

## FRIDAY, 26 JULY 2024

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

#### **Estimate Committee Members**

Mr PS Russo—Chair  
Mr JM Krause  
Ms SL Bolton  
Mr MA Boothman  
Ms JM Bush  
Mr JE Hunt

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#### **Members in Attendance**

Mr TJ Nicholls  
Mr SSJ Andrew  
Mr MC Berkman  
Mrs LJ Gerber  
Ms AJ Camm  
Mr JJ McDonald  
Mr DF Crisafulli  
Mr DG Purdie  
Mr DR Last  
Ms A Leahy  
Mr JP Bleijie

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#### **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 O Winchester, Policy Advisor

#### **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**

Ms J Joldić, Director-General

Ms C Scott, Assistant Director-General, Corporate Services

#### **Queensland Human Rights Commission**

Mr S McDougall, Human Rights Commissioner

#### **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

**Office of the Queensland Ombudsman**

Mr A Reilly, Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services

**Queensland Family and Child Commission**

Mr L Twyford, Principal Commissioner

**Forensic Science Queensland**

Dr L Wilson-Wilde OAM, Chief Executive Officer

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**The committee met at 9.00 am.**

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

I am Peter Russo, the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim, is the deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; and Mr Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the chair's discretion 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. Staff who are assisting our witnesses here today are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if not in use. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in this chamber. I welcome the member for Clayfield, who is also present.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. Today, the committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the portfolios of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, the Minister for Police and Community Safety and the Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery and Minister for Corrective Services. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, which is available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage.

This first session will examine the proposed expenditure of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies until 12.45pm. We will suspend proceedings for an intermission from 10.30am to 10.45am. I remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing orders and rules of the Legislative Assembly. In respect of government owned corporations and statutory authorities, standing order 180(2) provides that—

... a member may ask any question which the committee determines will assist it in its examination of the relevant Appropriation Bill or otherwise assist the committee to determine whether public funds are being efficiently spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, the director-general, officials and departmental officers and members of the public. 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 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 five minutes.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Thank you, Chair, and good morning everyone. I also acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet today. It is a privilege to appear before this committee one last time to update on the 2024-25 budget and elaborate on the tremendous work and substantial investment the Miles government is continuing to make across the justice system and domestic and family violence prevention.

Since 2015, our government has invested \$1.9 billion in working to end all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence and that continues unabated in 2024-25. We have provided a \$154.4 million funding surge over four years that will channel \$36 million per annum directly to frontline domestic, family and sexual violence service providers every year, which equates to a 20 per cent uplift in core funding. This budget will also help fund programs that will specifically target breaking the cycle of violence through strategies targeting the people who use violence or who are at risk of using violence.

Today I can announce the release of our Broadening the Focus strategy that will target people using violence in domestic and family situations and how to support behavioural change. This is a major milestone in an ambitious goal of eliminating domestic and family violence. It remains important that, as a community, we work together to not only support victim-survivors but also prevent the creation of new victims by supporting those using violence to seek help.

Earlier this year, almost \$56 million was announced for domestic and family violence initiatives including appointing the Queensland Council of Social Service to establish a new peak body for the domestic and family violence sector, a statewide training, support and coordination service to support our new domestic and family violence training and change management framework, and the implementation of Queensland's Plan for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women 2024-28. Just last month we rolled out the state's first domestic and family violence co-responder model in Cairns as part of a broader \$22.9 million pilot that runs until 2026.

Another area the government has made strides in is how we support our victims of crime. Nearly \$300 million was invested over five years to strengthen support for victims. In less than 12 months we have—and this is not an exhaustive list—increased payments to victims of crime and increased resources at Victim Assist Queensland. Just last month we announced support for victims of non-violent property crime. We have established the Victims of Crime Community Response pilot in Cairns, Townsville and Logan, and committed to the expansion of that pilot to two further locations. We have established the Office of the Victims' Commissioner and appointed a permanent Victims' Commissioner, and established the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council. Last month I visited the Victim Assist Queensland office to meet many of the new staff. Can I say it is great to see a team that is so dedicated to helping Queensland victims get the support they need.

We are also continuing to bolster the Coroners Court of Queensland considering the substantial growth in caseloads over the past decade. We now have more permanent coroners than ever before. Pressures at the Beenleigh and Townsville courts are being addressed through a variety of measures, which we are supporting with funding of \$36 million over four years.

The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal is an important part of the Queensland justice system and this budget provides \$73.1 million over five years to ensure that it is better equipped. QCAT is accessed by more than 60,000 Queenslanders annually and has jurisdiction over more than 180 acts. We have also made substantial funding increases, including the creation of 60 new full-time positions, to meet the ever-increasing demands on the tribunal.

Our commitment to the safety of children is reflected in our continued endeavours supporting the blue card system. The budget is continuing to fund extra staff to meet the huge demand for processing blue cards, while at the same time providing support to First Nations applicants, including appointing a blue card liaison officer to Palm Island.

I can announce to the committee that the Miles government is releasing its new Better Justice Together, Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Strategy 2024-2031. First Nations Justice Officer Stephen Tillet will lead the implementation of the strategy. The strategy was co-designed with First Nations peoples and will address and reduce overrepresentation within the justice system.

This year we have bolstered the operations of the Office of the Public Guardian to the tune of \$5.9 million so it can enhance its critical function in providing vital services such as protections to children in care.

Chair and committee members, we are always reforming and strengthening the state's justice system and our response to domestic, family and sexual violence. I think Queenslanders will agree that addressing domestic, family and sexual violence is and has to be a priority. I look forward to taking questions from the committee today. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Attorney-General. Member for Clayfield?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney-General, in respect to a number of the comments and announcements you have made, our shadow responsible will be addressing some of those matters. I will be addressing my questions more to the Attorney-General and justice areas and not the domestic violence and sexual violence matters, important as they are.

To start off with, could I ask Mr Barbour from the CCC to come forward? Mr Barbour, can you tell me how much has the CCC spent on the Carne case in total and how much has the CCC paid to Mr Carne's lawyers under costs orders? Effectively, what are your own costs and what are Mr Carne's costs that the CCC is liable for and have they been paid?

**Mr Barbour:** Good morning, committee. Thank you very much. Yes. As the committee would appreciate, the Carne matter has been progressing over a number of financial years. The total cost over the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years for the CCC was \$943,993.41. In relation to the costs of Mr Carne, those have been the subject of negotiations and have been determined to a total figure of \$370,280, which the government has indicated will be equalised in our 2024-25 budget.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Mr Barbour, can I confirm those costs have been paid to Mr Carne's solicitors or legal firm?

**Mr Barbour:** I understand that has been done. It was finalised, I think, at the end of the financial year.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Was there any delay in finalising Mr Carne's costs outside of normal negotiations?

**Mr Barbour:** No.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Might I ask, then: how much has the CCC spent on the Trad case in total and how much has the CCC paid to Ms Trad's lawyers under costs orders? Effectively, what are your own costs and what are Ms Trad's costs that the CCC is liable for and have they been paid?

**Mr Barbour:** The costs to the CCC for the Trad matter are \$91,953.31. A figure in relation to the costs for Ms Trad has been provided by her solicitors. That is the subject of ongoing negotiation and has not as yet been finalised. I am advised that we have continued to follow up with her solicitors and the response from her solicitors is that they are still awaiting instructions.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Is it fair to say, then, that you have received a submission from Ms Trad's solicitors in relation to costs and you have made a counteroffer?

**Mr Barbour:** Correct.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Can I ask when you made that counteroffer to Ms Trad's solicitors?

**Mr Barbour:** I think the final counteroffer was made on 29 April.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Since then, the matter has not been resolved?

**Mr Barbour:** No; that is correct.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** We are now almost in August.

**Mr Barbour:** Correct. We have in fact followed up on three occasions.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Is it fair to say that the delay in finalising that matter is as a result of awaiting Ms Trad's solicitors' response and they say they are awaiting instructions?

**Mr Barbour:** That is what we have been advised.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That is what you have been advised. Okay. Mr Barbour, is it your experience that solicitors wait three months to get paid their bills?

**Mr Barbour:** I do not propose to provide an opinion about how solicitors operate. I think the important thing is that the matter is currently under negotiation, as I have indicated.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Indeed. Prudently, you would be making a provision for having to pay an amount of money. How much have you provided for in your accounts to prepare to pay Ms Trad—that is, a provision for potential legal costs?

**Mr Barbour:** We have not formally provided a sum at this stage, but we have been advised by the Attorney that the government will equalise that amount in our budget, so the necessity to do that is not as significant.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** At the moment, you are not making a provision or an estimate for how much you will have to pay for Ms Trad's legal fees? In your accounts, you are not making a provision for it? You must have some idea because you have made a counteroffer. You know what the starting offer was and you know what the counteroffer is, so you must be expecting to have to pay costs in accordance with a settlement agreement somewhere within that range.

**Mr Barbour:** Correct, which will be equalised within the budget by the government.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Can I ask you what the range of costs is, then, between the amount that has been submitted by Ms Trad's solicitors and your counteroffer offer, please?

**Mr Barbour:** I do not think that is something that I would enter into discussions about. At this stage, the negotiations are confidential between the CCC and Ms Trad's lawyers, as they would be in relation to any other matter.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Yes, that would be the case if it were a private legal matter not involving the expenditure of public funds, I would suggest to you. We actually have here an offer made by Ms Trad's solicitors and an amount offered by you. I am asking only for the range, not for the actual amount that is there. We know, for example, that, in the Carne matter, \$370,000 has been paid to Mr Carne under a costs order. Surely, if we know the outcome in relation to Mr Carne, the same principle would apply with Ms Trad.

**Mr Barbour:** Logically, the costs for Ms Trad should be significantly less, given that her matter only went to the Supreme Court and did not go to the Court of Appeal and did not go to the High Court. I do not intend to posit a figure. As I have indicated, there are negotiations underway and we have been endeavouring to follow those matters up with Ms Trad's solicitors. We have indicated to you the advice that we have received.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I appreciate that. It is frustrating. It is almost desperate in the sense that nothing has happened since 29 April.

**Mr Barbour:** Can I say I share your frustration.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I can imagine you do. It would save you having to answer these questions as well, Mr Barbour!

**Mr Barbour:** It would indeed.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** What is the next step for you in the event that you do not receive any substantive response to your offer, seeing that it has now been outstanding for four months? You have been waiting for a response to an offer for costs for a third of a year.

**Mr Barbour:** We will continue to proceed to follow up matters with Ms Trad's legal counsel and solicitors. That is all we can do at this time. The important thing is that that amount, in fact, has not been paid by the CCC and has not been equalised by the government. I am hopeful that the matter will be resolved as soon as possible, but it is out of my hands at the moment.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I understand you are waiting for that. At some stage, though, you have to come to the point where you say, 'It's been four months. It's been five months. It's been six months.' At what stage do you say, 'I'm going back to court to seek a resolution of this matter'?

**Mr Barbour:** That is obviously an option, and that might be something that we need to pursue. I do not think we are at that point at this stage. We have clearly put a counteroffer, which we believe is very reasonable in the circumstances. We are awaiting advice from Ms Trad's solicitors.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** And they are saying to you that they are awaiting instructions from Ms Trad.

**Mr Barbour:** That is the advice I have received.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you for that. In relation to a similar matter, have you prepared any reports that you would have otherwise released under what was understood to be the operation of the law prior to the Carne case that have not yet been released as a result of the decision of the High Court in the Carne matter? Are there any investigations that you have undertaken where you would normally have finalised a report and then gone through the normal process of submitting that report to the parliamentary committee and then tabling it in the parliament?

**Mr Barbour:** No. As a result of the decision of the Court of Appeal and also the High Court in Carne, it is very clear that we are not in a position to prepare reports which they have identified as being unlawful. As a result, we have not done that work and, therefore, there is no number of matters waiting

to be transmitted to the parliamentary committee. Having said that, clearly we are undertaking investigations and, once these issues are clarified, it may well be that we will need to carefully consider whether any of them warrant a report being prepared, subject to whatever reporting model we ultimately are provided with.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** At the moment you are effectively not able to report because of the Court of Appeal and High Court decisions and have no public reporting powers in that sense unless it fits within the model that the Court of Appeal and the High Court have said—that is, where criminal corruption charges are laid.

**Mr Barbour:** Even in relation to that, the decision was that that is a section 49 report rather than a report to public. However, clearly that only relates to our corruption investigation work. It does not relate to other areas of work, and those other areas are, of course, continuing as normal.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Does this effectively hamstring the CCC in respect of those corruption investigations and reports then?

**Mr Barbour:** Without a doubt.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Would you like to see legislation introduced and for the matter to be regularised or rectified as soon as possible?

**Mr Barbour:** I would, provided what is introduced is appropriate.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In that respect—I think you have probably answered this—is the delay in getting that rectification or that rectification legislation frustrating to the CCC?

**Mr Barbour:** I think it is frustrating beyond just the CCC. I think it is frustrating to parliament. I think it is frustrating to the Queensland community. I think it is not in the public interest. I think there could have been a far speedier resolution to the matter than what there has been. Certainly our concerns about the process and our concerns about recommendations that have been made in the review by the former chief justice, Justice Holmes, have been made clearly to the Attorney.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Mr Barbour, earlier this week the Premier, in answer to a question in estimates, indicated that it was his intention for any laws to be properly considered by a parliamentary committee and that that matter is unlikely to be determined in this term of parliament. Does that continue to frustrate you then in the way that you have already explained?

**Mr Barbour:** It does and it does not.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That is a very diplomatic answer, Mr Barbour.

**Mr Barbour:** I will go on to explain and clarify for you. I was heartened to hear the Premier say that because certainly that was the first indication that I had received, even indirectly, that any proposed amendments following on from the review would be the subject of a committee process, so I was relieved to hear that. The reason I was relieved to hear that was that what has been put forward as the proposed model by the review, which the government has indicated that it proposes to implement by way of amending the legislation, is in my view very troubling.

The reason I am being diplomatic in my response is that I was very pleased to hear that it was going to go to a committee but, of course, I continue to be frustrated that we have not resolved the issue more effectively before now. Having said that, I would much prefer there be time taken to consider these matters very carefully if what the government proposes to do is to introduce amendments consistent with the review's recommendations. We have major concerns about those. We do not believe they are appropriate. We believe they are inconsistent with the public interest, and we do not support them.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** What would be fair to say then, Mr Barbour, that the view you have expressed is contrary to the view that you expressed in relation to the private member's bill, which has been in the House since October last year, which has been subject to committee review and which the CCC made submissions in support of?

**Mr Barbour:** The private member's bill is a very brief and very clear bill designed with one specific intention in mind, and that is to put the Crime and Corruption Commission back into a position which it and everybody else dealing with the commission understood to be the position for almost 30 years. As I indicated to the committee considering that bill, there are certainly areas that could be improved in relation to the bill. However, from our perspective it does the job. It allows us to publicly report. It retrospectively endorses and clarifies the situation in relation to previous reports that have been prepared. That was what we understood would be an appropriate response to the decision in *Carne*. When that decision came down and I urged for a quick and immediate response, it was with such a bill in mind.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In that vein, in relation to the former chief justice Holmes review, have you reviewed what work would be required to be undertaken to bring the Trad and Carne reports that have not been tabled into line with the model proposed by the former chief justice? You said there would be troubling aspects in being able to report appropriately. Have you considered how those existing reports would need to be brought into line with the recommendations if they were to be tabled under that model? Could they be?

**Mr Barbour:** My preliminary view is that they cannot.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Even under the Holmes review model, they would not be able to be tabled?

**Mr Barbour:** I do not believe so because both reports have been prepared. They have not been prepared under the scheme which is being put forward as part of the review. The recommendations in relation to retrospectivity and investigations past and reports previously prepared was that they needed to comply with what was proposed to be the new legislative basis for public reporting.

I do not want to take up too much time, but can I say this: a model for public reporting by the CCC has to be practical. It has to allow for a timely response. It has to be cost-effective. It has to be useable. Public reporting contributes to and improves transparency in the Queensland public sector. It is clearly in the public interest. These principles are essential for the work of the Crime and Corruption Commission.

We cannot effectively, in my view, fulfil our obligations, fulfil our statutory responsibilities, give confidence to the community, to parliament, to elected representatives if we are prohibited from making effective public reports that contain commentary, that contain opinion, that contain recommendations. To do away with these in a public report would mean significant reports such as the Windage report into Ipswich council would not have been able to be prepared in the way it was, and that investigation led to 15 people being charged with offences and significant recommendations coming from the investigation that have improved the local government sector. This is why I see this as being a very critical issue for the commission.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, we have just heard from Mr Barbour and his view in relation to the legislation. Given that very clear description of the need and the frustration and the ability of the CCC now to effectively report being muted, can you advise why the government will not, in the circumstances where Mr Barbour has clearly advised them, support a bill that is before the House that the LNP introduced in October last year given that it is practical, it is cost-effective and it will do the job that has been sought by the CCC and is expected by, as we heard, everyone who has had dealings with the CCC over at least the last 30 years.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. As the member knows, that bill has already gone through a parliamentary committee process. It will come before parliament at some point and will be debated. The government will put its position at that time.

Can I say this: we have undertaken a thorough process in appointing Catherine Holmes to do a review on what this model should look like going forward. It is not the government that removed these powers; it was the High Court that actually made it clear that the legislators had not provided that head of power in the first place.

I absolutely agree with the commissioner when it comes to the principles of our crime and corruption body being able to report. They absolutely should, but with that power comes responsibility and that means there has to be parameters around that reporting power like every other jurisdiction in this country. Every other jurisdiction and every other jurisdiction's crime and corruption body has regulation and a framework around that reporting, not just an open blanket where you can report what you want when you want. It is important. It is in the public interest to report. It is also in the public interest to make sure there is a proper framework for that.

We have undertaken the Holmes review. We have considered the Holmes review and indicated our support for that report and the recommendations, and we are in the process of drafting amendments that reflect those recommendations. We have provided the CCC with an initial draft. There is more work to be done. This is complex. The more simple you make this the more likely these laws will be challenged by the courts.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Madam Attorney—

**Mrs D'ATH:** The member has decided to turn estimates into a parliamentary process on bills before the parliament, so I would like to respond; that is—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sorry, no—

**CHAIR:** Member for Clayfield, please let the Attorney—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Mr Chair, I think the Attorney—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In terms on relevance, Mr Chair. I have asked a question and the Attorney is now straying far away from the question. I have been very polite allowing the Attorney to go on. This seems increasingly like a desperate attempt—

**CHAIR:** Member for Clayfield—

**Mr NICHOLLS:**—to avoid the question.

**CHAIR:** Member for Clayfield, do not talk over me, please.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Surely I am entitled to make a point, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** I will give you that opportunity—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am not raising my voice.

**CHAIR:** You are talking over me. If you continue to talk over me then we will not be able to proceed. Just give me the opportunity.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Yes, certainly. Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** I believe the Attorney-General is being relevant to the question, so I will allow her to continue. Then after that, member for Clayfield, you can ask a question if you are not satisfied with the answer.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Chair, the member asked me whether we would be supporting their bill and what position we would take on their bill and why we would not if that position was put. I had already said—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** And the position regarding it by the CCC.

**CHAIR:** Member for Clayfield, please do not interrupt the Attorney when she—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** To a point—

**CHAIR:** I have already outlined that you will be able to ask a question when she is finished.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Point of order, Chair: I am just correcting a misstatement the Attorney was making regarding my question.

**CHAIR:** You can correct it when the Attorney is finished.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, I appreciate that.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the chair and the member. I had not finished responding, so if I can do that. The CCC's view is that they support the framework outlined in the opposition's bill, so in responding to the bill I am responding to the CCC's opinion of that bill. I have already stated that it is a private member's bill before the parliament. It will come before the chamber. There will be debate on that bill, and at that point a formal position will be put. I have already said that, if the member for Clayfield had been listening. However, as far as wanting to ensure there is urgent action on this, the member himself has made public comments that this should not be rushed and that it should go through a full parliamentary process, so I would hope the member would be supportive of the path we have indicated to the CCC in relation to that.

I want to be clear: the pre Carne position was not an unfettered position. The fact that the opposition has sought to bring in a bill that really is seeking to address a single report or two reports and not the broader issue of a proper framework is a flawed law. It is those sorts of flawed laws that are overturned in the High Court. I have seen that happen previously with the opposition's legislation. We will get this right. We will consult with the CCC and it will go through a full committee process.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Mr Barbour, if I can go back to you on another topic, is the investigation into allegations against the former staff of Queensland forensic sciences still in progress? That was the two officers of Queensland forensic sciences.

**Mr Barbour:** Yes, it is. We have had a number of matters referred to us by Queensland Health and also by the commission of inquiry into the forensic service unit, and that matter is continuing. I hope it will be concluded shortly. As you can well imagine, it is an extremely complex matter and it has required the review of the entire evidence that was before the commission of inquiry.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Would you anticipate publishing a report on that investigation under the current laws?

**Mr Barbour:** We will have to wait and see whether it is going to be possible to do so.



**Mr NICHOLLS:** We may not know what the result of that investigation is in terms of a report in the way we once would have?

**Mr Barbour:** Ultimately, it will depend on the model for public reporting which is put forward by way of amendments.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Would you be preparing your report with one eye to a view to what the report recommended about the presentation of such reports?

**Mr Barbour:** We have to be very careful, obviously, in relation to what we do. It could be interpreted as preparing a report for public release, which we have been told we are not entitled to do.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So we may still be in the dark about what your investigation reveals?

**Mr Barbour:** I do not want to speculate on that.

**Mrs D'ATH:** It is very hypothetical and we do not have the legislation. The report has not been completed.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am asking Mr Barbour, not you.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I am allowed to raise a point of order, member for Clayfield.

**CHAIR:** That is correct, Attorney. That brings to a conclusion this part of the hearing for the opposition. I have the first question, Attorney. With reference to the Attorney's opening statement, can the Attorney expand on what the government is doing to respond to persons using violence?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. This is an important day for Queensland. *Broadening the focus: Queensland's strategy to strengthen responses to people who use domestic and family violence 2024 to 2028* is an Australian first. It places greater emphasis on responding to people who use violence in a domestic and family violence situation. The sector has been calling for this, with the CEO of No to Violence, Phillip Ripper, stating—

We need an overarching perpetrator strategy to guide investment and research, innovation and new models of intervention so we know what works for men and how we can make it easier for men to make the change.

Queensland's strategy revolves around strengthening and improving whole-of-system and community responses to actively help people using violence be responsible for their harmful attitudes and behaviours and support them to change. It explores interventions that provide the appropriate support to sustain behavioural change to stop the perpetration of domestic and family violence through the development and implementation of initiatives that cover the continuum of prevention, early intervention, responding to violence and systemic reform.

For the last decade following the release of the *Not now, not ever* report, the focus has been on helping people experiencing domestic and family violence—not on stopping domestic and family violence from occurring in the first place. Whilst protecting victims remains key to the Miles government's response to domestic and family violence, it is time to broaden the focus and engage with preventive solutions. In August 2023 I released a consultation paper on the draft strategy. Since then we have continued to consult with stakeholders from government, non-government, community-based organisations, the public and experts. We wanted to get this right, and I thank all of those individuals and organisations that have ensured this strategy is underpinned by evidence.

The strategy has been designed to consider responses to all persons using violence including men, women, gender-diverse people and young people; however, it primarily addresses men who use domestic and family violence. Research has shown that four in five people using domestic and family violence are male. Because of this, the strategy considers risk factors, drivers and behaviours that increase the likelihood of a man's tendency to perpetrate domestic and family violence and takes an intersectional approach to interventions, which is essential to creating meaningful behavioural change.

The strategy will be implemented over four years and has four priority areas to tackle the perpetration of domestic and family violence: increasing community understanding of why people use violence and how we can prevent that violence from occurring; enhancing support for children and young people using, or at risk of using, violence; strengthening risk assessment referral pathways and interventions for people using, or at risk of using, violence; and enhancing Queensland's system of accountability to effectively respond to people using, or at risk of using, violence. The strategy also has a focus on reducing misidentification. Page 22 of the strategy states—

The first step in strengthening responses is ensuring the integrity service system is accurately identifying both the person using violence and the person most in need of protection. The impacts of being misidentified are far-reaching and have devastating impacts.

The strategy goes on to say—

To reduce the misidentification of persons using violence, a genuine whole-of-system effort is required, particularly across the criminal justice system, the specialist DFV sector, child and family services, and the Child Protection system. This includes responding to DFV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities which requires understanding and recognition of ongoing racism and intergenerational trauma that forms part of contemporary life for many communities.

We also know that directing efforts towards children and young people as well as parents, caregivers and guardians is crucial to ending intergenerational domestic and family violence. The behaviours or circumstances of many at-risk children and young people may come to the attention of various service providers, such as education, health, police, justice including youth justice, housing and homelessness, or child protection. At these points of contact, it is critical to identify children and young people who have been exposed to domestic and family violence and to recognise the link between trauma, learned behaviours and life trajectory. This is why enhancing support for children and young people using, or at risk of using, domestic and family violence is a priority area of the strategy.

I am very proud to release this strategy today. Queensland is leading the nation in this space. The Miles government is committed to ending domestic and family violence, and this strategy is a pivotal step to preventing violence from occurring in the first place.

**Ms BUSH:** My first question is with regard to page 2 of the SDS. Can the Attorney outline how the government is supporting domestic, family and sexual violence services to protect and support Queenslanders?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for her question. I know her passion in this area. The Miles government is committed to supporting victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence, ensuring they have access to the services they need, where they need them and when they need them. We are implementing major whole-of-society reforms to criminalise coercive control, hold people using violence to account and improve the experiences of victim-survivors within the criminal justice system, which requires a long-term approach.

This government has a proven track record of supporting our frontline domestic, family and sexual violence services. Since 2015, as I have stated, we have invested \$1.9 billion in domestic, family and sexual violence reforms. The Miles government funds a variety of organisations to deliver essential domestic, family and sexual violence services across the length and breadth of Queensland. They offer a spectrum of responses, from immediate crisis action through to therapeutic and ongoing support. These services encompass: early intervention and perpetrator programs; domestic violence counselling for adults and children; community support and women's health and wellbeing services; specialist homelessness services; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services; and dedicated high-risk teams.

Frontline domestic, family and sexual violence services save lives. It is important that services can confidently invest in more programs and staff so they can continue the amazing and invaluable work they already do in helping victim-survivors escape violence and heal. That is why the Miles government is boosting core funding for our domestic, family and sexual violence services by 20 per cent. We announced this funding boost in April, and the 2024-25 state budget makes the increase of \$36 million per year permanent to establish stability for the sector and to assist in staff retention and maintaining continuity of service delivery. The Miles government listened to the sector and we acted. Ending Violence Against Women Queensland President Amie Carrington stated—

We welcome the Premier's personal commitment and leadership to take action. The whole sector is galvanized on the urgent need to address this crisis.

We all have a responsibility to listen to the voices of victim survivors and act to make real change for future generations.

DVConnect CEO and our incoming Victims' Commissioner stated—

This investment in specialist services is an important step forward in ensuring that people get the right service at the time they need it.

This budget strengthens our capacity to combat domestic, family and sexual violence in our community, and the Miles government remains committed to supporting the domestic, family and sexual violence service system from prevention to recovery.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements, could you outline what primary prevention work is being undertaken to prevent domestic and family violence from occurring in the first place?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce *Hear her voice* reports 1 and 2 emphasised that prevention of violence was critical to ending violence against women. It concluded that violence against women was not an intractable or inevitable social problem and much can be done to prevent abuse from occurring from the outset. As a result, the

taskforce made several recommendations for systemic reform to prevent violence, emphasising the need for a clear and sustained focus on primary prevention efforts. One of these recommendations is recommendation 9, which recommended—

The Queensland Government develop and implement a comprehensive and integrated plan for the primary prevention of violence against women in Queensland ...

I was pleased to release *Queensland's plan for the primary prevention of violence against women 2024-28* in April this year. Changing the social conditions that give rise to violence against women and children by reforming the institutions and systems that excuse, justify or promote violence, and shifting the power imbalances, social norm structures and practices that drive and normalise it, will help us address the underlying causes. We cannot end domestic, family and sexual violence without a clear and sustained focus on primary prevention, and our new plan details the best way forward. We know violence is wide reaching and can affect everyone, but outlined in the plan is that four in five people using domestic and family violence are male. That is why the plan focuses on the gender drivers of violence against women and girls.

To support the work under this plan, the Miles government has invested \$16 million to: fund community organisations in urban, rural and remote Queensland to lead community education projects focused on building and embedding positive and respectful relationships; fund Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations to lead initiatives aimed at strengthening the factors that protect against domestic, family and sexual violence; deliver and evaluate a state-wide peer-to-peer program providing training to young people to promote healthier masculinities, building healthy relationship skills and social connections; and establish a dedicated primary prevention team to lead and coordinate the plan's implementation.

Underpinned by extensive consultation, the plan will guide efforts to address the primary causes of violence against women to prevent it from the outset, reducing the number of victim-survivors and in turn reducing demand on the criminal justice and services systems. The plan sets out four key areas of focus for primary prevention reform in Queensland including: leadership, community awareness and capability building; strengthening the primary prevention workforce; developing new partnerships and expanding into new settings; and engaging men and boys in primary prevention efforts. We know there is a lot of good work already underway across Queensland to prevent violence and this plan brings together an array of new and existing initiatives and complements our Persons using violence strategy to guide our shared commitment to end violence against women.

**CHAIR:** I call on the member for Clayfield.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Chair, I might ask Mr Barbour to return to the table again. Mr Barbour, I did not get the opportunity to say thank you for your responses to the first batch of questions. Have you carried out any further research for the government on a police integrity unit as recommended in *A call for change*, the report by Children's Court Judge Richards.

**Mr Barbour:** We undertook, at the request of the former attorney-general, a very detailed and urgent review with the assistance of consultants. That review led to the preparation of a detailed report, some 150 pages, which set out a number of options for government to consider. That report was provided to the Attorney at the end of May last year.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That is May 2023?

**Mr Barbour:** May 2023. I have recently been advised—I think yesterday—that there is now a working group that will be set up to be headed by the Public Service Commissioner to consider the PIU issues.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Last year you told us that some CCC staff had travelled to Northern Ireland in March 2023 to investigate options or suggestions from that jurisdiction. That cost around about \$31,000, if I recall correctly.

**Mr Barbour:** Correct. The purpose of that tour was because in part Judge Richards in her recommendations in her report utilised the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland as a potential model for the PIU that she was recommending for Queensland. It was felt that it was necessary to not only talk to that particular organisation but also talk to all of the agencies, including police, in that jurisdiction which engaged with that organisation to see whether it worked effectively, how it worked and whether or not it was transferable as a model to Queensland.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** What was the view of the people who attended in those circumstances?

**Mr Barbour:** We attended, myself and the CEO of the Crime Commission, as did a now deputy commissioner of police and two representatives, including the president of the QPUE, and of course the consultant.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Was that GSA?

**Mr Barbour:** That was GSA.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** They were paid \$400,000, if I recall?

**Mr Barbour:** Approximately, from memory. I think what was concluded was that the model in Northern Ireland was not an appropriate model for Queensland because that particular model only had a civilian review of police complaints for civilian-made complaints. What became clear from Judge Richards's commission of inquiry and what was documented in her report was that significant concerns arose in relation to complaints that were made by police against other police, and those matters were not part of the jurisdictional remit of the PONI, and it was felt that, on review, that would not be an appropriate split for a Queensland model.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Indeed. Since, I think you said, May 2023 when the report was handed down, the next information you have received about implementation or action taken in relation to the police integrity unit was yesterday's announcement in relation to the working group?

**Mr Barbour:** No, I have received advice now and then between those two periods of time about potential progress, about the formation of working groups, but unfortunately none of that has really come to pass, it seems, in any meaningful way. It is not clear to me why there has been a delay. I could hypothesise, but I do not propose to do that for the committee. Certainly our view, and the view of Judge Richards, with considerable evidence to support that view, was that this was something that needed to be looked at very quickly and with some degree of urgency, and it is disappointing that that does not appear to have happened.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Mr Barbour. If I may, I will direct a question to you, Director-General. What steps has the department taken to go further, having received a report in May last year to implement those recommendations, other than the working group which we have heard about which was announced yesterday?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. As the chairperson just outlined, the report was received in May last year. Since then, the department has been considering the report and working on options around the working group, including the chairperson of the working group, as well as its terms of reference.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So working on options and considering who should chair the working group?

**Ms Joldic:** The composition of the working group, including the chair of the working group, as well as its terms of reference, given that we have had a report that has considered options and provided four options that are clearly not suitable for the Queensland environment.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It seems clear from what Mr Barbour said that he was not going to recommend the Northern Ireland option, but there were other options put forward?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. That is correct. The report suggested four options. However, as the chairperson just outlined as well, the context and the environment in which a proposed unit would operate needs to be really taken into consideration. As such, getting the terms of reference right and getting the working group composition right is important.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Director-General. Attorney, your predecessor, the now health minister, stated in November 2022, when the *A call for change* report was handed down—

The responsibility now for ministers and the Premier and the cabinet is to make sure that these recommendations from the commission of inquiry that will transform this service are implemented and are funded.

It is now nearly two years since the report was handed down and getting on to two years since your predecessor made that statement about the government needing to get on and transform the service, yet we are seeing no real progress on this recommendation. Can you tell us why the government has taken so long and is shirking its responsibility in this respect?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. I do not accept the terminology used in the member's question. We have been working through the recommendations, not just of the commission of inquiry—and I hear the same sorts of comments being made about the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations as well, with a lack of acknowledgement that these recommendations are

collectively being implemented over staged approaches, and it is important to do that. There are many recommendations in the commission of inquiry and the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce that are very important recommendations which all need to be implemented, but they are being implemented in stages.

The government remains committed to establishing a police integrity unit. I had a conversation with the Crime and Corruption Commissioner yesterday in relation to the working group, because I was awaiting the commissioner returning from leave to give him the courtesy of telling him directly. In relation to who we are going to get chairing this, the government has made the decision, because of the work that has been done in the clearing house and any potential overlap of the role of the clearing house—and this was actually made in the recommendations, in the commission of inquiry report—that any PIU also take into account the role of the clearing house and how the two would interrelate. The government has chosen to appoint the Public Sector Commissioner, David Mackie, to chair that working group. He comes with experience and knowledge of the Crime and Corruption Commission, the justice portfolio as well as QPS, but is also overseeing the work of the clearing house. He will be establishing the working group and taking this forward.

There is a lot of work to be done because there is no model anywhere that actually operates as per this recommendation. There is not any jurisdiction in Australia that has civilian oversight and management of all complaints from the Police Service, whether it is staff on staff or whether it is public complaints about police behaviour. It is technically a difficult thing to deliver, but we are committed to do that, and that is what we are doing with appointing the commissioner as the chair of this working group.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thanks, Attorney-General. On that matter, you made a comment earlier in relation to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. I want to clarify that I have made no comments in relation to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.

**Mrs D'ATH:** They are all interlinked.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I have never made any comment in relation to that.

**Mrs D'ATH:** No, the opposition has.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I wanted to clarify that in particular.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I appreciate that.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But that does not negate the fact that it has now been two years since that report's release. I just wanted to clarify that. Mr Barbour, your time at the front desk has finished. Thank you very much. I call forward Mr Twyford, the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner.

**Mr Twyford:** Good morning.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Good morning. I bet you thought you were going to escape.

**Mr Twyford:** I welcome the opportunity.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Fantastic. Commissioner, you have been doing some work on the crossover between young people under Youth Justice supervision in the youth justice sector and Child Safety. Can you provide us perhaps with a little bit more information about your work in that respect?

**Mr Twyford:** Thank you. Through the work of both the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee and the Residential Care Review, there was an emerging narrative that children in care, particularly children in residential care, were the ones causing crime within our communities, and a number of different statistics were emerging in the public narrative. We decided to undertake a review looking at multiple perspectives of the issue and we produced an insights paper in, I believe, May of this past year.

If I step it through, a very small percentage, less than five per cent, of children in the child safety system are actually involved in criminal offending. That is not the public narrative that we hear, and that is what that insights paper is important to understand. On the converse perspective, around one-third to a half of children in the youth justice system have exposure to the child safety system. What that clearly signals, and the key message that I have tried to convey in my statutory role, is that lifehood adversity and exposure to child maltreatment are key drivers and root causes of criminal behaviour and that, indeed, addressing the root causes of crime requires us to improve the wellbeing of our communities and our families.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Some of your work has been around the reporting or understanding of those statistics. There is a Fast Facts crossover cohort document that was published in March 2024. It says there that more than half of young people who had been in youth justice supervision during 2020-21 had also had an interaction with the child protection system in the last five years. That seems to be

quite a different statistic to what we have heard from the government previously. For example, in 2022, the former minister for child safety said that the percentage of young people under a youth justice order who have involvement in the child safety system is a very small cohort and obviously a smaller number than the number of children in the child safety system at 19 per cent. You can see that on the one hand we have your report which says 50 and on the other hand we have the minister saying 19. Which is the more accurate statistic—I would expect you to say yours—but nonetheless, is there an explanation for the discrepancy?

**Mr Twyford:** Yes. You are correct, that is the paper I was referring to; it was March, not May.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Yes.

**Mr Twyford:** I believe the different figures stem from different perspectives. When we look at the total cohort of children in the child safety system who are known to child safety, there are three cohorts: children who are known to child safety so a report has been made about them; children in state care, where there is an order granting parental custody to the state; and children in residential care. There are three different cohorts of children in the child protection system. When we look at what percentage of those have had youth justice intervention, we see a very small percentage.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Across the three cohorts in total?

**Mr Twyford:** Correct. It does escalate. You will see a high proportion of children in residential care who are known to child safety. It is the reverse perspective of children in youth justice. Again, we looked at three cohorts: children who had been apprehended and charged; children who were sentenced, either to a community or custodial setting; and children who were in youth detention. That gives you a far higher percentage. For children in youth detention centres, 50 per cent are known to the child protection system.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Moving to your *Exiting youth detention* report—another piece of work that you have undertaken—you say detention is the ‘most expensive, and least effective, solution to youth crime’. Your report focused on leaving detention. Could you highlight some of current shortfalls in the existing system for people who are exiting detention? Would you say that a 12-month post-detention program would be of great benefit to people who are exiting detention?

**Mr Twyford:** Certainly. The Queensland Family and Child Commission and the Child Death Review Board that I chair in this role, in the last 24 months have provided a number of reviews and insights into our youth detention operations and our youth justice system more broadly. The *Exiting youth detention* report is significant in that we interviewed 40 children who had repeated instances of detention to hear from their mouths and from their experience what would need to be done differently to keep them out of detention and to reduce the behaviours that are leading them to have an impact on the community. We also spoke to the frontline workers who were working with those 40 young people and, in some cases, their family members. The root causes of their offending were very clear. The lifestyles that they had led prior to entering detention were exactly the same upon their exit—work had not been done to change their family circumstance, to re-engage them in education and training, to offer them employment, to work with them on their substance addiction and on the mental health causes that were leading to that substance addiction.

Whilst there are many good people and programs in our youth justice portfolio that work with these people day in, day out, what became clear was that upon three days, three weeks or three months of exit that support system had fallen away for the young people and they were seeking connection. They were seeking positive role models and they did not have them. I am obviously speaking generally. There are case studies within that report where there is success. Some of those young people had mentors and community members who became an advocate and a champion for them. This led that report very clearly to recommend that government should fund dedicated 12-month follow-through intensive case management for all young people who are leaving detention. That recommendation is in the report.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you for your very fulsome answer. Can I turn to another matter that has been around for some time and that is the Ombudsman’s investigation into the management of the cases of Jonathon and Kaleb that were the subject of the case study in the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Mr Twyford, have you or your staff been interviewed by the Ombudsman as part of their ongoing investigation in relation to that matter?

**Mr Twyford:** We have certainly had dialogue. This includes the Queensland Family and Child Commission providing the background papers and the source material that we collected for the Queensland Family and Child Commission review of that case, so yes I have had engagement with the Ombudsman.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You have discussed your involvement and recommendations with the Ombudsman?

**Mr Twyford:** Yes. I have certainly discussed the work that the Queensland Family and Child Commission does with the Ombudsman.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You have previously made a submission as part of the review of the act that the QFCC would benefit from amendments to section 35 of the act to reflect section 27 of the act in relation to compliance and confidential information. This would allow you, in cases that are similar to Jonathon and Kaleb's case, to access case files and information that give an accurate insight into the case. Are you aware of any changes that are being proposed in relation to that part of the legislation?

**Mr Twyford:** Earlier this past financial year, the government did conduct a consultation process on the Queensland Family and Child Commission Act. Public submissions were made and the Queensland Family and Child Commission did make a submission, including raising the issue that you have referred to. I understand that process is now with the department.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You have not heard anything further since then?

**Mr Twyford:** No.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Mr Twyford. I would like to call forward the Queensland Ombudsman, the Inspector of Detention Services. Welcome, Mr Reilly. On the same subject that I have been speaking to Mr Twyford about, can you tell us how your investigation or review is going and when you expect your final report to be tabled with the Speaker in respect to the case study of Kaleb, Jonathon and their late father Paul Barrett?

**Mr Reilly:** The investigation has commenced.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It is been going for 12 months?

**Mr Reilly:** Yes, it has been going for some time. A taskforce has been established to conduct the investigation and information has been sought and obtained from the relevant agencies. We have published some information on our website about the investigation because we felt that it was important for the public to understand how the investigation was progressing. That is an unusual step for the Ombudsman because the act says all our investigations should be confidential so we sought the permission of the Speaker to do so. I intend to publish more information as the matter progresses. There are a number of agencies that are involved in the matter. The issues that are raised go back decades so there is a lot of information to work through. We are now at the point of forming views about recommendations in relation to some agencies that we hope to be able to move forward on soon.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Do you have access to confidential case file notes for the purpose of your investigations? I note agreed facts have been provided and published by the royal commission, but do you have access?

**Mr Reilly:** Yes. We use the full powers of the Ombudsman Act to obtain information from agencies. We have had cooperation from the agencies in providing the information we have requested. There was a specific question that you asked about confidential case file notes—of which department?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Any of the departments that are involved that would maintain those confidential case notes. I would expect you would have, for example, case notes from the health department, the families department and the education department.

**Mr Reilly:** Yes. We have been able to access information from the departments about those matters. I should say that under the Ombudsman Act the details of our investigations are required to remain confidential and so I have to be careful in answering these questions that I do not breach the requirements of my act. I have used the Speaker as a means of seeking approval to provide information to the community during the course of the investigation.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It may please you to know I have had a look at your website in relation to this matter. It is not a very large website, I might say, but, nonetheless, it is a start.

**Mr Reilly:** It is a start, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Can I move on to your role as the Inspector of Detention Services, please. You commenced that role on 1 July 2023?

**Mr Reilly:** The commencement was interesting. I think technically I commenced in the role at the end of 2022.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** December 2022, yes.

**Mr Reilly:** The functions fully commenced, if you like, in July 2023.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You had six months from the end of 2022 until 1 July 2023 where you were not quite sure what you were doing?

**Mr Reilly:** No, I was appointed to the role but then I had six months to get a team set up so that from July we could get on with the functions. I did not have the full suite of functions available to me until July. I had the title, if you like, but not the functions.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** On 29 April you appeared before the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee and you said you were just finalising your report into the inspection of the Cairns watch house. You were obliged under the act to provide the report to the stakeholders and the commissioner to provide them with an opportunity to respond. Has your report been provided to stakeholders?

**Mr Reilly:** Yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Have they had the response and are we going to see that report now that it has been three months since the April appearance before the committee?

**Mr Reilly:** Yes, the response is due shortly and the report will then be released.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You are obliged to give them six weeks to respond.

**Mr Reilly:** Yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If you were giving them the report shortly after 29 April—it seems to have taken some time. Six weeks is not three months.

**Mr Reilly:** It does take some time to finalise reports. They are very complex matters. There are a lot of things to go through. I went to brief the Police Commissioner, for example, about the report before sending him a draft. I wanted to make sure he was aware of some of the issues we were raising. That was a good meeting. The report has been sent to them. I also met with the director-general of Youth Justice. That was another meeting to organise before sending the draft. These things take time. The report has now been sent to the relevant stakeholders and we should have a report soon.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Can you tell us when we will see it?

**CHAIR:** Member for Clayfield, this will be your last question.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Can you tell us when we will see that report, then?

**Mr Reilly:** I cannot give you an exact day, but I could—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You must have a plan.

**Mr Reilly:** Yes, but the nature of reports—for example, the timing of the report will be affected by the extent of the feedback we receive. If the feedback is, for example, advising us that information we have included in the report is not correct, we will have to spend some time with the agency trying to work that through and that could make it take longer to finalise the report. These things do get affected by these sorts of factors.

**CHAIR:** I would now like to call on the member for Noosa.

**Ms BOLTON:** Attorney-General, with South Australia introducing a ban on political donations, is there any allocation for Queensland to follow suit or investigate following suit?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for her question. I cannot speak on behalf of the party in any proposals, but, as far as government reforms around electoral donations are concerned, we have actually led the country in that regard. We are the only ones who have put a complete cap on electoral expenditure as well as donation caps. We have real-time disclosure. We are the only jurisdiction to have done that to the extent that we have. In many other places you are waiting months before you know of any of those donations and where they have come from. We have more transparency in relation to donations, I believe, than anywhere else in the country.

We looked at all options in developing the legislation. I make no comments in relation to South Australia's model, but we did look at all models. We looked at case law in relation to those models and what is considered appropriate. We believe that we have the balance right in relation to these issues. Some of the case law talks about the right of individuals to contribute in the political space and to make donations, but it is also about having proper transparency around all of that, accountability and full disclosure of it, which we have.

I think in the case of the Commonwealth, it is well over \$14,000 in donations that you can make before even disclosing from any one individual organisation. We have \$1,000. We have not indexed that. It has been \$1,000 from day one, when we changed the laws in 2015, and it remains \$1,000 today. We have a lot of disclosure and I think we have a really good model here, so at this stage we are not



looking at changing that model. We are very close to an election and it would be inappropriate to try to change those laws at such short notice when the current system is really only being implemented for the first time in this four-year fixed term—the full caps and the disclosure regime.

**Ms BOLTON:** When we go to transparency and the issue of infringing on privacy of Queenslanders with the application for postal votes, which we have raised previously, is there anything in the budget to bring that in line with the recommendations of the federal inquiry?

**Mrs D'ATH:** On postal votes, the ECQ have legislation around disclosure of information and privacy in relation to all of the information they get from voters including their postal votes. About postal votes I will say that there is a much broader issue and a conversation we have to have, which is the postal system and whether postal votes are actually suitable for our system anymore. Due to the structure, we end up waiting weeks for final decisions on elections because we have to wait until all of those postal votes come in. There are other better and more efficient systems around the world in relation to that. That has to be the conversation, because I do fear that changes in the Australia Post system will lead to further delays in sending an application, receiving the ballot paper and getting the ballot paper back to the Electoral Commission.

**Ms BOLTON:** I have one last question before I hand over to other crossbenchers. Given the Coaldrake report's criticism of the use of commercial-in-confidence in contracts, what will be undertaken to amend practices to address Coaldrake's concerns?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. In relation to Coaldrake's recommendation, which I understand was one of the 14 recommendations in the report—if you can give me a moment, I will take you to the government's response to that.

**Ms BOLTON:** I am quite happy for you to take that on notice because of time.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I will definitely come back before the end of this session today. I want to make sure that I am referencing back to the government response as well in relation to that. Thank you.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. I will hand over to the member for Mirani.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you, member for Noosa. I appreciate that. Minister, could you please explain to me the situation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are birthing at the hospital and why Child Safety are turning up when they are actually having children? I have had a lot of complaints that Child Safety are turning up as soon as these ladies have birthed. Is that the way the government pays respect to elders emerging?

**CHAIR:** There is an imputation in that question.

**Mr ANDREW:** I just want to know why people—

**CHAIR:** Do not argue with me, member for Mirani. Attorney, is that something that is in your portfolio or that you wish to answer?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. As the member is well aware, I am not the Minister for Health. I am also not the Minister for Child Safety, so I am just not in a position to answer. It does not fall within my portfolio area to be able to answer that question.

**Mr ANDREW:** That is fine. I have a question regarding the restrictive practices of the Public Guardian with reference to page 1 of the department's objectives in terms of safeguarding the rights of all people in society. Can the minister advise how many restrictive practices decisions were submitted to the OPG in 2023-24 and how many were approved?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. I would need to refer to the Public Guardian to get that data, so I am happy to take that on notice for the member.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you. I have a question for the Electoral Commissioner please. With reference to page 61 of the SDS, could you provide an overview of all of the steps your office is taking to ensure the provision of a fair and transparent state election this year, including any measures relating to social media misinformation?

**Mr Vidgen:** I thank the member for the question. I think it is important to put some context around elections at the moment. We have been through the local government elections in March and moving forward to the October elections. Obviously elections generally across the world are very topical in terms of the number being held in western democracies. I will say that—and we are not alone in saying this—the threats to electoral integrity in western democracies is greater than ever. The growth of misinformation and disinformation is on the rise, especially across social media platforms. Cyberthreats are real. The threat of foreign interference is real to elections. The use of artificial intelligence is

expanding and the physical threats to temporary election staff is rising—as an example, poor behaviour of candidates and candidate workers in some local governments in March such as Redlands was unprecedented.

With regard to the use of social media and the threats that it provides for the holding of elections, the Electoral Commission of Queensland is bound by its legislation, so we are limited in terms of what we can do in this space. In terms of where our powers lie, particularly around an election period, for example for the October elections the election period will commence on 1 October and run through to 26 October or until the election result is clear. That is when the period is on. Our powers relate to what we can do in that period of time and it very much relates to the proper authorisation of election material and the way that election material is presented in terms of the ways of voting. Beyond that we have very limited powers in what we can do. What we have done in addition to the limits of our powers is we do engage with social media platforms. We do it both at a state level and through a national level as well. We have a dialogue there. When we identify material on social media which we believe is problematic, we have an avenue to contact those social media platforms and seek their agreement to take them down. Of course it is a matter for them to respond to that and I should say that the responses are inconsistent.

**Ms BOLTON:** I would like to hand over to the member for Maiwar.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thanks very much. I was hoping to put a question to the Human Rights Commissioner, if I might. Mr McDougall, can you advise the committee in the last financial year how many complaints in the Human Rights Commission named the QPS as a respondent and how many of those complaints were able to be resolved through conciliation?

**Mr McDougall:** I do not have those details to hand, but I can certainly get them back within the timeframes of today.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I would appreciate that if possible, and maybe at a more general level then. Has the commission identified any shift in the way the QPS is approaching any human rights complaints that are brought in respect of the Police Service or QPS officers?

**Mr McDougall:** I think to answer that, you may be aware that the commission is currently involved in a collaborative process with the Queensland Police Service implementing recommendation 12 of the commission of inquiry which required the Queensland Police Service to engage the commission to undertake a review of its recruitment and retention policies and procedures. I can say that the commission has developed an effective working relationship with the police. I am yet to see any evidence though that that relationship is translating yet into a drastic improvement in the way that human rights are protected and respected by Queensland police officers. That is something that is within my ambit though and is certainly a goal of the commission.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thanks, Mr McDougall. If time permits, Chair, I was also interested—

**CHAIR:** This might be the last one.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Okay. I have a further question then for the Crime and Corruption Commissioner, if I might.

**Mr Barbour:** Thank you, member, but if I could before answering your question just put something by way of correction. I realised in relation to some figures that I quoted in earlier questions by you, Mr Nicholls, that I have managed to conflate some of the figures and I would like to correct those for the transcript if I could.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sure.

**Mr Barbour:** The figure I gave you of \$943,993.41 included the two sums paid in relation to Mr Carne and his costs. Those two amounts were for the Court of Appeal, \$70,526; and in relation to the High Court proceedings, \$370,280. The total cost of the CCC's own legal costs is therefore \$503,185 and the total cost in repaying the legal fees to Mr Carne come to a total of \$440,806. I do apologise that I conflated those figures.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** They are very big numbers. I accept your apology no trouble whatsoever.

**Mr Barbour:** They are. There is a lot of material here.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Mr Barbour. I appreciate your candour.

**CHAIR:** Now we are restricted on time.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Sure. I will make it very quick. I will preface this by saying that I apologise that I was not able to catch all of the evidence earlier about the scoping work on a police integrity unit, but I was hoping, Mr Barbour, you could provide the committee some additional information on what that scoping work recommended regarding the most appropriate model for the unit but specifically around which or what proportion of complaints against police would be investigated by civilians.

**Mr Barbour:** Thank you for the question. The consultancy that was undertaken in conjunction with work from the CCC was extremely extensive and we endeavoured to engage with a very broad group of stakeholders who had not only been involved in the COI and had worked with Judge Richards or had been involved in discussions with her but a broader group beyond that. We held a number of meetings with the relevant stakeholders. Unfortunately, the police unions refused to attend those particular stakeholder meetings. Ultimately the document that was provided to the government did not put forward a specific preferred option. One of the options of course was the option which was recommended by Judge Richards in her report and there were a range of other options put forward to the government. That document, as I understand it, is cabinet in confidence. I am reluctant to go into details. However, we did not put forward one option over another and we saw potentially that at least one of the other options put forward could be a legitimate stepping stone towards implementation of the full recommendation as recommended by Judge Richards.

I also add that I see this as being an incredibly important issue and one that should have been pursued with greater haste than it has been. I believe that the current commissioner through discussions with him and also the previous commissioner in discussions with her—police commissioners—were very supportive of efforts to improve the handling of police complaints, including a greater degree of civil oversight in relation to those complaints. So certainly QPS senior executives are supportive of that, most of the community representatives and stakeholders are supportive of that and the CCC is supportive of that.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Wonderful. Thanks very much, Mr Barbour.

**CHAIR:** This will be the last question in this session. I hand over to the member for Cooper.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney-General, I was hoping to put a question to the CEO of Legal Aid Queensland, if Ms Davies is available.

**Mrs D'ATH:** While Ms Davies comes up to the table, Chair, I do have a response to the question from the member for Noosa if you want me to address that before we break.

**Ms BUSH:** Ms Davies, I have an interest in your duty lawyer services, with regard to page 33 of the SDS. Could you outline how Legal Aid Queensland is working to deliver efficient and cost-effective duty lawyer services for Queensland?

**Ms Davies:** In terms of the way that we deliver criminal law duty lawyer services, we use a mixed model of both our in-house practitioners and then lawyers in private practice, some of whom are paid on a fixed hourly rate for the duty lawyer work that they do. There is another group of practitioners who actually tender for duty lawyer services. The final figures in terms of the cost effectiveness depend upon the balance at any one time as to how those services are delivered right across Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Attorney-General, would you like to provide the committee with that response?

**Mrs D'ATH:** Going back to the question of the member for Noosa around commercial-in-confidence and the Coaldrake report, I believe it has been confirmed that, in fact, there was not one recommendation. There was no recommendation, of the 14 recommendations, dealing with commercial-in-confidence in the Coaldrake report, which the government has implemented. Commercial-in-confidence, as the member would know, is a longstanding business and legal practice and is used all around the state, the country and the world. The use of commercial-in-confidence turns on the facts of each situation and, therefore, there cannot be a broad, sweeping statement regarding its use. However, I do note that it should only be used where appropriate and depending on the situation at the time. The Premier this week in his estimates hearing stated—

There are circumstances in which commercial-in-confidence is required—for example, to retain tension in a tendering process. My guidance to public servants has always been to limit that wherever possible and to disclose information as soon as is possible once the necessity for that arrangement has passed ...

The Public Sector Commissioner at the same estimates hearing said—

That was not a recommendation per se in the Coaldrake report, so it really did not feature as one of the 14 recommendations that we addressed. I think there was a reference to it in there—


that is, in the report. The Public Sector Commissioner then echoed the words of the Premier in relation to there being balance and the need for that and that there are places that commercial-in-confidence, on a case-by-case basis, is needed.

**Ms BOLTON:** My apologies if I used the word 'recommendation'. I thought I used the word 'criticism' as in 'Coaldrake's criticism'.

**Mrs D'ATH:** My apologies if I misunderstood what the member was asking.

**CHAIR:** The committee will take a short break, with the hearing to resume at 10.45. I acknowledge that we have some school groups in the gallery. Welcome to our estimates hearings. It is an important part of our democracy.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.32 am to 10.45 am.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Attorney-General, Director-General, officials and departmental officers. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I call the deputy chair.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I yield to the member for Clayfield.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Chair and Deputy Chair. Attorney-General, on 9 April this year, Aaron Harley James was declared innocent of all charges against him in relation to the death of his stepson, Jaylen Priest. That was after spending over two years in prison. Are you able to shed some more light on why this prosecution was mishandled so badly?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. As the member would know, these are matters that are dealt with by the ODPP in how they progress prosecutions and decisions they make as to whether prosecutions continue or get withdrawn. It has never been the responsibility of any attorney-general in this state to be asked by the ODPP whether matters should be withdrawn or not or have continual involvement in proceedings, as they go along, of those matters. Therefore, I am not in a position to go into detail as to the consideration of the ODPP.

I do not think it is appropriate to frame it the way that the member has without some evidence to support that what they did, up until the point of making that decision, was inappropriate. It was the court that remanded the individual. I do want to recognise that the ODPP do a difficult job and I think they do an exceptional job.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Noting your answer, a man has been detained for two years in prison and Justice Callaghan made some fairly scathing remarks in relation to the manner in which this matter was handled. Is this not a matter that, as Attorney, you would seek some information or advice about? I am not suggesting in any way, shape or form that you have any role—and nor should you have any role—in the decision of the DPP, but did you seek advice as to how this was allowed to occur?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I do not recall asking for a specific brief from the ODPP on this particular matter, recognising that there are many matters—I appreciate the comment you make. Absolutely, I would expect the ODPP to reflect on any decisions and any comments made by judges in relation to their conduct in matters before the courts, and I would not interfere in those decisions in any way. However, I respect what the member is saying. I would absolutely expect the Director of Public Prosecutions to reflect on that and to look back and do a review of their own cases to see if they can have any learned experience from that so that it does not happen again.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney-General, on Monday this week we saw the update of the case against a former day care worker, Ashley Griffith. You may be aware of this case. There are quite a substantial number of charges. Are you aware if all victims were notified prior to the decision to substantially reduce the number of charges? I think it has gone from over 1,000 charges to over 300 charges. Obviously, many victims are involved. Were victims notified prior to the decision to substantially reduce the number of charges by 700?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. Again, the responsibility for liaison with victims in relation to matters before the courts sits with the QPS and the ODPP. It is not operational matters that I would reach into as the Attorney-General. I personally have not received any correspondence, although there may be some in my office that I am not aware of or in the department, from any individuals who are victims. I would say it would be their parents as opposed to the victims.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sure.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I know what you meant. In relation to any parents who have contacted my office raising this issue with me, if they do of course I would follow up on that.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It seems a very substantial change affecting a lot of people in a very sensitive area with children, as it does. It would seem to me important, irrespective of the DPP's decisions, to ensure that the DPP has proper processes in place.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Of course. I thank the member. It was not really a question; I guess it was a comment from the member. In relation to that—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Are you satisfied the DPP's systems in place are adequate to do that?

**Mrs D'ATH:** Again, I have not had any of those family members contact my office, that I am aware of at this stage, to complain about not being contacted. I am not aware of that. If that is correct, then I would follow up on that if I was contacted by those family members. These are important issues. We fund ODPP to make sure that they have strong ties with victims in relation to liaising with them about matters before the courts.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you. Attorney-General, I note the answer to the pre-estimates question on notice No. 4, relating to the blue card system. Can you provide when you expect the recommendations that are yet to be completed to be fully delivered, given that this report was made in 2017?

**Mrs D'ATH:** As the QoN outlines, there are a number of recommendations. I think 52 have been completed and a further 12 are on track to be closed this year. I think nine of those 12 are being addressed through the bill before the House currently. Of the seven that are in progress, I could not give you a definitive answer because they are dependent on matters in relation to the Commonwealth government and also cross-government work, and one recommendation will not be finalised until all other recommendations have been implemented. For those seven outstanding ones, we are really reliant on other agencies, including other jurisdictions, before we can completely close them off.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, is there any anticipated timeline for those? The report was handed down in September 2017. It is now going on for the better part of seven years since the report was handed down and we are still waiting to see it finalised, noting the timing of the bill that was introduced in the last session of parliament.

**Mrs D'ATH:** As I have stated, I am not able to do that because in some cases they rely on work to be done at a national level and across other government agencies. I cannot give a definitive answer when that work may be finalised.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney-General, the Blue Card System Review Implementation Reference Group generally met at least three times a year from 2018, except for 2020 during COVID. There was no meeting between April 2022 and September 2023—16 months. Was it the case of former day care worker Ashley Griffith that made the government act again and have that September 2023 meeting? How many meetings have happened since then?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. In relation to the meetings of that organisation, I am advised that they met on 23 April 2024. I do not manage their schedule or the frequency of their meetings, and I cannot comment about why they did not meet between April 2022 and September 2023. I will say this: linking the meetings of this reference group to what this individual has been charged with and the allegations against him is really quite improper.

I am sure the member knows that this person did not have a criminal record. The blue card system is one tool to protect children. It cannot stop everything. When someone is going to be volunteering or working with children, its job is to look at their history. Sadly, when it comes to people who offend, there is always the first time that they are caught. Until such time as blue card becomes aware of the allegations and the offending, they cannot act on that.

None of these recommendations changes that. None of these outstanding recommendations would have changed what occurred in relation to the charges before that individual. There was no failing of the blue card system, and I will stand by our wonderful team at blue card and our legislation. Of course, we will look at learned experience—how all the agencies worked, what the Commonwealth knew and what the state knew—but, at the end of the day, when it comes to this individual, the blue card system did its job.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Attorney. I have a couple of questions in relation to the appointment of magistrates. Can you advise how many new acting magistrate appointments were announced on 12 April 2024?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I would need to take that on notice. As the member knows, we announce a lot of acting magistrates, so I would need to follow that up.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sure. Can I suggest to you that the *Gazette* shows eight new acting magistrates were appointed for a term up to and including 30 June 2026 on 12 April 2024? I am happy for you to confirm that. I also put to you that, on 3 May 2024, two new magistrates were appointed and, on 7 June 2024, 42 existing and acting magistrates, including a retired magistrates, were appointed to commence on 1 July 2024, ending 30 June 2026. Is it correct to say that the government has announced so far this year the appointment, or reappointment, of 52 acting magistrates and magistrates in Queensland?

**Mrs D'ATH:** If that is what appears in the *Gazette*, then that would be accurate.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Were the acting magistrate roles publicly advertised? If yes, where and on what dates were those advertisements calling for expressions of interest placed?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. I do not believe there has ever been, irrespective of whoever has been in government and who the attorney-general has been, a process of the attorney-general calling for EOIs in relation to acting magistrates.

The acting magistrates are put up by the Chief Magistrate. It is the Chief Magistrate who provides the names to the attorney-general—which I have accepted—who then sends that to Governor in Council. I will say that, when it comes to appointments, it was this government that established a judicial appointment protocol with public criteria and a panel to help select and make recommendations as to who the appointments will be, and I am very proud of that process. It was not one that existed previously.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But it does not apply to acting magistrates?

**Mrs D'ATH:** No, it never has.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** There are now 42 existing acting magistrates who are reappointed and eight new acting magistrates who are appointed. The roles are not publicly advertised or expressions of interest are not sought and all of those people are recommended by the Chief Magistrate; is that right?

**Mrs D'ATH:** That is correct.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Given that acting magistrates exercise all of the powers of a magistrate when they are appointed, do you then know how those magistrates or acting magistrates are identified and how they are judged as being suitable for those positions, given they do not go through the judicial protocol appointments that you put in place?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. As I have stated, this has been the process for as long as I have been in this role. It was the process before I came into this role that the former attorney-general in the Newman government also applied when it comes to acting magistrates. There is a big difference between an acting magistrate—and I accept what the member says in relation to fulfilling the same role, but they are not permanently appointed. Any issues in relation to the performance of acting magistrates can result in the acting magistrate being removed and no longer practising in the court.

I have full confidence in the Chief Magistrate of Queensland and the recommendations that that member makes, knowing that these appointments are temporary. If the Chief Magistrate has any concerns, including complaints from the public or the legal profession in relation to the behaviour and conduct of any individual acting magistrate, the Chief Magistrate can make the decision to not utilise them despite them being on the acting magistrates list. It is up to the Chief Magistrate when those acting magistrates are utilised and the frequency with which they are utilised. There are many safeguards there as opposed to a permanently appointed magistrate. There are such large numbers that are often appointed on the acting panel that it would not be reasonable to think that the judicial appointment panel would be considering those every time.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In terms of the appointment, then, of acting magistrates, when appointed and assigned to a position they exercise all of the powers of a magistrate. Presumably, they can make bail decisions. They can make decisions in relation to appearances on criminal matters within the jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court and all of those sorts of things, but they do not go through the judicial appointments process that you have outlined and put in place. If people are dissatisfied or unhappy with them, the Chief Magistrate can say, 'You don't do the job,' and does not assign them to court. Is that what you are saying?

**Mrs D'ATH:** That right is available to the Chief Magistrate, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** How does that work with the separation of powers, then? Aren't the magistrates entitled to say, 'I've made my decision. You're second-guessing my decision'? The appropriate course there is an appeal, not to say, 'You cannot sit any longer.'

**Mrs D'ATH:** As I say, with acting magistrates there is the ability for the Chief Magistrate to do that. I am not talking about whether someone has made an error of law. Of course, there are appeal avenues available to that. If there are any issues of concern about the suitability of an acting magistrate, the Chief Magistrate has opportunities—which is not my decision. It is not the decision of the Attorney-General. It is not an interference in the separation of powers between the judiciary and the government.

I will say this: if the member has an allegation, the member should just put it. This is the way that acting magistrates have been appointed for as long as I am aware, and it is also the practice when the opposition was in government. If the opposition are now planning on having all acting magistrates go through the judicial appointment panel in the future—if they were to get into government—they should put that policy out. I am more concerned they would scrap the existing policy when it comes to permanent judges and magistrates.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, with respect to judicial appointments, on or about 14 June 2024 an email sent at about 4.26 pm contained an expression of interest calling for six magistrates roles, with the EOI closing on 28 June 2024. It was put up on the website too, I understand. Can you confirm the EOI called for direct appointments to Mount Isa, Townsville, two magistrates in Brisbane, along with potentially appointment to either Southport or Bowen and/or Southport and Cairns—so six positions in those three jurisdictions: two in Brisbane and then potentially one Southport/Bowen and one Southport/Cairns?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I believe that to be correct.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Did the expression of interest locations change over the EOI period—that is, in the 14 days between 14 June and 28 June? If so, how was that decision to change the locations for the appointment of those magistrates made and why was it made?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. In relation to where the vacancies exist, other than the announcement of the government to appoint a new additional magistrate to Mount Isa, the other vacancies are the decision of the Chief Magistrate. What the Chief Magistrate does when someone is retiring or there are new vacancies or new positions established around the state is they will often do an internal EOI first: 'Are there any magistrates already appointed who would like to move to those courts and, if there are, where are the vacancies left after that?'

I am not aware of the EOI changing in relation to it. I am aware that the Chief Magistrate definitely went through that process of an internal EOI. If there was a change in relation to those locations, it was as a consequence of the Chief Magistrate, who did go through that process of moving magistrates around based on their preferences of where they would like to work.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That leads me quite nicely to the next question, which is: were existing magistrates provided an opportunity to express an interest in moving to those advertised open locations from 14 June?

**Mrs D'ATH:** Yes, they were.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Is it correct that the EOI process was then reopened to existing magistrates on 18 June at 12.21 pm via another email? Let me put this out: on 14 June the original email was sent around containing an expression of interest. It then called for an expression of interest for those locations that I identified. Subsequently, on 18 June, four days later, another EOI was sent to existing magistrates reopening the process and inviting existing magistrates to apply for those positions. That would indicate to me that the first EOI did not seek an internal process from existing magistrates but was subsequently reopened on 18 June for the appointment process.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I am not aware of that because I am not obviously privy to the correspondence of the Chief Magistrate to sitting magistrates when it comes to internal expressions of interest. I met with the Chief Magistrate in relation to vacancies. We discussed them, and the Chief Magistrate indicated to me that she wanted to go through an internal process first and then would advise me via letter, which I know occurred, as to where the vacancies would be and the period of time of those vacancies.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So it would surprise you to learn that there was a second process that started on 18 June?

**Mrs D'ATH:** Yes. I am not aware of the timing other than I was advised by the Chief Magistrate that she would send the letter to me after she had gone through that process.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Would it surprise you further, then—I expect it would—that the time under that second EOI process on 18 June was only three days for lodging applications? It closed on 21 June 2024—18 June the EOI process opens and 21 June the EOI process closes. This period is shorter than that provided for in the magistrates transfer policy, which under paragraph 3 states that a period of 14 days should be allowed for EOIs to be submitted.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. If you are talking about the internal EOI as opposed to the external EOI for the broader legal profession, I am not privy to what correspondence the Chief Magistrate sends out to sitting magistrates. That is the separation of powers the member referred to.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It seems a very odd sequence of events that the EOI goes out on 14 June. It would seem that the EOI specifically appoints people to specific jurisdictions as opposed to asking internally first up, 'Are there any existing magistrates who would like to move to Mount Isa?', for example. 'Would someone like to move from Charleville to Townsville?', or wherever it might be. That seems to have been on 18 June rather than being done on 14 June when the original EOI went out. That seems odd.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Is there a question?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Would you be disturbed if that was the case and that the magistrates were not offered the opportunity to relocate before the advertising for specific positions went out to the general public?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I am not going to reflect on the Chief Magistrate and decisions that—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Nor am I asking you to. I am just asking whether you would consider that odd.

**Mrs D'ATH:** It is reflecting on the decisions made by the Chief Magistrate and the timing of those decisions. I can only comment on what I have already said; that is, in relation to the vacancies, the Chief Magistrate indicated to me that she was going to do an expression of interest internally first and advise me then as to where the vacancies would be so we could put that out in the public EOI. That is what I can advise.

**CHAIR:** I will now move to government members. I call on the member for Caloundra to ask the first question of the Attorney-General.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, could you please advise the committee how the government is responding to the increased demand for matters being heard by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. We know that the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal was established some 15 years ago. The jurisdiction is designed to streamline a range of administrative and civil justice matters to avoid the ad hoc proliferation of tribunals that existed by amalgamating those jurisdictions into 23 different bodies. In 2024 QCAT looks very different to when it was first commenced to predominantly deal with small claims and minor debt matters.

We know that the tribunal is now accessed by more than 60,000 Queenslanders annually across the tribunal's guardianship, human rights, civil, administrative, disciplinary and minor civil disputes divisions. We know that the tribunal has experienced tremendous growth in terms of the numbers of acts over which it has jurisdiction. There are now over 180 enabling acts which confer jurisdiction on QCAT. Not only has the jurisdiction increased in terms of legislation; the tribunal has also seen an increase in the complexity of matters falling under its jurisdiction, notably in the guardianship space. In 2022 the Queensland Law Society stated that the guardianship jurisdiction continues to grow in size, volume and complexity year on year, and it is this complexity and the volume of work coming into QCAT that has resulted in a substantial increase to funding to assist QCAT meet these increasing demands and continue to provide accessible and inexpensive dispute resolution to Queenslanders.

In recognition of the importance of QCAT and the important role it plays in Queensland's justice system, the Queensland government has invested \$44.41 million in the 2024-25 budget, representing an uplift of \$16.9 million for this financial year. The funding will include: \$15.4 million over four years for up to 37 FTEs across QCAT from 2024-25 and \$5.8 million ongoing from 2028-29; another \$28.8 million over four years from 2024-25 and \$8.2 million ongoing from 2028-29 for three FTEs as well as additional decision-makers—I believe 10 additional sessional members will be appointed as part of that as well; \$4.6 million and seven FTEs over four years from 2024-25 and \$1.2 million ongoing from 2028-29 for



critical mediation services in minor civil disputes; and \$1.5 million over four years from 2024-25 and \$400,000 per annum ongoing from 2028-29 for increased regional hearings, videoconferencing, security, and recording and transcription services; and \$1.5 million in capital expenditure for accommodation. This substantial funding increase will help meet growing demand and enhance QCAT's capabilities across Queensland.

We expect this uplift will be very much targeted towards the volume we are seeing and delays in the guardianship space. We know how critical it is and that we do need further investment, and that is why we have seen the significant uplift by the Miles government this year.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, with regard to page 64 of Budget Paper No. 4, can you advise how the government is investing in gambling harm minimisation?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. I would like to acknowledge that this week is Gambling Harm Awareness Week and make special mention of Relationships Australia Queensland hosting a launch event at the Kedron Wavell on Tuesday. I was pleased to listen to the stories of people with lived experience of gambling harm and hear how the consequences of a person experiencing gambling harm can be so far-reaching, impacting families, friends and loved ones. It was quite an emotional morning. It was heartbreaking to listen to their stories, but it was great to hear they believe they are now getting the support to support their loved ones who are dealing with gambling harm.

The Miles government has doubled the investment in gambling help service systems in this budget, allocating an additional \$8.06 million for gambling harm minimisation, support and treatment programs. This investment will: increase support in remote and regional areas; enable more tailored approaches to respond to the needs of at-risk groups; and support a greater focus on gambling harm education at a local level. This is on top of our investment of \$1.08 million for the 2023 Gambling Survey, which has now been released. This survey establishes important baseline data for a range of harm minimisation key deliverables and for the Gambling harm minimisation plan for Queensland 2021-25 more broadly.

We also have a strong record of delivering important awareness campaigns, including the award-winning First Nations Let's start yarning about gambling campaign. An evaluation of this campaign found it has successfully increased awareness of gambling harm, effectively promoted the Gambling Helpline and was culturally safe and appropriate. The campaign was relaunched again this year in May and will conclude in November.

In the past 12 months we have also partnered with Queensland Cricket and the Brisbane Heat to deliver the Forget the bet. Enjoy the game. sports betting awareness campaign, which aims to address the normalisation of gambling in sport, particularly among young people. An evaluation of the campaign is currently underway. We will support continuing conversations with key stakeholders to facilitate improved messaging to vulnerable cohorts.

What the Queensland gambling survey shows us is that sports betting and online wagering are increasing in popularity, highlighting the importance of the research being conducted by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. I would like to commend the regulator for their strong submissions to the Commonwealth's inquiry into online gambling, raising concerns about the proliferation of gambling advertising, the normalisation of gambling in sport and the impact of this exposure on children. I look forward to the Commonwealth government handing down their response to the inquiry as soon as possible.

The Miles government recognises the importance of preventing harm in the population as a whole and intervening early before significant harm has occurred. Preventing gambling harm requires a multifaceted, proactive regulatory response. That is why this budget will support the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulations' work in developing effective, evidence-based youth education programs and resources for use by gambling help services to deliver education to school-age children.

We will also deliver targeted community education resources for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities as we continue to focus preventive strategies towards these at-risk groups. Research into young First Nations males' engagement with online gambling will be undertaken in 2024-25 to better understand potential risk and protective factors and the interventions that would be most effective in preventing and reducing harm for this at-risk group.

We remain committed to working in partnership with industry, community and other government agencies to identify and implement holistic and cross-sectoral approaches that proactively prevent people from developing gambling problems. In partnership with industry, our government has prioritised the development of a centralised self-exclusion system in Queensland to support consumers in clubs

and pubs at risk of experiencing harm from gambling to restrict their gambling activities. We have also introduced legislation that will require Queensland casinos to comply with an enforceable code of conduct, with similar codes being developed for other industry sectors, including the wagering sector, as a priority. This will provide enforcement mechanisms that will hold gambling operators accountable. We know there is more work to be done when it comes to gambling harm minimisation, and the Miles government will continue to work with stakeholders to deliver greater protections for Queenslanders.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to question on notice No. 16, can the Attorney advise how much funding has been provided to victims of crime in the last financial year and how it is assisting victims?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. The Miles government is committed to supporting victims of crime in Queensland. As stated in my answer to pre-hearing question on notice No. 16, we have significantly increased funding to Victim Assist Queensland under a targeted victims support package. This funding includes \$185 million to increase financial assistance limits payable to victims and additional resources for VAQ.

It is paramount that victims, including domestic and family violence victim-survivors, receive financial assistance that helps them address any trauma they have endured. That is why we changed legislation to provide faster access to payments so victims can begin the process of recovery. VAQ has also made changes to provide special assistance payments quicker. In some cases, special assistance payments can be up to \$15,000. This is money that can help victims to begin their healing journey. Special assistance payments for domestic and family violence victims have been increased ninefold, from \$1,000 to \$9,000, to reflect the seriousness of these crimes. This can be the difference between someone staying in a domestic and family violence situation and leaving.

In the 2022-23 financial year VAQ provided \$39 million to Queenslanders impacted by violent crime. I am pleased to inform the committee that last financial year we provided \$100,439,477 to Queenslanders. Last financial year VAQ received over 19,000 applications for financial assistance. This was a 157 per cent increase on the previous financial year. This means victims are getting lump sums directly in a timely manner and it demonstrates these initiatives are helping people most in need. These initiatives have led to a significant rise in demand so we have bolstered VAQ's workforce to ensure victims of crime continue to get the support they need.

I had the pleasure of attending VAQ's office in South Brisbane last month to meet many of the new staff, and it is evident that they are passionate and dedicated to making a difference in people's lives. Our hardworking VAQ staff are committed to ensuring victims are provided with a trauma informed response quickly. Ensuring that financial assistance is provided to victims of crime in a timely manner affords victims the ability to start their healing and recovery journey as soon as possible. The Miles government's legislative changes and increased resources for VAQ are further evidence of our commitment to supporting victims of crime.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, with regard to page 9 of the SDS, can you outline how the Commonwealth funded domestic and family violence workers will boost the frontline services here in Queensland?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for her question. The Albanese government has committed \$169.4 million nationally over four years to fund 500 new community sector workers to support women in crisis and to support innovative responses to perpetrators. Queensland has been allocated \$37.155 million to deliver a total of 111.6 new FTE frontline domestic, family and sexual violence workers. We welcome this investment from the Albanese government which will build the sector's capacity to support victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

As outlined in pre-hearing question No. 7, the Queensland government is implementing the rollout of these workers through a coordinated and phased approach taking into account existing and complementary Queensland reforms. Since negotiating and signing the national partnership agreement with the federal government in January this year, the department has been working to design a process that would facilitate a rapid ramp-up in contracting of these positions in conjunction with the needs, capacity and capability of the sector.

As members of the committee would know, Queensland, like other jurisdictions, is experiencing workforce challenges in attracting, recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified specialist frontline domestic, family and sexual violence workers at the pace needed to deliver Queensland and national reforms. However, despite these challenges, I am pleased to advise that, as of 24 July, 44 workers have been employed, with 38 workers having commenced and the remainder commencing shortly. Queensland is also now leading the nation in the rollout of this initiative.

In phase 1 of the rollout we prioritised the allocation of workers to sexual assault services, as consultation indicated that these services could recruit and onboard quickly. We also know that, according to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, we saw a 14 per cent increase in victims of sexual assault in 2023, with 85 per cent of victims of sexual assault being women, so it is important to ensure these services are resourced. We are also implementing Queensland's commitment to embed specialist domestic and family violence workers in police stations. It is important that the rollout of these initiatives complement each other.

The second phase allocated workers to domestic, family and sexual violence services that specifically go to the target set by the Commonwealth to support specific cohorts including: people in rural, regional and remote areas; culturally and linguistically diverse women; women with disability; First Nations women; and the LGBTIQ+ community. We know that diverse cohorts are less likely to come forward for help and find it harder to be heard. Ensuring our responses are intersectional and tailored to specific cohorts increases our ability to support all Queenslanders.

We have also funded through this program two workers for the Red Rose Foundation, who do incredible work running Australia's first strangulation trauma centre and supporting women who have experienced non-lethal strangulation. We know that we are seeing increased numbers of women coming forward to seek support in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence. Providing specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services with workers, plus the permanent 20 per cent uplift in funding, will allow services to support more victims when they are needed.

Queensland is required to deliver 111.6 workers by 30 June 2025, as per the agreement with the Australian government. I am pleased, however, to advise the committee that Queensland is currently on track to exceed the full number of workers by the end of this year, well ahead of schedule. This is a credit to the hardworking staff of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the providers themselves, all of whom are committed to working towards ending domestic and family violence with the continuing support of the Miles government.

**CHAIR:** I now hand over to the opposition.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** My question is to the director-general. Can you advise what projections the department has made as to how long it will take to get through the retesting and review of cases identified to be part of the historical case review? I am obviously referring to Forensic Science Queensland. Are you able to provide us with those projections, or have you done them? If not, is there a reason that has not occurred?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. As the member would be aware, Forensic Science Queensland has recently joined the DJAG portfolio, 26 days ago. Dr Linzi Wilson-Wilde is here and I am happy to call her to answer some of the questions. As in our last estimates last year, we work with the Director of Public Prosecutions, with FSQ and with QPS to not only ensure there is a smooth transition into the portfolio for FSQ but also consider how we ensure that, first, victims are looked after and what the numbers look like and how they are going through the process. I will refer to Dr Wilson-Wilde, if that is okay.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Dr Wilson-Wilde, the question, which was directed to the director-general: what projections has the department made as to how long it will take to get through the retesting and review of the cases identified?

**Dr Wilson-Wilde:** We have not at this stage conducted any expectations regarding how long it will take. This is because we have been working with our stakeholders, the Director of Public Prosecutions and QPS regarding the processes and the principles to which we will conduct the historical case review. Those principles have been agreed by the Forensic Justice Advisory Sub-Committee and the interim advisory board.

In addition to that, what has been determined in terms of the process is that all of the cases—and there are 40,701 cases that have been identified as having been examined by the laboratory between 1 September 2007 and 30 April 2023—will need to undergo an initial review. It has been previously discussed or termed 'the legal-led review'. That initial review will determine whether the cases would have a material difference if they were reviewed scientifically and additional DNA results identified. Until that initial review is conducted—and those teams, I believe, are being set up—it is hard to determine how many cases exactly will be referred to FSQ and then how long it will take us to do those reviews.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So at this stage there is no projection about how long it will take?

**Dr Wilson-Wilde:** There is not.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Director-General, given the information that has been provided, it is the case then that there is no projection as to how long it will take to get through the retesting and review of cases?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. As Dr Wilson-Wilde has outlined, it will take a number of moving pieces and systems and processes set up to get through the backlogs, but at this stage it is really hard to model when we do not have the numbers.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Indeed. Director-General, in the answer to the pre-estimates question on notice No. 1, if I can take you to that, if I understand that correctly, it says of the 456 cases that have been through retesting, 251 have returned profiles where they had not previously done so. If I am correct on my calculation, that is around 55 per cent of cases could have changed outcomes and be required to go through the courts again based on those numbers. Given 40,701 cases are subject to the historical review, is it plausible that we could have up to 22,000 cases that have been impacted by the failures in the lab and may need to go through the courts, given so far that of 456, 251 have been identified?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. You are seeking my opinion based on a small sample that has been taken, a relatively small sample out of the 40,000 that has been taken, and has been determined to be validated, so I would not want to speculate on whether 50 per cent would apply to the 40,000 cases. As I mentioned earlier, there is a process in place that is gone through in collaboration with FSQ, DPP as well as QPS to determine which cases need to be retested. As I said, the first ones that are being looked at are the current cases that are before the courts, so they are legal-led reviews.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** This is, though, the retesting of previous matters, so this is not ones that are going before the court that we are talking about here, is that right, of the 40,000, subject to the historical case review? So these are matters where a prosecution or a court matter has not gone ahead?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. May I ask Dr Wilson-Wilde to answer?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Absolutely.

**Dr Wilson-Wilde:** These are considered as part of the historical case review because the interpretation of the profiles occurred before the new DNA interpretation guidelines were released on 1 May 2023, so they do relate to cases that are active cases, so going before the courts. The two numbers are not directly comparable in the sense of the number that you provided which was the 251 cases where there were results that had been determined to be found for various reasons that were not there previously. It is important to note that those DNA results, where there was not a result before but where there is now, does not actually preclude the existence of a previous DNA result, so it is adding to the existing body of knowledge. It is not a count of the number of cases where there were no results in the case at all and now there is; it is purely the number of cases where, within that case, a sample gave a result where it did not, but there could have been a plethora of other samples that had given a result.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Of those 251 cases, are you able to identify how many of those are active and whether they relate to murder, manslaughter, sexual assaults or similar violent offences?

**Dr Wilson-Wilde:** They are all active cases at the moment. I do not have a breakdown of the case types. I can get that for you. I will note that the case management system at the moment—that is, our electronic system that manages our samples, and are cases through our system—is limited in the amount of information that we can garner from it. In order to extract that information, it is a relatively manual process at this stage. We are building a new system where that information will be more readily available, but at the moment it is really difficult to extract it.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am sorry, Chair, I should have directed that last question through the Director-General. My apologies, Director-General.

**Ms Joldic:** No problem.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In that sense, this is going to be a very long process, if I understand it; not something that is going to be completed in two or three years. Is that what the department is contemplating? Does the department contemplate a longer period of time because it is going to involve a lot of time, energy and money over the next period of time?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. The member would be aware that the Walter Sofronoff commission of inquiry did indicate that we should not compromise quality by speeding up things, so we are taking a considered approach to this issue. As to contemplating, we do plan. We work together with our stakeholders, we plan as much as we can, but we will not compromise quality by speeding things up.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thanks, Director-General. The latest progress report, written in March, but published in June, stated 50 recommendations had been completed. Is there any update on that number?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. Yes, if you give me a moment, I will give you the update on FSQ. In relation to the 123 recommendations contained in the 2022 commission of inquiry report, 65 recommendations have now closed and 47 are in progress. The remaining 11 recommendations will be progressed as soon as practicable and are dependent on completion of contingent recommendations or upgrades to current infrastructure.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Recommendation 4 stated that, within three months, the lab should implement a case management approach for major crime. Can you confirm if that is now in place?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. As we have just heard from Dr Wilson-Wilde, that process is still underway to ensure that the right system is in place. May I just ask if Dr Wilson-Wilde would like to add anything to that?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sure.

**Dr Wilson-Wilde:** I thank the member for the question. Recommendation 4 has been commenced, so it is not that it has not been started in its entirety. It has most certainly commenced. There are aspects, however, that are more difficult to implement because it is a multifactorial recommendation; it has a number of sub-parts to it. We are managing cases and looking at the interpretation of profiles within the case context, so as occurring cases are allocated to scientists who look at the case holistically to see if other testing is required, not just in-house, but potentially external testing, so there is a lot of multiple components within it that we have certainly implemented. As I said before, our case management system is limited, so we will need some extensive changes to our case management system in order to fully implement this recommendation. Those changes are not within the FSQ ability to change because it is provided by an external provider, so we are incumbent on that external provider having the resources to implement the changes to the case management system that are required to fully implement this recommendation.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, are you, or is anyone from the department, part of the Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group—the combined group that has been set up?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. I understand the working group is set up at an officer level so none of the attorneys-general sit on that working group; it is at an officer level. I am happy to clarify whether Queensland is currently sitting on that working group, but I believe all states and territories are.

**Ms Joldic:** Correct.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In the working group's September 2023 report it says—

On 12 August 2022, the Standing Council of Attorneys-General ... agreed that the Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group ... would be reconvened to continue to develop a proposal to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility ... paying particular attention to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the criminal justice system.

I appreciate that you were not the attorney at the time, but can you confirm if the former attorney supported this move as recorded and if this an ongoing position that you have and that this government supports?

**Mrs D'ATH:** The work of the working group continues, but the Queensland government has recorded—in giving updates as to where each jurisdiction is at—and made clear that Queensland has no intention to change the minimum age of criminal responsibility. We have made no commitment to do that. However, the working group is also looking at the causation factors that result in youths committing offences and what you can do as far as prevention, intervention and diversion away from the justice system to reduce offending. Whether young people are lawfully held to account or not, fundamentally it is about getting them to stop offending—not whether they get locked up or not. That work is very valuable and that work is being jointly done across the country.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you. To be clear, the government does not support increasing the age of criminal responsibility?

**Mrs D'ATH:** We have not changed our position. That has been put on the public record a number of times.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** For clarity, that is not to increase the age of criminal responsibility?

**Mrs D'ATH:** That is what I have just said, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you. I am giving you every opportunity to answer.

**Mrs D'ATH:** You are very kind, member for Clayfield.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am, indeed. Director-General, we have heard some discussion about gaming and other things. In the same vein, is the department proposing a review of the operation of the safe night precincts and the way the safe night precinct legislation operates? Is that a discussion that is underway?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. We are currently in the process of evaluating safe night precincts. As part of that evaluation process, we will consider what options need to be put to government.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Director-General, what form does that evaluation take in relation to safe night precincts? They were evaluated when they were introduced and subsequently reviewed by specialist groups, universities and others. What evaluation is taking place now that is different from what has been the case previously, and what changes would be contemplated as a result of the evaluation?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. It is a large piece of work that has commenced. We have gone out with a procurement plan to engage an independent evaluator. We need to make sure that encompasses legislative, economic, public health, industry and community perspectives. The independent review will begin later this year, as I mentioned, to ensure SNPs' ongoing effectiveness. This includes the current boundaries and the associated grant program, public safety and confidence as well as the vibrancy of Queensland's night-time economy districts. The review is expected to be finalised in late 2025 and recommendations are to be put forward to the government then.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Late 2025?

**Ms Joldic:** Correct. It is a significant piece of work.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That is a lot of nights out!

**Ms Joldic:** Not for me.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney-General, in relation to the investigations into Chow Tai Fook and its allegations of association with criminal links and the fit and proper person test, can you advise why the OLGR report into Chow Tai Fook was not publicly released?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. What was released was a summary of the report, from memory. The entire report cannot be released in full because of the commercial-in-confidence information that it contains. It is obviously appropriate that we ensure confidentiality in relation to that report, but we did release the summary findings.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I have in front of me the public statement that was put out. Is that the summary of findings you are referring to? It is three pages.

**Mrs D'ATH:** My eyes are not that good; I cannot see.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I wave it around for theoretical effect, just to show that it does exist. I am happy to table it, if you like.

**Mrs D'ATH:** We did release a summary of the PKF investigation report, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If that is the same summary—I preface it that way, Attorney—it does not provide any information in relation to the findings. It provides some justification for the decision that you made in relation to not finding Chow Tai Fook as an improper person. Given the seriousness of the allegations involving the operations of junkets, Suncity and a fellow called Alvin Chau, who is the subject of substantial criminal prosecutions and so on, how were you able to land on the finding that Chow Tai Fook was a fit and proper person?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. As the member would appreciate, when it comes to making these decisions it is important to take the advice of the office of liquor and gaming and the investigations and the work they undertook in relation to that. It is fair to say that, despite the advice to me that the threshold had not been met and so they were deemed to be suitable, the fact is that there were still issues identified by OLGR in which OLGR have required further work to be done by Chow Tai Fook. It is correct that the public statements and, I believe, the summary did go to that. It was found that there was a lack of fulsome in its dealings with the regulator; however, the evidence fell short of establishing any deliberate concealment.

The findings come with several actions to remediate Chow Tai Fook Enterprises' dealings with the regulator to keep Chow Tai Fook Enterprises and its associates under ongoing close scrutiny. Any failure to meet this duty to cooperate with the regulator would impact upon its suitability and may render Chow Tai Fook liable for criminal sanctions. It is not that the investigation is done, it is completed and that is the end of it. The regulator will continue to fulfil their role in looking at their conduct and their obligations to remediate and to ensure they continue to be suitable. It was not just a point of time.

**Mrs GERBER:** I have one question around victim support and victims. Does the Attorney-General acknowledge that the number of victims of crime in Queensland is the true measure of the effectiveness of this government's laws relating to crime?

**CHAIR:** Attorney, do you wish to answer that question? It is asking for an opinion, in my view.

**Mrs GERBER:** The true measure of effectiveness?

**CHAIR:** That is the question, isn't it?

**Mrs GERBER:** The question is: does the Attorney-General acknowledge that the number of victims of crime is the true measure of whether this government's laws on crime are effective?

**Mrs D'ATH:** If the member is asking in relation to victims of crime as identified through our numbers in Victim Assist Queensland, for example, coming forward, that is as a consequence of a whole range of reasons, which includes the changes we made around domestic and family violence. I can say that 62 per cent of the applications we get from victims of crime with Victim Assist Queensland are domestic and family violence related. We all have a role to play in trying to end domestic, family and sexual violence in this state and this country.

The number of applications coming forward is also due to the fact that we, as a government—and I am proud of this—changed the scope of assistance available to include domestic and family violence that did not include physical violence, recognising that violence comes in many forms when it is related to domestic and family violence. We have also seen a significant uptake in applications since we changed the actual threshold amounts. Now that there is more money available, we are seeing more individuals seeking access to that financial assistance. An increase in Victim Assist Queensland applications is not a direct correlation to the number of offences or crimes happening in the state.

**Mrs GERBER:** That was not the question, I am sorry, Attorney-General.

**Mrs D'ATH:** That is my answer. You are asking me to draw a correlation and I am answering that question.

**Mrs GERBER:** Is the answer to my question 'no'? The question was: is the number of victims of crime in Queensland an effective representation of the government's response to crime, the laws? Your laws, Attorney-General, reducing victims of crime—is that an effective measure?

**CHAIR:** Attorney, I believe you have answered the question in your previous answer. I do not know if you have anything further you could add.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I have not got anything further to add to that answer.

**CHAIR:** I now go to the crossbench.

**Ms BOLTON:** Attorney-General, regarding the new funding for victims of crime, are there any allocations to address recommendations 14, 15 and 58 from the youth justice inquiry? Those recommendations are around specially trained staff to provide victims with clear information on the youth justice system, extending financial support for victims of non-violent crimes and funding a public awareness campaign.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I obviously will not comment in relation to work being done in the youth justice space because that sits with a different minister. On the broader issue of victim liaison officers, there is a lot of work across agencies being done in that space which includes victim liaison officers with ODPP. We have established the permanent Office of the Victims' Commissioner and appointed a permanent Victims' Commissioner. That person will commence on Monday, 29 July.

In relation to, for example, the non-violent crimes, we have announced—and you may have picked that up in my opening statement—that we have expanded Victim Assist Queensland to now cover the victims of property crime where there is not violence or a threat of violence. For example, they may have been asleep, they never interacted with those who came into their home or they may not have even been home. However, we recognise there is trauma as a consequence of that. We have expanded our support for victims of property crime so they are now going to be able to have access to

free therapeutic counselling, information, advice and referrals to appropriate support organisations through UnitingCare, and that took effect on 1 July. Also there is the broader education and support of victims. There is continuing work being done through the work that the Interim Victims' Commissioner has already started. It is really looking at where those gaps are and making sure that we are improving that liaison wherever we can.

There is no doubt when it comes to victims of crime it is about communication. It is about letting them know what is available, what is happening and keeping them informed through that process. It will not always satisfy the outcome that they want, but information is so critical along the way. In part the increase we have seen in VOC applications is because of that education, awareness and advertising that we are doing to assist.

**Ms BOLTON:** I go to that \$689 million in the youth justice system, SDS page 9. Keith Hamburger AM has raised the importance of getting a taskforce together to quickly analyse the types of small place-based rehabilitation and assessment centres. I realise part of this is in the youth justice minister's space but also part is in yours. Within that was also the therapeutic assessment centre, court sentencing with restorative justice, and court supervised offender pathways and transitions. Those transitions would include 12-month exit transitions as well. Is there any allocation within that \$689 million to facilitate that?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for her question. The majority of what you have asked does go to youth justice. Those assessments and what is done outside of the court in terms of diversionary processes, community engagement and support are all part of youth justice. Within the court, though, we have court ordered youth justice conferencing. We also have the youth court in Townsville. All of this is about how we divert children away from crime and assist them in relation to their rehabilitation.

The reality is once a young person is prosecuted for an offence and they are found not guilty or guilty, at the end of the day they are then passed on to another agency whether they are doing community work or are in detention—all of those sorts of things. Although everyone tends to look at the justice system and the Attorney-General role as the be-all and end-all—and we do have a huge portfolio—the reality is when it comes to youth justice and criminal activity generally we have such a limited space because we deal with what comes before us. We are not necessarily in the prevention space other than working with diversionary processes and the court system, which we have done and we will continue to do to improve the system in relation to that.

We have committed \$39.14 million for strengthening and sustaining court reforms relating to children's courts. You asked about that \$689 million. This includes continuing two initiatives in 2024-25 to directly address youth offending. We have the Fast Track Sentencing pilot. That is in Brisbane, Southport, Cairns and Townsville children's courts in magistrates courts to investigate and address delays contributing to the number of children on remand, their length of time on remand, court case duration, total number of court events in Childrens Court proceedings and the youth court, which I have already mentioned, in Townsville. That is a Childrens Court for young people between the ages of 10 and 17 who are repeat offenders and are considered to be at high risk of reoffending. Having the same magistrate sitting in those courts, they know the history and they can work with those young people. We have allocated funding of \$7.984 million over two years for the continuation of that youth court in Townsville. I just want to go back to that Fast Track Sentencing.

We know that it is important for a young person to be held accountable for their offending as close as possible to when that offending occurred. We know that that is the way their brains work at that age in order for them to be held accountable and to understand the consequences of that.

We also know that, in shortening the remand time, if a young person is going to be incarcerated that is best to happen as quickly as possible so we can get them into those programs that you are talking about. That is what the fast-tracked sentencing pilot is about. I believe it is showing great outcomes as far as it is identifying where those roadblocks are. Some things we do not control such as delays in matters before the court, but where we can we are identifying those and trying to get young people off remand as quickly as possible.

**Ms BOLTON:** I am mindful of time because I have to hand over to other crossbenchers, but—

**Mrs D'ATH:** Sorry, member for Noosa: just on Mr Hamburger's proposal, the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council is also assessing that proposal, so we have asked it to independently have a look at that proposal for us.

**Ms BOLTON:** Wonderful. Going to the delays within the courts, I think recommendation 7 from the youth justice inquiry was for additional magistrates across the Childrens Court, and I think there has been an additional one to Mount Isa. Is there anything in the budget to not only expand those but also



look at the modelling? With regard to the increases that have been allocated, what is that actually going to do in terms of decreasing the incredibly long wait times not only within the Childrens Court but also with the DV courts and matters in general? In Noosa we have had one now for over two years—a really urgent matter—so what are we faced with?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. We have invested significantly in our court staff and our judiciary. We have seen a 23 per cent increase since 2014-15 in the number of staff who support our court operations. We have had four new magistrates, including one coroner, funded to be established over the next three years from 2022. This takes the current Queensland magistracy to a total of 107 magistrates, including the Chief Magistrate.

An additional four new magistrate positions will soon be appointed to support initiatives announced as part of the government's community safety plan, so there are four new ones starting. One of those is in Mount Isa, but they are not the only new one. Having just travelled to Mount Isa and met with the staff there, I can say that they are really excited about this new magistrate because it means that they are going to be able to start servicing the gulf directly from Mount Isa again where it is being done from Townsville at the moment. They know that that means that is going to be really beneficial for the community.

We had the DFV Live List solution successfully implemented in the Beenleigh specialist DV court in August 2023. That helps to streamline the court processes and support a reduction in delays. That solution will be expanded to a further 13 locations by mid next year, including six existing specialist domestic and family violence courts, because, as you have said, it is the whole spectrum, so actually dealing with the delays across the magistrates courts is really important.

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 also requires cross-applications to be heard together now, supporting further streamlining of domestic and family violence court processes, and it also requires consideration of who is the person most at risk, with the intention of trying to reduce the number of cross-applications as well as misidentification.

The department has worked alongside QPS to pilot the Video Recorded Evidence-in-Chief program in the Ipswich and Southport magistrates courts which enables trained police officers to take videorecorded statements to be used as evidence-in-chief in certain domestic and family violence proceedings. Early evaluation of that program identified potential benefits including increased efficiencies and accessibility as well as reducing the need for complainants to repeat their stories, with complainants being more than able to confirm statement accuracy and less likely to withdraw complaints. The QPS continues to offer videorecording of evidence-in-chief statements to eligible complainants in pilot locations, and the proposed legislation under the Criminal Justice Legislation (Sexual Violence and Other Matters) Amendment Bill will also clarify use of videorecorded evidence-in-chief statements in committal proceedings.

I was being asked by the member for Clayfield as well previously about acting magistrates. That allows for the Chief Magistrate to flex up as well, but I know the Chief Magistrate is constantly looking at the allocation of magistrates to specialised lists so that we know that they work. We know that when you get to know the individuals coming before the court and you are able to reflect on that, that can really help in making decisions going forward. I know that the Chief Magistrate is constantly doing that as well.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. I will hand over to the member for Maiwar.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I have just a couple of very quick questions to the director-general to start with around working-with-children checks. In terms of the departmental staff who are actually making those final approval or refusal decisions on blue card applications, are there minimum qualifications required for those staff?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. I will get back to you in terms of the minimum requirement in a moment. All of our staff who work particularly in frontline-facing roles are required to undertake training, so they are trained on the job. They are trained in our code of conduct and in all of the Public Service mandatory training, so as a minimum they all undergo training on the job.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Okay, but what I was trying to get at with the question is any minimum qualifications before on-the-job training, but I understand you are looking at that.

**Ms Joldic:** Yes, I am just trying to get the information.

**Mr BERKMAN:** The other thing I was interested in is whether you collect data on what proportion of those staff identify as First Nations, disabled or from a culturally and linguistically diverse background respectively?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. We do collect the data at a departmental level. It is not mandatory to acknowledge whether you are First Nations or a culturally and linguistically diverse person, but we do encourage staff to identify because it allows us to ensure we have the right environment and right training for staff and supports for those staff.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Is that data that you can provide in respect of the blue card working-with-children staff specifically?

**Ms Joldic:** I will have to check whether we would break that down specifically by unit, but that unit would be large enough to be able to give you non-identifiable data.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Okay; thank you. Attorney-General, the work done by CLCs Queensland around the workforce survey is a really valuable starting point, obviously. The additional funding that is offered in the budget for the 2024-25 financial year is obviously welcome, but I am wondering about any longer increases to CLC funding specifically so that they can work on that issue of staff retention and wage growth.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. I am very proud of the uplift that we have been able to provide in this year's budget that goes directly to increasing salaries and wages in the CLC sector and also for ATSILS, because we recognise that it is a challenge. There are challenges across the whole legal profession as well as so many other occupations at the moment, but that increase is actually to lift them up to have the same salaries as Legal Aid Queensland. We know that still will never compete with the private sector, but we are just never going to be able to meet private sector wages and conditions.

On the broader issue of future needs and demands in funding for our CLCs, the National Legal Assistance Partnership is due to be replaced mid next year. There are negotiations going on currently, across all of the states and territories, with the Commonwealth about what that will look like. We of course had the Dr Warren Mundy report and recommendations out of that. I think the key thing is we need to give stability to CLCs. We need to—and we have talked about this at the Commonwealth level—provide them with some certainty as far as next year as soon as possible, because there is nothing worse than organisations that rely on government funding being told at the last minute when they have already lost staff. I am very aware of that. It is a conversation I have had with the Commonwealth. I have raised that, but the Commonwealth is also very aware and we all want to see a replacement agreement negotiated as quickly as possible and the outcome of that to inform the sector. If we cannot then we should be agreeing to extend the existing partnership to give that certainty so we have time to get this right.

**CHAIR:** I now ask the member for Mirani to ask a question. This will be the last question in the crossbench section.

**Mr ANDREW:** I have a question for the Coroner. With reference to page 5 of the SDS and the role of the CCQ, can the Coroner advise whether it is a well-established precedent in Queensland for certain material—

**CHAIR:** Hang on a minute.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I am not calling the Coroner. That would have to be to me.

**CHAIR:** Yes, that would have to be to the Attorney.

**Mr ANDREW:** Attorney-General, with reference to page 5 of the SDS and the role of the CCQ, can the minister please advise whether it is a well-established precedent in Queensland for certain material to be excluded from an inquest on the basis of public interest immunity?

**CHAIR:** That is definitely seeking an opinion.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. I am not in a position to answer that; nor am I aware of what source that information is coming from, so I am not going to assume that that statement is actually reflective of practices within the CCQ. I am happy for the member to write to me and I can follow that up with the Coroner, but that is a question I would not take on notice. I think the member needs to flesh out that question and provide information.

**Mr ANDREW:** Okay, thank you.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Before the member leaves, I do have an answer to his earlier question in relation to the restrictive practices of the Public Guardian. I think the question was how many restrictive practices decisions were submitted to the OPG in 2023-24 and how many were approved. The Queensland regime to authorise restrictive practices currently includes multiple decision-makers, depending on the type of restrictive practices being applied for by a disability service provider. Authorisers include private

guardians, the Public Guardian, QCAT and the Chief Executive of the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disabilities, depending on the length and type of restrictive practices being sought by the disability service provider.

The Public Guardian has two functions under the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000 in the disability authorisation regime for restrictive practices. The first function is to consider applications for short-term approvals of containment and seclusion. Restrictive practices short-term approvals can be given for a period of up to six months. In 2023-24, the Public Guardian received 62 applications from disability service providers for short-term approval of the use of containment and/or seclusion. Twenty approvals were provided.

The second function relates to decision-making about the use of restrictive practices that do not include containment or seclusion where QCAT has appointed the Public Guardian for a person with impaired capacity. In 2023-24, when appointed by QCAT to make restrictive practices decisions for a person with impaired capacity, the Public Guardian received 293 applications from disability service providers for the use of restrictive practices that did not include containment and/or seclusion. Some 273 approvals were provided.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Before I go to the opposition, we are trying to clarify a couple of things in relation to questions that perhaps were or were not taken on notice. One of them was to the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner about the number of QPS named in complaints.

**Mrs D'ATH:** As I understood it, the member for Maiwar reframed his question to ask a more general question. I am sure that the member can write to the Human Rights Commissioner if there is a specific detail sought. The only question I took on notice was the one from the member for Mirani in relation to the Public Guardian.

**CHAIR:** The director-general referred to some data. Was that something taken on notice?

**Ms Joldic:** On minimum qualifications, our decision-makers must have a law degree or a related degree. A related degree can be a social work degree. We have currently at least two identified positions. Our First Nations staff are blue card liaison officers in Palm Island and Yarrabah. If you will indulge me, I take this opportunity to really thank our hardworking staff in the blue card team. They have done a magnificent job over the past 12 months in processing just under 300 blue card applications and regulate over 900,000 current blue card holders. I really want to place on record my thanks to the magnificent staff in the blue cards team.

**CHAIR:** I welcome the member for Whitsunday.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you, Chair, Deputy Chair and committee for having me. My question is to the director-general. Director-General, I note under the national partnership agreement and the 500 frontline worker initiative that Queensland received \$12.285 million towards the workforce initiative. Can you confirm what month we received that payment?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. If you give me a moment I will try to find the exact date when we have received the payment. The member may have also heard the Attorney-General's earlier update in terms of how we are tracking with the implementation and recruitment of frontline staff.

**Ms CAMM:** I have some questions to ask about that, thank you, Director-General, but I am looking for the month.

**Ms Joldic:** If you give me a moment I will try to find that. The agreement was signed in January but I am trying to see when we received the money.

**Ms CAMM:** I have a further question to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, I note that the Hon. Amanda Rishworth wrote to you in March. That letter, obtained under freedom of information, outlined some timing concerns around the expected recruitment and, in particular, a project plan that was due in relation to that recruitment. I also outline under the national partnership agreement that a second interim report from the 2021-23 national partnership was due in September 2023, a first progress report from the Innovative Perpetrator Response funding was due in December 2023—

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, member for Whitsunday. I understand that you have a theme. You will be allowed to ask the questions but—

**Ms CAMM:** The context of the three different reports is important, Chair.

**CHAIR:** You can put the context but I think it would be an idea to break the questions up.

**Ms CAMM:** It is all related to the one correspondence, Chair.

**CHAIR:** The way that I hear what you are saying is that a number of questions have already been incorporated into your comment.

**Ms CAMM:** I have only 20 minutes so I am making the best of my time. Attorney-General, there has been a significant lateness on a number of projects under the national partnership agreement and the reporting timeframes. Attorney-General, is that acceptable and how has that work not been prioritised in a timely manner?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. I do not accept the premise of the question that we have not been timely in responding to this. The fact is that the agreement with the federal government was only signed off in January this year. Despite the 2021 agreement, the funding was only signed off this year. In relation to that, we have acted as quickly as we could in developing a strategy for the procurement process for this. We are now leading the country in the number of staff or FTEs already employed under this.

In relation to the letter from Minister Rishworth, I believe there were some corrections made in relation to that correspondence in that we advised the minister's office that at officer level there had been discussions and there had been an agreed change in those timelines for reporting and the funding that was given. The variation was signed in January. A project plan was signed in May. I am happy for the director-general to elaborate on this, but my understanding is that it was agreed at officer level with the Commonwealth in revised timeframes because there is difficulty in recruiting in this space across the country right now that I know every jurisdiction is having problems with.

**Ms CAMM:** I have a subsequent question to the Attorney-General.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I have just asked the director-general to—

**Ms CAMM:** I do not need the director-general—

**Mrs D'ATH:** But it is not your choice.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order, Chair. The member has asked the minister the question, the question has been answered and the member would like to ask another question.

**CHAIR:** My understanding is—

**Ms CAMM:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Do not argue with me. I do not understand why people want to talk over me while I am trying to keep the proceedings running smoothly.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I have made my point of order.

**CHAIR:** I am trying to address the point of order but, before I could address your point of order, the member for Whitsunday chimed in. My understanding in relation to procedure is that the Attorney-General is able to ask the director-general for more information, if that is desired. I will allow the—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order, Chair: that is not the understanding of procedure. The question has been answered and we would like to ask a further question while we still have time.

**Mrs D'ATH:** With all due respect, I was asked a question and I was asking my director-general to confirm whether my recollection is correct. I would have thought that would be of interest. It will be a short response.

**CHAIR:** I will allow the answer. Let me worry about the time. You worry about asking the questions. Director-General, could you assist the committee, please?

**Mr Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. That is correct. We agree these things at officer level before the final agreement is signed or the agreement is deferred or delayed. We agree these things at officer level, as we would through any NPA. It does not mean that, while we are going through that process, we are not working on the agreement in terms of delivering what is contained in that agreement.

**Ms CAMM:** I have a question based upon the director-general's response. The opposition has an email from 18 March that outlines that, as per the terms of the agreement that was signed by the Attorney-General, key deliverables and milestones were not met with regard to the first payment of an approved project plan. That was outlined in reporting requirements, showing that Queensland is overdue.

Secondly, as I outlined before, under the national partnership agreement, a second interim report on the 2021 and 2023 partnership funding was almost six months overdue. It was due in September 2023.

Thirdly, the Innovative Perpetrator Response funding, which was due in December 2023, also was overdue. Project plans had not been forwarded to the federal bodies and were outstanding by six months, even though the Attorney, as she rightly said, had signed the plan. My question is: why was this work not prioritised and delivered on time?

**Mr Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. We talk to the federal government at officer level on an ongoing basis in terms of how they are tracking. The finalisation of the reports and the formal submission of the reports is one factor and it does not mean that we do not prioritise the work. The team works incredibly hard not just in the department but also with the stakeholders to deliver against the agreement and those reports.

I am happy to have a look at the chronology that you have just outlined and provide more information, but I do not believe that we are significantly delayed in delivering what we need to deliver under the NPA. The team works incredibly hard to deliver, but there are workforce pressures across not just Queensland but also Australia.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, I note that in the answer to question on notice No. 7 you have quoted the most recent government dashboard and outlined that Queensland is now leading with the 30 workers, and I have read your press release today. When I referred to the 500 Workers Initiative, as published by the Department of Social Services on 31 May, Queensland had recorded zero commenced workers and zero commenced FTE. We were the only state in that published data that had a zero next to it. Do you accept that that data was accurate at the time of publishing?

**Mrs D'ATH:** That was accurate at the time of publishing, yes. I think many of the other jurisdictions were in single digits, so they were all struggling with that initial phase of recruitment. We had already gone out to allocate positions. We are in the process of finalising and executing the contracts. In some cases, as I understand, people had been employed but they had not yet commenced. We were making sure that we were being as accurate as possible. Even though they may have been employed, they had not commenced in the job yet. That is why that figure was zero at this time. Now we are leading the country in terms of the numbers that have started. We now have 110 allocated. We have 92 FTEs contracted and executed already. We have 44.6 FTEs already employed by service providers and, of those, 38.6 have commenced.

**Ms CAMM:** I have another question for the Attorney; however, she may need to defer to the director-general. Of the positions appointed, I note that in the published allocation of 64 workers two workers have been allocated to DVConnect. Are there any additional FTEs being allocated to DVConnect, either in this program or in previous allocations—phase 1 or phase 2?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. The schedule that was attached to the QoN is the accurate schedule in relation to the 64 workers. In relation to the remaining ones of the 110, I am not aware of the detail of those executed contracts because they would go to the director-general. The reason we have not included them here is that we would not normally talk about service providers until those contracts are executed. I am just being careful what I say about who is or is not getting additional funding.

**Mr Joldic:** That is correct. We are still in the recruitment process. We have not finalised it. We are still negotiating with our partners. I think it is a bit hard to say whether a particular organisation would receive additional workers.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, you might also like to defer this question: has DVConnect raised with you the number of unanswered calls, being in the vicinity of thousands, they have experienced in the first quarter of 2024?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I have had DVConnect, DVAC—every service provider that I have engaged with has talked about the demand and the funding not meeting demand, which is why we initiated the 20 per cent uplift on core funding.

**Ms CAMM:** Specifically, though, DVConnect, given it is the 24/7 crisis line?

**Mrs D'ATH:** They have absolutely spoken to me about demand.

**Ms CAMM:** At this stage, only two FTE have been publicly allocated to—

**Mrs D'ATH:** Out of this one project, yes.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you.

**Mrs D'ATH:** They did get a 20 per cent uplift in their core funding, though, which will allow them to put on extra staff, if they want. They also get other funding. I want to be absolutely clear that, when we are talking about two staff for DVConnect, this is specifically in relation to Commonwealth funding for the 500 workers.

**Ms CAMM:** With regard to the federal agreement and the number of workers that have been outlined in correspondence by the minister and in the agreement, will the Attorney confirm that, in fact, by 30 June, 91 workers should have been employed and in the field under the national partnership agreement, based upon the funding that the department has received?

**Mrs D'ATH:** 30 June—

**Ms CAMM:** This year.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I am aware that there was a target of how many to achieve by the end of June. I do not have in front of me how many were employed. I believe that many of them were offered and allocated.

**Ms CAMM:** I can quote the federal minister's correspondence to you that sets an expectation of 91 to recruit by 30 June 2024.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. In relation to the June deadline, they were not employed by that stage but I can advise that, even though we do not have to deliver all of the 111.6 until June next year, we will actually be engaging 113 out of this funding program by the end of this year—well ahead of time.

**Ms CAMM:** Currently, though, there are not 91 FTEs that have been allocated, funded and in the field.

**Mrs D'ATH:** There have been 110 already allocated.

**Ms CAMM:** But not commenced.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Ninety-two contracts have been executed already. As I said before, 44.6 have been employed and 38.6 have commenced. Some of the providers have indicated to us that they have had to go back out for recruitment after their initial recruitment phase because of the challenges of recruiting staff. We are actually giving financial assistance to create incentive packages for organisations or for providers so they can try to attract service providers not just for this work but for work generally across the sector.

**Ms Joldic:** If I may add that we are also providing recruitment support to the providers. We are not just relying on providers to do the work. We recognise the pressure. We recognise that there is a need and we are working with the providers to ensure they are supported in that recruitment.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, you referenced the 20 per cent uplift. Was that extended also to perpetrator programs or providers of perpetrator programs across the state? A yes or no is fine.

**Mrs D'ATH:** The 20 per cent goes to all domestic, family and sexual violence service providers. It is core funding, so they will decide where that 20 per cent is focused, including perpetrator programs.

**Ms CAMM:** Director-General, how many current funded perpetrator programs are now running across our state?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. The government will spend \$16.9 million in this financial year on 17 service organisations across 23 service outlets to provide intervention programs to persons using DFV throughout the state. This is an increase of \$3.3 million on last year's expenditure.

**Ms CAMM:** Director-General, can you quantify how many perpetrators have been through those programs in the last 12 months?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. That is information that would sit with the organisations that are being funded to provide this service, so we would have to get that information from the providers.

**Ms CAMM:** To confirm then, the department does not monitor and gather that data ongoing?

**Ms Joldic:** Of course we monitor and talk to our stakeholders, but I will need to confirm whether we have the numbers that you are asking for.

**Ms CAMM:** Director-General, based on the data, can you advise what the longest wait time is for a perpetrator to be able to access a program? What are the waitlist times?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. I do not have that information on hand to accurately and confidently respond to your question.

**Ms CAMM:** Is it possible to take that on notice or would that not be achieved by the end of the session? I am hearing that maybe you could not get that by the end of the session.

**Mrs D'ATH:** We certainly could not get it by the end of the session, but I am not convinced we could actually get it full stop. Obviously they report to us in relation to their contractual obligations. In relation to how many have been through the programs, that data would have to be individually collected. How long waiting times are differs across organisations and the programs they run. The programs run for different times. I do not think that data is going to be able to be provided. I will say in relation to data collection that we are doing a body of work with all of the service providers right now because we know at the Commonwealth level and at the state and territory level there are data gaps in relation to this and it is core to making sure that our programs are being focused where we need them most.

**Ms CAMM:** Given that the department does not have any live data around the number of individuals, have any evaluations been undertaken in the last 12 months of perpetrator programs and, if so, in what region and what providers have you evaluated?

**Ms Joldic:** I thank the member for the question. As a matter of routine and business, we always evaluate whether our programs are sufficiently supporting services that we want them to provide. I will have to have a look whether there is formal evaluation. As a matter of routine we work with our stakeholders. We seek to understand whether the programs that they run are efficient and effective. I cannot confirm whether there is a formal evaluation for the large number of programs. As I mentioned, there are 17 programs across many locations that are currently being run.

**CHAIR:** Member for Whitsunday, this will be your last question.

**Ms CAMM:** In regard to nonlethal strangulation, I have a question to the Attorney. In 2023-24, strangulation offences lodged through the courts were significant. I refer to data in the last 12 months of 2023-24—2,231—with only convictions of a penalty being imposed on around 423. That data has increased year on year. Have you undertaken any work, engagement or consultation with any service providers or your agencies that you oversee to understand the rate of conviction and any impediments to conviction rates?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. The member would also be aware of the work done by the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council around this. It is important for us to make sure that we are collecting the data, but we are analysing what is coming out of these new offences and whether the offences are delivering the intent of their introduction.

In relation to conversations, of course I have had a number of conversations with the Red Rose Foundation and with other service providers around nonlethal strangulation. There is work being done currently. In fact, I am doing a referral to the Queensland Law Reform Commission on this, and I am going to ask them to look at the whole gamut of this offence and whether it is capturing everything it should and the intent of it and whether there needs to be any further changes. I am also looking at other changes that can be done sooner based on feedback I have had from some of those providers.

**CHAIR:** I now ask the member for Cooper to ask the next question.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney-General, can you outline the current status of the rollout of the embedded domestic and family violence workers in Queensland police stations?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for her question because it indicates that there are so many different programs and initiatives happening across the sector not just to increase their base funding, their core funding, but also to provide dedicated funding for extra staff. As part of the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence, the Miles government committed \$100 million in November 2022 to a raft of reforms and initiatives. This reform package included the rollout of 300 domestic and family violence support workers in police stations across Queensland.

Being very mindful of the things I have already said today of the impact on the sector, the difficulty in recruiting and retaining, we are doing this in a staged approach. As of 20 July this year, we have allocated funding to 34 embedded workers within 34 police stations which are being delivered in a staged approach to ensure providers can attract skilled workers. Fourteen of those workers have been employed already and 12 have commenced in service and are undergoing training.

My department is working very closely with the Queensland Police Service to ensure the delivery of the service is safe for workers and safe for victim-survivors. As I am sure members of the committee would appreciate, this is not as simple as executing contracts and placing workers into police stations.

Identification of suitable police stations is really important. Making sure they have the rooms and spaces within the police stations is absolutely essential to ensure that victim-survivors feel comfortable and safe. Some of these police stations are very old and might not have any spare space to accommodate an extra worker.

Without this work we run the risk of further traumatisation, which is contrary to the intent of the commission of inquiry's recommendation. Therefore, locations for additional specialised practitioners are being prioritised based on demand, sector capacity and where there is suitable infrastructure in police stations to safely and appropriately support engagement between the practitioner and victim-survivors. In addition, working in a police station requires training and checks prior to the commencement of any form of employment. Contracts with organisations delivering the embedded practitioners incorporate time to recruit a suitably skilled and qualified workforce to deliver the model. The Miles government continues to invest in our frontline workforce, and we will continue to ensure that all initiatives are implemented in a safe and trauma informed way.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to page 9 of the Service Delivery Statements, can the Attorney provide an update on the government's progress delivering on the recommendations from the inquiry into scrap metal theft?

**Mrs D'ATH:** As the member is aware, the Miles government tabled its response to the then Transport and Resources Committee's inquiry into scrap metal theft on 24 May this year. As outlined in the response, our government supports or supports in principle six of the seven recommendations. In response to recommendation 6(b), which is to urgently commit to investigate claims of unlicensed operators in the scrap metal and car-wrecking industries, the Office of Fair Trading has completed a number of compliance operations after conducting inspections at 19 businesses associated with the scrap metal industry. The Office of Fair Trading issued fines totalling more than \$14,000 to 12 entities in addition to issuing three official warnings and one compliance advice letter. In a second operation the Office of Fair Trading carried out inspections at 36 locations, resulting in seven official warnings for a range of offences under motor and second-hand dealing laws. I can inform the committee that the scrap metal, second-hand dealer and car-wrecking industries will continue to be targeted over the next 12 months under the Office of Fair Trading's Proactive Regulation of Industry and Marketplace Entities priorities. The government continues to assess the most appropriate legislative framework to combat scrap metal theft, as per recommendation 6(c). In considering the most effective option that will best protect Queenslanders, we are looking at the models employed in New South Wales, Victoria and the United Kingdom.

I do understand that the Leader of the Opposition has made a commitment to tackle scrap metal theft by changing the laws to allow only licensed operators to sell scrap metal. I am pleased to inform members of the opposition on the committee bench that there is no need. That is the existing law, so nothing needs to be done there. The fact that this announcement was made does make me wonder about the level of engagement of those LNP members involved in the committee process. I would suggest that, if the opposition wishes to convince the people of Queensland they indeed want to govern, they might take a bit more time to have a look at their policies before they commit to them.

I do want to thank the sporting clubs, councils and businesses that raised this issue with me. Metal theft is becoming a bigger problem. I want to thank the Queensland Police Service for the work they are doing in this space as well, because of course it is theft. It is a criminal offence, but it is not just a criminal offence. It not only costs businesses, councils and community clubs money; it is putting lives at risk. These people are leaving live wires on footpaths and leaving areas exposed. It is a great risk. It is costing organisations, especially small community clubs and councils, lots of money to repair. They are also not able to use their facilities for a period of time while they are being repaired.

The Miles government is absolutely committed to addressing this problem. I thank the City of Moreton Bay and the member for Kurwongbah for raising it with me. I know it is a major issue. A number of members of the government have written to me on this issue. I thank the committee for the work they did on this.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, we are close to the end of our time. Do you wish to make a closing statement?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I do. In conclusion, I would like to thank you and all of the committee members and other members who have attended the estimates hearing today. As everyone knows, this is my final appearance as a minister and member of parliament before an estimates committee. I do want to thank the committee for the work they do each and every day, because our parliamentary committees are important, as is our estimates committee process. Today, and every year I have served as a minister,



I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to speak about the merits of the budget and at the same time highlight the achievements of this government and the departments I have had the great pleasure to work with.

I thank all of my ministerial staff for the work they do every day. I would like to extend my gratitude to the directors-general I have worked with in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and all of the amazing staff across the department, statutory bodies, and public servants I have worked with over the years. I thank them for their ongoing and tireless dedication and efforts and of course the work that goes into preparing for estimates, which is huge. I have no doubt there are people sitting behind me and elsewhere across the department who are heaving a big sigh of relief right now that it is over for another year. We get to engage with amazing people in the community, including service providers, stakeholders and NGOs. In fact, we could not have achieved what we have if not for the support and dedication of these other organisations and businesses, and I thank them.

I have given everything in the past 10 years to serve the people of Queensland, and I am sure my successor will devote themselves with an equal amount of care and diligence, which is exactly what the people of Queensland deserve. Every member of parliament should consider it an honour and privilege to serve their community, just as I have. Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you to everyone: committee members, the secretariat, Hansard, support staff and ushers. We have now reached the end of the time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. I understand there were no questions taken on notice. The committee will now adjourn until 1.30, when we will examine the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Community Safety.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.46 pm to 1.30 pm.**

## **ESTIMATES—COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE— POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

### **In Attendance**

Hon. MT Ryan, Minister for Police and Community Safety

Mr P Keene, Chief of Staff

#### **Queensland Police Service**

Mr S Gollschewski APM, Commissioner

Ms C Scanlon, Deputy Commissioner, Special Operations

Mr S Chelepy, Deputy Commissioner, Disaster and Emergency Management

Ms T Nelson, Acting Superintendent, Ministerial Services Unit

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

Mr M Kelly, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Regional Operations

#### **State Emergency Service**

Mr M Armstrong, Chief Officer, State Emergency Services

#### **Marine Rescue Queensland**

Mr T Wulff, Chief Officer

#### **Office of Inspector-General Emergency Management**

Mr A Dawson APM, Inspector-General of Emergency Management



**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. We will now resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Peter Russo, the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim, is the deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; and Mr Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today. I would like to welcome the following members: Mr David Crisafulli, the Leader of the Opposition; Mr Dan Purdie, the shadow minister for police and community safety; and Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the chair's discretion or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised this hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. Staff who are assisting our witnesses here today are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present to ensure their phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if not in use. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in the chamber.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the police portfolio area until 3 pm. We will adjourn for a short break from 3 pm until 3.15 pm before examining the portfolio area of community safety until 4.45 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage.

I also remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing orders and rules of the Legislative Assembly. In respect of government owned corporations and statutory authorities, standing order 180(2) provides that—

... a member may ask any question which the committee determines will assist it in its examination of the relevant Appropriation Bill or otherwise assist the committee to determine whether public funds are being efficiently spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, commissioner, officials and departmental officers, and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or commissioner. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of the police 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 members, parliamentary staff and those tuning in on the live stream. The Miles government is doing what matters when it comes to the police and community safety portfolio, and this is highlighted by this year's record budget—a total portfolio budget of \$4.36 billion for the Queensland Police Service, State Emergency Service, Marine Rescue Queensland and the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management. That record total budget is comprised a record annual operating budget of \$3.7 billion for the Queensland Police Service, \$60 million for the State Emergency Service and \$27 million for the newly established Marine Rescue Queensland. The capital budget for the Queensland Police Service this year is an extraordinary \$663 million.

In addition, this year's budget includes funding of almost \$600 million and \$185 million annually ongoing for police to implement the Community Safety Plan for Queensland with a key focus on supporting victims, delivering for our front line, detaining offenders, intervening when people offend and preventing crime before it occurs.

To highlight the work that has been done by the Queensland Police Service and partner agencies, Chair, I seek leave to table the Doing What Matters portfolio update. Chair, would you like me to continue while you consider the leave request?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr RYAN:** As you will see, the update shows the Queensland Police Service continues to lead the nation when it comes to recruitment. I am told that the attrition rate has fallen. I am also told that Queensland is one of the few jurisdictions in the nation delivering positive recruitment growth. As you will see, the total police personnel headcount is now 3,338 above the 2020 approved strength baseline—the highest on record. The total headcount of police officers is now 303 above the 2020 approved strength baseline. The combined number of officers and recruits is now 953 above the 2020 approved strength baseline—the highest on record. There are more than 700 recruits in training—also the highest on record. Nearly 400 new first year constables are due to graduate between the months of September and December this year. I am advised that by the end of 2025 the combined number of officers and recruits is expected to exceed the government's election commitment. Given challenging labour markets across the nation, this is a remarkable achievement.

Our record funding is delivering new mobile police beats, tasers, vehicles, QLITE devices, integrated load-bearing vests and body worn cameras. Record funding is also delivering next generation tasers, next generation body worn cameras, more metal detecting wands and seven police helicopters, with three in the south-east—two in Townsville, one in Cairns and one for the Sunshine Coast-Wide Bay region. In addition, the commitment to fund a \$300 million infrastructure pipeline over five years has now been delivered, with planning, design or construction underway on even more projects. Now that is what I call backing the police.

The Doing What Matters portfolio update also provides a statistical update from the Queensland Police Service. While any instance of criminal offending is unacceptable, the update confirms an emerging positive trend. I am advised that the latest statistics comparing the most recent financial years reveals a reduction in the rate of youth offences of 6.7 per cent. The statistics also show that the rate of all offences, inclusive of domestic violence flagged offences, by all offenders decreased by 0.1 per cent. Significantly, the rate of all offences, exclusive of domestic violence offences, by all offenders decreased by 1.9 per cent. Notwithstanding this, it is confronting that domestic and family violence offences continue to increase. It demonstrates how important it is that everyone in the committee works together to stamp out this scourge on society.

The Doing What Matters portfolio update also highlights key emergency service reforms. These historic reforms have established a brand new agency—Marine Rescue Queensland. With its \$27 million annual budget and \$22 million vessel replacement program significantly advanced, Marine Rescue Queensland expects to see volunteer coastguard and volunteer marine rescue units transition to the new agency within the next 12 to 18 months.

Another historic reform means the State Emergency Service is now formally established with its own legislation, its own operating budget, its first dedicated chief officer and more resources. With its \$60 million annual budget for the State Emergency Service, the Miles government has more than doubled the number of staff.

The 2024-25 police and community safety portfolio budget is doing what matters for Queensland—supporting the front line and enhancing community safety. Chair, the Commissioner and I are now available to take any questions from the committee.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I hand over to the opposition.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, can I start by acknowledging and congratulating you on your recent promotion. Thank you for taking the time to come and present to the committee today with all of the senior executives you have with you. Commissioner, my first question relates to pre-estimate question on notice No. 5. I am aware that you chair the QPS executive level team meetings. What is the cost of taking your 42-member executive level team on the road, and can you justify that cost?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for the question. Can I start by saying that at the moment I have an executive leadership team of some 41 or 42, I think that number is. We will get those figures if they are available. In the last period that is under consideration here, that ELT, as we call it—the executive leadership team—met on seven occasions. There were only two occasions when it went on the road in that period; that was to Caloundra and then Toowoomba, from recollection. As for the cost of that, I do not have the exact figures before me. That is a thing that is factored into the budgets that are allocated to each of those areas. The individual executives are encouraged to attend, depending on the nature of the meeting and the agenda that is on for the day. It is our expectation that we do attend. We do go to the regional areas; it is very important for the ELT to engage with the local communities, with local police in particular. Over many years, the Queensland Police Service has visited various regional areas on a regular basis, but, primarily, most of the meetings that we have are conducted in Brisbane.

**Mr PURDIE:** I acknowledge you were appointed commissioner on 22 April 2024 and the first scheduled ELT meeting you were due to chair was the next day, on 23 April. Did you chair that important meeting? If not, why not?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I do not have recollection around that particular meeting. The week of my appointment I was not present; I was absent across Queensland.

**Mr PURDIE:** Do you remember where you were the day of and the day after you were appointed commissioner?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** The day I was appointed I was in Brisbane—obviously there was an announcement at 1 William Street—and then I travelled to North Queensland, and the next day I was also travelling.

**Mr PURDIE:** My next series of questions is to the commissioner. On Tuesday, the Premier said that the QPS booked the private jet for him to undertake his crime policy campaign. As the person ultimately responsible for QGAir, can you confirm this is correct?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I am sorry, member: which jet are you referring to?

**Mr PURDIE:** I am talking about the Premier's jet.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** No. Member, what I can say is that my recollection is that the week before there were discussions, when I was interim commissioner, about a trip that was going to be undertaken in relation to the community safety plan announcements which I was aware of. There was discussion at officer level only—I think parliament was sitting that week—in relation to what should happen for the booking of a plane for the Premier, and my office made it clear that it was a matter for DPC to book that plane, although it is done through QGAir, which, of course, is administered by the Queensland Police Service.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, can you tell the committee what was the cost of that travel—the Premier's jet?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** What I can tell you, member, is that, given the recent interest in this, I have had to ask for a brief on it. My initial briefs did not provide that level of detail, so I sought a briefing in relation to both the manifest and the costs of all travel for both planes during that week. They form part of a budgeted spend for the last financial year of \$3.343 million on chartered air flights that are undertaken by QGAir. That is an essential part of the business model for QGAir. As well as having fixed-wing aircraft, we provide services for a variety of issues including operational, dignitary, transport

and a number of other essential things that are done across the state. It has long been a model for the Queensland government to have jets—over many decades. At that stage, and still, we do not have jets. They have been divested in recent years because of age and we are in a procurement process to replace those jets. So, we went to chartered in this instance—

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Commissioner. I understand that if the total budget was \$3.34 million you would have to keep track of what individual flights cost.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Which is where I am getting to, member.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Commissioner. I am sorry to interrupt.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** As part of that, this is a normal business model for us and we do this on occasions when we are unable to use commercial flights to get to where we want. There was some initial discussion around other aircraft. I said they could not use operational aircraft for this type of travel, so the only other option available was chartered. The cost of that particular aircraft for that week was \$83,185.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Commissioner, firstly, thank you for providing the honesty that the Premier refused to earlier in the week. On behalf of every Queensland taxpayer, that is a refreshing change.

**Mr RYAN:** Point of order, Chair: there are established processes around members making suggestions around whether people have provided the right answer or not.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I think Queenslanders will be the judge of that.

**Mr RYAN:** Well—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Queenslanders will be the judge of that and whether or not \$80,000 was worth—

**CHAIR:** Can we just stop? Minister?

**Mr RYAN:** The member has made an imputation there around what may or may not have been said at another estimates hearing. There are established processes—

**Mr PURDIE:** It is a fact. It is on the transcript.

**CHAIR:** Let the minister finish and then I will come to you.

**Mr RYAN:** There are established processes about making those complaints, and I ask for the question to be asked in accordance with the standing orders.

**CHAIR:** Now, just one at a time. Who is first with the point of order?

**Mr KRAUSE:** No point of order, Chair.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, just confirming that \$83,000 amount is for the Premier's jet solely?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** That is correct.

**Mr PURDIE:** You said you were asked about using Police Air Wing planes and you said that was not operationally—

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Firstly, to help clarify, I had these figures because I have asked for them this week. We did not have these figures. They had to be broken out of the budget. I specifically had to ask for that.

**Mr PURDIE:** Why was it not appropriate—

**CHAIR:** Let the commissioner finish his answer. If you have a follow-on, you ask the follow-on.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Chair.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I have to point out that this was an officer-level discussion between my officer and—I cannot even tell you who it was, but it was someone in 1 William Street, in relation to how we could make this happen and how we could organise this. Of course we looked at commercial viability for what the itinerary was going to be and whether that could be done, and my advice was that, no, it could not be done that way. It then is a matter of QGAir—how can we do this? There was a suggestion by someone, in that officer level, that perhaps we could use the QPS other aircraft—of course, we have King Airs that are available—and I said, 'No, that is not appropriate. They are operational aircraft; they are needed for other things. We will have to consider other options.'

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Commissioner, what was the total cost for the two planes involved and, if I may, who was on each leg of the flights? What was their official capacity? What was their reason for being there?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, Leader. I can answer that. The total cost for the week for the second aircraft was \$84,640. I advise the committee quite clearly that I have no confidence in the manifest. I have been provided that. I have checked it myself. The reason I have no confidence is

that I know there are flights there that I was on and I do not appear on the manifest. I have asked for further work in relation to that manifest to get accuracy of who was actually on it. I know I did not get a bus; I was on a plane, but I do not appear on the manifest.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, I appreciate you would have some independent recollection of the flights and the different legs of the flight. Were any members of parliament on any legs of those flights with you and, if so, who were they?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Yes, from recollection—and I will not say which flights because there were a few. I know that there were ministers—Minister Healy, Minister Stewart and obviously the police minister on my flight. The reason I know about the manifest is because on one of the flights I was on the plane with the Premier, yet I do not appear on that manifest. I should explain that the manifests, I have been advised, are accurate as at the time of booking and if there changes later they have not amended them, and that is an issue I would like to follow up on. I think there was one other member—former minister Crawford, I think.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, in an RTI received by the opposition, the details of those ministers and members of parliament and former minister were redacted. Can you please explain to the committee why the names of members of parliament, particularly ministers, would be redacted from an RTI—members of parliament using a private jet at taxpayer funded expense?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I do not have any knowledge of that RTI, I am sorry, member.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Commissioner. We might get that to be tabled, Chair. You said—

**CHAIR:** Slow down. What is it?

**Mr PURDIE:** We might try to get a copy of that. I know it is here—the redacted RTI of the manifest.

**CHAIR:** You are going to get a document for the committee?

**Mr PURDIE:** If we can continue, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Yes, you can continue, but now I understand what you were saying. Thank you.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, you said other options were looked at. Were commercial arrangements investigated, or other arrangements, particularly for these members who—I understand you have questions about that manifest—only took one or two legs of the trip? Did you or anyone else suggest that those members of parliament should investigate other options?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for the question. I assure you I do not do logistic itinerary planning. I entrust other members of the organisation, including my office and QGAir, to undertake that work on my behalf. Certainly there were two planes, one of which was booked on my behalf and the other through DPC for the Premier. I certainly do not have any direct involvement in that. It is not uncommon for us to book flights going north and then coming back allow people to travel on that flight because the plane has to come back anyway, as long as they are a bona fide person who can use government aircraft—you might as well make use that efficiently. In terms of the planning of others, I cannot comment, although I know that the minister travelled on a mixture of both commercial and QGAir during that trip.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Commissioner, you are correct but in this case, if my read of the numbers is correct, had the two Cairns-based members not been on that flight only one plane would have sufficed based on the numbers who travelled across the two planes from Cairns to Townsville?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. My recollection is they were on a flight returning from Cairns, not to Cairns.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Again, the total number of passengers between the two planes, between Cairns and Townsville—whichever direction—had the two Cairns-based members of parliament not been on those two planes, one plane would have sufficed; is that correct?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** You are talking about the return flight from Cairns to Townsville; is that the flight?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Let's check in either direction. From memory, it was an eight-seater plane and I think between the two planes there were nine people—that is the round figure in my mind.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** My understanding and certainly recollection of the day is that the two planes were going north to Townsville and then onto Cairns—that that exceeded the capacity of both planes by more than one. As I explained, once the plane is in North Queensland—these planes

are based in Brisbane—they have to return anyway. It is not uncommon—in fact, it is quite common—if people only go one-way for instance and get off the plane, as was the case from recollection of Minister Stewart, that if we have capacity we will put people on the plane for the return trip because it has to return anyway.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, who else was on your plane?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Which flight, member?

**Mr PURDIE:** When you left Brisbane, who was on your flight?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** From recollection I had one of my staff members. I do not know the name of the person, sorry, there was another person and there was Minister Stewart.

**Mr PURDIE:** I think you said before that a brief has been prepared for you. I will give you time to look at that brief.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I do not think we will have that available today, member, sorry.

**Mr PURDIE:** I am happy, Chair, if I can give that question to the Commissioner to they can that on notice.

**CHAIR:** The Commissioner cannot take anything on notice, it is up to the minister.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** It may be that we are unable to because the records were not kept at the time of any changes that were made to the manifest after the initial booking. The problem we have is that I am advised the manifests are accurate as at the time of the booking and if there are any changes on the ground in terms of who is in what aircraft, it is not reflected and it is not recorded—I have to add that caveat.

**Mr PURDIE:** In relation to the Premier's jet, do you know who was on that flight? If you do not have the names available with you, can you confirm to the committee whether there are any videographers or photographers on your jet or the Premier's jet?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I am not aware of the specific roles of anyone who was not part of my staff or people I interacted with, bearing in mind it was my first day as commissioner. There were people who were taking photographs and doing some filming. My understanding is they were staff who are multiskilled and do a variety of different things, but I do not recall anyone you would call a videographer, for instance—someone who is a professional or operates commercially, if that is what you mean.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Commissioner. Another question: I appreciate you would not have booked the flights and you do not do the planning, but at any stage during this trip did you have concerns about this being the most efficient and cost-effective mode of travel and did you raise those concerns with anybody?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member. As a new commissioner, this is something I turned my mind to when it was being talked about. Given the significance of the announcements that were being made and their direct relationship to the QPS going forward—investment in a number of areas such as the helicopters, Polair, new establishments and the growth in some of those areas—I weighed that up and it was my belief that, as the commissioner, I should be involved in those announcements and show support for them. They were improving capacity and capability for the organisation and I was very committed to that.

I then also balanced that with the fact that as a new commissioner it was incumbent on me to go to regional areas and not just be trapped in the south-east corner. I have been criticised already for not getting out and about enough. In fact, this is something that we do on a regular basis. Next week I am travelling to the Torres Strait on a combination of both commercial and Polair flights because it is the only way I can get there. I weighed that all up, considered the importance of it and felt that it was something I should do. It was not until this week that I was aware what the total cost of that was.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, how was this request for you to go on this trip first communicated with you, when did you book your jet and where did you record the direction from the Premier requiring you to attend this trip?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I did not have any conversations with the Premier, member, if that is what you asking. You mention a 'direction from the Premier', there was certainly no direction. My recollection is there was a discussion between officers the week before—my office and the minister's office and the Premier's office—around what might be possible and how we could organise that. It was

a request that I be involved in this. I weighed that up in terms of what I thought the value would be for me as a new commissioner to do that and how it would add to what I needed to do in the commissioner space. That engagement with people on the ground is incredibly important to me.

Some of the engagements I have done with our frontline responders, including when we were in Cairns making the announcement on Polair, have led to direct decisions such as the formation of Operation Whiskey Legion, which is a proactive policing model that we are using across the state. There is value for me in doing that. I was not directed to do anything; it was a suggestion that I do that. It was certainly an invitation. It was not given to me directly by the Premier, it was not given to me by anyone directly from the Premier's office. This is a normal discussion that goes on between officers at commissioner and ministerial level. In terms of booking the plane, again I put my faith in the people who work for me, including in QGAir. We gave them the itinerary which outlined where we needed to go in a short period of time and we asked what the best way to do it was. We took their advice that the chartered air flights was the way to go.

**Mr PURDIE:** That was done on the 22nd, or was your flight booked prior to that?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** The 22nd was the Monday, was it? It had to be arranged before then. You cannot just book a plane that day and rock up. No, it was organised the week before.

**Mr McDONALD:** Commissioner, how could the manifest be incorrect given the CASA requirements for chartered services?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member. That is a very good question. I have asked that today. It was pretty obvious to me that once I saw the manifest and my name was not on a flight that I knew I was on, that I could not have confidence in that. I have spoken to my staff about that and asked them to explain why that would be the case. As I have already said, the explanation is that the manifests are accurate at the time of booking. If there are any changes, my advice is that provided the changes are people who were already booked and are moved around on different planes, or other people drop off or they are then added through bookings, they can be added and changed. What is not happening—what I have been asking for—is advice around what does that mean for us? Do we need to change our process? Certainly, I think we need to change our process, but are there any requirements for us that we need to be aware of to get it up-to-date? I thank the member for the question. Certainly we will certainly be following up on it.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, moving on, I want to refer to a news article that was on Channel 9 last night. When did you become aware of the serious issue of victims' details being given to offenders, and how widespread is this issue?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for that question. I would have to answer that by saying it was probably exactly the same time as you in terms of seeing that report last night and certainly the request that came to us from Channel 9 through our police media. What I have done is asked Deputy Commissioner Mark Kelly from regional operations to follow up on the detail on this. If it is okay, I will call Mr Kelly because he has a much more detailed understanding of this and I think we can answer your question that way.

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** QPS does see the security of victim information as extremely important. The first time this was raised with us was yesterday. My office made an inquiry of all of the regions to see if there had been other cases. We were advised there were not any other cases. Having said that, we have identified one other matter, which is subject to an investigation.

The issue is that that information directly imports from QPRIME onto our forms. When it does that, officers have to redact the victim information from the report. Yesterday I issued a memo to all regions to make sure they have processes in place to redact that information when they do these caution forms and any other court forms. The other important piece that we are doing is working with the digital information officer to see if there are improvements we can make to ensure this does not happen and it is still efficient for police officers when they are doing this type of work and correspondence.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Mr Kelly. Chair, can I ask a clarifying question in relation to the technicalities around that?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr PURDIE:** Mr Kelly, it sounds like this might be more than a one-off incident, if you sent a statewide email and QPRIME automatically populates this information. I might go back to the commissioner to ask my question. Commissioner, can you confirm to the committee that vulnerable victims are not at risk due to their home address being provided to an offender, including online perpetrators?



**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I can confirm that we are taking this extremely seriously and we are trying to get a complete understanding of what is happening. My understanding is that there are a variety of offences involved in this that are not less serious but are ones of less concern. We need to do that work. I will guarantee that we are going to get on top of this and do everything we can to make sure they do have confidence that they are protected. It is very early days. We only became aware of it yesterday, so I need to get to the bottom and the detail of what is going on.

**Mr PURDIE:** I appreciate that, Commissioner, but some of them, such as child exploitation material, could be quite serious if there was a vulnerable young child as the victim and the offender is an online perpetrator.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I can say that we would not be doing cautioning for that kind of offence.

**Mr PURDIE:** As you said, I think we found out at the same time last night and they talked about QP9 and court documents, which is obviously not for cautioning.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I will defer to Mr Kelly if there is anything he needs to add to that. As I said, we are committed to making sure this is addressed, and the work is underway.

**Mr PURDIE:** I appreciate that. I am sure you would be.

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** One is obviously very important—if one person's details are released. As I said, we take it very seriously. That is why we are doing this work. That is why we issued the memo to all regions: to remind people about the importance of redacting information where that is the case. It is the case that you can click a box and delink it from the actual form. Again, what we want to do is look at it from a systems point of view with our chief digital officer with the frontline digital division to make sure the automation is also not at risk of doing that by exception.

We are dealing with it by a systems approach around reminding people about having risk management systems in place, making sure our digital systems are friendly to this process and making sure victims' data and information is kept secure. If there are any other training implications, we make sure they are implemented to ensure the security of victim information.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Mr Kelly. I appreciate that. I have another question to the commissioner on another topic. On 16 July 2024 the Premier told the media that he spoke to you directly and asked if there are any current investigations into criminal activity involving the CFMEU. When and how did this discussion with the Premier take place?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for the question. I do not have the exact day or time with me. Yes, the conversation did take place. It was a telephone conversation. The Premier was obviously very concerned about what had been reported in Victoria and what was happening there and was keen to know what we were doing. The answer I gave the Premier is probably exactly what I will give you or anyone else, that in relation to any individual operations around individuals, who may or may not be CFMEU, I would not comment on them publicly and I certainly would not brief the Premier on them. We have many investigations against people and I have no doubt that that may well be the case, but I do not intend to comment any further on it.

What I can say is that we cannot investigate on a whim. Unless there is intelligence that is compelling that says to us there is serious criminal activity happening or we have a complaint or evidence of criminal activity, we would not be investigating, and that was the case in terms of the CFMEU in Queensland at that time. In terms of what was happening in Victoria, again, I will give the same advice: of course, we collaborate and speak to our jurisdictional partners, and I will not be disclosing any information that we get from Victoria Police other than to say that we remain in contact with them and at this stage it is a watching brief and we do not need to take any action.

**Mr PURDIE:** In the Premier making this call to you asking for information about ongoing investigations into the CFMEU—and we know publicly there is a close link between the Premier of this government and the CFMEU—did that put you in a compromising—

**CHAIR:** Hang on. There is an imputation in the question. I ask you to rephrase the question, please.

**Mr PURDIE:** Did the Premier put you in a compromising position when he rang to ask about any ongoing police investigations into the CFMEU, which has close links to the Labor Party in this state?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** No, not at all. I know in my role as commissioner I am quite happy to push back on politicians when they want to cross into the operational space and I will continue to do so. I think it is a reasonable question—at a higher level as an organisation in this state, is there

anything of concern for the people of Queensland?—and I was able to provide a very bland answer to that in terms of overarching. As I said, I will not comment on investigations into individuals or intelligence, in fact, that we might hold in relation to that group. That is not a matter for any person in this chamber or the Premier.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Commissioner, you mentioned before that there was one other issue with the potential breach of data, the privacy issue. Can we find out what that issue is, what it relates to?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I will bring Mr Kelly forward.

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** I understand it is in relation to the release of information from documents. We are just trying to identify whether that has been released. Some documents are provided to solicitors as part of the process of open disclosure. We are just trying to identify how that information was potentially released from those documents.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Sorry, my question is: what type of crime does it relate to? Does it involve a child? Is it a domestic violence incident?

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** I believe it may have been a person offence. I am not exactly sure. It was not a caution; it was a QP9.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Can we get a little bit more detail about what that looks like?

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** I can find the detail for you before the end of the hearing, yes.

**CHAIR:** Before you leave the table, is it a matter that is still currently before the courts?

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** My understanding is that it is still before the courts.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Chair, we are not asking anyone to be identified in any way, shape or form. We just want to know if there were vulnerable children involved or a vulnerable woman.

**CHAIR:** I understood your question. I just wanted to get some clarity around what will be provided to the committee because if it is a matter that is before the court it may be something that the committee should not be made aware of. However, if it is as narrow as what your question is, maybe that would be okay.

**Mr PURDIE:** Just to clarify that, it was a QP9. For those on the committee, that is a court document, so this is not a caution that we are talking about; this is a matter where someone was put before the court.

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** That is correct.

**CHAIR:** Most of us know what a QP9 is.

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** And that information only came to me today. As the commissioner said, this is very early. It is a matter of reviewing how that information has been released. I believe it was from harassing phone calls. Whether that was in a domestic relationship I am not sure, but my understanding is it was in relation to harassing phone calls.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** What steps have been taken since that data breach? What steps have been put in place?

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** My understanding is that that matter has been reported.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, everyone, but questions should be directed either—

**Mr RYAN:** I am happy to allow the questions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** That matter has been reported to Ethical Standards Command and they are investigating the information that was released—the documents that were released, how they were released, the full circumstances and whether it is from actual documents or otherwise. I believe it is from documents, but again whether it was supplied through a solicitor or otherwise I am not sure. It is being investigated by Ethical Standards Command. They then also look at system approaches, as I mentioned. The first time we became aware of the matters that were before Channel 9 was yesterday. The first time I became aware of this matter was today when I read a brief as a result of us going to the regions and asking if there were any other matters and I received that information today which is being investigated by Ethical Standards Command.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** What is the likelihood that other incidents like this exist?

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** There is the officer who circulated the email as a preventative to his office to make sure people were taking actions to redact information and then there is this one reported matter which is currently under investigation. That is why my process from a systems approach in terms of yesterday—even before knowing about this other matter—is circulating a memo to everyone

to make sure that our officers are reminded of redacting information to talking today to our chief digital officer to work with our frontline digital division to see if we can put steps in place to make sure that any automation does not release victims' information.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Minister, to be clear, someone who is harassing another individual has been given that person's address. Would you apologise on behalf of yourself and your government for what has occurred?

**Mr RYAN:** I think the Police Service would as well.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I am after it from you.

**CHAIR:** Let the minister answer the question, please.

**Mr RYAN:** I will answer the question. As the deputy commissioner and the commissioner have outlined, there are processes in place around keeping information private. If there has been a breach of that process—and it is being investigated; the deputy commissioner has been very open about that—then of course the Police Service and the government would be apologetic for that because something has happened that should not have happened. The Police Service takes this very seriously and I am sure the commissioner agrees with me on that front.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Yes. I thank—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** But what about the minister? The question was you, Minister. Are you apologetic for it—

**CHAIR:** He is allowed to ask the—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:**—not the Queensland Police Service? Are you apologetic for it?

**CHAIR:** The question has been answered.

**Mr RYAN:** I have answered the question. I have said that the Police Service, the government, everyone would be sorry that that would happen and I was confirming that the commissioner would be too.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** But you cannot say that you apologise and you accept responsibility?

**CHAIR:** I think the question has been answered.

**Mr RYAN:** The matter is being investigated. There are processes in place around protecting people's privacy. If a process has not been followed and if someone's privacy has been breached, then of course we are sorry for that and of course we would apologise for that. What are you talking about? I answered your question directly.

**CHAIR:** Yes. The question has been answered. Can you ask your next question? Who from the opposition wants to ask the next question?

**Mr PURDIE:** Deputy Commissioner Kelly, correct me if I am wrong, but did you say before that a box needs to be checked manually for the victim's details not to automatically be populated in these documents?

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:** To explain the process in QPRIME, member, if the offence location is the same as someone's address—if that makes sense—

**Mr PURDIE:** Yes, it does.

**Deputy Commissioner Kelly:**—then the system may prepopulate that address into the form. I am advised that what you can do is either put 'known to police' in the document—a long time ago when I was in operations we would always type in 'known to police' for specific victim data for the information that was going to the courts or potentially may go to the defence et cetera—but my advice is they can delink the location address, but obviously time, date and place are all things that police have to also prove as elements of the charge. In a full court system, for example, a witness will provide statements to court and list all the facts that are related to a matter and they will get presented to a court. They will be provided to the defence. In someone's legal defence someone gets to read that detail as well in terms of court processes.

**Mr PURDIE:** My concern is that someone has to manually delink that, so what we are talking about now is not one or two occasions when a police officer has forgotten to fill out or tick the box; it manually does that. My biggest concern is that this is not one or two occasions. Has any analysis been done? Commissioner or Minister, has any analysis—

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** There are two aspects to this. One is data breaches that are intentionally or recklessly done by individuals in our organisation. We have taken a very hard, firm line on that. We criminally charge people that do that.

**Mr PURDIE:** We are not suggesting that that has occurred.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I just wanted to clarify that so that we have a very clear position about data breaches. I share your concern if there is some error that can occur in our system that allows that to happen. We have just found out in the last 24 hours that this has happened. We need to do the work to work out what that means and what the real risk is, and that is what Mr Kelly is trying to say. We have people who are expert in this area who can provide advice around it. That will happen rapidly. We will address this rapidly. If we need to do a systems change to make sure that we eliminate that risk, we absolutely will.

**Mr PURDIE:** I appreciate that, Commissioner. I am not suggesting for any second—no-one is—that this has been intentionally done or anyone has acted unlawfully. Our concern is for potential victims and vulnerable victims—children and females—who might be the subject of online offending such as CEM or threatening, menacing and harassing. We do not know at this stage how many potential victims are in danger across Queensland at the moment.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** And that is exactly what we are doing, Mr Purdie, to absolutely understand what this really means and do something to address it.

**Mr PURDIE:** I appreciate that, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you.

**Mr PURDIE:** Mr Chair, I want to move on to another topic now in relation to police numbers. Minister, I was diligently trying to write down all those numbers that you trotted out in your opening statement, but I might just go to the commissioner to see if he can help clarify some of those numbers. Commissioner, can you just confirm for me—and I do appreciate the minister did trot these out at the start—how many FTE police there were in Queensland on 30 October 2020?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member. I will just get the correct brief. I am not sure I will have your exact date, but I will get close to it.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** While you are doing that, just to be clear, that is full-time-equivalent front line, not the approved strength which is often a figure that gets trumpeted around by others.

**Mr PURDIE:** It should be around 12,082.

**CHAIR:** Can we just wait until we get an answer and if that answer is not what you were looking for you can ask a second question to get some clarification?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** FTE for 30 June 2020—I do have that figure—is 12,038.

**Mr PURDIE:** 12,038. That was June. In pre-estimates question No. 1, the updated figure we have as at 30 June 2024 is 12,341; is that right?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Was that 12,341, member?

**Mr PURDIE:** Yes. Commissioner, can you get the figure from 30 October 2020? I know there is a spreadsheet that is regularly—

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I will just check with the deputy chief executive, who has human resources under her. I will invite her to explain.

**Ms McCarthy:** The information I have in front of me is based on financial years. I do not have the October number in front of me, although I will endeavour to get that figure to you before the end of the session.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you. I do understand that that might be available in a spreadsheet that the QPS often sends to the minister in relation to strength which has 'MOHRI strength', 'actual strength' and 'approved strength'. Hopefully we might be able to get that information pretty quickly. I take it that is the—

**CHAIR:** No, slow down.

**Mr KRAUSE:** There is a question coming, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Yes, but there was a comment that you should be able to get the information fairly quickly. I am trying to work out what it is that you are suggesting can be obtained really quickly.

**Mr PURDIE:** I am happy for you to get back to us. I was not asking you to get it urgently.

**Ms McCarthy:** My understanding is that you are seeking the actual FTE as at October 2020?

**Mr PURDIE:** 30 October, yes. Commissioner, in 3½ years, allowing for attrition, which we know is at record highs, over the past two years particularly, the number of police has increased by 300, which is what the minister said in his opening address.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** To clarify, the attrition rate in the previous financial year before the one we are considering was 5.6 per cent. For the last financial year it was 5.3 per cent. This calendar year it is 5.1 per cent. That is a downward trend for us, but obviously that is a challenge for us because of the numbers that we have to recruit and I acknowledge that.

**Mr PURDIE:** That percentage is 670-something to 640-something?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** The figures are pretty on there, member.

**Mr PURDIE:** How many police can both academies at Oxley and Townsville realistically train in the next 92 days before the election or even into next year?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** What I can tell you is that our capacity to push out new recruits into the Police Service is 1,250 per year. At the moment, we have 743 recruits in training.

**Mr PURDIE:** Has the academy ever trained that many police? I understand the normal capacity is 600 a year.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** That has been the historical optimal amount, but obviously we are in a great period now. I see that as my job to make sure we can get as close to that 1,250 a year to get those officers onto the front line. We are working very hard to do that and we are seeing improvement.

**Mr PURDIE:** Commissioner, over the past 3½ years you have increased the numbers by 300. What, in realistic terms, do you expect the number to be next year?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** We expect the permanent headcount change—this is a projection—to 30 June 2025 to be 633.

**Mr PURDIE:** Sorry, can you please tell me that again?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Projected headcount change, permanent police, of 633.

**Mr PURDIE:** An extra 600 on the 300 that we have attained over the past three years?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I might get the deputy chief executive.

**Ms McCarthy:** If I can confirm, that would be a projected number of 633 above the headcount as at June 2020?

**Mr PURDIE:** That is on top of the 300—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** No, that is including.

**Mr PURDIE:** That is including. How many short is that of the 1,450 extra police that the minister and the government promised at the last election?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Can I add something there that helps explain this, if that is okay, member, to give the deputy chief executive time? We are talking about FTE headcount. The issue for us is that at the moment we have a 5.6 per cent vacancy rate, so what we have done is we have created the positions. They have been allocated: 1,200 have gone to our regions and districts; 250—police, I am talking about—were kept as a discretion for the commissioner to be allocated to more specialised areas as needed. We have 173 positions yet to be allocated next year—the remainder of the 1,450. When we get into the headcount, you are not counting the vacancies for created positions because we are carrying that 5.6 per cent vacancy rate.

**Mr PURDIE:** I appreciate that, Commissioner, but my calculation—and I am happy to be corrected when Ms McCarthy gets to it—is that the commitment and the promise that this minister and this government made to the police and the people of Queensland at the last election to increase police numbers by 1,450 will fall over 800 police officers short.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I have to make the point that any agency, including police, creates positions and has an FTE number that governments commit to. As we have mentioned, we have that 173 left to allocate out of the 1,450 for next year, which means that 1,031 of the 450 police officer positions had been created by 30 June this year and 811 of them are occupied. The problem for us is that, as we have vacancy rates and then we have to go through the recruitment process, there is a long lead for us to get people through the application line, through the academy and out on the road. I am sure some agencies would like to have a 5.6 per cent vacancy rate.

**Mr PURDIE:** I appreciate that, Commissioner. Minister, at the last election you promised 1,450 extra police in communities across Queensland. Do you now admit that is a broken promise?

**Mr RYAN:** The Police Service is recruiting against those numbers. The commissioner has just said that, of the growth positions allocated to date, of the 1,000 or so there are another 400 to be allocated this financial year and 800 of those have been filled. Yes, there are vacancies in other roles and the Police Service is actively recruiting against those. We made that election commitment as at 1 July 2020. That might provide some clarity around whether you need that October number or not. The election commitment was actually backdated to 1 July 2020. That is why the commissioner provided that baseline number from 30 June 2020.

Notwithstanding that, the government has provided extraordinary support to the Queensland Police Service to help with its recruitment. Right now, there are over 700 recruits at the academy. The Queensland Police Service tells me that by the end of next year the combined number of recruits and officers will exceed the government's election target. By the end of 2025, the combined number of recruits and police officers will exceed the target. I think it is extraordinary in the current climate, where there are workforce shortages all over the world, for the Queensland Police Service to lead the nation when it comes to recruitment.

Member, it is an extraordinary effort. The government has provided the funding. It has provided the positions. It has provided the assistance to the Police Service. As the commissioner just reported, of the 1,000 growth numbers created to date, over 800 are substantially filled. I commend them for their efforts. It is 1,000 more than your commitment at the last election. We are well on the way to delivering it and that is a reflection of the hard work of the academy as well as the recruitment team.

**Mr PURDIE:** Minister, you promised boots on the ground, not position numbers and vacant chairs. Is it a broken promise?

**CHAIR:** Member, you are getting argumentative. I ask you to withdraw that question or rephrase it.

**Mr RYAN:** I am happy to restate what the commissioner said and what I stated. Of the over 1,000 growth positions created to date, over 800 are filled. Yes, there are vacancies in other roles and the police are recruiting against that. There will be now another over 400 growth positions created this financial year and the Police Service will recruit against those. In addition to all of those things, there are 700 recruits at the academy right now and over 2,000 in the applicant pipeline. The Police Service is well on the way to filling those vacancies as soon as possible. I commend them for it.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Chairman, I have a question to the minister.

**CHAIR:** No, we will go to the crossbench now.

**Ms BOLTON:** Commissioner, I know that we have just gone through numbers, but I would like to go back to them. I refer to the targets that have been set for FTEs in terms of what is required across the state. Were those targets set using the new allocation modelling as a result of the Auditor-General's report or the old, superseded model?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** If I could just clarify—and thank you for the question—there are two aspects that we need to cover here: firstly, the 1,450 police where the planning has been done over a number of years, and that predates the QAO report to some degree; and, secondly, the 500 that is future growth in the years beyond next year that we are currently doing planning around. I might go to the deputy chief executive, who is leading the planning and coordinating on how we are going to allocate that growth going forward.

**Ms McCarthy:** Thank you for the question. The QPS, in formulating that growth model, relied on the demand model developed in partnership with the QTC in 2019 which draws on information such as calls to service and population and urban growth to determine demand. It draws from QPRIME data, HR establishment data, ITAS data and QCAD data to provide analytics on actual demand within defined periods of time. The demand model forecasts out to 2032 by applying a compound annual growth rate to the historical data and uses the Queensland Government Statistician's Office's population projections.

The commitment to provide extra police personnel, including 500 police officers, is over and above the 2025 additional police personnel. The initial demand modelling has already been undertaken to inform the distribution of the 500-growth officer positions. Further work is being undertaken to develop a more robust model for forecasting demand across the service to ensure police resources are allocated appropriately.

**Ms BOLTON:** I raised this question, I think, last estimates or the estimates before regarding hidden demand, which can include the increase in administrative burdens through legislative change. We have heard of extended leave and sick leave leading to gaps and shortages in the resourcing. I did not hear in what you said that hidden demand was accommodated for. What is also included in that? Is that those added administrative—

**Ms McCarthy:** We are evolving in that space. We did a piece of work in 2019 with the Queensland Treasury Corporation to develop an initial demand model. More recently, we have done a body of work around domestic and family violence demand modelling which captures more information that was not included in the earlier model around watch houses, prosecutions and other areas of demand that are attached to that particular offence.

We are very cognisant, having regard to some of the demand pressures and those increasing pressures, of the need to get better at demand measurement and management. To that end, we have two pieces of work that have commenced. The first is at the enterprise level. We have a new position that the QPS has created, which is the Chief Digital Officer. The Chief Digital Officer is very focused on designing digital solutions for the enterprise and for the front line as well as uplifting data governance and management. Her role is to look at all of the potential datasets we have within the organisation and how we might innovate to bring that together for a better look at demand at an enterprise level.

The second piece of work is for the front line. We have a program of work being carried out in rostering which involves a deeper dive into two areas—the Gold Coast and I will have to look up the other area. It is really looking at measuring demand at the station level, or at the district level, at a much more granular level. So we are tackling demand from both ends—at the enterprise level and at the frontline level. It is certainly an area we are very focused on. We have dedicated quite a bit of new resourcing to it and we see it as the answer to some of the demand challenges we have.

**Ms BOLTON:** In those calculations of the volume, or targets, and the provisions, we also have youth co-responders and early action groups. The recommendation from the youth justice inquiry was to expand those—and I think it was recommendation 39. I see in the budget that there is only \$300,000 in funding to expand the Youth Co-Responder Team, which does not sound like a lot. Can I get a little bit of information as to how that will be accommodated—whether that \$300,000 will be for the one in progress on the Sunshine Coast? Where does it fit in the mix in the budget?

**Mr RYAN:** I might answer that question. It is probably a little bit outside the portfolio of the deputy chief executive. Thank you for acknowledging that investment. The amount in the budget that you are referring to is the capital component of that investment, so that refers to the vehicles. There is significant uplift through personnel to support the resourcing of the co-responder teams.

So, in good news for your region, a Youth Co-Responder Team will be established on the Sunshine Coast for the first time. That will mean that every single district in Queensland will have a Youth Co-Responder Team. Some of them do have more than one, like the Far North and Townsville. They are very effective. They have been evaluated by the police service as being a very constructive way to engage with young people, divert them from crime and prevent crime from happening.

**Ms BOLTON:** I have a quick question, before I hand over to the member for Maiwar—and, again, this came up in recommendation 59 in the youth justice inquiry—regarding the QPS and the current practices for improving the accuracy of victim data. What is being done in this space to improve that?

**Mr RYAN:** I might see if the commissioner has anything to add.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you. I will take some advice on that, if I could.

**Mr RYAN:** Sorry, I have had some notes given to me. I am conscious that other members want to ask a question. It is very important that we do have independent analysis of QPS data, which is why the Queensland Government Statistician provides the verification, review and interpretation of QPS data. That data is provided in its raw form to the Queensland Government Statistician which then independently makes the interpretations and provides that public report each year.

The QPS is very conscious of making sure that data is recorded accurately in the first place. As we evolve the technology options available to police, mostly through their QLITE devices, it is becoming easier to capture more data about more people, and, just to reinforce, all of that data is expected to be held privately to ensure the protection of victims.

**Ms BOLTON:** I do not want to interrupt, but we did find during the inquiry that there was a need to improve current practices—that needed to be assessed. I wanted to see whether there had been any progress in that space, but I am happy to put questions on notice afterwards so that I can hand over to the member for Maiwar.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I appreciate the opportunity. I will start with a question to the commissioner, if I may. Commissioner, are you of the view that watch house officers are adequately trained and equipped to provide health and welfare services to children, including children who may be severely disabled or cognitively impaired?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for the question and I will answer it by focusing on that in a bit. Can I say that, since becoming commissioner, watch houses have become an area of some concern to me. In fact, I have had recent conversations with both the Human Rights Commissioner and the chair of the CCC about the concerns that I have, and it is not just around the treatment of children in our watch houses. Watch houses are very difficult environments, not just for the people we have to put in them but also for my workforce, the people who have to work in them.

We have 64 watch houses across Queensland, some which you could say are up to speed in terms of what we would look for currently and some which, sadly, might have been state of the art in their day but that was 50 years ago. It is an area of great concern. I raised very early with both the minister and the Human Rights Commissioner that I intended to focus on that area. Since that discussion, we have instigated a dedicated program which I will go into later, should I get the time, but I want to come back to your question.

Yes, there are the places, so the facilities themselves—how they are constructed, what we put in them, how we staff with them and not just with police. For instance, in the Caboolture hub, where we keep children, there are embedded youth justice workers, health workers and regular availability of other specialists to come in and support children when they are in that facility.

Our preference is not to have children in watch houses and to process them as quickly as possible. The children that are put in our watch houses are those that we cannot deal with otherwise—where the risk to community safety is such that they cannot be bailed and they cannot go elsewhere. The only way we can reduce that risk to community safety is by putting them in custody, and that is the appropriate thing to do. Of course we are increasing our operational and investigative targeting in that area to make sure we are bringing people to account who are posing that sort of risk to the community.

My answer is that is an ongoing piece of work. I am not satisfied that we have the capabilities we need to appropriately deal with this. I have appointed Deputy Commissioner Cameron Harsley to lead a piece of work that will look at our places, our people, the culture that we have in our watch houses, how we act. I have concerns about the level of complaints we are seeing coming out of our watch houses as well.

As I said, this is a piece of work that we will do collaboratively with the Human Rights Commission, the CCC and Queensland Corrective Services. I have spoken to the commissioner there. I am yet to engage with the Queensland Family and Child Commission, but we will. I acknowledge that the government has given us \$5.5 million in this budget towards watch house modernisation. That is a start, but I can guarantee that I will be coming back after we do this work to see how we can significantly enhance how we manage our watch houses, including how we treat people within them.

**Mr BERKMAN:** While we are on watch houses, the QPS Operational Procedures Manual, I understand, dictates that people held in watch houses should not be segregated or held in isolation unless it is necessary for prisoners' welfare and safety. Commissioner, are isolation cells ever used for any other reasons including for punishment for people detained in watch houses?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you for the question. I would be extremely concerned if that were the case. I am not aware and think that would certainly not be what we would be doing in practice. If anyone has information otherwise, I would be certainly wanting to hear about it.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I expect you would be aware of the *Guardian* and SBS The Feed coverage recently which actually showed video and included audio of watch house officers saying to a young disabled Aboriginal girl as she was being put into isolation that it was because 'you broke the rules, missy'. Surely, that is an example. I do not know how else you could characterise that other than it being a punitive use of isolation.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Can I assure the member that any individual matters—and I will not get into ones that are current that we may be looking at. There is another one at Richlands which I have asked for further review on. I am not satisfied with the explanation that I have been given to date. There are ongoing bodies of work on that and I am committed to making sure we address them.

**Mr ANDREW:** With reference to page 5 of the SDS and the availability of staff, can the minister advise whether the department has considered lifting the state's mandatory retirement age of 60 for sworn police officers, particularly as Queensland, I believe, is the only state in Australia to impose such a restriction?



**Mr RYAN:** At this stage there are no plans to change the mandatory retirement age. You are right in that most other jurisdictions around Australia do not have a mandatory retirement age. Tasmania does and the Northern Territory does. There was a decision made over 30 years ago to provide greater superannuation payments and contributions to police officers in exchange for the mandatory retirement age. If there were to be any change on that front then obviously those conversations would have to take place.

That being said, we did pass legislation 12 to 18 months ago about introducing the special constable model, which does allow people over 60 to continue serving as police officers in that special constable role. We actually have over 50 officers now appointed as special constables. There are over 30 applications currently under consideration. For those who want to continue serving as police officers beyond 60, there is an option. There are also options for people to continue serving the community as civilians in the Police Service, and there are many opportunities for them to transition to those roles.

**Mr ANDREW:** With reference to page 5, will the minister provide an overview of what the Police Service is doing to address the growing problem of youth gang violence and crime in Queensland and also what major initiatives the QPS has undertaken to fight the epidemic of drug related crime in rural and regional areas like my area of Mirani?

**Mr RYAN:** It is a very good question and we can provide a very detailed response.

**Mr ANDREW:** You can take it on notice if you want to save time.

**CHAIR:** No. The minister is in control.

**Mr RYAN:** No. I am happy to refer you to some resources like the community safety plan as well as the current operations being run by the Queensland Police Service like Taskforce Guardian, Operation Whiskey Legion and Operation Whiskey Unison, which are all contributing to extra police visibility and extra police engagement, particularly with young people. From some of the data that I outlined to you before, I want to commend the Police Service because their efforts in this regard are contributing to what we are seeing as a positive emerging trend around that particular offending.

**CHAIR:** Minister, at the commencement of your contribution to the committee, you sought leave to table a document, 'Doing What Matters'. Is leave granted for that document to be tabled? Leave is granted. Our first question will be asked by the member for Caloundra.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to Budget Paper 4 and the new Miles government's \$15 million investment in a new PCYC for Caloundra South, will the minister inform the committee of the benefits that this project will deliver?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, very good, member.

**Mr HUNT:** Take all the time you need.

**Mr RYAN:** I am conscious that there will be many more questions, so I will be similarly very concise in my remarks about this outstanding extraordinary investment in the Caloundra electorate. Member, I do want to acknowledge your particular advocacy around this but also the partnership that has been created with PCYC Queensland and the contribution that has been collectively decided by the developer and the council to contribute land to this project.

Member, you would have seen, following your advocacy, there has been an allocation of land announced this week. I am very excited that we will be able to attend that site in coming weeks to highlight to the community where their new PCYC will be built. In fact, I spoke only this week to the CEO of PCYC Queensland, who has said that they want to make this one of their priority projects.

Design works are well underway. Now that the land is secured they will move through those final stages of getting development approval but also getting construction started very quickly. Member, all things going well there will be building happening next year. Isn't that extraordinary? When you think about the precinct that has been created, which you helped to advocate for—it was an election commitment which we have delivered—of police, fire and ambulance, having PCYC in that precinct is very beneficial. The benefit it will have in engaging young people and diverting young people into positive activities is quite extraordinary. Well done, member.

**Ms BUSH:** With regard to page 1 of the SDS and the strategic objective to innovate and strengthen capability, will the minister advise of any innovations in relation to the first aid equipment carried by police officers?

**Mr RYAN:** Thanks, member. I hear you want an announcement made, because this is a very insightful question. I am very pleased that we are able to make an announcement today about a significant upgrade to tactical first aid kits, which will save lives. It has very strong support from across

stakeholders including the Queensland Police Union as well as health and wellbeing advocates. Today I am able to announce that the Queensland Police Service tactical first aid kits will have a new piece of equipment added called naloxone. It is a Nyxoid nasal spray. It is a first aid product which will temporarily reverse the effects of opioid overdoses.

This has recently been successfully trialled in Western Australia. It has saved lives. Many paramedics already have access to this, but this will be the first time in Queensland that officers will receive training and have that equipment available to them in their tactical first aid kits. I would like to acknowledge the comments of stakeholders in this regard. Ian Leavers from the Queensland Police Union has shown his support for this. He indicated, 'This is about doing what police do: helping people, saving lives and enhancing community safety.' Chief Executive Officer Geoffrey Davey of QulHN said, 'This is a significant health issue and this is a lifesaving measure.' Rebecca Lang from QNADA said, 'Frontline police encounter people experiencing overdose, and it makes good sense to equip them with this first aid piece of equipment.' Finally, Dr Aaron Lawlor of the Alcohol and Drug Foundation said, 'Greater access to this is a lifesaving drug. We commend the Queensland government on this important initiative.'

I will take this opportunity to once again highlight the Queensland Police Service as a leader. This was an initiative of the Queensland Police Service, particularly the Drug and Alcohol Coordination Unit. The QPS is again leading the way, showing they are a progressive police service while also being true to their core mission: saving people's lives. Member, that is a great question and, I would like to think, a great announcement.

**Mr HUNT:** Commissioner, with reference to page 2 of the SDS and the \$13.2 million funding over four years to boost the Queensland coronial system, could the commissioner please advise the committee how this funding will assist in improving coronial services and outcomes, particularly for the families of victims involved in the coronial process?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for the question. The QPS is generally the first point of contact for families of victims of violent crime and deaths reported to our coroners. Coroners are supported by the coronial system, which comprises the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the QPS and Queensland Health. The QPS is the investigative body for coroners under the Coroners Act 2003. The QPS Coronial Support Unit coordinates efficient and effective death investigations, supporting coroners to investigate circumstances surrounding deaths, providing families with timely answers and increasing public safety. This funding will ensure statewide, consistent coronial services with the creation of 19 new positions.

In 2023-24 the QPS Coronial Support Unit triaged 1,864 natural causes of death out of the coronial system. The two AO5 positions will assist in this process. One senior sergeant officer in charge, one detective senior sergeant, five AO6s and two AO3s will ensure investigations are robust and expedited. One AO7 will provide a culturally sensitive, coronial-specific lens over First Nations and multicultural death investigations. One detective senior sergeant and one AO4 intelligence analyst will provide specialist coronial investigation intelligent support to the domestic and family violence death review unit. Five positions will provide statewide photographic coronial support, address coronial file backlogs, and support the Townsville mortuary's increased functions and increase QPS death investigation efficiency. The additional positions will provide coroners with adequate and sufficient support, enabling them to have confidence in the QPS as their investigators. Additionally, the Coronial Support Unit is remotely supporting police who are supporting bereaved families with the innovative 2024 launch of online sudden death reporting. This is an intuitive and transformational product for frontline police to accurately post deaths to the coroner in a timely manner.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, in relation to page 3 of the SDS, can you please update the committee on how the QPS is working with the domestic and family violence sector to better support victims and hold perpetrators to account?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, member; I know your commitment to supporting victims and your support of the government's efforts in our work to support victims and do whatever we can to prevent them from becoming victims in the first place. I must admit, you are on a roll: I have another announcement. You should keep asking me questions, because I can keep making announcements.

This is a very exciting project which has been advocated for by the domestic and family violence sector. It brings together some pretty big players: Griffith University, DVConnect, the Domestic Violence Action Centre, the Queensland Police Service and, would you believe, Microsoft—one of the world's biggest companies—in a world first of its kind pilot. The Police Service is committed to doing everything we can to support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and hold perpetrators accountable.

That is why today I am pleased to announce that funding has been allocated to enable the pilot of a new, groundbreaking Perpetrator Visibility Project. This is a collaboration between Microsoft, Griffith University, DVConnect, DV Action Centre and the Queensland Police Service. It is best if I highlight what stakeholders have said about this proposal. Michelle Royes from DVConnect said—

Collectively, women, children and men can be safer if holistic and collaborative approaches like this Pilot are in place to help keep people that use violence accountable and visible to support and response systems.

Amie Carrington from DVAC said—

Today's announcement is an exciting milestone because the PVP pilot aims to improve our information sharing capacity in real time.

Microsoft said—

Microsoft is deeply honoured by the Queensland Government's recognition of the PVP with its support of over \$1 million for the pilot build.

This significant contribution underscores the potential impact of our collaborative efforts in the family and domestic violence sector.

Professor Patrick O'Leary from Griffith University said—

This is such an important innovation that deals with fundamental issues of how we can share risk information and make the system more accountable.

...

It does require significant investment from government, and we are grateful for this commitment.

Stakeholders tell me that not only will this improve responses; it will mean that victim-survivors are better supported and it could potentially save lives. It is extraordinary commitment. Member, thank you for the question.

**CHAIR:** Minister, do you wish to make a closing statement before we end?

**Mr RYAN:** I will leave it for the end of the day.

**CHAIR:** Commissioner, with reference to page 3 of the SDS and the Queensland Police Service responsibility to coordinate responses to disaster events and emergencies, can the commissioner, noting his extensive experience as the former state disaster coordinator, please advise the committee on the benefits that have already come to fruition as a result of the QPS taking the lead on disaster management.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you for the question. Since the adoption of the primary responsibility for disaster coordination and response, the Queensland Police Service has continued to develop disaster management capability in Queensland while coordinating responses to disasters during the 2023-24 high-risk weather season. This included responses to Tropical Cyclone Jasper, severe weather impacting south Queensland in late December and Tropical Cyclone Kirralee. The State Disaster Coordination Centre was activated eight times for a total of 71 days during the season. The transition has enabled the QPS to engage with disaster management stakeholders, including local governments, non-government agencies and industry groups to ensure Queensland disaster management arrangements are contemporary and responsive to the needs of communities before, during and after disaster events.

This has included: updating Queensland disaster management legislation through the Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023 and the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024; commencing a thorough review of the State Disaster Management Plan and disaster management guidelines to ensure they are contemporary and meet the needs of stakeholders, particularly local governments, which have the primary responsibility for disaster management at the community level; and the delivery of disaster management training to 41 newly elected local disaster management group chairs following the March 2024 local government elections to ensure they are empowered and prepared to effectively manage disaster events. As of 28 June 2024 training has been delivered to 23 local disaster management groups, with training offered and scheduled for the remaining groups prior to the commencement of the higher risk weather season.

Whilst the QPS has already delivered enhancements to the disaster coordination response in this short period, further enhancements are planned in the coming year to ensure disaster management partners are prepared and best placed to facilitate disaster management coordination to support safer and more resilient Queensland communities.


**Mr KRAUSE:** Just before we close this session, I wanted to ask if Ms McCarthy, through the minister or commissioner, has had a chance to find those numbers from 30 October 2020 that she was going to look for.

**Mr RYAN:** I have it. The number you are after is 12,042. As I mentioned in my response, the election commitment was from 1 July 2020 and that number was 12,038. That has been the answer consistently provided at estimates hearings every year since that. The number you are after from 31 October 2020 is 12,042.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thanks for finding that out.

**CHAIR:** We have reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the police portfolio area. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 3.15 with the examination of estimates for the portfolio area of community safety.

**Proceedings suspended from 3.00 pm to 3.15 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and Commissioner, and welcome Inspector-General and the other officers. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of community safety open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I call the deputy chair.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Thank you, Chair. Is there an opening statement in this segment, Chair?

**Mr RYAN:** No.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I will ask the member for Burdekin to commence with some questions.

**Mr LAST:** My first question is to the commissioner. Commissioner, I refer to the deliverables on page 1 of the SDS to support the implementation of emergency management reforms. Can you advise the date of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard plebiscite in relation to the transition?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for the question. I do not have that in front of me, but I will ask our Chief Officer for Marine Rescue Queensland, who has been appointed this year, who may be able to assist us.

**Mr Wulff:** Negotiations with the representatives of the Australian Volunteer Coastguard Association are ongoing as part of the transition program. The national board, Marine Rescue Queensland and advisers are helping support those negotiations. At this point in time, we are working with the volunteers locally to still include them as part of the transition program. We are both committed to ensuring we are continuing the service to the boating public through the piece of work. The negotiations at this point in time have not included a plebiscite that I am aware of. We are still negotiating how the transition will work across the state with the support of the national board.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, on 10 April Assistant Commissioner Hill told VMR volunteers the ownership model for vessels and equipment was not finalised and work was still underway with the ATO and lawyers. When was the ownership model finalised?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I thank the member for the question. Again, I will go to the Chief Officer.

**Mr Wulff:** The vessels are still community assets when they transition to Marine Rescue Queensland. At the moment, under the existing model, the units have been supported across the state by donations and partnerships to fund the purchase of vessels, and there is also support from government. In the new model within Marine Rescue Queensland, they will still be community owned assets through a deductible gifts recipient program. The government has given undertakings to units that funds that are raised locally will stay local. This includes assets that they currently have. This will be facilitated with the establishment of the Marine Rescue Queensland public fund to house all deductible gift recipient funds for Marine Rescue Queensland with a separate bank account.

The QPS has obtained gift recipient status from the Australian Taxation Office to enable donations to the Marine Rescue Queensland public fund from individuals or companies to be tax deductible. Part of the deductible gift recipient status is a requirement to be able to report funds that are collated and how such funds have been spent in accordance with the purpose of the organisation. This also incorporates vessel ownership. If a vessel that is currently owned by a unit in either coastguard or VMR gets sold at a later date, the funds that are received for that sale will sit within the public fund, held locally, with a very strong focus on ensuring those funds are there to support the local community where they were raised.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you. Commissioner, how many volunteers are currently registered with MRQ, and how many of those volunteers hold a blue card and have completed the necessary QPS screening requirements?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** I should explain that under our new structure for Marine Rescue Queensland, as the CEO for the organisation obviously I am responsible, but Deputy Commissioner Shane Chelepy—who is our Deputy Commissioner, Disaster and Emergency Management as well as the State Disaster Coordinator—is my delegate in that area so I will go to him to start this question.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** I thank the member for the question. The number of approved members who have joined Marine Rescue Queensland as at 1 July 2024 is 114. That is 58 for Marine Rescue Queensland Gladstone and 56 for Marine Rescue Queensland Mackay. Those numbers also represent the members who have valid blue cards.

**Mr LAST:** The Marine Rescue implementation plan monthly newsletter in February 2024 stated that 530 members had declared their intention to join. Why is there a delay? Why is that number so small?

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** I can answer that. As we engage with the units, the units sign a letter of intent to join across, which includes those numbers you have discussed today. In fact, since that date we have had a number of other letters of intent to come across. That triggers a transitional program—it is a 15-week program—with each of those units led by the Chief Officer, Tony Wulff. He may be able to add more to this. We work with those units to put a transition plan in place. We are looking at transitioning each of those units across over the next 12 to 18 months in a staged approach, by a regional approach, to ensure we can keep a very good maritime safety capability across the coast.

Each of those units come with complexity and this is why it takes time. Each of those units are individual associations. Each of those units have leases that are in place. They have dry leases, so land leases, some of them have berth leases, and some of them have subleases. We work with each individual unit to go through and engage with the members to enable them to make the decision to transfer across to us. As part of that, we work with them around the blue card so that the members, as we saw with both Mackay and Gladstone, as they come across to join us, all the members are blue card holders.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, the same update that I just referred to stated that the south-eastern region was expected to transition by December 2024. When do you expect the transition of the south-eastern region to be completed?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member. Obviously as we move through this there have been adjustments for our timeframes and scheduling, and that is continuing as we go forward. I think the chief officer—and I will go to him shortly—would acknowledge we have learnt a lot in the first two units that we have transitioned, and there will be adjustments as to how we go. For that specific question, I will defer to Chief Officer Wulff.

**Mr Wulff:** Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, member. The transition program over the next 12 months will have us engaged with 21 different units across the state. Because we have a staged transition program that is individualised to the remaining 44 units, it is really important that we work at the pace that works with volunteers and not at a pace that we impose on those volunteers. The volunteers require to be a part of this process so that they can ensure we continue the continuity of services through the transition period. The South-East Queensland region, if you bring together all the units, there are quite a lot of volunteers and quite a lot of coverage in that space. To ensure we continue the service delivery to the community, we started with Mackay and Gladstone and they helped support and build the transition model. We finished that review process of that initial transition yesterday and we have built a very detailed transition program and transition project plan for each individual unit which we are now working through. As we work through each of those milestones, different elements and different challenges are faced to the program and we can adjust the timeframes accordingly. The purpose for that is to ensure that when we transition and the new services are being delivered under MRQ, there are very limited impacts to the boating public and that volunteers are fully supported on the other side.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, the Marine Rescue implementation plan—it was just alluded to by the chief officer—envisaged four phase 1 units will be on board to MRQ on 1 July 2024. When was the decision made to reduce that to two units?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** That was relatively recently. This year, I think, member. I will get confirmation of that. Mr Chelepy can answer that question.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** Thank you, member. That decision was made this year. As I indicated before, as we work through with each of the units to transition them across, what we have identified with two of those units is there were some complexities around the land leases for those units that required us to do additional legal work to bring them across. As a result, we have brought our first two units across—Mackay and Gladstone. I am glad we did bring those two across because we have learnt so much from bringing them across; it will aid us with the rest. It does not mean that for those who were due to come across in the first two we have stopped working with them, we are simply working through what the legal complexities are of bringing them across. They are keen, they are engaged with us and, in fact, one of them keeps asking us, 'Can we come across? Can we come across?' but we have to sort out the legal elements of it.

**Mr LAST:** Which begs the question, Commissioner: the Blue Water Review commenced in 2019 and the decision to establish the new Marine Rescue Queensland was made in May 2022. Why the delay?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you for the question. As you may recall, before this job I was the Special Coordinator for Police and Emergency Services Reform, and what we saw through that process was an evolution of how we were going to do the reform in the QPS. Of course, the original decisions and the original ownership of this transition belonged with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services as it was then. So, as well as having to take on board what the recommendations were out of Blue Water Review, the KPMG review and the QFES and, in particular, the thing we are actually working towards, the cabinet decisions and investment that the Queensland government had committed to, through my appointment as the special coordinator and then overseeing the Reform Implementation Taskforce that guided the implementation, we had to go through a transitional stage to bring the Marine Rescue implementation program under the Reform Implementation Taskforce as part of the broader reform program. There was a significant amount of work to do to set that up. We were very particular to make sure this was well planned, well informed and was using program project management with oversight by a steering committee that I requested the Premier approve the formation of because that had not been envisaged. That steering committee included all central agencies and all stakeholders, including the LGAQ, for instance, and the IGEM, to make sure we got the transition correct. That meant we had to adjust timeframes around what we were doing. It is fair to say it was a very complex and detailed piece of work, not only to plan against what we wanted to deliver against the cabinet decision but also to make sure it could be integrated into the QPS as part of that decision, because you are doing a machinery-of-government change as well, so it is a very complex piece of work.

We were working towards the cabinet decision, not necessarily the Blue Water Review. It informed that, of course, and where things were accepted, of course we implemented that, but we have designed a program that has an optimal end date for us. What we are doing over the next period is making sure we are transitioning these units in a very deliberate and informed way, in particular because we are dealing with so many people who are dedicating their lives as volunteers towards keeping the community safe, that we are engaging heavily with them to make sure we can work through that. Of course that has changed and of course we will continue to make sure it is implemented appropriately.

**Mr LAST:** With regard to that response, Commissioner, how many Coast Guard and VMR units are there in total that are yet to transition? The second part of the question is: how many have indicated a refusal to transition?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member, for the question. I understand there are 46 all up. I will go to the chief officer.

**Mr Wulff:** Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, member. Two units have transitioned already. There are 46 in total across the state across both organisations—25 in Volunteer Marine Rescue and 21 in Volunteer Coast Guard Association. There are 44 left to transition. As we have learnt, each one of those 44 is individual in their structure and set-up because of the legacy and history of delivering the service so well over the last 60 years.

**Mr LAST:** How many have refused or indicated that they have no intention of coming across to the new entity?

**Mr Wulff:** At this point in time, I have not spoken to any that have intended to refuse, and we have engaged across the state.

**Mr LAST:** What is your timeframe to have all units transition?

**Mr Wulff:** We have given ourselves until July next year, with a contingency through to December next year.

**Mr LAST:** What is your process when you have two units—Coast Guard and VMR—in close proximity? I use Southport as an example. How do you intend to resolve that issue?

**Mr Wulff:** We are looking at transitioning areas where they are close to each other simultaneously. We are not running a linear transition program; we are running a number of transitions simultaneously. At this point in time, with the structure we have, we can run four to five transitions at the same time. With the Southport region as a specific example, we are working with both of those units to transition together. We are already engaged with both of them collectively. We are working together to ensure we are not impacting service in that region while we do that.

**Mr LAST:** To become a single entity?

**Mr Wulff:** Not at this point in time. They are still transitioning independently, yes.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, when was the new \$1.4 million vessel delivered to the Torres Strait Volunteer Marine Rescue unit?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member. I do not have the precise date but it was November 2023.

**Mr LAST:** How long was the delivery of that vessel delayed due to the resignation of the regional operations manager, as reported by the *Cairns Post* on 6 October 2023?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member, for the question. Deputy Commissioner Chelepy is across that and can answer this question.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** With respect to the reporting in the *Cairns Post*, I can say that the vessel was delayed due to inclement weather. Looking at the date of November, you will appreciate that it was a high-risk weather season that we were delivering the vessel in. The first delay came about by us not having a berth available to place the vessel. The berth we thought would become available in the Torres Strait did not come available at the time. As a result, we had to hold the vessel in Cairns until we could secure a berth in the Torres Strait. Then we secured a berth in the Torres Strait but we were delayed due to the inclement weather when we were taking the vessel up there. During that time we continued to work with the unit up there. We brought down staff members from the unit to train on the vessel, even when the vessel was being constructed, to make sure they were operationally viable. By the time we were ready to deliver the vessel, the staff were ready to use it. I do not believe there was a delay as a result of the operations manager. We had workarounds the entire time.

**Mr LAST:** Is that unit operational today?

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** Yes.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, the same *Cairns Post* article stated that a state agency paid a \$5,000 traffic fine incurred by a person driving a Volunteer Marine Rescue vehicle. Which agency paid that fine and when did you become aware that it had been paid by a state agency?

**Mr RYAN:** Member, to the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of that. I will seek some guidance from the deputy commissioner.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** Thank you, member. In partial answer to your question, upon these units transitioning and in the work we have done when the Marine Rescue Implementation Program came across to the Queensland Police Service from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, we were made aware of a historical complaint allegation that was in play and being investigated. I am unable to advise of the outcome of that as it did not come across to the Queensland Police Service. My understanding is that it was not paid by a state agency. That was the brief I received at the time. The allegation was that it had been paid by one of those services. That was the allegation in the brief I was given at the time.

**Mr LAST:** As in paid by VMR or the Coast Guard?

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** Correct. I am not aware of the outcome of the investigation.

**Mr RYAN:** Member, that would be information beyond our awareness because they are private organisations. They are charitable organisations.

**Mr LAST:** Depending on the date that it was paid.

**Mr RYAN:** No, they remain charitable organisations. They are still charitable organisations to today's date.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, having regard to the qualifications of the new marine rescue service, do all units—flotillas or squadrons as they are known—across the state have the capability to deploy, with the relevant staff having the qualifications to deploy on those particular vehicles?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member. That is a very important question. It is something we are very keen to make sure of. During the transition and through all of the emergency services reform, we have been absolutely committed to maintaining community safety and to maintaining capacity and capability so there is no degradation of service. That includes how trained people are. I will go to the Chief Officer and he can talk through some of the details.

**Mr Wulff:** Thank you, member, for the question. With regard to the transition of units and the capability that sits within them, we assess in detail the capability within those units in our due diligence period as part of the individual transition. We rely on the state body for VMR and the local units for Coast Guard to advise us on whether they have the capability whilst they are still individually incorporated and still in their own entities. At this point in time, we believe we can be covering the service across the state.

When we transition a unit, in that 12-week due diligence period we request all of the qualifications of the volunteers. In that period of time we then ensure they are up to date. We validate and check that. That is all loaded into our records from MRQ prior to transition so that on the first day of transition we know exactly who is qualified and certified to deliver the service to the boating public. As an example, in Mackay and Gladstone, on the first day of transition to MRQ we had calls for service and we were able to deploy services appropriately.

**Mr LAST:** Are you able to say unequivocally that in those two units that have transitioned all of those members have a blue card?

**Mr Wulff:** All members that are active within MRQ have a blue card. They cannot be an MRQ member and active on a vessel without it.

**Mr LAST:** Are you aware how many members—in the number you gave me before—still have to obtain a blue card?

**Mr Wulff:** Not at this time, but I will see if I can find that before the end of the session.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** As I have indicated in relation to staffing numbers, the active members who have transitioned from Mackay and Gladstone also represent the numbers of people who hold blue cards from those units. All of the members hold a blue card.

**Mr LAST:** Have you conducted audits on all the Coast Guard and VMR buildings that they are operating from to determine their compliance with government standards? What is it likely to cost to bring them up to speed?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member. In respect of methodology we will use for that, I will defer to the deputy.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** There is probably two parts to this, and the Chief Officer will answer the second part. The Queensland Police Service have used our properties and facilities area to undertake an audit as part of the Chief Officer's transition. We not only audit vessels but also audit vehicles and all of the equipment to make sure they meet standards. I am aware and have been briefed that as we have gone around we have identified some areas within buildings that require rectification. Those units have worked very closely with us to undertake those rectifications of their own right. Some of those rectifications are also in leased buildings. We have worked with the lessee to get that done. Maybe the chief can give some more detail on what we have seen.

**Mr Wulff:** Certainly. We needed to understand the state of all of the assets across the state that we will be working with. As the deputy mentioned, we have inspected and understood the capability that is currently there. The specific due diligence we have referred to is so important because that is where we get down to the very granular detail of what is in place at that unit. More importantly, we also take a moment to understand how they have got to that point—where they have focused their investment over time—so that we can understand where we need to focus our investment to ensure capability is continued in the regions.

In that due diligence period when that is all collated at transition there is a unit service plan that is developed for every individual unit which gives us a baseline of information from the date of transition. Incorporated in that is a one-year, two-year and five-year strategic plan which covers all elements of that unit's operations. Then in terms of the last comment with regard to the inspections, it is very



important we do those inspections from a work health and safety perspective. We have an absolute focus on ensuring our volunteers are kept as safe as they possibly can. All assets are assessed from a work health and safety perspective initially.

**Mr LAST:** Do you have an indicative cost to bring all these buildings up to specifications?

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** We cannot give a specific cost because, as I said, some of the buildings are leased. It comes back to a contractual matter through the lease areas. A lot of the areas are being brought up to standard by the independent associations at the moment. They are doing that as an indication of their willingness to transition and bring their buildings and their equipment up to speed. We will continue to work with these areas. We have not seen anything in those buildings that says that that is a building that cannot transition across to police.

As you would appreciate, we can always improve maintenance of a building, but we are seeing little things like handrails not being properly in place on steps, which present a workplace health and safety matter. The unit have immediately gone and fixed that through funding they have available to them either through our service level agreements or through the funds they have raised through their association.

**Mr LAST:** How many of these buildings are leased?

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** I do not have the exact figure on that. Some are leased. I do not have the exact figure, sorry. It is a mixture of leased buildings. Some of the buildings are on peppercorn leases. Others have been given buildings that they are operating through a community gift. Others have been bequeathed. You can see the complexity in bringing each up to standard. That is why we have to work with each individual one to bring them across.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, moving to the State Emergency Service, I refer to the deliverables on page 1 of the SDS to support the implementation of emergency management reforms. How many SES volunteers are currently registered?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** The figure is 5,000.

**Mr LAST:** Around 5,000? Commissioner, QFES reported that as at 30 June 2023 there were approximately 5,200 volunteers, so we have seen a reduction of around 200. What is the plan to address the attrition within the SES?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you for the question and it is a very important one. I am certain that I will go to Deputy Commissioner Chelepy shortly. Volunteers are a priority for us not just in the SES space but also in MRQ. It is a challenge right across our community. In fact, I had a recent conversation with Red Cross about their inability to attract volunteers as well. We are looking at it collectively. We are working with Volunteering Queensland to look at our strategic approach around how we can increase volunteerism broadly, particularly in the emergency service space. Of course our SES are incredibly important in terms of what we need to do to keep our community safe and help them recover. I will throw to the deputy now. He might be able to add or, indeed, the minister may have something he wishes to add on this.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** We recognised very early that volunteerism right across our emergency services network is absolutely critical moving forward. As the State Disaster Coordinator, I also have an interest in that not only in SES and MRQ but right across Red Cross and other volunteering agencies. I can say that volunteering numbers have been dropping and volunteering numbers are a challenge right across the nation in all of our volunteering areas. As part of the transition we did engage with Volunteering Queensland to come on board with a volunteer advocate. As a result of that, we have developed our guiding principles on how to support volunteers within the broader Queensland Police framework so that we could be seen as an agency where volunteers would like to work. That includes national training packages to further develop volunteers in relation to their volunteer involvement.

A draft copy of those principles has been developed and we have sought feedback on them and involved our volunteers in drafting them. That will lead to a long-term volunteer strategy. We did not want to go to a long-term volunteer strategy at the time of transition. We thought the principles approach was the best way to go to allow the volunteers once they have joined our agency to have a voice.

Also we had the initial uplift of the 45 positions during transition of the SES across to the Queensland Police Service. Out of those 45 positions, seven new permanent community engagement and recruitment positions were identified within the SES and were established across the state. That allows for us to do a place-based approach to recruitment of volunteers. In addition to that, we have had a further 30 positions allocated in the 2023-24 year. We have also now created the dedicated recruitment, development and retention team within the state office to support those volunteers. As the

chief officer and I have been travelling around the state meeting with our local councils, we are having this engagement conversation about what we can do on the ground to lift our volunteer attraction and retention.

**Mr LAST:** Having regard to those volunteers, have you completed all the screening requirements for those volunteers, including blue card requirements, for all 5,000 SES volunteers? Has that been done?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** With regard to blue card that has already been done; it was done when they were in QFES. I think the figure is 99.78 per cent; that is off the top of my head. It is probably time to introduce our Chief Officer, Mark Armstrong, who was appointed recently to lead the SES under the new construct. Mark might be able to correct me if I have that number wrong.

**Mr Armstrong:** Good afternoon. Thank you for the question. In relation to the blue card percentage I can advise that 99.84 per cent of our required staff and volunteers have a blue card. That small gap is the small number whose blue card has lapsed or expired. We have a process to deal with those to help to remind them but then to deal with those individual cases in order to get them their blue card issued again and active.

**Mr LAST:** Following on from that, other than mandatory training as part of the onboarding process, is there any other mandatory training that volunteers need to complete before they can be deployed?

**Mr Armstrong:** Thank you for the question. The safety and the capability of our volunteers is critical to us. We need to make sure that they are safe. They are operating in dangerous environments during crises and we need the community to have confidence in the skills that they bring to the role. The minimum level of training includes that on entry they need to apply for and be granted a blue card. There is also a criminal history check. Both are important in the early phase.

The initial training which gets them to a minimum employment level can be delivered in multiple ways but it totals just under six days of training. That enables them to operate as part of a team in a dangerous environment, to complete a number of tasks, mostly relating to a storm damage and flooding type of response. That training, as I say, can be delivered in a number of ways. It can be delivered continuously. A new program that has been introduced delivers that training over the course of three weekends. That has delivered some excellent results in the areas where it has been trialled. Alternatively, it may be delivered across weeknights or weekends over a longer period of time.

**Mr LAST:** What percentage of the 5,000 would not have completed those six days of training?

**Mr Armstrong:** As at 30 June this year that number was 786 members.

**Mr LAST:** When do you expect those to be complete?

**Mr Armstrong:** It varies. We are training right across the state. We are in over 300 different locations. Our aim is to get individuals through that training pipeline as quickly as possible so they are ready and able to serve. Each of those individuals will be at different stages. A big part of the reform and additional funding provided has been invested in training capabilities, particularly full-time members, both in the regions and at state office in order to increase our capacity for training. I cannot give you an exact answer for that group. Some of those would have been trained already since 30 June.

**Mr LAST:** You understand the relevance of that question given that we have a cyclone season coming up. In three or four months we start entering that season; hence the reason for that question in terms of disaster preparedness.

**Mr RYAN:** I will make some remarks before handing to the deputy commissioner. At the end of the day, it is people volunteering their time. People will make the best decisions around their own circumstances about the time they can do the training. The State Emergency Service is being very agile around how that training is offered. There are some examples where the training is offered in two weeks straight, some examples where it is offered three weekends in a row and other examples which suit people's particular circumstances where it is offered over six to 12 months. It is not for lack of offer of training opportunities—those training opportunities exist—but it is for the individual to decide, and credit to them: they are being generous with their time, generous of their spirit. They have to find the time in their schedule to do the mandatory training for their safety but also for competency. Deputy, did you want to add anything or did that cover everything?

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** Thanks, Minister. I would also point out that in preparation for this season I do engage with the chief officers of the state disaster coordinator and I have been advised that the SES for this season alone has undertaken over 24,000 hours of training, so I am very confident that our SES have the capability to support our high-risk weather season.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, we heard previously that there are 45 personnel within QPS that are tasked with looking after these SES personnel. Is that sufficient, having regard to the HR issues, discipline issues et cetera that come with it?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** There is probably a point worth making there, member, and thank you for the question around how we are constructed now. Traditionally, the QPS was both a department and a service and it was only the Queensland Police Service. We now have three services within the department of the Queensland Police Service and SES is its own entity and its own service, so it has those 44 staff within SES. The benefits of it coming into an organisation like the QPS is the broader capability that we bring through a variety of areas to do that, including whilst not directly delivering training to SES members but the systems that sit behind that, and our capacity to provide additional resources to support SES to do that is what it is all about, including ICT and the like.

The other thing I would say is that it is a brand new service, so of course we will be watching to see how things go and we will be very interested to ensure we do that. There is a total headcount of 219 FTE in the SES at the moment. When we uplifted the QPS to do that, we put 80 corporate staff into the QPS to support the functions of both new services coming into it. These are the capabilities that sit in the QPS that already existed that provide a number of things, including in our training areas and those types of areas, and we have uplifted all of that by 80 staff to make sure the capacity of QPS to support the SES and MRQ was there.

**Mr LAST:** Across the state.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** That is globally. Of course, with new agencies, as the commissioner, if I do not think there is enough I will be back to the government of the day to say what we might need after we have seen that running for a while because, as I said, it is a new service.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I go back to my very first question and the implementation plan phase 1. The update says that the Coast Guard flotillas cannot be transitioned to MRQ until that plebiscite is successfully completed. Is that the case?

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Thank you, member, for the question. There are legalities around this which I know for certain the deputy is across in much more detail than I, so I will defer to him.

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you for the question. We are in negotiation with Coast Guard. The Coast Guard is a national body that we are in negotiation with. The national body are working with us very closely and they have agreed for us to continue to work with the Queensland-based units through our transition planning. However, we have taken certain advice with regard to some of that transition coming across to the Queensland Police Service and we are in very delicate negotiations as a result of that advice.

**Mr LAST:** Are you able to give the committee a timeframe today?

**Deputy Commissioner Chelepy:** In terms of the timeframe, as the chief indicated, we still have an aim to have our Coast Guard units transition within the 12-month period, with a six-month contingency that we have—that is, Coast Guard and VMR—and that is why Coast Guard national are working with us so closely and allowing us to continue to engage with those units on the ground in Queensland around their transition, so that they are ready to go the moment we can resolve that.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you. I have a question to the Inspector-General of Emergency Management.

**Mr RYAN:** He has been waiting for this moment, too. He normally does not get questions.

**Mr LAST:** I could not let him come here today without having a question. I refer to the key deliverables on page 80 of the SDS particularly relating to disaster management arrangements. Following changes due to local government elections, can you advise how many LDMG chairs have not completed all of the mandatory components of the Queensland Disaster Management Training Framework?

**Mr Dawson:** We do not have that detail, member, but thank you for the question.

**Mr RYAN:** We will try to find it, but just for a point of clarity: as part of the machinery-of-government changes—and we are going to look into it, do not get me wrong—disaster management transitioned to the Queensland Police Service, and that was session 1. We are going through the folders for session 1 to see if we have that information, because our emergency management coordinators, who are now in the Queensland Police Service after transitioning from the former department known as Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, have some visibility on that. Give us a moment and we will get the information, but it really should have been a question asked in session 1.

**Mr LAST:** I will just hand over to my colleague, Mr Chair, if I could.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** My question is the Inspector-General of Emergency Management. In reference to the South-East Queensland Christmas Day storm, focusing on the Gold Coast region—and I do thank you for holding a forum down at the Helensvale cultural centre on 1 July this year—as part of the Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management review you are looking to preparedness for these events. Do you agree that many residents expressed their frustration with the government after being denied the ability to remove problematic vegetation which is within striking distance of people's dwellings? It was an issue that was brought up at the forum.

**Mr Dawson:** Thank you very much indeed for the question, and it is a very good question. We are still in the middle of consultation. We have done 10 consultations so far. With regard to the consultation, member, so far, as you have indicated, we were at Helensvale on 1 July and we were at Jimboomba immediately before that. We have now completed 10 engagements and we still have three to go. One of the things around the community engagement and the forum is drawing down all of the information we get across all of those community forums to bring together to look at some of those common themes. When we conduct a forum we tell the people there that we conduct the forum and respect their privacy, obviously, to encourage their sharing of what, in essence, is some quite private information, but we have not submitted an interim report yet to the minister. We are required to do that at the end of July and a final report is due at the end of September. In distilling that information and working with the analysis of that, we are still working through all of that at the moment.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** The main premise of my question, though, is: obviously a lot of residents in the Gold Coast region, which was heavily affected by that storm event, are very concerned about a similar event in the future and not learning from what transpired. In order to be prepared for these events, we have to understand that vegetation very close to residential properties and dwellings has the potential to cause serious damage to those structures and also has the potential for loss of life. Is this something that will come up in your report?

**Mr Dawson:** It is one of the lines of inquiry that we are following at the moment with the communities, to identify what some of those things are. I do agree that, as part of the community forum that we conducted down there, quite a few observations were made and a lot of people brought documentation and photographs. Again, it is looking at how that all fits within that residential footprint as well. It is a case now of drawing together all that information. We have done the South-East Queensland area. We have done the cape so we have been all the way up into the Bloomfield valley. We have also been to the south-west and now we still have to do the Tablelands and there will be, I would suggest, some pieces raised in that area.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** I will hand back to the member for Scenic Rim.

**Commissioner Gollschewski:** Chair, for the member for Burdekin I think I might have an answer that we were looking for. It resonated because I read it out in a previous session. Delivery of disaster management training to the 41 newly elected local disaster management group chairs following the elections: as of 28th June this year, training has been delivered to 23 of them, with training offered and scheduled for the remaining groups prior to the commencement of the higher risk weather season, so that is all in play. We have active monitoring of that. Through Mr Chelepy's area, through our emergency management command, that is constantly managed and coordinated. To give you further comfort, between July 2023 and 20 June this year, 9,912 participants throughout the state, consisting of 6,754 participants in face-to-face courses and 3,158 online, from all of our stakeholders, including local governments, have been trained.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Chair, I have a question for the Inspector-General of Emergency Management. Mr Dawson, I acknowledge you were at one of those forums for the community at Tamborine Mountain a few weeks ago. Thank you for that. My question relates to the SDS at page 19 and the recommendations of the *K'gari (Fraser Island) bushfire review report 1*. Have those recommendations been fully implemented?

**Mr Dawson:** Thank you very much for the question, sir. What I can advise the committee today is that the *K'gari (Fraser Island) bushfire review* currently has 31 recommendations that are implemented. Five are strong and two are currently in development at this time. The ones that are implemented are no longer being monitored by us. That only leaves seven that are not being monitored by us at the moment.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Does the information you have before you, Inspector-General, indicate timeframes for when the remaining recommendations will be implemented?

**Mr Dawson:** No. I can advise the committee that, with recent MoG changes, there has been a realignment of some recommendations now to different agencies and different formed agencies. We know there is a plan associated with that. We do not set a timeframe with regard to implementation. What we are looking for is the evidence that there is progression towards implementation so that when it is implemented we know that it is. The important thing here is not speed but actual implementation. That is current as of now.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Recommendation 4 refers to the Queensland Bushfire Plan and states that the review of that plan is important to ensure appropriate alignment and currency. Can you tell us when the last review of that plan was completed? Do you have a copy of the Queensland Bushfire Plan?

**Mr Dawson:** I do not have a copy. That would be a matter for the Queensland Fire Department as owners of the Bushfire Plan. I can say that those recommendations you talked to are actually pending the review of that Bushfire Plan. I think once that is done and we are confident that they have a plan—because we do have regular meetings and the staff of the IGEM are diligent in regards to that. We look for the evidence so I am confident that it is progressing and it will actually come to fruition at a point, but I cannot give you the exact date.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Inspector-General, it is my understanding that your office has the responsibility for assessing capability of local disaster management groups across the state. Can you inform us of any concerns you hold about those capabilities that you have come across in your review so far, especially in the last few months after the disasters around Christmas time?

**Mr Dawson:** We actually do conduct disaster management plan assessments. It is a legislative responsibility for the department of which I am a member and the IGEM. It is also a responsibility of local government as well as the district disaster management groups. I can tell you that in 2023, 100 per cent of the local governments submitted their disaster management plans for assessment and the process for the 2024 disaster management plan assessment is consistent with previous years. However, I will flag that we are looking at a review of that for the following year, 2025.

This is conducted in consultation with the key partners, local governments, disaster districts and our colleagues in the Queensland Police Service. This year's process includes analysing information relevant to local governments adoption of the IGEM's recommendations that were made in the *South East Queensland rainfall and flooding February to March 2022 review* report, which was report No. 1 of 2022-23. The office develops a report showcasing insights—in other words, where good work has been done and where there are opportunities for improvement, especially around making sure that they are regularly updated. A plan as such is very dynamic. Although we do an assessment on it one year, things will change and that will be reflected in terms of what happened in that year but also what the future is holding for them.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Do you have any red flags on any local disaster management groups in terms of the way they deal with these things?

**Mr Dawson:** No. I think it would be fair to say that we are highly aware of the different capabilities of different local governments and also the fact that some areas are very isolated and remote and, therefore, we would expect to see greater reflection of support in their plans for them to actually move forward.

**CHAIR:** This will be the last question from the opposition.

**Mr KRAUSE:** That is perfect timing, Chair.

**Mr RYAN:** Chair, can I seek clarity because we want to be fulsome in our answers. Member, you were making a reference to the SDS and the K'gari bushfire review, or was that just a general reference and then you asked about K'gari? I could not find it in the SDS.

**Mr LAST:** It is an objective on page 19.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I am sorry. I may have not stated that in the question—my apologies—as an objective.

**Mr RYAN:** Yes, but not specifically about K'gari. I wanted to make sure that we were accurate with our answers. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** I go to the crossbench, please. You might have it all on your own, Sandy.

**Ms BOLTON:** I am feeling a little lonely. The member for Burdekin asked just about all of my questions so I think you are going to get off easy. I have a question, through the minister or the commissioner, to the Inspector-General of Emergency Management. When assessing local disaster management plans, how does the QCoast 2100 and the CHAP relate? In your assessment, in what way would that need to be connected so that the disaster management plans have reference to those?

**Mr Dawson:** As part of that review, we send out a questionnaire to them initially. I would like to first of all thank the honourable member. You can actually ask me directly because I report to the minister. I know Steve is probably glad he has got rid of me.

We sent out a questionnaire to the local groups and asked them to inform us about some of their risks and what their priorities are. As those plans come in, we do the analysis across the questions that we asked and the answers that came back. We then look at what the situational awareness is for us across the state, which is based on a lot of research and also a lot of predictive modelling, which you see from the bureau as well.

It is about acknowledging that each of the local disaster management groups and each of the districts is very unique in its own way. Although they can be neighbours, they can have these completely different environments. It is a qualitative analysis process. We do not count the number of people, the number of ladders or things like that. We are looking at their ability to respond, and part of that is also looking at where they can get support from. A good example of that is things like council-to-council support, which is provided by the Local Government Association of Queensland.

**Ms BOLTON:** So it is not reliant on their having a CHAP in place?

**Mr Dawson:** It is about the plan relevant to their area. For example, if I lived in an inland area, I might not have a reference to tsunami, but I might have an acknowledgement there that I might be a supporting area for another local government area that may have that.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. Going back to our SES volunteers, what pathways are in the new structure for volunteers to have their voice heard?

**Mr RYAN:** Come through me and then I will invite the Chief Officer.

**Ms BOLTON:** Yes. Who in the structure is their voice at the higher level?

**Mr RYAN:** Thanks, member. I am not sure if members have picked this up, but both the commissioner and I are very proud of the new structure. Part of the new structure is you that are seeing people from their service agency in uniform at this table for the first time. That is all about identity. It feeds into the answer I will give you, member.

We are very proud that we have accomplished leaders like Mark Armstrong, who comes from the Australian Army, as our inaugural Chief Officer, and also Tony Wulff, who has an outstanding corporate and nautical background, as the Chief Officer of Marine Rescue. Having them at the table here in uniform was done deliberately so that all of the members of the organisations that they lead can see that their organisation is recognised, valued and clearly identified as an important contributor to Queensland. Having excellent leaders like Tony and Mark in those respective roles is important to engaging volunteers so that they can raise issues and have their voices heard.

I will focus on the SES because that was the focus of your question. There has been an extraordinary volume of engagement with SES volunteers the length and breadth of the state since the Chief Officer has started and during the transition of the machinery-of-government changes for SES to move into a government construct where it is supported and hosted by the Queensland Police Service. It is very, very important. It is also one reason we have significantly uplifted the staff.

I have a note just to clarify the commissioner's response to the member for Burdekin about the number of staff at the State Emergency Service. As at 30 June, there were 189 approved positions, and the substantive headcount was actually one more—190. As part of this budget year, there are additional growth positions being created, so the total number will increase to 219 and we will recruit against that.

To put that in context, it was only two years ago that the staff numbers at the SES were about 100. It has gone from about 100 to about 200 in two years—doubling the paid staff support for volunteers. We have been really particular about how we have calibrated that staffing mix to be about volunteer support, recruitment, retention and building a strong foundation for the SES.

Maybe I am a little bit romantic in this thought as well, but I really hope that, in encouraging people to think about contributing to and being of service to their community—and because now we have this well-resourced, identified State Emergency Service with a chief officer and many stepping stones in between—there are young people out there who will turn their minds to starting to volunteer with the SES with the view to one day getting a job in the SES and one day taking over from Mark Armstrong. On that note, I will hand over to the Chief Officer to talk about how he is engaging with volunteers.

**Mr Armstrong:** Thank you, Minister, for my succession plan! Thanks for the question—it is an important one. I will start by saying what an honour it is to be here representing the wonderful volunteers across the organisation—nearly 5,000 in nearly 300 locations around the state. That part of our workforce needs us to pay particular attention to communication because they are dispersed—some are in very remote and regional areas—and they also tend to be working and training out of business hours. Because they are working at different times and in different places, we need to think very carefully about how we communicate and engage with them.

Through the transition and in the lead-up to 3 June, there was a lot of work within the reform implementation team and in the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services environment. The feedback mechanisms included town halls that were available and recorded and an email address that people could email directly and get answers directly in reply. Those questions would be put on an available page on ForGov so that volunteers could not only get their own questions answered but also see everybody else's questions and, within reason, the answers to those.

As we approached the transition, we did a series of regional visits to discuss the specifics around the changes occurring with the transition for staff, and they included volunteer-gathering events where we briefed them but also took the opportunity to engage them to get their feedback and ideas. As transition approached, we produced fact sheets and had other specific sessions, like training on particular things that were changing, including ICT. Importantly, that engagement has continued beyond 3 June and transition. We will continue to run the town halls. We have a new email address so any volunteer at any time can email and that will be addressed and answered.

Also, we have recently introduced an internal social media platform called Workplace, which has been used extensively within QPS already. We have our own instance in SES, and that enables volunteers right across the state to engage with each other group to group, region to region, individual to individual, including with me. We are excited to see the uptake and use of Workplace and some of the interesting ways that it is being used for people to talk to each other.

Again, that has to continue because it is an essential part of an organisation like ours. As part of our growth strategy, we need to create the environment that our citizens want to serve in and want to continue to serve in, and they need to feel a part of it and important. Fundamentally, without volunteers we do not have a State Emergency Service.

**Ms BOLTON:** We spoke about working with Volunteering Queensland and councils to be able to increase our volunteers. What about our schools and our cadets?

**Mr RYAN:** We can touch on that as well. There is a very important initiative which is supported by the Queensland Police Service and partners, including the Queensland Fire Department, SES, Marine Rescue Queensland, and that is the Emergency Services Cadets. We fund PCYC Queensland to host that program. We have recently boosted their funding which will give them not only greater sustainability but also capacity to expand the Emergency Services Cadets program. It is quite extraordinary because you attract a few different types of people: firstly, people who are natural leaders who want to be in the program; secondly, people who want to contribute in a workplace environment afterwards as a member of the police or emergency services; and, thirdly, people who need a bit of confidence, people who need a little bit of additional support. It is a very good program. We are very proud to fund it.

**CHAIR:** I now pass over to the member for Cooper.

**Ms BUSH:** Through the minister, I was hoping to put a question to the Inspector-General of Emergency Management. Could the inspector-general update the committee on how his office works with the sector, including interjurisdictional agencies, to inform and strengthen Queensland's disaster management arrangements?

**Mr Dawson:** Thank you for the question. The Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management, pursuant to section 16C(g) and (i) of the Disaster Management Act, works with entities performing emergency services, other departments and the community to identify and improve disaster management capabilities, including volunteer capabilities, and to identify opportunities for cooperative partnerships to improve disaster management outcomes.

The office facilitates the Research Advisory Panel, otherwise known as the RAP, comprising local, state and national agencies, non-government organisations and representatives from seven Queensland-based universities. Formed in 2018, the RAP was one of the very first multisector collaborations between researchers and disaster managers in Queensland. The RAP identifies and

builds research collaborations, sharing existing research, and contributes to priorities nationally. The office also works with the Queensland Disaster Research Alliance, which is part of that university grouping, further enhancing collaboration between researchers and government.

The office hosted the third annual Queensland Disaster Management Research Forum in November 2023, sharing the work of early career researchers from across Queensland universities. There were 212 representatives from across the research, government and non-government sectors who attended the forum in person and via the virtual live stream. The office will host another forum in November this year.

The office facilitates a network of Queensland local government disaster management officers, known collectively as the Disaster Management Officer's Network. The DMO Network shares its knowledge and resources and provides peer support and promotes disaster management collaboration across Queensland. That is also in partnership with a number of other agencies.

The office also works interjurisdictionally to inform practice and strengthen relationships through conferences, presentations and exercises—some of which have included executive development for the Australian Institute of Police Management, especially with respect to that complicated new strategic thinking piece on disaster aspects; Gender and Disaster Australia; the Asia Pacific Cities Summit and Mayors' Forum in October 2023; the national space weather Exercise Aurora in May 2024; Exercise Ru Whenua in New Zealand, which is based around absolute catastrophic planning based on two naturally occurring faults in New Zealand; and the 2024 AFAC Lessons Management Forum. We have also supported presentations to the Indonesian Financial and Development Supervisory Agency, otherwise known as PBKP, delegation on their Queensland visit. Thank you very much indeed for the question.

**Ms BUSH:** Thank you, Alistair, for your response. Minister, in relation to IGEM's Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting program, could you please provide an update on this program and how effective the program has been?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you very much. It is a very important role of the Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management, and I commend him for this. It is under his leadership that this program was established. It provides ongoing monitoring of recommendations. It is really important to make clear that implementation of the recommendations is the responsibility of the host agency, but it is also important for assurance, evaluation, reporting and monitoring. The inspector-general provides that role and does it very thoroughly. I have to say he asks the tough questions of the agencies at the right time to make sure that they are on track and that they are contributing to the work around implementing those recommendations.

The most recent update shows that, of all of the reviews that the inspector-general has done in recent years, there were 122 recommendations, of which 98 are now classified as fully implemented, so I give credit to those host agencies for doing that. The remainder are generally well progressed or strong. The Inspector-General of Emergency Management will continue to monitor that work.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to page 89 of Budget Paper 3, will the minister please update the committee on the ongoing delivery of the government's Marine Rescue Vessel Replacement Program?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you very much, member. It is your turn to ask the great questions which elicit great public announcements. Well done, member! I direct your attention to the Doing What Matters portfolio update, which I know has been circulated. There is a map of Queensland in there which shows the locations for our Vessel Replacement Program. When you think about it, this is an agency which is now only months old. It has a very ambitious program of onboarding all marine rescue units across the state to Marine Rescue Queensland over the next 12 to 18 months, but that does not mean that support and investment in the volunteers who contribute to marine rescue services in Queensland has not been underway, has not been planned, has not been committed to.

We have a \$22 million Vessel Replacement Program. You will see on that map that units have already received those new vessels—Thursday Island, Tin Can Bay, Rockhampton, Cairns, Currumbin and Mackay. The commissioner and I are actually travelling to Far North Queensland to Thursday Island next week to be a part of the official commissioning of that new vessel for Thursday Island.

In exciting news—member for Noosa, maybe you should have asked this question—I am very pleased to confirm the locations of the next round of vessels which are coming out which will be delivered by the end of next financial year. Some of them will see them by the end of this calendar year. One of them is your marine rescue unit at Noosa but also Mornington Island, Weipa, Southport, Round Hill, Brisbane which is the QF2 based at Manly, Midge Point, Port Douglas, Cardwell, Tully, Sandy Straits and Yeppoon.



Some of these locations have not been formalised until we have made the public announcement today. There will be a number of volunteer units across the state who will be hearing this for the first time. Noosa knows—they are in the know. Noosa is a great unit, and I know that once the vessel is delivered to them they will make good use of it which is important because it is all about keeping people safe on the water. Member, thank you very much for the question.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, you like my questions so much, I shall ask you another one. With reference to page 1 of the SDS and the establishment of Marine Rescue Queensland, could Chief Officer Tony, through you, Minister, please update the committee on the observations in the first months in the role as the inaugural chief officer and what his vision is for MRQ into the future?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, member. In passing over to the Chief Officer of Marine Rescue Queensland to provide those observations, I do also have a very impressive document that outlines the emergency service reforms for the committee. It outlines every single one of the machinery-of-government changes. I would like to seek leave to table it so that each member does have a copy of it.

This is important, because it does not happen too often where you have a completely new start for a number of emergency services agencies, including the establishment of a new agency in Marine Rescue Queensland. I mentioned a few things about the Chief Officer's background, but I will now invite him to share his observations as he takes on the leadership of Marine Rescue Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Before he does that, are you seeking leave to table this?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Mr Wulff:** Thank you for the question. I am extremely honoured to be the first Chief Officer of Marine Rescue Queensland. My own personal sailing experience started on the waterways of Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast. That experience took me all around the world with a professional career in the maritime and corporate worlds. I now have the honour of bringing that experience back to serve the community that has already given me so much in my life, so this is a very personal and proud opportunity for me. Since I joined in February, I have taken the opportunity to travel around the state and meet as many of the volunteers as I can. That has helped me determine a principles-based approach to the transition, which you heard a lot of detail about before, and has been a focus of the strategy to support volunteers and the boating public of Queensland.

The first principle of the transition we have developed, with input from volunteers and my observations, is that we must have the utmost respect for the past as we work through this period of change. The history of the two organisations and all of the 46 individual units is imperative to ensure the service is delivered effectively for the boating public of Queensland going forward. That history is not just about the 50 to 60 years of volunteerism; it is also the knowledge and experience that those volunteers hold and then hand down to the next generation of volunteers. If you think about the service we deliver, we deliver it in a challenging environment, usually out in waterways and storms where you do not see champagne sailing. It is an environment that requires high levels of skill and dedication to serve in, so ensuring we respect the history and past of those organisations and bring it forward is critical.

The second principle to the transition is accepting the present. You heard earlier—and thank you for your questions, member for Burdekin—about the complexities we have with transition. We need to respect that volunteers and the public, and people as human beings, deal with change in really different ways. Some people are quite anxious; some people lean in and embrace it. We have up to 2,700 volunteers across the state that we need to nurture through this period of time, so we need to accept that people work through this in different ways.

Our third principle is that we will look to optimise into the future. We want to get through this period of transition with as limited an impact as possible on the continuity of service and on our volunteers. Once we have become a single agency, with the partnership of QPS, SES and other partners like Surf Life Saving, we will start to work out how we can build regional service plans, capability and contingency across different regions across the state in potentially a different way where we have not had the opportunity historically.

With that in mind, through the transition we now need to build a strategy for the future. From observations and input from volunteers, there are three strategic pillars we are working to. The first and most important of those strategic pillars is ensuring the safety of volunteers and the safety of the people who are in our care. We need to ensure we provide safe environments for them to operate in and safe

environments for them to enjoy each other's company. We talked about buildings before. Buildings are not just radio rooms and operational locations; they are tearooms where some of the best war stories you ever heard get shared. It is where experience gets shared with the next generation. We need to embrace that into the future. It is about safety and ensuring we provide a place of connection.

The second pillar of our strategy is around culture. The last comment I made leads directly to the culture that already exists within the 46 organisations. We need to ensure that stays and that the fantastic elements of that culture are still embedded in the local communities. MRQ is a new organisation, and as a new organisation we need to build our own culture that not only embraces volunteerism and the uniqueness of the communities we serve but also delivers the best and most sustainable service we can to the boating public of Queensland.

The last pillar is performance. That is where we really start to focus on delivering the best service we can, train in the best way we can, and then leverage partnerships to drive better outcomes for the boating public. I am really honoured to be here working for the volunteers of Queensland. I cannot wait to work with them in the future.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, with regard to pages 1 and 2 of the SDS, can you please update the committee on how the government's uplifted investment for SES resources and equipment has made Queenslanders safer?

**Mr RYAN:** I thank the member for the question. You get the good announcements. Keep asking the questions; the good news just keeps coming. I know that you are a key supporter of emergency services volunteers in your area and the broader region. This big investment in the State Emergency Service is really about creating a very strong foundation for the future for an organisation that is there when Queenslanders need it. It is also an organisation that relies on generosity, goodwill and the Queensland spirit that resonates across so many thousands of people right across the state.

We see \$60 million in this year's record budget. There has been an uplift in staffing, and we went through the numbers before. There has been a near doubling of staff this financial year. We will get up to 219 staff, which has essentially doubled over two years. It also provides the capability to provide more assistance to partners around more equipment, more resources and more things that are critical to the work of volunteers, including uplifts in training. I am advised that almost \$4 million has been allocated this year for the annual flood boat and trailer build program. That is a significant investment. The State Emergency Service has a key role in flood events and relies on that flood boat capability to rescue people and provide support to people in place.

The exciting thing—this is the first time we are hearing this publicly—is an uplift in the drone capability. This has been a capability that SES volunteers have organically nurtured. I am really excited about it, the commissioner is really excited about it and the Chief Officer is as well. We are very pleased to support them with an additional uplift: \$600,000 this year to purchase more than 40 extra drones to be deployed across the state. The great thing about this uplift program is that it also supports the doubling of drone pilots in the SES to over 100. This provides the SES with greater capability to do its core business, such as search and rescue, and continue to partner with other agencies like the Queensland Police Service to assist the Police Service in the work they do by using that drone capability. It is great news for volunteers across the state and great news for Queenslanders, because a better resourced SES means a safer Queensland.

**Ms BUSH:** Thank you for that response; that is a great announcement. Staying with the State Emergency Service—through you, Minister—can the Chief Officer of the SES update the committee on the transition of the SES as its own separate service within the broader department, what the chief officer's vision is for the SES and how they intend to see the SES grow into the future?

**Mr Armstrong:** I thank the member for the question. The recent formal transition of the State Emergency Service as a dedicated volunteer emergency service to the Queensland Police will enable a more strategic approach to the growth and sustainability of the organisation. The SES will have its own budget, we now have our own legislation—the State Emergency Service Act 2004—and the role of the Chief Officer to lead the organisation.

This reform has allowed the SES to retain its current operational functions. We deliver those in cooperation with local government throughout the state. It also allows us to improve coordination and interoperability between the existing disaster management capabilities. Those relationships, including the new MRQ, will remain key. Significant collaboration has occurred between the Queensland Police Service, SES and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, now QFD, across both the corporate support and the tactical functional areas to support the lift and shift of people, functions and systems that were required and were in place for 3 June 2024 when the transition happened.

My vision for the State Emergency Service is for us to be a reliable and trusted volunteer-based service recognised for excellence in community support during disasters, especially emergencies, storm and flooding responses, and that we are trusted partners in building safe and resilient communities. The priority of the SES will always be to maintain our operational output and support for our communities as they prepare for and respond to severe weather events.

Over the next six months I will be focusing on enhancing the SES post the transition. To do that, we will be pursuing a strategy along five lines of effort to continue to build and grow the SES into the future and leverage the support. These focus areas will be as follows. The first is that we align our capability with the needs of communities and also to grow our capacity. An important aspect of that is the numbers of volunteers—not only the numbers but what they can do and how long they can do it for. The second one is that we foster resource stewardship so that we spend the funds that we are allocated from both local government and state government—that we spend that well and invest it in areas that will make a difference.

The third is that we develop and maintain productive partnerships, especially with local government and our emergency services partners. The fourth is that we invest in our people and leadership, with particular attention on the health and safety of our workforce and developing our leaders and future leaders in the workforce. The final one is that we boost the SES profile and that we tell the stories of the wonderful work that our volunteers do every day in the community.

In conclusion, the key to SES growth is focusing on our people and our partners. In the SES, we are committed through consultation, engagement and collaboration to continue to leverage the strengths and experience of our people to achieve important outcomes for Queensland communities.

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

**Mr RYAN:** I will. Thank you, Chair. I start as always by commending you on chairing this estimates session. You do it so superbly every year. I look forward to returning next year and having you as the chair once again of this outstanding estimates session. I would like to thank you, Chair, all committee members, the secretariat and Hansard for your contribution to the estimates process. I would like to thank Commissioner Steve Gollschewski and his team, led by his chief of staff, Acting Superintendent Don Baillie, who I understand is nicknamed Kiwi. Chair, you know that every year I like to reveal some people's nicknames. I have one more to come.

Thank you to the deputy commissioners, chief officers and assistant commissioners and all the staff who have contributed to this estimates process. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Acting Superintendent Tania Nelson, Margaret Cameron, the ministerial services team—who are collectively a class act; I have worked with them for a long time and they are very good people and I want to commend them for this—Paul Friedman, Laura Rafferty, Tony Brown and James Hinchcliffe. I give a special shout-out to James. He is our stats man. He is very clever. I like James. Thanks also to Inspector Scott Calcutt, my ministerial liaison officer this year in my office, and his nickname is Vic.

Thanks also to the Inspector-General of Emergency Management, Alistair Dawson, and his incredibly hardworking team in the Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management. In particular I would like to acknowledge Darlene Mowle and Donna Spalding.

I would also like to thank my outstanding team. Many of them have been with me for many years—Paul, less so, but he is all right; he gets there. I would like to acknowledge and thank Paul Keene, my chief of staff, who is supported by a very hardworking team. For anyone who has ever dealt with my office, I am sure you would agree with me that my team are committed, passionate, hardworking and very caring for the people of Queensland. To Jacob, Dan, Rose, Phil, Nicola, Melissa, Craig and Zac, I commend you. I would also like to extend my personal thanks to Tim Linley, Darren Cann and Ali France from the Premier's office and Barnaby Kerdel from the Treasurer's office for their ongoing support to my office.

Thank you also to the thousands of frontline police officers, State Emergency Service volunteers, Marine Rescue volunteers, members of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management and also the partner agencies like Surf Life Saving Queensland, the Royal Life Saving Society Queensland and Emergency Services Cadets PCYC—there are many out there. They do outstanding work.

Chair, we have been doing this awhile and I am not sure if you have ever picked up on this fact. We only get to do these roles for a blink of a moment in time, and I would like to think we all make substantial contributions and we are very committed to the work we do. Every year, I like to subtly highlight very good work that is happening in my agencies by wearing particular badges. If you go back

through time—and I have been doing this for eight years now, as the longest serving police minister in Queensland's history—every year you would have seen different badges. I do not normally say anything about it but I wear them to highlight their good work and to show my appreciation.

This year I want to highlight the four entities that were represented in badges: first, PCYC Queensland, who celebrate 75 years this year and who are doing extraordinary work, and I have been very pleased to back them in with extra funding; second, the State Emergency Service Volunteer Association, with Eddie Cowie as one of their key representatives, and they have been really helpful in the transition and the machinery-of-government changes; third, the Queensland Police Service Legislation Branch, and we acknowledge them today; and, finally, the State Flying Squad, who have been instrumental in supporting Taskforce Guardian and the other outstanding work that happens with their deployments across the state.

That all being said, and I know everyone has been waiting for this, I would like to thank the people of Queensland for tuning in. I would like to thank the committee for all the questions—the good, the bad and the ugly. I am sure everyone will agree that the answers were excellent. I look forward to seeing everyone again next year.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We have now reached the end of the time allocated for consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Police and Community Safety. Thank you, Minister, Commissioner, Inspector-General, officials and departmental officers for your attendance. Thank you to the secretariat staff, the ushers, Hansard and all the other people involved in putting this together this afternoon. The committee will now adjourn until 5.15 when we will examine the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery and Minister for Corrective Services

**Proceedings suspended from 4.47 pm to 5.16 pm.**

**ESTIMATES—COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE—FIRE  
AND DISASTER RECOVERY; CORRECTIVE SERVICES****In Attendance**

Hon. NA Boyd, Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery and Minister for Corrective Services

Mr K Manifold, Chief of Staff

Mr B Moore, Principal Policy Advisor

Mr S Lowry, Senior Policy Advisor

**Queensland Fire Department**

Mr S Smith AFSM, Commissioner

Mr B Millington, Acting Chief Officer, Rural Fire Service Queensland

Mr K Walsh, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue

Ms J Houston, Executive Director

**Queensland Reconstruction Authority**

Mr J Ellwood, Chief Executive Officer

Mr A Nehill, Chief Financial Officer

**Queensland Corrective Services**

Mr P Stewart, Commissioner

Mr S Scougall, Chief of Staff, Brisbane Regional Community Corrections



**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. We will now resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Peter Russo, the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim, is the deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; and Mr Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today, and I welcome Dale Last, the member for Burdekin.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the chair's discretion 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. Staff who are assisting our witnesses here today are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if not in use. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in this chamber.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the fire portfolio area until 6.15 pm. We will then adjourn for a short break until 6.30 pm before examining the portfolio area of disaster recovery until 7.30 pm, followed by examination of the corrective services portfolio until 8.30 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage. I also remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly.

In respect of government owned corporations and statutory authorities, standing order 180(2) provides that a member may ask any question that the committee determines will assist in its examination of the relevant appropriation bill or otherwise assist the committee to determine whether public funds are being efficiently spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

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

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of fire 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. Thank you.

**Ms BOYD:** Good evening, Chair and committee. This is an exciting and transformative time for our state's fire service personnel with the establishment of the new Queensland Fire Department. QFD formally brings together Queensland's Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service Queensland. This is about ensuring that our Queensland communities are protected and that the men and women serving their communities have the best resources available and the best legal protections available. Since becoming minister, I have been impressed by the camaraderie and dedication demonstrated by both volunteers and paid staff I have seen firsthand across Queensland as I have met with firefighters and volunteers from Coolangatta to the cape.

The Miles government has provided a budget of more than \$1.09 billion for the Queensland Fire Department, delivering more fleet, facilities and equipment for our Queensland firefighters across both entities. This includes providing \$5 million for the purchase of priority fire safety equipment such as thermal-imaging cameras and rapid intervention team kits. This budget also delivers \$4 million for the commencement of remediation work to address the PFAS issue at the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station, with further planning around the future of the site to be undertaken.

The capital works program includes \$72.4 million to deliver new and replacement stations and facilities, including new fire and rescue stations at Greater Springfield and Caloundra South. Construction of replacement stations is also funded in this budget for Airlie, Drayton, Gympie South, Beerwah and Caloundra, with another \$3 million earmarked for replacement stations at Babinda and Highfields. \$3.6 million is funded to provide upgrades to the auxiliary fire and rescue stations at Boonah and Mitchell. With regard to fleet, we are delivering \$23.8 million for replacement and new fire and rescue appliances, and \$19.5 million for replacement and new rural fire appliances.

Now officially under the banner of QFD, Rural Fire Service Queensland has its own budget of \$121.8 million. This covers the \$80.7 million operating budget and the \$41.4 million capital budget. As well as providing the legal protections that our rural volunteers deserve, this budget means more facilities, more fleet, more equipment and more staff for Rural Fire Service Queensland. The Miles government is committed to community safety and our investment in frontline services is delivering on that commitment. I am proud of the investments we have delivered because we back our frontline men and women.

**Mr LAST:** My first question is to the commissioner. Commissioner, I refer to the budget highlights on page 2 of the SDS, specifically the reference to replacement facilities. What is the cost of the new fire and rescue station at 7 Depot Road, Deagon?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the question. It is our station that is in the path of the planned work on the Gateway Motorway. I do not have a figure for a replacement as that work will be done as part of that program of work.

**Mr LAST:** I have a follow-up question to the minister. Minister, the current Bracken Ridge Fire and Rescue Station, which the commissioner has just referred to, opened in 2020 at a cost of at least \$6 million. When did the department become aware of the proposed Gateway Motorway upgrade that would mean the station needed to be relocated?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. It is been 221 days since I was appointed as minister and 22 sitting days as a minister and this is the very first question that the member for Burdekin has asked me in a proceeding such as this, so I very much welcome the opportunity to respond to the question.

**Mr LAST:** Right.

**Ms BOYD:** In terms of the fire and rescue station in question, I understand that, due to significant population growth in Queensland, there has been a need to be able to bring forward the programmed works for the Gateway Motorway that will impact on the Bracken Ridge Fire and Rescue Station. As the member alluded to, it is located at 223 Bracken Ridge Road. At the time the land was acquired, the department undertook detailed due diligence. This resulted in TMR and Brisbane City Council advising that they had no resumption requirements for the site when we originally undertook the land acquisition. We constructed that station in 2020 at a cost of \$6.79 million. TMR has since identified that the fire and rescue station will be impacted by those needed upgrades to the Gateway Motorway and Bruce

Highway and that this will result in the full resumption of the facility. I do not have a date to hand of exactly when those conversations transpired, but, as a result, we are relocating that station to ensure the communities of Bracken Ridge and Sandgate can continue to be serviced by a well-resourced emergency response. We will be making some announcements in relation to that in due course.

**Mr LAST:** Chair, I would like to table page 59 of the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program 2019—20 to 2022—23 which shows a commitment to this project in 2019 and funding from 2020 to 2021. I have copies for all of the committee members.

**CHAIR:** Are you seeking leave?

**Mr LAST:** I seek leave to table that document.

**CHAIR:** Can we have a look at it? Do you have enough copies to provide the minister and her support staff?

**Mr LAST:** Yes, I do.

**CHAIR:** Can you identify where these documents came from?

**Mr LAST:** The Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program.

**CHAIR:** How do the two relate? One says page 59 and the other one does not say?

**Mr LAST:** Page 59 is the particular document, but the other one is relevant to what I am talking about, thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Can the minister please see a copy. Leave has not been granted to table this yet. I propose that the committee review the material during the next break and I will advise of the outcome. You can continue.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Chair. My question is to the minister. Minister, do you now acknowledge that your government has wasted at least \$6 million of taxpayers' money?

**CHAIR:** That is clearly an imputation; could you rephrase the question?

**Mr LAST:** Minister, do you now acknowledge that the \$6 million that was spent on the fire station at Bracken Ridge is superfluous given that it will be resumed with the upgrades to the Gateway Motorway?

**Ms BOYD:** The investment that we made in that community has been a worthwhile investment. It has meant that thousands of lives have been saved. It has meant there has been a community response provided to that community. I am sure that there are more questions that sit behind the project in terms of the Gateway and the Bruce Highway upgrades that would be better directed to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to be able to get an idea of the sequencing of events and how this has transpired. What we have invested in and what we will always continue to invest in is appropriate resources to be able to respond to community need—that is what this fire and rescue station has been doing for years.

**Mr LAST:** My question is to the commissioner. I refer to page 67 of the Capital Statement relating to new fire and rescue stations and page 62 of last year's Capital Statement. Could you please advise whether sites have been purchased for replacement facilities at Atherton, Beerwah, Bundaberg East, Hervey Bay, South Townsville and Wulguru?

**Ms BOYD:** Can you run through the list?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the question. Can you please repeat that list?

**Mr LAST:** I am happy to repeat those.

**CHAIR:** Slow down. Ask separate questions rather than bottling it all up. Just ask, 'Has the site been purchased for' wherever and then—

**Mr LAST:** Do you want all of them or just one at a time?

**CHAIR:** One at a time.

**Mr LAST:** Okay. Atherton?

**Commissioner Smith:** In terms of Atherton, I know the work has been done on identifying a site. We will look for whether that has been confirmed in our land acquisition.

**Mr LAST:** Beerwah?

**Commissioner Smith:** Beerwah—we have confirmation. We have completed planning for a joint facility and land has been secured through a contract that has been executed.

**Mr LAST:** So Beerwah you have land purchased. Okay. Bundaberg East?

**Commissioner Smith:** Bundaberg East—land has been—

**Ms BOYD:** We made an announcement on that on Tuesday.

**Commissioner Smith:** There is a commitment for land for Bundaberg East as part of a strategic land acquisition to futureproof service delivery in that location. The site is subject to two leases which are commercial leases not due to expire until December this year. On that basis, we have secured land—

**Mr LAST:** But you have not purchased it?

**Commissioner Smith:** That is correct.

**Mr LAST:** Okay. Hervey Bay?

**Ms BOYD:** We have announced that. It has been announced.

**Mr LAST:** Has it been purchased?

**Ms BOYD:** It has been announced.

**Mr LAST:** The question is to the commissioner.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order, Chair: the member is asking questions of the commissioner, not the minister. I would ask the commissioner be able to answer them.

**CHAIR:** Go ahead, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Smith:** A suitable site was identified and that title of land has been registered as of 11 June. It has been secured.

**Mr LAST:** South Townsville?

**Commissioner Smith:** South Townsville—the delivery of a replacement remains a priority for the department. It has been delayed due to a complex property market in Townsville. A whole range of sites were identified and deemed unsuitable as we moved through the due diligence process attached to our land acquisitions to ensure their suitability across a range of bases. They are now working on a confidential proposal to secure a tenure and a location for that station.

**Mr LAST:** Wulguru?

**Commissioner Smith:** Wulguru—we have again strategic land acquisition. It has been secured. That is my understanding. I will confirm that at the end of this session.

**Mr LAST:** Going back to Atherton, you are still checking on Atherton?

**Commissioner Smith:** Confirmed. I confirm that Wulguru has been secured.

**Mr LAST:** Purchased?

**Commissioner Smith:** Yes.

**Mr LAST:** What about Atherton?

**Commissioner Smith:** We are just getting that figure for you. Again, due to the nature of the market, we are continuing to look at sites and do due diligence, but it is yet to be acquired.

**Mr LAST:** My follow-up question is to the minister. The commissioner has just said that three of those projects have not progressed despite your predecessor, the former premier and the current Treasurer directly referring to their importance. Can you please advise when those projects are scheduled to be completed?

**Ms BOYD:** One of them had already been announced, which you were not aware of. As the commissioner has outlined, they are a work in progress right now. They remain a priority for us. I think it is clear and appreciated widely through the community that the acquisition of property at the moment is quite difficult. We are working in earnest in all of those sites. In some, they have completely progressed. I think the commissioner's response identified and detailed that this is work that is progressing at the moment and progressing quite positively.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, there is no funding mentioned in the current Capital Statement for those projects. Could you advise where the funding is to progress those projects, or are they broken promises?



**Ms BOYD:** Of course.

**CHAIR:** There is an imputation. Can you just rephrase the question?

**Mr LAST:** Could you advise where the funding is to progress those projects?

**Ms BOYD:** Sure, I will be happy to do that. In the instance of the land that we have already purchased and announced, I think that would be pretty clear. We have a land acquisition fund that the department uses. That is a fund where, essentially, we have money that is used particularly for growth areas or in areas where we need replacement stations to make sure we have the best location and the best strategic land prioritised. The budget allocation for the acquisition of land in many of those instances has been highlighted in this budget or previous budgets. I understand that is through the strategic land acquisition for the budget.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, could you direct me to the budget documents where that is identified?

**Ms BOYD:** Sure. We will look into that and let you know by the end of the session.

**Mr LAST:** I have a question to the commissioner. I refer to page 2 of the SDS, namely, the replacement of Rural Fire Service appliances. How many of the 248 Isuzu NPS series appliances built between 1997 and 2009 have been assessed for front-axle weight/load capacity issues?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the question. The matter you are speaking to relates to our medium fleet and a particular type of medium fleet on which some overweight issues have been identified. Of course, the safety of our volunteers and their ability to operate and go about their important business is critical to what we do. We have been working through those issues—Rural Fire Service Queensland—with our fleet team and with brigades. It is important to note that each year independent certificates of inspection operate and sometimes those appliances have been operating for 20 years.

It is also important to note that in those years certain modifications and changes have been made, particularly to enhancing safety systems and additional equipment that supports our firefighters' safety. We did issue a safety bulletin and advice in March 2024 to RFBs about the operation and how to deal with matters where they are concerned or believe that their appliances are overweight. We have subsequently deployed a team to work across the regions weighing our appliances. We have assessed 493 appliances in total, 216 of those specifically being the appliances you referred to. We took the opportunity to weigh all of the vehicles as that team was going around to understand if there were wider implications for this work.

The work is now complete and the remediation action is being undertaken progressively as required. Some of that remediation work was done immediately; it was a simple process of just removing some additional equipment that was not within the standard inventory. The work now is that, where that is not the solution, other options are being worked through in order to ensure those vehicles come within their operating requirement. No response has been compromised as a result of that service delivery.

**Mr LAST:** To clarify, out of the 216 appliances, how many have been replaced to date—or are they still currently in service?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the follow-up question. In terms of the ones that remain in service, I am not aware of any appliance being removed from service subsequently if it has been removed temporarily for works or if it has been replaced through our replacement program in terms of the RFS QFleet program.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, the information I have received states that vehicles less than half a tonne over their GVM may be used for emergency response after the department is notified of the weight issue. Is that a one-off notification or is that every time the vehicle is being used for an emergency response?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for that question. That ability to operate over weight is one-off. However, what RFSQ has committed to doing is working through what requirements are in place to ensure that with regard to the changes or additions that might affect weight into the future additional controls can be put in place to minimise that outcome and we are working closely with DTMR and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in order to ensure our compliance with fleet requirements.

**CHAIR:** We will go to the crossbench now.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you, Chair. I refer to the response to question on notice No. 12 regarding the \$13.6 million that has been committed for new and upgraded fire brigade stations. As you know, we have been waiting on something for Tinbeerwah and I think we have been advised in previous

correspondence that the department is assessing the status of all rural fire facilities. If there is no allocation for Tinbeerwah in this assessment, what is the timeframe for that completion and when will that be made public?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the question. The Rural Fire Service's commitment through the course of this financial year is to conduct a condition assessment of all of our facilities and look at what further requirements are needed across brigades in terms of station replacement and enhancements. With regard to that work, as you indicated, \$13.6 million is allocated this year in terms of supporting capital programs, land acquisition enhancements and new station builds. The condition assessments will inform what our priorities are moving forward and our ability to plan and program that work, so I cannot give you an answer specifically on Tinbeerwah at the moment, but that would be the driver of that—that is, the overall condition assessment across the state and the prioritisation of that work and investment.

**Ms BOLTON:** So we do not have a timeframe when those assessments will be completed?

**Commissioner Smith:** The assessments will be completed through the course of this financial year and part of that work and the ability to do that work is a significant uplift in Rural Fire Service Queensland in terms of those additional people out across the state where there are more area officers and asset officers to support that assessment and condition understanding so we can plan and support our volunteers on the front line in greater detail.

**Ms BOLTON:** Minister, with regard to disaster resilience and mitigation infrastructure, page 2 of the SDS shows \$38 million. Can I ask what inputs the department uses to assess climate risk from the state government, the Commonwealth and the IPCC and whether this integrates into the state government's sponsored program for local government in terms of QCoast 2100 and the CHAPS, and I do note in response to question on notice No. 10 the resources to risk. I am just trying to understand better how that correlates in the data and where that data comes from in making those assessments.

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question and acknowledge her continued advocacy in this space. In terms of the climate risk, for me it is an interesting one in that it sits over both the fire agency but also the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. I will get the commissioner to talk here about that, but it might also be worthwhile asking it of Mr Jake Ellwood from QRA when he comes in. From a fire perspective, there is so much work that the department does in terms of our bushfire mapping and we work with local area groups to be able to progress that. Of course there is that synergy that happens with local government as well as upward with the Commonwealth, but more specifically, member, I might get the commissioner to talk about the mechanics of that in terms of how that all interplays and works together because I am sure that he will have a much more detailed response for you.

**Commissioner Smith:** Thanks, Minister; thanks, member, for the question. Queensland is the most disaster-prone state in the country and we are very focused on the impacts of more frequent, high-intensity events and what that means for us in terms of our response capability and how we support our people in approaching that. The state level risk reports are a key element of how we operate and in that regard there is a state disaster risk report that informs us based on the latest scientific information.

In terms of the specific approach we take for bushfire mapping particularly, our state bushfire-prone area mapping involves the latest science, remote sensing, vegetation type and the link between field sampling to prove that validation and that informs our planning and preparation and the public education campaigns that we engage in. There is a Queensland Bushfire Plan that links to support and how you operationalise those things across Queensland, because we work with many partners across the state in terms of bushfire management. Of particular importance in connecting with the partners and people who own the hazard—landowners—the state bushfire committee is critical at the highest level in supporting that through the disaster management connections. Area fire management groups with that local knowledge and connection feeding in know their local areas better than anyone and we work closely with them in order to support local decision-making and mitigation focused in on that local knowledge and the best science behind it.

**Ms BOLTON:** So ultimately it is the feed-in from the predictive modelling from local governments that actually form part of the state management plan?

**Commissioner Smith:** Yes. Local input absolutely is part of our overall assessment of risk and our ability to support them in minimising that risk.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Let us go back to the opposition please.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Mr Chair. I have a follow-up question based on my previous questions around Rural Fire Service appliances. Minister, the commissioner has just confirmed that unroadworthy appliances can be used in an emergency response. Can you advise who bears the legal responsibility should the use of that vehicle result in injury or death to a Rural Fire Service volunteer or a member of the public?

**CHAIR:** That is a hypothetical. It is definitely hypothetical. You are asking the minister who is going to bear the responsibility for an unknown accident which may occur sometime in the future.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order, Chair: in relation to the matter of being hypothetical, it has been confirmed by the commissioner that those vehicles can be used, so it is not a hypothetical because it has been stated in evidence here.

**CHAIR:** But the question he asks is hypothetical. What he is asking is who is going to be responsible if an accident happens sometime in the future and who—

**Mr KRAUSE:** I think it is a question that is quite relevant to appropriations.

**CHAIR:** It is not relevant, so either rephrase it or move on.

**Mr LAST:** Okay; I am happy to rephrase it, Chair. Minister, who bears the liability responsibility for those vehicles?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question and I agree, Chair, that it is hypothetical. The commissioner stated in his response, as I heard it and understood it, that permission could be given for the use of those vehicles, but at no point in time did he say that those vehicles were regularly being used or that they were in use at the moment. As I understand it, over weight vehicles are not being used.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to prehearing question on notice No. 4. When is the Queensland critical communications modernisation project due to make its recommendations on improving public safety communications?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the question. Communications obviously is a critical element of our response across the state, and it is a very large and diverse state so we have a challenging operating environment in terms of communications. We are working with a range of partners in terms of supporting our communications needs across the public safety portfolio agencies. We are working closely with DTMR and the Customer and Digital Group, which is the lead on that body of work. I do not have any specific outcomes. You may need to refer that question to that department for the answer in terms of the specifics. I know we are working closely with it and we have provided significant input and we continue to liaise in that space to improve communications into the future.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, when is the current GWN radio contract due to expire?

**Commissioner Smith:** The current GWN contract is due to expire in 2028. Again, the GWN area covers largely South-East Queensland. The digital radio network that has been in place for a number of years now expires in 2028. At that point, it will require a replacement system.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what steps have you taken to ensure that coverage of the GWN is increased to ensure access to it for the Rural Fire Service?

**Commissioner Smith:** We have done an extensive body of work about understanding what our communications needs are across the state. No communication network can cover every possibility so we are looking at a combination of radio network, mobile services and satellite services and how that collection works in order to improve and support communications moving into the future. Again, that is all part of our work across agencies. That input has been provided into that case that has been managed through the Customer and Digital Group.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, have there been any occurrences in the past three years where firefighters carrying out internal operations in structural fires have lost contact with colleagues outside the structure?

**Commissioner Smith:** As I mentioned earlier, no communication network system is perfect and there will always be instances where there are dropouts and black spots. We train our personnel very closely on lost comms and what approach to take during those instances so that if that does occur there is a process that they understand to follow in order to get back into communications. The ability for communications, as we move forward, is part of our focus to ensure we are putting everything possible in place to support the strongest communication system, but no system is perfect.

**Mr LAST:** To confirm, there have been instances of lost comms?

**Commissioner Smith:** I am not aware of specific instances of lost comms, but from my own history I have experience where you do lose communications from time to time and there is a mechanism that you follow in order to re-engage with communications.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, are you aware of any instances since 2021 when departmental staff have had to use mobile phones to call for assistance due to failed radio transmissions?

**Commissioner Smith:** Again, I am not aware of specific incidents of that occurring. However, we are very clear in our communication mechanisms that we operate with different systems and the radio system is not the sole ability to communicate back. Mobile services and satellite phone enabled services are all a part of the greater communications capability that we have. If we are operating in environments for any extended period or for complex incidents and the timescale allows, we will deploy additional assets to create communications networks in those areas. When you were talking about cyclone crossings and those larger scale type events, campaign bushfires, we will move communications capability into that area in order to improve communications, avoid black spots and provide really strong coverage through that area.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, namely, the purchase of fire safety equipment. Can you advise how many of the new Rosenbauer Heros-titan AS helmets have been provided to firefighters and how many have been provided to senior officers?

**Commissioner Smith:** Of the new helmets that are being rolled out, 4,498 of those helmets have now been delivered into the regions, which is the full cohort of helmets into those areas. Of those helmets, 2,312 have been received and fitted to firefighters. It is important to note the very significant change that this helmet provides for our Queensland Fire and Rescue firefighters across the state. It is a different design, it requires different fitting and, importantly, it is embedded with communications technology that will assist in improving communications. Part of that is a bone induction system that requires a high level of fitting and repeatability in order to support appropriate use once that switch occurs. In terms of the numbers of senior officers, the second part of that question, I do not have that figure available at the moment. I will endeavour to get that for you by the end of the session.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to page 2 of the SDS, namely, the reference to the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station. Can you advise the cost of the AECOM PFAS detailed site investigation undertaken at the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station in February 2020?

**Commissioner Smith:** There has been a significant body of work occurring around the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station in terms of PFAS contamination and the extent of that contamination. This year, \$4 million has been allocated in terms of remediation works, to commence remediation works. The specific cost of those contractors—

**Mr LAST:** The 2020 site investigation.

**Commissioner Smith:** I will come back to you before the end of the session, if I may. Can I clarify, it is the 2020 AECOM—

**Mr LAST:** The AECOM PFAS detailed site investigation in February 2020. Commissioner, are further investigations at that site needed? If so, when will they commence and what is the cost of those investigations?

**Commissioner Smith:** In terms of the Ayr site, in accordance with our environmental management obligations we have engaged a contaminated land auditor and an environmental consultant, who are working through detailed site investigations in and around the station site. In terms of doing that, we have established what the concentration and distribution is and we are working through that currently to implement a strategy and action plan. That is being done in consultation with the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, Queensland Health and the Burdekin Shire Council. The intent of that report would need to be approved by the contaminated land auditor and subsequently by DESI in order to comply with their obligations under the Environmental Protection Act. The intention is that that will be completed in the third-quarter of the 2024 calendar year.

**Mr LAST:** And the cost of those investigations?

**Commissioner Smith:** We will work through the exact breakdown of those through the course of this session.

**Mr LAST:** Will the cost of those investigations be met from that \$4 million in funding announced in the budget?

**Commissioner Smith:** The \$4 million is to support that ongoing understanding and the remediation plan, yes.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what is the cost to build a new fire and rescue station to replace the existing facility in Ayr, not including the cost of land?

**Commissioner Smith:** We currently do not have funding or an intent to build a new station so I cannot give you a figure of what that station would cost to replace.

**Mr LAST:** How many facilities, in total, require remediation works due to PFAS and what are those facilities?

**Commissioner Smith:** We are working—and we have been doing so since 2016—on looking at six sites across Queensland, those being Ayr, Home Hill, Airlie Beach, Toowoomba, Proserpine and Gladstone, with the intent that that work will understand what contamination may exist and to what level and then what remediation requirements may be required for those sites.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Commissioner. Minister, the Capital Statement shows no funding post 2024-25 for the Ayr Fire Station. When will our firefighters be provided with a site that is free from PFAS where they can undertake usual activities, including training?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. I understand that the department has been looking in earnest for a replacement fire and rescue site for the community of Ayr.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, how many Queensland Fire Department staff do not currently hold 1st class firefighter qualifications or above?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the member. In terms of how our firefighters progress, they come into the service as recruits and go through a compulsory training program that takes a number of years to progress to 1st class firefighter. As you are aware, we are in the middle of a significant growth period of recruiting 500 firefighters by June 2026. I do not have a specific figure of how many would be there as of right now, but we have recruited 341 firefighters of that 357, and there is attrition on top of that. So I would estimate there would be around 600-odd people at that 1st class mark or below.

**CHAIR:** This will be the last question.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Chair. Commissioner, further to the pre-hearing questions on notice on page 2 of the SDS—namely, the replacement of facilities—can you advise why Rural Fire Service facilities across the state were not inspected for compliance with government standards before they were transferred to government control?

**Commissioner Smith:** I thank the member for the question. Importantly, the significant uplift and boost in terms of Rural Fire Service Queensland involves a staff uplift and a greater positioning of staff to support our volunteers across the state. That equips us with the ability not only to be closer to them but also to be able to progress some of the important work to understand the condition of those facilities and what is required and then to have a deliberate plan in order to uplift those facilities, where required.

That resourcing did not exist in Rural Fire Service Queensland before the 114 uplift, and we are still recruiting that 114. What is important now is that we get out amongst those facilities, understand what the needs are and create a plan in order to address that work and support our volunteers on the ground. That conditional assessment will be done in the 2024-25 financial year, and we will have a full understanding in that time of what is required and that will inform our planning for capital works into the future.

**CHAIR:** Just before we start the questions from government members, leave was sought to have a document admitted. Is leave granted?

**An honourable member:** No.

**CHAIR:** I now ask the member for Cooper to ask the first government question.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS, outlining initiatives designed to educate children on fire safety. Minister, can you please update the committee on how these programs keep our young people safe?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for Cooper for her question. It is wonderful to get one. The Queensland Fire Department takes a proactive approach in providing a range of education programs to build community understanding and resilience, including Safehome, Fight Fire Fascination and Road Attitudes and Action Planning. The Miles government proudly supports these programs.

You asked, member, how we support them. I can inform the committee that our government supported them by reinstating the Fight Fire Fascination and the Road Attitudes and Action Planning programs after they were cut by the LNP. Can you imagine cutting programs designed to educate and possibly save the lives of children? The RAAP program is designed to alter the driving habits of Queenslanders who either are learning to drive or have just received their licence, leading them to make better choices while in control of a vehicle. I have been informed that it has been such a success since its reinstatement that it is now been delivered in the youth justice space. This is a demonstration of our government's commitment to supporting community safety and, in particular, the future generations, while the only fascination of the LNP is where the staff vacancies are.

The Queensland Fire Department has also helped Queensland teachers facilitate age-targeted learning in schools through the Bushfire Ed, Fire Ed, SafeSpace and StormSafe programs. Under the emergency services reform process, the SafeSpace and StormSafe programs have now transitioned to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority for continued delivery.

In relation to fire safety education, specifically the Fight Fire Fascination program, it is a voluntary, confidential education program targeted at young people aged between three and 17 who have been involved in at least one concerning fire incident. This program teaches respect for fire behaviours and develops fire safety skills and works in partnership with families, schools, mental health services and community agencies to deliver one-on-one education sessions. Between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024, there were 79 Fight Fire Fascination program interventions either completed or in progress.

In relation to the Fire Ed program, it is delivered by operational firefighters and teachers of year 1 students to develop an understanding of the dangers of fire and the appropriate responses. The program aims to build basic fire safety awareness and works to establish trust with firefighters. Key messages include, 'Get down low and go, go, go!', dialling triple 0 in an emergency, having a school or home escape plan and so much more. The QFD has also adapted the Fire Ed program to be targeted at learning facilities working with preschool-age children with diverse neurological learning needs. This program was developed in collaboration with the AEIOU Foundation for Children with Autism. In the last year, it has seen 45,500 students in 690 schools go through the program.

In terms of the bushfire education program, it is designed to be used by teachers working with students in years 5 and 6. It is an operational program for teachers to help facilitate learnings in relation to bushfire natural hazards under the Queensland curriculum.

In relation to the Safehome program, it is delivered at no cost to households. The Safehome programs are delivered by our operational firefighters to assist in understanding fire hazards in and around their homes. During a home visit, the resident is provided with advice on the required steps to eliminate or mitigate these hazards. In the last year, 326 Safehome visits were conducted.

**CHAIR:** The next question is also from the member for Cooper.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, my question relates to page 2 of the SDS and the investment in operational equipment. Can you advise, please, how this investment in equipment will enhance firefighter safety?

**Ms BOYD:** I welcome the opportunity, and I would like to start by acknowledging our firefighters and thanking them for the job that they do in keeping us safe and secure. Firefighting is a high-risk occupation where firefighters are exposed to physical, chemical and psychological stresses due to the inherent demands of their work. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of these dedicated professional firefighters from around the state in my time as their minister. One thing that strikes me is just how proud they are to wear their uniform and represent the community they serve, and the Miles government thanks them for this—unlike the former LNP leader, who accused an operational firefighter of being a fake firefighter.

Queensland's firefighters can count on our support, which is why the 2024-25 state budget includes a funding allocation of \$5 million for the QFD to purchase priority firefighter safety equipment to be used in structural firefighting inside buildings and enclosed structures, including fire. This equipment, such as additional thermal imaging cameras and rapid intervention kits, will improve situational awareness and rescue capability and promote enhanced safety and better outcomes for our firefighters. Thermal imaging cameras essentially are used by firefighters to give them the ability to visualise temperature differentials through smoke or in environments with limited or no light, assisting in firefighting and rescue operations, including, importantly, victim location.

Rapid intervention kits are used to rescue firefighters in emergent situations and contain critical equipment to assist in conducting rescues of trapped or downed firefighters and their initial transport to a safer environment. These kits can include gear such as forcible entry tools, wire-cutters, power detection tools and emergency air supply, for instance. Where a rescued firefighter may have been exhausted of their air supply and trapped and not easily eradicated, that is life-saving equipment.

This critical equipment directly supports the Miles government priority of backing our frontline services and will go a long way to enhancing the safety of our firefighters when operating in structural firefighting environments. It also complements our 2020 commitment to recruit an additional 357 firefighters over five years, with 339, or 95 per cent, having already been recruited as at 30 June 2024.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, with great enthusiasm and with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you provide QFD investment being made in the Sunshine Coast and how this will benefit the local community?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. I know what a passionate advocate he is for his community and for the Sunshine Coast more broadly. It is wonderful to see this budget deliver in spades for the Sunshine Coast.

In line with our budget and the QFD's purpose to pre-empt, prevent, mitigate and manage the consequence of fire and other emergencies, QFD continues to deliver world-class fire and rescue services to the people of the Sunshine Coast. This is something I have personally witnessed from my visits there with the member where I have had the opportunity to talk to our amazing firefighters who are dedicating their lives to protecting their community.

The QFD supports government stakeholders in the community by fulfilling its responsibilities to support functions under the Queensland disaster management arrangements and is represented on all local and district disaster management groups across the state.

During 2023-24, QFD's delivered capital works projects on the Sunshine Coast include: a new Caloundra South permanent fire and rescue station, which is so close to practical completion—it was due in June 2024, and we are just about to cut the ribbon on that one, member—and it is forecast to be operational in August 2024; and an upgrade and refurbishment of the Imbil auxiliary fire and rescue station, which I proudly opened not too long ago.

The new Caloundra South Fire and Rescue Station will provide 24/7 coverage to the existing, developing and expanding communities in and around Caloundra South. We have also seen a type 3 appliance and 23 new staff who will call that new station home. It is a project with a total budget of \$8.5 million.

In addition, capital works projects continuing or commencing from 2024-25 include the replacement of the Caloundra Fire and Rescue Station and a joint Queensland Fire and Rescue and Rural Fire Service Queensland facility at Beerwah. Funding of \$2 million has been allocated in the 2024-25 budget to commence the replacement Caloundra Fire and Rescue Station, with the project having a total budget of \$7.5 million. It is currently in its planning stage, with practical completion indicatively scheduled for June 2026.

The new Beerwah facility will be a joint QFR and RFSQ facility, receiving a funding allocation of \$2.5 million within the 2024-25 budget, with a total budget of \$10 million. Practical completion is indicatively scheduled for October 2025.

Frontline firefighters and the Sunshine Coast community have also recently benefited from fleet investments, with Caloundra and Imbil stations receiving upgrades in 2023-24. Additionally, rural brigades in the region will benefit from two new 12,000-litre tankers servicing the north coast region.

The department will continue to support the Sunshine Coast community with the introduction of a new corporate hub located at Kawana on the Sunshine Coast. In addition to delivering local support, the hub will provide genuine career opportunities with people located on the Sunshine Coast with locally-based services including human resources, community engagement, building development, mental health support, safety and wellbeing, finance, asset management and information technology.

**CHAIR:** Minister, that brings the examination of the fire portfolio to conclusion. Do you wish to make a closing statement?

**Ms BOYD:** You bet I do, Chair. I would like to take this opportunity, firstly, to thank you and the committee for their participation in today's hearing. I also thank the secretariat and Hansard. I would like to thank Commissioner Stephen Smith, Deputy Commissioner Kevin Walsh, Chief Officer Ben Millington and their staff for being here with us today and for preparing for today's estimates hearing.

I would also like to thank Brad Moore, who finishes up today as my principal fire adviser. Mr Moore's expert advice and experience during to the response to the floods, storms and cyclones of the last natural disaster season we experienced was invaluable.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the men and women within the Queensland Fire Department, whether it is frontline staff, volunteers or support staff, for what they do every day to make Queensland the special place that it is. We might live in the most disaster impacted state in the country, but I know that whenever Queenslanders need help these are the men and women who are there to respond and to protect our communities from harm.

Chair, I would like to update the committee. There was a question in relation to how many new Rosenbauer Heros-titan AS helmets have been provided to senior officers. I can advise that the number of senior officers who have been fitted and provided with that new helmet is 81.

I can also advise the committee that the funding for Townsville South and Atherton do not appear in the 2024-25 Budget Paper 3. However, I am advised by the Queensland Fire Department that the funding allocation from 2023-24 to secure land for the replacement Atherton Fire and Rescue Station has been set aside within the QFD budget. This means land can be purchased once a suitable site is identified. I am pleased to advise the committee that the QFD is currently progressing a proposal for the replacement of the Townsville South station. The proposal is currently commercial-in-confidence.

In relation to the question on the site investigations undertaken at the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station in February 2020, I am advised by QFD that the total cost of the site investigations in 2020 was \$36,228 including GST.

**CHAIR:** I understand that that is all of the questions that were taken on notice. We have reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the fire portfolio area. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 6.30 pm with the examination of estimates for the portfolio area of disaster recovery.

**Proceedings suspended from 6.16 pm to 6.30 pm.**



**CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister, Mr Ellwood, officials and department officers. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of disaster recovery open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I invite the minister to make an opening statement.

**Ms BOYD:** Since I was sworn in as Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery on 18 December, I have seen the impact that natural disasters can have on Queensland communities. From Tropical Cyclone Jasper and the flooding that followed in the northern suburbs of Cairns and the devastation in Wujal Wujal to the isolation of Cape Tribulation, the Christmas storms that cut large swathes of damage through the Gold Coast and Scenic Rim or my own community of Pine Rivers, which saw homes flooded in their hundreds, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority has worked relentlessly with these communities to recover. We know that with a changing climate and more frequent natural disasters it will happen again.

That is why the Miles government's budget has approved \$9.3 million to extend the surge capacity of 30 additional full-time frontline QRA jobs over two years. These are the people who work behind the scenes help Queenslanders in their time of need and help the QRA advocate with Canberra for Queensland's fair share. During the 2023-24 disaster season these hardworking staff have helped administer joint federal and state payments, including: \$78 million in personal hardship grants; \$247 million in exceptional circumstances funding; and \$3.5 million in low-interest loans to support small businesses. Queensland is the state in Australia impacted more than any other by natural disasters, and that is why we are committed to a strong QRA. I am happy to take your questions about the QRA and the investments the Miles government is making to ensure Queenslanders have a helping hand when they need it most.

**CHAIR:** I welcome the member for Warrego.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, in relation to the efficiencies fund on page 71 of the Capital Statement, can you advise how this fund is generated?

**Ms BOYD:** Absolutely. I thank the member for the question. The funds we receive here in Queensland are through a partnership we have with the Commonwealth. It is not always the most straightforward for a lot of people to interpret. There have been two rounds of the efficiencies fund so far. In 2018-19 the efficiencies program had \$190.8 million allocated; round 2 was 2019-20; and in 2020-21 the efficiencies program was \$100 million. Essentially, it is the difference between the



estimated reconstruction cost and the actual reconstruction cost for essential public asset reconstruction. As I said, it is in accordance with the DRFA arrangements that are allocated to disaster resilience and mitigation projects. That is essentially how they come about, member.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, can you give an example of the projects that would be considered high priority disaster resilience and mitigation infrastructure projects under that efficiencies fund? I note that you have \$38 million scheduled for this year's expenditure.

**Ms BOYD:** I am happy to do that, member. I might throw to the CEO, who can provide you with some details and specific examples of where efficiencies have made huge investments in communities in Queensland.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** We have had a number of different programs that have been funded, including: the SEQ Strategic River resilience works flood resilience program; implementation of coastal hazard adaptation works and actions for disaster mitigation; the Pillowcase Program for children; and betterment as well. At the moment, the focus for efficiencies is to look at how we can improve access and maintenance of supply lines. It has been one of the things that has vexed us in this last disaster season, as we saw in Cape Tribulation up in Ayton and the Bloomfield valley in general.

Where we can, we work with councils and regions to discuss. Of course, each region has completed its own resilience strategy, which is really a guiding light as to the priorities they have that will assist in improving their resilience. From our perspective, it is the idea of ensuring that we are improving access and supply lines. I will give the committee an example. In the Bloomfield valley it took the best part of two weeks just to get in to commence reconstruction. That leaves you with this void for a time. Providing supplies to Cape Tribulation required rotoring in support and barges that had trouble landing. That is our focus.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, I refer to the Bundaberg council's conditions for the Bundaberg East flood levee that all associated costs, including asset transfer fees, operations, maintenance and future upgrades must be funded by the state government. What is your response to the concerns of the Bundaberg council regarding the Bundaberg East flood levee?

**Ms BOYD:** I acknowledge that the member is also the shadow opposition spokesperson for local government. We do not see the Bundaberg Regional Council saying they want to hand back their Works for Queensland funding because it would have a depreciation attached to it or that that kind of investment, which brings outstanding results to the community, is unwanted by the council because they would need to write down depreciation to do future upgrades, maintenance or infrastructure they put in their local parks. I think it is irresponsible of the Bundaberg Regional Council to say they do not support this project. It is a project that we know will keep hundreds of Bundaberg locals safe. It will also directly impact the cost of living of those Bundaberg locals.

We have been told by big insurers like Suncorp that there would be a reduction to insurance premiums for people who would be protected through that levee of up to \$1,000. The Bundaberg Regional Council right now is saying to their constituents, to their community, that they do not want to see people protected from major flood events. They do not want to see people have hip pocket savings of up to \$1,000 because they do not want to write down the depreciation. I think it is entirely irresponsible of the Bundaberg council, quite frankly, and I do not support those comments at all.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, in relation to Tropical Cyclone Jasper and the recovery, can you provide advice to the committee in relation to the total cost of the evacuations following Tropical Cyclone Jasper? As you would be aware, there were numerous evacuations.

**Ms BOYD:** There were numerous evacuations through Tropical Cyclone Jasper and the subsequent flooding of the Far North. Those evacuations happened in a range of ways. They happened through ADF support such as in the instance of the very remote community of Wujal Wujal, where we needed to get Chinook helicopters in to evacuate people from that community. We also saw other community members evacuated through muster choppers. When it was too unsafe for emergency services aircraft to fly, we saw the community dig deep and support one another through jumping in helicopters of their own and supporting that. There is a mechanism by which people can claim support for the outlay of that expenditure, and I will hand to the CEO to speak to that further.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** The evacuations all occur within the response phase invariably, so those costs are captured by Queensland police, by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, by the federal government where the federal government provides support and by any other entities. We work with councils and the different emergency services who undertake to identify what costs fall within what they

call counter-disaster operations, and then we provide them with that funding through a joint arrangement with the Commonwealth government. At this stage, I would imagine that figure is still being compiled in total.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. Minister, in February the government announced \$10 million in funding to Far North Queensland tourism operators. How much of that \$10 million has been expended to date?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. There have been a number of packages that have been rolling through many communities in Queensland as a result of the summer of natural disasters. In the Far North we had packages that supported local governments, that supported impacted individuals, that supported not-for-profits, that supported agricultural businesses and that supported tourism businesses. One of the things we have recently learned in the Far North is how important those tourism businesses were. We knew it through COVID. We had Minister Healy, who was an enormous advocate for tourism operators in the Far North. I got to meet with those tourism operators a number of times, with both the Premier and the Prime Minister, and they told us directly how their businesses had been impacted.

One of the images that circulated very quickly during Jasper was that photo of the Cairns Airport and the flooding that occurred there. Many people had holidays booked in Cairns and in the surrounding communities and they actually cancelled their holidays on account of that image going global. Tourism operators were recounting to me that they had people from overseas saying to them that they thought Cairns had entirely shut down, and that simply was not the case. Cairns was absolutely still open for business and was able to have tourism through that Christmas period and beyond.

In terms of the grants, 83 tourism operators have been approved with those grants, and so far we have seen \$2.3 million out the door.

**Ms LEAHY:** Just to clarify, that is \$2.3 million out of a \$10 million funding program; is that right?

**Ms BOYD:** I have \$6.4 million of grants to tourism operators, but I will double-check those figures and get back to you.

**Ms LEAHY:** I think you just spoke about how many applications have been approved. How many applications have been rejected in that program?

**Ms BOYD:** I will get the CEO to talk to that in more detail. He might have a better sense of that.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** The program itself is run by DTS so we will have to confirm through them what that number is.

**Ms LEAHY:** Several tourism operators have reached out to the opposition advising that the grants are very difficult to apply for and the eligibility criteria are very strict and inflexible—particularly some around that Cairns Airport area, which is strategically important to North Queensland. Do you know if any changes have been made to the grant eligibility criteria or the application process?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** We have been working very closely with the federal government in terms of DRFA funding—in particular I think you are referring to the category C and D packages. We are evolving the guidelines. What will happen is we will have surveys come in that explain where the issues are and where funding needs to go and then we will develop the guideline, but obviously over time we watch very closely to see whether it is meeting the need. Indeed, with the \$10 million tourism grant that you speak of, we are doing some amendments now to endeavour to get to additional impacted businesses. To us, it is very important to stay agile and to make sure we understand the needs of the community, and that evolves over time.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. Was any consideration given to extending the deadline for the applications? Do you have any information about that?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I am not aware of anyone who has missed out on deadlines. We can put in things such as extensions on time perhaps for a broader package, and in fact we routinely do that. I am not aware that there has been an issue in terms of timelines.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. Minister, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority is responsible for some \$1.2 billion of expenditure in 2024-25. Can you advise the committee how this funding is used to decrease insurance costs for Queenslanders, given we have seen an 18 per cent increase?

**Ms BOYD:** I would love to talk about that. I would like to start by touching back on the proposed Bundaberg flood levee and my commentary around how that particular investment project would protect hundreds of homes and also save residents, as Suncorp has estimated, \$1,000. We know that insurance across Australia is regulated nationally and it is a national issue, but we engage with our insurers regularly and we make sure that people are able to provide us feedback around that. Did you have anything else to add there, Jake?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** For us, programs like Betterment are obviously key to ensuring that we enhance resilience. There are other programs that have been undertaken, and if you look at things like the Voluntary Home Buy Back scheme, those homes would have been inundated. Now the land was inundated but there is not a home there. There are a number of different programs that enhance that resilience. We work very closely with councils to make sure we understand their evolving needs in terms of repair of essential public assets as well. We work very closely with them.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. I have a question to the CEO of the QRA. How many levee banks have been built since 2015?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I will take that on notice and we will try to get you an answer.

**Ms LEAHY:** Of all of the programs administered by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, are there any levee banks other than Bundaberg in the planning phase?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I will confirm first before I answer that question.

**Ms LEAHY:** Is the minister happy to take that?

**Ms BOYD:** Yes, of course.

**Ms LEAHY:** Can you come back at the end of the session?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. I refer to the Queensland Betterment funding guidelines and the co-contributions required either in kind or as a monetary contribution. Can you advise how most councils make this contribution? Is it in kind or do they make a monetary contribution?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Which program are you talking about?

**Ms LEAHY:** This is the Betterment funding guidelines.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Monetary.

**Ms LEAHY:** What percentage of the project is required as a monetary contribution by the council?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** There is no set amount. It is by council.

**Ms LEAHY:** Does it vary between certain percentages? Is there an upper limit that they contribute?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** No, there is no upper limit, but it is at what is deemed a reasonable level.

**Ms LEAHY:** Is there a lower limit for that reasonable level?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** For Indigenous communities it is nil.

**Ms LEAHY:** What about for the other councils?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** No, there is no lower limit.

**Ms LEAHY:** To the CEO of the Reconstruction Authority, I refer to the efficiencies fund that we spoke about earlier, and the QRA capital statement references the DRFA efficiencies for high-priority disaster resilience and mitigation and infrastructure projects. Would a project be eligible if it was from a council if it was developing detention basins to stop flooding in the CBD of a community? Would detention basins preventing flooding be the sort of thing that could be considered as a mitigation infrastructure project under the fund?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Sorry, under efficiencies, not betterments, just to confirm?

**Ms LEAHY:** Under efficiencies.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Under efficiencies, yes, there would be nothing precluding that.

**Ms LEAHY:** To the CEO of the Reconstruction Authority, I note with the Disaster Ready Fund projects provided in the answer to the questions on notice, is there any assessment done on these projects to ascertain how these projects will drive down the cost of insurance in the respective communities?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** No. We are not in a position to be able to make a judgement about what insurance will and will not do. That is a decision for insurance companies. We work closely with the Insurance Council of Australia when we are working with communities, where we see that there are issues, and obviously some of our programs have benefits. If you were to look at the North Queensland strata title plan as well as the North Queensland Natural Disaster Mitigation Program, these types of programs do have a positive impact on insurance over time, but we are not in a position to make any assertion that it will or will not achieve a particular outcome.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to questions from government members and I have the first question. Minister, with reference to page 15 of the SDS, could you please advise the committee how much the betterment funding is currently underway and has the QRA calculated the avoided costs associated with this program? Forgive me, Minister, I know there have been general questions around betterment and other issues.

**Ms BOYD:** It is always something that we are happy to continue to talk about and showcase, Chair. A new \$100 million betterment package has been established to help communities impacted by the prolonged 2023 monsoonal floods experienced across North and Central Queensland and their long-term recovery. This brings our betterment funding currently being delivered to build back to a more resilient standard and better protect Queensland to \$270 million. This funding comprises of \$250 million established under category D of the joint state-Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, and \$20 million available under the DRFA Efficiencies Framework.

Betterment funding allows councils and state agencies to improve roads, drainage, bridges and floodways to better withstand the impacts of natural disasters. Work with the federal government is ongoing when it comes to a betterment program for the most recent disaster season.

Since 2013, we have seen 720 betterment projects across Queensland have been approved with more than \$533 million allocated for betterment programs in response to severe natural disasters. When avoided reconstruction costs associated with betterment funding were last calculated following the 2022 floods, it revealed that that was from an investment of \$174 million in projects that would have been re-impacted. We have seen \$397.5 million in avoided reconstruction costs. A new avoided costs figure will be calculated as part of the 2024 ongoing reconstruction efforts.

Betterment funding is a great example of all levels of government working together to improve the resilience of our communities. The betterment is possible because of significant investment. We recognise that cuts generally do not make things better; they make things worse. The words of the previous LNP premier ring loudly in my ears, though, after he and members of his cabinet, like the member for Broadwater and the member for Kawana, had embarked on savage Public Service cuts. Campbell Newman told the Australian Institute of Company Directors and UQ that if public servants came on a journey with him, they would think, 'It's going to be a much better public service in a few years' time.' What we saw were communities decimated and services cut. I remind the LNP that cuts do not make things better; they make things worse. Betterment can only be achieved through investment like the QRA investment in regional communities.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, I note from page 15 of the SDS that the QRA has an increase of 31 staff from the 2023-24 budget and the 2023-24 actual. Can you update the committee on this staffing increase?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. It is a wonderful opportunity for me to thank the staff at the Queensland Reconstruction Authority for the tremendous work that they do, particularly at times of the year where most other Queenslanders are taking a break, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority staff are doubling down with their efforts. What we have seen since 2011 in Queensland is 118 natural disasters, including massive floods, tropical cyclones and catastrophic bushfires that have resulted in loss of life and billions of dollars of damage to public infrastructure.

Since its establishment, the QRA has administrative responsibility for a program of works that has been estimated to be \$25.1 billion. This is currently a delivery program estimated right now at \$10 billion. The Queensland government is currently delivering one of the most significant bodies of change to Queensland's disaster and emergency management system, ensuring we are best placed to continue delivering exceptional services to Queenslanders. For QRA, the reforms will uplift capability and capacity and improve resilience across our state.

To support disaster preparedness programs and initiatives, the QRA has received 30 extra full-time equivalent positions. In addition, a further FTE is being funded for QRA's 'If it's flooded, forget it' program by the Department of Transport and Main Roads—the same program cut by the LNP. I remind LNP members of this committee that there was an LNP government that strung out a decision to extend the life of the QRA in 2014, despite calls from councils and the LGAQ that this very important body needed to be extended, and the extension was only temporary. It was not until 2015 that a Labor government ensured the QRA was a permanent entity ready to help Queenslanders when they need it. In stark contrast, the LNP cut funding to advertising like, 'If it's flooded, forget it' and refused to refund the QRA until the eleventh hour.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, in reference to the key responsibilities of the QRA, on page 13 of the SDS, could you please update the committee on how the Queensland government is continuing to support flood-affected Queenslanders through the Voluntary Home Buy-Back scheme?

**Ms BOYD:** Thank you, member. The Voluntary Home Buy-Back program was developed in response to the southern Queensland floods of 2021-22. Under the Resilient Homes Fund, buyback was identified for homes most severely impacted and at greater risk of future flooding. As at 17 June 2024, 686 flood-impacted home owners have now accepted a voluntary home buyback. Of these, 634 home owners have settled contracts under the program. To date, there have been 859 offers presented to home owners across Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan, Sunshine Coast, Fraser Coast, Gympie and Moreton Bay, Lockyer Valley, Goondiwindi, Somerset, Gold Coast and Noosa. This program allows home owners and families to move on with their lives and out of a flood zone. Once agreement for buyback is reached, the property is purchased by the local council using program funds. The property is then demolished or removed and its land is rezoned as a non-occupied use. To date, 451 properties have been demolished or removed. Work is also continuing with home owners who have expressed interest in other Resilient Homes Fund program options to either raise or retrofit their home to make them as flood resilient as possible. The removal of these properties is to ensure no-one will have to suffer the devastating impacts of flooding in that location again. For this reason, all homes purchased under the program must be demolished and the land rezoned to an appropriate non-occupied use, such as green space, by the relevant local council.

In certain circumstances, dwellings may be removed from site. This approach will be dependent on the contractor appointed by the relevant local council, noting that in many cases homes are severely damaged and non-inhabitable.

The Voluntary Home Buy-Back program is protecting vulnerable Queenslanders from future flooding risk. It would be irresponsible to endanger anyone's life by placing them in a property that has been bought back under the program and is known to have a high risk of flooding. It is important to note that other Resilient Homes Fund programs—Resilient Retrofit and Home Raise—ensure land that may still be viable for residential purposes is not removed from the housing market. Incorporating resilient building design can significantly reduce the effort, cost and time it takes to return people to their homes following a flood. The Queensland government is committed to building safer, stronger and more resilient communities.

**CHAIR:** I now hand back to the opposition for questions.

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, are there any applications for assistance under the Voluntary Home Buy-Back program and the Resilient Homes Fund that are not finalised? If so, how many in each?

**Ms BOYD:** I can confirm that both of those have outstanding balances. It is a program that has been going on, as I stated, for a period of time and it is a program that has not yet concluded. There are some instances with regard to the Voluntary Home Buy-Back where we are still working through that and still talking around that. I will hand over to the CEO to provide more detail.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I note that the Voluntary Home Buy-Back program is 92 per cent complete. Some 685 have accepted the offer and 639 are at contract. Of those, 460 homes have been demolished. There are still a number outstanding and we are working very closely with all of those involved.

**Ms LEAHY:** Can you give us a ballpark figure in relation to each? There is a buyback and there is also the Resilient Homes Fund. How many applications are still waiting for finalisation?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Offers were made and have been accepted by 685 for the Voluntary Home Buy-Back. In terms of raise and retro fit—I note that is a department of housing program—the figures as I understand them at the moment are that 1,609 have applied, 973 have been approved and 416 are complete.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. Of the contracts that have been settled and finalised, what is the total amount of funds that have been expended?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** It is \$519 million.

**Ms LEAHY:** In relation to the Voluntary Home Buy-Back program and the number of home owners who have been approved and have settled, are you able to give the number that are in each of the 12 local government areas?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I can. In terms of offers accepted or contracts settled?

**Ms LEAHY:** Offers and contracts.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Offers accepted: Brisbane is 293; Ipswich is 204; Logan is 32; Sunshine Coast is three; Fraser Coast is 22; Gympie is 35; Moreton Bay is 56; Lockyer is 24; Goondiwindi is zero; Somerset is zero; Gold Coast is 13; and Noosa shire is three. Contracts settled: we have 291 in

Brisbane; 163 in Ipswich; 32 in Logan; Sunshine Coast is three; Fraser Coast is 22; Gympie is 35; Moreton Bay is 56; Lockyer Valley is 24; Goondiwindi is zero; Somerset is zero; Gold Coast is 10; and Noosa shire is three. These are the most up-to-date figures that have been provided to me. On offers accepted, it is actually 685 and contracts settled it is 639. I have just had an update. I am sorry: my off-the-cuff figure of \$519 million was incorrect. It is \$516 million. I am sorry.

**Ms LEAHY:** With reference to the nine 2021-22 events, can the Reconstruction Authority advise of the major reasons only about 45 per cent of those projects are complete?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** With this, context is everything. At the moment we are in, I would say, unprecedented waters. We have a \$10.7 billion program of works over four years. We have more C&D packages than we have ever had in history. The claim we placed to the Commonwealth in June is the second largest claim since the QRA's inception in 2013. We have multiple events that result in a rollover, which means that if an area is damaged it may roll over into the next annual program. Obviously, there is capacity of workforce and council. There are a range of issues. In terms of average days from an event to lodgement—this speaks volumes about our wonderful councils and the amazing work of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority—in 2019-20 it was 196 and we are now down to 106. This is despite a massive program of works.

**Ms LEAHY:** Following the revelations in last year's estimates hearing, the QRA was invited to participate in the quarry native title working group. What involvement has the CEO had in the group?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** My team have attended the working groups, but I worked directly with the director-general of DAF because it was an issue that we wanted to cover in terms of the repair of essential public assets. Our focus was on making sure that at no stage would we be in a position where we could not reconnect communities. We worked in close consultation with Crown Law and DAF. In November the director-general of DAF and I, under co-signature, sent a letter to all the councils to let them know that, under section 143 of the Local Government Act, under certain circumstances—it should not be used anytime—they can go to pits that are not under ILUA. It is very important to note that this is just for REPA. It is not for maintenance and it is not for betterment; it is just to make sure our communities can reconnect quickly.

**Ms LEAHY:** How many meetings of the group has the CEO or his representative attended in the last 12 months?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** In 2023, seven quarry material native title working group meetings were convened by DAF. QRA attended four of those meetings after being extended an invitation to attend. We have attended four. The meeting that was proposed in December did not proceed.

**Ms LEAHY:** In relation to the events from 2019-20 to date, has the Queensland Reconstruction Authority received any request for extensions to projects from councils due to difficulties in accessing gravel, and is QRA aware of any increased cost to disaster recovery works due to the lack of gravel access?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I am still not aware of any delays or changes to costs. That is not to say that there is not, but it certainly has not been brought to my attention.

**Ms LEAHY:** Section 143 of the Local Government Act is only for the emergency works. Can you detail exactly what the requirements are around that so that councils that might be reading this are clear on the particular circumstances?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** It is not just emergency works; it is also for immediate recovery works and repair of essential public assets. It is making sure that that full repair can be undertaken. The only thing that cannot be undertaken is betterment and then the routine maintenance. All REPA, under the letter we have sent to councils and we had it confirmed by Crown law, is eligible to be accessed. Again, it is not to be used as a default setting; it is, rather, based on cost, time—all these types of factors that would make it problematic to use anything other than those pits.

**Ms LEAHY:** I think there is a bit of confusion out there with some of the councils. REPA is not just for emergency works? Can I get a little bit more definition around that, because councils do read the *Hansard*. I want a little bit more definition around exactly where section 143 actually applies.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** It is for all repair of essential public assets, so not just emergent works. Emergent works actually do not draw on a lot of gravel. With emergent works it is usually minor gravel, get out the plant and move things so that people can use the road. It is really important to understand that often the emergent works do not last long. They are just there, as the name would suggest, to reconnect quickly.

In some instances you will go to the immediate repair of an asset, immediate recovery works. That is quite rare because usually you will need to do some design to really understand what needs to be done to ensure the work is done appropriately. Then you have REPA, which is the broader recovery post emergent works, which is the rest of what we call category B funding.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you for that clarification. I have a further question to the minister in relation to costs for resupply to places like Kowanyama. They were cut off for 24 weeks during the 2023-24 wet season. Can you advise how much funding was expended through the DDMG to resupply Doomadgee, Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama?

**Ms BOYD:** Questions around efforts through the DDMG are probably best directed to QPS.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. In the Property Level Flood Information Portal delivery you have some continuation happening with 33 councils having formally confirmed their participation in the QRA-led portal solution. Are you able to advise who those 33 councils are that are participating in that particular solution?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I will be able to do that. I will take that one and get back to you.

**Ms BOYD:** Chair, under the standing orders, given the detail of the question that is asked, I would suggest that question would actually be better asked on notice rather than in a hearing like this. I appreciate the committee's time is valuable.

**CHAIR:** Mr Ellwood, what is the best way to manage it? Would you—

**Ms LEAHY:** Looks like she is taking it on notice.

**Ms BOYD:** Put it in as a question on notice.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** We think we can get it.

**CHAIR:** Okay. You have two minutes, member for Warrego.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. I have a further question to the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. It has been brought to my attention that there are disaster recovery funds that have been allocated to a mental health professional in Tara and that that funding actually ceased at the end of the last financial year, in June. The community, as you would be aware, have had multiple disaster events. Would the QRA give consideration to extending that funding for that position?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I am very happy to work with the council to understand the issue, absolutely.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. I have a further question to the CEO. In the SDS we see that a final tranche 4 of the LiDAR data and acquisition is underway with the exception of the Maranoa area. Can I ask why the Maranoa area has not been included in that LiDAR tranche?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I will get back to you on that.

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a further question to the CEO of the Reconstruction Authority. Does the Queensland Reconstruction Authority have any funding streams to assist councils to mitigate against future bushfire risks and make those bushfire areas—we have certain ones around Millmerran and Tara and there are various other ones—safer, to do that early mitigation work?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** There were the devastating fires in October of last year—and you would be very familiar with them—1,000 fires across the state, which was absolutely horrendous. In particular, the Tara area was hit so badly, so the state has funded a \$500,000 study to mitigate the risk. I think that is really an important first step: to understand what can be done to reduce the devastation that we saw.

**CHAIR:** We will now go to the crossbench. Member for Noosa?

**Ms BOLTON:** I will go to an earlier question that I asked the minister regarding the interrelation between things like CHAP and QCoast 2100 in relation to the criteria. In relation to mitigation funding or the efficiencies funding, is there criteria that says, 'A local government must have in place their disaster management plans or their coastal hazard adaptation plans'? Do they all have to be in place? Is there a criteria from the state that says, 'To access that funding this is what you need to have'?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** No.

**Ms BOLTON:** Fabulous. Given the amount of money that you have been speaking about—we are talking in the billions—can you clarify whether that funding comes from the Commonwealth?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Are we talking about the Disaster Ready Fund?

**Ms BOLTON:** I am talking about reconstruction, so during disasters.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Reconstruction is a joint arrangement between state and federal.

**Ms BOLTON:** With the increases in disasters that are predicted, obviously those funds are going to increase further and further. Does the data that is used in the forecasting come from local government forecasting?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** In fact, I will jump back to the very first question. Through the Sendai agreements, every region now has a regional resilience strategy. This is really important because it ensures that every region has contemplated what it needs to do and the measures it must take to make it more resilient. That was done over the last 24 months and it is amazing work by councils. We work very closely with councils; we have resilience and recovery officers who work with councils to walk them through that. They do have plans. That is essential to make sure that we are not making poor investments.

In terms of the risks that are evolving with climate, we work very closely with councils because we are always going to be council led. That is the strength of Queensland and that is the basis upon which we have been working. The Queensland Flood Risk Management Framework again focuses on a decentralised model, but at the same time we work hand in glove. We have our flood risk management team who are experts in flood risk and understanding what climate change over time will do. Indeed, for our very own strategy for the Queensland Reconstruction Authority I will not say we are fixated but we are fascinated by what climate change is going to bring and what we need to do to make ourselves more resilient. Having now seen up close and personal the Black Summer fires and then the terrible floods of 2021-22—and then many forget in 2022-23 the terrible flooding in the north and north-west, some of it unprecedented, and then over Christmas the tropical cyclone and flooding and the storms in South-East Queensland, Tropical Cyclone Kirrily and the subsequent flooding—we have to make sure that what we are doing is focused on getting stronger because the impacts are growing.

**Ms BOLTON:** I will hand over to the member for Maiwar. Thank you.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Great; thank you, member for Noosa. I wanted to ask some further questions on the Voluntary Home Buy-Back scheme under the Resilient Homes Fund. That fund was announced by the now Premier while standing on Vincent Street in Auchenflower in my electorate, and I have had a lot of dealings with the residents there who have sought to access the buyback scheme. Despite their best efforts, though, they have been refused access to the scheme and have, on their account of things, been given conflicting information about the criteria for deciding what would be bought back and what would not. My first question to the CEO of the Reconstruction Authority is: where would we find—if you can give them in shorthand—what are the actual criteria applied when deciding whether to buy back and who is applying those criteria?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** Firstly, the council requirements for the area are one, because obviously we were doing this in close consultation with council. Council needed to be a part of this process. Secondly, it comes down to risk to life in the property. It comes down to the height of the water but not just the height. Flooding is one thing, but water velocity is the second factor that is taken into account. It is hard to find the exact point—a centimetre here or a centimetre there—so we have used a standard that council has endorsed and that is how, but it is water height, water velocity and risk to life.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Okay; thank you. That is helpful. On that basis, though, I understand—again, just from what I have seen and been told by these residents—that there are some houses in the immediately surrounding streets that have been bought back where residents were in fact able to walk out the front door before the flooding took hold, yet these other homes were under two-plus metres of floodwater and they have been declined under the scheme. How is that possible under those criteria?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** I would have to take those specific examples and look at them, but what I have said stands. It is difficult. I have met householders who are, frankly, petrified of their house. They have been through trauma and they just do not want to be there, and I understand that. If you could you would fix all of their problems but you cannot, so we have had to focus and we have had to use science to get us to the answer and to work closely with council as well.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I caught the figures before about how much has been spent on buybacks to date, but can you advise what quantum of funds left for buying back properties and is there any way that the public can know which properties have been bought back under the scheme?



**Major Gen. Ellwood:** The program with the offers that have gone out are the ones—that is it—so there will be no more offers placed out, and we should not forget we still have the raise and retrofit program, but the program is closed. Obviously, it was advertised for quite some time and there is no scope to reopen that.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I have one final question if I might, Chair, and thanks for your indulgence. These residents have—at least one household and I think two—dealt with the internal review process. I am curious to know how many requests for internal review of a decision to refuse buyback have been made and how many of those were ultimately successful.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** We have had 16 complaints that were managed through the QRA formal complaints process. All but one related to eligibility. The other was related to a valuation but was withdrawn prior to completion. The appeals primarily related to eligibility for voluntary home buybacks. It is important to note that some homes were processed through multiple levels of appeals all the way to the ombudsman, so the total number of appeals is not reflective of the total number of home owners who appealed the VHBB decision. Included in the total number of appeals were valuation of appeals of 20 properties.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Okay, so 20 properties in total?

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** That was for valuations.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** There were a number of questions that Mr Ellwood took on notice. The first one was the dollar amount for the tourist operators.

**Ms BOYD:** Yes, Chair; I can respond to that. In terms of the \$10 million tourism fund announced in February, I have been advised that the Department of Tourism and Sport data provided to QRA reports 83 grants approved for just about \$6½ million, so \$6,441,781. Of this, the department has paid out \$2,962,810.

I can also update the committee that, in terms of the question regarding levees, QRA is not the lead agency for building levee banks in Queensland. QRA has funded works for levees, including the Bundaberg levee as well as the repairs to the Goondiwindi levee.

Regarding Queensland's betterment contribution, there is no upper or lower limit, but eligible Queensland councils generally contribute between five per cent and 10 per cent towards eligible approved betterment projects. The remaining funding is met by the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, the Queensland Betterment Fund as well as the reconstruction of essential public assets funded by the Queensland and Australian governments, and I think the CEO was keen to read out the list of 33 councils.

**Major Gen. Ellwood:** They are Balonne, Banana, Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Bundaberg, Carpentaria, Central Highlands, Cherbourg, Diamantina, Flinders, Fraser Coast, Gladstone, Goondiwindi, Gympie, Ipswich, Isaac, Kowanyama, Livingstone, Longreach, Maranoa, Murweh, Noosa, North Burnett, Redland, Rockhampton, Scenic Rim, Somerset, Southern Downs, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and Western Downs.

I will just note the question about the Property Level Flood Information Portals. The Property Level Flood Information Portals initiative has received \$10 million allocated from the \$741 million Resilient Homes Fund comprising \$9.8 million for the delivery of local council portals administered by QRA and \$200,000 to update the state administered FloodCheck portal delivered by the Department of Resources. We also have an answer on Maranoa.

**Ms BOYD:** In terms of the question regarding Maranoa, the tranche 4 LiDAR is now complete with the exception of Maranoa Regional Council. The QRA, the Department of Resources and council have now finalised scoping of the LiDAR extent for Maranoa to ensure it will inform future flood studies and risk management studies. We received an additional \$6 million that will ensure the completed area scope for Maranoa can now be procured. Scoping and timing have been agreed in collaboration with the Maranoa Regional Council.

**CHAIR:** Minister, would you like to make a closing statement before we end this section?

**Ms BOYD:** I would love to, Chair. Thank you so much for your indulgence. I take this opportunity to firstly thank yourself and the committee members here today for their participation in today's hearing. Thank you also to the secretariat and Hansard. I thank Queensland Reconstruction Authority CEO Jake Ellwood and the hardworking staff of the QRA. They do a truly remarkable job. There is an enormous amount of work required not only to prepare for these hearings but also to respond to natural disasters.

The portfolio of work managed by the QRA is massive, with the goal of better preparing Queensland for natural disasters and responding to assist Queensland communities when they need it most. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We have now reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the disaster recovery portfolio. Thank you to Hansard, the parliamentary staff and my committee.

**CHAIR:** I welcome the minister, the commissioner, officials and department officers. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of corrective services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you want to make an opening statement?

**Ms BOYD:** Thank you for your indulgence, Chair; I do. Community safety is at the forefront of the work being delivered 365 days a year by the hardworking and committed people at Queensland Corrective Services. To support this, our government has committed \$1.9 billion for QCS to deliver the 2024-25 budget, which will bring more capacity and more programs, address recidivism and domestic and family violence, and support victims of crime. It will also allow the QCS to continue to enhance community safety through evidence-based corrective services to maximise rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. It will help address the root causes of crime, rehabilitate offenders and make Queensland communities safer. It will also see a new Lockyer Valley correctional centre begin commissioning to expand the custodial estate by more than 1,500 beds and, importantly, bring more than 800 good secure long-term jobs for people living in the region. We have committed to increasing the QCS workforce by a further 1,000 new frontline officers in cities and regions across Queensland.

Our record-high budget recognises that the QCS is a critical public safety agency and the government is committed to supporting those workers who put community safety at the heart of what they do. The remarkable QCS frontline officers work in challenging environments to rehabilitate some of the most complex people in our society and protect community safety every day, and they do so with commitment and dedication.

In 2023, the QCS's highly skilled academy recruited and trained 598 new custodial correctional officers and will train 700 more by the end of 2024. That is 1,300 people now in good secure jobs with a myriad rewarding career paths that contribute to keeping our communities safe. It is the commitment and dedication of those officers that has seen recidivism improve by 2.6 per cent in 2022-23 to 49.4 per cent through programs and efforts to rehabilitate people in custody.

I want to recognise the really important contribution that the community corrections branch of the QCS has on community safety. Frontline officers, including case managers, senior case managers, probation service officers and electronic monitoring surveillance officers, work tirelessly each day to monitor offenders' compliance with their order conditions. They have daily interactions with supervised individuals in community and play an important role in reducing recidivism by helping offenders complete rehabilitation programs towards a crime-free life.

I take the opportunity to confirm today the fulfilment of recommendation 1 of the Queensland Parole System Review, which was accepted by government in 2017, to conduct a follow-up review of the parole system five years on. Chair, I am pleased to say that that is now complete and I can advise that 43 recommendations made by former District Judge Milton Griffith KC have been supported or supported in principle. This is an important piece of work and I thank all of those involved. Chair, I have copies of the government response to that report to table here today.

**CHAIR:** Are you seeking leave to table that?

**Ms BOYD:** Yes, I am, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted. I now hand over to the member for Burdekin.

**Mr LAST:** My first question is to the minister. Minister, have you personally referred any matter to the Crime and Corruption Commission since you have been the minister for corrections?

**Ms BOYD:** I cannot recall off the top of my head but I would say that the likelihood is yes.

**Mr LAST:** You have?

**Ms BOYD:** I think so but I could not say for sure. I would need to double-check that.

**Mr LAST:** With respect to the resignation of the Parole Board chair, the ABC reported that you had requested a meeting with Mr Byrne to ‘understand any issues’ and ensure that the board was aware of the government’s expectations. On what date did that meeting take place and who was present?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. The member was in fact in the Legislative Assembly when I made this statement to the House as well so, in addition to it being published in a news article—

**Mr LAST:** Just answer the question.

**Ms BOYD:** I am answering your question. Thank you for delaying me. In relation to the response, it was also published in a news article as a result of me making that contribution in the Legislative Assembly. I can advise that I met with Mr Byrne on 12 June 2024. During that meeting I stressed the importance of having a parole board that was well managed and operating effectively and one that the community has confidence in.

**Mr LAST:** I have a follow-up question. Minister, did you at any meeting with Mr Byrne or has anyone else had discussions with you about any issues involving financial matters, allowances, expenses and particular authorisations that Mr Byrne approved in his capacity as president?

**Ms BOYD:** Not that I can recall off the top of my head.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, the opposition has been advised that there were allegations that travel allowances were paid to a person within the Parole Board that the former president had a close friendship with; is that correct?

**Ms BOYD:** Are these allegations that you have referred to appropriate agencies?

**Mr LAST:** I am asking the question.

**Ms BOYD:** I am providing the answer.

**Mr LAST:** Would you like me to repeat the question?

**Ms BOYD:** If the opposition are aware of any inappropriate conduct, I would advise them to make those complaints and report that behaviour to the appropriate agencies.

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

**CHAIR:** What is the point of order?

**Mr KRAUSE:** The question was asked. It is not for the minister to ask questions but to answer them in this forum, and I would ask that she answer the question.

**Ms BOYD:** I have answered it.

**CHAIR:** Move on. Next question, please.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, have you been made aware of any allegations involving the former president of the Parole Board?

**Ms BOYD:** In relation to?

**Mr LAST:** Allowances.

**Ms BOYD:** If you have something to say, just say it. In terms of allowances—

**Mr LAST:** I have asked the question, Minister.

**Ms BOYD:** Not that I can recall.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, did you advise Mr Byrne—

**Ms BOYD:** I can also advise, Chair, that if I had evidence of any element of wrongdoing I would report it to the relevant agencies immediately. If those opposite have evidence of wrongdoing, I would recommend they report it to the relevant agencies immediately.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, did you advise Mr Byrne that you had lost confidence in him at that meeting, or did Mr Byrne offer his resignation?

**Ms BOYD:** I have stated, member, that when I met with Mr Byrne on 12 June I stressed to him the importance of having a parole board that was well managed, was operating effectively and the community had confidence in. Mr Byrne tendered his resignation days after that meeting.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, who chose the effective date of Mr Byrne’s resignation as 4 July?

**Ms BOYD:** I could not speak to the conditions with which he tendered his resignation or information that went around it.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, when did you become aware that, by his resignation taking effect on 4 July, Mr Byrne would be entitled to an increase in his judicial pension, which is payable for the rest of his life?

**Ms BOYD:** Sorry, can you restate the question?

**Mr LAST:** When did you become aware that, by his resignation taking effect on 4 July, Mr Byrne would be entitled to an increase in his judicial pension, which is payable for the rest of his life?

**Ms BOYD:** I could not comment on any matters that are of a private nature like this, Chair. I do not think it is reasonable to have people discuss these things in the open.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, if I may?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, in the meetings you have had with the Parole Board former president, were there any discussions of allowances, or have you had anyone from the department, your office or Mr Byrne directly tell you that there were allegations about inappropriate allowances being paid to other people, maybe employed in the department or the Parole Board, associated with Mr Byrne?

**Ms BOYD:** That is a huge question, member. It has about three different components to it. What is the actual question?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I would like you to answer any of them, please.

**Ms BOYD:** It has three different facets, so maybe you would like to pose them differently.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Well, answer the three facets. Minister, I feel that you are trying to avoid the question. It is very direct.

**Ms BOYD:** It was a question that had a number of components to it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Would you like to answer the components, please?

**Ms BOYD:** Yes, sure. Ask them.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I just did.

**Ms BOYD:** It was a lengthy question, member, so I will need you to redo it.

**CHAIR:** Can I just intervene here for one second.

**Ms BOYD:** Please, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, would you mind breaking the questions up into the three parts, please.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, the member for Burdekin has laid before the committee allegations that the opposition has been told by whistleblowers that the elements of Mr Byrne's resignation alleged to have involved allowances being paid to associates of Mr Byrne in the Parole Board or the department that he had a close personal or intimate relationship with. Are you aware of that?

**Ms BOYD:** No.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** When you met with Mr Byrne in June, did you ask him to resign or did he offer his resignation?

**Ms BOYD:** Neither. When I met with him in June, I told him that I wanted a parole board that was well managed, operating effectively and the community had confidence in. He did not tender his resignation to me in that meeting, and I did not ask for his resignation in that meeting.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What were the reasons for him to resign?

**Ms BOYD:** You would need to take that up with him. He would need to answer those questions.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You were not told? You were not told why your Parole Board president, appointed by the government, resigned all of a sudden, out of the blue, after meeting with you?

**Ms BOYD:** I have answered the question. You will need to direct your questions to him.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** He is not the Parole Board president anymore. We would if we could. Commissioner, if I may, are you aware of any allegations of inappropriate use of allowances or travel allowances or any allegations made against the Parole Board former president involving a close friendship or association he may have had with someone in the department or the Parole Board?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. If any allegations were made in relation to that, they would be of sufficient nature to refer to the Crime and Corruption Commission. If indeed they were—and I am not saying whether they were or were not—it would not be appropriate to discuss matters that have been referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission in this committee,

due to the legislative requirements in relation to privacy and matters that the Crime and Corruption Commission considers. That is a matter that would, if it happened, be referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The Clerk of the Parliament has advised this estimates hearings process that even if a matter is before the CCC that does not prevent it being discussed at estimates. The allegations we have heard involve an inappropriate use of travel allowances by the Parole Board former president. I think it is pretty important for Queenslanders and this committee to understand if you were aware. I am asking if you were aware of those allegations, please.

**Commissioner Stewart:** My understanding of the legislation and the CCC process is that if I were aware of those allegations it would be my responsibility to report those to the CCC.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Did you report any allegations to the CCC?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I report, unfortunately, a lot of allegations to the CCC.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Commissioner, I am being very direct. I have put to you certain allegations in a very small scope. Did you or anyone refer the particulars of those allegations that we have raised tonight to the Crime and Corruption Commission?

**Commissioner Stewart:** And if I were of the opinion that I could disclose that without breaching a legislative requirement of the Crime and Corruption Commission, I would do that. But my understanding of it is that there are matters before the CCC that I cannot discuss if anything has been referred.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** So you have confirmed there are matters before the CCC.

**CHAIR:** Can I just intervene here for a second.

**Ms BOYD:** Come off it! Stop verballing him.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Grow up, Minister. Act like a minister of the Crown, please.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana!

**Ms BOYD:** There is no doubt you were Queensland's worst attorney-general.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana and Minister!

**Ms BOYD:** Why did the Solicitor-General resign under your watch?

**CHAIR:** Minister! This is not helping.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You had to write that down to say a joke? Seriously?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana—

**Ms BOYD:** What are you? The henchman?

**CHAIR:** This is not helping. Commissioner, I understand that the question has been answered. I ask the member for Kawana to ask the next question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Commissioner, the allegations I have put to you tonight with the Parole Board former president: have you discussed these with the minister or her office?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I have discussed a whole range of things with the minister's office—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Sorry, Commissioner, I—

**CHAIR:** Do not interrupt him. Let him answer the question.

**Commissioner Stewart:** I am sorry, Chair.

**Ms BOYD:** No, don't apologise.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Excuse me?

**CHAIR:** Just let the commissioner answer the question. If you are not satisfied with the answer you get, you can ask the next question.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Member, my fundamental understanding is that anything I disclose and report to the CCC is a matter for the CCC, and I am not able to discuss anything that may or may not happen around those events because they are matters that potentially would be considered by the CCC.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Would you ordinarily, though, discuss these with the minister?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Ordinarily there would be a range of things that I discuss with the minister in relation to our agency, yes.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** On the particular matter I raised, though, it is very important for the public to understand if there were allegations of misappropriation of travel allowance by someone employed by this department. It is quite a serious allegation; hence the member for Burdekin and I have brought it to these estimates proceedings. We need to ascertain what the allegations were, if in fact they were referred to the CCC. More importantly, Commissioner, I am trying to understand whether you have had these discussions about the exit and resignation of the Parole Board former president with the minister and what she knew about this matter.

**Commissioner Stewart:** I am obviously aware that the president has resigned, yes. I was advised of that. However, matters that are before the CCC require investigation. Had these allegations been made, and if they were referred, that would be a matter for the CCC and something that I would not be in a position to discuss in a public environment. That is my understanding of these matters.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I ask you to ask the next question. The commissioner has repeatedly answered the question that you have asked. You may not like the answer but that is it.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am not satisfied we have an answer. That is the problem, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am asking you to ask the next question and not to go down this path again.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you. I just make the point to the minister that even the CCC chair in estimates over the years has advised whether matters are before the CCC, so I cannot understand—

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair—

**CHAIR:** No.

**Ms BOYD:** It is not a question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair—

**CHAIR:** I am the chair.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take a point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I will deal with your point of order when I am finished. It is not your place to come here and make points. You are here with the permission of the committee and that permission can be withdrawn at any time. You are here to ask questions, not to make points.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am here to get to the truth, and that is what I am trying to do.

**CHAIR:** No.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I had a point of order, Mr Chair. Are you going to take my point of order?

**CHAIR:** What is your point of order?

**Ms BOYD:** Jack Nicholson's on the committee.

**CHAIR:** What is your point of order?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Seriously, are you going to allow the minister to behave like this, Chair?

**CHAIR:** No. I have just given you the opportunity to tell me what your point of order is.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The point of order is this, Chair: why is the CCC chair able to advise estimates what matters are subject to CCC investigations but—

**CHAIR:** Well, that is not a point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:**—the department of corrections is not?

**CHAIR:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** A question to the minister—

**CHAIR:** No.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The minister said before—

**CHAIR:** If this continues, I will adjourn and we can go out and discuss it and you can come and make your case to the committee in private. At this stage—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is going to blow back on the government, I assure you of this. Minister—

**CHAIR:** Okay. That is it. We are adjourning.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Chair, I want to ask my question.

**CHAIR:** No. We are adjourning.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You are protecting the minister.

**Ms BOYD:** You want to grandstand.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You are protecting the minister. This is disgraceful.

**CHAIR:** I am not protecting anyone. Don't argue with me.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is disgraceful.

**CHAIR:** We are adjourning. Let's go.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I want to ask my question before you adjourn, Chair.

**CHAIR:** You are not asking your question.

**Proceedings suspended from 7.52 pm to 8.02 pm.**



**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, there is just one thing I said that I would like to correct—that is, I made a statement which said that you were here at the invitation of the committee. That is an error on my part. The standing rules were changed in the House so that does not apply, but I do have two points to put to you. Questions can be put in accordance with the standing rules. Members are to refrain from arguing with witnesses. I ask you to desist from arguing with witnesses.

As far as the question that you have put to the commissioner is concerned in relation to whether or not he has had—and I am paraphrasing—any discussions with the CCC, that question has been sufficiently answered by the commissioner. You may not like the answer, but it is not your place to argue with him or to try to insist that he can answer the question. I do not have any powers to ask the witness to answer the question. He has answered the question. I ask you, if you are going to continue to stay here, to go on to your next question or go on to another subject.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Commissioner, while the committee was adjourned I was advised there is nothing in the legislation preventing you from answering my question about referrals to the CCC.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I would like to know—

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Point of order, Chair: you ruled earlier that I was unable to ask the question and that I might not like the answer but we have to abide by the law.

**CHAIR:** There is no compulsion on the chair of this committee to direct the commissioner to answer the question the way you may want it answered. He has answered the question that you put to him several times. I ask you to move on.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am giving the commissioner, now knowing the legislative facts, one more opportunity to tell this committee the truth. I am asking that again.

**CHAIR:** No. There are imputations there. Member for Kawana, you are saying to the commissioner that he is not telling the truth.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I did not say that.

**CHAIR:** If that is not an imputation, I do not know what is.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Chair, I take personal offence and I ask you to withdraw that statement. I never made that imputation.

**CHAIR:** Can you stop arguing with me? Otherwise I will rule—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Point of order, Chair—

**CHAIR:** Just let me finish. I will come to you. Stop arguing with me, member for Kawana. You are running very close to being disorderly. What is your point of order?

**Mr KRAUSE:** The member for Kawana has taken personal offence at your comment, and in line with all of the conventions of the House I would ask that you withdraw.

**CHAIR:** In accordance with the conventions of the House, I withdraw. Member for Kawana, I ask you to either move on to a different subject or—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, based on your comments before, what prompted you to feel the need to advise of your expectations to the Parole Board president when you met with him? What prompted that discussion?

**Ms BOYD:** I have made an extensive ministerial statement in the House that outlined this. It is a matter of public record.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, are you aware of section 57 of the Criminal Code?

**Ms BOYD:** I have not memorised the Criminal Code.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Section 57 is ministers and witnesses giving false testimony to estimates committees. It is what Gordon Nuttall went to jail for. Are you now aware of what section 57 is?

**Ms BOYD:** I would have to look up section 57 and read it for myself.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, based on the advice I received, which is that these matters can be discussed, can you please advise this committee: based on the allegations we set out before, have you any awareness of the allegations I have raised?

**Ms BOYD:** Chair, the question has been asked multiple times. It has been answered by myself and the commissioner multiple times.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** You have not answered it. Does the minister have any awareness of these allegations? Are you refusing to answer the question?

**Ms BOYD:** I have answered the question, member for Kawana. We have traversed this—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It is yes or no. You said you could not recall—

**CHAIR:** You are arguing again. I have asked you not to argue with the witnesses. The minister can answer the question any way she wishes. In my view—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Chair, what is the point—

**CHAIR:** Now you are arguing with me.

**Mr BLEIJIE:**—of estimates when there is a cover-up by this minister?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, do not argue with me.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** There is a cover-up by this minister.

**CHAIR:** Do not argue with me.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** She is refusing—

**CHAIR:** You are making statements. You are here to ask questions.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As you are, and she is refusing to answer the questions.

**Ms BOYD:** I take personal offence at the statements of the member for Kawana and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Just tell us the truth. What happened at the meeting?

**CHAIR:** One point of order at a time. Member for Kawana, the minister has taken personal offence. I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I withdraw.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, I ask you to move on to another subject if you are going to continue to ask questions of the minister or the commissioner.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I have plenty of questions in this regard, but if the commissioner and minister are refusing to answer my questions then what is the point of the estimates committee?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, this is the last time I am going to—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What is the point?

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, this is the last time I am going to say this. Either move on to a new subject or ask another question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Minister, when the minister became aware of the allegations that I raised today, why did the minister not personally refer them to the Crime and Corruption Commission?

**CHAIR:** That question has been answered and I ask you to move on.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It has not. It has not been answered.



**CHAIR:** That question has been answered and I ask you to move on.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The minister is not answering the questions.

**CHAIR:** Ask another question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This is a joke. This is an absolute joke. The minister cannot even say whether she knew it, was aware of it and has referred it when she became aware—

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, your behaviour is disruptive—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I submit that the minister—

**CHAIR:** Do not argue with me.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am not. I am asking—

**CHAIR:** I have asked you several times not to argue.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I submit the minister knew about it and she did not refer to it to the CCC under her obligations under the legislation.

**CHAIR:** Member for Kawana, you have already been warned about your disruptive conduct. Under standing order 185, I ask you to withdraw immediately from the hearing for 30 minutes.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Kawana withdrew from the committee at 8.09 pm.*

**CHAIR:** Member for Burdekin or member for Scenic Rim, do you have some questions? I understand we are still in opposition time.

**Mr LAST:** I have a question to the commissioner. I refer to page 65 of the Capital Statement regarding funding for the Wacol precinct. Commissioner, what was the cost of the review conducted by an external body?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. Are we talking about the Wacol precinct?

**Mr LAST:** Yes, we are, for the dangerous prisoners, sexual offenders.

**Commissioner Stewart:** You are talking about the high-risk offender management—

**Mr LAST:** Yes.

**Commissioner Stewart:** My apologies, member; we have a lot of facilities in the Wacol precinct. I thank the member for the question. What we are talking about here are two reviews that were conducted in relation to the high-risk offender management area—the dangerous prisoner sex offender area. One review was an internal review and another review was conducted by another agency within government and there was no cost in relation to the reviews.

**Mr LAST:** I have a follow-up question. Commissioner, can you guarantee that as of today no unauthorised persons can access the dangerous prisoners sexual offenders housing area at the Wacol correctional centre?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. As a result of those reviews, we have done a significant amount of work out at the precinct. We have erected a three-metre high fence. We have cleared a lot of land. We have also put in additional CCTV cameras. We have people who are working on the precinct at this time. As you would imagine, this is not a correctional facility. Therefore, whilst we have done everything that we can do to mitigate the risk of someone coming onto that property, and whilst the risk is extremely low that that can occur, I cannot give a guarantee that no-one would be able to get onto the precinct. However, the risk is considerably much lower and we have mitigated on the basis of implementing everything that was recommended to us.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, in pre-hearing question on notice No. 8 the minister advised there is now a boom gate to control vehicle entry to that area that is video monitored.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes, that is correct.

**Mr LAST:** Given there have been allegations that visitors to the area may have previously been hidden in cars driven by offenders, can you explain how a remotely monitored camera would prevent that situation occurring again?

**Commissioner Stewart:** We have a significant number of cameras within the precinct that are viewed 24 hours a day by people within the precinct. We have also put in a number of bollards to make sure that vehicles cannot get into areas where they are away from the CCTV. We continually monitor, in particular, the use of vehicles coming in and out of the precinct.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Commissioner. If I could ask a follow-up question, Chair?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, how many inmates across all facilities have been charged in relation to drug related offences in the past 12 months?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. We have zero tolerance in relation to contraband coming into our correctional facilities. We have a whole range of processes in place in order to stop that. We have drug dogs, we have detection scanning, we have a whole range of processes. Drones are another way that prisoners have attempted in the past to get those in. The other thing that we are doing is implementing body scanners into a number of our facilities as well. In 2023-24 there were 2,446 items of drug-related contraband located within correctional centres.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, can you advise how many staff were assaulted in the last 12 months?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. Again, one assault is one too many for our staff. If I can take the opportunity to acknowledge the complex work that our people do and face every day in very difficult circumstances. Interestingly, the number of serious assaults is actually the same as last year. It was 11 last year and 11 this year. The rate for that is 0.10—that is serious assaults. In relation to assaults, last year there were 92 officers and this year there are 82 officers. In the category of other assault, which is a push or a shove not resulting in an injury, there was an increase in relation to that from 385 last year to 454 this year.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you. Minister, could I revisit the previous questions that were asked. If the minister has answered the question as outlined by the chair, can you confirm if it is a yes or a no as having been referred to the CCC as per your obligation?

**CHAIR:** This question has been canvassed.

**Mr LAST:** Not by me.

**CHAIR:** It does not matter. It has been canvassed and I ask you to move on.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I do not think it has been answered by the minister.

**CHAIR:** It has been asked several times with several variations.

**Mr KRAUSE:** It has not been answered though. There is no legal impediment to—

**CHAIR:** Do not argue with me. I am telling the committee: the question has been answered. Move on. Ask another question about another subject, but that question in relation to the travel or whatever it is that has been put to the minister and the commissioner several times in several different versions is finished. Move on. Ask another question about another subject.

**Mr LAST:** Well, in a different version on that, Chair, I have a question to the commissioner. What were the reasons that the Parole Board chair resigned? That is not relating to what we just talked about.

**CHAIR:** Commissioner, I do not know if you can answer that.

**Commissioner Stewart:** I am not aware of the reasons that the Parole Board president resigned. I thank the member for the question but I have no idea in relation to why the president resigned.

**Mr LAST:** All right. Commissioner, I refer to the performance statement on pages 3 and 4 of the SDS regarding facility utilisation. What is the current number of prisoners and the current utilisation rate on both a built cell and a built bed capacity?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. Do you want it as of 30 June or as of today?

**Mr LAST:** As of today, thank you.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Minister, if it is all right with you to get the latest information in relation to today?

**Ms BOYD:** Sure, thanks, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Stewart:** We have approximately at the moment 10,800 prisoners in our facilities. It is 10,860 today, I believe, but I will get the exact figures in relation to the snapshot for today for you.

**Mr LAST:** Moving on, are any staff currently stood down pending investigations?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Member, I have the prisoner numbers.

**Mr LAST:** Okay, I will come back to that staff question.

**Commissioner Stewart:** In relation to the numbers today, we have 10,892 prisoners in total. We have 11,188 beds, and capacity utilisation as of today for cells is 143.6 per cent.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you. Coming back to that other question: are any staff currently stood down pending any investigations?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes, we do have a number of people who are suspended in the organisation at this particular time. From recollection, the number is approximately 36 but I will just verify that. As of 30 June 2024 there were 31 employees suspended under section 101(1)A of the Public Service Act; 29 were suspended on normal remuneration and two were suspended without normal remuneration.

**Mr LAST:** Are you aware of any Parole Board staff being stood down at the present time?

**Commissioner Stewart:** No, I am not aware. For clarity, the Parole Board is an independent statutory authority. The president, the deputy president and the Parole Board professional members are a part of the Parole Board, which is an independent statutory authority. Our people are the secretariat—the QCS staff in the secretariat—and I am not aware of any people being suspended from the secretariat in the Parole Board.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, are you aware of any members of the Parole Board being stood down?

**Ms BOYD:** No.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, based on the current number of prisoners, how many additional cells do you need to bring utilisation on a built-cell basis to the targeted 90 per cent, and how many cells will be available at the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre on the day it opens?

**CHAIR:** Member for Burdekin, I am sorry to interrupt, but it makes the flow of questioning a lot easier if you just ask one question and then ask the follow-up. That was a double-barrelled question. There were two questions in there. Ask the first question. You asked about the capacity to bring it up to—I am paraphrasing—

**Mr LAST:** The commissioner answered it.

**CHAIR:** Then the next question was about numbers. Just ask the first question.

**Mr LAST:** Do you want me to repeat the question?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, based on the current number of prisoners, how many additional cells do you need to bring utilisation on a built-cell basis to the target of 90 per cent, and how many cells will be available at the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre on the day—

**CHAIR:** And that is the second question: how many cells will be available?

**Ms BOYD:** I answered that in my opening statement.

**CHAIR:** Go ahead, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. In relation to the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre, there will be 1,536 beds in that new facility when it comes online, and we may need to get that information to provide before the end of the session in relation to the number of cells at Lockyer Valley. The calculation around the number of cells to bring in line with 90 per cent would be something that we would need to do and potentially come back by the end of the session, if our people could be calculating that for us, thanks.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, when the Lockyer Valley centre opens, will prisoners from facilities that are currently over the target built-bed utilisation rate be transferred to that new centre?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes, that is correct. Part of having Lockyer Valley come online will be the ability to move people from facilities where there are higher numbers of prisoners in those facilities to balance the load across corrective services.

**Mr LAST:** Given that 143 per cent figure, even after the Lockyer Valley Centre opens we will still have centres above the target built-bed utilisation rate?

**Commissioner Stewart:** For cells, but we will not have for beds. We will have sufficient built beds, but we will not be in a position to have one prisoner per cell. In the Lockyer Valley centre, some of the new cells are actually designed for two people. They are a larger footprint to enable two people to be in the one cell.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what was the total cost last financial year to fly prisoners and utilise taxis for prisoner transport in Queensland?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. Queensland being a large state, obviously we utilise the Queensland Government Air Wing for prisoner transport, and we also utilise, where we have to, commercial providers in relation to prisoner transport. Staff air travel expenses incurred for escorting prisoners—sorry, we expended a total of \$3.4 million on domestic air travel last year. That would not have just been for prisoners, though, because when we take prisoners we have to escort them. That would have been the cost of transporting people around.

**Mr LAST:** And what about taxi fares?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Taxi fares would be something we would need to get from our finance people. In relation to the clarification around that point, the \$3.4 million on domestic air travel would be not only travel for our people escorting, as I said, but also travel for your Community Corrections people. The staff air travel expenses for escorting prisoners make up 21 per cent of that, which was \$703,672 of the total domestic airfare travel expense.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, are you taking that on notice, the amount expended on taxi fares?

**Ms BOYD:** Yes, if you need it.

**Mr LAST:** I do.

**Commissioner Stewart:** We will try to come back before the end of the session.

**Ms BOYD:** If we can capture it.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, the Corrective Services annual report 2022-23 referred to a 12-month trial of body scanners at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre. Has that trial been completed?

**Commissioner Stewart:** The trial commenced last Wednesday in relation to the utilisation of body scanners, and that was as a result of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations. The body scanner is now active in the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre. The minister and I went out to view the body scanner the other day. There had already been 200 prisoners who had been through the body scanner and had not required a removal-of-clothing search due to the utilisation of the body scanner.

**Mr LAST:** Will a body scanner be in place at the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre when it opens?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes, that is part of the design as well.

**Mr LAST:** From the day it opens?

**Ms BOYD:** Yes.

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes, that is correct.

**Mr KRAUSE:** Commissioner, you mentioned zero tolerance for drugs before. I wanted to ask if any Corrective Services staff are under investigation or stood down for involvement in supplying drugs in any corrective services installation across the state at the moment?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Yes, there are, unfortunately, a small number of people, and they have been in the media and the public is aware that there are people, unfortunately. From my recollection—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Where have they been referred to for investigation?

**Commissioner Stewart:** The Queensland Police Service would have investigated those individuals. From recollection, I am aware of two—a very small number of people. We have over 7,000 people in our organisation and, unfortunately, not all people do the right thing, but these individuals were picked up through our own processes, together with the Queensland Police Service. They are matters before the court and I am not really able to discuss—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Not referred to the CCC?

**Commissioner Stewart:** Ah—

**CHAIR:** I go to the crossbench now, please.

**Ms BOLTON:** With the increase in young people transferring from youth detention to adult corrections as a result of amendments to the Youth Justice Act, how is Corrections ensuring that these detainees maintain any of the rehabilitations, supports and other services they were receiving before transfer?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question—an important question particularly with young people coming in to adult facilities, because it is a difficult time for them. However, it is the responsibility of Youth Justice to make sure there is consideration given to how individuals involved in any programs or education continue that on through QCS. When the 18-year-olds transfer to our facility, Youth Justice provide us with information in relation to what they have been doing and, where we can, we will continue on with those, noting that within Queensland Corrective Services we have the whole range of services that are provided to all adults, whether 18 or not, in relation to numeracy and literacy, vocational training, alcohol and other drugs, violence—a whole range of programs. We would ensure that if those young people were required to do that they would participate in those programs.

**Ms BOLTON:** That would come out of your budget or Youth Justice?

**Commissioner Stewart:** It comes out of our budget. As I said, it is a matter for Youth Justice, if they are already in the youth justice system, for them to consider prior to transfer when the appropriate time, of course, is to transfer.

**Ms BOLTON:** Then if you have somebody at 18 transfer across, they might be with you for three months—and we have heard through the inquiries the importance of the exit transition, that there needs to be 12 months. It could comprise a residential component but work and skills-based education. Because you have, in the budget, end-to-end case management, would that exit transition come from Corrections' budget or would that have to be funded from Youth Justice?

**Commissioner Stewart:** No, once they came into our facility it would be a matter for our budget. Whether it was a re-entry process and a reintegration back into the community at the end of their sentence or onto parole, as the case may be, and under supervision from Community Corrections, it would then be a matter of responsibility for us as an agency for that individual.

**Ms BOLTON:** Has there been any forecasting and provision made for 12-month transitions out of corrections for these young people?

**Commissioner Stewart:** For transition at the end of their sentence?

**Ms BOLTON:** Yes, as per recommendation 36 out of the youth justice inquiry for a 12-month transition for young people?

**Commissioner Stewart:** They would be, from our perspective, under the adult system. Once they were in the adult system, they would be subjected to whatever our arrangements are at the end of the sentence for individuals. That may be some re-entry and re-integration contact, but I am not aware of a 12-month process in place in relation to adults, even if they come from a youth facility and are exiting the adult system.

**Ms BOLTON:** In essence, if this was brought in for youth it would not necessarily then apply—

**Commissioner Stewart:** Apply across to us, yes.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you.

**Mr BERKMAN:** To start with, my pre-hearing question on notice was perhaps clumsily worded. The answer did not include a total figure for the number of times spit hoods were used in Queensland prisons in 2023-24. I am very conscious of time, I am wondering whether the question might be taken on notice to provide that total annual figure and a break down by facility for the complete year?

**CHAIR:** Member, ask the question. If the question cannot be answered, I am sure the minister can indicate whether she wants to take on notice.

**Ms BOYD:** By way of context, member, it may be helpful to let you know that the way the question was worded, the data was not captured because the figure was too small in its quantum.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I understand the reason for the exclusion. Perhaps in the interest of time, is there a single statewide figure—rather than broken down by facility—I could get?

**Commissioner Stewart:** The statewide figure in relation to spit hoods is 104.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you. Commissioner, again in relation to spit hoods, which are now banned in youth prisons and police watch houses, you would be well aware of the death of Selesa Tafaifa in the Townsville prison in 2021 after being put in handcuffs and a spit hood and denied access to her puffer even after telling guards four times over she could not breathe. The coronial inquest heard evidence from Assistant Commissioner Joel Smith. I understand that the 'hot debrief' that was held where Ms Tafaifa's death was discussed before police arrived was not appropriate. Has any disciplinary action been taken in respect of the hot debrief or processes changed to avoid happening that again?

**Commissioner Stewart:** I thank the member for the question. We obviously monitor coronial matters very closely. I do not believe that matter has been finalised yet and it is still before the Coroner's Court, but we monitor the outcomes of any recommendations that are made by the Coroner, even in the absence of a recommendation. We make sure if there is something that we have not done the way that we should have, that we adjust our policies and practices to make sure we do.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Further on that inquest, I understand it heard evidence from the team leader who was involved in that incident that he did not here Ms Tafaifa say she could not breathe but the inquest also heard audio of this same officer responding to one of her requests. Commissioner, have you considered or taken any steps to investigate whether that team leader may have, in fact, purged himself before the inquest?

**Commissioner Stewart:** As the matter is before the Coroner's Court at this point in time, we would need to hear from the Coroner in relation to that matter.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Understood. One final question that I will put to the minister. Minister, will the government now finally ban spit hoods in Queensland prisons as other jurisdictions have done due to the clear risk of misuse, asphyxiation and death?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. Spit hoods are used as a risk mitigation measure on prisoners who bite or spit, or threaten to bite or spit at officers. They are deployed during critical incidents and are always recorded and reviewed by local review panels to ensure they are used appropriately. To minimise the risk to our officers and the people in our custody, QCS conducted a review of safety hoods and of the process and policies in relation to individuals who bite or spit at officers, noting that the operating environment is different to that of police.

As part of the review, workshops were conducted at all high-security correctional centres and included custodial correctional officers, supervisors, managers, safety and compliance advisors and union delegates. Staff have genuine concerns regarding their safety when they engage with prisoners who bite or spit at officers. The transmission of bloodborne infections and viruses is a very real concern. Being bitten or spat on is repulsive but for staff to await the results from necessary medical tests can be a very traumatic experience. I am not aware of any practical alternative that provides staff with the same level of protection as a safety hood. I understand that QCS is continuing to evaluate alternatives to safety hoods.

**CHAIR:** I will now go to questions from government members.

**Mr HUNT:** As has become my habit, I would like to thank the commissioner and all of the staff in QCS across the state for the work that they do that is invisible to the public eye. They do a fantastic job and almost nobody sees it. Minister, noting the growth in FTEs that is highlighted on page 7 of the SDS, can you please outline some of the ways that the achievements of our hardworking frontline staff are recognised?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. I know what a champion he is for our corrective services staff. He is well aware, from personal experience, of the hard work that they carry out each and every day. Jail and incarceration are part of protecting the community. We need staff to run our jails and to help deliver programs. I note the SDS outlines that QCS has a budgeted full-time equivalent of 7,400 for 2024-25. That is an increase of 587 FTE from the 2023-24 estimated actual of 7,712 FTE. I am advised that since 1 July 2023, QCS has recruited 512 custodial correctional officers. Since 1 July 2023, we have seen 72 case managers and 10 probation service officers appointed across all of our regions. Recruitment activities commenced in October 2023 for the new Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre which will provide 800 permanent roles across various occupational groups once it is operational.

Building new prisons is part of being tough on crime. In the past 20 years we have seen the LNP shut more prisons than they have opened. They shut down the Borallon Correctional Centre—it seems they did not need capacity because of their soft-on-crime approach. We re-opened Borallon because we knew that under our tough laws we would need that capacity. The LNP sold off corrections facilities on the Darling Downs—they did not need it, apparently. The LNP did not recognise the hard work of staff. They sacked 180 corrections staff and privatised their jobs. The corrective services staff I talk to have raised what they believe to be very real concerns that the LNP will sack and sell all over again.

In stark contrast, we recognise the hard work of our staff. One example is when in January this year I joined the commissioner to recognise the hard work of QCS staff through his excellence awards. I am not sure if the member knows but his old workplace—Woodford Correctional Centre—received awards for excellence in safety and respect. We saw Townsville Correctional Centre staff receive an

award in excellence for collaboration. Palm Island Community Corrections are doing amazing work for empowerment, while the QCS Connect project was recognised for accountability. We saw 14 QCS officers recognised for their recovery work after the 2019 North Queensland floods and Tropical Cyclone Debbie. The commissioner's ethical and meritorious service medals were awarded to nine officers while several staff from the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre received the commissioner's unit citation for outstanding conduct, professionalism and bravery.

I mentioned Woodford and the member for Caloundra of course knows that Woodford holds some of the worst of the worst, like murderers and bikies, as he was a former corrective services officer at that facility. While we reward staff who deal with those very dangerous people, the LNP reward and praise those dangerous people. For example, Bree James, the LNP candidate for Barron River, teamed up with the federal member for Leichhardt earlier this year—

**Mr LAST:** How toxic are you? You cannot help yourself.

**Ms BOYD:**—to present an award to the Mongols bikies for their valued service to the community

**Mr LAST:** How is this relevant?

**Ms BOYD:** They were handing out appreciation awards to bokie gangs. It is disgraceful that the LNP—

**CHAIR:** Member for Burdekin.

**Ms BOYD:** It is disgraceful, member for Burdekin, and the LNP should explain themselves. Their leader was, in fact, in attendance at that event. You cannot claim to be tough on crime and then hand out medals for Mongols, like the LNP does. You cannot claim to be tough on crime and then commend crooks, like the LNP does. You cannot claim to be tough on crime and then give gongs to gangs, like the LNP does. We award corrective services staff. We do not praise criminal motorcycle gangs, like the LNP does.

**Mr Krause** interjected.

**Mr Last** interjected.

**Ms BUSH:** My question is also to the minister. I was not sure if there was an interjection.

**CHAIR:** Please do not interrupt, members from the opposition.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, I understand that a key deliverable for 2024-25 is enhancing the operation of the QCS victims register and enshrining a victims voice in Parole Board Queensland decisions. Can you please explain what this will look like and how this will further support victims of crime?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. I want to acknowledge her tremendous contribution over her working life in advocating for victims and supporting them in their journey. Of course, legislating that the Parole Board must have at least one victims representative is one of the most visible ways that we are ensuring the voice of victims is always considered. However, as was mentioned when the legislation was being debated, having victims representatives on the Parole Board has been a long-established practice. I would remind the member for Burdekin that, if he has not already done so, he owes Brett Thompson from the Homicide Victims' Support Group an apology for disregarding his many years of service on the Parole Board by suggesting that there had not been a voice for victims on the Parole Board.

The Miles Labor government is committed to ensuring that through the victims register we are supporting victims of crime and enabling them to have a voice and tell their story. The victims register supports eligible people by informing them about important events in the sentences of relevant prisoners such as a prisoner's parole eligibility, when the prisoner makes an application for a parole order and if the Parole Board decides to grant, refuse, suspend or cancel a prisoner's parole order. The information provided by the victims register is intended to assist victims in their plan for safety and empower them to make submissions to the board about a prisoner's parole application. I am advised that QCS has experienced increased demand for this service and anticipates that the number of registered victims will rise.

In the 2024-25 budget the Miles government committed \$2.3 million over four years and \$624,000 per annum ongoing to enhance the capacity of the victims register to directly support victims of crime. The additional funding will see the number of victims register staff increase, which will assist in meeting an increasing demand in applications as well as enhance the nature and the timeliness of information provided to eligible persons.

Amendments that we made to the Corrective Services Act in June further streamlined the registration process to reduce instances of retraumatisation, extend the eligibility criteria for those who can register, increase flexibility on how an eligible person can engage with the parole process and clarify what information is provided to victims to support their safety. These amendments also require the board to appoint at least one community board member who has expertise or experience relevant to victims of crime, including how crime affects victims and the challenges victims face in interacting with the criminal justice system.

QCS will work with the new president of the board, when appointed, to review and align board processes for victims of crime with relevant QCS processes and enhance how victims can provide information and submissions to the board in a trauma informed way. QCS is also working closely with the Office of the Interim Victims' Commissioner to enhance the victims register practice and process. This work includes identifying, developing and providing additional resources for victims of crime to raise awareness of the victims register and its services to ensure the victims register continues to be an effective mechanism for promoting the safety and wellbeing of victims.

**CHAIR:** We are coming close to the end. Commissioner, there were two questions that I understood were taken on notice. I may have them out of order so forgive me. One was about the number of cells at the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre.

**Commissioner Stewart:** The number of cells at Lockyer Valley is 842 cells.

**CHAIR:** Also there was the dollar figure for taxi fares.

**Commissioner Stewart:** We do not have a breakdown in relation to taxi fares specifically. However—

**Mr KRAUSE:** Chair, would the minister be able to take that on notice?

**Ms BOYD:** We have it.

**Commissioner Stewart:** The total cost for taxi fares across the organisation, which would include prisoners from time to time, was \$413,769. However, that would be for our staff as well. From an escort and security point of view, we would not be utilising taxis unless we were required to do so.

**CHAIR:** I think that covers it. Minister, would you like to make a closing statement?

**Ms BOYD:** I would love to. Thank you so much, Chair. I would also like to state that it has been brought to my attention that the Parole Board former president originally proposed a resignation date of 12 July and, in discussions with my office, agreed to bring that date forward to 4 July. I would further like to reiterate that any allegations of the nature raised by the opposition would be referred to the appropriate body for investigation.

**Mr KRAUSE:** It was referred—

**CHAIR:** Do not interrupt, please.

**Ms BOYD:** It would not be appropriate for me to discuss matters that are before the CCC. If the opposition is in possession of any allegations of wrongdoing by anyone, I would urge them to refer those matters to the appropriate body so they can be properly investigated.

Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to, firstly, thank you and the committee members here today for their participation in today's hearing. I would also like to extend my thanks to the secretariat and to Hansard. I would like to thank wholeheartedly the Queensland Corrective Services Commissioner, Paul Stewart, and his deputies who are here with us as well as all Queensland Corrective Services staff. Whether you are talking about community correction officers, custodial officers or administrative staff, QCS works each and every day keeping the community safe and reducing reoffending rates.

I would also like to thank the Parole Board acting President, Julie Sharp, and Chief Administrative Officer, Jess Wellard. Finally, I would like to thank my own ministerial staff and ministerial and cabinet liaison officers for their work and advice in the lead-up to these hearings across all three portfolio areas.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We have now reached the end of the time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery and Minister for Corrective Services. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and visiting members who participated here today. I would also like to thank the Hansard and parliamentary broadcast staff together with all of the other parliamentary staff who have assisted today. Thank you. I declare the hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 8.47 pm.**