and maintenance services to regional and remote areas of the state; improve the government’s ability to respond to natural disaster events; and help address the housing needs of Queenslanders. That is our government’s plan. It is a partnership with the mighty Queensland trade union movement that is delivering good job opportunities across different trades and locations. In Springwood, the electorate that I represent, Kamillah Nuttall was the first ever woman to join QBuild as a plumbing apprentice. Nathan Swenson, an apprentice chippie who recently delivered upgrades to the Daisy Hill Conservation Park, said—

Every day is different on the job with QBuild. One day I can be working alongside a tradesman on a school site doing repairs, or at a social housing site, or doing a new build.



I am pleased to inform the committee and members that there are trade roles open right now. I can advise there are four positions going in Atherton, two in Bowen and two in Bundaberg. In Cairns we are assembling our Far North Queensland Rapid Accommodation Apprenticeship Centre, so there will be 33 new roles there. We are going to employ another three in Cannon Hill, five in Charleville, 34 at the new soon-to-be-extended QRAAC at Eagle Farm, two in Kingaroy, one in Longreach, eight in Mackay, five in Maryborough, three in Mount Isa, three in Rockhampton, three in Roma, two more on Thursday Island, four in Toowoomba, and six more in Townsville.

There are 30 apprentice positions open right now across the state to train the next crop of QBuilders. These apprentices will be out there in communities in every single region in Queensland from Thursday Island to Townsville, Bundaberg to Brisbane, and everywhere in between. As I mentioned, this is a proud partnership with the Queensland trade union movement, ensuring the government returns to its all-important capacity to deliver critical projects and respond to and meet the challenges of industry. When a tradie joins the QBuild team they are not just constructing building; they are literally building this state.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, as Queensland embarks on a strong pipeline of big builds, can you advise the committee how we are helping to support contractors in the construction industry to take full advantage of the opportunities of this record investment?

**Mr de BRENNI:** As we have heard, there are record levels of building and construction here in Queensland with more renovations than ever before and a significant number of major building projects. As we work with stakeholders across the spectrum to deliver more construction we aim to develop a stronger, safer, fairer and more sustainable construction industry for all.

I was pleased to see this year's budget allocation for the Department of Energy and Public Works's role in continuing the all-important work of the policy division that exists within the department. As a Labor government, we believe that a rising tide lifts all boats, but for too long too many tradies and subcontractors were stuck in leaky boats, being held back by payment delays. They are prevalent across the nation and around the world. For too long, subcontractors have been too vulnerable to delayed payment or non-payment. That affects their ability to pay their bills, to invest in their own workforce and to purchase supplies. It actually slows down the building and construction industry and slows down the delivery of housing. Ultimately, now that we are delivering Queensland's Big Build, we want to make sure that happens on time.

Those tradies and subbies are at the end of the contractual supply chain and they have been taken advantage of for too long. In Queensland we have delivered the strongest security-of-payment framework in the country. While those opposite criticise the policy and the people who uphold it, we back these initiatives and we back the people who ensure these high standards of regulation. We have: strong anti-phoenixing laws, supported through the QBCC, with three-year/lifetime bans for insolvency/repeat insolvency; licence suspension or cancellation for failure to meet minimum financial requirements; transparent minimum financial requirement reporting performance; regulator powers to investigate and enforce payment obligations; enhanced adjudication of payment disputes, subcontractor charges and moneys owed complaints; new payment withholding requests, charges over property and supporting statements; and of course project trust accounts and retention trust accounts.

Since 2015 it has been the Labor government in this state that has worked to deliver the strongest security-of-payment frameworks, and of course we have provided the greatest level of stability in the construction industry. In fact, the figures show that the rate of insolvency under this government is half the rate of insolvency under the Liberal National Party. That is right: under the Liberal National Party, insolvencies in the construction industry run on average at double the rate they have under this government.

The project trust account regime that we have established is about making sure that those eligible construction contracts in Queensland have their separate project trust accounts, aimed at ensuring money paid by those at the top of the chain finds its way from those project owners to the tradies who ply their skills and expertise every day. They are the men and women who do the lion's share of the work and we are making sure that more of that money gets to them because we believe they should be paid on time, in full, every time.

It is with great pride that I can inform the committee that we have now protected over \$14.3 billion worth of project trust account contracts for Queensland tradies across 737 projects. Queensland is the only jurisdiction that has gone this far. However, earlier this year and in recognition of the need to balance continued protections for tradies, we extended the commencement times of the remaining phases of the PTA framework. Just as we have done with the National Construction Code, we have

listened to industry, we have worked with industry and we have developed a reasonable way through. We have established a steering committee that is focused on supporting industry with software, clarification of legislation and enhancing communication and engagement. We have always said that tradies should be paid on time and in full, and now more than ever tradies can rely on timely and secure payment to maintain their livelihoods and provide for their workforce and their family. It is only Labor that is protecting payments first as the backbone of Queensland's Big Build.

**CHAIR:** Minister, my question is about tradies. With regard to the generational infrastructure build that we have, could you outline for the committee how we are training the next generation of tradespeople and putting them into good and secure jobs? I ask that question having been an apprentice and a tradesperson myself.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Chair, that is an incredibly important question, and I recognise your long career in a trade role. As you know, we are all about ensuring we are able to deliver and uplift Queensland's construction industry capability, but that requires a whole-of-government approach. I can inform you that our collective work is delivering significant positive results. Among our initiatives is the Queensland Government Building and Construction Training Policy. This policy is one element in a longstanding partnership between the building and construction industry and our government to develop the industry's skills base and future workforce capability. A core requirement is that a minimum of 10 per cent of the total labour hours on eligible projects be undertaken by apprentices or trainees. This core requirement was increased to 15 per cent for eligible major building and/or civil construction projects. All Queensland government departments and statutory bodies, as defined by the Financial Accountability Act 2009, and government owned corporations are required to comply with the policy. I am pleased to provide some details to you and the committee about results achieved in the previous financial year.

A total of 409 projects have been recorded in the training policy administration system. They are valued at an approximate total of \$2.9 billion. Of that 409, there are 28 Indigenous projects. From the 409 completed projects, we have secured for Queenslanders and the Queensland construction industry 1.734 million training and employment hours. This has exceeded the 1.123 million required hours under the training policy as at 30 June 2023. Of these 409 completed projects, 939,000 apprentice and trainee labour hours were achieved, exceeding the 667,722 hours required under the policy. That equates to 544 full-time equivalents supported through our Big Build. The 28 Indigenous projects are valued at an approximate total of \$168 million, where 132,353 training and employment hours were recorded, exceeding the 100,512 hours required under the policy.

It would be remiss of me not to give our QBuilders a big plug. They play a key role in delivering the Big Build. Throughout 2022-23, QBuild provided an incredible 115,200 training hours, including 100,400 hours on the job and 14,800 hours in training at facilities like TAFE Queensland or internally in practices such as workplace health and safety. They are not stopping there. Applications, as I mentioned before, are open right now for 30 new apprentices at QBuild, so whether you are a recent graduate, are soon to be a graduate or perhaps are looking for a fresh change of career, the door to a good, secure job is wide open with QBuild and the Palaszczuk government.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am sure it has been lost on no-one that we have seen a number of construction company collapses over the last year that have in some cases delayed the construction of thousands of homes. Just last week we learned that another Queensland-based builder, GCB Constructions, has been placed into administration, leaving potentially hundreds of units unfinished. My first question is to the director-general. Can you outline for the committee what barriers exist to QBuild potentially taking on these contracts as construction manager and potentially as a public housing build? I am thinking of barriers like staff capacity, wage competitiveness or any strict regulatory barriers.

**CHAIR:** There are quite a few questions there but if the director-general can answer them.

**Mr Martyn:** I thank the honourable member for the question and for his interest in QBuild. QBuild exists to undertake work in the public sector. Last year was our 160th anniversary. We talked about the fact that we had a proud heritage but also a big future. QBuild is not only growing in terms of the size of its workforce; it is also innovating. We have heard the minister talk today about the modern methods of construction process which is allowing us to deliver more government key worker housing and social housing, particularly in regional and remote Queensland, where it is harder to get public sector capability.

In terms of whether or not QBuild can do more social housing, we are always talking with our colleagues in the Department of Housing about how we can lean in to help them to do more, and we have had some very constructive conversations with them. That is a range of issues around how we

build more houses more quickly and how we reduce wait times in terms of turning houses over and getting them back to tenants. We are very conscious, though, that QBuild is not a direct competitor to the private sector. We have our particular niche and I think we do it well. What I would say is that we are trying to do it differently and better. I think what you are seeing is significant effort in that regard. We do work in partnership with the private sector, so the modern methods of construction process has been an example of learning from the private sector because they have been doing modular housing much longer than QBuild has. We are learning that, applying it and building up our own capacity.

As the minister said, we have the Eagle Farm facility. We will soon have an answer on the Cairns facility. We will be able to provide more public housing, more government worker housing in the cape which is often hard to do. QBuild is doing a lot, it is expanding rapidly, and it is doing it in a way that supports the government's objectives. It is potentially outside of this portfolio, but clearly the government as a whole adopts the approach of working with both the public provider and the private sector to address those housing needs.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Minister, I want to ask along the same lines as to whether you or the government have considered the potential for QBuild to pick up those crash construction contracts and whether it is something you might be interested in, that expanded capacity for QBuild?

**Mr de BRENNI:** First of all, I think it is really important to recognise that where there are those insolvencies—as I indicated, they are on average half now than what they were under the LNP administration—and homes do not get finished, that is a difficult time for those home owners with a lot of stress and a lot of anxiety. There are a range of reasons that is happening in the economy at the moment and, as the commissioner indicated before, it has had a particular impact in terms of the workload coming through in terms of non-completion claims. I do want to provide this assurance to Queenslanders who are considering building a home: they have the nation's best home warranty insurance product. It is the only first-resort product anywhere in the nation. If you are in this circumstance in other states and territories, you are off to court and you have to find the builder. If there is no builder there, you really have no recourse, so you are left out in the cold. Here in Queensland, the non-completion process under the Home Warranty Scheme which is recognised by Choice as the best in breed in the nation, will work with you to complete your home.

In terms of whether QBuild would lean into that, we are already at capacity in terms of the work that we are doing for the public sector. We are building social housing, government employee housing, repairs and maintenance to our schools and hospitals. That needs to be our No. 1 focus to ensure that public infrastructure is there. We are building government employee housing and social housing to take pressure off rents as well. It is really a program between the QBCC, its service providers and the private sector that is best placed to deliver that range of completion products. I have given general thought to it, but there is no capacity within our organisation to lean into that at this stage, and I think the current arrangements are best placed for consumers and the overall outcomes for the state.

**CHAIR:** We have a question that was not taken on notice, but with the QBCC Commissioner, if we can get an update on the CCC matters that have been forwarded back to the QBCC as to their status, if you have the ability. It will not be taken on notice unless the minister wishes to. Do you have an update?

**Ms Levy:** I do have an update. There were eight referred back to the QBCC that were deemed not to require any further action, and there are three that are still ongoing.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Minister, was there anything that you wished to say to your team before we wind up? I know you started with it, but it has been a good afternoon.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Chair. I think it is worth reflecting on the extensive and significant dedication of all of the employees of the Department of Energy and Public Works, the regulatory authorities and the government owned corporations. I have used this opportunity, this examination today, to demonstrate that Queensland is well on the way to delivering the transition of our energy system because of their leadership and because of the expert advice that they have been able to provide. The examination this afternoon has heard that through the building, procurement and other agency divisions within the Department of Energy and Public Works and associated entities that are appointed by me that Queensland is a great place to live and work. I pay tribute to all of those Queenslanders, and I encourage them to continue their outstanding work on behalf of the state and five million Queenslanders. I thank the chair and the members of the committee for the opportunity to address those matters today.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed estimates and expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement has expired. I would also like to thank the minister, the director-general and all the officials for your attendance, as well as committee members and visiting committee members for your input today.

The committee will now adjourn for a break and this hearing will resume at 5.30 pm for the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Resources. Thank you all.

**Proceedings suspended from 5.15 pm to 5.30 pm.**

**ESTIMATES—TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE—RESOURCES****In Attendance**

Hon. SJ Stewart, Minister for Resources

Mr P Keene, Chief of Staff

**Department of Resources**

Mr W Agnew, Director-General

Mr S Ferris, Deputy Director-General, Georesources

Ms D McAllister, Deputy Director-General, Lands


**Resources Safety and Health Queensland**

Mr M Stone, Chief Executive Officer

**Gasfields Commission of Queensland**

Mr W Squire, Chief Executive Officer

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 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the portfolio of the Minister for Resources until 8.15 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 7 pm to 7.15 pm. I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply in the 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. While mobile phone use is not normally permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses here today and who have been permitted the use of their devices for this purpose. I ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and electronic devices are switched to silent mode.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials and members of the public to the hearing. I also welcome the member for Condamine to the table. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of resources open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

**Mr STEWART:** Thanks, Chair, and I will. Before I begin I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity of appearing here before you today. I am joined by my director-general, Warwick Agnew, deputy directors-general from my department, as well as staff from statutory bodies such as Resources Safety & Health Queensland, GasFields Commission Queensland and the Land Access Ombudsman.

2023 is an exciting time to be in the Queensland resources industry. In fact, today in the half-yearly results the board of Coronado Global Resources highlighted that it had approved the Curragh North underground metallurgical coal project. This steelmaking coal project still requires a range of approvals, but this announcement flies in the face of what the Queensland Resources Council has said about the state of the industry and our progressive coal royalties.

Also just six weeks ago more than 3,000 people from throughout the world were here in Brisbane for the World Mining Congress. The congress was an opportune time to release the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy. It will see \$245 million of investment with a clear ambition, key objectives and new

commitments to accelerate growth in our critical minerals sector. By transitioning from digging and shipping raw materials to processing and refining our critical minerals and manufacturing high-value products, the strategy is futureproofing the next generation of jobs for Queensland, diversifying and decarbonising our economy and ensuring Queensland's future sustainability and economic prosperity.

We will initially establish two critical minerals zones, one in Julia Creek-Richmond and the other in Mount Isa, with \$75 million to support a proactive and coordinated approach to the development of critical minerals projects. We will also waive rent for new and existing exploration permits for minerals for the next five years. The strategy also provides the strategic framework for developing the \$100 million Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund announced in December last year. The Critical Minerals Strategy will support thousands of good, secure jobs, particularly in regional Queensland.

The 2023-24 state budget will provide further support for our resources sector through the development of the frontier gas exploration grants. This \$21 million new initiative will help drive exploration for new gas reserves in the Bowen and Galilee basins over the next two years.

Responsible use of the resources depends upon a safe and healthy mining workforce, and it is with great sadness I note the tragic loss of three lives in our mines since we last met this time last year. On 26 November Mr Ron Selig was fatally injured while working on a small-scale opal and gemstone mine. On 15 February this year Mr Dylan Langridge and Mr Trevor Davis were tragically killed at the Dugald River mine. The loss of any life in the workplace at any time is not acceptable. Families should be able to expect that when their loved ones go to work they will return safe. We must, along with the resources industry and workers' representatives, continue to ensure we are doing everything we can to improve safety for our workers.

From the responsible use of our underground resources to the responsible use of resources above the ground, the Lands Division of the department has also hit the ground running this financial year. Just last month we joined with the Central West Wik people of Cape York to recognise their native title rights to nearly eight million hectares of their ancestral lands. We are also working closely with the Weipa Peninsula People to help repatriate ancestral remains from Victoria. Recognising native title is one of the ways to demonstrate our respect for our First Nations communities and their strong and enduring connection to their homelands. We can also demonstrate this respect through acknowledging the unique cultures and languages of our First Nations communities.

Through public consultation last financial year, the department removed the insensitive names of two creeks in Queensland and renamed them Bana Gindarja Creek near Cairns and Watyakan near Longreach. The department also worked closely with the Butchulla people over many years to reinstate the traditional name K'gari to the island previously known as Fraser Island. K'gari holds such a special place in the hearts of Queenslanders. As I said in parliament, she is as beautiful as she is because of the expert land management of the Butchulla people, who have maintained her for tens of thousands of years.

Land management is a key component of the work we do. Through our Natural Resources Recovery Program, the department has allocated \$10 million every year for grassroots community natural resource programs. From the cape to the south-east, this program aims to increase the potential of the state's natural resources and promote economic benefits in regional communities. Six organisations will work with traditional owners and their local communities on a range of activities to ensure our natural resources become more resilient.

I would like to thank the chair and the committee members for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to questions from members.

**CHAIR:** We will turn to the member for Condamine.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, you have overridden the wishes of the local Isaac Regional Council, the state Planning Act and the community of Glenden in supporting a new fly-in fly-out worker accommodation for the nearby QCoal Byerwen mine, something that will decimate the community of Glenden. Why is this and how can it possibly align with your department's commitment to the ESG process?

**Mr STEWART:** On 21 June this year I wrote to both Byerwen Coal and Isaac Regional Council outlining the preliminary view that I had formed based on the mining lease application made by Byerwen Coal for a workers camp associated with the Byerwen Coal Mine. Importantly, my preliminary view is not a decision and was provided in writing to both parties to afford them natural justice and to allow for further submissions about the application.

On 5 July this year both Isaac Regional Council and Byerwen Coal provided submissions on my preliminary view. My department is completing an assessment of the mining lease application and I will make my decision once I have fully considered the responses from both Byerwen Coal and Isaac Regional Council as well as the complexities of the application.

Byerwen Coal applied for an infrastructure mining lease on 27 April 2021 for the purpose of constructing and operating a workers camp to support the Byerwen Coal Mine. The mining lease proposed a camp facility containing 650 units and associated infrastructure. This could house up to 98 per cent of the Byerwen Coal Mine non-residential workforce. I understand that the mining lease application process has been affected by separate but related processes undertaken under the Planning Act.

Byerwen Coal had already constructed and operated a temporary workers camp over the same area under a development approval given by Isaac Regional Council. That developmental approval expired on 31 January of this year after Isaac Regional Council refused to extend it for another 12 months. I am aware that Byerwen Coal lodged two further development applications to expand and make permanent that same workers camp. I understand that Isaac Regional Council refused the applications as they were inconsistent with the local planning schemes and the regional plan. The council is concerned that the development will also impact the nearby township of Glenden.

In making the mining lease application, Byerwen Coal cited a lack of available housing in Glenden with no alternative land sites within the town to construct a workers camp. I am aware that the mining lease would enable the expansion of the camp and would provide Byerwen Coal with the certainty of accommodation for the life of the mine. My department will continue to work closely with both Byerwen Coal and the Isaac Regional Council on this matter.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, is this a sign of the future direction of this government to support more fly-in fly-out workers rather than the futures of these small mining communities?

**Mr STEWART:** I understand the member—and, in fact, all the members of the opposition—is from a regional town. We know the importance of what these regional towns mean. This is a preliminary view that I made. We have also introduced legislation under the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act. We are ensuring we can look after our communities, but this application sits outside of that act. I can make decisions on what happens on the particular lease; I cannot make decisions under my powers or my responsibilities of what happens offsite. As I said, I have made a preliminary view. I have received submissions from both Byerwen Coal and Isaac Regional Council and we are working through their submissions to arrive at a final decision.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, have you received any feedback from other local governments that are concerned at the precedent this may set on their mining communities?

**Mr STEWART:** We have received a number of letters, particularly from a number of regional mayors, outlining their concerns about the decision I have made. Like I said, it is a preliminary view and we are continuing with that work. We understand that this is a very unique situation because this is the only coalmine application or any mine application that has been made prior to the SSRC Act that has come into place, so this is quite unique as opposed to any of the other further applications that may come in. As you are aware, any applications that come in would now sit under that legislation and they would need to abide by that legislation; this sits outside of that.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, have you or the department done any modelling on what effect this decision may have on the town of Glenden and the surrounding community?

**Mr STEWART:** Town planning, or the Planning Act, does not come under my purview so it is difficult in that regard. I can only look after what happens on the mining lease itself and that is why I have made that preliminary view to further get submissions from both the council and the mining company itself to look at what this means, and what the impacts will mean for them. Prior to receiving those submissions, and after I made my preliminary view and wrote to both parties, I have since met with both Isaac Regional Council and Byerwen Coal who presented their concerns and then submitted their submissions. We are considering what this means, but we understand the complexities and what impact this will have, particularly on the town of Glenden.

**Mr WEIR:** I can assure you that there are a lot of communities that are watching very closely.

**Mr WATTS:** My question is on business confidence and is to the director-general. I refer to page 1 of the SDS, a 'sustainable resource industry that grows'. Have you received any feedback that any new regulatory changes are reducing Queensland's investment certainty?

**Mr Agnew:** It is a pleasure to join with the committee. I have been with the department since May of this year. In relation to confidence in Queensland's resources sector, there is a broad range of factors that influence industry confidence and outlook. Over the last 12 months we have seen high demand for commodities that are mined and processed in Queensland, along with high prices for these commodities. The resources sector has benefited significantly from this demand and these high prices. Queenslanders own these resources and those royalty rates are their share.

**CHAIR:** Member for Toowoomba North, you have a point of order?

**Mr WATTS:** On a point of order: my question relates to feedback and any new regulatory changes that are reducing Queensland investment certainty.

**CHAIR:** I think the director-general was answering the question.

**Mr Agnew:** I can continue on.

**CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**Mr Agnew:** In relation to the regulatory changes, the royalty regime ensures a fair return for those resources, as I referred to, in terms of the return to Queenslanders from that. There are some reports of a drop in confidence. The resources sector has been a key driver of growth for Queensland and it remains the largest industry in the state.

Queensland Treasury has estimated that in 2022-23, Queensland will benefit from more than \$18 billion in royalties from coal, liquefied natural gas and minerals. In the financial year 2021-22, the resources sector was worth over \$74 billion and accounted for nearly one-fifth of the Queensland economy. The resources sector continues to be an important source of high-quality, well-paid jobs for Queenslanders, with an average employment of more than 70,000 people across the state over the financial year 2022-23.

**Mr WATTS:** On a point of order: I think we are all fairly familiar with the resources industry. I am interested in feedback specifically around the regulatory changes and whether there has been any reduction of Queensland's investment certainty because of the regulatory changes. I do not need an explanation of how important the resources industry is to Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member. Obviously a lot of these changes are made under Treasury, but the director-general will answer as best he can.

**Mr WATTS:** I am not asking about the regulatory changes; I am asking if the director-general has any feedback in relation to them affecting business confidence in the state of Queensland.

**CHAIR:** As best you can.

**Mr Agnew:** I do have some further points to raise. So the key feedback and index I have been made aware of as director-general is the Fraser Institute and, in particular, the interjurisdictional comparison. I would note that in May of this year, the Fraser Institute released its *Annual survey of mining companies* report for 2022. The survey that is specific to your question assesses how mineral endowments and public policy factors such as taxation and regulatory uncertainty affect exploration investment. The results provide valuable insights into how industry views the resources sector globally and this year provides a comparison of 62 mining jurisdictions. In this year's survey, among all mining jurisdictions surveyed around the world for all minerals, Queensland was ranked 13th overall for investment attractiveness—a rise of five places on a year ago.

Queensland also ranked highest for investment attractiveness amongst the major steelmaking coal-producing jurisdictions surveyed and was 10 places ahead of New South Wales—Australia's other major coal-producing jurisdiction. Queensland ranked 28 in the Policy Perception Index which examines how policy factors affect investment decisions. This is a focus area for many actions of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan and the newly released Critical Minerals Strategy. Queensland jumped to sixth place globally on the Mineral Potential Index, significantly up from last year's ranking of 19th.

**Mr WATTS:** Have resource companies raised the issue of sovereign risk as a result of the government's broken election promise which is affecting their investment decisions in Queensland?

**Mr Agnew:** I thank the member for the question.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, but I missed that. We were discussing timing, sorry. Did you ask the director-general?

**Mr WATTS:** The director-general, yes.

**CHAIR:** Okay. I missed the question. Was it relevant to your—



**Mr WATTS:** I can ask it again.

**CHAIR:** Please do.

**Mr WATTS:** Have any resource companies raised the issue of sovereign risk as a result of the government's broken election promise which is affecting their investment decisions in Queensland?

**CHAIR:** I think there is a fair bit of hypothetical and—

**Mr WATTS:** Either they have or they have not.

**CHAIR:** But the actual tone of the question was—

**Mr WATTS:** It is not a dispute that the election promise was broken and I am just looking for whether they have raised them or they have not raised them and if it affects their investment decision.

**CHAIR:** That is your call on it, member, but I will ask the director-general. If you do have an answer, please answer.

**Mr Agnew:** No, nothing has been raised with me.

**Mr MILLAR:** Director-General, I refer to the answer of prehearing question on notice No. 14 concerning bonds held by small miners. The answer shows the securities dispersed for mining claims have dropped by 91 per cent between 2018-19 and the previous financial year. Why has it dropped so much?

**CHAIR:** 2018, did you say?

**Mr MILLAR:** 2018-19 and the previous financial year.

**CHAIR:** Is that relevant to now or back then?

**Mr MILLAR:** It has dropped by 91 per cent to now.

**CHAIR:** Okay; all right. Sorry.

**Mr MILLAR:** Sorry, Chair.

**CHAIR:** That is what I was trying to say: we are not in 2018-19 now.

**Mr MILLAR:** No, no. That was a long time ago. It was a question on notice that you would have received.

**Mr Agnew:** If I could ask the member for the number of that—

**Mr MILLAR:** Fourteen.

**Mr Agnew:** Thank you. I might ask Deputy Director-General Shaun Ferris to assist me with any detail that he may be able to furnish for you.

**Mr Ferris:** I have question on notice No. 14. Could you repeat the specific data that you—

**Mr MILLAR:** Basically, you have had a drop of 91 per cent in securities dispersed to mining claims. It has dropped by 91 per cent. Why?

**Mr WEIR:** From 2018-19 to the current—

**Mr MILLAR:** To the current date. You will see it as you go down how there has been a significant drop.

**CHAIR:** We will just take a little bit of time for the deputy director-general to familiarise himself with that.

**Mr Ferris:** The total of securities held is \$4.5 million at the 19th and the total securities dispersed for mining claims over the last five years is detailed there, so we have—

**Mr MILLAR:** Yes, I know that. I am just wondering why there has been a drop.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, but I am trying to hear this answer.

**Mr Ferris:** I am actually trying to understand the basis of the question.

**Mr MILLAR:** You have seen a significant drop in that money being dispersed over the last couple of financial years. You can see that in the graph, can't you?

**Mr Ferris:** I can see that, yes.

**Mr MILLAR:** So why? Why is that?

**Mr Ferris:** Can we take that and come back during the course so I can check in with the team so I have a really crystal clear answer around what the trend has been over those five years?

**Mr STEWART:** Yes. We are happy to report back on that later.

**CHAIR:** Yes. We will not be taking it on notice at this stage. That is up to you, Minister, but if the deputy director-general can get us that information during the course of the proceedings that would be great. We will go to government questions for a bit, thanks. Minister, I was wondering if you could please advise the current status of the Great Keppel Island lease and what actions are being undertaken to manage the island.

**Mr STEWART:** I know that Great Keppel Island was discussed at length as part of the island inquiry by the committee finalised last financial year. Just to recap the history, the formal leaseholder had approximately \$900,000 in unpaid rent outstanding as of April this year. A compliance notice was sent to the leaseholder requiring payment of the arrears. The leaseholder wrote back to the government indicating that the company that held the lease was not in a financial position to pay that outstanding rent. The decision was made to forfeit the lease for non-payment. It is also important to understand that the only type of Land Act lease forfeiture that does not need to be applied for through the Land Court is for non-payment of rent. Resolving the future of GKI tourism leases was the only barrier to the department of state development being able to progress the master plan for GKI. Public consultation for the draft master plan for the island is open until 21 August, so if you have an idea and you want to report back on it get it in.

It is also important to acknowledge that this draft master plan is for the whole island and is not just the recently returned island resort leases. Separate to the master-planning process, the Department of Resources is transitioning back into land manager for the lease areas. There is a comprehensive program underway, being conducted by QBuild engineers, to assess the safety and usability of existing structures on the lease area. Unfortunately, there have been instances of illegal dumping of dangerous goods like gas bottles and toxic chemicals. Resources will be continuing to assess these issues whilst the master plan is being finalised.

Following on from the master-planning process, any plans concerning the sequencing of community infrastructure will need to be completed before any major clean-up activities begin. The Department of Resources is also particularly mindful that in the short term there are challenges around the number of staff that could be based on the island at any one time as there is only a fixed amount of accommodation on the island.

Obviously my department now has a formal responsibility, given it has taken over management of this lease. As we go forward in supporting the process around the GKI master plan, it is also important that we do not cut across any other essential works council or residents need to perform. That is, the work within the lease area is programmed to occur alongside community infrastructure projects.

I very much see the priority of the island being the community having its say on the future of the island through this draft master plan as well as getting the community infrastructure program underway to be delivered so that any remediation or additional works that the Department of Resources might want to undertake on the former tourism leases does not slow down community projects. I look forward to examining feedback from the local community. I look forward to working with the community, the local council and local stakeholders and I look forward to what the future holds for that special part of Queensland.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, I have a question about gas induced subsidence. Would you be able to advise the committee what the government is doing to address claims that have been made by some farmers out there about the impact of gas induced subsidence on their properties?

**Mr STEWART:** Members of the committee will have heard me say on a number of occasions that Queensland continues to do the heavy lifting on the gas supply for the eastern states. In fact, the country needs our gas and we will continue to support our gas companies as they continue their search for and development of new supplies. I am of course aware that there are some farmers in the Dalby region who have expressed concerns about the prospect of subsidence on their properties induced by the activities of gas producers. This is an issue that we take very seriously.

Whilst acknowledging the critical role gas continues to play in our national energy mix, we are absolutely committed to ensuring its extraction is conducted in a way that does not negatively impact on the environment or farmland. This continues the development of a coexistence framework which establishes the guidelines by which land use by different sectors of our community can flourish side by side. This framework has been instrumental in protecting the rights of both farmers and gas producers and for developing clear pathways for resolution when disputes arise.

The issue of subsidence is complex and requires careful analysis to determine its causes and its effects. To that end, the GasFields Commission and the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment have been working in close collaboration with stakeholders on issues related to subsidence management. I was pleased to receive the commission's regulatory review of gas induced subsidence in late 2022 and I released the government's response in May of this year. In that response I advised that we had accepted six of the review's eight recommendations in full and two in principle. Part of our response will be to undertake an institutional review to ensure the responsibilities of the departmental and statutory bodies charged with the oversight of these issues are clearly delineated and well understood by stakeholders. That review will include a period of consultation, with stakeholders encouraged to make submissions to the Department of Resources. The Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment will provide information to all stakeholders through risk assessments including through a pilot scheme for farm-based assessments on selected properties.

Subject to the completion of the review, I anticipate the Land Access Ombudsman will be given enhanced powers to assist to resolve disputes as they arise. I also note the further work done by the GasFields Commission in examining the possible impacts of subsidence on drainage for some properties in the Condamine region and welcome the recent release of their consequence report. That report recommends further analysis of these issues and I look forward to receiving the results of that analysis when it is completed.

Chair, I can confirm that most of these recommendations are already underway. We are approaching the issue of subsidence with two key objectives in mind: get it fixed and get it right. I look forward to continuing to engage on this issue. My thanks go to my department, the GasFields Commission, OGIA and the community for the work already undertaken.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, with reference to page 3 of the Service Delivery Statements and vegetation management, can you advise the committee what the most recent SLATS data reveals about the effectiveness of the Vegetation Management Act?

**Mr STEWART:** The SLATS data for 2021, which I released last week, shows that our vegetation management laws are, in fact, working. In 2020-21 the total area of woody vegetation cleared was 349,399 hectares. That is a 17 per cent decrease on the previous year's SLATS and a 49 per cent decrease on the 2018-19 report. It is worth noting that 82 per cent of the clearing in the 2020-21 period occurred on land designated as category X. That is land not regulated under the act and is overwhelmingly the result of clearing of regrowth on land previously used for pasture. The overall clearing of woody vegetation also includes the removal of non-native species, in other words, weeds. There has been a 36 per cent reduction in clearing rates in those areas regulated by the clearing codes under the act, which follows the 51 per cent decrease we saw in the preceding year.

In the last three years, clearing rates in regulated areas have fallen by 69 per cent. That is further evidence that our laws are working, unlike the unmitigated disaster of the free-for-all carnage that occurred during the dark years. Much of the clearing in regulated areas is for approved purposes under accepted development vegetation clearing codes or management area plans. This includes clearing for an approved purpose such as fire hazard reduction around dwellings and fences, and construction or maintenance of roads. This represents about six per cent of the total clearing of woody vegetation in Queensland.

The rate of unexplained clearing has fallen from 38,000 hectares in 2019-20 to 26,000 hectares in 2020-21, a decline of almost 30 per cent. It should be noted that 'unexplained' does not necessarily mean 'illegal'. Overwhelmingly, this clearing involves the clearing of small lots, commonly between one and three hectares, by private landholders. We are committed to working with the agricultural industry to ensure landholders are fully aware of their obligations under the act and welcome the announcement in the budget of the investment of an additional \$9.8 million to employ a further 16 FTEs to bolster the department's compliance capabilities.

As I said, we are keen to work cooperatively with the industry to ensure that the letter and spirit of the act is observed. Whilst we believe prosecution is an absolute last resort, we will use the courts to enforce the law where breaches are most egregious. In 2020-21, two prosecutions were finalised, resulting in fines of \$140,000 and costs awarded to the state of \$46,000. Other compliance measures for that year included 42 proactive audits, 57 workshops, 266 advisory letters, three statutory notices and three penalty notices.

To answer the first part of the question, the most recently released SLATS data provides a strong endorsement of our vegetation management strategy. Whilst I as minister know that there is always more to be done, the data confirms that we are certainly on the right path.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, could you please explain why the creation of the critical minerals zones will be important for the resources industry and what projects are currently being undertaken in Queensland?

**Mr STEWART:** This is really exciting. Critical minerals are the next chapter in Queensland's resources story, particularly as the next big boom that we will see. As we know, Queensland has vast quantities of critical minerals and these offer a once-only opportunity not only to safeguard our economic prosperity and transform ourselves into a manufacturing state but also to realise our decarbonisation commitments in the coming decades. Demand for minerals such as vanadium, cobalt, tungsten and rare earth elements are set to rise significantly as economies turn to renewable energy, electric vehicles, advanced electronics and defence technologies. However, for Queensland to capitalise on the generational opportunities the demand for our critical minerals represents, we must take quick and purposeful action.

This is why we have developed the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy. The strategy has four key objectives to achieve Queensland's ambition: the first is to move fast and smart; maximise investment; build value chains; and foster research and environmental, social and governance or ESG excellence. This strategy will oversee \$245 million in investment to grow Queensland's critical minerals strategy. This funding includes \$75 million to undertake a place-based approach in critical minerals zones to achieve time, resource and capital efficiencies in advancing critical minerals projects. A place-based approach will be undertaken where projects are co-located in one region. This approach will leverage collaboration opportunities to achieve time, resource and capital efficiencies.

Each zone will be unique and government actions will be tailored according to geography, stakeholder priorities and concerns, and the minerals being targeted. The benefits of these zones include: government, industry and community working groups to identify common issues and advance collaborative solutions; regional, environmental and social impact baseline assessments to provide robust and transparent data and information for use by all stakeholders; the coordinated assessment and development of critical minerals projects; the coordinated development of enabling and common-user infrastructure to realise economies of scale and scope; opportunities to make use of mineralisation in mining wastes, ensuring the responsible use of resources; coordinated community consultation to understand local community needs and create opportunities for larger positive community legacy projects to be delivered; and partnerships with communities and First Nations people to understand their aspirations and support native title and cultural heritage.

Critical minerals mining is a complex and time-consuming process involving major decisions by both proponents and government entities. From exploration and feasibility studies to securing permits and licenses, each step requires careful evaluation through planning and collaboration to ensure responsible mining practices throughout the critical minerals value chain. The Palaszczuk government is committed to developing a critical minerals sector that moves quickly to take advantage of opportunities that benefit the sector and Queenslanders. Importantly, moving faster and smarter will not alter our commitment to protecting the environment, communities and the cultural heritage of First Nations people. The Palaszczuk government will work with communities, First Nations people and industry to commence a coordinated approach in Julia Creek and Richmond, focusing on vanadium, and Mount Isa, focusing on secondary prospectivity in mine waste. Consultation will be undertaken to investigate this approach in other locations.

These are the first critical mineral zones that are currently planned for under the launch of the Critical Minerals Strategy. Baseline strategies for the critical minerals zones may also inform a bioregional plan under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The intent of bioregional plans is to provide improved protection of important areas of biodiversity while providing greater certainty about where development can and cannot go, and identify areas where further consideration of environmental values are required. Bioregional planning may support streamlining approval processes by removing duplicate assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act when a development proposal is consistent with a bioregional plan.

Zones will also allow adequate government planning for aligned projects such as the Palaszczuk government's \$5 billion investment in CopperString 2032 to connect the North West Minerals Province to the National Electricity Market. The Palaszczuk government's \$75 million investment in critical minerals zones will unlock the critical minerals potential of Queensland and only increase certainty for the resources industry.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Condamine?

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, I refer to a recent news article where the MEU declared 54 serious incidents across the state over the last six months in Queensland mines, calling for an urgent meeting with the resources minister. When did you last meet with the MEU on this issue, given that your diary does not suggest a single meeting this year?

**Mr STEWART:** I appreciate the work the MEU have been doing. They wrote to me highlighting those particular issues and outlined each particular instance of that. I did meet with the MEU and Stephen Smyth in Mackay when I was there about a week ago. I will be able to get that specific date for you. It was Wednesday, 19 July. Just last month I met with the MEU around these particular issues. It was quite a good meeting. One of the things we try to do is make sure we address the issues of all stakeholders—industry, the unions, our workers, our contractors.

This is about keeping each one of our workers safe each and every day. As you have heard me say a thousand times, the most important thing to come off any of our sites is our workers. We need to make sure we listen to their concerns. There were a couple of things that came out of listening to their concerns. The first is that we—and when I say ‘we’ I also refer to RSHQ—continue to ensure we communicate safety notices about any safety breaches to make sure the most available and up-to-date information is in place.

I had a really good conversation with the MEU. One of the things we have worked exceptionally hard to develop—it is a legacy that I wish to leave when I leave this particular portfolio—is a reporting culture. That reporting culture really requires trust between the employer and the employee—that ability to report these HPIs—

**Mr WEIR:** Chair, I have a point of order. I actually think the minister has answered my question. I have a follow-up question on this issue.

**CHAIR:** That is really good. How about that!

**Mr WEIR:** How many of these 54 incidents were HPIs?

**Mr STEWART:** I will pass that to Mark Stone, the CEO of Resources Safety & Health Queensland. We work very closely with regard to any of the reports that we get. I am sure that he will be able to highlight to you that we want to develop this culture. From Sean Brady you will see that we want to see the number of HPIs continue to increase, because that shows a good, strong, robust reporting culture that does not take punitive action on those who report. We also want to see a decrease in those serious incidents and accidents. I refer to the CEO, Mark Stone.

**Mr Stone:** Thank you, Minister. On the specific question of how many of the 54 incidents were high-potential incidents, I do not have that number in front of me but I am very confident that I will be able to find it within this estimates session.

**CHAIR:** Is it fine if we come back within the session?

**Mr STEWART:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Just for clarity, so we can make sure we have that one, it is the number of HPIs—

**Mr STEWART:** From that particular report from the MEU that wrote to me.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**Mr STEWART:** Fifty-four, was it?

**CHAIR:** All right, thank you. Member for Condamine?

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, given that the first meeting you had was on 19 July and these incidents have been recorded during the course of this year, how does that give workers confidence that you are taking workplace health seriously?

**CHAIR:** Obviously you are asking for an opinion of how he feels workers would be, but he is going to answer the question. He seemed really keen. I am just going to say: please be a bit cautious. We do not want to pull them up. There are some good questions.

**Mr WEIR:** Thanks, Chair.

**Mr STEWART:** The member for Condamine has heard me say a number of times that safety is my No. 1 priority and will continue to be my No. 1 priority. There are a number of avenues for workers to report safety—so it does not necessarily have to go through the MEU—but the MEU has written to me. The MEU also meets with a number of my staff around some of these key issues. The MEU also is a member of Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee, which meets several times a year.

That committee provides advice back to me. It identifies these particular questions. It is a tripartite group chaired by the Commissioner for Resources Safety & Health. It has members from the MEU, a member from the ETU and industry representatives. Their job is to report back any of these concerns, to look at further investigations and to provide advice back to me specifically around these safety issues and ways we can address these. If you remember, the board of inquiry highlighted in its report that this process with CSMHAC is a very good process. It works well and should continue to be supported because of that ability to inform the minister.

There is also every opportunity for any worker to report any incidents through to RSHQ via its reporting processes. We want to continue to ensure that we have a reporting process whereby workers can confidently report issues to their particular supervisors and know that they will be acted upon and taken seriously and that there will be no reprisal.

We spend a lot of time working with our CEOs and our SSEs. Just two weeks ago when I was out at Moranbah we met with a number of the underground SSEs and CEOs, we talked to them about that need to have the loop closed—to provide a follow-up on any of those reports back to the group or the individual about what is actually happening. The reports we get back are that that is not necessarily occurring. These reports are a feedback system. The feedback system is about early intervention—preventing injuries and looking at ways that early intervention can happen to stop injuries but also prevent downtime to the mine so everyone wins. Safety culture is such an important issue. The ability to report through a whole range of different areas is absolutely critical. The ability to report back to me is crucial. We use a number of strands, as I have just explained.

**Mr WEIR:** Director-General, was PwC engaged to prepare the Critical Minerals Strategy that the Premier launched on 27 June at the World Mining Congress?

**Mr Agnew:** PwC was engaged by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning to undertake that work. The Department of Resources did contribute to the cost of that work being undertaken.

**Mr WEIR:** Director-General, what happened in the department to ensure PwC did not have any conflicts of interest in completing this work? For instance, did the department ensure PwC did not share information it obtained with any of its critical minerals clients?

**Mr Agnew:** I would advise the committee that, following the PwC breach of confidentiality in relation to government tax policy information, the Department of Resources completed a review of current contracts with PwC and other major management consultants to ensure satisfaction with contract management processes. That is the process that the Department of Resources has undertaken for contracts with us. I would refer to my previous answer to say that that contract was not with the Department of Resources; it was with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning.

**CHAIR:** Good answer. I was going to say it was not with them. Thank you for answering that question anyway.

**Mr WEIR:** Still in the same vein, can you inform the committee of the scope of PwC's role in the preparation of the critical minerals strategy?

**Mr Agnew:** The engagement of PwC through that strategy predated my time with the agency. Again, the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning were the agency that would have finalised that scope, albeit, I am sure, in consultation with my department. I can inform you that the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning engaged PwC to undertake market and policy analysis that was used to inform the development of the strategy.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, 200 jobs remain in limbo at the New Acland mine as the New Hope Group fights yet another legal challenge after receiving all the approvals to operate the mine. Noting the latest application which prevents mining while a water appeal is underway, will the government finally use its powers under the Coordinator-General's act to protect the local jobs and let our workers get back to work?

**Mr STEWART:** As you know, New Acland certainly has had a very long and protracted history to get this approval done. I went out and visited the site and spoke to a number of groups as well as the mine workers undertaking care and maintenance. When that mine lease came in I spent a lot of time working through that approval. As you know, I granted that mine lease approval. That is as far as my responsibilities extend. That now goes to the department of water. They will be working through that. I have no purview in that regard.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, I refer to the mounting legal costs derived in prehearing question on notice No. 19. Given further legal action where the state will be the defendant, has a regulatory impact statement been completed on the loss of revenue as a result of this ongoing battle around New Acland mine?

**Mr STEWART:** On 26 August last year, after careful consideration of a large amount of material on this complex matter was supplied to me by the department—in fact, it was two cartons full of information—we have approved this. I understand that two appeals have been lodged with the Land Court about the water licence. As I have said, that issue needs to be directed to Minister Glenn Butcher, who appeared at estimates last week.

I was pleased to attend the opening. New Acland has commenced work on the site to restart operations, including the hiring of the workforce to commence construction. Revenue, as you are no doubt aware, is an issue for the Treasurer and not for me as the Minister for Resources.

**CHAIR:** Do you have one more quick question before we go to government questions?

**Mr STEWART:** Can I add further to that?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr STEWART:** I have just been informed that no costs have been incurred in the current financial year.

**CHAIR:** We will move to government questions. Minister, I note that this question has been asked of your deputy director-general. Has any feedback been received from industry or the capital market regarding an increased sovereign risk of investing in Queensland since the implementation of progressive coal royalties? Would you like to furnish us with some information on that?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the deputy director-general for his answer on that. This is an important question.

**CHAIR:** I could see you wanting to answer it.

**Mr STEWART:** I was keen to answer it before. We have certainly heard a bit of noise, especially from entities and individuals with vested interests, suggesting that there is some supposed uncertainty in the resource sector and they have suggested it because of our government's progressive coal royalties. The reality though is the complete opposite. According to the ABS, private capital expenditure in Queensland's mining industry is 15 per cent higher in the second half of 2023 after coal royalties were introduced. In May the Fraser Institute released its annual survey of mining companies, including its influential investment attractiveness index.

Of all the major producers of metallurgical coal, Queensland is now ranked as the most attractive destination for investment. Our overall state ranking improved from 18th to 13th—a five-year high. The federal government's most recent *Resources and energy quarterly* highlights the strength of the investment environment in Queensland. It states—

On the upside, metallurgical coal exports will likely benefit over time from a solid pipeline of investments, with new output expected from a range of projects including Ironbark, Goonyella, Vickery, Olive Downs and Hillalong.

Of those listed projects, only Vickery is not in Queensland. It went on to state—

Australia's coal exploration expenditure increased to \$70 million in the December quarter: 30% higher through the year.

Data from the Queensland Mines Inspectorate shows that the number of coalmine workers in December 2022 is up 12.7 per cent on the year before. Seek data shows that the number of advertised mining, resource and energy jobs has increased by 18 per cent over the year to March 2023.

Going back to the naysayers, in terms of statements made by BHP, I can add that they are increasingly isolated comments. BHP have openly spoken of reducing their involvement in Queensland's coal sector for years. There is absolutely no surprise in them continuing that process. They even asked us to help them facilitate that and we did that through the changes to the Central Queensland Coal Associate Agreement Act that we all spoke on.

They would not be as eager to offload mines like Daunia and Blackwater if the investment environment was not great. BHP will be looking to make money from those mines and BHP specifically noted that the scale of these mines was consistent with its strategy of focusing its coal portfolio on the highest quality steelmaking coal. Our recent experience in terms of companies interested in purchasing available coalmines and interested in investment in critical minerals is higher than ever before.

As I said during my opening address, Coronado Global Resources' half-yearly results released today highlight the fact that its board has approved the Curragh North underground met project. There is still a range of approvals Coronado needs to do before this project begins, but it shows the confidence

is there to invest in the resource industry, particularly in steelmaking coal. Also as part of Coronado's half-yearly results, I can inform the committee that the company announced to the ASX that it was the second highest first half revenue result in its history.

I can also inform you that on my recent trade mission to South Korea their interest in investing in Queensland's critical minerals sector is grounded in the fact that Queensland is a safe, reliable and secure trading partner and place to do business. Companies are literally queuing up. We look forward to doing business with them and seeing them get the tremendous benefits mining in Queensland offers and will continue to offer.

Over the top comments about sovereign risk based solely on royalty issues are frankly absurd, especially when you consider some of the extraordinary profits companies have made from coal in the last couple of years. BHP's joint venture operation BMA had half-year revenue results of \$US3.6 billion in the second half of 2022. In fact, just last week BHP progressed environmental approvals on their \$2 billion Peak Downs expansion project through the Coordinator-General.

Across the sector, ABS data shows the coalmining industry profit margin last financial year was a 38.3 per cent increase—more than double the average across all industries. The coal sector remains strong despite what some would have you believe. As a government, we will continue to support the entirety of the resource industry for the good jobs they create and support, particularly in regional Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I think we have put that topic to bed well and truly. It almost makes you want to throw maroon on, doesn't it!

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, can you please advise the committee on the status of the Australian government's code of conduct for the gas industry and the implications of its implementation for Queensland's gas producers?

**Mr STEWART:** The committee is no doubt aware of the extraordinary upward pressure on energy prices arising from the supply-side issues emanating from COVID-19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Here in Queensland some of that pressure has been moderated by the rebates announced by the Treasurer in the budget, made possible because, unlike other states and contrary to the plans announced by the LNP when last in government, we own our energy assets.

One area which saw a significant spike in prices was the contracted price for gas. This has had an impact on both households and businesses, particularly in parts of our manufacturing sector where gas is an essential input into their production. In response, the Commonwealth government introduced a \$12 price cap pending the delivery of a code of conduct. After two periods of consultation, the mandatory code of conduct was released on 6 July—just one month ago.

The Department of Resources, at my direction, made two submissions to the Commonwealth government to contest some of the more punitive aspects of the draft. Our submission argued for, one, regulatory certainty to support investor confidence, including fit-for-purpose guidance material; two, an exemption framework to incentivise domestic supply; and, three, a review process to ensure the gas code is operating as intended.

I also hosted a number of round tables with the gas industry to discuss the challenges they confront and practical ways in which the government might help, particularly as the Commonwealth government's policy was being developed. The final code contains substantial improvements on the original draft, and it has been broadly welcomed by the industry for the increased clarity and certainty it provides around obligations of gas producers, particularly in regard to the exemptions framework. Direct government intervention in markets, especially involving pricing, is never a decision to be taken lightly; however, we are currently facing extraordinary and challenging circumstances, and the ability of producers to pursue profits must be balanced by the needs of consumers to access affordable power. The final code of conduct, amended from the original draft, goes some way in achieving that balance.

I have been pleased to see that the industry has adapted quickly and that a number of our domestic supply tenure holders have pursued and secured new deals with their commercial customers. Exploration and investment in Queensland gas is continuing—and just as well. The Australian Energy Market Operator has made it clear that it believes Australia is facing a looming gas shortage. This will increase demand on the gas fields of Queensland, the state doing all the heavy lifting on the east coast gas supply. That is why we are continuing to support our gas producers for both the direct jobs they support as well as indirect jobs through manufacturing. We are doing this through a variety of measures including the \$21 million Frontier Gas Exploration program, which is a new initiative that will help drive



exploration for new gas reserves in the Bowen and Galilee basins over the next two years. The Palaszczuk government remains committed to supporting our gas industry and ensuring our gas producers are able to access the supply they require to meet the needs of the Australian market.

**Mr MARTIN:** Will the minister please outline any issues affecting land rents and the actions undertaken by the Palaszczuk government to protect primary production and agricultural leaseholders from state land rent?

**Mr STEWART:** As I am sure the member is aware, state land rents are a fixed percentage of the land valuation. The rental rate for primary production and agricultural leases is set at either 0.75 per cent or 1.5 per cent of the unimproved value of the land. There has been exceptional growth in agricultural land values generally in the last five years. Because the land valuation program does not re-evaluate every local council area every year, this has seen some agricultural land valuations increase by over 200 per cent since their last valuations.

As minister for the Land Act, I have approved the capping of rent increases for agricultural and primary production leases on state land for the 2023-24 financial year at 10 per cent. The revenue from these leases with the cap in place is estimated to be \$41 million. Without the cap, the estimated revenue from these leases would be \$89 million. I understand that, when land values are increasing strongly, every year that statutory land valuations do not occur is a bonus for the leaseholder. I am sure the committee is aware that land values of primary and agricultural leasehold land have been growing strong since 2008, when current capping arrangements were first implemented.

In addition to the 10 per cent rental cap for these leases on state land, drought and natural disaster rent deferrals remain in place. There are active hardship rental deferral notices for Bulloo, Burke, Carpentaria, Cloncurry and Mornington shire councils and Mount Isa City Council, as well as separate hardship declarations for Diamantina and Bulloo local government areas. The effect of these notices is that state land rents can be deferred by leaseholders if they need without interest or penalties. It also means that the leaseholder has five years after the hardship declaration is lifted to repay that rental amount.

This five-year grace period is particularly important this year for a positive reason. For the first time in a decade, according to the minister for agriculture, less than 10 per cent of Queensland is drought-declared. Minister Furner also indicated seven local government areas—Barcaldine, Bulloo, Longreach, McKinlay, Richmond, Winton and Isaac councils—have been declared drought free for the first time in a decade. Leaseholders who live in those areas that have had drought declarations issued will be receiving correspondence about the five-year grace period. I, like the rest of the committee, hope that these areas enjoy many years without another drought declaration.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements and supporting the development of critical minerals projects and supply chains, can you please detail the purpose of the Queensland Resources Common User Facility?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question. He is a great supporter of that facility because it is going up in Townsville. The global demand for critical minerals is rapidly increasing, given their key role in the development of modern technology and specialised equipment required to decarbonise global economies.

Queensland's North West Minerals Province is one of the world's richest mineral-producing regions with major deposits of copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, gold, graphite and vanadium as well as silver and phosphate. The Palaszczuk government is committed to developing the North West Minerals Province to drive prosperity and support the transition to renewable energy sources. The Department of Resources is progressing the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan to deliver this, and a key action is building an Australian first—and I think it is an Indo-Pacific first—government owned common user critical minerals demonstration plant facility in Townsville.

My department is working in partnership with Queensland Treasury and the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning to progress development of the Queensland Resources Common User Facility. On 7 December 2022 the Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment, Hon. Cameron Dick, announced funding for the common user facility, which led to the \$75 million commitment to the Queensland Resources Common User Facility as part of Queensland's Critical Minerals Strategy.

In late March this year my department purchased a site for the facility in the Cleveland Bay Industrial Park, as no doubt you are aware, member for Mundingburra—a state development area near the Port of Townsville. This location provides excellent logistical access to critical mineral ores

transported to Townsville. The design for this facility initially targeted vanadium; however, after consultation with the industry, a commitment was made for the common user facility to be equipped to trial processes for a broader range of critical minerals such as cobalt and rare earth elements.

Vanadium is a strategic mineral with a large existing market in the specialist steelmaking industry and a small but rapidly growing market in redox flow batteries that are starting to be used in electricity networks and renewable energies. I can say that when we were in South Korea we had a lot of inquiries from companies about that. Other critical minerals such as cobalt and rare earth elements are used in batteries, hydrogen, electrolysis, electric motors, mobile phones and electric vehicles.

Australia has the third largest endowment of vanadium in the world—half of which is in Queensland. However, demonstration of the economic and technical viability of extraction and processing is a key gap limiting Queensland's ability to establish that vanadium supply chain.

To build a facility of this nature, it must be underpinned by detailed engineering design. To assist with this, the government is engaging a third-party expert mineral processing engineering firm to advise on the design, construction and operation of the facility. The important part of this is that it will be modular. You will be able to move components around as you need to process and refine the specific elements you are tracing. If it was just plain vanadium, it would only be used for vanadium. I have also been told that on current prices we know the vanadium deposit alone is worth around \$260 billion.

**CHAIR:** That is impressive.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements, supporting the development of critical minerals projects and supply chains, can the minister please outline the objectives of the Critical Minerals Strategy?

**Mr STEWART:** We know that critical minerals are the next chapter in Queensland's resource history. The Palaszczuk government's Energy and Jobs Plan will require 500,000 tonnes of critical minerals in Queensland alone. That is why we want to see critical minerals not only explored but also extracted, processed and turned into products here. If we do not manufacture our future someone else will.

The Palaszczuk government announced the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy at the World Mining Congress hosted in Brisbane on 27 June; that is, to transform the state's global economy with the responsible use of the state's critical minerals, which will create sustainable economic prosperity for Queensland. The strategy oversees \$245 million of investment in the critical minerals sector and aims to: capitalise on Queensland's minerals potential; safeguard the state's long-term economic prosperity; and provide a pathway to an orderly transition away from carbon-intense elements of the economy.

The strategy has four objectives which I highlighted earlier: move faster and smarter; maximise investment; build value chains; and foster research into environmental and social governance—or ESG—excellence. Part of the \$245 million includes: \$75 million critical mineral zones—which I have already highlighted—around the Mount Isa, Julia Creek and Richmond area; and \$8 million to partner with industry and research institutions to foster research and ESG excellence and progress low-carbon and circular economy initiatives. There are a number of South Korean institutes that are very excited about that. There is \$5 million to expand our successful Collaborative Exploration Initiative to back companies that will drill and conduct other assessment activities at abandoned mine sites and operating mine waste sites. We are also waiving rent for new and existing exploration permits for minerals for five years to support investment and exploration activities in Queensland. These measures will also build on the \$100 million Queensland Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund announced last year.

This is about futureproofing the next generation of good jobs for Queensland, diversifying and decarbonising our economy to ensure our future economy prospers. The implementation of these actions will be coordinated by the newly formed Critical Minerals Queensland and require ongoing consultation between government and key stakeholders. I can inform the committee that we already have someone acting as the lead for the Critical Minerals Queensland office, and we are actively looking for both staff and office space in Townsville right now. The strategy builds upon the Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan, Queensland's Jobs and Energy Plan and the Queensland New Industry Development Strategy to target and accelerate the development of Queensland's critical minerals industry.

For decades mining has been the single largest contributor to Queensland's economy, directly supporting more than 70,000 jobs and generating billions in export revenue for the economy; however, its importance will take on new significance and shape the world that we build for our future generations.

The decarbonisation of the global economy will gather pace over the coming decades as nations, including our own, advance ambitious climate and clean energy commitments. At the centre of this transformation is Queensland's Critical Minerals Strategy. It aims to capitalise on our mining and mineral potential to not only safeguard the state's long-term economic prosperity but also provide a pathway for an orderly transition away from carbon-intensive elements of the economy. Together here in Queensland our ambition is equal to that challenge.

**CHAIR:** Director-General, I believe you have an answer to an earlier question.

**Mr Stone:** I can confirm that the number I have is 55. I think you mentioned 54. All 55 incidents that you referred to were reported to inspectors who responded to the incidents. Those incidents spanned a period from 4 January to 6 June this calendar year; they related to about 30 coalmines. The incidents span a range of hazards though they are dominated, as would not be a surprise to most of us, around the unplanned movement of vehicles and the movement of ground.

Very quickly, the act defines a high potential incident as an incident which can, or has the potential to, cause adverse harm. That is really important, because it is vital that industry reports incidents and that they are attended to at site. Through the course of sharing them with the regulator we undertook the following actions: for about 40 per cent of the incidents a compliance directive or SCP was issued; for about a third of the incidents the mine site was advised by us that their investigation would be sufficient; about 10 per cent of those incidents, so about five, were referred to our Serious Incident Investigation Unit because they concerned us more gravely; and for approximately the remainder, 10 or 11 per cent, either the mine's inspectors undertook an investigation at site or a site meeting was held or there was some other investigation. We are aware of all of those incidents.

The 55 you mentioned are in the context of 1,916 total HPIs for the financial year 2023. I just want to stress—because I think this is a really important message for the public record and all stakeholders—that the regulator wants to see incidents reported to us accurately, fulsomely and timely. The majority of incidents do not result in harm to a worker. Importantly, some do. It is only through the reporting of incidents that the site, the workers and the regulator gets the opportunity to work out what worked well and what did not work well, so I really thank you for the question.

**CHAIR:** We have another answer from the deputy director-general that relates to the member for Gregory's question.

**Mr Ferris:** My apologies, member for Gregory, I was thrown by the 90 per cent when I was looking at the question on notice. It is really clear now exactly what you are asking. I can confirm that for 2018-19 we dispersed 2,314 securities that were held in that financial year. They included amounts that related to environmental bonds as well as tenure bonds. Those environmental bonds at that time were dispersed to Queensland Treasury at the commencement of the financial provisioning scheme. That is why that number was so very large in that year, both in terms of total dollars and in terms of total numbers of mining claims for which those amounts were dispersed. There also would have been some tenure bonds returned in that financial year to mining claim holders at the time of surrender of the mining claims, so it is a combination of both disbursement to Queensland Treasury at the commencement of the financial provisioning scheme and mining claims that were surrendered and those bonds dispersed back. The data for the remaining financial years relates to tenure bonds and does not include any environmental bonds because now that has become the responsibility of Queensland Treasury with the commencement of the financial provisioning scheme.

**Mr MILLAR:** This is just a quick follow-up question. Are the bonds held within the department? Are they held in consolidated revenue? Are they held in Treasury? Where are the bonds held?

**Mr Ferris:** It is my understanding they are held by the department. If that is incorrect, I will confirm that by the end of the session. The environmental bonds are transferred across to Treasury with the financial provisioning scheme. We require bonds for a whole range of matters, but in particular for compliance with conditions of mining claims. That includes things like removal of structures, non-payment of local government rates et cetera.

**Mr MILLAR:** Given that everybody has been working hard today, the question on notice can come back to the committee whenever. It does not have to come back to the end.

**CHAIR:** It does, because otherwise the minister has to take it on notice and the minister has not agreed to that. Before we head to the member for Condamine, Minister, you said a figure of what the vanadium was worth. Can you state that figure again? I just want to write it down.

**Mr STEWART:** It is estimated to be in excess of \$260 billion in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Wow. I have to say it: I am in 'ore' of that figure!

**Mr WEIR:** My question is to the director-general around the absence of commercial river mooring in the Brisbane CBD area. Over 12 months ago, the tourism minister said that a city marina with berthing for at least 12 vessels is needed right now. Noting seabed leases are the responsibility of the Department of Resources, what direction have you been given to ascertain new river mooring locations in the Brisbane CBD?

**Mr Agnew:** Essentially, we are in discussions in relation to future commercial mooring opportunities currently within the Brisbane River.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, when will Brisbane see the construction of inner-city marinas for commercial mooring, and will they be completed in time for the Olympics in 2032?

**Mr STEWART:** We call ourselves the River City, and this will certainly be part of what we do when we have the amazing event of the Olympics in 2032. It is going to attract investors, visitors and everyone to Queensland, and what we want to do is put this on display now. The responsibility for those particular moorings and locating those fit outside my purview, so they will be with the tourism minister. As the director-general has highlighted, our department is working with Tourism. Minister Hinchliffe will be the lead on that and our role is to manage the leases once they are in place. We will certainly work very closely. We are very keen to progress it and we will do whatever we need to do to get these leases moving once we are given them.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, I am going to the islands and this question is specifically to do with the issues around Double Island. Minister, what is the process going to be to have a new lessee for Double Island, ensuring the island can return to being an asset to the community and Queensland tourism?

**Mr STEWART:** We have a number of iconic assets through Queensland and we consider that they are part of our tourism sector. Double Island has been held by the lessee since 2013 and has not operated for six years. The Department of Resources has conducted lease condition audits and inspections on 10 tourism islands. Double Island inspections took place in 2020 and 2022. After various efforts to work with the lessee, my department issued a warning notice, with the lessee agreeing to remediate their compliance with the lease by March of this year. On 8 May 2023 my department informed the lessee, Fortune Island Holding Company, that following a relevant notice period it would be applying to the Land Court to seek consideration for the lease to be forfeited for noncompliance with lease conditions. On 6 July this year my department responded to a request from the lessee seeking approval to sell the lease. The department's response was to refuse that request.

As a government, we are committed to the responsible development of our island resorts for the good jobs and business opportunities they create in regional Queensland. However, we will not hesitate when operators consistently fail to meet the terms of their leases. After all, they have a duty to look after these islands for all Queenslanders.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, I refer to your response to question on notice 635 which says, 'Breach notices cannot be issued under the Land Act 1994.' You may have touched on this earlier, but I would like a bit of clarity. The minister is essentially saying that, even though the state grants the lease, they have no power to enforce it. If leaseholders are in breach of their lease, what powers does the minister have to ensure leaseholders remain compliant?

**Mr STEWART:** I am going to hand this over to the deputy director-general who looks after the leases and implementation of that. We work with leaseholders to ensure they are compliant and we continue to work with them to maintain that compliance. At the end of the day, what we want to do is ensure that those leases are compliant and that everything is working as best as it possibly can. We have across Queensland around 18,000 leases, with 12,133 being primary production leases. My department, in administering these leases, works closely with lessees to create tenure security and provide financial relief following natural disasters. I am pleased to advise the committee that around \$21 million in annual land rent was deferred through drought-declared areas, but we also provide rent rebate in a number of those leases. Specific to your question, I will hand to the deputy director-general, who will be able to answer your question in more detail.

**Ms McAllister:** As that question on notice advised, while breach notices cannot be issued under the Land Act, there have been notices issued to the lessee for breaches by the Cairns Regional Council and other government agencies. What the Department of Resources can enact under the Land Act is forfeiture notices. Obviously, there is a full process to comply with that. Our notices are compliance notices. We have a warning system and then, depending on the reason for the compliance action, if it is for noncompliance, we would progress as we are with Double Island with a notice of the intention to refer it to the Land Court. Then after that notice period we lodge that with the Land Court for decision.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, you said that the department works with leaseholders to ensure the islands do not fall into disrepair, but what is the process for ensuring compliance on leased islands before islands do fall into a state of disrepair or, worse, are abandoned, as we heard cases of in the islands inquiry? Something is obviously failing.

**Mr STEWART:** I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for the work they did on the island inquiry and leases. As I said, there are 18,000 leases across our state that we manage, ranging in size from a small pump site through to 100,000-hectare pastoral stations. This also includes 29 tourism resorts on 25 of our Great Barrier Reef islands.


In the vast majority of cases, our leaseholders demonstrate strong compliance with the conditions of their leases. I can say that 18 of the 29 island resorts are operational and thriving and providing a range of tourism experiences that we can all enjoy. These resorts range from Hamilton Island right through to small places with ecotourism offerings such as Green Island. Each resort generally holds multiple leases covering different aspects of its operation. With 11 island resorts currently closed, this represents only a very small amount of our noncompliance across the state's land portfolio. Let me put it in perspective: it is 0.06 per cent of all our leases.

My department has a long history of engaging with our lessees and the community to keep those tourism islands open and supporting a vibrant tourism product in Queensland. I am sure that my colleagues on the committee are well aware of the several external factors that are beyond my control which impact operations of island leases. They are things like cyclones, natural disasters, insurance, economic downturns, competing and cheaper international offerings—quite often, a large steel island that floats around and visits many different places—labour shortages and of course the COVID-19 global pandemic. These have all impacted on the ability of some of these islands to continue or repair some of their infrastructure. We know that the local island tourism opportunities that were successful in the eighties and nineties are not going to be the same as they are today and into our future, so we need to be more strategic around the approach that we take in our future development and management of these island tourism resorts.

My department has conducted inspections and lease condition audits on 10 islands over the last couple of years focusing on noncompliance and non-operational resorts. The audits have provided a detailed understanding of the level of compliance and developments on the islands and the condition of infrastructure and land. This information, coupled with the recommendations of the committee's report following the inquiry into the economic and regulated frameworks for Queensland island resorts, is being used to determine and prioritise our forward path for tourism islands and resorts. When you think about what we are doing at Double Island, we want those islands to get up and get going again. We give those notices of noncompliance and work with those leaseholders to return those particular leases back. We give them time, give them opportunities, and at the end of the day then we can progress down a further path.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. That is well-timed. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 7.15 pm with the continued examination of the estimates for the resources portfolio area.

**Proceedings suspended from 7.00 pm to 7.15 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will continue its examination of the estimates for the resources portfolio area. I welcome the member for Warrego, who is joining us now. I believe we have an answer from earlier, Deputy Director-General?

**Mr Ferris:** Yes, to confirm we hold the securities of the department.

**CHAIR:** We are all happy with that. We will go to the member for Stretton for a question.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, when it comes to delivering reliable, efficient and effective regulatory support, can you outline what has been done about dozer incidents at mine sites over the last 12 months?

**Mr STEWART:** A series of incidences in Queensland coalmines particularly highlighted hazards faced by workers operating bulldozers on coal stockpiles. On 4 November last year at Red Mountain Infrastructure mine, a bulldozer became trapped in the stockpile when the coal bridge above the feed valve void collapsed beneath the weight of the dozer. The worker did not sustain injuries. This incident remains under investigation.

On 27 January this year at Peabody Energy's Moorvale open-cut mine, a dozer operator became trapped in a stockpile of coal he was working on when the void opened up and the dozer was unable to drive out. A directive was issued after the incident, suspending operations. The incident remains under investigation.

On 30 January, only three days later, at Anglo American's Moranbah North Mine, a dozer operator was working on a coal stockpile when a void opened near the front of the dozer and it slid forwards, blade down, into the void. The operator was unable to drive the machine out and initiated an emergency call. The operator was rescued, uninjured, at approximately 10.45 am. A directive was issued after the incident, suspending operations on coal stockpiles. That incident also remains under investigation.

On 27 May at Peak Downs Mine, a worker was operating a dozer on a coal stockpile when the bench they were working on slumped, causing the dozer to roll down the slumped coal to ground level and rolling onto its side. The operator exited the machine uninjured. RSHQ inspectors followed up with the mine.

I am advised Resources Safety & Health Queensland issued an industry safety alert after the initial incident in November 2022 and further guidance material which referred to 10 rollover incidences since December of 2021 identified key issues and major recommendations to SSEs and site supervisors. The further two incidences in January 2023 resulted in the regulator issuing directives to Queensland coalmines requiring their operators to ensure they have effective risk controls in place. I am regularly updated by RSHQ about these incidences and how the independent regulator is responding to them. While I am relieved that the incidences did not result in serious injuries, I am advised that they had the potential to result in fatality.

I am further advised that the New South Wales Resources Regulator has reported similar incidences with the operation of bulldozers within mines, showing that this is of wider concern across the industry. While the number of recent bulldozer incidences remain under investigation by RSHQ, a safety bulletin was issued in December identifying incident causation and making recommendations. I issued a media release on 7 February 2023 welcoming RSHQ putting the industry on notice about hazards involved with operating mobile equipment on stockpiles. My expectation is that mine operators respond in a timely way to these recommendations and address any matters that present a risk to the health and safety of resource workers.

On 27 March this year, the mining industry held a forum to discuss bulldozer safety, including learnings from incidences and the sharing of risk management practices. I commend this initiative and investment in worker safety. The mining legislation relies on cooperation between stakeholders at both mine and industry level to achieve its objectives. I encourage all stakeholders to work together to ensure the best safety and health outcomes for all workers right across the resource industry.

**Mr MARTIN:** Minister, I have a question about the renaming of places in Queensland. Can you advise the committee on the current status of the renaming actions progressed last year under the Place Names Act?

**Mr STEWART:** I am very proud to be the minister responsible for officially naming localities and geographical features in Queensland under the Place Names Act. No, I am not calling any of them Stewart. That is the only joke you are going to get and it was really bad; it went over like a lead balloon, didn't it? Consistent and accurate place names are essential for vital activities including map production, communication and emergency services. My department receives suggestions from local and state government agencies as well as the community to end local boundaries, give a place a name, change an existing name or discontinue the use of a name. My department takes all suggestions into consideration and assesses them against stringent criteria to ensure they meet community expectations.

This includes consultation and engagement with local government, First Nations and traditional owner groups, emergency services, industry and community groups to determine the cultural and historical significance of the feature. This time last year I approved public consultation proposals for changing the names of two creeks to traditional Indigenous names. A creek at Longreach was officially changed in November of last year to Watyakan—meaning women's—Creek and in January of this year a creek near Edmonton was officially given the name Bana Gindarja, a local Indigenous word, 'Bana' meaning water and 'Gindarja' meaning cassowary, an important totem for the traditional owners.

Acknowledging First Nations people and their language and cultural connections to the land through place names is part of the respectful work we are undertaking to assist the Path to Treaty. Addressing offensive and derogatory names is another key action for Queensland towards Path to Treaty. As you may recall, in my estimates speech last year I announced the opening of consultation on officially restoring the name K'gari to Fraser Island. The K'gari place-naming proposal involved the largest consultation ever undertaken for a place-naming suggestion in Queensland, with nearly 6,000 submissions. I am happy to report that the majority of these submissions supported the renaming

proposal and in June we celebrated the official naming restoration on country with more than 300 traditional owners and stakeholders. This was a very special, moving and emotional day for traditional owners on the island and I was proud to have played a small part in getting this to happen.

On top of completing this work, I have also recently announced the official naming of five new localities or suburbs in the Caboolture West area. This was as a result of Moreton Bay Regional Council working in close collaboration with my department during development of the naming proposal and undertaking extensive community engagement. The five new suburbs have been named Lilywood, Wagtail Grove, Greenstone, Corymbia and Waraba. These new localities will underpin future urban expansion in the Caboolture West priority growth area identified in the South East Queensland Regional Plan and Moreton Bay planning scheme. Defining the new locality names and boundaries prior to development and population growth occurring ensures there is certainty of delivery of postal and emergency services. We will continue to work with all stakeholders moving forward when it comes to renaming places.

**Mr WALKER:** My question is to the minister. With reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements and the department's objective of increased and diversified private sector investment in georesources, can the minister please explain what the benefits were of hosting the World Mining Congress in Brisbane and having the Queensland government as a host partner to the event?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question because that was absolutely the most exciting part of this year so far. From 26 to 29 June this year the Palaszczuk government was the proud host state partner of the World Mining Congress. It was the first time in its 65-year history that the World Mining Congress was held in Australia. I hope that I am wrong, but it is likely never to return to Brisbane in our generation.

Having this prestigious event in Queensland recognised our state's strong global reputation when it comes to our resources sector. Through the event, Brisbane hosted more than 3,000 people—in fact, I think it was about 3½ thousand—including more than 200 CEOs from more than 50 countries. That was thousands of potential investors with all eyes focused on the opportunities for investing in our resources industry. The four-day event generated millions of dollars in economic benefit for Queensland, and I am proud to say the Department of Resources was the lead agency for designing and managing the Palaszczuk government's role during the congress.

The congress provided the perfect global platform to showcase Queensland's critical minerals sector and the role we will play as the world decarbonises their economies. Throughout the congress we profiled the Palaszczuk government's deep technical expertise and future commitments at plenary and other speaking opportunities. We also showcased the state's infrastructure, geography and geology and our unmatched culture and warm hospitality at our exhibition experience.

This was an incredibly popular experience, with about a thousand visitors across the three days moving through and interacting with the Queensland government's exhibition stand. Importantly, additional leveraging opportunities were also curated to showcase this government as a supportive and facilitative partner for future investment. These opportunities included hosting international CEOs and senior government representatives at the exclusive Queensland government World Mining Congress dinner. The dinner provided the opportunity to create connections, leading to future investment opportunities in Queensland as well as showcasing Queensland's culture, food, hospitality and local talent.

I also hosted around 20 delegates including future investors, companies, and government and international decision-makers on a fantastic tour of Queensland's North West Minerals Province. From mine pit to product, from Mount Isa to Cloncurry to Townsville, delegates got the chance to see the best of Queensland's geology and geography and supply chain opportunities. The Treasurer also held a Queensland Critical Minerals Investor Forum highlighting the state's critical minerals sector and promoting investment opportunities to over 200 local and global attendees.

I hosted more than 14 meetings over the three days of the event with senior international government officials and CEOs of international mining companies to further cement relationships and explore future collaboration activities in Queensland's mining industry. The Premier also launched Queensland's Critical Minerals Strategy during the World Mining Congress, which was widely praised by industry. In fact, Warren Pearce, the CEO of AMEC, said about our strategy—

The Queensland government has delivered a nation-leading and globally significant commitment to developing the critical minerals industry in Queensland.

This is a fantastic endorsement of our strategy and the opportunities ahead for the resource industry that were on show during the World Mining Congress. I look forward to keeping the parliament up to date on the huge opportunities for critical minerals and the resource industry in general moving forward.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I was wondering if you could please provide for the committee an outline of the work undertaken by the Explosives Inspectorate, with a particular focus on their work surrounding illegal fireworks being imported into Queensland?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the opportunity. I know that you are certainly very interested in the work that the Explosives Inspectorate does. In July officers from the Resources Safety & Health Queensland and the Queensland Police Service undertook a three-day blitz on motorists entering Queensland from the Northern Territory to conduct safety checks and seize illegal fireworks after Territory Day. I am advised motorists were very cooperative, with several drivers volunteering to surrender fireworks that may have otherwise caused issues in Queensland or other states. Several noted that they had seen an RSHQ billboard on the Barkly Highway and warnings in news articles not to take fireworks out of the Northern Territory, yet they still wanted to do that.

The inspectorate and QPS officers explained the dangers associated with unauthorised possession and use of fireworks to help motorists understand why they are illegal in all Australian states as well as working with NT WorkSafe to ensure warnings about taking fireworks over borders were included in their messages, and we are grateful for their support in that. In total, 384 vehicles were stopped over a period of three days, and I am advised 16 motorists surrendered 45.5 kilograms of illegal fireworks, equating to 350 individual items. I bet you that would go off with a bang! Queensland does not want to put people, property, animals or the environment at unnecessary risk. That is why we and every other state in Australia ban the unauthorised use of fireworks. Several of the vehicles were returning to New South Wales and South Australia, meaning Queensland authorities had prevented issues for other states as well.

Resources Safety & Health Queensland publishes an online list of authorised firework displays held around Queensland every week. People can attend these knowing that licensed operators have satisfied safety requirements. In the Northern Territory, authorities responded to approximately 100 fires and there were at least two major injuries, including one where a young man had his arm amputated. Fireworks are an inherently high-risk product and when used by untrained people or in unauthorised situations, they can lead to serious and even deadly consequences. I encourage anyone in possession of unauthorised fireworks to contact the Explosives Inspectorate to arrange a penalty-free surrender. I also encourage members of this committee to visit the RSHQ website to gain an appreciation for the activities of the regulator. The Explosives Inspectorate has further focused on improved explosive logistics such as: improved tanker safety design in bulk explosive precursor transport; improved safety and security standards of explosive imports; and improved explosive security in underground mining.

In 2022, the Explosives Inspectorate worked with industry to develop and publish a best practice guide for the *Prevention of explosive misfires in blasting applications*. The aim of this guideline is to reduce the occurrence of misfires, reducing the risk of unintended detonation. The explosive security assessment and security management system has been successful in identifying licence applicants with relevant criminal histories and current domestic violence orders. Achieving the intent of the law made by parliament in 2018, 169 persons with domestic violence orders or disqualifying criminal histories have been refused security clearance and 81 have had their authorities cancelled for those reasons. The Explosives drivers licence was introduced into legislation in 2021 to ensure that only competent persons may transport explosives consistent with other states. The introduction of this licence has supported the safe transport of nearly two million tonnes of explosives annually across Queensland. The Explosives Inspectorate continues to do important work in a range of ways which ensures people and the community are kept safe, and I would like to thank them for their work today.

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

**Ms LEAHY:** My question is to the director-general, Mr Agnew. I refer to the multiagency quarry native title working group dealing with the closure of council gravel pits. Director-General, is the Department of Resources the lead agency for this working group?

**Mr Agnew:** Firstly, I am not sure whether the name of the working group was about the closure of quarry pits. I can confirm what the name of the working group is before the end of this session. The Department of Resources is not the lead agency for this issue.

**Ms LEAHY:** What resources has the department devoted to this particular working group in terms of full-time equivalents, either within the department or seconded to other departments?

**Mr Agnew:** As I have been advised, state-owned quarry materials are materials that fall under the Forestry Act; that is why the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is the lead agency. That quarry material supplies around 15 to 20 per cent of Queensland's quarry material in terms of the context of



what we are working to. Particularly, that goes to commercial and local government quarry operations which supplies materials for infrastructure programs, particularly in regional Queensland. I have been advised that those quarry operations are on tenures where native title still exists and the requirements of the federal government's Native Title Act must be complied with before granting, varying or renewing any Forestry Act quarry sales permits.

I have also been advised that consent through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement can be required and in other cases, permits can proceed just with notification of native title groups in accordance with the requirements of the Native Title Act. In that regard, we have seconded a number of staff from the Department of Resources to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for the purpose of assisting with that permit assessment, particularly where councils do have those permits coming up for reconsideration, renewal or new permits. We have seconded three people.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you.

**Mr MILLAR:** Minister, I refer to SDS page 1, Land Administration and Property Services. The Treasurer promised that all current services will be preserved when the titles registry was corporatised. Titling and search services closed in Bundaberg, Cairns, Gold Coast, Ipswich and Nambour and Townsville closed just before Christmas. Why is regional Queensland losing core government services?

**Mr STEWART:** Changes have been made to services delivery by department business centres as a result of the increased use in online services and the transfer of titles registry work to Titles Queensland. Let's put this in a bit of perspective so we gain an understanding: currently about 93 per cent of lodgements are performed online either through e-lodgement or e-conveyancing. Over 99 per cent of title searches are conducted online. Title searches are also available online or by calling specialist staff in Titles Queensland. For those who do not have a computer to do their title searches, you can contact specialist staff at Titles Queensland. The Brisbane CBD has not had face-to-face titles services for over three years. Face-to-face titles services ceased being provided at the Department of Resources regional business centres on 16 December of last year and customers were provided with three months notice of the change. There have been no job losses resulting in the changes to counter services, and I can advise the committee that my department continues to provide face-to-face services for the community right across our state.

**Mr MILLAR:** A quick follow-up. Minister, we still have seven per cent of people who do require to go in to lodge a title. In my electorate of Gregory, you have a lot of elderly people who do not have computers or are not computer literate. There has to be some way we can try to help these people.

**Mr STEWART:** I agree that there are opportunities where we do recognise that because of distance, lack of computer literacy skills, or for whatever reason, that there needs to be that opportunity. I will ask the deputy director-general of lands to expand further on those services. As I said, the majority—in fact, over 90 per cent as you have heard me say already—continue to use online, but for those particular services there are some alternatives, so I will ask the deputy director-general to continue.

**Ms McAllister:** As the minister said, there are specialist and title staff who are available via phone. People can pick up the phone and call and talk to someone and talk through how they can lodge their hard copy form.

**Mr MILLAR:** I understand; it does get a little bit frustrating for some people out there.

**Mr STEWART:** I agree, but we recognise that and it is not purely 100 per cent 'you have to do everything online', because that does not work in regional Queensland. In fact, not only just regional Queensland, but there are also those alternatives. Thank you, member for Gregory.

**Mr WATTS:** Is the phone number that people can use advertised, promoted or informed? How do people know there is a number they can use if they do not have access to the former building?

**Ms McAllister:** As the minister said, the Department of Resources has counter services available. We have 28 counter services across the state, so people could go in and talk to our counter staff who would be able to provide them with that number if they did not have access to a computer online to have a look at the Titles Queensland website.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, the budget confirms a commitment of \$100 million to the Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund and this was then complemented by the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy by a further \$145 million of initiatives to facilitate the exploration and development of minerals across the state. What moves, as minister, are you taking to ensure there is an integrated whole-of-government policy to address conflicting land uses such as exploration and mining with renewables?

**Mr STEWART:** We know that the Critical Minerals Strategy is a very exciting part going forward, and you have heard me say what we are going to need specifically when it comes to the Energy and Jobs Plan just to meet our requirements. What currently exists in this space is almost like the great Oklahoma land claim—whoever sticks the stake in the ground first seems to get first dibs. We recognise that as the needs of that particular land changes we need to work with a number of groups and organisations, so coexistence is absolutely critical in this particular space. That is why we are looking at ways that we can continue to work with our groups, knowing that there are minerals underground, because the moment you put a renewable energy project over the top it sterilises the ground for the production of agriculture and it also sterilises the ground for any resource applications.

We are working with our various departments to look at prioritising these but also making these freely available on the Queensland Globe, which will overlay a number of these already determined areas such as for renewable projects or for mining leases. We recognise that the 'stake in the ground first claim, first dibs' does not work in our now and future, so you will certainly see some changes in this space.

**Mr HEAD:** Director-General, has any modelling been undertaken in relation to the impact of changes to the federal government's safeguard mechanism to the additional operating costs of mines or hydrogen projects in Queensland?

**Mr Agnew:** Whilst being in the chair I have not been briefed on any such modelling. I will confer with my team just briefly and get back to you. I can confirm not by the Department of Resources.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, I refer to the GasFields Commission's review *Potential consequences of CSG-induced subsidence for farming operations on the Condamine alluvial floodplain: final report*, which states on page 8—

... the burden of proof rests with the landholder and the Commission is of the view that procedural systems are generally unsuitable for managing the issue.

What regulatory changes is the government going to implement to address the situation and the reverse onus of proof?

**Mr STEWART:** The Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan established that 30-year vision of growth in the resource industry and part of the vision of the plan recognises the importance of coexistence in fostering sustainable communities. The Queensland resource sector operates with the coexistence framework, which balances the interests of resource companies and landholders as well as manages environmental impacts and provides economic benefits for the people of Queensland. This framework has been very successful in balancing the interests of landholders and the industry.

I am aware of the concerns raised by landholders from the Dalby region in relation to potential impacts of coal seam gas induced subsidence on high-value agricultural land. I also note, though, that there are other stakeholders in the region who are accepting of the coal seam gas activities on their farms and the benefits that the industry can bring, so you have a whole continuum of this.

The GasFields Commission Queensland and the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment have been working closely with stakeholders on issues relating to subsidence management. I was pleased to receive the commission's regulatory review of coal seam gas induced subsidence late last year, and in May this year I released the government's response to the commission's review. This response supports six of the eight recommendations in full and the remaining two recommendations are supported in principle, subject to further detailed investigation.

The commission's review highlighted key gaps in the existing regulatory frameworks, with an important issue being the lack of available independent information to assist landholders in understanding the amount of subsidence arising from coal seam gas extraction and its impact on farming activities. In line with the commission's recommendations, it is proposed to establish a coal seam gas induced subsidence management framework that will establish a pathway to assess impacts using a science-based risk assessment process. Tailored agreements between resource tenure holders and landholders are also proposed which will outline the actions the resource company will be required to undertake to manage farm-scale impacts from CSG induced subsidence. Accordingly, the proposed subsidence agreements will provide for how and when any compensation to landholders will be determined and paid.

The Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment will provide detailed information to all stakeholders through risk assessments, ensuring independent information can be relied on to fill the current knowledge gaps. I note the commission has also completed further work to understand the consequences of coal seam gas induced subsidence on different types of irrigated and dryland farming

enterprises which was released on 28 July this year. My department also committed \$400,000 for the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment to conduct pilot farm-scale assessments over a small number of existing properties relating to coal seam gas induced subsidence.

In addition, the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment is actively working to make more information available to landholders about monitoring of subsidence. To this end, the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment has released an online tool that will allow stakeholders to access relevant LiDAR survey data from resource tenure holders, including at individual property levels, to understand how the land form has changed over time. Finally, my department is working with other relevant agencies to implement the government response to enhance our already strong coexistence framework going forward. It is expected that further consultation with stakeholders will occur later this year.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, given the report clearly states that subsidence will be an issue in the Condamine alluvial flood plain, what impacts does this have on conduct and compensation agreements given the possibility of area-wide impacts?

**Mr STEWART:** I will defer to the GasFields Commission. Warwick Squire will come up and provide a bit more detail. I just outlined in my response that it was about tailor-made agreements as well, so it is not just a cookie cutter, one size fits all. This is specifically about this farm and this farm and this farm, and you know probably more than anyone in this room that no two are alike. I will ask Warwick Squire to respond further.

**Mr Squire:** I think the key issue around the agreement-making process here is that what we have recommended in our regulatory review is a bespoke regulatory framework for CSG induced subsidence that would require engagement between landholders and the companies around the specific impacts on that farm-by-farm basis. It is really about ensuring that there is that engagement between the two and an agreed outcome in terms of how that would be managed going forward, if there would be a consequential impact.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mundingburra?

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, with its continued implementation, can you please provide an update on the status of actions in the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan?

**Mr STEWART:** On 22 June last year, the government released the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan or QRIDP following an extensive consultation process. This is our plan for capturing the opportunities over the next 30 years to build a resilient, responsible and sustainable resources sector that grows as it transforms. The QRIDP identifies six key areas with 43 actions that support the resources sector to navigate key global trends while supporting sector transformation in an environmentally and socially responsible way.

Under the QRIDP, our state emerges as a global leader for mining and processing critical minerals and advanced manufacturing. I am also proud to say that, although it has only been a year, all the actions are underway, with six having already been completed and a further three have been transitioned for delivery under the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy. My department has worked closely with lead agencies, industry and community stakeholders to progress actions, some of which include amendments to the Mineral Resources Act 1989 to implement a rental deferral framework allowing critical mineral proponents to defer their rent on mining leases. The delivering of this action will enable eligible proponents to redirect capital towards their project during its infancy to improve their project's chances of success. This is in addition to the five-year rental reduction scheme for exploration permits announced as part of the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy earlier this year.

There is the allocation of \$75 million in funding to build the Queensland Resources Common User Facility in Townsville. Once operational, this facility will support the extraction and production of critical minerals to accelerate the development of commercial mining projects, promote investment and advance mineral manufacturing opportunities, enable the development of supply chain and supporting industries in Queensland and support the Resources Centre of Excellence in Mackay to expand and develop a new future centres delivery hub. This world-class centre is driving research and innovation, increasing export opportunities and providing safer and more accelerated training options for students and apprentices.

We have engaged extensively with stakeholders to undertake consultation on several discussion papers, progress regulation amendments and coordinate the funding of various projects, some of which have resulted in the development of a common user infrastructure guidance framework in October of last year and published on Queensland Treasury's website in May of this year. The Land Access Code

will be remade to include a revised set of values-based coexistence principles to support the development of strong mutually beneficial relationships between resources companies and landholders over the long term and the referral of an objection process for mining lease applications and their associated environmental authorities to the Queensland Law Reform Commission for review.

To date, two meetings of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan ministerial advisory group have been held, the first in Townsville in October last year and the second in Mackay in early April of this year. Both meetings were attended by standing members and mayors of the local communities. They presented a great opportunity to discuss local issues and their intersection with the resources sector. There is plenty of great work in progress with more to come. But wait, there's more. The Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan is a living document. I invite all Queenslanders to monitor the progress through the Department of Resources website. I look forward to continuing to work with industry, its workers and our communities as we continue to implement this plan.

**Mr MARTIN:** Can the minister please provide an outline of the work undertaken by the RSHQ's Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate?

**Mr STEWART:** The RSHQ has four inspectorates: the Coal Inspectorate, the Mineral Mines and Quarries Inspectorate, the Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate and the Explosives Inspectorate. Each inspectorate has a compliance program that deliberately changes over time to reflect industry activities, safety and health performance and emerging risks. The regulator frequently meets with operators, workers and management to help them understand and meet their legislative obligations and enforce compliance when they fail to do so. It also meets with regulators in other jurisdictions to share information, discuss trends and improve regulatory efficiencies.

The Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate works with industry and the public to regulate and improve safety and health in relation to fuel gases under the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004. This includes regulating hydrogen when used or intended to be used as a fuel gas. The Palaszczuk government is committed to developing an effective risk-based safety regulation that will support a sustainable and safe Queensland hydrogen industry. The inspectorate published the *Hydrogen Safety Code of Practice* for the purposes of providing a consolidated and accessible reference point for fuel gas requirements that apply to hydrogen applications. A safety code of practice is a tool that can inform industry-specific stakeholders about safety requirements and approvals. The *Hydrogen Safety Code of Practice* provides certainty about legislative requirements for hydrogen as a fuel gas and guidance for compliance. It has been developed in consultation with industry and government stakeholders and is designed to inform industry of approval pathways and safety requirements for operations that use hydrogen as a fuel.

The Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate has also maintained a safety focus on drilling rigs, petroleum wells including coal seam gas integrity, biogas and the state's major pipeline infrastructure. Licensed gasfitters and a gas device approval scheme coupled with comprehensive inspection by the PGI work to achieve the safe use of fuel gas by other industries and the public. The Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate has developed a communications and media strategy to promote gas safety practices in commercial kitchens, takeaway food venues and vans in response to an incident trend. The aim is to create awareness among business owners, lessees and employees of the risks associated with do-it-yourself gas works and the need to engage suitably licensed gasfitters. As in the other Resources Safety and Health Queensland inspectorates, the petroleum and gas inspectors engage with stakeholders through committees and industry forums and in the development of Australian standards.

Chair, I would like to correct the record: in relation to the implementation of the QRIDP, nine actions have been completed, not six as I stated earlier. I do apologise for that.

**Mr WALKER:** Minister, with reference to the Service Delivery Statements, can you please outline what projects are ongoing to rehabilitate abandoned mines in Queensland?

**Mr STEWART:** The Department of Resources has invested \$31.93 million to address public safety and health and environmental risks at abandoned mines and resources sites in the 2022-23 financial year. Just like the \$1 billion box office success of the recently released *Barbie* movie, we are taking assets from the past and re-commercialising them as part of our abandoned mines project. Key projects that are a part of the abandoned mine site program include the decommissioning of legacy wells at the former Linc Energy and Carbon Energy sites, the completion of remediation at the Collingwood Tin Mine near Cooktown and ongoing remediation at the Goondicum mine near Monto.

The work at Collingwood Tin Mine completes a five-year \$9.4 million project that was delivered in close consultation with the Kuku Yalanji traditional owners and their representatives. The final stage of the project was completed in the 2022-23 financial year at a cost of \$3.5 million. It involved the re-

profiling and capping of a tailings storage facility and associated work on the water dam. The project not only helped heal the country of the Kuku Yalanji people but also contributed significantly to local First Nations and small to medium enterprises. For the work on the tailings storage facility and dam, 75 per cent of expenditure was with local businesses, 90 per cent with small- to medium-sized businesses and over 55 per cent with First Nations owned or partner businesses. My department is also currently managing the Thalanga Mine as an abandoned mine, west of Charters Towers, after liquidators of the former operator disclaimed all plant equipment and mining leases in December of last year.

The Queensland government's Financial Provisioning Scheme is improving the state's management of its financial risk in the event resources companies fail to comply with their environmental management and rehabilitation obligations. Over time, the scheme will also provide funds to support rehabilitation of abandoned mines and expand research into mine rehabilitation. In August last year my department received grant approval for up to \$2 million in funding from the Financial Provisioning Scheme manager to investigate and prepare options to inform future remediation of the Jumna, Chariah and Golden Gate tailing storage facilities in Far North Queensland. The funding grant was provided over two years, with \$567,000 expended in 2022-23 and the remaining allocated for the 2023-24 financial years.

As part of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, my department also conducted a pilot program to recommercialise one of our abandoned mines, the former Wolfram Camp Mine, Bamford Hill Mine and surrounding areas in Far North Queensland. The call for tenders released by my department was open for submissions between 27 January and 20 April. On 27 July this year I announced that EQ Resources was preferred tenderer for resource exploration for the entire tender area including Wolfram Camp Mine, Bamford Hill Mine and surrounding areas. As preferred tenderer, EQ Resources can now progress its application for an exploration permit over the area. Importantly, it must obtain an environmental authority and meet native title and other requirements before on-ground exploration activities can begin. In July this year at the World Mining Congress the Premier released the Critical Minerals Strategy, which will position Queensland as global leader in delivering critical minerals. The world needs to move to net zero emissions in the future.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We might now go to questions to my left, because I would like to give a few minutes at the end for the minister to wrap up.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, I refer to Senex's announcement that they have struck a gas deal with Visy. I note that their initial medial statement says the announcement can only be delivered with satisfactory resolution of regulatory arrangements and at the receipt of certain Commonwealth approvals. What state regulations and approvals is Senex waiting for?

**Mr STEWART:** We know that Queensland is doing the heavy lifting when it comes to gas, and we will continue to do that. A lot of what we have been doing is around providing certainty for domestic gas supply in particular. I refer to the deputy director-general, who will be able to give you further details around those specifics.

**Mr Ferris:** Senex, like any petroleum and gas company, will operate under our resources legislation—the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act—for the grant of their petroleum lease. You are correct in the sense of the statement that Senex has made around the regulatory approvals that are required. I have been advised in relation to that matter that it relates to EPBC approval matters at the Commonwealth level, and that is the subject of the media statement they have made in recent times.

**Mr WEIR:** So there are no state approvals that are still pending?

**Mr Ferris:** My understanding—and I have been advised—is that it relates to the EPBC approvals in relation to that particular project at the Commonwealth level.

**Mr WEIR:** Minister, I refer to Budget Paper No. 2 concerning coal royalties. Considering the actual royalty base collected by the government of coal royalties, is the minister able to advise how the \$245 million Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy funding announced out of the budget was calculated? How did you arrive at that figure?

**Mr STEWART:** The \$245 million was arrived at through the breakdown of a number of key projects. As you have already highlighted, you talked about the \$100 million for the Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund. I will break it down for you. There is: \$75 million to undertake a place-based approach in critical mineral zones to achieve time, resource and capital efficiencies in advancing critical minerals projects; \$5 million to expand our successful collaborative exploration initiative, CEI, to

back companies that will drill and conduct other assessment activities in mine waste at abandoned and operating mine sites; \$55 million in forgone revenue to reduce rent for new and existing exploration permits for minerals over five years to support investment and exploration activities in Queensland; \$1 million to establish an interactive investor portal to showcase high-quality and up-to-date information about Queensland critical minerals opportunities; \$100 million to progress the Queensland Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund, announced last year; \$1 million to partner with the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy and industry to build ESG excellence; and \$8 million to partner with research institutions to undertake research and develop a circular economy in mining.

As I said, when we were in South Korea we had some really good discussions with organisations that really want to get in and reprocess these tailings and mine waste sites. They see that miners targeted one particular product. If you think about the western corridor, the North West Minerals Province, quite often it was targeting specifically copper. We know that a whole lot of other resources sit in there. Quite often with copper cobalt comes with it.

A number of Korean companies were talking to us about the excitement of what we are doing with our critical minerals but working with us, with some of that funding, to get in and target specifically some of those tailings wastes—that mine waste—and ways they can use that circular economy. This is really kickstarting what can be the next big step for us. If you think about some of those mine tailings, if you think about Queensland nickel in my backyard or front yard, there is estimated to be anywhere between—it depends who you talk to—\$5 billion and \$12 billion worth of cobalt sitting in those tailings dams. This is really exciting. This is where we are seeing already, within two weeks, a lot of concentration from other countries about getting in and working with us around critical minerals.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, what advice do you have for councils that cannot fix their roads and airports because gravel is sitting in stockpiles without native title clearance due to this government's inability to resolve this impasse? What advice do you have for those councils?

**Mr STEWART:** I know that you have previously asked the director-general whose responsibility it is. That was your key question. We have been contacted by a number of these particularly western regional councils around their concerns. We need to put this in the perspective that this is directly in response to our native title. Commercial and local government quarry operations supply those materials that we have talked about. In some cases, consent through Indigenous land use agreements is required. There is an opportunity for those councils to go down that path. In other cases, permits can proceed just with notification of native title groups in accordance with the requirements of the Native Title Act. Where native title does not apply, the quarry permits can simply be issued.

I am advised that DAF is working with local governments to review their quarry needs and with native title holders to validly address native title on priority quarry pits. These actions are also aimed at ensuring continuity of quarry mineral supply to local governments. DAF is also leading the engagement with relevant native title landholders and claimants about negotiating those Indigenous land use agreements to ensure consistency for all parties.

DAF has issued 44 sales permits to local government authorities which include more than 2,000 pits. Current sales permits are unaffected; however, DAF has identified that under the Native Title Act some quarry activities will require future act consent via an Indigenous land use agreement and has committed to this prior to issuing extended quarrying sales permits. Future acts include acts done after 1 January 1994—the date of commencement of the Native Title Act—that will affect native title. You can see that there are a lot of things happening. DAF are certainly doing a lot of work in that space because they are the lead agency.

**Ms LEAHY:** There are a lot of pits that are impacted. Boulia council was saying that of their 104 pits they have four that they can access. Do you appreciate the urgency of this matter?

**Mr STEWART:** I absolutely do. That is why three of our staff in the native title area have been seconded to DAF to work in Minister Furner's area to get this resolved as quickly as possible. We do understand the urgency.

**CHAIR:** We have probably got time for one more quick question unless you can answer the question from earlier—the name of the working group regarding the closure of council quarry pits.

**Mr Agnew:** Thank you for the opportunity to clarify that. The group title is the Quarry Material Native Title Working Group.

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, are you happy with that?

**Ms LEAHY:** Yes, thank you.

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

**Mr WEIR:** My question is to the director-general. I refer to the announcement of \$21 million over two years to implement the Frontier Gas Exploration grants program to support appraisal activities to unlock significant gas resources in the Bowen and Galilee basins. At page 79 of Budget Paper 4 it shows that only \$517,000 of the \$21 million program, or just 2.46 per cent of the program, is budgeted for this financial year. Why is there such a small percentage being budgeted in this financial year at such a critical time for our domestic gas supply?

**Mr Agnew:** I will refer you over to the deputy director-general.

**Mr Ferris:** You are correct in terms of the budget papers for this financial year that it is in the order of about \$500,000. It is a complex program to design. We want to work with industry to ensure that it is a co-designed piece of work and that it targets the opportunities to bring gas on quicker. Where there are opportunities during the course of this financial year to enter into collaborative exploration type grants with parties we will work with our colleagues in Treasury to bring forward dollars, but at this stage our focus is on the design because it is complex. We want to go out to industry and call for grant applications. Many of the wells that we anticipate will be drilled over the course of this program are going to be deep. They will be targeting deep, complex geological formations and those rigs are just not available in short periods of time.

To answer the question, our intention is to spend the balance of this financial year designing the program with industry and then seek applications for the grant program to deploy the \$21 million that has been funded as part of the Frontier Gas Exploration grants program to ensure that the targets are satisfactory and appropriate and that we make sure that we expend the dollars in the right places to bring gas to market in what is a complex geology.

**CHAIR:** With two minutes to go, I do not think we will get another question in. There are no more questions on notice. Minister, did you want to wrap up or do any thankyou's?

**Mr STEWART:** Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee tonight as it is an important part of our parliamentary system. I thank you for the genuine questions from everyone involved. It has been very good. I am always happy to talk about our resource industry and how important it is for our great state.

I would like to express my sincere congratulations to the staff from the Department of Resources, Resources Safety & Health Queensland, the GasFields Commission and the Land Access Ombudsman for the incredible amount of work that has gone into these hearings. I am also grateful for the tireless work, commitment and dedication that they bring to the job each and every day, not only during the estimates process but throughout the year, and particularly during the World Mining Congress and the K'gari renaming ceremony which were some of the big events that we had in our calendar this year. The team did an outstanding job.

I would also like to thank my director-general, Warwick Agnew, and my deputy directors-general, Shaun Ferris, Danielle McAllister, Celia Venables, and their teams for their leadership and boundless knowledge of this portfolio.

I would also like to thank my team, particularly Mr Paul Keene, Stephanie Kameric, Michael Riordan, Travis Dawson, Bella Hickson, Izzy Manfield and Chris Lees. They are always there to help support me in my position as minister. I thank them for helping to carry out the government's vision for the people of Queensland.

I also take this opportunity to thank Hansard and all the team who are involved in putting this together. You do an outstanding job and it runs seamlessly. Thank you, and good night from me.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed estimates for the portfolio of Minister for Resources has expired. Minister, on behalf of the committee, I thank you, your directors-general and officials for your attendance. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members and the visiting members who participated in the hearing. On behalf of the committee, I also thank the Hansard staff, parliamentary broadcast staff and other parliamentary staff for their assistance today as well as our hardworking secretariat who have been here with us all day. I really appreciate your time, as we always do. I declare this hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 8.15 pm.**