

WEDNESDAY, 9 AUGUST 2023

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE—ATTORNEY- GENERAL; JUSTICE; PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Estimate Committee Members

Mr PS Russo—Chair
Mrs LJ Gerber
Ms SL Bolton
Ms JM Bush
Mr JE Hunt
Mr JM Krause

Members in Attendance

Mr TJ Nicholls
Mr MC Berkman
Ms AJ Camm
Mr DR Last
Ms FS Simpson
Mr SSJ Andrew

In Attendance

Hon. YM D’Ath, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Mr S Zanatta, Chief of Staff

Ms T Lenz, Senior Policy Adviser

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Ms J Joldic, Acting Director-General

Ms V Thomson, Deputy Director-General, Office of Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading

Ms P Werner, Acting Assistant Director-General, Corporate Services

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Mr L Twyford, Principal Commissioner

The Public Trustee of Queensland

Mr S Zhouand, Public Trustee of Queensland

Crime and Corruption Commission

Mr B Barbour, Chairperson

Legal Aid Queensland

Ms N Davies, Chief Executive Officer

Electoral Commission of Queensland

Mr P Vidgen, Electoral Commissioner

The committee met at 9.00 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee open. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners 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 Peter Russo, the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. Mrs Laura Gerber, the member for Currumbin, is the deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; Mr Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra; and Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2023 and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

While the use of mobile devices is not ordinarily permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting our witnesses here today, who have been permitted the use of their devices for this purpose. I ask all present to ensure their phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode if not turned off. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in this chamber.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine portfolio areas in the following order: the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies from 9 am until 10.30 am; the Department of Justice and Attorney-General from 10.45 am until 12.45 pm; Police from 1.30 pm until 2.45 pm; Corrective Services from 3 pm until 4 pm; and Fire and Emergency Services from 4.15 pm to 5.15 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies portfolio areas until 10.30 am.

I welcome the following non-committee members who have sought leave and been granted leave to participate in the hearing in accordance with standing orders. I now welcome Mr Tim Nicholls MP, member for Clayfield. I will acknowledge other members who have sought leave as they join us.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preamble, argument or opinion.

I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. Before we continue, I wish to declare, in accordance with standing orders 260 and 261, that my wife is a Supreme Court judge and President of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I also invite other committee members to consider any declarations they feel should be made at this time.

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

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Attorney-General, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than six minutes.

Mrs D'ATH: Thank you, Chair. Good morning to you and members of the committee. I am pleased to appear before the estimates hearing and this committee to speak to the 2023-24 budget and the substantial investment and reforms the government is continuing to make in the justice portfolio.

We have funded reform packages to implement the recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and drive the systemic change required to improve the experiences of women and girls in the criminal justice system. We have established the Criminal Justice Innovation Office to deliver innovative projects to reduce demand on the criminal justice system. We have appointed the state's inaugural First Nations Justice Officer to lead development of strategies to reduce the over-representation of First Nations people in our criminal justice system and continue to implement initiatives to reduce rates of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children. The office is responsible for leading reforms including improving the cultural capability of the justice system and engaging with First Nations communities about their experiences in the justice system.

I know from speaking with domestic, family and sexual violence service providers that the demand for services is increasing. That is why the 2023-24 budget will see more investment to provide domestic, family and sexual violence support services. This includes \$58.3 million over four years and \$20.7 million per annum ongoing to meet immediate demands in the sector and address gaps in domestic, family and sexual violence service provision.

Total funding of \$177.9 million in 2023-24 will be provided across the domestic, family and sexual violence support sector, which encompasses approximately 115 organisations across Queensland, to deliver a variety of service types including domestic and family violence and sexual assault counselling, specialist homelessness services, perpetrator interventions, children's counselling, and women's health and wellbeing services—an approximate 23 per cent increase on funding provided last year. This increased funding will give certainty for domestic, family and sexual violence services to continue the important work they do and meet sustained demand.

In addition to securing major funding to address domestic and family violence, the 2023-24 budget provides substantial funding to support victims of crime. Increased funding of \$9 million has been allocated over four years to support victims of violent crime, including domestic and family violence, and to better meet the needs of property crime victims where violence or a threat of violence has occurred. I can advise that we are establishing a victims commissioner and will have them in place before the end of the financial year, while an interim commissioner will start in October.

Queensland's courts are among the busiest in the nation, which is why we have committed to \$34 million over four years and \$8.8 million per annum to support sustained growth in demand. The Coroners Court of Queensland is receiving a substantial funding boost—an additional \$18.9 million over four years and \$5.8 million per annum ongoing to support sustainable resourcing of the court. Just last month we announced three new coroners, which were funded in this year's budget to help deal with demand on the court.

The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal will also receive \$13.4 million over four years and \$1.2 million per annum to support an efficient and sustainable civil justice system. The funding package in the budget includes \$17 million over four years and \$4.4 million per annum ongoing to support Legal Aid Queensland to provide its vital legal services to financially disadvantaged and vulnerable people. In addition, Legal Aid Queensland will receive \$4.7 million as part of funding over three years to support delivery of a fast-track sentencing pilot for youth offenders in four locations for 18 months.

Of course, committee, when we talk about victims of crime they come in many forms. Recently I have been approached by many concerned citizens about the cost and risk to lives of metal theft. That is why today I can announce that the Palaszczuk government will hold a parliamentary inquiry into metal theft in the state—in particular, copper. Its impact is wideranging, affecting councils, businesses, local sporting clubs and schools. This portfolio is undertaking a significant program of reforms to strengthen the state's justice system and deliver for Queenslanders by helping to create safer communities. I look forward to continuing this work, as detailed in the 2023-24 state budget.

Mr NICHOLLS: Could I ask for the principal commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission to come forward, please. Attorney, before I turn to Mr Twyford, we have recently experienced one of Australia's most horrific child abuse cases. The community wants an assurance that the government is doing everything in its power to prevent that abuse. Why is it that, almost six years after a report that was prepared following the death of Tiahleigh Palmer, only a third of the recommendations have been completed?

Mrs D'ATH: You are absolutely right: we have seen one of the worst cases ever of child exploitation. I want to also be very careful in my comments in relation to that matter as it is before the courts and I do not want to in any way in my role prejudice those proceedings in relation to that matter.

On the matter more broadly of delivering on the QFCC recommendations, the government set out a very large agenda when it came to the blue card. We have undertaken significant reform in this space over the years, including prioritising those recommendations that were going to make the most difference to keeping children safe. Yes, 28 recommendations have been completed in full. There are 49 recommendations currently in progress and substantial milestones have been achieved through legislative reform and system improvements, including No card, No start, which was very significant to ensure that we did not have people working with children while they waited to see if they were going to get a blue card or not. We have added 17 new offences to the list of offences that disqualify a person from applying for a blue card. We have established a new framework for dealing with cardholders and applicants charged or convicted of a serious offence. We have strengthened the identity checks of people applying for blue cards, including having photos on blue cards and facilitating the consideration of domestic violence information on blue card assessments.

Without going to each and every individual recommendation—although I can do that if the committee wants to give me the time to go through all those individually—it is important to understand that the ones in progress—I think there are four which have not been commenced yet—are generally linked to other agencies, including other jurisdictions. It may be that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has completed its part of implementing those recommendations but it is contingent on the work of other agencies or the Commonwealth for us to completely close off on those recommendations. It would not be correct to say that nothing has been done in those areas. In other ones—and I am sure the member will go to particular recommendations—we have worked very closely with other agencies, including the QPS, to deliver the intent of those recommendations.

When it comes to recommendations and reports, at a point in time we will continue to monitor and evaluate. I know that the QFCC has a forward plan to further review the blue card to ensure we do have the most robust system. The member asked: how do we assure the community that we have the most robust working with children checks in the country? We do have some of the strongest laws in the country around child protection. The other day the Premier announced that once these proceedings before the courts are completed there should be a national review—because this particular case crosses over multiple jurisdictions—of what else we can learn from that and whether there is more work that can be done to strengthen those matters.

I do want to remind all committee members that, when it comes to the blue card, it is one part of a much bigger system for protecting children, including: obligations on employers; matters that the police take into account; and risk management while they are looking at complaints. We are a blunt tool in that the blue card has the ability to approve or not in the first place and to suspend or cancel once someone has a blue card. We do not monitor someone as far as the investigation of those complaints in the sense that those are matters for the police. It is for the police to advise at what point we can notify the person that they are under investigation or require their card to be suspended. I am very mindful of not doing anything that would ever prejudice any sort of investigation, including covert investigations, knowing that many of these types of cases can go beyond one individual and be part of a much broader paedophile ring, which includes international investigations as well.

Mr NICHOLLS: As a follow-up question, because you made a number of comments in your answer there, Attorney: recommendation 4 of the report from 2017—this is six years ago, a report following the Tiahleigh Palmer tragedy—*Keeping Queensland's children more than safe*, which the report itself said should be a priority, was to introduce Child Safe Standards. In the review undertaken in March this year, six years later, the QFCC commissioner, Mr Twyford, is still advocating for these to be put in place. They are also recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Why has that not happened?

Mrs D'ATH: There has been extensive work in relation to developing a community regulatory impact statement around Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, but I—

Mr NICHOLLS: Minister, it has not happened.

Mrs D'ATH: If I can finish answering. I will not comment any further because they are the responsibility of the Minister for Child Safety. Those are questions best put to the Minister for Child Safety in relation to implementation.

Mr NICHOLLS: The QFCC falls under your jurisdiction, and the protection of child safety in the SDS refers to keeping the community safe and protecting children and families.

Mrs D'ATH: As the member would be well aware, I have many oversight bodies that sit under my responsibility but they make recommendations that go to many agencies across government. It is not necessarily the responsibility of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to implement each one of the recommendations from those various bodies. When those reports come down they are disseminated to those agencies which they are the lead for or are joint lead with other agencies. I ask that questions be put to the child safety minister on that issue.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. Recommendation 78 of *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe* recommended that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General establish an implementation working group. It states—

The working group should also oversee and report on progress over the implementation period.

That is directed to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Attorney-General, after six years why has that recommendation still not been implemented?

Mrs D'ATH: The advice I have in front of me is that recommendation 78, which goes to establish an implementation working group to develop a detailed implementation plan and reporting framework, has been completed and meetings have been held regularly.

Mr NICHOLLS: The implementation has not occurred, so how can that be? How can we say there has been a completion of the recommendations when almost three-quarters of those recommendations have still not been implemented, including a priority: an overarching mechanism to implement the Child Safe Standards? You mentioned in an earlier report that it is not just the responsibility of the government—which I accept—but also employers, and the Child Safe Standards apply to employers.

Mrs D'ATH: Is this a question or is the member seeking to now make statements?

Mr NICHOLLS: I am asking: why have they now not been implemented after six years? Can you say when they will be implemented?

Mrs D'ATH: The recommendation is about establishing a working group to develop the implementation plan. That working group has been established. That recommendation has been delivered on. That is not saying that the detailed implementation plan is completed because, as the member has just stated, there is still work being done across recommendations. The recommendation itself is to establish the working group to develop that implementation plan, and that working group is established.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. Mr Twyford, do you keep track of the progress of recommendations from your reports to government, including obviously the report that we are discussing here today?

Mr Twyford: To your question, there are multiple streams. Overall, the role of the Queensland Family and Child Commission is to monitor the current performance of the systems that are designed and legislated to keep Queensland children safe, to review those schemes, to produce reports which possibly include recommendations, and to provide advice to government. When we hand a report with recommendations to government, responsibility shifts to government to accept those recommendations and to monitor the implementation. Having said that, in my role trying to understand the current performance of contemporary schemes, it is critical that I keep track of past recommendations and also the decisions that have been made to shape and shift our legislation, policies and procedures.

Regularly—and at present it is every two years—we undertake a stocktake of past recommendations and produce reports to ministers and directors-general seeking their current advice on where those recommendations are up to. The last time we did a full stocktake of all recommendations was in 2022. It was called a rapid review of the QFCC's impact. It looked at 10 system reviews including 208 recommendations. We then publicly report on our website and to our LASC oversight committee on the total outcome of those recommendations—the compliance rate to a degree. On the forward work plan for the Queensland Family and Child Commission which we published in June, we did list that it will be timely to do another stocktake next year, in 2023-24, and that is planned. Again, the overall results will be reported to the directors-general.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you. One of the recommendations of the report that we are discussing—which is, as I have mentioned previously, recommendation 4—is that amendments are made to the working with children act to bring in Child Safe Standards as a priority and the overarching mechanism to achieve safe service environments. In your legislative review of the Family and Child Commission Act 2014 in March this year, you are still advocating for the implementation of Child Safe Standards. Does this mean that those standards have not yet been implemented as they ought to have been?

Mr Twyford: Yes, I think that is correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: Those standards give effect to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as well. Have you raised this matter on a regular basis with the government, other than obviously that report in March 2014?

Mr Twyford: March 2014?

Mr NICHOLLS: Sorry. The review of the 2014 legislation and the report in March. My apologies. I do not mean to confuse you.

Mr Twyford: Yes. Most recently through our response to the review of our own legislation we raised the critical importance of implementing both Child Safe Standards and a reportable conduct scheme. More regularly, it was discussed at the QFCC Advisory Council, which is made up of 30 senior leaders from across Queensland including the child safety system. We did write to the Attorney asking for an update on the status of the implementation of Child Safe Standards, the principles and the reportable conduct scheme.

Mr NICHOLLS: Did you receive a response to that correspondence?

Mr Twyford: Sorry, I will correct. The letter was sent very recently—I believe in the last fortnight.

Mr NICHOLLS: So you have not yet received one?

Mr Twyford: No, I have not.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Twyford, are you aware of an implementation time frame for the remaining recommendations from your 2017 report?

Mr Twyford: Um—

Mr NICHOLLS: You made recommendations about implementation and overseeing it. You have made recommendations about Child Safe Standards, which you say have not yet been satisfactorily introduced. Are you aware of a time frame for their introduction in your role as monitoring these matters?

Mr Twyford: I think I need to distinguish between undertaking a stocktake of recommendations and getting line-by-line advice from departments on where they are up to against each recommendation, with what is more broadly my role to assess the current performance of the systems in Queensland and the intended reforms to those systems that government has announced. I do not have a clear time line against the blue card reform recommendations. I have a status report line by line but, more broadly, government has announced that it intends to introduce Child Safe Standards and a reportable conduct scheme. I am aware that in the budget there is money made available for the implementation. I am—

Mr NICHOLLS: It is a bit late six years down the track.

Mr Twyford: I am interested in the forward work plan for the introduction of those two elements that would strengthen this child safety system.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thanks, Mr Twyford. Might I ask the acting director-general a question. Recommendation 78 of the QFCC's blue card review recommended that an implementation working group, which we have already discussed, and a plan and a reporting framework be put into place. Did the plan establish time frames for recommendations and, if it has, has that time frame been met? Can you provide details of that time frame?

Ms Joldic: As the Attorney indicated earlier, the reporting that I have is that recommendation 78—to establish an implementation working group to develop a detailed implementation plan and reporting framework—is considered complete. I will need to seek details around the implementation time frame from my colleagues.

Mr NICHOLLS: Through the Attorney, would that be an answer today or would it be a question taken on notice?

Mrs D'ATH: We will seek to get an answer today. If we cannot, we will take it on notice.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is the implementation time frame that we have asked about. Acting Director-General, if the time frame shows matters have started, can you also provide us with advice of those matters that have been completed? You have told us, for example, that you believe recommendation 78 has been completed because the task force has been established. Rather than just 'We have started those', would it be possible for you to tell us if they have been completed and when you expect them to be completed?

Ms Joldic: I will seek further advice around the time frames and see the detail that we would be able to provide before the end of the session.

Mrs D'ATH: Chair, just in answering that question, I did say before that I could go through each recommendation and give an update if that is what the member wants us to do.

Mr NICHOLLS: No. I would have asked that question if I did, thank you, Attorney.

Mrs D'ATH: But you just asked it of the acting director-general.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy for it to be provided in part of the answer to the question.

Mrs D'ATH: We are not taking that on notice. I am able to give that answer right now, as opposed to asking for us to—

Mr NICHOLLS: I am not going to waste the very short period of time I have left running through 81 recommendations when it can be answered—

Mrs D'ATH: Well, we are not taking that on notice.

Mr NICHOLLS: So you are not going to take a question on notice that seeks an update on the implementation of 81 recommendations into the blue card system to protect children?

Mrs D'ATH: Because we have already stated the number that have been completed—

Mr NICHOLLS: But you have not.

Mrs D'ATH:—and the number that are in progress. I said I can go through those.

Mr NICHOLLS: I know those. With all due respect, Attorney, I have already given you those numbers. We know already that you have only done 28 out of 81. We already know the answer to that. We just want to know where they are at in a timely fashion, because it is not reported on.

CHAIR: I think it has been covered by the acting director-general's words that said they will try to come back to us by the end of the session.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is all I am seeking, Chair—just that report back. It would seem to me to be a relatively straightforward thing to do and it would allow us to get on and ask questions, which is for the benefit of the entire committee.

CHAIR: Can you ask your next question? I think that one has been completed.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. Attorney, you took carriage of the implementation of the report in 2017. It appears that in the six years since there has only been limited progress in implementing those recommendations. Is this a priority for this government?

Mrs D'ATH: Yes, it is. It is why we have made significant legislative reform over the years since coming to government, not just in relation to the working with children checks. Remember that the QFCC report is just one report. We also had the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and that overlapped with many of those recommendations. In some cases, the recommendations were not consistent so we had to go through a mapping exercise. Where you have a royal commission making recommendations that might not align with the QFCC's recommendations, which recommendation do you go with? Which do you see is the authority that you should lead with? Or they may have come up with a recommendation that seeks the same intent but in a different way, so which model do we go with?

There has been a lot of work over the years, including our DPSO legislation, our reportable offenders legislation, too, as well as in the child safety space. I have already gone through a number of the recommendations which we have implemented that are very significant as far as reforms nationwide go, such as in No Card, No Start, the photo ID and the additional new offences in which some of our offences do not exist in other working with children checks across the country.

With regard to your question around whether we take this seriously, we could not take this more seriously. As I say, any work that is done at a national level, and the work that we continue to do and work that comes out of the QFCC or QPS, for that matter, who come to us and say, 'This is what we need to ensure we can provide more information to Blue Card,' to suspend and cancel cards or to not approve them in the first place—I am all ears to make sure that those changes are made, to make sure that we do continue to have the strongest system in the country.

Mr NICHOLLS: Attorney, can I simply ask this question, and I think people would be anxious to know the answer: under what circumstances and what does it take for a blue card to be withdrawn?

Mrs D'ATH: There is a simple and complex answer. The simple answer is if anyone is charged or commits a disqualifying offence—

Mr NICHOLLS: That is the legislative answer?

Mrs D'ATH: That is the legislative answer. In determining what other factors are taken into account, there is a very long list of criteria that Blue Card can and will look at in determining the suitability of someone to hold a blue card or to retain a blue card. Obviously in the most serious cases, it is police notifying us. Most of our reporting, of course, is to police first before Blue Card because police have to determine whether any claims, complaints, allegations are valid allegations and not frivolous or vexatious complaints made against individuals. It is for police to decide at what point that individuals should be notified. Remember, at the point that we suspend a card, we are notifying that person that they are suspended for a reason, as in they are under investigation or charged. It is for police to determine at what point we are provided with that information so that we can notify that person of that suspension. As such, where there is covert surveillance, an investigation is happening, it is up to the police to advise us at what point that person can be aware that that investigation is occurring. To do anything more, as you will see under the act where it talks about Director of Public Prosecutions and us not being able to use information that the DPP is aware of, it will prejudice an investigation. It is not just about charging the individual; it is making sure that children are identified and are protected and saved from further offending. In any way jeopardising an investigation or in relation to what police are doing could mean that that person is aware of what police are doing before police want them to. Having said that, again, we suspend and we cancel. There are many other risk management processes that police put in place, and those are questions best put to police in regards to any investigations that they are doing that we may not be aware of at a particular time.

Mr NICHOLLS: Would it be fair to say that the threshold for removing a card that has been given to someone is the police determining—

Mrs D'ATH: No, that is not correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: I may have misheard. There was a lot of mention of police. I wondered what the threshold was.

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to get the criteria that is considered. There are many factors that are taken into account, and I am happy to get that criteria and come back to you before the end of the session.

Mr NICHOLLS: I appreciate that, thank you.

Ms BOLTON: Good morning, everyone. Attorney, given ongoing concerns regarding the courts not utilising the legislative tools they are given to deliver harsher penalties to a repeat offender, what powers does the attorney have to remedy this? If there is none, what can be done to address this?

Mrs D'ATH: If I am understanding the member's question correctly, the member is asking how I intervene where I believe the court's sentence is not meeting community's expectations.

Ms BOLTON: Correct.

Mrs D'ATH: The powers that I have is through appeal. That is what we do. The police also have mechanisms for appeal. Through the separation of powers, I cannot instruct a judge or magistrate to revise their sentence in any way other than through appeal processes. That is what the justice system in this country is all about: it sets up mechanisms where, if I am advised by Crown Law or the Director of Public Prosecutions that we believe a particular decision—and we are not just talking sentencing, but any decision of the court—either is an error at law or is not in line with community's expectations, we can certainly appeal those, and we have on numerous occasions. Some are successful and some are not. Of course, we can go to higher courts and can go all the way to the High Court if necessary in relation to those matters. As I say, police also have those powers to appeal certain matters.

Ms BOLTON: If the appeals process, as you have just said, is unsuccessful at times, is there then another mechanism, for example, bringing into legislation mandatory sentencing? Is that another avenue to meet community expectation?

Mrs D'ATH: Certainly, minimum mandatory sentences is a tool to enforce that someone must be sentenced, but sentenced does not necessarily mean sentenced to detention; it may be sentenced to particular outcomes. However, we must tread very carefully in relation to those, not only with regard to human rights and the United Nations conventions in relation to the rights of individuals and presumption of innocence and so forth but also because every case is different.

The causes behind that offending—the circumstances, whether the individual has a history of offending, the seriousness of offending, what they have done since they are alleged to have committed the offence, what have they done, have they acknowledged guilt in relation to that offending, have they sought to rehabilitate, what actions have they taken to address those issues in their lives in between the alleged offending and being convicted and sentenced—that the courts will take into account.

So, when governments of any persuasion start putting in minimum mandatory sentencing, what they are saying is that they are taking away the discretion of the courts to consider all of those elements. For example, if you put in place minimum mandatory sentencing in relation to manslaughter: we talk about some of the domestic and family violence situations where mothers have actually been charged with manslaughter because they failed to give care to their child when in consequence it has been because of the person who is perpetrating violence against them that stopped them from doing that. There are a whole lot of reasons why that has occurred and why that discretion is so critical in a democratic society and in the justice system across our country. There are very limited circumstances where you would put in minimum mandatory sentencing, such as murder.

It is something about which all governments tread very carefully. They understand the importance of the court having that discretion so that they and the jury—they are being judged by their peers—have all of the information and can take in all of that information when making decisions on sentencing.

Ms BOLTON: In essence, there is not any movement with our repeat offenders regarding car theft et cetera?

Mrs D'ATH: The government is not considering mandatory minimum sentencing, no.

Ms BOLTON: I refer to the response to question No. 13 regarding QCAT. I note the number of files pending, as of March 2023, for over 24 months for 'children and young people'. Is there any risk assessment done when QCAT is dealing with these disputes to ensure that none of those children are at risk during the actual process? Two years seems a very long time for these cases to still be not addressed.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for the question, and it is a very legitimate question around the ongoing safety of the individuals. It is not possible for me to comment because, obviously, the consideration of QCAT is a matter for QCAT. As I said, due to the separation of powers I am not responsible for those decisions and the matters that they consider. I will say that matters that are delayed over a long period are often delayed due to a whole range of different circumstances. It may be at the request of the individual parties or all parties to have the matter adjourned. They may be awaiting further information, advice, investigations, reports and so forth or it could be due to the availability of parties. There are so many factors that any individual case has to take into account.

Again, I am not speaking on behalf of other government agencies, but when government agencies come before QCAT in relation to child safety matters there are normally legislative but also policy requirements for them to ensure that the safety of children is still monitored and addressed while those matters are pending.

CHAIR: I will now go to government members.

Ms BUSH: I would like to ask my first question to the Public Trustee, if he can come forward. With reference to the key deliverables listed on page 82 of the SDS, can the Public Trustee outline his organisation's Customers First Strategy?

Mr Zhouand: Soon after I joined the Public Trustee in 2019 we embarked on a transformation called the Customers First Agenda. It is the biggest transformation in the organisation in several decades and it is designed to provide a more modern, customer-centric organisation. It is designed to provide better customer outcomes.

While there is still work to be done, the agenda has achieved much positive change and the transformation extends to all parts of the Public Trustee including information and support available to customers, decision-making, fees and charges arrangements, complaints system and management, and structure and governance.

As part of the reforms we have undertaken a comprehensive fees and charges review. We have also reduced a set number of fees including removing the family home from calculations for eligibility for a community service obligation to ensure that no customer is charged fees more than five per cent of their assets. We are not charging customers for expert financial advice where that advice only recommends investing in Public Trustee products.

We have implemented a nation-leading structured decision-making framework based on La Trobe University's best practice model, and that has been independently evaluated and tabled in parliament. We have established the sector's leading Financial Independence Pathway Program, and to date 24 customers have achieved full financial independence and 93 customers are participating in the pathway. Even if participants do not achieve full independence, they gain greater levels of independence and knowledge as part of the process.

We have established a referral pathway with the Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion to provide independent support, advice and advocacy for customers seeking to review the Public Trustee's appointment as their financial administrator. We have established a national redress scheme unit to help customers to help claim through the Commonwealth government National Redress Scheme relating to institutional child sexual abuse, and through that unit we have been able to achieve more than \$1 million in redress for our customers. We have established the sector's first customer advocate office. We have established an independent complaint review mechanism.

We have established a Customer Interests Safeguard Committee to continue to identify opportunities to improve interactions with the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal to provide better outcomes for our customers. We have undertaken an organisational restructure so that we have our customer delivery staff focused only on delivering customer services. We have expanded our support to regional areas through additional regional directors. We have improved our responsiveness to complaints through embarking on changes to our complaints management system.

We have also established a Customer Reference Group and a Government Reference Group. To date, while there are always opportunities for improvement, we are starting to see some positive results. We are finding that our complaints requiring remedial action have reduced over recent years from 32 per cent to three per cent. We are finding that for our two main customer groups, our net promoter score has improved by 36 points and 30 points respectively. We are continuing to focus on our reforms over the forward years and continuing to look forward to work with our stakeholders to listen and to continue to focus on the best outcomes for Queenslanders.

Ms BUSH: Thank you for that. That was the only question I had for the Public Trustee.

Mr HUNT: In reference to page 29 of the SDS, could the Attorney outline the increases in the CCC's budget?

Mrs D'ATH: The Palaszczuk government acknowledges the vital work performed by the Crime and Corruption Commission in reducing the incidence of major crime and corruption in this state. We are committed to supporting the CCC with the funding it needs to operate effectively and efficiently. To quote the findings of the Hon. Tony Fitzgerald AC, KC and the Hon. Alan Wilson KC in their final report following their 2022 commission of inquiry—

We accept that the success of an organisation like the CCC must involve public approval and respect and, critically, trust. Queenslanders must be confident that their concerns about crime and corruption can be brought to an institution that will respond appropriately.

That is why following the commission of inquiry the government provided the CCC with \$5.8 million as part of the 2022-23 budget update in December 2022 to implement specific recommendations and develop and manage the program. Subsequently, the CCC has delivered a road map to implement the recommendations directed to it by that commission and the government has committed \$15 million over the next four years, including \$4.2 million in this year's budget and \$2.9 million per annum ongoing from 2027-28 to support the delivery of that road map. Integrity bodies such as the CCC are the cornerstone of modern and mature democracies like Queensland and we will continue to deliver the funding they need to serve the people of Queensland.

Mr HUNT: My question is to the chairperson of the CCC, please. Chairperson, what benefits will the increase that the Attorney-General has outlined have for the CCC's operations in the 2023-24 financial year?

Mr Barbour: The CCC is, as a result of this funding, able to do a considerable transformation program that is consistent with the recommendations made by the commission of inquiry to it. In line with that, the CCC has delivered monthly implementation reports detailing the significant progress being made, including the delivery of a customer-centric and data-driven approach to complaint lodgement and assessment following a considerable review during the year into that process. Strengthening investigator capabilities, commencing comprehensive reviews of organisational culture and corruption investigation processes and progressing the legislative amendments required by the commission of

inquiry. We also recognise that sophisticated digital capability is necessary to strengthen the security of information holdings, to prevent and identify criminal networks engaged in major crime and to confiscate the proceeds of crime.

To ensure a prevention perspective informs all corruption investigations moving into the future, the government's approval of \$4.3 million in funding over the next four years allows the CCC to leverage its analytics data warehouse and strategic partnerships with both public and private institutions to build a unique corruption data asset which will improve the state's ability to identify and prevent corruption.

We have developed a new corruption strategy following significant consultation with a range of people throughout the year. This strategy recognises the increasing value of data to prevent and investigate corruption and it will strengthen the CCC's focus on serious and systematic corruption. It will improve complaint management and the accessibility of the CCC's corruption services. The CCC is also upskilling investigators in digital currencies and has commenced a trial of cryptocurrency forensic software to enhance the effectiveness of criminal investigations. That, I hope, answers the question but it is just a small sample of some of the activities that we have been engaged in in the past 12 months.

Mr HUNT: I have a follow-up question. With reference to page 25 of the SDS, could you please outline what work has been conducted in investigating serious organised crime in Queensland, and in working with law enforcement agencies to ensure criminal profits are confiscated?

Mr Barbour: One of our primary strategic focus areas in our crime jurisdiction is in relation to illicit markets of high value. Organised crime groups of all kinds are heavily involved in illicit market activities with very strong links to global supply chains through international networks and facilitators. The commission continues to play an important part in the fight against organised crime by removing the financial benefit and support for criminal networks through its investigative capability and unique hearing powers. We have done this, for example, by focusing on high-profit, high-impact crime. For example firearms, drug trafficking, cybercrime, organised fraud and child sexual exploitation. We have targeted enablers and professional facilitators who provide organised crime groups with critical expertise to hide their activities and we have responded to emerging trends by uplifting our capability for investigating matters involving digital currencies.

I can give you two examples of this. In one case, an investigation focused on the facilitation of drug trafficking and supply through the sale of encrypted mobile devices. This resulted in the dissemination of 55 intelligent products to our law enforcement partners about the type of devices and applications that were currently being used and supplied. The operational model was utilised by the network in a number of states including Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Another investigation into money laundering, fraud and drug trafficking involved members of an outlaw motorcycle group based on the Gold Coast. This resulted in the arrest of five offenders on 16 charges, including drug trafficking charges and analogous offences of consorting and contravening access orders. One defendant pleaded guilty in that matter and was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for possessing 10 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine with an estimated wholesale street value of \$2 million.

Ms BUSH: I was hoping to direct my question to the CEO of Legal Aid Queensland if she might come forward for us. My question is in reference to page 33 of the SDS and the prehearing question on notice No. 7. Can the CEO update the committee on Legal Aid Queensland's important work and the work that lies ahead for 2023-24?

Ms Davies: Legal Aid Queensland is delivering crucial legal assistance services to vulnerable Queenslanders. We deliver services in criminal, family and civil law matters including community legal education, legal information, advice and task assistance, duty lawyer services, court and tribunal representation and dispute resolution. We have provided more than 250,000 legal information referral and advice services and more than 124,000 duty lawyer services and provided grants of aid for legal representation in 32,000 matters.

Going forward, the work that we have been funded to do in 2023-24 includes the expansion of the domestic and family violence specialist courts and support to expand the current court locations and to roll out specialist courts in Brisbane and Cairns. We have funding in relation to the fast-track sentencing pilot for youth justice to ensure the matters relating to young people move through the court system in a timely fashion so that children are not on bail or on remand for long periods of time without their matter being finalised and sentenced. Those are some of the things that we are currently doing. We have also been funded to assist with the escalating workloads in the District Court. There will be three additional District Court judges appointed, and Legal Aid Queensland will need to provide services for clients who are appearing before those judicial officers.

In addition, under the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, there are a number of positions that will be funded in relation to the extension of the protected witness cross-examination scheme, which currently only operates in the higher courts, to the magistrates courts. This will mean that people who are the victims of domestic and family violence will not be directly cross-examined by the alleged perpetrator; there will be a lawyer in the court able to undertake that cross-examination. Those are some of the things that Legal Aid Queensland will be doing in 2023-24.

Ms BUSH: It is important work; thank you so much. My next question is to the Electoral Commissioner. My question is in reference to prehearing question on notice No. 3 and page 58 of the SDS. I was hoping the commissioner could update the committee on preparations for the 2024 local and state elections.

Mr Vidgen: The successful delivery of major local and state elections requires a structured and strategic approach that considers the needs of all Queenslanders, particularly the stakeholders within the electoral system. Preparations are well advanced for the delivery of the March 2024 local government elections, including finalising approximately 40 separate project plans across 16 program areas covering each critical function of election delivery; progressing the recruitment of over 150 returning officers and assistant returning officers—and that recruitment process is approximately 70 per cent complete, with training to commence in October for those critical positions; commencing the major procurement of essential materials such as 6,000 laptops for use across all polling booths and early voting centres, cardboard voting screens and other IT hardware needed in the field; negotiating contracts with critical service providers including print, digital and cyber support and creative agencies; and, importantly, conducting end-to-end election rehearsal over three weeks to simulate a local government election and providing staff the opportunity to practise delivering critical election activities.

The ECQ is confident that its rigorous approach to planning and delivery of major election events will ensure the delivery of high-quality electoral services to Queenslanders in 2024. I should add that with the planning for the state government elections a lot of the preparation work we do for the March local government elections mirrors into the state, with our phase of preparation really covering four areas. We obviously deliver elections, we evaluate, we plan and then we prepare. At the moment we are in the preparation and delivery phases, depending on where we are across those 40 separate project plans.

CHAIR: Electoral Commissioner, can you outline the steps that have been taken to engage with local governments?

Mr Vidgen: Our engagement with local government following the 2020 local government elections commenced in 2021. We recognised the critical importance of having a good, close relationship across all 77 local governments. They are key partners in the delivery of our services. In 2021, for the first time ever, the ECQ released a local government statement of intent which outlined ECQ's commitment to ongoing and constructive engagement with Queensland's local governments and the stakeholder organisations. Since then, the ECQ has written to every local government CEO seeking engagement in the election planning process. Either I or my staff have met with approximately 50 council CEOs or full councils to discuss both 2020 and also the preparations for 2024. Those that we have not been able to meet personally we have communicated with more formally.

We provided councils back in April cost estimates for their elections. We have formed a local government advisory committee comprised of representatives of the local government sector to consult on election service design and we have commenced the publication of a newsletter for local government stakeholders about 2024 and what they can expect. The ECQ has also been engaging with councils at the operational level, with frequent consultation between ECQ and council staff about logistical arrangements for elections within their local government area. Engagement with the local government sector will continue throughout the preparation, delivery and finalisation of the 2024 local government elections and we will continue to build on this relationship.

CHAIR: Electoral Commissioner, can you outline the steps that have been taken to engage with First Nations communities?

Mr Vidgen: Increasing electoral participation among First Nations peoples and communities across Queensland is a strategic priority of the Electoral Commission. The ECQ is implementing several initiatives to improve engagement with First Nations communities and co-design electoral services for the 2024 local government elections. The ECQ has recently developed and released its *First Nations engagement strategy*, which is the first one it has ever done, which was developed in consultation, importantly, with Indigenous local governments and the Australian Electoral Commission. The strategy outlined priority areas to deliver culturally safe and appropriate election services as well as undertake

effective engagement with First Nations peoples and communities with the aim of improving electoral participation. The strategy is supported by an accompanying action plan to be delivered over short, medium and longer term time frames. These actions include training, developing communication resources, co-designing electoral services, improving employment opportunities and coordinating with other stakeholders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. I now hand back to either the deputy chair or the member for Clayfield.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Vidgen. I will not ask you about where the polling places will be in Clayfield just yet, but that is obviously high on your planning list. I ask Mr Barbour from the Crime and Corruption Commission to come forward, please. Mr Barbour, we have had some discussion about additional funding provided to the CCC. In that respect, can you provide an update on the total legal costs incurred by the CCC to date on the Peter Carne matter, which has been subject to a High Court decision? Can you tell us when you expect to receive that High Court decision, if you are aware?

Mr Barbour: The total cost over several financial years in relation to the matter of Carne through the Supreme Court of Queensland process, the Court of Appeal and also the High Court is \$571,045.91. In relation to where that matter currently stands, the High Court heard that matter over two days in early June. The decision in that matter is reserved. We cannot predict at this point when we will receive a decision, but we are hopeful that it will be in the not-too-distant future.

Mr NICHOLLS: Sure. Mr Barbour, last year we heard that the legal costs associated with the Carne matter, I presume up to that time, were \$109,000, so since then it has been about another \$462,000 in expenses?

Mr Barbour: Yes. The total High Court expenses thus far are \$361,981. There would be other associated costs that are not directly linked to the High Court proceedings.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. Mr Barbour, given that the subject matter of that High Court matter goes to—and it is well ventilated—the ability of the CCC through this place to provide a report, even though there are not findings of corrupt conduct but findings that the CCC believes sufficiently important enough to reveal through the parliament, have there been discussions within the CCC on the CCC's role in the event that the High Court decision goes against the CCC—that is, if it is found that the CCC does not have the power that it thought it otherwise had?

Mr Barbour: There have not been discussions in detail, but clearly, both through our parliamentary committee oversight process and in discussions more broadly with those within DJAG, those issues have been contemplated. We are hopeful that the provisions in the act will be confirmed by the High Court as providing us with the capacity to report as we were doing prior to the decision in Carne.

Importantly, the High Court is considering two issues and two aspects in this matter, and both are significant. One is in relation to the Crime and Corruption Act and the provisions in that act which permit public reporting of the kind we are discussing. Importantly, the decision also goes to the issue of parliamentary privilege, and that is also an important element of this case—so important that the Speaker of the Queensland parliament and also the Commonwealth Attorney-General sought to intervene in support of the CCC's position at the High Court.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, I understood that to be the case. Finally then on that particular matter, in your annual report last year you said—

At the completion of investigations, our public reports enable us to highlight types of conduct or system weaknesses that could give rise to future corruption, and we may make recommendations for procedural or legislative reform.

You make it very clear that it is a very important role from the CCC's perspective that these reports are made available. Will you in your discussions be advocating for that role to continue notwithstanding the outcome of the High Court decision?

Mr Barbour: Absolutely. I think the first step would be to carefully consider any decision of the High Court. If the High Court decision was against our view of how the act operates then certainly that would enliven discussions with the Attorney and the department around potential legislative amendments. I could not agree more that the importance of the commission being able to publicly report on matters, notwithstanding whether formal findings have been made of corrupt conduct, is essential to community assurance that the commission is working effectively and also in terms of educative processes for the rest of the public sector.

CHAIR: Before we go on, I just have a couple of administrative announcements. First of all, I would like to welcome students in the gallery from Bundaberg State High who have joined us for the estimates hearing. Welcome. I also would like to welcome Mr Michael Berkman MP, member for Maiwar, to the committee.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks kindly.

Mr NICHOLLS: In a similar vein, can you update us on additional costs in relation to the Trad matter which follows closely behind the Carne matter?

Mr Barbour: Yes. There have been very limited costs for that matter in the last financial year, a total of \$3,025.04.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is it the case that the Trad matter would follow necessarily the outcome of the Carne High Court appeal, so that if the CCC's view of the legislation is upheld then matters proceeding with Trad will not necessarily need to proceed through a litigious outcome?

Mr Barbour: I think it is important to talk in generalities. As the member would be aware, there is a non-publication order in relation to particular proceedings involving that matter so I am somewhat limited in terms of being specific in my answer.

Mr NICHOLLS: Has that order not been lifted? I thought it had been lifted.

Mr Barbour: No, only in relation to the names and the parties involved. In relation to my earlier answer, I would just simply emphasise the importance of public reporting in circumstances where the commission believes that there is an important process to advise the broader community about.

Mr NICHOLLS: Are there any CCC senior executives or senior office holders under investigation by the CCC—that is, is the CCC concerned about any of its senior executives or senior officers—and are they under investigation by the CCC or another body or related entity that you are aware of?

Mr Barbour: Not that I am aware of. Certainly not by the CCC. As to other bodies, I do not know.

Mr NICHOLLS: I understand. Thank you very much. Attorney-General, following up on that earlier line of questioning in relation to the reporting by the CCC, has the government considered forming a view in relation to the legislative requirements should the High Court find against the CCC's view of the legislation?

Mrs D'ATH: It is a bit hypothetical at this stage for us to turn our minds to what legislative changes may be considered when we do not know what the ruling is going to be and we do not know the form that ruling might take because there are a number of elements to it. It could be that parts of it are successful and parts are not. I have met with Mr Barbour and I know that Mr Barbour has the intention to write to me if that application is not successful to seek amendments, but I think it is a bit early to be pre-emptive of what amendments might be considered by government until we get that judgement.

Mr NICHOLLS: I appreciate that. Thank you. Mr Barbour, can I come back to you then on another set of investigations which were being undertaken into Forensic and Scientific Services. Can you provide an update on that investigation into the Queensland Health staff at that forensic lab, given that last year you had paused that work and were assisting the inquiry? Has that project finished or are you continuing investigations in relation to that? Has it been superseded, in your view?

Mr Barbour: As the member would appreciate, the commission does not comment publicly on operational matters or the specific content or detail of complaints. However, it is publicly known that certain matters were referred to the commission for inquiry following the commission of inquiry into those particular matters. Those are ongoing with the commission and they have not as yet been concluded.

Mr NICHOLLS: I understand. So, there are ongoing matters arising from the Forensic and Scientific Services investigation?

Mr Barbour: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: If I can also take you to *A call for change*, the report. It was stated—

The role of the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) in police integrity is now almost completely opaque. As far as can be ascertained, the discretionary powers it retains to independently investigate and review matters means that it remains marginally within the 'civilian review' category of oversight—although the system is very close to the 'internal affairs' model,

Recommendation 68 of that report said—

Within 18 months, the Queensland Government establish the Police Integrity Unit as an independent and separate unit of the Crime and Corruption Commission to deal with all complaints in relation to police.

Mr Barbour, has that recommendation commenced and will there be a police integrity unit established within the CCC as recommended?

Mr Barbour: As the member just noted with the recommendation, that is a recommendation to government. I am not in a position to respond to what the current thinking of the government is in relation to that recommendation.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is fair to say that you have no commitment from the government in relation to that recommendation?

Mr Barbour: I believe when the recommendations were first made and the report released the government indicated in-principle support for the recommendations, so I certainly am aware of that. As to the particular issues around a potential police integrity unit and the recommendation that you are referring to, that is a matter that is currently with government.

Mr NICHOLLS: In that respect, can you advise whether any money has been allocated to the task of that unit, because I note at the end of March a delegation from the CCC went to Northern Ireland to learn more of how such a unit would operate here. Would you be able to give us details about that delegation and what you learnt?

Mr Barbour: Yes, certainly. Firstly, if I can begin by providing some background, after the tabling of that particular report, given the nature of that recommendation, the former Attorney-General asked that we provide her, for the purpose of government's deliberations, with a review of the recommendation and also other potential options that might, in fact, lead to greater efficiencies in relation to the handling of police complaints consistent with the findings and concerns of the commission of inquiry. That travel to Northern Ireland was part of that process: so that information could be fed into that options paper for government. The reason for the trip was because many of the recommendations were based on a model which exists in Northern Ireland, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland model, and it was important to properly understand the nature of those recommendations within the context of the Northern Ireland experience and the creation of that office and the way in which that office worked. The trip was extremely valuable in providing important information into the options paper for government.

Mr NICHOLLS: How much was the cost of the trip?

Mr Barbour: I and the CEO of the commission went to Northern Ireland. The cost for the two of us was \$31,405.

CHAIR: I would like to go over to the member for Noosa.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you, Chair. I will defer to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: I have questions for Mr Barbour in relation to the same recommendation. Again for context, the commission of inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence recommended this police integrity unit with civilian investigators be established within the CCC and that was to deal with all complaints against police. I understand from media reporting that external consultants have been engaged by the CCC to work on this matter. Can you confirm, if that is the case, who the consultants are and how much that is costing the CCC?

Mr Barbour: Yes, thank you. We were assisted by consultants, with the approval of the former Attorney-General, to prepare the options paper which I just spoke about in answer to the other member's question. The consultants that were retained were GSA consulting and the cost of that consultancy was \$409,000.

Mr BERKMAN: According to media reporting in the *Guardian*, they indicated that the CCC opposes the commission of inquiry's recommendation based on resourcing constraints. Is the CCC's position that the commission's recommendation that all complaints against police are independently investigated by civilians would be preferable if adequate resourcing was provided for that function?

Mr Barbour: Unfortunately, much of what is reported in the media is not necessarily accurate so I thank you for the opportunity to provide an accurate answer on those issues.

Mr NICHOLLS: Do you mean the *Guardian* is not accurate?

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield.

Mr Barbour: I think the important thing to note, in answer to your question, is that the commission of inquiry report correctly refers to the fact that we were supportive of the recommendations that were made to significantly enhance police oversight and for the development of a unit of the kind that was recommended. As I said in answer to earlier questions, that matter is now squarely with government and it is a matter for government to determine whether or not it proceeds with that model or any other model to enhance. This provides me with an opportunity to categorically state that effective independent oversight is essential, in my view, for the handling of police complaints and I believe the system in Queensland can be enhanced. What that looks like and whether or not it is as recommended is a matter for government.

Mr BERKMAN: Again referring to another bastion of media integrity and accurate reporting, you would have seen the *Courier-Mail* this morning referring to a shift in the government's policy position around not specifically that recommendation but the Coaldrake recommendation around a single clearing house for complaints against government. It had previously been suggested that that clearing house would be bundled up as part of this response to the police integrity unit. Do you have any reaction to that proposal that the current online form for public sector complaints might be sufficient for that independent police integrity unit function?

Mrs D'ATH: Chair, I do believe that is seeking an opinion.

CHAIR: Yes, it is.

Mrs D'ATH: I ask it be ruled out.

Mr BERKMAN: I will pare it right back.

CHAIR: Do not pare it right back—

Mr BERKMAN: Mr Barbour, do you have any response to the reporting in the *Courier-Mail* this morning?

CHAIR: Do not interrupt me.

Mr BERKMAN: Apologies, Chair.

CHAIR: Let me finish.

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly.

CHAIR: You have the opportunity to rephrase the question, but that question is asking for an opinion. If you persist then I will rule it out of order.

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. Mr Barbour, in addition to your previous answers, do you have any further comment in response to the publications in the *Courier-Mail* this morning around that recommendation from the Coaldrake review?

CHAIR: I do not think that question is any better. I will rule it out of order. I hand over to the member for Caloundra.

Mr HUNT: Attorney-General, with reference to your opening statement, could you expand on the parliamentary inquiry that the Palaszczuk government will establish to examine the issue of copper and other scrap metal theft?

Mrs D'ATH: There has been a growing concern across the community about the frequency of theft of copper and scrap metals. I know that the QPS has been very strong on wanting to advance some work in this space as well, and I acknowledge the police minister on that. Stealing is a criminal offence and thefts of this nature impact many organisations, from our big energy companies and our communication networks right through to small businesses, our local councils, our schools and our sporting clubs. I take this opportunity to thank the many members—I will not name them all—who have written to me. A number of members of parliament have written to me, advocating for some work to be done in this space. Local councils and businesses have raised the issue of copper theft directly with me and my department.

I would like to share some examples provided by the Moreton Bay Regional Council. The council reported that in April of this year over 320 metres of copper cable was stolen from the Narangba Demons Baseball Club. As a result, the club's 17 teams and 200 players were unable to train in the evenings. In July 2023, council states that parts of the North Lakes and Mango Hill streetlighting network were subject to blackouts due to copper theft. Cabling was illegally removed from lighting poles at a North Lakes school, impacting the students' use of facilities and sporting fields during the same month. I believe this equated to over \$4 million worth of loss.

Our parliamentary inquiry will examine the prevalence and impact of metal theft in Queensland and consider options to deter and disrupt the sale of stolen metals. Approaches taken by other states, including New South Wales and Victoria, will be investigated as part of the inquiry. Next week I will convene a round table to hear from key stakeholders and consult on draft terms of reference for that inquiry so that I can bring that before parliament. The theft of copper and other scrap metals is having an impact on our economy and our communities and this inquiry will help disrupt these offenders.

Mr NICHOLLS: No more cash for scrap.

Mrs D'ATH: No more cash for scrap; I will take that interjection. Chair, in the brief time we have left and when it is an appropriate time, I have a response for the member for Clayfield on the criteria that Blue Card Services considers.

CHAIR: Do you wish to do that now?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to do that now. I think it is a really important question that I would like to address and, again, I thank the member for his question.

Before anyone is issued with a blue card, a national criminal history check is undertaken for every blue card application in Queensland. The blue card check is more than a police check. It looks for a charge or conviction for any offence in Australia, even if no conviction was recorded. This includes spent convictions; pending and non-conviction charges; child protection prohibition orders, both respondents and subjects to the applications; disqualification orders; reporting obligations under the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004 or our Dangerous Prisoner (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003; disciplinary information from certain organisations—and this includes information about teachers, childcare licensees and foster carers; domestic violence information; other information about the person that is relevant to deciding whether it would be in the best interests of children to issue a blue card; and police investigative information relating to allegations of serious child related sexual offences even if no charges were laid. I can advise that there is also additional work that is done in that Blue Card Services has the capacity to issue a negative notice or cancel a person's card based on any information Blue Card Services believes is relevant to deciding whether it would be in the best interests of children to issue or continue a person's blue card following a natural justice process.

Without speaking in detail to the matter that has been reported, I have already made public comments that we were notified by the AFP in relation to charges of disqualifying offences on the same day we suspended the card and on the same day we notified the employers and the Department of Education in relation to that. I can also advise that previous criminal history checks undertaken by Blue Card Services did not return any criminal history for this person. Additionally, there was no other relevant concerning information, disciplinary or investigative information or other allegations or adverse information returned to Blue Card Services in its screening processes in relation to that individual. As such, all appropriate steps were taken in relation to the approvals and, consequently, the suspension of that card.

CHAIR: I hand over to the member for Cooper.

Ms BUSH: Attorney-General, I noted your comments in the opening statement in relation to the progress on the establishment of a victims commissioner. Can the committee receive a fuller update on the progress of implementing the independent commission of inquiry into the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations to establish that victims commissioner?

Mrs D'ATH: I know that the member for Cooper is very interested, as are all members of the parliament and the community, in what we are doing to deliver on those recommendations. The Palaszczuk government understands that our justice system must put victims front and centre in our support and services. We said that we would implement the recommendations of the commission of inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence and the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce reports and we are delivering on that promise. We also initiated a parliamentary inquiry, which this committee is aware of because it conducted that inquiry, into the support provided to victims of crime. From those reports, the call for a victims commissioner was very clear. This morning I tabled the government's response to the committee's inquiry into the support provided to victims of crime. For the committee's benefit, I can also now provide to the committee members copies of the government's response.

As I announced in my opening statement, the Palaszczuk government will recruit an interim commissioner. Although it is going to take some time to develop the legislation and the legislative framework for this permanent independent statutory appointment, we thought it was very important not to wait—just as we did with the independent implementation supervisor for the task force recommendations. We established an interim supervisor while we established the framework. That is what we will be doing in relation to the victims commissioner. It is the intention to have an interim victims commissioner appointed by October and commencing in October of this year, ahead of the introduction of legislation early in 2024 to establish a permanent victims commissioner who will be appointed by the end of this financial year, so by the end of June 2024.

This permanent independent statutory appointment will be responsible for promoting and protecting the interests and rights of victims of crime through education and training, systemic inquiry and advisory functions together with complaint-handling functions. The government has listened to Queenslanders. We have consulted with existing interstate victims commissioners and key government agencies involved in service delivery of victims and complaint handling and developing an appropriate model for the Queensland victims commissioner. The victims commissioner is one step, but it is an important one that will ensure victims' voices are heard and their rights are promoted and protected. The Palaszczuk government listens to Queenslanders and is committed to providing support to victims of crime in their time of need.

Ms BUSH: Thank you. That is fantastic.

CHAIR: Attorney, in relation to the government's response to our inquiry, is the Attorney seeking to table them?


Mrs D'ATH: I table those and I have copies for all the committee members. It is already formally tabled, so I am just providing it for the information of committee members.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. Attorney, just before we close, there was also a question in relation to the implementation time frames. Is that something the Attorney can tidy up?

Mrs D'ATH: I will come back before the end of the final session today in relation to that and also the status of the recommendations in relation to the QFCC report.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney and supporting staff. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 10.45 with examination of the estimates for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General portfolio area. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 10.31 am to 10.46 am.

 **CHAIR:** Before we commence, at the conclusion leave was sought to table the government's response to the victims inquiry. During the break, the committee has accepted that. The hearing is resumed. Welcome back, Attorney-General, acting director-general and other officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General portfolio. I hand over either to the member for Clayfield or the deputy chair.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Chair. Unfortunately, time was against me. Attorney-General, the question is for you instead of the Public Trustee, which I am sure the Public Trustee is glad about. In terms of the Public Trustee, the fees and charges review was released last October and a freeze was announced in the annual indexation of fees. Will that indexation be lifted and when will the charges regime be altered as recommended by the review and report that was put forward?

Mrs D'ATH: Yes, there was a body of work done in relation to reviewing the fees and charges. Consideration is being given to the significant recommendations around not just what the fees and charges should be but how the public trustee is funded and its community service obligations. There is significant work to be done in this space. We did put in place a moratorium for 12 months to those fees and charges as a consequence of consideration and understanding the cost of living and hardship if those fees were increased. I can advise that that moratorium has been extended for 12 months while we continue to do that work.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Attorney. On 15 March your predecessor announced several reviews into the Public Trustee following significant allegations in a *Four Corners* report. Can you advise if those reviews have been finished and, if yes, Attorney, the former attorney-general stated in parliament she would table the findings of the internal reviews. Will you consider doing the same?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to take that on notice as to where those internal reviews are at. If the former attorney-general committed to releasing those—where obviously there will be confidential information in there—so a summary of those—that commitment stands. I will need to check where those internal reviews are in relation to those matters. I think they went particularly to issues raised around guardianship.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. I think Mr Forbes Smith, the former ombudsman, undertook one of them and Mr Andrew Brown, the former health ombudsman, undertook the other one.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, I am sorry to interrupt. Before you go on, I would like to welcome to our estimates hearing students from Corinda State School.

Mr NICHOLLS: Attorney, have you received any written advice or recommendations from the Public Trustee Advisory and Monitoring Board in its role?

Mrs D'ATH: Not that I am aware of in the time since I have resumed the role of Attorney-General. I am happy to check the department's records to see whether there are any briefs in the system, but I do not recall seeing one from the board in the nine weeks or so that I have been back in this role.

Mr NICHOLLS: Further on that, I have been contacted—as have a number of my colleagues—by people seeking to contact the Public Trustee Advisory and Monitoring Board. By way of background, I went onto the website for the Public Trustee yesterday and onto the Department of Justice and Attorney-General website and could not find any contact details. Can members of the public have any access to the board to convey any concerns that they may have?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to follow that up. I do not think it is something that needs to be taken on notice, but I am happy to pass that information back to the Public Trustee Office and also to the board to make sure there are contact details available for people. Obviously the board is there to oversee the Public Trustee, but, understanding the importance of boards and being aware of information, they should be able to be contacted by the public. I will certainly pass on that recommendation that they make sure those details are publicly available.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you. Can I ask the acting director-general a question in the similar vein? Section 117ZZA of the Public Trustee Act requires a report to be provided by the advisory board 'as soon as reasonably practicable' after the financial year. It is now 40 days since the end of the financial year. Are you aware whether the board has submitted its report?

Ms Joldic: In the nine weeks that I have been in the role I have attended almost three meetings. I say 'almost' because I had to delay my attendance at the third meeting. At this stage we have not provided a report to the Attorney-General.

Mr NICHOLLS: Acting Director-General, 'as soon as reasonably practicable'. Do you have any indication of how long that is?

Ms Joldic: At this stage, I do not know the answer to that question. I will be talking to the chair and members of the board around the provision of the report.

Mr NICHOLLS: Attorney-General, is the commencement of criminal proceedings for breaches of legislation—wherever that may be in Australia—a disqualifying event for commissioners of inquiries or for appointees to government supervisory panels such as advisory boards, implementation panels or similar? Do you have any concerns about any current members of such boards or panels?

Mrs D'ATH: I find part of that question to be hypothetical—that is, in relation to possible criminal charges on any matter in relation to chairing any inquiry or anything of that nature. I do not believe that is a question that can be answered. If anyone has any allegations or any issues in relation to anyone who is currently in any of those roles then that should be brought to the attention of the government to consider the circumstances in relation to the individual and whatever offences are being referred to.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. I am not saying 'if this occurs', which would be hypothetical. I will clarify for the Attorney. I am asking: what are the disqualifying events in relation to the appointment to boards? For example, if you were appointed to the local sports board or some other panel or board there is often a range of qualifications in legislation or otherwise. In that sense, is the commencement of criminal proceedings for breaches of legislation a disqualifying event for commissioners of inquiries or similar?

Mrs D'ATH: The question is so broad. The member is asking me about boards or bodies that would be outside my portfolio as well. You just gave an example which may be outside of my portfolio—other than regulation of not-for-profit organisations and so forth. If you are asking across government, I cannot answer the question across government. If you are asking whether there are any specific criteria under any particular legislation for any particular board in my portfolio, again, I would have to look at the board and the statute that sits underneath that board or any other regulation that sits with that to look at what the criteria is. Obviously it is serious if someone is charged with a criminal offence so, of course, it would be taken into account. Whether it is a statutory criteria that prohibits someone being on a board, I could not answer.

Mr NICHOLLS: Let us move on. Acting Director-General, what updates is the department receiving from the DPP on the process to identify cases impacted by the forensic lab debacle?

Ms Joldic: Forensic Science Queensland, the Queensland Police Service, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the judiciary are working collaboratively to investigate options to streamline the analysis processes to minimise impacts on the courts and cases currently on foot. The DPP also currently sits on the Forensic Science Queensland advisory board, as do other eminent members.

Mr NICHOLLS: Acting Director-General, are you aware of the number of cases and has it been reported to you the number of cases to date that have been reviewed? If so, what proportion are being submitted for further testing?

Ms Joldic: It has not been reported to me and I am not aware of the number.

Mr NICHOLLS: Acting Director-General, is that something that you believe the department should be pursuing?

Ms Joldic: What I can say is that additional funding has been provided to the DPP through the 2023-24 budget—an amount of \$3.8 million—in order to deal with those issues.

Mr NICHOLLS: Acting Director-General, you say \$3.8 million?

Ms Joldic: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is that the cost for the DPP? Have you estimated the cost for the DPP in undertaking the review?

Ms Joldic: The funding that has been provided to the DPP is \$3.8 million.

Mr NICHOLLS: We have read in the media and had recent reports that the time frame is a few years to get through the impacted cases. Can you provide us with any greater clarity or detail about the time frame to go through the cases that are being reviewed?

Ms Joldic: As I mentioned earlier, the DPP, Forensic Science Queensland and the Queensland Police Service are working collaboratively to make sure that the processes are as streamlined as possible. In relation to FSQ, that is a matter for the health portfolio. What I can say is that Forensic Science Queensland, the QPS and the Director of Public Prosecutions are working collaboratively to streamline the processes as much as possible to ensure the impact on victims is as minimal as possible.

Mr NICHOLLS: FSQ obviously has its obligations, but there is obviously going to be an impact on courts as these matters go through. Do you have any indication of the impact that the review of cases and subsequent actions will have on court delays or court timing?

Ms Joldic: Not at this stage. As I mentioned earlier, it is important that we do work collaboratively to streamline the processes to ensure the impacts are as minimal as possible.

Mr NICHOLLS: What I would really like to know ‘collaboratively’ is the answers to my questions, rather than the same answer three times. What work is DJAG undertaking to prepare for the creation of the Queensland forensic science institute and what are the current expected time frames for that to happen?

Ms Joldic: We are working—

Mr NICHOLLS: I am sure you are working collaboratively.

Ms Joldic: We are working collaboratively with Queensland Health in terms of the planning process including policy and legislation—what the future FSQ will look like. I am confident that it is on the public record that FSQ would be transitioning to the JAG portfolio as of 1 July 2024.

Mr NICHOLLS: You are working on 1 July 2024.

Ms Joldic: That is the time frame we are working towards.

Mr NICHOLLS: You will have the infrastructure in place in order to accommodate that change?

Ms Joldic: That is what we are working towards.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can I ask a couple of questions to the acting director-general in relation to The Star casino? Acting Director-General, has the investigation into the alleged criminal associations of one of the key backers of the Queen’s Wharf casino development Chow Tai Fook been completed?

Ms Joldic: The investigation is ongoing. The report is expected to be finalised in the next three months. That will inform the government’s position and actions regarding anything going forward.

Mr NICHOLLS: Other than OLGR, can you advise who else is undertaking or assisting in the undertaking of that investigation?

Ms Joldic: I am not aware of anyone else undertaking the investigation. The investigation is undertaken by OLGR.

Mr NICHOLLS: OLGR have not contracted with anyone else to assist in carrying out that investigation—for example, forensic accounting specialists or special investigative bodies?

Ms Joldic: I will need to seek advice whether OLGR has contracted anyone else to assist with the investigation.

Mr NICHOLLS: In the meantime, you say the report is being finalised. Have you received an update about those investigations from OLGR? Is there anything in that update that causes you concern in relation to the ongoing operations of Star and the Queen's Wharf casino?

Ms Joldic: As the acting director-general, it is prudent of me to make sure that I am being briefed, and I do receive regular updates from my deputies including the deputy director-general for OLGR. If the Attorney is comfortable, I would not mind calling Ms Victoria Thomson to provide a response to that question.

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy for that to occur, Chair.

Mr NICHOLLS: She is not on the list, so I have to go through a fairly convoluted process—but I get there. Welcome, Deputy Director-General. I am sure you were listening intently to my previous question to the acting director-general. Can you provide an update and are there any matters of concern arising out of the investigation by OLGR to date that affect the ongoing operations of Star and the development of the Queen's Wharf casino and associated facilities?

Ms Thomson: The first part of the question was in relation to the investigation. As the acting director-general quite rightly pointed out, that investigation is ongoing. I can advise that OLGR has indeed secured the services of a specialist firm to assist us with those investigations which are ongoing. Obviously, being an ongoing investigation, I am not in a position to provide details around that. As the acting director-general also pointed out correctly, that investigation report is scheduled to be ready within the next three months.

Mr NICHOLLS: Through the Attorney and the acting director-general to the deputy director-general, how long has this operation been ongoing? Can you advise the name of the firm assisting you in that investigation?

Ms Thomson: The firm engaged is PKF Integrity services. They are very well credentialed to conduct the type of suitability and forensic examination to which the member refers. That engagement commenced in December 2022.

Mr NICHOLLS: What is the duration of the investigation? That was the first part of my question. How long has it been going, not just PKF? Has it been going since December 2022 or had OLGR started prior to engaging PKF?

Ms Thomson: Obviously with the issue around Chow Tai Fook which was raised in the media OLGR undertook some preliminary investigations but sought the need to engage specialist services. In terms of the time frames, casino inquiries and investigations have been ongoing within OLGR since the nationwide stories around both Crown and The Star came into the public arena. Our investigations have been ongoing since that time right across our casino environment. I think it would also be fair to say that the OLGR did an investigation into the suitability of all of the Queen's Wharf partners back in 2015. Again, it is not at one point in time. It is an ongoing process.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you for that answer, Deputy Director-General. Is it the case that OLGR commenced this current investigation following the media reports by I think it was the ABC at that time in relation Chow Tai Fook?

Ms Thomson: That would be correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: What recommendations is OLGR able to make in relation to divestment should it be the case that Chow Tai Fook is found to have a criminal association? How does OLGR propose monitoring the associations in the future?

Ms Thomson: I might take that question in reverse order. One of the amendments that has already been made in the casino space through the legislative amendments that went through the House with the casino reforms was to enable the regulator to engage expertise and to be able to ensure that that expertise is paid for by the casino operators. As a regulator that then gives us the opportunity to secure the specialist services that we need. The casino environment is incredibly complex and every now and then regulators—and this is nothing remarkable in terms of the way that regulators operate—need to seek those specialist resources. That has already been in place and has been used by OLGR to date.

In terms of where we may go with the suitability assessment, like all matters, that will be put into a report with our findings. That will be a matter for government in due course in terms of what they may wish to determine a disciplinary process or any other conditions on the licence or, indeed, any other actions that they may wish to take.

Mr NICHOLLS: In terms of divestment, as I understand the legislation it requires divestment for criminal associates. Am I correct in that regard?

Ms Thomson: I would have to take that particular question on notice and have someone refer to the exact legislation for me.

Mr NICHOLLS: No worries. You are confident that the measures the OLGR will have in place for Star at Queen's Wharf when it opens will be enough to mitigate the ongoing risks around having Chow Tai Fook still linked to the project—if it is?

Ms Thomson: As the committee may be aware, the government had Mr Gotterson KC conduct an extensive review into Star's operations here in Queensland. The review made 12 recommendations, one of which has already been implemented, which was the appointment of the special manager, Mr Nick Weeks, who has been working extensively with the OLGR and NICC in New South Wales, which is the independent casino commission down there, on a range of work. This includes matters around remediation, looking at things like governance and accountability.

The other thing I will say in relation to the opening of Queen's Wharf and Mr Gotterson's review is that the government has accepted in principle the other 11 recommendations Mr Gotterson made. When those recommendations are implemented they will further bolster our regulatory powers and controls, which seek to minimise the risk of the behaviour we saw not only from Star but also from Crown and the risks they did not manage from being repeated. Some of those recommendations are things like the introduction of carded play and ongoing suitability reviews of all casino operators which, until now, OLGR has not had the benefit of. They will put us, as regulator, in a much stronger position to oversight casino operators.

CHAIR: Before we go on, Attorney, are you happy to take on notice the question that the director-general referred?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to take it on notice, although I note that the question is just what the legislation provides for. As members of parliament we should be able to look up the legislation ourselves, but I will take that on notice.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, I am conscious of the time. Do you have many more questions?

Mr NICHOLLS: I have many, many more questions, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: I do not want to put a leash on you.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am sure you would not try, Chair. How much time do we have?

CHAIR: You have gone over, but I was going to go to the member for Noosa.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy to defer.

Ms BOLTON: Attorney, turning to efforts to reduce family and domestic violence, in a situation, for example, where a suspected perpetrator is admitted to hospital after an altercation in the family home and hospital staff cannot hold that person under either a mental health order or for drug issues, is there anything mandatory in place such as staff having to report to police to make them aware this person is being released?

Mrs D'ATH: Obviously I cannot speak to the procedures within hospitals. That would be a question that would go to the Minister for Health. I can confirm that my department works very closely with agencies like Queensland Health. Speaking generally, hospital staff are in a unique and challenging position when it comes to the situations the member is discussing. The staff's primary duty, of course, is to care for the patient and the health circumstances they are responding to. However, if hospital staff do suspect that a patient may be a risk to others if released, they should certainly contact QPS, and they can do that. I think we can always do more in this space. I am happy to discuss this further with the health minister and the member, remembering that it is people's confidential information. We certainly have other circumstances and obligations—for example, because of cases we have seen around child abuse—where it is required to be notified to police. These are discussions that we can have on an ongoing basis to see what more we can be doing. You have already pointed to a couple of important areas, which is what the health system can do in relation to mental health or drug and alcohol issues.

Ms BOLTON: Obviously I cannot speak about it because it is in the judicial realm now, but I am referring to the release of somebody who then became a risk and created a situation. There was no mechanism within the hospital system with regard to the mandatory reporting of their concerns of that

risk. I understand what you are saying insofar as that is for hospitals. In terms of working with the Minister for Health, I am trying to understand what could be put in place to ensure that, when hospital staff are concerned and there is no mechanism to hold someone, all staff know the process as part of the alert.

Mrs D'ATH: As I say, if hospital staff suspect that a patient may be a risk to others if released they could contact the police. It is something that I am happy to continue to discuss with Queensland Health and QPS. As we know, there would not be a process where Queensland Health would be the appropriate body or authority to hold onto someone beyond assisting them with their health needs. That is not where someone should be detained. If police need to intervene and whether police should be taking someone into custody is something we can continue to have dialogue with Queensland Health and QPS about in terms of whether that should occur, in what circumstances that might occur and how that would occur.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you. I have no further questions, Chair.

CHAIR: Before I hand over to the member for Caloundra, I would like to welcome the second group of students from Corinda State Primary School. Welcome to our estimates hearing.

Mr HUNT: Attorney-General, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, could you please outline what the government is doing to assist Queenslanders fleeing domestic and family violence situations to have access to safe housing?

Mrs D'ATH: The government is committed to ensuring that every person fleeing domestic and family violence can have access to safe emergency housing, because domestic and family violence should not be a reason for homelessness. We know that individuals with children on occasion make the decision to stay in a domestic situation that is violent or controlling because of the fear of not knowing where to go. It would be a shock to me if members were not aware of cases in their own communities where some victims, predominantly women, feel the need to live in a car to flee that violence. When children are involved the decision around the suitability of doing that becomes harder, and that is why decisions are made to stay in those relationships when it is unsafe.

I am very pleased to say that in last year's budget there was funding, and in this year's budget there is \$38.8 million per annum being invested in specialist homelessness services. This funding goes to 47 organisations already operating across Queensland that are delivering 103 specialist homelessness services across Queensland including 54 shelter refuges, 35 mobile support services and 14 centre-based support services. Under this government we have built eight new shelters in Queensland. In fact, there had not been a new shelter in 20 years before we did that. We are delivering new social housing and there are a range of programs already underway to support victim-survivors into safe long-term accommodation such as flexible assistance packages, Helping Hand Headlease and brokerage.

There are also programs under national partnership agreements. I am pleased to announce today that, through a national partnership agreement with the Commonwealth, the Palaszczuk government has been allocated \$8 million in funding to co-design and pilot a new crisis accommodation model that will integrate support for victim-survivors to exit temporary accommodation and independently sustain tenancies in South-East Queensland. The importance of this is that it is one thing to get them into emergency accommodation, but that emergency accommodation is for a temporary period of time because of the volume of women needing to come and that accommodation is not suitable for long-term accommodation, especially with children. This pilot will see three teams of nine specialist workers, known as housing connectors, operating across South-East Queensland. They will have knowledge of both domestic and family violence and the housing systems, working to help improve housing outcomes for victim-survivors with complex and diverse needs. It is targeting the most vulnerable. I know that all domestic and family violence victim-survivors are vulnerable, but particularly cohorts are even more complex and are more at risk because of other diverse needs.

The housing connector roles will be embedded into existing domestic and family violence services so we are not having to wait for new providers to establish. They will take this work on and they will work one-on-one with victim-survivors to actively manage their safety and assist them in navigating the housing and human services systems and finding suitable and sustainable housing and support referrals. They will utilise the strong networks they have across the service system, alongside their knowledge of local referral pathways, to ensure an integrated service response for victim-survivors. It is anticipated these roles will commence in October this year, with an evaluation of the pilot to be undertaken in 2024 to capture the outcomes of the project and form future policy and planning.

Unprecedented pressure on the housing market has highlighted the importance of finding innovative solutions to support Queenslanders experiencing domestic and family violence to find safe and sustainable housing. The government is committed to working across governments to find solutions. I want to acknowledge and thank the Commonwealth for their partnership in this pilot. I think it will make a real difference in getting women out of emergency accommodation and into more permanent, sustainable accommodation.

Ms BUSH: Remaining with domestic and family violence, Attorney-General, can you outline how the 2023-24 budget will strengthen responses focused on domestic and family violence perpetrators?

Mrs D'ATH: That question goes a bit to the member for Noosa's question around the work we are doing around perpetrator programs. As a society, we still have a long way to go to change the culture of controlling and violent behaviour by individuals towards those who are supposed to be their loved ones. Our work to end domestic, family and sexual violence not only needs to focus on keeping victims safe and holding people using violence accountable; it needs to stop violence from happening and escalating in the first place. We know that, if we assist a victim now, we assist that one person and potentially their children from harm but that perpetrator can go on and create other victims. If we deal with the perpetrator, we are saving multiple victims in that action. To quote Dame Quentin Bryce from her foreword in the *Not now, not ever* report—

It is beholden upon all of us—every single citizen of this diverse, vibrant state—to take a stand against domestic and family violence; to commit to protecting the vulnerable; and to make it clear to those who would hurt another, within a relationship of intimacy and trust, that we will not tolerate, excuse, condone or accept their behaviour.

The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce made a number of recommendations focused on how we can better respond to persons using violence to control others. As part of our \$363 million package committed to implement the response of report 1, \$25.5 million over four years and \$4.4 million ongoing has been allocated to perpetrator intervention related reforms. In this year's budget \$15.3 million has been allocated to the implementation of perpetrator programs. This is an increase of 35 per cent compared to the 2022-23 budget. This includes additional funding of \$3 million per annum for mainstream perpetrator intervention services to meet increased demand. A further \$1 million has been allocated for the development of a perpetrator risk assessment tool and workforce attraction and recruitment initiatives to employ and retain the skilled workers needed to deliver perpetrator intervention programs.

Today I can advise that our government is commencing consultation to inform a standalone domestic and family violence perpetrator strategy. That consultation paper will come out very shortly to develop that strategy. The strategy will further strengthen and guide a whole-of-government approach to preventing and responding to persons using violence. We want to ensure our strategy is evidence based and considers all responses to persons using violence. This strategy will be the first of its kind in Australia focusing on perpetrators. We intend to release the strategy following consultation by the end of this year. The development of a domestic and family violence perpetrator strategy is another important step forward and something many in the sector have been calling for.

We must modernise and improve our approach to protecting victims, but by also focusing on perpetrator responses we can work together towards preventing future victims of domestic, family and sexual violence. Having talked to a number of DV providers in this state, I am particularly interested in how we help those who are self-referring—particularly men who are coming forward to DVConnect and others and actually saying, 'I think I need help. Where can I get it?' We need to get programs to those individuals as quickly as possible.

Mr HUNT: Attorney, still on page 2 of the SDS, could you please advise what the Palaszczuk government is doing to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to end domestic, family and sexual violence, especially around perpetrators?

Mrs D'ATH: Building on and adding to what I have just said about the broader work around perpetrators and our strategy, there is no doubt that we need a particular focus around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because of their overrepresentation in relation to both the perpetrators and also the victim-survivors. We have a number of strategies working in unison to bring an end to domestic, family and sexual violence. There simply is not a one-size-fits-all solution to this insidious social problem, but that is why we are delivering a comprehensive program of reforms. This includes additional funding for a program that is specifically tailored to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence. The government is providing \$1.552 million over the next three years in additional funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's support

services as part of an increased investment in perpetrator intervention programs to tackle domestic and family violence across the state. This funding will provide culturally appropriate support to men aged over 16 years to address concerns related to their use of violence.

We are increasing investment and strengthening Queensland's existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's support services in remote locations, including Kowanyama, Napranum, Wujal Wujal, Mapoon, Yarrabah, Lockhart River, Mornington Island, Pormpuraaw and the Northern Peninsula Area. The commitments form part of the broader government's response in relation to recommendation 27 from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report 1. That recommendation involves working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to design a community-led project to pilot perpetrator programs. These programs will be specifically tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and embed a healing approach that is connected to culture, community and country.

Further initiatives will look at solutions to reduce the disproportionate rate of First Nations women as victims of domestic, family and sexual violence as well as accused persons. We need to break the pattern of behaviour that can lead to domestic and family violence. It will take a community effort to end this violence. That means governments working with stakeholders and support service providers, who in turn are partnering with the Queensland community to change our attitudes about violence and control, particularly towards women, and what respectful relationships should look like.

Ms BUSH: With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General outline the progress made by the Queensland government in implementing the reform program set out by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce during 2022-23 and the focus areas for the years ahead?

Mrs D'ATH: It shows the volume of work we are doing in this space because there is so much to talk about and there are so many areas to look at. Coming out of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce we have made strong progress, as detailed in our first annual report recently tabled in parliament. Our government has made significant progress to improve the experiences of women within the criminal justice system, holding perpetrators to account and criminalising coercive control. We invested \$588 million from 2022 through to 2026-27 to address 277 recommendations detailed in task force reports 1 and 2. The government has committed this funding to enable the systemic changes needed to address domestic, family and sexual violence. However, as I said in my response to a previous question, as a society we still have a long way to go to change the culture of controlling and violent behaviour by individuals towards those they are supposed to love. We need more respectful relationships, helping victims and perpetrators to recognise the signs of domestic, family and sexual violence early. We also need an improved community understanding of domestic, family and sexual violence so that ultimately all of us can prevent the harm in the first place.

Over the past 12 months we have passed legislation to amend existing laws to better respond to coercive control. Those laws commenced on 1 August this year, so they have just commenced. We established an independent commission of inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence, which made 78 recommendations, supported in principle by the Palaszczuk government. We have announced three new high-risk team locations in Rockhampton, Townsville and Redlands as well as delivered a funding increase to existing high-risk teams. We have launched the co-responder trial involving the Queensland Police Service and specialist services in Cairns. We have commenced new specialist domestic and family violence courts in Brisbane and Cairns and provided more funding to men's behaviour-change programs, which I have talked about.

This coming year, our government will continue to focus on implementing task force recommendations, including introducing legislation to criminalise coercive control, releasing a new primary prevention plan, delivering a trauma informed domestic and family violence training framework to support the training of professionals, finalising a primary prevention campaign to increase community awareness of sexual violence and the importance of affirmative consent, and developing a whole-of-government five-year investment plan.

I also know that our hardworking domestic, family and sexual violence service providers are dealing with an increase in demand for services. That is why this year's budget includes an additional \$58.3 million over four years and then \$20.7 million per year ongoing to address gaps in domestic, family and sexual violence service provision to meet the increasing demand in the sector. I would like to take this opportunity to thank victim-survivors, advocates and specialist services who are taking this journey with us for the work that they do each and every day. Thank you.

CHAIR: Before I move on, I would like to welcome Ms Amanda Camm MP, member for Whitsunday, who has joined us.

Ms BUSH: In relation to page 5 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General outline what investments have been and will be undertaken to modernise Queensland's courts and in particular our specialist domestic and family violence courts?

Mrs D'ATH: We have talked about programs supporting service providers, but we also need to make sure, especially in my portfolio, that our justice system—the courts—are fit for purpose in dealing with domestic and family violence across the system. Our courts are amongst the busiest in the nation, recording the second highest number of criminal lodgements in Australia in 2021-22 across all criminal courts. To ensure Queenslanders continue to have access to efficient and timely justice services, this year's budget has committed \$34 million over four years and \$8.8 million per annum to address sustained growth in demand in the criminal justice system, particularly in the District Court.

Furthermore, as part of our continued response to domestic and family violence and the Queensland Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce reports, the government has committed to a range of domestic and family violence courthouse capital upgrades to support enhanced delivery of domestic and family violence services at selected locations. With that uptake in the District Court, I should also say that we are appointing three extra District Court judges—the largest increase that the District Court has seen in decades. I am really proud that we are expanding the District Court with regard to appointments.

Our specialist domestic and family violence courts were first trialled as a result of the *Not now, not ever* report in 2015. I do not need to tell everyone the success of those specialist courts. The evaluations speak for themselves about why we not only embedded it as business as usual but also have expanded it since. We now have specialist DV courts in Southport, Beenleigh, Townsville, Mount Isa and Palm Island, with two new courts commenced, as I said before, in Brisbane and Cairns. This model ensures victim-survivors attending court can have confidence the experience will not further traumatise them.

We also have specialist courts, including dedicated magistrates, specialist duty lawyers and prosecutors, as well as skilled registry staff, and a range of support services which are located on site. They have dedicated facilities and infrastructure, such as a separate registry from the rest of the courts, separate interview rooms and safe rooms where victim-survivors can wait. There are a number of safe rooms that also accommodate children. These courts also have separate entrances to the courtroom so the victim-survivor can feel safe.

We know how important the specialist DV court model is and, as I say, the evaluation report showed the benefit of having these courts. Our focus on this model was further reinforced in the 2022-23 budget when we commenced a dedicated \$49.1 million to the domestic and family violence courthouse improvement program, along with increased recurrent minor capital works funding for much needed equipment upgrades and functional improvement works. These improvements will continue to be rolled out this financial year, with many key projects progressing into the construction phase. As outlined in my answer to prehearing question on notice 4, we are accommodating domestic and family violence courthouse improvements across eight courthouses including Brisbane Magistrates Court, Cairns, Caboolture, Ipswich, Mackay, Maroochydore, Rockhampton and Toowoomba courthouses.

Furthermore, this year's budget includes \$6.5 million over four years to improve court management of sexual offence cases. This includes for the consideration of a specialist list and to design and implement a pilot of voluntary case conferencing model in sexual violence cases in the District Court of Queensland to identify opportunity for courts to improve efficiency and timeliness and to explore options to provide information to judicial officers and lawyers in the Supreme and District courts of Queensland regarding the laws and procedures for sexual violence cases. It is important that our courts make victim-survivors feel safe. That is why we will continue to modernise our courts to ensure they are trauma informed and provide support for victim-survivors.

Mr NICHOLLS: Attorney-General, it is reported today that the government no longer supports a clearing house, which was one of 14 recommendations made by Professor Coaldrake, on the basis that it is unviable financially and technologically. Can you advise whether you have given any advice as Attorney-General with respect to the clearing house and why the government no longer supports recommendation No. 14?

Mrs D'ATH: In relation to whether I have given advice since taking over the role as Attorney-General in late May in relation to this matter, no, I have not been asked to or proactively provided advice on that. In relation to the recommendation itself, that is a question to be put to the Premier, not me, as I am not directly responsible for the consideration or implementation of the recommendation.

Mr NICHOLLS: Attorney, in your role, though, in terms of being responsible for the Crime and Corruption Commission and, as you have said many times, dealing with criminal and corruption matters, and in your role as a member of the government that makes that decision, is it your view that the clearing house is no longer a requirement and should no longer be supported as a recommendation of Professor Coaldrake's?

CHAIR: That is seeking an opinion, in my view. Member for Clayfield, would you like to rephrase the question?

Mr NICHOLLS: No. I am happy to move on, Mr Chair. Mr Chair, I want to touch on a matter that has been raised with me, with the Attorney-General. Attorney, I have had contact this week from Shayne Probert, one of Doreen Langham's daughters. She has said that, while she has contacted your office a number of times since you were reappointed to the position of Attorney-General for a meeting, both by phone and by email, she is yet to have a response. Can you advise why you have not contacted Ms Probert and will you do so?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to follow up on any contact with my office and communication and make sure that my office has communicated back to the individual, although I think I recall that I was the one who sought a reopening of this investigation in the first place when I was previously attorney-general. A coroner's report has been issued in relation to this matter as a consequence of that request by me. That report has been conveyed to the family. I understand the family might not—

Mr NICHOLLS: I hesitate to interrupt. Ms Langham was a victim of domestic violence—

Mrs D'ATH: Yes, I understand that.

Mr NICHOLLS:—and there was a coronial report that was done as part and parcel of it. I do not know if it needed to be reopened; I think it was undertaken as part of the investigation at the time.

Mrs D'ATH: My apologies. As I say, I may be getting my coronial inquests confused, so I might just check with my office about any communication and whether we have responded. If we have not, I am more than happy to make sure that we have responded in relation to any requests for meetings.

Mr NICHOLLS: Just quickly, Attorney, it has been four years since you sought advice about reopening the inquest into the death of Jeffrey Brooks. You may recall that matter.

Mrs D'ATH: I do.

Mr NICHOLLS: The hearing was scheduled for February this year but was postponed due to the resignation of the coroner who was due to hear that case. It was scheduled again for July and it has once again been postponed. Can you do anything, and how much longer will the Brooks family have to wait for this inquiry to be conducted given it is now over four years since the instruction to reopen was given?

Mrs D'ATH: Yes, I certainly recall that request to reopen that matter. I think at the time I acknowledged and thanked the journalist involved in shining a light on the information that showed that there could be new evidence or the matter did deserve further consideration. In relation to the timing of coronial inquests and who is conducting that coronial inquest by the Coroners Court, obviously those are matters for the Coroners Court. It is not for me to interfere with the courts and the timing of any particular matter.

What I can say, however, because you talked about the resignation which really goes to pressures on our Coroners Court, is that pressure is recognised and in this year's budget we have provided additional funding. We have provided \$18.9 million over four years and \$5.8 million per annum ongoing to meet the community's expectations of comprehensive and timely coronial investigations. That has led to three new coroners being appointed. That is how we are trying to deal with those pressures and the timeliness of coronial matters. As I say, I cannot direct the coroners on any particular matter, but what I can do is give them the funding and the bodies to help them deal with demand pressures.

Mrs GERBER: May we pass to the member for Whitsundays?

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms CAMM: My question to start with is actually to the acting director-general. In regards to the recommendations to establish a domestic violence peak body, can the acting director-general advise how much has been spent on consultancy to date and what is further budgeted in association with establishing that peak body?

Ms Joldic: I thank the member for the question. If you give me a moment I will seek that detail for you. Rather than wasting your time while we seek the detail, with the Attorney's permission, I will seek to come back to you at the end of the session on that.

Mrs D'ATH: In relation to taking that matter on notice, if I understand, the question is about any spend on consultancies in relation to the allocation of funding by the department in doing work to establish the peak body. We do not break down the hours of staff that are directly employed as part of business as usual in implementing recommendations, but if the question is in relation to consultancies I am happy to take that on notice.

Ms CAMM: Thank you. It was in relation to consultancy, not departmental hours. Also what is the time frame expected before we will have a peak body in place? Are you able to advise that?

Ms Joldic: Can you give me one moment please? I am confident that the department is currently working and funding has been provided for the establishment of the peak body. In terms of the time frame, I might need to seek some advice for a moment. As I mentioned, consultation has been undertaken with the domestic and family violence stakeholders to inform the model for a Queensland domestic and family violence peak body. We are working towards the establishment of the peak body by the end of this calendar year.

Ms CAMM: Thank you. I have a question now to the minister. Stakeholders across the domestic violence sector have expressed to me that they have contributed significant hours in providing up to seven years of data for an investment review into the sector that was being conducted by QTC that demonstrates an increase of 30 per cent in demand for services. This is without the introduction of coercive control. Is the minister aware of such a review and has that review gone to cabinet?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. Yes, I am aware of the QTC review. Obviously I cannot comment on matters that may or may not have gone to cabinet; they are covered by cabinet confidentiality. What I can advise is that in 2022 in partnership with Queensland Treasury Corporation the department undertook a detailed examination of demand and needs for domestic and family violence services across Queensland to inform future funding priorities and strengthen the investment approach across the sector.

The member rightly identifies the significant work that our service providers have put in to contribute not just to that body of work but in all of the recommendations that we are implementing through the various reports. As a result, the government has provided increased funding of \$58.3 million over four years and beyond that, \$20.7 million per annum ongoing to address gaps in domestic, family and sexual violence service provision to meet the increasing demand in the sector. There was investment this year in recognition of that QTC work.

The review identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services make up the overwhelming majority of the gap followed by prevention, capacity building and awareness, women's health and wellbeing services, and centre-based mobile support. There is funding going to those areas as part of last year's budget but also this year's budget particularly looking at those gaps and how we may address those. In part, it is \$29.8 million over four years from this year and \$11.2 million ongoing from 2027-28. This is an increase to the existing service enhancement funding of \$7.5 million per annum by \$3.7 million per annum for domestic, family and sexual violence. There has been an increase in that funding. There has been an additional \$28.5 million over three years from 2024-25 and \$9.5 million ongoing from 2027-28 to uplift existing funding for the DV services sector to address gaps in service coverage, particularly in regional areas.

In conjunction we now have funding indexation for existing ongoing services. This increased funding will provide relief for rising costs resulting in the tight labour markets and high inflation environment currently. The funding is allocated on a permanent basis, so no-one should underestimate the significance of that. A lot of government funding for organisations have in the past been annual or for two or three years. We have extended our DV funding to every five years and permanent ongoing funding to fund those services. That gives certainty. I have met too many organisations over the years that have lost really good staff because they are facing a funding cliff and do not know until the next budget whether that funding is going to be continued. This is really important because they can build their workforce by giving them the confidence that there is sustained funding going forward.

Before the member arrived I talked in depth about a whole range of funding commitments we have made, but this is in part coming out of the QTC work that was done.

CHAIR: They are leaving now, but I welcome Nundah State School to our estimates hearing.

Mrs D'ATH: I know that the member for Clayfield has left, but he asked me when the Brooks inquest will be completed. The Brooks inquest findings were published on 13 June this year, so it has been completed.

Ms CAMM: Minister, has the QTC review been released publicly? If not, will it be?

Mrs D'ATH: No, the review has not been released publicly. It will not be released publicly because my understanding is that the work done by QTC not only went to various government agencies but also, as you said, went to private providers. It was done on the basis of asking them to basically open up their books and share confidential information about their costings and budgets to allow us to give consideration to what future funding should look like. That information was collected on the basis that it would be confidential and used to guide government on their funding commitments going forward.

In relation to the member's previous question that we took on notice on the funding of consultancy in relation to the establishment of a peak body, I can advise that the funding went to The Social Deck and they have received \$50,940.

Ms CAMM: The minister outlined the change in funding agreements. Just this week the Police Commissioner outlined and data was released around the significant increase in calls—up to 400 per day—strangulation up 30 per cent and almost a doubling in the last five years of DV offences. I quote the police minister's comments around the general increase in particular in the past 12 months. I note the minister's comments around funding. Is the minister aware that in this last financial year in Ipswich a frontline service had to make a staff member redundant because there was a lack of clarity around service agreements and funding?

Mrs D'ATH: Dealing with the specific question around a particular organisation, I have met with a number of providers from across the state who came together in Ipswich recently. I do not recall any of those bodies raising with me having to make a particular staff member redundant and the reasons for that. I am happy to go back and check whether that was brought to our attention in that meeting, but I do not recall them saying anything specifically in relation to uncertainty with state government funding.

What was raised in that meeting—it has been raised with me by individual providers—is some uncertainty around some funding under a national government program that I believe has led to the suspension or the ceasing of some services with some providers. That is federal government funding and we are working with the Commonwealth on that at the moment. We have not cut funding. We are giving five-year agreements, we have increased funding and we have guaranteed continued funding going forward in this year's budget. I am not aware of a redundancy in relation to an Ipswich provider that directly goes to uncertainty in relation to Queensland's funding.

Ms CAMM: Minister, you are increasing core funding for those key bodies across the state?

Mrs D'ATH: What we have said is that we are lifting up funding for a range of services. I have already gone through that in detail in relation to different services that are being provided. As the member is aware, there are a whole lot of different buckets of money that funding comes out of for domestic and family violence services. I will seek clarification from the deputy director-general in relation to the prevention of domestic and family violence services as to whether it is a base uplift or other uplift, but it is funding that is being increased in this year's budget. I will come back to the member specifically.

Ms CAMM: Thank you. The clarity I seek is around the core funding, the base funding.

CHAIR: I welcome back Mr Michael Berkman MP, the member for Maiwar.

Ms CAMM: With regard to the implementation supervisor, when did the government receive the biennial progress report No. 2?

Mrs D'ATH: I would have to go back and check when we received that. As the member knows, we have recently released the government's annual report to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations and the supervisor's report. I will have to go back and check the date of when I received it.

While the member for Maiwar is taking his seat, I can advise that there was an uplift of \$26.6 million in core funding in relation to domestic and family violence services.

Mr BERKMAN: Attorney-General, you would be well aware that the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce made it clear that survivors and victims of sexual violence continue to suffer every day because of an outdated legal framework. I understand that the former attorney-general had indicated that we would see additional law reform introduced this year, so I am seeking clarification of when the government will act on the task force recommendations and legislate affirmative consent in Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: I do not necessarily accept the premise of the question, but we are constantly improving and evolving with what we learn around domestic and family violence and the recommendations coming out of the various task force reports. As the member would be aware, legislation that was introduced last year commenced on 1 August this year—in the last week and a half. That sets the framework around coercive control and other provisions. We have committed to introducing the coercive control offence this year, and that is what we will be doing.

If I can return to the member for Whitsunday's question in relation to when we received the report, I am advised that the report was received on 5 May.

Mr BERKMAN: So that I can follow up—

Mrs D'ATH: The answer is that the next tranche of legislation is being introduced this year, as we committed to.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you.

Ms BOLTON: Attorney, previously you responded to the member for Cooper regarding new initiatives for emergency accommodations that include eight new shelters and some other things. Does the rollout date of October 2024 include construction?

Mrs D'ATH: No. My understanding is that the eight shelters are already constructed. We have established eight new shelters since we came to government. In terms of the other programs and the pilot that I talked about—the house connector—we are hoping that those new roles will start in October this year, with an evaluation in 2024 for those new roles.

Ms BOLTON: In amongst those new initiatives and in the budget, is there anything to address the ongoing issue of emergency accommodation? Over the weekend, from four o'clock on a Friday, we have only one service to address emergency accommodation—that is, the 1800 number. They cannot assist or provide any forms of accommodation—this is a constant. It is up to us to house and take in domestic and family violence victims. Is there anything that can alleviate the immediate situation at the moment?

Mrs D'ATH: We are working across government and with the housing minister in relation to what else we can do in both emergency short-term accommodation and also the longer term, which is what the house connectors are about. You are right: I think we all get individuals who come directly to us as members of parliament seeking assistance. Aside from the number that you talked about, I also have in my community organisations that provide support that assist with getting emergency accommodation. The department of housing also directly provides assistance to get emergency accommodation for women fleeing domestic and family violence.

Ms BOLTON: Just to confirm, that does not occur after four o'clock on a Friday, and a lot of those organisations are funded and created. We have a lot of organisations operational, but they seem to close at four o'clock on a Friday and I think it is that weekend period. Is there anything that is going to be done to uplift because it is often on a Friday night when there is big demand?

Mrs D'ATH: Sure. My understanding is DVConnect itself is a 24/7 line, so it does not shut down at 4 pm on a Friday afternoon. We do ask people who are seeking assistance, both victims and perpetrators, in relation to domestic and family violence to ring DVConnect. That will be the starting point to try to reach out to other services that can assist. I am not saying that we have all of the answers yet. There are a lot of recommendations. We have committed to implementing recommendations from the first report of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce over four years which started last year. We have a second report with many recommendations and there is a lot more work to be done and so I am not in any way indicating that the job is finished, but we do encourage people to ring that DVConnect line for that reason.

Ms BOLTON: They do, but the problem is there is nowhere for them to even send them. With that, to finish, in those shelters is there anything for the northern Sunshine Coast within the Noosa region, because we are just absolutely desperate?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to follow up on the eight shelters, but I think the member was here when I read out earlier the funding injection going into a large number of service organisations for a whole lot of other services, including the refuges that they run, so the eight is not the total. I guess in asking the question whether there is anyone servicing that area, we are probably better off looking at across service providers, not just the eight particular new shelters that we talked about. I am being advised the shelters are in Brisbane, Townsville, Charters Towers, Coen, Roma, Caboolture and the Gold Coast for those particular new ones and Tingalpa is the final location. I should say, because I did, I think, answer before—it might have been to the member for Whitsunday—that all of them were established.

I am being advised that the Tingalpa one is the final location, but the capital was federal funding and state funding is covering operating costs. But I think they are established? They are? Okay, so they all are established. I do not know if my department can advise of all of the other private providers and what services they are providing in your particular area. I am being told we can take that on notice, so we will come back to you, member for Noosa.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr HUNT: Attorney-General, with reference to page 12 of the SDS and page 65 of Budget Paper 4, could you please outline the additional funding provided to ATSILS and the CLCs in Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: I want to acknowledge the very important work that both ATSILS and our community legal centres across Queensland do and contribute to our most vulnerable and disadvantaged Queenslanders. Not all members may be aware, but I certainly want to firstly acknowledge the demanding work of ATSILS, which is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, in terms of the staff and the work they undertake and their dedication to provide legal assistance and support to disadvantaged and vulnerable First Nations people in navigating what can be a rather complex justice system.

I am aware that ATSILS had to make some very difficult decisions over the last several months to withdraw services in some locations due to resourcing and staff shortages. This was very concerning and, as a result, \$9 million has been provided in this year's budget for ATSILS by the Queensland government. This funding is on top of the recently allocated Commonwealth one-off funding of \$21 million. The additional state funding will improve ATSILS's ability to attract and retain staff and to increase ATSILS's capacity to address existing demand and reduce workload pressures on staff.

I was a little bit surprised even myself coming from health back to Attorney-General that when we talk about staff shortages and workforce shortages just about every industry and occupation across this state and country, even the legal fraternity—and after talking to ATSILS and other community legal centres—are struggling to attract staff to their services and compete with wages and what is being offered out there, including our criminal lawyers, due to the demand of work that they face changing over and going to the commercial sector to get much higher rates. It is a challenging issue, especially for our CLCs and ATSILS to meet those and be competitive in that area, so that is what this funding is to help ATSILS do.

More broadly, the government is proud of its support for our community legal centres. I am aware that the staff and volunteers in these 32 centres across the state support people every day, many of whom are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community, and I want to thank them for their dedication. From 2020 to 2025 our community legal centres received \$80.7 million in funding, including just over \$15 million in this year's budget. This is on top of \$112.4 million in Commonwealth funding. This funding will ensure these centres and staff can continue their great work. In addition to the above, our government has committed to working with the Commonwealth and the states and territories on the upcoming review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-2025. This will provide us an opportunity to review the funding model to assess unmet legal need in the community. I think at every meeting I have ever had as Attorney-General across this country we have all discussed funding for Legal Aid and community legal centres and the pressures on them. The national partnership review will look at unmet legal need and demand particularly pertaining to the most disadvantaged communities, including those in regional and remote communities. This will also include an investigation of areas currently experiencing resource pressures, including the civil justice system.

The courts and legal systems are often daunting and overwhelming for non-lawyers. Those clients of community legal centres are those who are facing injustice, those with legal problems where it is not profitable and whose life circumstances are affected significantly by the problem. Having ready access to these centres, which are staffed by passionate lawyers who can provide clear advice on navigating our system, is critical to ensuring justice is done for all. Not only does it assist the individual; it streamlines court services so we can get more matters before the courts, because when people are self-represented in the courts that is when we see significant delays in matters because of their lack of legal knowledge.

Mr HUNT: Attorney-General, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, could you please outline what the First Nations Justice Officer will deliver for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples interacting with our justice system?

Mrs D'ATH: I am very proud that our government and our department's commitment to First Nations people in Queensland is unwavering. I acknowledge the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system and I understand the historical role the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in perpetrating these cycles of disadvantage and their involvement. The Palaszczuk government has a strong record of acknowledging the wrongs to our First Nations people in the past and is working towards righting those wrongs.

The First Nations Justice Office—the first one of its kind in our state, possibly the nation—was a recommendation of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce *Hear her voice* report 1 and addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland. I recognise that the establishment of the First Nations Justice Office is again just one important step towards reconciliation and meeting our obligations under the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap. I note that the First Nations Justice Office commenced engagement with community justice groups in June to co-design the whole-of-government and community strategy to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system.

I would like to recognise and commend Stephen Tillett as Queensland's inaugural First Nations Justice Officer appointed to lead this important work. A strong governance framework has been established to lead the Justice Policy Partnership work in Queensland, in partnership with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition, to deliver the commitments under the national agreement. I am proud to represent a government that is committed to achieving target 10 of the national agreement to reduce incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults by 15 per cent and target 11 to reduce detention rates of First Nations young people by 30 per cent by 2031. In saying there is a national target to reduce incarceration rates, that means actually turning people away from offending. It is not just about incarceration; it is about reducing offending rates as well. The First Nations Justice Office has been established within the context of our whole-of-government approach to co-designing culturally sensitive policies and services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stakeholders to better deliver on our commitment to Closing the Gap. This is an important component of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's capability to respond to the needs of First Nations Queenslanders engaging with the justice system.

As the member would know, the First Nations Justice Office represents \$9.3 million of funding over four years and \$2.3 million ongoing, with \$100,000 allocated for capital funding in 2022-23. Additionally, I draw the committee's attention to the government's allocation of \$2 million in funding and 10 FTEs in the 2023-24 budget to establish domestic and family violence as a key priority area of the First Nations Justice Office and to provide the resources for specialist capability, skills and experience required to tackle this important issue. To enable a dedicated focus on domestic and family violence as part of the First Nations Justice Office responsibilities—the re-established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Group—12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons have been appointed to provide expert advice, support and oversight of actions and initiatives that address First Nations domestic and family violence.

Finally, I am proud of the additional \$5 million investment over four years commencing in this year's budget to establish community-led, place-based justice reinvestment initiatives that will help address the underlying causes of youth crime and reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our justice system, complemented by \$81 million in funding from the Commonwealth.

Ms BUSH: In relation to page 74 of Budget Paper 4, can the Attorney-General outline the additional investment in and the success of Queensland's safe night precincts?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. I know that she has been a passionate advocate over many years in this space and I thank her for her advocacy and the work that we used to do together when she was in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The government continues to lead the way in reducing alcohol related violence in Queensland. I am seeing in the media over the last 24 hours that South Australia is considering whether they are going to continue their laws, but I am very proud that in 2016 we passed legislation that struck the right balance between tackling alcohol fuelled violence and maintaining our vibrant hospitality and tourism industry.

Although there was some opposition to the introduction of this legislation, our safe night precincts and initiatives have been successful in improving the overall safety of consumers across many of Queensland's night-life precincts. An independent evaluation of our government's Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Policy over a three-year period showed that the establishment of safe night precincts did not adversely impact businesses. Importantly, reduction in serious violence was achieved. For

example, there was a 49 per cent drop in the number of serious assaults between 3 am and 6 am on Friday and Saturday nights across Queensland, a 29 per cent reduction in ambulance callouts across safe night precincts between 3 am and 6 am, and no evidence of violence shifting to venues outside of the safe night areas.

More than \$4.5 million has been provided to safe night precinct initiatives since 2014. In the last period, the last 12 months—2022-23—\$737,311 of grants was provided to support important safety measures like taxi marshals and roving security services at Airlie Beach, Broadbeach, Bundaberg, Cairns, Fortitude Valley, Mackay, Sunshine Coast, Surfers Paradise and Toowoomba. In this year's budget, funding of up to \$1 million per annum ongoing has been provided from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to support initiatives specifically targeting women's safety in and around licensed venues. Applications to the safe night precinct grants fund closed on 28 July this year and are currently being considered, and I look forward to announcing the recipients in the near future.

Mr HUNT: Minister, with reference to page 8 of the SDS, could you please outline how the Gambling Community Benefit Fund is assisting local community organisations?

Mrs D'ATH: I know that I do not have to convince anyone at the table in front of me of the benefit of the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, established in 1994 under the Goss government. Since then, 66,100 applications have been approved and more than \$1.1 billion provided to not-for-profit community groups. I take the opportunity to thank the members and past members of the Gambling Community Benefit Committee for the work that they do. It is a very difficult job deciding those applications that come in every year.

During the 2022-23 financial year the Gambling Community Benefit Fund had three grant funding rounds. Round 114 provided \$30 million via grants of up to \$100,000 to assist in disaster recovery, while round 115 provided \$11 million in grants of up to \$35,000 to individual organisations. I will shortly receive recommendations from the committee for the \$20 million super round which I am sure our communities are very eagerly waiting for.

A total of 1,211 not-for-profit community groups received \$41 million in grants during the last financial year—organisations like the Kerry Memorial Hall society, which received over \$76,000 to improve its facility; the Proserpine Junior Cricket Association, which received more than \$30,000 to upgrade cricket nets and install a match pitch; and the Woodwork and Craft Club in Currumbin Waters, which received \$7,500 to buy its new extraction fan. It was great to see the members for Currumbin, Scenic Rim and Whitsundays promoting the receipt of these grants with their local organisations.

The member for Noosa I have no doubt was excited that the Noosa Touch Association got funding for a new mower—a \$19,000 grant in round 115—which is keeping the local playing fields in top shape. I know how excited my cricket club is with their mower. I am also sure that The Gap She Shed in the Cooper electorate is utilising the extra equipment from its \$9,520 grant, while the Caloundra City Soccer Club in the Caloundra electorate is enjoying the new soccer goals—a \$26,650 grant. Chair, I have not forgotten you, I know that you are a big supporter of Autism Queensland vacation care at Sunnybank. Its \$34,780 went to a shed and therapy equipment which will help children in your local area. That is great to see.

This financial year more than \$60 million will be available for not-for-profit community groups. To ensure that community members are aware of upcoming grant rounds, my department will again implement targeted community strategies and provide grant information sessions across the state. It would be remiss of me not to mention that round 118 is now open for grants of up to \$35,000. Applications close at midnight on 31 August. I thank the many members of parliament, government, opposition and crossbench who promote this round, like many others within their local communities, and I note from their experience that these grants help local not-for-profit community groups deliver the services and activities our communities need and enjoy.

Ms BUSH: The Gap She Shed is very excited. Turning to page 2 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General provide an update on the delivery of the Gambling Harm Minimisation Plan for Queensland 2021-2025?

Mrs D'ATH: While we talk about those grants going out the door, which is really exciting, we also have to remember that we have to do everything we can to reduce unsafe gambling and support the wellbeing of Queenslanders, which the government is committed to do. That is why in this year's budget we have allocated nearly \$10 million to various initiatives under our Gambling Harm Minimisation Plan 2021-2025. This year my department will be undertaking a review of Queensland's responsible gambling code of practice and mandatory harm minimisation requirements. We will also be working with Queensland Cricket to address the normalisation of gambling in sport, particularly amongst young

people. I want to thank Queensland Cricket for that partnership. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in sports and race betting nationwide, with young Australians aged 18 to 34 most often increasing their bets in response to advertising on TV or online. Through our partnership with Queensland Cricket we will create an awareness campaign regarding the risks associated with sports betting and the free 24/7 Gambling Help targeting young people and family support services. The campaign will be informed by results of a recent survey of the betting behaviours and attitudes of sports fans in Queensland. Data from the survey will also be used to create baseline measures to evaluate campaign effectiveness.

This financial year, the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation will continue to implement successful harm-minimisation initiatives like the 'Let's start yarning about gambling' campaign. That campaign was co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and run in Aboriginal community controlled health organisation waiting rooms. The initial campaign ran in 44 sites. In 2023 the campaign will be run again across the network, in addition to exploring options to expand the reach of the campaign. Evaluation of the campaign found participants had increased awareness of gambling harm and the free support services available and contributed to breaking down shame and stigma. We are also continuing to invest \$7.9 million to deliver Gambling Help Queensland, a free and confidential counselling and support service for people. A new SDS measure introduced this year will gauge how Gambling Help has assisted people in resolving their gambling issues.

Furthermore, the Queensland gambling survey will continue to gain key insights into Queensland's gambling behaviours and the prevalence of at-risk and problem gambling, which will inform our ongoing harm minimisation efforts. I am glad we brought that survey back when coming back to government. In addition to our actions under the Gambling Harm Minimisation Plan, casino and broader gaming regulatory compliance will help minimise the adverse effects of gambling for Queenslanders.

The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation will continue to enact its comprehensive gaming audit program. In 2022-23 the regulator conducted over 1,400 gaming inspections and investigations and took over 830 enforcement actions. Our government will also progress further legislative amendments to address the remaining 11 Gotterson review recommendations and continue to support the National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering and the Commonwealth's delivery of a national self-exclusion register. With a modern regulatory approach and implementation of best practice approaches, our government is facilitating safer gambling in Queensland.

CHAIR: With reference to page 8 of the SDS and expanding on prehearing question on notice No. 1, can the Attorney-General outline how the Office of Fair Trading is helping Queenslanders with cost-of-living challenges through consumer protection and education?

Mrs D'ATH: As we know, there are pressures on households in many different directions. What they do not need is service providers or businesses—and I use that term loosely sometimes—basically ripping people off by not giving them what they thought they were buying or the service they should have received or by taking their money and not providing it at all. The Office of Fair Trading assists with consumer disputes about traders. In these difficult financial times when every cent counts, the Office of Fair Trading can help consumers who find themselves, for example, with products that are faulty or when services paid for are not delivered.

As detailed in our answer to prehearing question No. 1, in 2022-23 the Office of Fair Trading received more than 20,000 consumer complaints and obtained almost \$12.3 million redress for consumers. Part of the OFT's role is about informing and educating consumers, businesses and licensees about their rights and responsibilities under fair trading laws. During 2022-23, the Office of Fair Trading directly engaged with over 25,000 people, educating them about various consumer rights and protections. This included 3,900 people involved in business, 1,000 consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, consumers with disability or additional needs, 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers, 800 people who work for service organisations, 7,100 seniors and 9,300 young people. To do this the OFT implements a wide range of engagement and communication methods like campaigns, education programs and community information sessions to reach those particularly vulnerable community members and small businesses.

I hope all members are aware of the OFT delivering the Buy Smart program with our school kids. This is a hands-on learning activity designed to help Queensland students in years 4 to 12 develop lifelong skills and become more informed consumers. In 2022, over 8½ thousand students participated in that program. For seniors, the OFT delivers presentations at seniors events across the state, delivering to older Queenslanders information about consumer issues, particularly scams trending in

the marketplace and providing advice on how to protect themselves. Whether it is 'bitumen bandits' offering consumer deals to resurface driveways in a local area or Origin ticket scalpers and dodgy car sellers, the OFT works hard to keep the general community aware and up-to-date on scams throughout the year.

The OFT also attends local events to give presentations when requested by state members and federal members of parliament, other departments and local community organisations, and through our outreach programs and services in rural and remote communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Some of the locations visited in the last financial year included Wujal Wujal, Hope Island, Bloomfield, Rossville, Woorabinda, Palm Island, Mossman Gorge, Cherbourg, Thursday Island and Cooktown. You can be assured that the Office of Fair Trading will continue to travel the width and breadth of the state to improve and empower Queensland consumers.

CHAIR: Before I hand to the deputy chair or the member for Whitsunday, I welcome to the gallery people from the Queensland Country Life Showgirl Awards. This leadership program is hosted by Queensland agricultural shows. Welcome to our estimates hearing. I now hand over to either the member for Whitsunday or the deputy chair.

Ms CAMM: Chair, I join with you and, I am sure, the minister in welcoming the showgirls. It is fabulous to have them here in the gallery.

Attorney-General, I have a question in regards to the existing strangulation legislation and what we have seen in the past at least 12 months around a 30 per cent increase in accounts of not only strangulation but also the frustration that has been expressed to me and many advocacy groups by police prosecutors and magistrates themselves about the loopholes that exist within the definitions of 'strangulation'. Does the Attorney-General have any plans to reintroduce legislation or amendments in the next 12 months in regards to addressing some of those issues to ensure that perpetrators are actually receiving the sentences that they should be?

Mrs D'ATH: We certainly have further legislation to come. There is a huge body of work to deliver on with the recommendations from report No. 1 and report No. 2 and also the commission of inquiry into police services. Work is underway to develop that second tranche of legislative reform, particularly focusing on the new offence by criminalising coercive control.

In relation to the issue of strangulation, in 2021-22 we funded the Red Rose Foundation to establish the first-ever Australian Strangulation Trauma Centre. We have now extended their funding for another three years in this budget with a further \$670,000. I know that is important work. I have spoken to them. We were at the laying of the rose event in parliament recently where the Red Rose Foundation talked about some of the harm from non-lethal strangulation that is happening and the consequences of that with individuals coming forward to make police reports and also the evidence that they can give, plus the ongoing trauma and health issues as a consequence. I am keen to work with and understand those issues, particularly with the Red Rose Foundation.

In relation to the strangulation offence, I am not aware of particular proposals to amend that offence at this stage. However, I will say this: my door is always open to considering any reforms around that particular offence recommended by police if they believe that needs to be improved but also, as I say, working with other service providers and their lived experience in relation to non-lethal strangulation. We do have to do all we can in relation to this.

I am also interested in and I know that the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council is doing a body of work around sexual violence. When we first introduced this I can recall, and I do not know if I said it publicly, the intention of having the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council—and they are just hearing this now, I suspect—do a body of work to evaluate not just the offence itself and how it is working in the justice system but also the sentencing around that offence to see if the intent of it is being delivered on.

Ms CAMM: Minister, you just touched on sexual assault. I acknowledge the government's commitment in funding that has already been outlined, so I do not really need to go over that again. The concern that I wanted to raise and ask a question about is: there are services reporting that they are closing their books due to the significant waitlist they have of more than six months to provide sexual assault counselling services across the state. What is your department doing to support those services so that when victims make that call to come forward they are in fact heard and not turned away from services?

Mrs D'ATH: Again, I am happy to meet with any service provider in relation to what they are doing if they are closing their books. I know that many providers go above and beyond what is asked of them and they continue to provide services well beyond the funding envelope that is provided by government. I also acknowledge their own philanthropic fundraising to support their services and the many businesses and community members who fundraise to support them to continue those services.

We know that demand is constantly increasing. I have outlined our investment in domestic and family violence and sexual violence. I do not intend to go over that all again, but I am more than happy to meet with individual organisations that are closing their books to consider what more we can be doing. There is a finite bucket of money that can be distributed, but I am proud of the uplift that we are giving in this year's budget and the ongoing funding. There is a lot of work to do in the sexual violence space that has come out of the task force reports that we need to be addressing.

Mr KRAUSE: Minister, the replacement of Beaudesert courthouse is an important budget allocation—one I fought for over several years—but serious concerns have been raised about the proposed location of a temporary courthouse on William Street, which is in close proximity to local businesses with very limited parking available. Has the minister heeded these concerns and directed the department to find a new temporary courthouse location in Beaudesert?

Mrs D'ATH: Yes. I very well know of and acknowledge his advocacy on behalf his community for a new courthouse. After careful consideration, the temporary courthouse site was identified as suitable for lease as a temporary courthouse facility. Factors impacting the decision include: suitable properties available for lease in Beaudesert were limited—I appreciate that there may be some who do not want it where it is but there are not a lot of other suitable facilities that are available—and the building has ground-floor access for the public, has separate access and parking for the judiciary and staff and is large enough to accommodate one courtroom and a domestic and family violence safe room and registry needs. Minor alterations only were required, preserving more of the project budget for the new permanent courthouse and maximising value for money.

The building is located in close proximity to the existing courthouse and police station—within 300 metres. When we say that it is close to business, so was the existing courthouse. The site is located in close proximity to public transport and a traffic study undertaken for the existing courthouse indicates adequate on-street parking in the immediate surrounds. The temporary facility will include: an onsite security presence to maintain safety for court users and the public; internal waiting areas with seating for approximately 50 people; five public toilets on the ground floor, including a unisex toilet compliant facility; and existing rubbish bins on the pavement directly outside the front of the building. Obviously, to change the plans now, when there are not other suitable sites identified, would mean a significant delay to the construction of the new courthouse which I do not want to see and I am sure the member does not either.

Mrs GERBER: Minister, you spoke about the community benefit fund and the super round that has been announced. I note that the decision for the round 116 super round, which closed on 28 February, has not been made yet. We have had complaints from organisations that have applications still sitting in that round. Without a determination, they cannot now apply for the subsequent rounds that you just spoke about. When can those organisations expect a determination and how many have been waiting?

Mrs D'ATH: I am hoping that I am going to get a decision very shortly. I cannot tell you how many applications because that is in the possession of the committee, not me. We keep the considerations of the Gambling Community Benefit Committee to them independently. They will eventually advise the number of applications they received and how many were successful, but I do not see the total number of applications in the initial stage.

In relation to delays, yes, there have been delays because there have been new members come on to the committee. Those new members have required training so that they understand the processes and can apply those processes and protocols to conflicts appropriately. I believe that process has been undertaken and I am confident that I will get recommendations on those grants very shortly. I understand the consequences. I know that it affects being able to apply in the future as it depends on whether you have been successful in the past. I want to see that money out the door as quickly as possible as well.

Ms BOLTON: Attorney, in the response to question on notice No. 7 regarding legal aid services, there is a reference to recruitment challenges. Obviously that goes across many government organisations and also the private sector. Are there any initiatives similar to what QPS is doing in the recruitment of international officers to fill those spaces? Is there anything similar happening in the other realms that are experiencing those shortages?

Mrs D'ATH: I cannot speak for Legal Aid per se—they were here this morning and able to answer questions—but it is difficult. I have no doubt that there are challenges in relation to the legal profession, whether it is our community legal centres, ATSILS, Legal Aid and even across the department but particularly the private profession. I have spoken to the Bar Association. I even asked the question, just as I did in health: 'Is this about graduates? Are we not getting enough students wanting to go to law school and enough graduating with legal qualifications? Is that part of the reason we have a shortage?' Realistically, the shortage is about experienced lawyers, as we have seen across so many industries, making decisions about what their future looks like and how they want to work. COVID has shifted the way people look at their employment and how they want to operate—whether they want to work from home, interstate or remotely and just work-life balance. All of these decisions have had an impact. Since the borders opened, people have travelled and want to work elsewhere and work overseas.

I have no doubt that those bodies, including Legal Aid, are doing everything possible to attract, but it will be a challenge and it is a challenge. Trying to compete with the fees of the private sector in the legal profession, like other areas, will always be difficult. We continue to fund Legal Aid and try to support it as best we can. We are providing additional funding for ATSILS as well. Specifically for ATSILS, it is about giving them \$9 million to see if this helps to offer higher wages so they can be competitive, because we do not want ATSILS removing services in our rural and remote communities as that will have a detrimental impact.

Ms BOLTON: Are you working with the federal government? We are hearing—it is not just within these types of organisations but also in the private sector—cases of them not delivering the orders. There is a five-year waitlist because they cannot get everything—boat builders et cetera. There are federal constraints around permits and things like that. Is the state government working with the federal government to see whether there is some relief?

Mrs D'ATH: Are you specifically talking about Legal Aid now?

Ms BOLTON: I am talking broadly. I have just used Legal Aid as an example.

Mrs D'ATH: Sure. In terms of what we are doing to support business, what we are doing in the training and skills space and those types of things are questions that should be directed to the small business and training and skills minister. Otherwise it comes down to individual portfolios and what they are doing in terms of working with the Commonwealth on incentive programs in particular areas and attracting people from overseas. I know the Commonwealth is alive to the workforce shortages across so many industries. I know they are looking at how they streamline those services, particularly around immigration and work visas.

CHAIR: Before we move on, I would like to welcome to our estimates hearing another group of school students from Corinda State School.

CHAIR: We will move to a question from the member for Caloundra.

Mr HUNT: Attorney-General, with reference to page 4 of the SDS, could you please outline the work of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

Mrs D'ATH: I would like to firstly commend the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages for their outstanding contribution to the First Nations communities in Queensland. Since 2021 the registry has been leading the cross-agency Closing the Registration Gap strategy and action plan and accompanying campaigns to address the disparity.

I am proud to report to the committee that I have been informed that, while a full evaluation of the project is currently being undertaken, the results from this work are indicating an upward trend in birth registrations. I have been informed that, as of 31 March this year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births registered within one year have increased from 77 per cent in 2018 to 83 per cent in 2022. I acknowledge that we still have work to do in this space, but this is a strong step in the right direction, and the registry should be recognised for those efforts in progressing this positive change towards closing the gap.

The registry continues to collaborate with other Queensland government agencies to implement 36 specific initiatives developed across nine Queensland agencies. The registry also employs a community engagement officer who coordinates visits to remote communities to promote birth registration. Engaging with regions is critical to ensuring that the strategic objectives that focus on cultural safety and community co-design are implemented effectively—those being communication, access, awareness and collaboration.

From Cherbourg to Thursday Island, Our Kids Count campaign is raising awareness that birth registration is important and free, that the hospital does not automatically register births and that it is never too late to register births. I think a lot of people do not realise that we still have babies born that do not always get a birth certificate because it is not done automatically by hospitals. It has to be done by the parents because it is the parents who identify who the birth parents are.

Working with remote communities and local stakeholders, Our Kids Count holds community events on country that support parents to register their children's births in Aurukun, Cherbourg, Doomadgee, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mount Isa, the northern peninsula area, Pormpuraaw, Thursday Island, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah. I am additionally informed that the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages issued 539 free birth certificates in 2022, in partnership with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, as part of the Deadly Choices birth certificate program. I thank them because they have been partnering with us for many years on the good work around birth certificates.

These actions are supporting an upward trend in birth registrations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, but we want to acknowledge that we still have work to do in this space and we will continue to support the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in closing this gap. In mentioning the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, I want to acknowledge the good work they do with us in getting children immunised in partnership with getting those births registered and obtaining birth certificates.

CHAIR: Attorney, there were some questions outstanding. I know you addressed quite a few of them. I am just trying to identify whether there are any others the Attorney would like to address now?

Mrs D'ATH: There was a question from the member for Noosa taken on notice about emergency domestic and family violence accommodation providers in the northern Sunshine Coast region. I am advised that the department, through Women's Safety and Violence Prevention, fund four services to deliver accommodation services in the Sunshine Coast region. These are: the Salvation Army's Supported Accommodation Sunshine Coast, known as Shine, in Noosa; Sunnykids Najidah in Maroochydore; Kyabra's Peggy's Place in Nambour; and 54 reasons, formerly known as Save the Children, women's shelter in Caboolture. I know that is a little bit south of you. That is between us.

Ms BOLTON: We reach out to all of them, do not worry.

Mrs D'ATH: As does everyone across the state, I appreciate that. That is the answer to that question taken on notice.

The question with regard to recommendation 78 of the QFCC blue card review was: did the detailed implementation plan establish time frames for the completion of recommendations and, if so, have the time frames been met? Can we provide completion status and expected time frames? As at 18 May this year, of the 81 recommendations, 28 are completed in full and a further 49 are in progress. I can advise that those recommendations that are in progress are recommendations 1, 9, 24, 27, 31, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 51, 52, 54, 55, 60, 61, 66, 67, 68, 73, 81, 2, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 25, 29, 34, 35, 41, 45, 48, 49, 56, 58, 70 and 75. They are all in progress. Eight recommendations relating to the implementation of child safe standards are being progressed by the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services.

Work has not yet commenced on four recommendations—21, 38, 76 and 77. Some of these recommendations are dependent on work that needs to be completed at the national level. Others are dependent on other recommendations still in progress. We cannot start them until we complete some of the others. The plan to implement the remaining recommendations provides for implementation to occur over the period up to and including 2024-25.

There was a question taken on notice in relation to whether the Casino Control Act 1982 or any other Queensland legislation requires divestment for casino licensees who have criminal associations. The legislation does not require any specific action in relation to criminal associations. It depends on the circumstances of the matter. The Casino Control Act 1982 provides the Governor in Council or the minister the ability to commence disciplinary action against a licensee if they have an association with a person or entity who is not suitable to be associated with a casino licensee. It would be open to the Governor in Council or the minister to issue a direction to the licensee requiring rectification of the matter that resulted in an adverse finding. Where there has been a finding of unsuitability under the Queen's Wharf Brisbane Act 2016, the Governor in Council may issue a direction for disposal of interests in any entity associated with the casino licensee.

In relation to the member for Clayfield's question around Shayne Probert, the daughter of Doreen Langham, I am advised that a meeting had been arranged with the previous attorney-general, but was cancelled as a result of the change in portfolios. I understand Ms Probert contacted my office by

telephone on 16 June to follow up and that meeting request was processed by my office. Subsequently, I requested that a meeting be arranged jointly between the office of the Minister for Police and my office because the issues raised by Ms Probert go across both responsibilities. I am advised we are currently trying to organise times with his office, at which point we will contact Ms Probert.

At the start of the proceedings I was asked by the member for Clayfield about a commitment by the former AG to table a review by the Customer Advocate regarding the Public Trustee and whether we will be keeping that commitment. I understand that the previous attorney-general stated in *Hansard*—

... the Public Trustee has also directed the Customer Advocate to commence an internal investigation into the Public Trustee's systems and practices. I have spoken to the Public Trustee this morning and I can advise the House that I will table the findings of that internal review once finalised.

That commitment remains.

CHAIR: Are there any outstanding questions on notice?

Mrs GERBER: There is one outstanding. It is in relation to the Public Trustee. It was the question around the reviews into the Public Trustee out of the *Four Corners* report. Have these reviews been finished? I thought you said you would take that one on notice.

Mrs D'ATH: Yes, I have that. Thank you for that pick up. The question was in relation to the *Four Corners* matters. I am aware that in March 2022, *Four Corners* aired a program that raised a number of matters in relation to three particular customers of the Public Trustee. The matters raised in that investigation were referred by the Public Trustee to independent investigators for review. I understand that those investigations were completed in May this year and that the review reports were provided to the three customers. I am unable to provide those review reports due to privacy and confidentiality reasons.

The Public Trustee requested the Customer Advocate to undertake a review into the Public Trustee's systems—which I have just spoken to—and practices relating to issues identified in the individual reviews. On 15 March this year, as I say, the former attorney-general undertook to table the findings of those reviews. I understand that the systems and practices review report is currently being finalised and has not yet been provided to me. I will endeavour to table those findings once I have received them.

In finishing, I thank the committee and the secretariat. I thank my department for all of the work in preparation for estimates and I thank my staff in my office. I thank my department for the work they do each and every day. I thank all of the service providers and NGOs that we work with that do amazing work. It is a pleasure and an honour to work with them, and I do want to thank everybody.

CHAIR: Is there still a question on notice outstanding? The question in relation to the shelters that are in Noosa—

Mrs D'ATH: We just answered that.

CHAIR: Attorney-General, on behalf of the committee, I thank you, the acting director-general and the officials for your attendance. I also thank all departmental staff who supported the estimates hearing. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 1.30 pm for the examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

Proceedings suspended from 12.51 pm to 1.30 pm.

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE—POLICE AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES; FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

In Attendance

Hon. MT Ryan, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

Ms H Spencer, Chief of Staff

Mr S Lowry, Senior Policy Adviser

Mr N Barter, Senior Policy Adviser

Queensland Police Service

Ms K Carroll APM, Commissioner

Ms S McCarthy, Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Corporate Services

Ms T Nelson, Acting Superintendent, Ministerial Services Unit

Ms T Linford, Deputy Commissioner, Specialist Operations

Mr S Chelepy, Deputy Commissioner, Disaster and Emergency Management

Queensland Corrective Services

Mr P Stewart APM, Commissioner

Mr G McCahon, Deputy Commissioner, Custodial Operations

Ms U Roeder ACM, Deputy Commissioner, Community Corrections and Specialist Operations

Mr S Scougall, Chief of Staff, Office of the Commissioner

Parole Board of Queensland

Mr M Byrne KC, President

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

Mr G Leach AFSM, Commissioner

Mr A Stevenson, Acting Deputy Commissioner

Office of Inspector-General Emergency Management

Mr A Dawson APM, Inspector-General Emergency Management



CHAIR: The hearing is resumed. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine areas within the minister's portfolio as follows: Police from 1.30 pm to 2.45 pm; Corrective Services from 3 pm to 4 pm; and Fire and Emergency Services from 4.15 pm to 5.15 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed by the House.

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

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

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, commissioner, officials and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the commissioner.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the police portfolio 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 RYAN: Good afternoon, Chair, committee and the people of Queensland who are tuning in. Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge a tragedy—the tragic loss of constables Rachel McCrow and Matthew Arnold, who were murdered at Wieambilla in December last year. Certainly we are all united when we say, 'With honour they served.'

Chair, on the commissioner's desk at police headquarters there is a sign that reads 'Failure is not an option'. It is with this sense of determination that the commissioner and the Queensland Police Service have been addressing the challenges that Queensland and many other jurisdictions around the nation are facing. They are the same challenges every other policing jurisdiction in Australia is facing—whether it is domestic and family violence, mental health, youth crime or recruitment.

We have been very up-front about these challenges. It is why the government is backing the commissioner and the Queensland Police Service with extra resources—a record \$3.2 billion operating budget—more police powers, more personnel and stronger laws. It is why the government has also provided an additional \$87 million for police recruiting incentives and strategies in this year's budget. I am advised by the commissioner that these incentives are working, with a 120 per cent increase in recruit applications since January. There are currently over 400 recruits in training at the police academies in Brisbane and Townsville. It is expected that more than 200 more recruits will join the academy just next month.

The recruitment pipeline is stronger than ever, with more than 1,300 applicants in the recruit pipeline. To support those recruits and all frontline police, the Queensland Police Service and the government are always looking for new technology to enhance community safety. Just this morning the commissioner and I announced a world-leading trial of new taser technology, and our nation-leading trial of vehicle immobilisers is well underway, with over 6,700 vouchers already issued to residents in Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa in less than a week.

The Palaszczuk government will always back the Queensland Police Service. Our commitment is without question. To assist the committee with its deliberations today, I seek leave to table a document outlining the government's investment in the Queensland Police Service.

CHAIR: Can I see the document, please? Can I have a motion that the document referred to by the minister be tabled?

Mr HUNT: I so move.

CHAIR: All those in favour? Against? I declare it carried.

Mr RYAN: The commissioner and I are now available to take any questions the committee may have.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, how many new recruits were sworn into the Queensland Police Service last financial year? Could I just have a number, please?

Commissioner Carroll: Bear with me. We do have the number. I am just making sure that I get it correct. That number is 483.

Mr LAST: How many police officers left the Queensland Police Service last financial year? Again, could I just have a number, please?

Commissioner Carroll: Bear with me.

Mr LAST: Do you need to take that on notice?

Commissioner Carroll: I can get it for you. We have it.

CHAIR: Let the process occur, please.

Commissioner Carroll: It is 685.

Mr LAST: So, Commissioner, more police officers left the QPS than were sworn in last financial year; is that correct?

Commissioner Carroll: That is correct.

Mr LAST: Attrition has outstripped recruitment.

Commissioner Carroll: Attrition has gone up in recent years. It was at 3.7 per cent; it is now at 5.7 per cent. It has slightly gone up over the last couple of years.

Mr LAST: Would I be correct in saying that this calendar year approximately—as of last week—220 officers have been sworn in?

Commissioner Carroll: This calendar year, so that is in the last seven or eight months?

Mr LAST: Yes.

Commissioner Carroll: I will just get that for you. We normally do it by financial year, but I will try and get the calendar year number for you.

Mr LAST: I appreciate that. The approximate number is 220.

Commissioner Carroll: We will get the number for you.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, would I be correct in saying that this calendar year—approximately again—406 officers have left the Queensland Police Service?

Commissioner Carroll: I will have to get that number for you. We do work in financial years and I have given you the financial year numbers, but I will get that for you.

Mr LAST: Working again on the calendar year, as of this week the headcount for the Queensland Police Service has reduced by 185. I appreciate that you will need those numbers to work that number out.

Commissioner Carroll: I will need those numbers. In the financial year the numbers have reduced by 202, so that may be correct.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, how many full-time-equivalent police officers do we have in the QPS as of today? That is FTEs.

Commissioner Carroll: I might have to get that exact number as of today, which is a couple of months on, but as of 30 June it was 12,225.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, prior to the 2020 election, as you confirmed in estimates last year the government promised to employ an additional 1,450 officers over and above attrition. I refer to prehearing question on notice No. 7, which states that on 30 June 2020 there were 12,038 and on 30 June 2023 there were 12,225. That is an increase of 187 officers; correct?

Commissioner Carroll: That is correct.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, if not a single officer leaves the service going forward, this shows that after three years the government is more than 1,200 officers short on that election commitment; is that correct?

Commissioner Carroll: On those numbers that is correct.

Mr LAST: Given the current attrition rate of police officers which you just alluded to, in the next two years the government must hire around—and again it is an approximate number—2,300 officers to meet the government's election commitment; is that correct?

Commissioner Carroll: That is correct, 1,200. Six hundred this year, 1,200 over the next couple of years each year, yes.

Mr LAST: Minister, given that we now have fewer police, are the youth crime crisis and changes to the legislation the reason why morale is at an all-time low in the QPS, as reflected by the Working for Queensland survey?

Mr RYAN: I am happy to answer the question and I will give the member an opportunity to correct the record, because he just read out two numbers. He read out the number from June 2020, 12,038, and then he read out the number from June 2023, 12,225. I hope he does not have to take his shoes off to work this out, but that number is bigger than this one, so when he says it is less—

Mrs GERBER: That is unparliamentary.

Mr RYAN:—I am just giving him the opportunity to correct the record.

Mrs GERBER: Let's keep it civil.

Mr RYAN: The member does not have the call.

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, please.

Mr RYAN: The Commissioner has been very clear in her public remarks. In fact, the Commissioner and I are asked at almost every single press conference about recruitment. It is a not a challenge unique to Queensland or Australia; it is a challenge right around the world. There is a challenge in all jurisdictions and in all industries—whether you are in mining, hospitality, political parties, policing or community organisations—around recruiting appropriately skilled and qualified people for your workforce. That being said, compared to other jurisdictions—the Commissioner tells me that she has conversations with her colleagues all the time—Queensland is very well-placed. We are very well-placed because not only has the government been very responsive to the challenge in providing recruitment incentive packages for the Queensland Police Service but we have also been very pro-active about the strategies.

Yesterday the soft launch of an advertising campaign started in New Zealand. I am told that the New Zealand Prime Minister was on TV today in New Zealand expressing concern about that. The New Zealand policing association has already said they fear that hundreds of well-trained and experienced police officers will take up the invitation from Queensland to come to Queensland. Our recruitment pipeline is the strongest it has been in a very long time. As I mentioned in my opening statement, we have over 400 recruits at the academy right now. They will be graduating over the coming months. In addition, 200 recruits will join the academy next month. More than 600 recruits are expected to join the academy over the next six months. The recruitment pipeline is over 1,300, including over 400 internationally and interstate. In a moment I will get the Commissioner to outline why that is important. Having experienced, qualified police come from other jurisdictions not only obviously value-adds to our Police Service but it is quicker to get them to the front line. We have invested significant funds in supporting the Commissioner and the Police Service with the recruiting challenge ahead. The Commissioner and academy staff have told me that, because the pipeline has improved, as long as all things remain equal moving forward the Commissioner has great hope and expectation that the election commitment will be met by 30 June 2025.

Commissioner Carroll: We knew last year—and I have been quite frank and open—that recruiting was going to be extraordinarily tough. It was not only attrition but also the retirement age. We recruited heavily in the 1980s so more people are retiring, particularly over the next three or four years. On top of that there was government growth, so we are recruiting heavily at a time when it has been the most difficult to recruit. Recognising this, we have put in a number of strategies. We have brought forward our civilian staff numbers. If you look at civilian staff numbers, they are at plus 261. Those directly impact the front line, and I will give you an example of that. We advertised 100 watch house officers; 900 people applied. That automatically releases people from the watch house to go back to the front line, similarly with PLOs as well as prosecutors.

Mr LAST: Chair, point of order: the question directed to the minister was about morale. The question was not about recruitment.

Mr RYAN: He asked about numbers. He got his maths wrong, remember?

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Commissioner Carroll: If you do not mind I will finish on this, because I do think there is a point here. We all want to have the right amount of staff at our stations because demand is incredibly high. The work we are doing behind the scenes has seen a dramatic shift in the recruitment pipeline. I have to give it to my recruitment team, because some of the strategies and initiatives are unheard of across the country and across the world. Every time we have implemented something really out of the box—one was the international labour agreement, 500 staff over the next five years—already we have 200 in that pool and 110 from New Zealand and other states. The advantage of having over 400 current police is that is a four-month course as opposed to an eight-month course and that throughput is so much quicker. I do say that I am confident. It is going to be hard work, do not get me wrong, but the amount of work done just in recent months has really changed that dynamic.

CHAIR: I would like to welcome Ms Fiona Simpson MP, the member for Maroochydhore. I apologise, member, I did not see you arrive.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you, Chair; it is a long table. My question is to the Commissioner. Commissioner, I refer to correspondence between myself and yourself in relation to police numbers. In your letter of 17 July 2025 you stated—

It is important to clarify that a police roster is not an accurate reflection of the resources available to attend calls for service at any one time.

Commissioner, my question is: if a police roster is not an accurate reflection of available police at a major incident, what measure does the Commissioner use?

Commissioner Carroll: Police rosters is just one of those measures. The reason I put that in the letter back to you is that there are many other resources that can actually be called upon that are not on a station roster, such as the tactical crime squads, the investigative units, other police—because it is a borderless policing operation that we run across the state—as well as the local rapid action groups. There are many other areas where resources can be called upon to assist that police station.

Ms SIMPSON: Commissioner, obviously police rosters in an area do have an impact on timeliness to respond to local incidents, whether they are a major incident or not. Do you agree that a shortage on a police roster does have an impact on the ability of police to respond to local issues?

Commissioner Carroll: It depends, because they do come from other areas. If we have a code 1 or a code 2, they do not just respond from that area; they will pretty well respond from everywhere. You would have to be quite exact as to what station you are talking about and what issue, because code 1s or 2s are pretty well attended from everywhere.

Ms SIMPSON: I will shortly hand back to my colleague. Commissioner, would you agree that a roster in an area where there may only be a couple of police scheduled, for example, over a shift that is covering quite a reasonable size of population would actually make it very difficult for police to respond in a timely way?

Commissioner Carroll: It depends on where it is and it depends on what the demand is. I expect district officers and OICs to be on top of what the demand is and what their rostering is and to obviously brief up if there are issues. We know—and it is clear that we know this—how tight the recruiting is and how difficult this has been for us. Another way that we are addressing this is actually bringing back special constables for the very recognition that we know that demand has dramatically increased and we know that we need further staff.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the implementation of the recommendations of the *A call for change: commission of inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence*. Recommendation 17 of the commission of inquiry was that the QPS implement a procedure for certain roles to undertake the specialist five-day training. When was that procedure put in place, and how many members have been appointed to those roles since that date?

Commissioner Carroll: I will get that for you. We have implemented the three-day training, which some 93 per cent of frontline police have finished, and this is the additional five-day training for supervisors and leaders within the organisation. I will get that for you.

If you do not mind, while I have the opportunity, I will give you the information that you asked for before. In the calendar year, recruits sworn in were 227 from January to July 2023, plus an additional 50 in Townsville. Sorry, I am trying to get that correct.

You specifically asked for the five-day training. The five-day face-to-face vulnerable persons specialist training was developed for obviously the dedicated domestic and family violence specialist staff. This is not the general training, the three-day training. The pilot course was originally delivered in November 2022 and a further three courses were delivered in 2023. The course is scheduled to commence formally on 4 September 2023, and 123 members have completed this course.

Mr LAST: So that is the five-day training?

Commissioner Carroll: This is the five-day training, and this is for specialists.

Mr LAST: Yes, that is right. Minister, the opposition has been contacted by whistleblowers who have raised some very concerning questions regarding the minister's office and in particular given the minister's position implementing the findings of the independent commission of inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence. Minister, at any point have staff in your office been investigated following allegations of domestic violence?

Mr RYAN: I will come back to a point that I am going to make in a moment. In a second I will also ask the commissioner to make some remarks. All allegations, no matter who they are about—whether they are about you, member, or whether they are about other members of parliament or employees of government agencies or ministerial offices; all members of the community—are referred to the appropriate body for investigation, and my expectation is that investigations are conducted. Commissioner, we can read between the lines about what the member is referring to. Would you like to make some remarks?

Commissioner Carroll: Thank you. Yes, there has been an investigation in relation to a complaint made against a ministerial staffer. This investigation was approximately two years ago and it was raised very recently by another member in estimates hearings last week. As a result I had my staff

thoroughly review the original investigation. It was very thorough over a number of months. There were 40 statements taken. Certainly as a result of that I am quite comfortable—as I said, I have had this investigation gone through a number of times—that it was thoroughly investigated and that there was certainly no evidence to proceed on any matters. I did inform obviously DPC of the outcome of that investigation and also the minister of the outcome of that investigation.

Mr RYAN: I go back to the point I was going to make. I saw the remarks by one of your colleagues last week and you have now slipped to this low standard that you now want to say is the standard that you want to apply to people. Making remarks in the cowards castle that have been fully—

Mr LAST: Point of order, Chair—

Mr RYAN: No, I am entitled to it. There is a question here.

CHAIR: Hang on. The member is also entitled to make a point of order. Can I just ask everyone to refrain from argument and trying to antagonise each other. I will deal with the point of order and I will come back to you, Minister.

Mr LAST: Chair, the Police Service has an integral role to play in the investigation—

CHAIR: No, what is your point of order? I do not want a speech; I just want to know what your point of order is.

Mr LAST: I am entitled to ask a question as to whether someone in the minister's office has been investigated. It is an opportunity for the minister now to—

CHAIR: There is no point of order. Minister, could you continue, but please may I ask you to—

Mr RYAN: If members have allegations to make and they allege that they are so serious, why turn up at parliamentary estimates throwing allegations around and not refer them immediately to the Police Service? The question for the member for Burdekin, if he is an honourable gentleman, is: when did he first receive these allegations and what action did he take? When I receive allegations, I refer them immediately to the appropriate entity.

People can come in to the cowards castle and throw allegations around which, following police investigations, have no substance. The advice I have is that when a colleague of the member for Burdekin used this forum last week to make similar remarks the Queensland Police Service immediately contacted that member and asked if the member had any further evidence. The advice I have is that the member did not even come back to the Queensland Police Service and that the member did not respond to follow-up calls.

The challenge I have for the member for Burdekin is: does he have any evidence? There was an allegation, as the commissioner referred to, that was received by many people two years ago. It was immediately referred to the Queensland Police Service and there was a thorough investigation and there was no evidence to support the allegation, so does the member—

Mrs GERBER: How does the minister know this level of detail?

CHAIR: Let him speak.

Mr RYAN: Does the member have any further evidence to support the allegation? If not, the member should withdraw and apologise for using this forum, for using the privilege of parliamentary privilege, in a disgraceful and disorderly way.

Mrs GERBER: Can the minister explain to the estimates committee right now how he knows this level of detail about the case?

Mr RYAN: Member, I refer allegations—

CHAIR: Just stop! I do not want cross-argument. If you have a question, wait your turn and I will give you the opportunity to ask the question. I do not want any bickering going on, on this particular point, or any point, for that matter, because we have limited time and we are wasting it. Where are we at?

Mr RYAN: They are serious allegations which, of course, any—

Mr LAST: They are, and you should answer it.

Mr RYAN: No, any responsible person—

CHAIR: Excuse me, Minister. I have already made a direction in narration as to how we will behave this afternoon. Ignore that at your own peril.

Mr RYAN: They are serious allegations and any responsible person would refer them, and any responsible person would seek assurances that they have been fully investigated and that there are no further concerns. I question whether those opposite have been responsible, have taken them seriously and then have sought those assurances. I certainly did and I am satisfied with those assurances.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, given the reports that offenders are now utilising the disempowerment of police in the pursuit policies which have been raised, is there going to be any review on those policies and efforts to reduce some of the horrendous statistics we are seeing and perpetrators, including in DV?

Commissioner Carroll: Sorry, member, can you repeat, if you do not mind, the second part, the pursuit policy?

Ms BOLTON: Yes, the pursuit policy. Will there be a review of those policies in order to get a reduction on what we are seeing currently with stolen vehicles and also an incident which obviously we cannot speak about that happened in our shire just a fortnight ago?

Commissioner Carroll: I will touch on why the pursuit policy was brought in and how a lot of research went into it and to advise that ultimately, yes, there will be a review. It came in as a result of 22 deaths from 2000 to 2009. The policy is actually a restricted policy, but in certain circumstances you are still allowed to pursue. Since then, from 2019 to 2022, there have been two deaths attributed to the pursuit policy. There is a recommendation from the State Coroner who has asked us to expedite the review and, as a result, a current review is underway.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, we have been advised that Operation Sandstorm has completed and is no longer operational, and that is on the Cooloola Coast. Can you provide the rationale for why this was ceased given the ongoing offences committed along that stretch and what will be implemented to replace it?

Mr RYAN: I am always happy to get some more information from you about what you have heard because I have just been advised by the commissioner that the operation is continuing; it has not ceased. I have some detail that the commissioner has just provided to me. It has been ongoing since 2019. There were 18 deployments last year and 4 deployments to date this year with particular focus around peak visitor periods. It is conducted by the Wide Bay Burnett Police District, alongside Queensland Parks & Wildlife. It includes emerging technologies like drones to capture hooning and dangerous driving. They have had some significant success with the work. The data I have is that since the beginning of 2022 to 30 June this year, there have been almost 1,400 traffic infringement notices, over 9,000 roadside breath tests and 365 drug tests.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, can you quickly share how adequate police numbers are determined for a region? You mentioned earlier demand and rostering, but how is that calculated given the increase we have had in domestic and family violence?

Commissioner Carroll: There are a number of criteria used in that: demographic factors is one, clearly, crime trends, local policing initiatives, historical demand for service, and particularly now and in recent years, the actual demand of an area. I would say that a few years ago we were quite immature in measuring demand, particularly hidden demand. Part of recommendation No. 1 for the commission of inquiry is actually looking at demand. We have more sophisticated systems to look at that. There are a variety of factors, but for me the most accurate is to look at that hidden demand that in the past we actually did not see. I have touched on some of those things, as I have said: demographic, crime, local initiatives and that demand modelling.

Mrs GERBER: Minister, I want to go back to what we were talking about before and I want you to explain to the committee how you know that police contacted another MP last week following estimates and why the minister knows about operational detail when the minister consistently says that he does not know about operational details?

Mr RYAN: I sought assurances that the matter had been investigated and those were the assurances that I received.

Mrs GERBER: How does the minister know about that level of operational detail when the minister consistently—

Mr RYAN: Those are the assurances you get around whether a serious matter has been investigated about something impacting a ministerial office. It would be, I imagine, the same assurances you would get if it applied to your electorate staff.

Mrs GERBER: May I ask the commissioner then what level of operational detail did the minister ask of you?

Commissioner Carroll: I can answer that. Tracy briefed the minister, so I will divert to her very shortly. Interestingly, when that email first came forward some years ago, there was a lot of detail in it. Whoever got that email had a lot of detail which I think was—it is not nice to see those things in emails going to many people across the state. As a result of that we did the investigation and, as I said to you, that was very thorough. I simply informed the minister that a comprehensive investigation was completed and I am satisfied with the outcome. What happened last week was that further information came forward and I got Tracy to have that command revisit the investigation, as well as make further inquiries. That was then relayed to the minister again. Sufficient investigation was completed and those inquiries were over. Then—

Mrs GERBER: Why would you—

CHAIR: Do not interrupt.

Commissioner Carroll: The brief was given to the minister from Deputy Linford and I will now refer to her in terms of that brief.

Deputy Commissioner Linford: I run the Special Operations portfolio. It was me who had a conversation with the minister. It certainly was not to discuss any of the operational detail of the investigation; it was simply about clarifying the fact that what we had ascertained was not a new investigation.

Mrs GERBER: Why would the minister be told about police with another MP? That is what I am trying to get to the bottom of. Why did the minister get told?

Deputy Commissioner Linford: Because at this point in time when it was raised last week, we did not know at that point in time whether this was a fresh investigation that needed to be undertaken.

Mrs GERBER: Is that not a matter for police?

CHAIR: I am going to bring this to a conclusion because it is going nowhere.

Mr RYAN: Can I put a final dot point on that, too?

CHAIR: This will be the end of it.

Mr RYAN: The query was: was this something new other than raised two years ago? The advice I have is, no, it was the very same matter and that the MP—

Mrs GERBER: But how did the minister know that the MP did not respond then? That was an operational detail that was disclosed to you.

Mr RYAN: It is not an operational detail.

CHAIR: I have already asked that we not have argument and no-one—

Mr KRAUSE: If someone does not respond, it is not operational?

CHAIR: I now move to government members. I have the first question for the minister. Minister, with reference to Budget Paper 3 and \$146.3 million for the aircraft acquisition program, will the minister update the committee on what this investment will deliver for the Queensland Police Service?

Mr RYAN: It is a significant investment that the government is making in community safety as well as to support the Queensland Police Service community safety operations and initiatives and the life-saving work of those who participate in organ donation. In a big state like Queensland you cannot operate community safety services without an air fleet; you just need it, whether it is Jason moving prisoners from one part of the state to another, whether it is deploying specialist police officers from hubs to particular areas of the state, whether it is doing organ retrieval or whether it is supporting operations of government.

The air fleet that we have has served Queensland well, but it is an air fleet that was due for renewal. As with many things in business as well as government, a point is reached where you need to take an opportunity to renew the assets you have to ensure they are fit for purpose, not only today but also tomorrow. Certainly as we head towards the Olympics there is a key opportunity for government to ensure it has a fit-for-purpose air fleet. In the budget we have committed significant funds to renewing that air fleet with the purchase of five new turboprops. These are exceptional. They are long-range, pressurised and faster. These are the workhorses of the Queensland Police Service's Aviation Capability Group. There will also be two Gulfstream G280 jets.

There has been a lot of commentary around governments needing jets. It is actually a requirement for organ donation and retrieval that you have significant speed as well as appropriate range. To be honest, the last two jets that we had, commonly called the government jet and the police jet—in fact, the commissioner and I were on the police jet when there was a significant midair aviation emergency, and the commissioner is still a little bit shaky about it—did not meet the standard that we require for the basic things like organ retrieval. They did not have, for instance, a pressurised cargo hold. I know that sounds minor, but for organ retrieval it is important. They did not have the range we needed. They could not fly to Perth or to New Zealand. Certainly they did not have the speed we are going to get from the new air fleet.

We are looking forward to the renewal of the air fleet. It is critical to the delivery of community safety, policing and health services in Queensland. The new aircraft will start arriving this year and the program should be fully completed within 12 to 18 months. In addition to that, we have also renewed our contract with Surf Life Saving Queensland for the Polair contract. This is a 10-year extended contract and will significantly increase the rotary capability of the Queensland Police Service. In fact, we are going from two helicopters to three. They are state-of-the-art, top-quality ones which will obviously have added operational benefits. Thanks for the question. It is critical to how the Police Service operates. I am very pleased that our government has once again backed in the Police Service with significant investment.

Mr HUNT: My question is to the commissioner. Before I start I take the opportunity—there are a lot of shoulder boards and silver gorgets in the room at the moment—to thank all of you and the QPS more broadly for the excellent work that you do. You can stand on your record and it is exemplary, so thank you for that. With reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements and the QPS vision of making Queensland the safest state, will the commissioner please update the committee on what the QPS is doing to prevent and respond to sexual violence?

Commissioner Carroll: As you have alluded to, the QPS is committed to delivering what is a victim-centric and trauma informed approach to victim-survivors of sexual violence whereby a victim-survivor's needs and welfare are really our priority. In 2021 the QPS published the *QPS sexual violence response strategy 2021-2023*, which was the first of its kind for the QPS. It really is aimed at enhancing the service's response to sexual violence by putting the victim first and holding perpetrators to account.

To date, there have been a number of key achievements such as options to report sexual assaults online and through Policelink. We were one of the first organisations that undertook that. There was the statewide rollout of the sexual violence liaison officer's role, which has been evaluated and found to be extraordinarily successful; statewide victim-centric and trauma informed training in partnership with the University of Queensland including child abuse, child sexual abuse, fundamental education, and challenging beliefs, inferences, attitudes and stereotypes courses; the continuation of the specialist training course Investigating Sexual Assault, Corroborating and Understanding Relationship Evidence; and the conduct of thematic business reviews, which has been really essential across the board in all of the QPS. We do a number of business reviews not just around sexual violence but also DV and a whole heap of other matters in the QPS. This is done in each and every district to identify strategies for continuous improvement. We launched the joint QPS and Tinder safety campaign, which tailored safety messages proactively promoted to Queensland Tinder users. Again, it is kind of a world first and we are very proud of that. The strategy was independently evaluated by Griffith University, and it found that the QPS had made a lot of progress in those four priority areas of the strategy. It made some recommendations to enhance further work that is underway in the QPS.

I can announce the release of the *QPS sexual violence response strategy 2023-2025*, which will further enhance the QPS response to victim-survivors of sexual violence. The new strategy builds on the work that has already taken place. It also builds on those key deliverables and those recommendations from the recent reports of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. The QPS will deliver 21 actions through the new strategy. Some of those include training for the first response and front counter officers and staff, specialist training for investigators, developing resources to equip officers to provide consistent responses to victim-survivors of sexual violence, community education including about options available to victim-survivors to report sexual violence, and establishing multiagency responses across the state in collaboration with key stakeholders including sexual assault support services. I am incredibly proud of the organisation for what has been achieved in such a short time frame.

Ms BUSH: Minister, I would like to start with the budget measures in Budget Paper 4 and the \$56 million in funding to facilitate infrastructure development and the Back to Basics program at PCYCs. Will the minister inform the committee of the benefits this will deliver?

Mr RYAN: This is actually so exciting—the Back to Basics initiative, which the Queensland government is supporting the Queensland Police Service to deliver. One of the amazing things you hear from PCYC staff as well as the police officers who support delivery of PCYC programs is how connected they are to community and how there is a desire to do more in connecting to young people and their families. A lot of people used to talk about the after-hours boxing programs or the midnight basketball. The Back to Basics program supports the enhancement of the delivery of those after-hours programs by the PCYC.

The crux of it is that the \$6 million transition payment will support the employment of dedicated office managers—commercial managers—at the PCYC branch. This will then free up the PCYC sergeant to deliver outreach proactive crime prevention programs. In a moment I will get the commissioner to add a little bit to it. There is also another exciting component to it; that is, the infrastructure fund that we have announced in the budget—\$50 million to assist with the construction of new PCYCs in new locations across the state as well as the upgrade of PCYCs. I acknowledge the advocacy of the member for Beaudesert. In turn, I hope he acknowledges my understanding and shared enthusiasm.

Mr KRAUSE: Send us some funding, please.

Mr RYAN: As part of this program, the government will be making a \$5 million contribution towards the establishment of a PCYC at Beaudesert. We have always said that it needs to be a shared initiative, a shared project. I know that the council is engaged. I know that there is a really good community organisation that the member for Scenic Rim—sorry, I am old-school. He used to be the member for Beaudesert. There is a very strong community organisation out there. There have been initiatives and infrastructure improvements right across the state and the Back to Basics contribution towards PCYC. We are really excited about it, aren't we, Commissioner? Did you want to add to that?

Commissioner Carroll: Thank you for the question. I think the minister is spot on. I am really excited about the pilot trial that we did across six PCYC sites. We looked at police officers delivering those programs and someone being employed to deliver the business. It was hugely successful and as a result, we submitted to receive additional funding of \$5 million to roll this out across the state. We anticipate that, as a result, we will increase the social program delivery side by 100 per cent. We already have some 50,000 kids going through our PCYCs. We know that the primary reason why we are there is to basically make sure that we deliver those social programs. It is exciting; it is a massive investment for us. For us as police officers, what we want to be doing at the end of the day is delivering those crime prevention social prevention programs so that we can have healthy kids into the future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. Before we go on, I would like to welcome back, Mr Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar. I will go now to the member for Caloundra.

Mr HUNT: To the Commissioner: with reference to budget paper No.3 and the funding to progress the construction of the much-anticipated police station at Caloundra South, will the commissioner update the committee on how this investment will enhance policing services in my community?

Commissioner Carroll: We know that the Sunshine Coast is a huge growth area. Some 12,316 residential blocks have already been approved in that area. It is estimated that there will be 20,000 dwellings with an estimated population of 50,000. This truly is incredible growth. As a result, we are very proud of the new Caloundra South facility, which will include Fire and Emergency Services as well as ambulance. I have been up there two times already to see how it is developing into the future years. It will be occupied by 30 police officers to meet the growing demand. In the meantime, we have already placed 10 officers at Caloundra because we know that houses are being built, those dwellings are increasing and so is that demand. There will not only be general duty police officers, a child protection investigation unit as well as a criminal investigation unit will be attached to that. I have seen the design of the facility. It certainly is a great investment for the future. It really is about looking out to the next 20 to 30 years. I am looking forward to it and, as I said, staff are already being allocated to that area.

CHAIR: Can I go now back to the member for Burdekin or the deputy chair?

Mr LAST: Commissioner, if I could take you back to the previous questions: is it appropriate that you reported back to the minister about private communications between the QPS and an opposition member of parliament only last week?

Commissioner Carroll: As I said, that matter was briefed by the deputy, so I think that would be relevant—

Mrs Gerber interjected.

CHAIR: Do not interrupt.

Commissioner Carroll: The matter was actually very public. Obviously that member said those things very publicly, and it was appropriate that we approached that member. While I will not speak on the deputy's behalf, my view would be to inform you that there is no further information in relation to this matter. As I said, the email was very detailed. Everyone knows what the allegations were; they were extensively investigated. I am advised by the deputy that we even went to the CCC, who had no further information. Contact was made with that member—there was no further information. We again reviewed the entire file. In my view, it would just be an update of what occurred. I will leave it for the deputy to continue.

CHAIR: Before we go any further on this point, it has been exhaustively ventilated here. Can you move on to either a definite subject or—

Mrs GERBER: The communication was not public. The communication between the police and the MP in relation to the MP's response, was not public information. That was information that was communicated to the minister.

CHAIR: Do not argue with me, member for Currumbin.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the minister's response to question on notice No.15 showing that the total number of random breath tests in 2022-23 were 893,695 less than the 2018-19 financial year. At the same time, the Queensland Road Crash Weekly Report shows that fatalities on Queensland roads are 37 per cent higher this year than in 2019 and that the number of fatalities involving drink driving has climbed every year since 2019. Commissioner, given those statistics, why are we seeing less random breath tests on Queensland's roads?

Commissioner Carroll: Member, can you give me the first part of that question—the 800,000—if you could?

Mr LAST: It refers to question on notice No.15. It shows that the total number of random breath tests in 2022-23, are 893,695 less than the 2018-19 financial year?

Commissioner Carroll: Yes, thank you for your question. You are obviously comparing pre-COVID to post-COVID numbers, and that is correct. RBT was considerably lower through the COVID years and we are just coming out of those years now. We have pushed RBT heavily to continue to rise over the years. It is one strategy of many. Last year I must say that we did have a terrible year on the road, but this year, pleasingly, we had 257 fatal crashes which is 20 minus on the previous year—272 lost on our roads which is 20 minus the previous year. We are currently 13 down for this year. Yes, it has been tough. There are many reasons for it. We have seen an over-representation of motorcyclists, in particular. Post-COVID we know that an extraordinary amount of motorcycles were purchased and they are over-represented in our figures. In terms of RBT, we are quickly building that up post-COVID, but it is not quite back to the pre-COVID years.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, what was the total cost of the failed service delivery program?

Commissioner Carroll: Thank you. I would say that it was not a failed first service delivery program at all. This came out of a review in 2019 that clearly showed that the demand in the Queensland Police Service had risen some 45 per cent in the previous years. What it clearly showed was that we had to improve our performance frameworks and that we had to optimise our service delivery. In order to optimise the service delivery, the service delivery program was introduced and there were some actual, extraordinary benefits in relation to that program. For the first time in our history of 150 years, we looked at the end-to-end system. From triaging at Policelink, to when the officers are called out to when they actually notify members of the community of what the outcome is. Ernst & Young did a review of that program and found that there were a lot of benefits to it. In fact when we surveyed the community afterwards, there was an increase in trust in police.

MR LAST interjected.

Commissioner Carroll: I need to explain this when I tell you the costs.

Mr LAST: The question was about cost.

CHAIR: Do not interrupt the witness.

Commissioner Carroll: The cost at the end of 30 June 2023 was \$8,708,000. I would say for what we got from it and the ongoing benefits, it was a good investment into the organisation.

Mr LAST: Out of that \$8 million, what was the total paid to consultants including Ernst & Young?

Commissioner Carroll: Ernst & Young was \$180,000, GSA was \$5.55 million and there was a further \$70,000 for ICT development to another company, but it is just not named in here.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, are any police districts still operating under the SDP model or components of that model and, if so, which ones?

Commissioner Carroll: Yes, so certainly still operating with components of that model in Moreton as well as Logan. There was an option where I encouraged district officers and assistant commissioners to look at the components of that model, because there are some definite benefits in the model.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, earlier I asked the Attorney regarding a suspected domestic violence perpetrator when they are hospitalised after an altercation. What processes or policies are in place when the hospital cannot retain them under a mental health or drugs issue? I understand there would be a protocol within the hospital, but from my understanding when police are contacted they are told that unless something has been done there is nothing to hold that perpetrator any longer. Is there anything that can be done when hospital staff are concerned but cannot hold somebody to prevent them being released back to where they can then do harm to their families?

Commissioner Carroll: It depends where that perpetrator sits in the scheme of things. The reason I say that is: if you look at our high-risk teams—and I will pick on Logan, and this is done around the state—they are categorised in terms of high risk, medium risk and low risk. Depending on where the perpetrator sits within that, there would be certain actions taken such that they would be checked up on and it would be checked that they would be abiding by their conditions, so certainly at the back end there is action in relation to those people. Across the state we have high-risk teams and we have a vulnerable persons unit, so the police would be well aware of who that is and, as I said, they would be addressed in terms of where they sit on that risk matrix and that risk scale.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, to be assessed for risk they would have to be somebody who had already come onto the radar of police, but for those who have not previously is there anything that hospital staff can do, such as call police, and is there anything then they can hold them on, especially at the request of families?

Commissioner Carroll: As you know, they would normally go in under what is an emergency mental health order, but certainly I would expect that hospitals would refer that to police because they would not have the powers to hold someone unless there is a reason to hold them, and that is coming through the police in the first instance.

Ms BOLTON: And police do have powers to hold them?

Commissioner Carroll: They can investigate initially and then if the investigation is substantiated, depending on what the matter is, they definitely have powers to hold them. It is not uncommon for us to hold people in hospitals—we will deploy police to do that—but it cannot be done unless there is an offence and it has been investigated.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr BERKMAN: Commissioner, I am sure you are aware that last Friday the Supreme Court found that three children were being unlawfully held in police watch houses because there was no order permitting their detention in a watch house. Based on that decision, can you advise the committee how many children have been unlawfully detained in watch houses over the past five years? If that is not a figure you have to hand, what are you, together with the youth justice department, doing to audit the records and determine the extent of that practice?

CHAIR: There is an inference in that question, but, Commissioner, can you shed any light on it?

Commissioner Carroll: I can shed light to add a part of that. Obviously as a result of those orders that was immediately rectified by the courts that day and the following day, so that rectifies everything into the future and those that were in custody, so that was pretty well rectified on those two days. What I cannot tell you at this stage—and we will try to get those numbers very quickly—is how many children that would relate to and how many children came into the watch house as a result of those orders previously.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you. I would appreciate that. As a further related question, have you or has QPS sought any advice more broadly as to whether the practice of holding remanded children in police watch houses for extended periods is in and of itself lawful?

CHAIR: That is seeking an opinion.

Mr BERKMAN: Point of order, Chair—

CHAIR: You just asked whether or not the commissioner thinks it is lawful. That is—

Mr BERKMAN: No, I am sorry; can I clarify the question, Chair? The question was: has QPS or the commissioner sought advice as to whether that practice is lawful. I am not seeking an opinion; I am seeking to learn whether or not that advice has been sought.

Commissioner Carroll: We are currently getting Crown Law advice, but it was in relation to the initial action, and, if you recall, there was an action prior to that about the practicality of police holding children in watch houses. I would have to find out whether we sought advice on the validity of the orders because that sits obviously with magistrates under the Youth Justice Act, so I will have to get that for you.

Mr BERKMAN: Okay. I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Mrs GERBER: The member for Scenic Rim has a question.

CHAIR: I call the member for Scenic Rim, but this will be the last question from the opposition.

Mr KRAUSE: My question is to the commissioner, and I refer to a QPS media statement dated 3 July this year which references a comparison of police numbers between 2015 and 2023 on the Gold Coast. Was 2015 referenced due to a suggestion from the minister's office to the QPS media unit?

Commissioner Carroll: I would have to look at that, but that would not be the case at all. I am not sure who would have done that media inquiry or release. Could I have that from you so I could get some further detail back to you, please?

CHAIR: Are you able to provide that?

Mr KRAUSE: I am happy to table the media release and also hand it over to the table.

Mr RYAN: It does not have to be tabled.

CHAIR: We can table it. Has a copy managed to make it over to you, Commissioner?

Commissioner Carroll: No.

Mrs GERBER: Can one of the attendants take that to the commissioner, please? Thank you.

Mr KRAUSE: Why was 2015 referenced?

Commissioner Carroll: Member, I will have to get further detail for you. I do not recall seeing this, so I will have to get further detail for you.

Mr KRAUSE: Would the minister be able to take that on notice?

Mr RYAN: We will come back by the end of the session.

CHAIR: Thank you. I now ask the member for Caloundra to ask the next question.

Mr HUNT: With reference to the budget measures in Budget Paper 4 and the government investment package of \$5.78 million to deliver enhanced emergency services capability across Queensland, will the commissioner please update the committee on the work of the Reform Implementation Taskforce?

Commissioner Carroll: Can I sincerely thank you for that question. I was on the original committee that looked at this, obviously, and I must say it is pretty exciting. We, as you know, have a lot to do with SES in our everyday business. We work very closely with Marine Rescue and it makes perfect sense that we align ourselves further and obviously when we looked at disaster management it kind of was a little bit in both agencies so it was incredibly important to streamline it. We are looking forward to this opportunity, to the staff coming over, but I do have here the deputy for disaster management who heads up that piece of work so I might get Shane Chelepy to speak to it if that is okay.

Deputy Commissioner Chelepy: Thank you, Commissioner. Informed by the Independent Review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Reform Implementation Taskforce was established and is responsible for the delivery of the 25 decisions of government relating to emergency management. This includes the establishment of Marine Rescue Queensland which will see Volunteer Coast Guard and Volunteer Marine Rescue activities come together, the expansion of the Queensland Police Service disaster management responsibilities, as well as the inclusion of the State Emergency Service and the new marine rescue service into the Queensland Police Service functioning with their own identity and their own uniforms within the organisation. In addition, the capability and capacity for the Queensland Reconstruction Authority will be increased with some disaster management functions to improve resilience for Queenslanders and the establishment of the new Queensland fire department which will encompass the Fire and Rescue Service, the Rural Fire Service, and the Chief Fire Officer.

The new Marine Rescue Queensland will strengthen the focus on Queenslanders both on our waterways and, broader, in our bluewater oceans. The Marine Rescue Implementation Program was established in 2020 and has now successfully transitioned from the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services across to the Reform Implementation Taskforce to work towards the establishment of Marine Rescue Queensland itself. It is expected that the operational disaster management functions will transition from the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services prior to 30 October this current year. The specialist working groups have been established to support these transitions across and they will report to the Reform Implementation Taskforce any gaps or challenges or mitigations that are required to ensure that we are able to maintain an uninterrupted delivery of services to Queensland this year while that transition is occurring and in the out years in our disaster management space.

The State Emergency Service team has also commenced work to scope and plan for staff resources—corporate staff—to enable the SES volunteers to continue to provide their services as part of the broader disaster management system to support their local communities. The transition team has commenced extensive engagement activities to inform the paid staff and the volunteers of the SES of the upcoming changes. Engagement with local government members who support SES through a very valuable partnership arrangement has been ongoing and is underway. A successful transition will ensure that the SES under QPS is able to continue to provide expert services to our severe storm and weather events in Queensland and will ensure that they continue keeping members of Queensland safe. The Reform Implementation Taskforce will directly lead to an increased number of resources and personnel in our emergency services, and as the State Disaster Coordinator I am really pleased to be able to say that this increase will enable us to continue to keep Queenslanders safe. Thank you.

Mr RYAN: I am conscious of time and I wanted to double-check the matters the secretariat had for us to come back to the committee on. My understanding was there was a matter for the member for Maiwar and then there was the matter in relation to the media release.

Mr LAST: And two others. The calendar year.

Commissioner Carroll: Yes, the calendar year. There were 227 new constables sworn in between 1 January and 31 July and 50 due to be sworn in on 31 August in Townsville. I also wanted to correct the record for myself, if I could. I think I said that there was 500 from overseas over five years. It is 500 a year over five years so it takes it to two and a half thousand, to correct that record. Also the police separations as at 31 July for the calendar year was 384 police separations. Member, in particular, also for the matter that you asked, the court proceedings last week were in relation to the nominated children. There were seven children nominated. To determine whether any children had been remanded in a similar manner would require individually reviewing every remand and seeing what orders the court made. That may be several hundred thousand. It would have to be a manual extraction of each of the orders from the courts.

CHAIR: On that basis, that is not a question that needs to be taken on notice.

Commissioner Carroll: In terms of the legal advice, it is still under consideration. The matter is still under consideration.

CHAIR: Do you think you will have the advice by 2 pm on Friday, 11 August?

Commissioner Carroll: I would say it would be extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible.

CHAIR: If it is available.

Mr RYAN: Chair, if I may, it would be likely subject to legal professional privilege anyway.

CHAIR: What is the other one?

Commissioner Carroll: There is the matter of a media release.

CHAIR: I understand it might be 2015, which was eons ago. Sorry, my mistake: it is 3 July 2023.

Commissioner Carroll: This was a local release. The media release as referenced in questioning was approved by Superintendent Geoff Sheldon in response to a media inquiry. That is all I have at this stage. As I say, I had not seen that. It is a local approval and as a result I cannot answer why 2015 was referenced.

CHAIR: I understand, as you just outlined, it was locally approved so therefore that is as far as you could take it.

Commissioner Carroll: That is as far as I can take it, but I can ask that superintendent. I get the impression that it was as a result of a media question.

CHAIR: If that is the case, Minister, do you want to take it on notice?

Mr RYAN: I have just had confirmation from my office that we had no input in that media release. They have checked the emails. We had no input.

CHAIR: You do not want to take it on notice?

Mr RYAN: Well, that is the answer.

CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn until 3 pm for the examination of the proposed expenditure for the corrective services portfolio. Can I thank everybody who has come along this afternoon for this part of the hearing. Thank you, Minister, staff and all the officers from the Queensland Police Service who are here this afternoon. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 2.48 pm to 3.00 pm.

CHAIR: Welcome, Minister, Commissioner and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the corrective services portfolio. 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 commissioner. Before we start with the member for Burdekin, I will introduce the member for Mirani, Mr Stephen Andrew. Welcome.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you, Chair.

Mr LAST: I have a question to the commissioner. I refer to the performance statement at pages 3 and 4 of the SDS and specifically the section headed 'Assault'. Both the target and the actual figures in that section refer to the rate of assaults. Commissioner, how many staff were victims of both serious assault and assault during the 2022-23 financial year?

Commissioner Stewart: In relation to assaults, from a Queensland Corrective Services perspective no assault is acceptable and we do everything that we can do in order to ensure our people are safe and protected. Assaults come in the categories of serious assault, assault and other assault. We monitor this very carefully through our operational performance review process. In relation to assaults, we ensure that our people are suitably trained in order to provide the best and the safest response from an operational skills and tactics process.

In relation to the number of assaults for the 2022-23 financial year, there were 11 victims of serious assault compared to 11 the previous year. The rate actually stayed the same for serious assault between the two financial years. In relation to assault, the number of victims in 2022-23 was 92 compared to 76 the previous year. That was an increase in the rate from 0.79 to 0.93. In relation to other assault—and this is for prisoner-on-officer assaults—the number in 2022-23 was 385 compared to 399 the previous year. That is a rate from 4.16 to 3.90. The rate has decreased in relation to other assaults.

By definition, serious assaults are those that would require hospitalisation overnight. In relation to assaults, they are a more general assault by nature, not requiring overnight hospitalisation but may require someone to go to either the medical centre or a hospital but not an overnight.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, how many people were successfully prosecuted for those offences?

Commissioner Stewart: In relation to an assault on our officers, of course, there is legislation in relation to assaulting an officer and there was an increase in relation to that. It is now a 14-year penalty. We have a process whereby our officers refer that to the corrective services investigation unit. They then investigate those matters and make a determination as to whether or not those matters are then prosecuted.

Mr LAST: Do you have the figures on how many were successfully prosecuted?

Commissioner Stewart: That would be a matter for the Queensland Police Service in relation to the data around successful prosecutions. We have the data in relation to the number of assaults and we refer those assaults to the Queensland Police Service for investigation.

Mr LAST: Do you have data on how many were charged?

Commissioner Stewart: Again, it is a matter for the Queensland Police Service to make that determination. They would require a sufficiency of evidence test to make that determination as to whether or not an individual is charged and then put before the court.

Mr LAST: Of those numbers that you have given me, were they all referred for investigation?

Commissioner Stewart: Officers have the individual choice and ability. Some officers, depending on the nature of the assault, may choose not to progress and not to put that forward. Obviously you would be required to give evidence in court in relation to that. We would encourage our people to report every assault. Every assault for us is something that should be investigated, that should

be followed through. It is similar, of course, to other members of the community who can make a determination in relation to whether or not they are prepared to put something forward, but we encourage our people to report those offences.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, at last year's estimates hearings we heard about a number of initiatives around safety. How many safety hatches were retrofitted to the older style doors in the 2022-23 financial year?

Commissioner Stewart: We received funding to retrofit a further 1,000 hatches in cell doors. We previously did a trial of 80 to make sure that we could actually construct those and retrofit them into the doors. Since that time we have installed 1,000 cuff hatches to, again, as you point out, support the safety of our people.

Mr LAST: How many does that leave to be fitted?

Commissioner Stewart: The commitment was for 1,000 cuff hatches to be installed across the system.

Mr LAST: Are all doors now retrofitted?

Commissioner Stewart: Not all doors are retrofitted. We retrofitted 1,000 doors and part of that is that not every door needs to be retrofitted. Cuff hatches are used, and the determination is made by the correctional centre in relation to the individuals who go into those cells. That is part of an assessment in relation to the risk that that individual poses to our people. We have sufficient hatches across the organisation to support the operational tactics that we use in relation to prisoners and to support the safety within our centres.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, how many staff are now trained to use and are equipped with OC spray?

Commissioner Stewart: Again, this is another form of extremely important equipment that our people use in relation to OC spray. The MK-3 OC spray is now provided personally to our people across the men's centres and also across the escort and security areas. Each and every officer has the ability to carry MK-3 oleoresin capsicum spray in order to use it as required. We also have MK-4, which is a slightly larger version of the spray, and then also MK-9, which is a fogger. Each and every one of our officers has access on shift to MK-3 OC spray.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, at the estimates hearing last year the minister, in response to questions on staff assaults, said 'additional training is being rolled out to custodial officers'. How many staff completed that additional training in the 2022-23 financial year?

Commissioner Stewart: The training would have been in relation to Maybo training, which is engagement training. For our officers there was also operational skills and tactics training. Our people undergo a lot of training across the organisation in relation to the work that they do. The operational skills and tactics training was based on work that we did looking at other jurisdictions and coming up with the best model that we could for our people in relation to operational skills and tactics. The Maybo training is to support our people to ensure they are engaging with prisoners from a dynamic, safety and security perspective.

Mr LAST: Can you confirm that all staff have completed that additional training, or are there still some staff to receive that training?

Commissioner Stewart: Minister, that may be something that I can get through custodial operations before the end of this hearing. I do not have it before me.

Mr RYAN: We will come back. I know it is at the academy for new officers.

Commissioner Stewart: Our intention was for every officer to be trained in Maybo in relation to it. I will check with custodial operations just to check and make sure. The operational skills and tactics training, again, every officer should have been provided that training and they indeed are reaccredited and trained on a three-year cycle in relation to that as well.

Mr RYAN: Gary, do you know?

Deputy Commissioner McCahon: I do not have that information. I will get the number.

Mr RYAN: We will come back.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I am happy for you to conduct that research in the background. How many body worn cameras were rolled out to custodial corrections officers in the 2022-23 financial year?

Commissioner Stewart: We now have 720 body worn cameras throughout our organisation. That is on top of the existing. I will just get the numbers in relation to that, but my understanding of it was that a further approximately 500 were rolled out across the state. We now have 720 body worn cameras.

Mr LAST: How many does that now leave to be provided before everyone has one? How many more do you need?

Commissioner Stewart: In our environment we have the body worn camera available for specific locations within custodial operations. They are not a single issue. People use the body worn camera on a shift and then pass that on to the next person on the shift. The 720 that we have gives us the ability to ensure that all of our really key areas of risk have body worn cameras present.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, how many inmates across your facilities have been charged with drug related offences in the past 12 months?

Commissioner Stewart: Contraband, of course in the form of drugs, is a significant issue for us. Our position is to have zero tolerance in relation to contraband and, in particular, in relation to drugs. We have a whole range of processes that we deploy in order to defeat people attempting to bring contraband into our area. That includes PADD dogs, the drug dogs in the visitor areas and of course within the centres. Another way potentially of people attempting to bring drugs into our centres is through drones. We have ways to defeat drones as well. We also have searches, intelligence and a whole range of practices.

Mr LAST: Just a number, thanks, Commissioner.

Commissioner Stewart: There were in total in relation to contraband—and this is not just drugs of course; this covers drugs, phones and a whole range of matters—4,422 incidents of contraband that were located across the organisation. In relation particularly and specifically to drug related contraband, 2,431 were identified of which they would have been referred to the Queensland Police Service. We have had some significant operations with the Queensland Police Service that target visits and target centres. At Woodford recently, there was a significant detection of an individual attempting to bring drugs into the centre. Our people are alert to this. They are alive to it. They are doing everything that they can in order to stop it. At this moment, everything is referred to the Queensland Police Service for them to make a determination as to whether or not they will charge people and follow through with that.

Mr LAST: Is that number—2,431—an increase on last year or a decrease?

Commissioner Stewart: I do not have that figure, but we continually monitor that through our operational performance review process. Again, these are figures that we have had to actually go through the system and manually determine to understand exactly what is happening in our centre. I do not have that comparison. That is something that in the future we will continue to compare as we move forward.

Mr LAST: Minister, the commissioner has just advised this committee of the assault numbers. The budget documents clearly show that not one of the targets for assaults in corrections centres has been achieved in five years. Minister, what action are you taking to keep correction services staff safe?

Mr RYAN: The commissioner has also just outlined the government's investment in safety equipment and safety training.

Mr LAST: I want to know what you are doing.

Mr RYAN: Well I have advocated for those investments and, as the responsible minister, I have delivered those investments. A couple of years ago—I remember the conversation very well—former commissioner Peter Martin and I discussed the importance of the rollout of load-bearing vests. That was a conversation I initiated and that was delivered. In fact, the member for Caloundra was one of the recipients of those vests and he would actually remember some of the conversations about body worn cameras that took place in his previous role. It is interesting that we raise the body worn camera issue, because that is also about some levers that both the commissioner and I have been able to pull by working in partnership with the Queensland Police Service. In fact, a cache of cameras that were to be renewed by the Queensland Police Service has been delivered to Queensland Corrective Services to support the safety of custodial officers. It was I who brought legislation into the parliament doubling the penalty—14 years—for serious assaults on custodial officers. There is the record budget, the investment in new infrastructure, bunk beds, a new prison at Gatton, supporting and enabling the commissioner and his team to roll out new training.

There is a significant investment that this government has made. I also remember the rollout of OC spray. That was again a matter which was raised by the member for Caloundra and his colleagues in a previous role and something that commissioner Martin and I both supported. That of course complemented the vests that were rolled out. It was a significant investment. In fact, in the last 12 months the budget has increased by 20 per cent for Queensland Corrective Services. That also supports the additional staff which will be employed as a result of the double up model which, again, both the commissioner and I have been strong advocates for in convincing others in government around the support for that particular model.

Member, there is a long list of investments. You only have to look at the budget papers to see the investment made and to listen to the commissioner about the work being done. Of course, we do not want any assaults on anyone in correctional centres. The professional staff in Queensland Corrective Services work very hard every single day to prevent that but, ultimately, you are dealing with people who have very complex needs. Some of them have very violent tendencies. Despite the most professional, most equipped staff in the nation—and it is recognised that Queensland Corrective Services is amongst the best trained, best resourced and best paid in the nation as a result of their last EB—you still are dealing with complex people, some of them with very violent outlooks. Despite your best efforts, sometimes your best efforts are defeated by those violent people.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to staffing on page 5 of the SDS. How many staff do you currently have working on GPS monitoring of young offenders and other offenders? How many offenders does QCS monitor?

Commissioner Stewart: The electronic monitoring and surveillance unit is a part of our high-risk offender management unit. They do an outstanding job in relation to monitoring dangerous prisoner sex offenders, parolees and also our young people. They are the three cohorts of people that we have. We have 41 people currently employed. Also, we do have the ability to bring in casual people on a needs basis in relation to that. Their role, as well as electronic monitoring, is also around surveillance and escorting in those circumstances. Of course, they monitor, as I said, parolees, young people, the dangerous prisoner sex offenders—depending on the cohort—any alarms that go off or anything like that, anyone who tampers and anyone who goes into an area that they are not meant to be in. They will then respond to that and provide that information to the Queensland Police Service or, indeed, if it is a battery issue, they will contact the individual to ensure they recharge the battery et cetera. They are constantly working in relation to electronic monitoring and surveillance.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, can you confirm that staff are actually monitoring those devices 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Commissioner Stewart: Yes, I can.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, would you say that the ability of the QCS to monitor offenders is equal to the monitoring services provided by private companies?

Commissioner Stewart: I would not be in a position to make any comparison. All I know is that the work our people do is of a high level. I compliment them for that work and the work they do 24/7 monitoring those individuals.

Mr LAST: How much and which private companies is your government currently paying for GPS monitoring that could be undertaken by the QCS?

Mr RYAN: There is a partnership that exists for the QCS monitoring program with a technology provider. That technology provider is Buddi. They provide the devices as well as the connectivity. I can get that information for you in a moment. That work is around the provision of the devices and connectivity. As outlined by the commissioner, the monitoring is done by highly trained Queensland Corrective Services staff. Within the Queensland Corrective Services framework that is the connection. Buddi is a partner but they provide the devices and the connectivity, but the monitoring is done by the QCS.

Mr LAST: Do you have that figure for Buddi?

Mr RYAN: I will get the figure. From memory the contract is some millions. I will get you the exact figure. I do not have it in front of me at the moment.

CHAIR: We will move to the member for Noosa for a question.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, can you update us on any progress regarding efforts to reduce the number of prisoners who are eligible for parole but have not been able to provide the required details of accommodation that they will be able to go to?

Commissioner Stewart: That is an important part of parole determinations. Of course, the determination on parole is a matter for the Parole Board Queensland—an independent authority that makes the decisions and the determinations in relation to parole. Accommodation is one of the significant risk factors in relation to people who are released from custody transitioning into the community. In order to ensure they have the best chance of success on parole, accommodation, employment, family support and other supports are the important factors. Our Community Corrections people do accommodation risk assessments and provide that information to the Parole Board when they are making their determinations. From our perspective, we fully support the role and the need for those who are ready and eligible for parole to safely exit custody and be supported on parole.

We work very closely with the Department of Housing in relation to housing stock that is available through the public housing process. We work very closely with other partners such as St Vincent's that have accommodation that they provide for people exiting custody. In addition to that, we have re-entry services in the men's and women's prisons across the state. The re-entry people have significant contacts throughout the community in relation to housing and housing stock.

We then have to overlay community safety. Community safety is at the core of everything we and the Parole Board Queensland do—without speaking for the Parole Board Queensland. We need to ensure that the accommodation that is identified is in a safe location, does not impact any victims or any concerns that might be raised by any victims, and provides support for those people to ensure they are not then in a position where they could potentially reoffend.

In answer to your question, we are doing everything we can. We see that as one of the most critical elements of release on parole. We do everything we can to support people, acknowledging that it is difficult to find appropriate housing for people.

Ms BOLTON: Since last estimates, have the statistics improved? We did hear last estimates and in inquiries that there were a lot of people sitting there who could be paroled but could not be because, even though we have all of those agencies, accommodation could not be found.

Commissioner Stewart: Minister, I do not know that that would be something for us to answer. From our perspective, we do everything we can and the Parole Board are the people who make the determination in relation to parole.

Mr RYAN: The President of the Parole Board is available to answer the question.

Ms BOLTON: If you want to take that on notice given the time constraints, that would be fine.

Mr RYAN: The president is available.

CHAIR: Can I invite you to come forward, please.

Mr Byrne: As the commissioner has explained, it is not a simple process. Community Corrections, which is an arm of Corrective Services, assesses all accommodation for prisoners who are vying for parole being granted by the board. What the board has introduced to try to fast-track the process, because the provision of housing is outside our province, is a system whereby if a person is ready for parole so far as risk is concerned, so far as they have done the appropriate programs and so far as they have support, both professional and/or family, then we grant the prisoner parole subject to finding accommodation. That, from discussions, assists the housing organisations such as CREST to prioritise that prisoner for accommodation and they work through it that way.

We also fast-track at our end in the sense that, once that stage is reached, the board delegates the authority to approve an address to the chair of the particular board making the decision in consultation with the Public Service representative who liaises with Community Corrections about that. From the Parole Board point of view, that is how we do the best to minimise the time that prisoners spend in prison simply for want of housing. I do not have the exact numbers in front of me, but I can try to obtain those.

Ms BOLTON: That would be good. In one of our inquiries, Sisters Inside said that each time an address was given only one would be accepted instead of being able to put, say, three addresses for the Parole Board to check. What was slowing the process was that only one address could be given per application and if that was rejected then they had to go back and start the process again.

Mr Byrne: The commissioner may be able to answer that more directly, but certainly from the parole point of view it is outside our control. We welcome the addresses being given to us. I am not sure of the process, but we often get more than one submitted by prisoners. Sometimes none are suitable and sometimes two are suitable and then we try to approve both so that there is flexibility in the management of that person in the community.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, you spoke of employment—and part of that is the work skills programs. In terms of the reforms facilitating the transfer of adult detainees out of youth detention into the adult correctional system, what impact is that having given previously we heard that the work skills programs were not being delivered appropriately because of overcrowding in prisons?

Commissioner Stewart: We have a number of programs and experiences in industries that we offer prisoners across the state. As I said before, employment is a critical element of success for people leaving our custodial centres or, alternatively, going onto parole. Interestingly enough, across the state we have a whole raft of opportunities for prisoners, whether it is learning skills in laundry, sewing, metalwork or painting. We have a lot of processes with agencies where people attain certificate IIIs or certificate IVs in skills across the organisation. Whilst a youth coming out may not have the exact program to follow on with, we would work with that individual to determine what is the best that we can offer them within our system. There are raft of opportunities in relation to industries and processes as well as numeracy and literacy and education.

Ms BOLTON: So there has been no detrimental effect to youth transitioning out of the youth sector to the adult sector?

Commissioner Stewart: My position would be that we would be able to offer individuals the chance to gain skills in relation to meaningful employment. The other thing is that we have work camps throughout the state as well. People in areas such as Innisfail and Julia Creek speak so highly of individuals. There is a work camp at Winton that I visited recently. One of the individuals there indicated that he was a boilermaker. When he finished his sentence, he gained employment in Winton. It is a significant focus of ours in relation to rehabilitation and wanting to stop reoffending.

CHAIR: I go to the member for Mirani.

Mr ANDREW: With reference to page 3 of the SDS and assaults on officers, I have received letters from staff at Capricornia Correctional Centre in my electorate who are saying there is a critical lack of experienced officers at the facility. One letter makes specific reference to the lack of support correctional officers are receiving from either their union or various government statutory bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission who they have gone to for help. I would like to understand what the minister and the commissioner are doing to recruit qualified and experienced officers to regional prisons such as Capricornia in my electorate and what mentoring programs are in place for new recruits to help reduce the incidents of assaults on staff?

Mr RYAN: I am happy to say a couple of words and then let the commissioner say a couple of words. The Capricornia Correctional Centre in Rockhampton has recently been expanded. It has some of the newest accommodation in the state. Alongside that, there was a localised recruitment campaign which had some success in getting additional staff.

Across the state—and regional Queensland will be a beneficiary of this—Queensland Corrective Services has recently launched its major recruitment campaign. You may see billboards around about people having the opportunity to join Queensland Corrective Services. It is a very rewarding career. In fact, it is an occupation where people can get a really good work-life balance because of the 12-hour shifts that correctional officers work. Essentially, you can work three shifts a week then you have the rest of the week to engage in other activities or contribute in other ways. Commissioner, do you want to add more around the recruitment at Capricornia?

Commissioner Stewart: I acknowledge the chief superintendent and the superintendents, the general manager and the deputy general managers for the work they do—and, indeed, the whole staff at Capricornia. They work exceptionally well and together. As the minister said, we did have a significant expansion there in recent times and there has been a significant body of recruitment. We have increased the number of assessment centres that we run in order to recruit people and get people in. We have also introduced a mentoring program for senior officers to mentor new people coming in, in a formalised way, across the state. We are trialling that and rolling that out as well from a mentor perspective.

I have been to Capricornia recently. Their engagement with their local union is a matter for them, but we continue to work together obviously to support our people from a safety and security perspective. In relation to the training, as I said before, we have operational skills and tactics training. I can inform the member that every one of our people across the state, I have been advised by custodial operations, have completed that training. Everyone fundamentally continues to receive the latest in training and the latest in equipment. Again, the advice and the data that we see coming out of Capricornia in our operational performance review process is that the people in that centre are doing an outstanding job.

In relation to human rights, interestingly enough, responses to surveys that I see show that our people across the board have an 80 per cent understanding and recognition of the importance of human rights within our centre—for each other and for prisoners—and have significant knowledge in relation to human rights. Again, from time to time matters are raised through the industrial relations process. We work together and attend the industrial commission in order to resolve any incidents that come forward.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you very much for that answer. I am trying to support the officers. I know it is a tough gig.

Commissioner Stewart: Thanks, member. Our people do an outstanding job across the board, whether it is community corrections or custodial. Thank you for your comments.

CHAIR: Minister, I owe you an apology. In my opening comments I omitted to invite you to make an opening statement. Before I call the member for Cooper, I invite you belatedly to make an opening statement. I apologise again, Minister.

Mr RYAN: That is okay. I understand that the remaining time is probably for government members anyway, so I do not want to take away from their questions.

CHAIR: Yes, it is.

Mr RYAN: I did want to make one small announcement. I have been in conversations with the Mayor of the Lockyer Valley Tanya Milligan around her support for the new prison at Gatton. She is a strong supporter of Queensland Corrective Services and also the economic benefits that flow from the workforce and the economic activity that flows around a correctional centre. We are getting to the pointy end now around the delivery of that project. Construction is going very well. In fact, I have some aerial photos for people to see later on about how the construction is going. It is a massive facility—over 1,500 beds.

We are now in a position where we are able to announce the name for the correctional centre. A number of people were asked about their ideas—the commissioner, me, the mayor, the inaugural general manager, as well as other stakeholders—and, coincidentally, they all came up with the same name. It was extraordinary, wasn't it, Commissioner? I am pleased to say that the new correctional facility will be called the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre. The Mayor of the Lockyer Valley is very excited about that. I am happy to take some questions now from government members.

CHAIR: I call on the member for Cooper to ask the first government question.

Ms BUSH: My first question is in relation to the Parole Board, which, as you know, is an interest of mine. In relation to Budget Paper No. 4, can the minister please advise how this budget will strengthen the work of the Parole Board?

Mr RYAN: The president is here. I would like to acknowledge the president of the Parole Board, as well as his team who work very hard in the interests of community safety to ensure appropriate awards of parole and that there are appropriate conditions that go along with anyone who is granted parole. The evidence is very clear. If someone can be successful on parole, that is a benefit to community safety and it is also a benefit to their rehabilitation.

There is significant investment in this year's budget in the Parole Board. We are not just continuing the temporary operating teams—temporary teams 4, 5 and 6—for another two years but creating a 7th temporary operating team, not only to manage demand but also to allow the Parole Board capacity to invest their efforts in some very innovative projects. One of those initiatives is called the Culturally Engaged Release of Indigenous Parolees. There is investment in administrative positions on that. Also, it will be supported by the investment in the additional temporary operating team.

For those who are interested, this is an initiative that was developed by the board itself in recognition of the over-representation of First Nations people in custody. It sees a collaborative and culturally sensitive approach to the board's consideration of eligible First Nations prisoners' parole applications. This is where it is really important I think. There is a lot for us to learn from First Nations people and a lot for us to hear from First Nations people.

What is this approach? It involves the board engaging with community justice groups from the community the prisoner is from. This comprises elders and respected community members. It is a consideration that happens through the parole process. I have an example of how successful this has been. A 35-year-old First Nations man from Hope Vale had significant criminal history, including domestic violence. His application for parole was heard through this initiative. The board and the Hope Vale Community Justice Group met. They met with this person in prison and they conducted the board

hearing at the prison. Following his release the man has successfully completed his parole supervision and other programs. He has engaged with domestic violence counsellors and begun work on Aboriginal artwork for his church and community. He also now assists with community events. The community justice group said that his progress has been excellent. He has also sought to help government agencies with their work, and recently he assisted the police during a period of community unrest in Hope Vale. What an extraordinary turnaround, all because the Parole Board had an open mind and innovative approach to engage with First Nations people and listen to them and their communities about what is best for them. Thanks, member, for raising it, and thanks again to the president.

Ms BUSH: Commissioner, I was so excited to read this article from ABC News Online. I will refer to it. I have brought copies I can table for the committee. The article is about a recycling scheme that is occurring at Lotus Glen. Can you tell us a bit more about the program and whether there are any other initiatives under consideration to cut down on waste in prisons or reduce Corrective Services' carbon footprint.

Commissioner Stewart: Indeed, it is a great piece of work from Lotus Glen Correctional Centre. It also fits in with future employment prospects for our prisoners, which I was speaking to the member about previously. QCS is committed to sustainable initiatives to reduce our carbon fingerprint. Lotus Glen Correctional Centre contributed to this priority through their Environmental Management Recycling Program, which started in 2022 after it was identified that 50 tonnes of rubbish per month, including food and plastic waste, were going to landfill. Today around 700 kilograms of waste is collected and sorted each day, with up to an additional 500 kilograms of food waste.

The program employs 32 prisoners, teaching them skills in waste management with the potential for formal qualification pathways which are currently being explored. It also raises broader awareness throughout the correctional centre about environmental and sustainable practices. The recycling program includes food waste, cardboard, aluminium and tin cans, milk bottles and lids, wood shavings, steel and brass, mattresses, clothing and electronic waste.

Since the commencement of the program approximately 180 tonnes of food waste alone has been diverted from landfill, which has prevented an estimated 12,000 kilograms of methane being released into the atmosphere. Nine skip bins of non-recyclable waste were previously used in the secure area to manage waste. This has now been reduced to two. It is estimated that \$45,000 will be saved annually in disposal fees let alone as a result of streamlining waste management practices in Lotus Glen Correctional Centre. I am aware that correctional centres across the state are considering replicating this scheme.

Across our agency our officers are continuing to explore options to reduce their carbon fingerprint. At the Commissioner's Awards for Excellence the other day an officer from Palen Creek, the low-custody centre, came forward with a proposal to plant a particular species of tree at Palen Creek that would offset our carbon fingerprint as well. That is just a highlight of the innovation and confidence that our people have in looking at new and important ways to not only reduce the impact on the environment but also provide prisoners with future employment possibilities.

Mr HUNT: Will the minister provide an update on any emerging technologies being investigated and how these new technologies might assist in delivering safe and effective corrective services?

Mr RYAN: We had a little bit of a discussion before around body worn cameras and the obvious safety benefits they bring in certain places during particular interactions. Queensland Corrective Services is investing in other technologies as well to not only enhance rehabilitation opportunities but also ensure that a custodial officer's time is best focused on supporting the rehabilitation of a prisoner. You know from previous experience, member for Caloundra, that there is often a lot of paperwork that goes along with being a custodial officer. If we are able to streamline processes by using technology, your time as a custodial officer can be better focused on maintaining safety and security and enhancing rehabilitation opportunities.

The budget has made an allocation towards scoping up the concept of in-cell technology. This is used in other jurisdictions around Australia and the world. Even the basics of being able to have a prisoner check their own learning and education materials rather than a hard copy necessarily being delivered to the prisoner is an advantage, as well as supporting better connection through connecting with family outside of prison, as we saw during COVID with the use of virtual visits technology. Of course people could not visit the prison because of COVID restrictions, but being able to maintain connectivity in a supervised way between prisoners and their families enhances their rehabilitation opportunities. The investment we are going to make in in-cell technology is not only intended to enhance those rehabilitation opportunities but also streamline the process. I will give you another example around trust

accounts. Rather than the prisoner needing to ask every second day how much is in their trust account, the prisoner will have the ability to access technology so they can check it themselves. This not only saves a lot of time for the custodial officer but also empowers the prisoner.

There is some other great work we are doing around the ability to use wastewater testing technology to see what possible contraband may be circulating in a prison. That also helps with detection strategies and cooperation activities with the Queensland Police Service. There is significant investment going on there. The final piece to highlight is the new body scanners that we are hoping to bring online to detect contraband not only better and more effectively but in a more dignified way which does not require the removal of clothing for that search. That is in the process of being rolled out. In fact, the body scanners have been incorporated into the new Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre, and the intention is to first roll them out in female prisons across the state.

Ms BUSH: Commissioner, this committee recently completed an inquiry into the support provided to victims of crime. Can you please advise what work is being done to ensure victims and their families are sufficiently supported by Queensland Corrective Services and to ensure their needs can be met?

Commissioner Stewart: It is very important work that we as an organisation do. In particular, our victims register group is a group of very dedicated, caring and professional people who really go the extra mile in order to support victims, as they should. Queensland Corrective Services also works closely with our justice system partners, including the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and a number of other stakeholders and advocacy groups, to support victims of crime. One key way that QCS ensures that victims of crime are supported and that they have a voice is through the important work of our Victims Register. The register provides eligible persons with information about important events in the sentences of relevant prisoners including: eligibility dates for discharge or release; dates of discharge or release; and any circumstances relating to the prisoner that may endanger the eligible person's physical life or safety. As I said before, everything we do is predicated on community safety. That is our priority and focus.

Importantly, victims who are registered are supported to make a written submission when a prisoner applies for parole or when an order subject to the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003 is being considered. In a submission, victims can detail the impact that the prisoner's offending has had on them and others and any safety concerns they may have for themselves and others should the prisoner be released on parole or subject to a community supervision order. It gives them an important voice in relation to the process.

In 2022-23 the QCS Victims Register participated in 73 interagency meetings, stakeholder engagement sessions and victims support events to promote the register and investigate ways to ensure a more streamlined response to victims across the justice system. QCS is committed to protecting domestic and family violence victims. Domestic and family violence victims since 2017 are now able to register on the Victims Register. We are committed to protecting victims from further trauma. Where QCS intelligence holdings that a prisoner has breached a non-contact order, all relevant information is referred to police for investigation.

QCS utilises domestic and family violence information to inform critical risk areas, such as visits, prisoner telephone calls, case management and the accommodation approval process for paroled prisoners. QCS is committed to ensuring offender accountability and rehabilitating perpetrators of domestic and family violence through rigorous case management, high-risk teams and evidence-based programs to reduce reoffending and to protect the community. QCS delivers an in-prison Disrupting Family Violence Program for domestic and family violence perpetrators. A key feature of the model is a contracted victim advocacy service supporting partners or ex-partners of those engaged in the program. That was found to be a critical and important part of running those programs. Unfortunately, many QCS supervised individuals have also been victims of domestic and family violence, and our community corrections people work very closely to ensure that they have safety management plans and use a trauma informed approach as a key focus during people's supervision, ensuring that they are referred to appropriate victim advocacy services in their local area.

Member, you can see that we are doing so much in relation to victims and it is a really critical and important part of our area. I do acknowledge again the Victims Register people for the critical, important and sensitive work that they do.

CHAIR: Minister, how is Queensland Corrective Services planning for the future to ensure that there is sufficient and suitable prisoner placement options across Queensland's custodial estate? Does this differ from approaches of previous governments?

Mr RYAN: Obviously, there has been significant investment in infrastructure under our government. In fact by the time the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre will open, this government will have delivered over 6,000 beds to correctional capacity across the state. From a totals perspective, there is currently more beds than prisoners in the system. When Lockyer Valley opens, that will add 1,500 beds. We also have another round of the bunk bed program which will deploy hopefully another 500 beds over the next 12 to 18 months. We are also continuing to invest in the future. If you want to have tough laws with strong penalties, you have to accept that there will be growing prisoner numbers. Despite the expert efforts of Queensland Corrective Services to rehabilitate, if you are going to strengthen penalties and laws and have new offences, which this government has done, then you will have more people in custody. That is a fact.

An example is the offence of strangulation which did not exist before our government came to power. Just this year, over 2,000 people have been charged with strangulation. That is a very serious offence and generally leads to that person having some sort of custodial sentence. I hear the commentary around people and growing prisoner numbers, but if you are going to have a new offence like strangulation and you are going to have an expectation that that person has a significant consequence for that action, then you will have growing prisoner numbers. That is why we have made the investments to date and why we will continue to make investments.

One matter to highlight for the future is the investment in this budget around planning for expanded capacity at Townsville. There is money in the budget for pre-commencement activities, including design work, site investigations and other preliminary works for the expansion of that precinct. The other one is the establishment of some new facilities in the Wacol precinct. That is a total investment of \$30 million. You have to do the planning and you have to do the design work. Obviously the government is committed to doing that work because we have got to be responsive around prisoner numbers and also the demand across the system.

CHAIR: Minister, there were some questions that were taken on notice or that you were going to come back to us before we close. Can you address them please if you are able?

Mr RYAN: Certainly. I want to give some information around the GPS monitoring. I have some strong advice that QCS is currently in the tender process for the next contract of GPS monitoring so I do not want to be too specific. I can give the overall number. When the government expanded its use of GPS monitoring technology into parole, the government committed \$35 million over five years. Obviously, how much you spend each year depends on prisoner numbers, whether people damage devices and the like. I wanted to give that high level number but I also wanted to highlight that I do not want to prejudice the current tender that is underway. The Commissioner will add to another answer.

Commissioner Stewart: In relation to Maybo training, we have trained 24 custodial officers to be train the trainers. They are out and about in the centres and training. Definitely we have got approximately 237 who have received it, but that is something we will continue to roll out over the next period of time. That will be a body of work we continue with. In relation to the operational skills and tactics, every officer has received that updated operational skills and tactics.

CHAIR: There was a question from the member for Noosa which I think may have been directed to the president of the Parole Board. It was in relation to prisoners who may have been eligible for parole but do not meet the criteria for accommodation.

Commissioner Stewart: Minister, through you, I have a response to that. As of 7 August 2023 there were 204 prisoners granted parole subject to prisoners obtaining accommodation that is approved by the board. It was 204 prisoners as of 7 August who were waiting a determination in relation to that accommodation.

Ms BOLTON: Does that include those who were not waiting on a determination—that basically there was no accommodation that could be provided so they could not even submit?

Commissioner Stewart: No. That is the number who are subject to accommodation only, so they are just waiting for an approval from the board in relation to that accommodation.

Ms BOLTON: Is that a reduction from last year?

Commissioner Stewart: I am sorry, Member, I would need to—

Ms BOLTON: That is okay.

Mr RYAN: I have been asked to clarify. Obviously, that number to expand GPS monitoring to parolees, which is \$35 million over five years, also includes the staffing component at QCS to support that monitoring. I cannot for probity reasons get into the exact amount for the particular contract because we are out to tender.

CHAIR: Minister, would you like to make a brief closing statement?

Mr RYAN: I will save that for the end of the next session.

CHAIR: The committee will now take a break, with the hearing to resume at 4.15 pm with the examination of the proposed expenditure for the Fire and Emergency Services portfolio area.

Proceedings suspended from 3.59 pm to 4.15 pm.

CHAIR: I welcome the minister, commissioner, inspector and other officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the fire and emergency services portfolio areas. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister, the commissioner or inspector. I invite the minister to make an opening statement if he so desires before I call for questions.

Mr RYAN: Thank you, Chair. I have a brief opening statement. We are all united in agreeing that our frontline Fire and Emergency Services personnel go above and beyond to keep the community safe. Sadly, this year we have seen tragedies that have reverberated not only through the department but also through the entire state. We tragically lost firefighter Izzy Nash in the line of duty earlier this year. She was a brave firefighter, a true Queenslander, a true hero and forever always ready. Over the weekend, the horrific tragedy on Russell Island once again left Queensland in shock. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of the victims and the whole Russell Island community. Our brave Fire and Emergency Services personnel were there to help not only in the initial moments of the tragedy but also continue to be there to investigate and help and support the community to recover.

This year there is a record \$1.04 billion Queensland Fire and Emergency Services budget, and this represents an over \$100 million increase on last year. It includes a record \$125 million in capital works, a record almost \$58 million for the State Emergency Service, a record of over \$101 million for the Rural Fire Service and a record \$548 million Fire and Rescue Service budget. These budgets mean more staff, more training, more facilities, more resources and more equipment for our essential Fire and Emergency Services personnel. It also includes funding for a pipeline of 412 Rural Fire Service vehicles on top of the 413 Rural Fire Service vehicles already delivered by this government. It continues the rollout of almost 4,500 new firefighter helmets which include the latest in communications accessories, with the first helmets already delivered and others being fitted to firefighters across the state. I have one here for members to inspect after this session should they be interested. They will be very impressed by the quality as well as the technology.

This budget also continues funding for our large air tanker which is due to arrive next month to support bushfire-fighting efforts, and it boosts our aerial firefighting fleet with an additional investment of over \$17 million over three years. The Palaszczuk government is steadfastly committed to increasing community safety, and our pipeline investment for better fire and emergency services clearly demonstrates that. It is our commitment to back the front line every single day. Thank you, Chair. The commissioner and I are happy to take questions.

CHAIR: Member for Burdekin, would you like to start?

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the capital program, page 5 of the SDS, specifically the reference to land acquisitions. Commissioner, how many QFES facilities have been built on or bordering flood zones, tsunami evacuation zones or storm tide evacuation zones in the last three years?

Commissioner Leach: Good afternoon. As the minister indicated, we have a significant capital works budget that is underway this year. \$64.5 million in total with \$28.08 million of major capital works underway. In 2022-23, QFES acquired land and buildings throughout Queensland to the value of \$17.98 million. That was including land for new and replacement QFES facilities. For example, at Northgate we bought land for a replacement Brisbane region mechanical workshop—

Mr LAST: Commissioner, sorry, the question was how many of those have been built on flood zones, evacuation zones, storm tide zones. I appreciate that you are building facilities across the state. How many have been built in those areas?

Commissioner Leach: We will get that detail for you. I do not have it in the brief that is in front of me at the moment. I can give you the locations while we get the information.

Mr LAST: I am happy to move onto the next question.

Commissioner Leach: Sure.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I would like to table Townsville City Council flood map and tsunami evacuation zone maps for 80 Webb Drive, Mount St John. These maps show 80 Webb Drive as a yellow coloured box.

Mrs GERBER: Chair, we are seeking permission to table these.

Mr LAST: And the commissioner needs to see it.

CHAIR: Leave is granted. I would like you, Commissioner, to have the ability to look at what you are getting. Commissioner, you will be more across this type of information than I will ever be.

Commissioner Leach: I am familiar with the address the member is referring to.

CHAIR: I will give you time to have a look at that, Commissioner and Acting Deputy Commissioner.

Commissioner Leach: What I am looking at is a tsunami map which has an area of inundation. It is demonstrating 80 Webb Drive in the yellow square. Without looking at the detail of this in terms of what the—

Mr LAST: My question, Commissioner, now that you have had time to look at it is: do you acknowledge that the northern region emergency services complex is an area that may be inundated by up to two metres of floodwater?

Commissioner Leach: Yes, in the event of a tsunami at whatever the rate this map depicts. In our preparations to take over that site we looked extensively at the history of events in that area and we talked with council about the uplift that has been done on that site. All of these things are a risk assessment at a point in time. We determined that the tsunami risk to that site would not be significant if you look at how often an event like that might occur.

Mr LAST: Is that risk assessment available to the general public?

Commissioner Leach: I will ask Acting Deputy Commissioner Adam Stevenson, who oversees our capital works, to talk about that in more detail.

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: I do not think we will have that data on all of the sites across those disasters that you note. What I can say is that for all of our facilities and particularly for combined locations like that, we do apply the one-in-100-year and one-in-500-year flood mitigation mapping process. Where possible we try to step outside of where there has been any flooding in that one-in-500 year scenario. As you know, within Townsville there was a one-in-1,000-year event in 2019.

Our previous footprint in Townsville, to be honest, was a little bit all over the place. There were leased facilities in areas that were in worse flood zones than that particular site, particularly the SES site and in leased facilities in the town. We are trying to get a footprint that will mitigate us having multiple locations where we have both staff and equipment trapped and unable to be deployed during a significant event.

Mr LAST: Do you acknowledge then that, given that it is an emergency services facility and it would also, I would envisage, be a command post during a disaster event, it is important that that facility be above inundation levels?

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: Yes. We worked with a particular developer who we secured that facility through. It is already elevated significantly throughout the facility. In fact, he added an extra foot, I believe, of secure concrete at the back for the SES storage facility. He also strengthened the front windows of the location to withstand a category 5 cyclone.

Mr LAST: Again, can that risk assessment be produced? Are you able to take that request on notice?

Commissioner Leach: There is no physical risk assessment. What I am talking about is an assessment of the risk relative to all the information we collected from local government in our discussions with the developer and local government, taking into account the various natural disasters that might occur in that area. We also have a network of incident control centres across North Queensland in the event that we are not able to operate here. If we are talking about a one-in-250-year to one-in-5,000-year event, chances are a lot of facilities will be inundated along the coast and we would be pulling back to other incident control centres in other locations.

Mr LAST: Yet by your own admission in 2019, some four years ago, there was a one-in-1,000-year event in that community, so it can happen.

Commissioner Leach: Yes, with climate change and some of the challenges that we will be facing in the future we are trying to ensure we are hardening all our infrastructure as we develop it.

CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt, member for Burdekin. Before we move on, I would like to welcome back Michael Berkman MP, member for Maiwar.

Mr LAST: My next question is to the commissioner. The minister's response to question on notice No. 17 states that operational testing was undertaken when the new helmets and communication systems within the QFES were evaluated. Were the helmets tested with high ambient noise while wearing breathing apparatus?

Commissioner Leach: Yes, we have just entered into a contract for new structural firefighting helmets for the Fire and Rescue Service. Part of that included an upgraded operational radio communication system that includes in-helmet communications. That supports hands-free communication through bone induction and boom mic technology along with having noise-cancelling capability to improve operations in noisy environments.

In terms of the testing regime, in June 2020 we approached the market to identify a communication accessory that would work effectively with the radios we use in the Fire and Rescue Service. In February 2021 an evaluation report for the communication accessory was approved. The report noted that the recommended communication accessory would not fit within the structural firefighting helmets that we were using at the time. As our structural firefighting helmet contract was due to expire, we progressed an invitation to offer to the market to source a structural firefighting helmet that would support hands-free communication with noise-cancelling capability.

In January 2022 a staggered six-week operational trial commenced with 79 firefighters across 15 fire and rescue stations across the state trialling both the helmet and the in-helmet communications accessory. In April 2022 the operational trial concluded with 83 per cent of the participating firefighters indicating the communication accessory improved their communications capability and 87 per cent supporting the introduction of the in-helmet communication accessory.

Mr LAST: Just to be clear, were the helmets and communication systems tested for reliable communication while warning devices and distress-signalling devices were activated? It is very specific.

Commissioner Leach: I can say that there was a range of testing done in operational circumstances and down at our training college as well. We wanted to test these helmets under a range of operational type conditions. I am looking at the notes in front of me to see if I have some specifics about the nature of that testing. I do not have the specifics here in front of me about the range of testing that we did, but we can get that information before the end of the session.

Mr LAST: Thank you. Commissioner, you would recall that I have raised concerns to this committee previously regarding communications equipment, namely that a report prepared by the Communications Technology Enhancement Committee was edited. At that time the CTEC's concerns were with regards to communicating in breathing apparatus with high ambient noise and warning devices activated. Can you give this committee a guarantee that this equipment was thoroughly tested under all conditions that firefighters can face?

Commissioner Leach: I am very confident that the testing that was done was done over a range of conditions with a number of different operational scenarios. Obviously it is difficult to replicate every sort of operational scenario you might get, but we had an extensive team of firefighters involved. We had senior officers involved. We had representatives from our various stakeholder bodies involved. They went through all of the scenarios that they could muster in order to test the equipment, because it was in all of our interests to try and get the best communication solution that we could.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the departmental highlights on page 1 of the SDS, specifically the delivery of the If It's Flooded Forget It campaign in youth detention centres. What was the cost of delivering that program in youth detention centres and how many detainees participated?

Commissioner Leach: While we get the brief, the If It's Flooded Forget It campaign has been running for a number of years now. It is a very important tool that we use to communicate with the public around the importance of—

Mr RYAN: The reference in the SDS is to a number of programs, including the Road Attitudes and Action Planning program. It would be my recollection that it is more likely to be that program which was delivered in the detention centre rather than If It's Flooded Forget It.

Mrs GERBER: How about we let the commissioner answer.

CHAIR: Do not interrupt.

Mr RYAN: The member gave a misleading reference.

CHAIR: That was not directed towards you, Minister. It was directed to the member for Currumbin.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, what is the total cost and the number of detainees?

Commissioner Leach: We deliver a range of community education programs including the If It's Flooded Forget It campaign. We do also offer a Road Attitudes and Action Planning program, the RAAP Program. That is delivered in diverse areas including the centres that you mentioned and education settings. We deliver that to Queensland schools as well, particularly to year 11 and 12 students. We do deliver the RAAP Program in youth detention centres.

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, QFES delivered the RAAP presentations both in mainstream and non-school settings including restorative justice programs within the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training. They were also delivered in partnership with the Police Citizens Youth Club and other community youth organisations. As at 30 June 2023, \$250,531 was spent in the financial year in supporting the delivery of the RAAP Program.

Mr LAST: Are you able to give me the number of detainees that program was delivered to?

Commissioner Leach: Not at this stage, no.

Mr LAST: Is that something you could ascertain?

Commissioner Leach: We will endeavour to get a number for that, yes. We do have, for your information, 215 trained and active QFES RAAP presenters across the state.

Mr LAST: To be clear, when you say 'RAAP' is If It's Flooded Forget It incorporated in that or does it sit separately?

Commissioner Leach: No, they are separate programs. The RAAP Program is particularly aimed at young people—

Mr LAST: But you are delivering If It's Flooded Forget It?

Commissioner Leach: No, I do not—

Mr LAST: You are not delivering that in detention centres?

CHAIR: Member for Burdekin, let the commissioner answer the question.

Commissioner Leach: I do not believe so. I think if we were in youth justice centres it would be more about safety on our roads. It would be our RAAP Program. I am very confident that that is what we would be delivering in youth justice centres.

Mr LAST: That is what is included in that \$257,000?

Commissioner Leach: Correct, yes.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the departmental highlights on page 1, specifically the commitment to continue to focus on reducing bushfire risk. The 2019 fleet update states that 60 Rural Fire Service vehicles needed to be replaced each year. Since then, only 102 trucks have been produced and, according to the minister, another 127 would be produced over the next two financial years. By 30 June 2025, the replacement of the Rural Fire Service fleet will be 131 vehicles behind. When will the replacement of these important vehicles be back on track?

Commissioner Leach: For the 2023-24 year, we have a \$24.1 million investment for the RFS fleet program. That includes \$7 million for support vehicles and a million dollars for the retrofitting of cabin deluge systems into our rural fire appliances. I might pass you over to Acting Deputy Commissioner Stevenson, who can give you detailed information on that.

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: A number of years ago, 60 replacement vehicles of our 1,030 frontline firefighting appliances for the Rural Fire Service was quoted. That was at a time when we were running a program where we were doing year-on-year replacements. We have found that with COVID and the global supply chain shortages that is not a sustainable program, so we are now having multiyear programs where we are extending our investment in those programs over two and three years.

As the minister noted, since 2015 we have delivered 413 rural fire appliances. In 2018-19 there was a catch-up program where we delivered 119 appliances. Currently there are 127 under build and that will bring that number to 540, which is over 52 per cent of the overall fleet. Then we have just committed through our strategic and budget committee within the department to deliver a further 285 appliances commencing build from mid-2025. That will take the overall replacement of that fleet to over 80 per cent. The catch-up is more than ahead. As of yesterday, a request to quote went out to market for 88 replacement light chassis as a part of that 285.

Mr LAST: To clarify, are you saying that it will be three years before you will catch up with all of these replacement vehicles?

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: No. Over the next two years, those 127 which are under build will be delivered. The contracts have caught up; it is the delivery of our suppliers that we are struggling with. I think you will find that any fire jurisdiction has the same sorts of problems at the moment.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, the South Australian government funded the fitting of radiant heat shield curtains to 390 vehicles to 'minimise the exposure to death or injury from burnovers'. Why were none of the vehicles provided to the Rural Fire Service in 2022-23 fitted with this life-saving technology?

Commissioner Leach: The curtains that you refer to are an important part of the safety system on our rural fire appliances. Our medium fleet that is being built at the moment has those curtains fitted. We would like to extend that program to our light fleet. That requires some engineering to be undertaken. Obviously if you install these curtains to assist with fire burnover situations that has to be done in accordance with the engineering of the vehicle so that they do not interfere with the activation of airbag technology, for example. There is quite a bit of engineering work that is required to be done.

Mr LAST: Surely if South Australia is doing it, what are we doing different?

CHAIR: Let the commissioner finish answering the question.

Commissioner Leach: We are working through that at the moment. Just as we are doing with the deluge systems, where we are retrofitting that to medium appliances, we will go through a program of retrofitting curtains into our light fleet.

Mr LAST: Time frames, Commissioner?

Commissioner Leach: We are working through that at the moment and we will put a program together. We can fund it; we have internal funding to do that. Again, as the acting deputy commissioner outlined, it will be subject to the availability of the market, because the same companies that are delivering our fire trucks will be the companies that we will be seeking to help install this program. It is about the capacity of the market to be able to supply some of these.

Mr LAST: We do not have a definite date at this stage?

Commissioner Leach: No, but we will be rolling them out as part of the rollout of the new fleet. The number of the appliances in the fleet with curtains will go up as more and more of this new fleet comes into the service.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, for how long was the Barcaldine Rural Fire Service area office closed due to staff shortages and how many other area offices have been closed due to staff shortages in the last two years?

Commissioner Leach: We have a network of area offices across Queensland for the Rural Fire Service. There are 19 area offices at the moment and as part of the reform program we are working through at the moment our intent is to increase those number of offices so that we have more frontline offices closer to our fire brigades so that we can deliver better service to support our frontline people. Like a lot of organisations, we do have issues from time to time in recruiting and retaining people in parts of rural and remote Queensland, and the Barcaldine office is a good example of that, and we are working to ensure that we get not only a frontline operational person but administrative support in that office to support our people. That office was vacant for—I will get you a time frame—months.

Mr LAST: So how many other area offices are closed at the present time due to staff shortages?

Commissioner Leach: None that I am aware of, but we will double-check that.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, I refer to the departmental service area on page 1 again. In a submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly, the United Firefighters Union of Australia states that 1,125 litres per minute and up to 60,000 litres of water are needed to suppress thermal runaway which can occur when an electric vehicle catches fire. What steps have been taken to ensure that 60,000 litres of water can be safely transported to these events where hydrants are not available, such as the majority of the Bruce Highway?

Commissioner Leach: You have highlighted a new and emerging risk for fire services not only in Australia but right across the world with the advent of electric vehicle technology and the potential for thermal runaway, as you describe. That is a new and emerging risk for us. We are watching closely some of the research that is going on around the world about that. There is a lot of research happening here in Australia through the Australasian Fire Authorities Council and Fire and Rescue New South Wales is leading a program that QFES is a part of to understand where these lithium ion batteries and other battery technology exists where we need to be ready with new suppression techniques.

Because it is emerging, even just in recent weeks one of the major electric vehicle car manufacturing companies has come out with new advice about how to deal with a runaway fire in their car. Previously in some places like the United States and Europe some firefighting organisations were literally picking up these vehicles on fire and putting them into an open tank of water in order to try and control the runaway. One of the manufacturing companies has come out and said not to put water on their vehicles now. There are companies that are offering up essentially huge fire blankets that can be put over the vehicle to contain the fire. The challenge for that is that that heat will continue to generate for days potentially and so the requirement for fire service personnel to be deployed at a scene like that for an extended period of time is very real. This is a new issue that we are dealing with. As you say, if you need somewhere near 60,000 litres of water, we will need to be involved in pump relays or multiple appliances responding in order to get the supply of water you need to successfully extinguish it.

Mr LAST: So do you have the technology and equipment at the moment to contain up to 60,000 litres of water that has potentially been exposed to lithium?

Commissioner Leach: Yes, we do because we combat all sorts of hazardous materials fires at the moment. Not only does that involve putting copious amounts of water onto the fire; it also often includes bunding the fire so that that fire water run-off, which can be quite toxic, does not get into our waterways. We have arrangements in place to do that either ourselves or with partner agencies that we bring on scene to capture that water and have it removed and treated.

Mr LAST: Commissioner, in the same submission the example of the Victorian Big Battery site is given. More than 150 firefighters were involved in fighting the fire. There was a toxic smoke warning issued and the fire burnt for four days. Given the water demands, staff requirements and potential for environmental damage, did the government seek any assurances from QFES with regard to large-scale batteries in places like Emerald?

Commissioner Leach: QFES as a department has contributed briefing notes to the relevant government departments when these things are considered. We are involved with this network, as I said, around dealing with these new and emerging renewable energy sites and we have provided advice and are continuing to provide advice to the relevant departments on these sorts of technologies. We have also made submissions to the Australian Building Codes Board regarding proposed provisions for the National Construction Code and to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's lithium ion batteries issues paper. For example, the National Construction Code has recently changed, so all medium- and high-rise buildings under construction now will be roughed in to essentially accommodate electric vehicle charging technology for every car park in that building. That obviously presents a future risk for us, so we are part of the discussions in the national regulatory framework around how we build in the required safety systems to keep those buildings safe in the future.

Mrs GERBER: Commissioner, I have a quick follow-up question. If an electric vehicle was to catch fire on the Bruce Highway tomorrow, what preparation measures do we have to be able to contain that? Do we have anything? We do not have those big fire blankets. We do not have 60,000 litres of water sitting beside the Bruce Highway ready to dump the car in. How would we deal with an electric car fire on the Bruce Highway?

Commissioner Leach: We have been rolling out training programs around electric vehicles for a number of reasons. One is not only if they are on fire but also because of the high voltages involved. When we do road crash rescues—and we do a lot of them across the state—it is important that our firefighters understand how to go about cutting into a vehicle that has very high voltages running through it, so we liaise with industry. A lot of the car manufacturers are very generous with the information that they give us about how firefighters can go about conducting those rescue techniques. In terms of fire, at the moment we would use the measures that we have traditionally used—that is, we would attack it with water from a safe distance and we would use water relaying and bring in additional appliances to transport water to the site.

Mrs GERBER: So pretty concerning, really. We need a bit more there. Thanks, Commissioner.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, what feedback has been received on the introduction of the new Australian Warning System? Also, are there any outstanding recommendations from the IGEM report from 2020?

Commissioner Leach: Thanks for highlighting what is a very important part of the national warning system. With regard to the Australian Warning System, because we have our fair share of disasters across Australia—not just bushfires but storms, floods, cyclones—each jurisdiction has developed its own warning systems organically over many years, and so for the travelling public it can be quite confusing when you move from one jurisdiction to the other not being familiar with the various

warning systems. There has been a project running for a number of years now to develop the new Australian Warning System. The new Warning System, if you are familiar with it, has three levels of advice to the community. There is an advice message that goes out to let the community know that an incident has started. There is no immediate danger, but people should stay up to date with what is going on in their local area. Then there is a watch-and-act signal. That is to let the public know that there is a heightened level of threat and the conditions are changing and people need to start thinking about their circumstances and whether they need to take action to protect themselves. The last level is an emergency warning, and that is where people may be directly in danger and need to take action to protect themselves. The new system that is being rolled out also involves community education, so we are doing all sorts of electronic media and print media to make sure that the new system is known and to let the public know the sort of standard icons that will be used as part of the warning.

Ms BOLTON: We have not had an incident yet to see how the feedback is from the communities?

Commissioner Leach: It is a relatively new system. We have introduced it for bushfire here in Queensland and are progressively moving to other hazard types as well. A couple of other jurisdictions have adopted the Australian Warning System in full and I think we will get a lot of feedback over the next 12 months as we move through our bushfire seasons nationally and severe weather seasons. There has been a lot of effort go in to educating the community about this and we hope that we have had a fair level of penetration because this is information that is important to people's personal safety.

Ms BOLTON: Are there any outstanding recommendations from that IGEM report from 2020?

Commissioner Leach: I might defer to the Inspector General Emergency Management.

Mr Dawson: In respect to the recommendations that are currently underway, there are recommendations in play at the moment from a number of different reports that have been done, but I am pleased to report that 60 per cent of all current recommendations of 112—that is 67—are currently implemented and three are superseded. That leaves about 38 per cent, or 42, that have not yet been implemented. That does not mean to say they are not underway, because every recommendation is underway. In the current light of the Reform Implementation Taskforce, a lot of the work there is actually going into that as well. We form part of that as a member, as do others, and part of that is making sure that recommendations that are still outstanding or are underway are translated across in that whole exchange process.

Ms BOLTON: Within that process, are the LDMGs notified of the progress of any? How does that information filter back?

Mr Dawson: Thank you for the question. It is a good question. The information around progress of recommendations from reviews is reflected on our website. It is a cabinet-in-confidence process. The process goes into the minister. As a result of that, every six months we do an update. Part of that is around that transparency so community can see the progress being made against the recommendations from the various reviews. I can say that they are all underway.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks for your time today. I will go to Commissioner Leach first, if I might. There is a reference in Budget Paper 4 to increased funding over three years, held centrally, to enhance Queensland's aerial firefighting capability under additional National Aerial Firefighting Centre contracts. Am I right, first of all, that that is the \$17 million the minister referred to?

Commissioner Leach: Yes, correct.

Mr BERKMAN: Are you able to clarify for me that that section of the budget paper refers to additional suppressant delivery aircraft—I think that is reasonably self-explanatory—but also additional intelligence-gathering aircraft platforms? Are you able to clarify what exactly is meant by those terms and who those contracts will be with?

Commissioner Leach: Sure. The exact figure is \$17.58 million over three years. That is to improve our aerial firefighting capability. Currently we have over 150 call-when-needed aircraft and we also have contracted aircraft via the National Aerial Firefighting Centre that you mentioned previously. We use aircraft for a range of different functions: performing water-bombing operations; airborne coordination, so command and control from the air; line-scanning capability, where we fly aircraft to map a fire line; and intelligence-gathering functions. This funding will provide an increase in our baseline aerial firefighting capability by increasing the number of NAFC contracted aircraft from 10 to 13, so there will be an additional three aircraft come online. They will be available for the 2023-24 bushfire season.

To give you a sense of some of the aircraft coming online, there will be: two fixed-wing water-bombing aircraft; two Helitack water-bombing helicopters; two air attack platforms, one helicopter and one fixed-wing, and they will be stationed at the Toowoomba air base; and two of the new ones for this year are fixed-wing scooping bombers that will be positioned in South-East Queensland. These are aircraft that do not have to land to be refilled. They can fly low and slow and refill themselves off a large water mass and keep going, so obviously the turnaround times for those aircraft are much quicker than landing and refilling. We are also putting on a specialist intelligence-gathering rotary wing platform that will be based out of Toowoomba and, of course, we have our Large Air Tanker that will be back again and based in Bundaberg this year. The third of the new three for this year includes line-scanning capability, which is not a function that we have had directly ourselves. We have relied on a national aircraft from northern New South Wales to perform that function for Queensland previously.

Mr BERKMAN: You touched on our access to Large Air Tankers. Can you advise the committee how many days per year—for example, just over the coming fire season—the government has contracted access to an LAT during this period and at what cost?

Commissioner Leach: The Large Air Tanker is contracted for 84 days starting 1 September. It is the same Q400AT aircraft that we have used successfully in the last couple of years. It will be based out of Bundaberg again. It is able to carry 10,000 litres of firefighting retardant or firefighting gel. We have this unique contractual arrangement where, when the aircraft concludes with us at the end of our bushfire season, it moves, after a shoulder period, to Victoria where it assists with their bushfire season down south. That has been a very effective platform for us the last couple of years and it will be back again this year.

Mr BERKMAN: Apologies if I missed the specific figure, but is there a number of days that we have contractual access to that?

Commissioner Leach: Yes, 84 days. There is a two-week shoulder period. When our 84 days finishes there is 14 days before it is due to commence in Victoria so we could continue the contract for a further 14 days and, depending on what is happening with the Victorian bushfire season, if we needed to we could potentially negotiate to hang onto it beyond that. We also have access to the national Large Air Tanker fleet and New South Wales Rural Fire Service run a Large Air Tanker of their own. We have used that in Queensland on a number of occasions. There is a network of Large Air Tankers that we can tap into.

CHAIR: I move now to government questions.

Ms BUSH: Minister, I refer to page 5 of the SDS outlining the \$125 million capital program. Can you please update the committee on how funding allocated for new and replacement stations will help firefighters and frontline volunteers to keep these growing communities safe?

Mr RYAN: Thank you very much, member, and thanks for highlighting the enormity of the capital commitment this year. It is quite extraordinary. It is the biggest in Queensland Fire and Emergency Services history, really—a big increase on previous years. But it is for good reason, and that is to invest in new and upgraded facilities right across Queensland Fire and Emergency Services—new rural fire facilities, new fire and rescue facilities and also investing in capital equipment like vehicles that all of those agencies, including the State Emergency Service, require.

You would be interested to hear, and I am surprised the member for Caloundra did not fight you for this question, that there is a new facility being built at Caloundra South—a 24/7, fully staffed fire and rescue station. There is one due to open at the end of the year at Moreton Bay Central. We have plans to build one at Greater Springfield and there is one under construction currently at Mount Cotton Road. We are also obviously planning for the future, with land acquisitions for other fire and rescue stations to meet population growth but to also renew the Fire and Emergency Services' operational delivery model in certain towns.

As populations change—Hervey Bay is a good example—we are in the stages now of acquiring some land. The station is now in the wrong location. It does not just need renewal. Because of population growth, half of the coverage area is currently water so moving it further inland provides greater coverage for the Hervey Bay community. There are a number of other examples across the state which require our investment. We are also investing in really far-flung places like in Bamaga, the tip of mainland Queensland. We are building a Queensland Fire and Emergency Services facility there to support volunteers who engage in fire and emergency services work. There are big investments.

One thing I am particularly proud of is that for the first time last year we were able to dedicate a specific line item in the budget for Rural Fire Service facilities. This year we have grown it even more. It is really important for us to value Rural Fire Service volunteers and the personnel attached. I do not

want to embarrass the commissioner but we are really proud that we were able to make that decision last year for a specific line item to specifically value the Rural Fire Service. This year it has grown even more with more facilities and more upgrades to support the good work that they do. Member, thanks for highlighting it. It is a great way to show our thanks to the personnel in the department.

Mr HUNT: Minister, this question follows on from the question of the member for Cooper. I refer to page 1 of the SDS. Could you please inform the committee how this government has and continues to invest in increasing firefighter numbers and ensuring that the Fire and Rescue Service has the resources it needs to protect the community?

Mr RYAN: It is a very strong record for the government. The political party that makes up the government has been the only political party that has made commitments about additional firefighter numbers at each election. We are delivering on that. Certainly, the numbers are rolling out on schedule. In 2017 there was an election commitment of 100 additional firefighters. They have been delivered and deployed across the state. At the last election there was a commitment of 357. That is on schedule and being delivered. As part of our reform work around Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, we increased that commitment from 357 to 500. Certainly, we are on track with the delivery of that. In fact, with three years to go on that commitment we are halfway through: 243 firefighters of the 500 have already been recruited and planning is underway to continue to meet the recruit pipeline for that.

Although there are challenges across the nation when it comes to recruiting, there is no challenge when it comes to recruiting firefighters. It is a problem that the commissioner does not have. There are a lot of obviously committed citizens who want to serve their community and one way they are attracted to serving that community is through the fire service. I want to commend all the firefighters for the contribution that they make. The commissioner and I were very excited to attend a graduation only last week where 16 outstanding citizens became firefighters and are now deployed to stations across the state.

Mr HUNT: Commissioner, this is the question that the minister anticipated that I would ask so I feel obligated. With reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you please update the committee on how the Sunshine Coast region will receive an enhanced emergency services capability?

Commissioner Leach: I think it has been acknowledged that the Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest growing regions in Queensland. We are cognisant of that and are planning for the future of fire and rescue services across that area.

As part of our 2023-24 capital budget, we have \$7 million allocated to continue the delivery of the new Caloundra South fire and rescue station. That will be a state-of-the-art modern fire station. I think you were there when I visited the site just recently. It will be a great addition to our network of fire stations in that part of Queensland. It is strategically located to pick up the ring-road that will run back around and link up with the Bruce Highway. It is important for our firefighters to be able to access the Bruce Highway for road traffic accidents and the like and also important that they are positioned right in that growing area to service the structural fire risk that will exist in that area.

We have also included in our capital budget this year \$3.77 million to acquire land for a replacement fire and rescue station at Beerwah. The planning is underway to support the delivery of a replacement station for the area, with service delivery to be maintained by the existing station until that new facility is operational. There have also been grants from QFES to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to support the operations of the State Emergency Service groups in that area. It is important that we continue to support our State Emergency Service units with the latest equipment so that they can do their job safely. The SES uplift funding is directly benefitting the SES groups. We are seeing some additional equipment such as remotely piloted aircraft systems being used there and we are enhancing our volunteer capability through enhanced training to our SES members as well.

CHAIR: Commissioner, with reference to page 1 of the SDS and the focus on reducing bushfire risk, can you please update the committee on how QFES has prepared for the upcoming bushfire season and what the community can do to be ready in the weeks ahead?

Commissioner Leach: We are certainly in an interesting climatic situation in Queensland at the moment. In the last three summer seasons we have seen above average rainfall right across Queensland. We have been in a La Niña cycle for not just one but three years straight. A triple La Niña is a rarity. It happened in the mid-1950s, it happened again in the mid-1970s and again in the late 1990s. What we know from those historical periods is that in the two years following a triple La Niña we have seen increased grass growth across Australia, we have certainly seen that right across Queensland and we see an increased grassfire risk. What we have seen in Queensland, particularly southern Queensland, in the last six months is below average rainfall. We have had three years of

above average rainfall with significant grass growth. Now we have had six months of below average and that grass is drying out. That is reflected in the increase in grassfires that we see across southern Queensland at the moment.

We are well prepared for the bushfire season. Our brigades have been conducting hazard reduction burns where they can. Last year we moved to a different way of running our risk mitigation programs. Traditionally we have focused on reducing bushfire risk in the three months leading into our bushfire season. In the months of May, June and July we would typically do our work. We have moved to a new program called Operation Sesbania, which is a year-round mitigation program. When we do mitigation works like hazard reduction burns we will take the opportunity whenever the conditions are right, at whatever time of the year, to conduct burns where we can. That is based on the increased understanding we have based on the science of fire and understanding our weather conditions, climate, aspects, slope topography and all of the elements that go into managing fires. Since Operation Sesbania started on 15 January 2022, through to 7 August this year, we have conducted 1,390 mitigation activities. That includes, for this calendar year from 1 January through to 7 August, 630 mitigation activities in 2023.

To give you some idea of how complex these things can be, I was down on the Gold Coast last Saturday and I had the opportunity to drop into Canungra where the local brigades have conducted a fuel reduction burn in a very difficult area around Mount Misery on the outskirts of the Canungra township. That involved 14 local fire brigades getting together to burn out the area of Mount Misery. It involved the coordination of 43 different landowners because, as you would appreciate, the Rural Fire Service does not own the risk; landowners own the risk. Over a number of years, they have collaborated with all of the landowners and got all of the necessary approvals and permits to conduct the burn. We used aerial incendiary devices. We used helicopters and incendiary devices to light up along the ridge line of Mount Misery and let that fire trickle down both sides of Mount Misery to the back of the properties. As I said, we had 14 brigades there over a period of three or four days to manage that fire in conjunction with landowners. It is very resource intensive and that is just one hazard mitigation burn. That was really important because we want to try to get the burns in to protect critical assets like townships such as Canungra.

Ms BUSH: Commissioner, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, which outlines \$41.3 million for the Disaster and Emergency Management Reform program to uplift the capability of our Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. Can you advise the committee where this additional funding will be spent and how the Queensland community will benefit?

Commissioner Leach: You are referring to the reforms to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services which involve the establishment of the reform implementation task force headed up by Deputy Commissioner Steve Gollschewski, who is the chair of that reform task force. It involves the transition of some services that currently sit within Queensland Fire and Emergency Services across to the Queensland Police Service. The other part of the reform for the fire services is the creation of the Queensland Fire Department, which will incorporate the Fire and Rescue Service and will also have the Rural Fire Service sitting within the department as a separate entity. This is a significant step forward for the organisation and a significant uplift in funding to put resources in to better service our frontline firefighters.

As I mentioned before in response to an earlier question, we currently have 19 areas in the Rural Fire Service. We are looking to expand that number. We do not have a definite number at the moment. It will be in the mid-20s in terms of the number of areas that we will have. That is putting frontline officers closer to brigades so that we can be working more closely with brigades to try to reduce their administrative workload and try to give them more access to training so that our frontline volunteers can focus on what they do best; that is, keeping their local community safe. It is a significant uplift in resourcing to both our Fire and Rescue Service and our Rural Fire Service.

With the Rural Fire Service there will be an uplift of 114 positions, nominally at an AO6 level. What I mean by that is that there is a bucket of money available to be reinvested into the service to provide for these new officers out in the field. We are also going to bolster our corporate support because for every person you have in the field you need back-of-house staff, if you like, to support those frontline people. This is about getting our operational mix right to better support our brigades.

CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. Minister, there are a number of questions for which I am not sure you have been able to ascertain the answers. Bear with me while I go through them. There was a question asked by the member for Burdekin about how many fire stations were built on flood zones. Is that number able to be provided today?

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: We will have to provide that answer. We can also provide the criteria by which we assess sites.

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

Mr RYAN: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you. The next one was from the member for Burdekin. It was in relation to the range of testing done on the new helmets.

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: I can confirm that the testing and a report were done by VicLabs. There is not a noise test for the particular new helmet that is in place, but firefighters are instructed to locate at a safe distance away from noise when they can. The helmet itself has gone through rigid testing for safety in terms of damage, heat and the like.

CHAIR: The next one is also from the member for Burdekin. It is in relation to the Road Attitudes and Action Planning program. How many detainees have had the opportunity to attend?

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: I can advise the member that in the last financial year 120 detainees received the RAAP education program. I can also confirm in relation to your question about the number of persons receiving If It's Flooded Forget It training that there is no training program associated with that campaign but there is an extensive public media campaign aimed at that education.

CHAIR: The last one is: how long was the Barcaldine area office closed?

Deputy Commissioner Stevenson: I can advise the member that, in relation to the Rural Fire Services nil area offices are currently closed. In relation to the Barcaldine office, it has not been closed but it had an administration officer and the area's director was at Emerald but serving in the region. The inspector was having trouble finding housing in Barcaldine. We are in the process of increasing the staffing and recruiting three operational staff for the Barcaldine office.

Mrs GERBER: Chair, there is one minute on the clock. May I just ask a really quick question?

CHAIR: No. Minister, in relation to the first question I referred to, relating to flood zones, are you able to provide the committee secretariat with an answer to that question by 2 pm on Friday, 11 August?

Mr RYAN: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, would you like to make a closing statement?

Mr RYAN: There is one thing, Chair, and then I do have a closing statement.

CHAIR: Yes, of course. Commissioner Leach?

Commissioner Leach: If I could just correct the record on one thing. This is in relation to our air operations. I did say that we had acquired a line scanner aircraft. A high-altitude line scanner fixed-wing platform is still being investigated to be tendered through the NAFC process. We are using the aircraft out of New South Wales as part of our standard arrangements. I said that we had acquired one, but we are still working through our tendering process for that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. Minister?

Mr RYAN: Thank you, Chair. I would like to start by acknowledging the heroes of our great state: the personnel who make up the agencies that I have portfolio responsibility for—the officers, staff and volunteers in the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Corrective Services, the Parole Board Queensland, Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Marine Rescue Services, Queensland Government Air and the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management. These are all dedicated citizens wanting to serve and united in their determination to make Queensland a safer place.

I would also like to thank the people who have contributed to this estimates hearing and, as I always do, Chair, to commend you and thank you for your outstanding chairmanship. To be honest, I think this is the best committee because of your chairmanship. Member for Toohey, thank you very much. You do give lots of time to the opposition too, so well done.

Mrs GERBER: I had one more question to Commissioner Leach, Minister. I will be really brief.

Mr RYAN: Save it for next year or ask me afterwards. I would like to also thank all committee members for their diligence and patience. To the secretariat and to Hansard: thank you very much for contributing to this estimates hearing.

For the Queensland Police Service session I would particularly like to thank the Police Commissioner, Katarina Carroll, and her team. To the chief of staff to the Police Commissioner, Superintendent Paul Hart, 'Harty'—I always like to include nicknames—thank you very much. Thank you to the deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners and all staff who contributed to the police

session of this estimates process. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Acting Superintendent Tania Nelson, Margaret Cameron, Phoebe Goddard, Tony Brown, James Hinchliffe and Amanda Moran. Thank you also to Inspector Don Bailee, who is the ministerial liaison officer in my office.

For the Queensland Corrective Services session, thanks to Commissioner Paul Stewart and his team, led by chief of staff Steve Scougall; the President of the Parole Board Queensland, Michael Byrne, and his team; and the deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners and all staff who made a contribution to the estimates process, in particular Julie Melville, Don Sfiligoj and Tom Humphreys. Thank you also to Carly Bolhuis, the senior departmental liaison officer in my office, who is assisted by Melissa Hunt, whom we just love. If you ever ring my office, generally you will hear Melissa's voice first. Hi, Mel.

For the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services session, thank you to Commissioner Greg Leach and his team, led by chief of staff Brooke Gowland; the Inspector-General Emergency Management, Alistair Dawson, who got to answer a question this year—sometimes he gets cut off so he will be happy—and his team; and the deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners and all staff who made a contribution to the estimates process, in particular Evonne Harding, Adrianna Humphries, Jane Houston, Jessica Rae, Darlene Mowle, Kylie Mercer and Ian 'Thommo' Thompson, who is retiring next week. He is having drinks I think next week, too. Thanks also to Inspector Andrew Richards—nickname 'Richo'—and Cathy Knapp, the ministerial liaison officer and departmental liaison officer in my office. I would also like to extend my personal thanks to Donna O'Donoghue, Jon Persley, Darren Cann and Brad Moore from the Premier's office for their ongoing support to my office.

Finally, Chair—I know that you have been waiting for this moment; I say it every year—of course I would like to thank the people of Queensland for tuning in. I would like to thank the committee for all of the questions—the good, the bad and the ugly. I am sure that everyone will agree that the answers were excellent! Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Minister, on behalf of the committee I thank you, the commissioner, the inspector and officials for your attendance this afternoon. I would like to thank all of the departmental staff who supported the estimates hearing. I would like to thank all of my fellow committee members and the visiting members who participated in the hearing today. On behalf of the committee I would like to especially thank Hansard staff, parliamentary broadcast staff and other parliamentary staff for their assistance, and the great secretariat whom we have the pleasure of working with. I declare this hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 5.20 pm.