

TUESDAY, 30 JULY 2024

ESTIMATES—CLEAN ECONOMY JOBS, RESOURCES AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE—ENERGY AND CLEAN ECONOMY JOBS

Estimate Committee Members

Ms KE Richards—Chair
Mr PT Weir
Mr BW Head
Ms JE Pease
Mr LA Walker
Mr TJ Watts

Members in Attendance

Ms DK Frecklington
Mr MC Berkman
Mr SSJ Andrew
Mr ST O'Connor
Mr DR Last
Mr SJ Minnikin

In Attendance

Hon. M de Brenni, Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs
Mr N Heath, Chief of Staff
Ms E Williams, Senior Media Advisor
Department of Energy and Climate
Mr P Martyn, Director-General
Mr D Shankey, Deputy Director-General, Energy
CS Energy
Mr D Busine, Chief Executive Officer
Queensland Hydro
Mr K Cusack, Chief Executive Officer

The committee met at 8.29 am.



CHAIR: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee open. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. We are very fortunate in this country to have two of the world's oldest continuing living cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose lands, winds and waters we all now share.

I am Kim Richards, the member for Redlands and chair of the committee. With me here today is Pat Weir, the member for Condamine and deputy chair. Other committee members are Mr Bryson Head, the member for Callide; Mr Les Walker, the member for Mundingburra; Ms Joan Pease, the

member for Lytton; and Mr Trevor Watts, the member for Toowoomba North. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today, and I welcome to the table the member for Nanango, Deb Frecklington, and I believe the member for Maiwar will be in and out of the proceedings today.

I remind everyone that any person may be excluded from these proceedings at the chair's discretion or by order of the committee. I intend to conduct today's proceedings in a fair and even-handed way and in a respectful manner, and hopefully this will be the only time I need to remind people of the behaviour that I will be expecting in today's proceedings. 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 are not permitted in the chamber.

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 energy and clean economy jobs, resources and critical minerals, transport and main roads and digital 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, available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage. This first session will examine the proposed expenditure of the energy portfolio until 10.30 am. We will suspend proceedings for an intermission from 10.30 to 10.45 am.

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 questions 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, directors-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 minister or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of energy 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. Thank you.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you very much, Chair. I want to start by acknowledging the original custodians of the land on which we gather today. I thank you, Chair, members of the committee and supporting staff. We are here today to consider the Miles government's first budget. It is a budget for working families, for small business, a budget for the future of our state. It is a budget for all Queenslanders. I point to the record \$26 billion investment in transitioning our state away from its reliance on expensive fossil fuels and investment in new industries whilst protecting existing jobs, especially in regional Queensland.

To the miners in Mackay, the welders in Warwick and the kids at school today in Springwood, the Miles government is investing in your future with \$16.5 billion towards renewable energy and storage projects and \$8.5 billion to build the Queensland SuperGrid, including CopperString. This record investment keeps our state on track to deliver cleaner, cheaper, more reliable power. It is an investment in more energy, in job security and in the working people of Queensland. We are protecting blue-collar jobs at companies like Sun Metals, Capricorn Copper and Incitec Pivot. We are creating new jobs like the 64,000 jobs at building the Queensland SuperGrid. It is an investment in lower energy prices for hardworking mums and dads, for the elderly and for those Queenslanders just getting started. The independent regulator confirmed on 24 July that Queensland is the only jurisdiction in the national electricity market to have declining wholesale energy prices and the lowest.

Members, this budget delivers action on climate. It maintains public ownership, it brings more manufacturing to Queensland and, because of Labor's Buy Queensland procurement policy, the budget will be invested by Queenslanders for Queenslanders. We have increased spending with Queensland small businesses by 41 per cent since 2017. That is a \$5 billion uplift into small and medium businesses—businesses like FloodMapp, MuraConnect and Ability Enterprises—and it keeps growing year on year. Today I can announce that, should current trends continue across the forwards—and that

of course relies on our procurement policies—the Miles government will deliver an annual \$9 billion injection into Queensland's small and medium businesses. That is more investment in real business and in real people—people like Steven from a Sunshine Coast small business who said—

Buy Queensland has been a great success story ... It's allowed us to bring on board more employees, and we've been able to do that, due to more contracts through the Queensland Government ...

It's been great for us to be able to invest in the local community.

Chair, today I can also announce that we have appointed a panel of respected leaders to advise on Queensland's decarbonisation and clean economy jobs journey. I can announce Professor Frank Jotzo will lead the Clean Economy Expert Panel that includes esteemed experts and leaders in climate change economics in agriculture, resources, economic and regional development, and the built environment.

Members, this budget will shape our state for generations and shape the lives and livelihoods of our kids and theirs. We are a government of vision and this is a budget of action. In contrast, the LNP is mired in the past, and no doubt we will observe that today. We know that they will not make the big companies pay their fair share and we know they have no plan. The Miles budget, however, demonstrates that only this Labor government is serious about delivering on a clear vision for the future on clean energy, on strong jobs in our industrial heartlands, on action on climate and support for business, but most of all it is about delivering for families, for the future of Queensland and for the future of our planet. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I hand over for the first question to the member for Nanango.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you very much, Chair, and welcome to estimates. Minister, for the first time today Queenslanders learned the true cost of the Callide cover-up. For the report and legal fees alone, \$10.4 million has been paid to the end of June so far for Dr Sean Brady's investigation and report. Minister, could this expense have been avoided totally if the government had maintained its power plants in the first place?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. Matters in relation to this question have been canvassed in several questions on notice, including questions on notice answered by the Premier and the Deputy Premier. Those responses have made it consistently clear, as does the report itself, and I will just talk about the commissioning of the report.

CS Energy and its legal representatives were responsible for commissioning the Brady Heywood organisation. They set the scope for the investigation, entering into the financial arrangements for and inevitably paying for this report, as is their operational responsibility. The report itself indicates that there are a variety of organisation and technical factors that went to the incident that occurred back in 2021. Our focus has been on ensuring that, going forward, the organisation has the leadership and, as has always been the case, has had the resources provided to it by government to perform its functions to the standard that Queenslanders expect of it.

There is a clear indication of our intent. We have appointed a new chair and a new board. There is a new CEO. The chair and the CEO have released a very clear statement in relation to these matters that canvassed all of the issues and addressed all of the issues that were identified by the Brady-Heywood report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, whilst you did not answer the question, on the \$10.4 million: does the minister believe that this is money that could have been saved if the government had done its job and maintained the power plant?

Mr de BRENNI: I reject the assertions made by the member. I refer to statements made previously by my colleague the Deputy Premier—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: About the \$10.4 million—

CHAIR: No interrupting the minister. You asked the question and the minister will respond.

Mr de BRENNI: The Deputy Premier and my colleague shareholding minister said this, which I think adequately answers the question—

Let me be clear again for the committee: since 2015, shareholding ministers have approved all written requests regarding asset maintenance overhauls recommended by the CS Energy board, including those pertaining to Callide C Power Station, and we have increased this funding over our 2016 and 2020 shareholder mandate periods. I am advised that since 2015-16 total overhauls and maintenance capital spend at Callide C has been almost \$280 million in real terms. In 2024-25, budget capital expenditure is \$60.2 million. Over the last three years, from 2021-22 to 2023-24, our generators, government owned corporations, have collectively invested around \$1 billion. In 2024-25 alone, CS Energy, Stanwell and CleanCo are investing \$376 million for upgrades and maintenance at existing power stations.

The LNP drove CS Energy to make a \$74 million savings cut to ready it for sale.

The LNP—

... is the only government that has demanded a cut in maintenance expenditure for a government owned generator, and that is the truth.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Chair, I have a question to the CS Energy CEO, Mr Busine.

CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Busine.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: For the first time today, Queenslanders have now learnt that \$38 million of Queensland taxpayers' money was spent on external legal fees in the past two financial years. This includes the ongoing battle to keep the Brady report out of public view. Could this expense have been avoided totally if the government had simply told the truth and released the report that has been paid for by taxpayers?

Mr Busine: I thank the honourable member for the question. CS Energy has incurred a range of legal fees over the last couple of years related to a range of matters, including an ongoing class action and matters relating to new investments and matters relating to the C4 investigation. They have been important legal fees that we have incurred to protect the interests of the organisation and ultimately the owners of CS Energy.

The Brady report was released to the public on 17 July. At that time, the chair and I apologised for CS Energy not maintaining the world-class standards. I would like to reinforce today the commitment that we have to taking the organisation forward. The identification of Dr Brady was that there were a range of factors that led to the event. There were technical factors that resulted in the explosion that occurred in May 2021. He also identified a range of organisational factors in his report that could have contributed. From our reading of the report, Dr Brady did not identify in there an underspend of maintenance as a cause of the incident.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Busine, I have a further question: when did you first see the draft of the Brady report?

Mr Busine: I saw a draft of the report first on 15 December last year and then subsequent drafts of the technical report on 30 March and 22 April. I saw a draft of the organisational version of the report on 1 March and a subsequent one on 30 March, and an executive summary on 12 June.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a follow-on question, Mr Busine: CS Energy expended \$7,185,410 on a report before anyone at CS Energy had even seen a draft?

Mr Busine: Dr Brady's process involved extensive investigation. He undertook some 52 visits to site with his team to undertake his investigation.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So no interim drafts?

Mr Busine: Dr Brady provided some presentation material but the actual drafting of the reports did not occur or were not presented to us until 15 December.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Busine, so we are really clear, during that period—let's say up to December—based on CS's figures approximately \$7.1 million was spent. You had some initial conversations with Professor Brady. How many times did CS Energy then communicate directly with the minister on that issue?

Mr Busine: CS Energy was speaking to the minister about progress of the report. We did not communicate with the minister about the content of the report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: About progress of the report, not content?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, Mr Busine is trying to answer your question. Allow him to do that, please.

Mr Busine: We were not communicating about the content of the report. We were communicating about expectations particularly on timing of the report. Since I came into the role last year and became engaged in working in this process, we have been very clear, as has the minister with us, on an expectation that we wanted to see the findings of the report when they were advanced enough to be able to be a conclusion that Dr Brady would be willing to share. In his engagement, he made it clear that the drafts were not necessarily to be relied upon. We respected his process of forming his hypothesis, confirming his investigations and putting those findings into material that he would present to us.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Was the minister informed about the progress of the report when you said you saw it on or around 15 December?

Mr Busine: Thank you for the question. I do not recall communicating directly when the draft was received, but we were talking with the department about the receipt of drafts and keeping the department updated that we were receiving draft information.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Did this minister or the other shareholding minister ever ask about what was going on with the report and what was in it?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. As I said before, we were getting regular inquiries about expectations of the completion of the report and the dates. We were regularly responding with what we were hearing from Dr Brady about the expected completion of the report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Would it be correct to say that the minister was more interested in the timing of the release of the report rather than what was in the report?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question.

CHAIR: Mr Busine, you have some latitude in how you respond to that question.

Mr Busine: I am unable to understand what was in the minister's mind.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Same here.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango.

Mr Busine: What I do understand is that there was a very clear understanding of the process that we were working through. The minister had made it very clear to us that he expected to see the report on its finalisation. We had communicated the process that Dr Brady was working through.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I want to go back to a comment you made before about investment in maintenance and Dr Brady's report. In the draft report, which I do have here, on page 6 it said that the shareholder mandate 'drove focus on cost savings, while at the same time placing constraints on CS Energy's investment strategies, including its existing assets'. Mr Busine, my question to you is: why is that statement in the draft but not in the final report?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. Dr Brady had full editorial responsibility.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So he changed his mind?

Mr Busine: I am not clear why he changed that report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Was there any communication between CS Energy and Professor Sean Brady in relation to retracting statements from the draft that did not look so good for the government?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. The process that we went through with Dr Brady—which is a normal process that he would go through—was one of providing comments on all aspects of his report. That included both the technical and the organisational aspects of the report.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: From the date the draft came out to the final report, Mr Busine, were you ever directed by the minister or the minister's office, or even the department for that matter, to ensure that the final sanitised version of the Brady-Heywood report—

CHAIR: It is the final report. You are making an inference there in terms of sanitisation. If you want to, reword the question please.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: In between the draft report and the final Brady-Heywood report, was there any direction from the minister, the minister's office or any of the shareholding ministers or their offices or departments to ensure the final report did not reflect as badly on the government as the draft report?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. I can confirm that that is not the case.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Busine, we understand from estimates last week that your predecessor, the former CEO, resigned of his own accord. It was confirmed by the Under Treasurer that he did not receive a termination benefit. Can the CEO confirm that any former executive of CS Energy is free to publicly discuss the explosion and what led to it?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. What I can confirm is that every former executive of CS Energy, according to the employment contract that they signed, has confidentiality clauses in those contracts.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So that we are really clear: they are under legal obligations to ensure there is an agreement to stop or prevent any former executive, including the former CEO, to speak about the explosion and what caused it?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I believe Mr Busine has just answered that exact question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I was just confirming.

CHAIR: You do not need to have confirmation. He responded to the question. Ask your next question, please.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question to the CEO is: are you aware whether the former CEO left of his own accord?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for her question.

CHAIR: Mr Busine, I will allow you some latitude. I do not believe that you are in a position to answer for the former CEO, but respond how you would like to.

Mr Busine: My understanding is that the former CEO was offered an employment opportunity at another company and resigned to take that position up.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I note that the Under Treasurer confirmed that there was not a termination payment for the former CEO. Can you explain why? I note CS Energy's annual report 2023 where it states, 'The former CEO had a termination benefit of \$95,000.'

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. I have not reviewed *Hansard* in terms of the way that the Treasurer responded. What I can confirm is that there were no additional ex gratia payments over and above the contract. Mr Bills had a three-month notice period and worked for half of that period. What was reflected in the annual report was the remaining period under that contractual notice period.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The minister has said publicly and just a couple of minutes ago that he was not satisfied with the performance of CS Energy under its former chair and CEO. Are you aware of the performance issues with CS Energy and what they were, and what performance issues has the minister raised with you directly?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. The minister has made it very clear in the first instance that he expects CS Energy to get our units back to full operation, which is something that we are absolutely committed to—getting our units back to operation and operating them safely and reliably going forward. The minister's conversations and expectations that he has communicated to me and to the chair are along the lines of ensuring that we are a safe and reliable business and that we continue to invest in both our existing plant and our new plant going forward.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Noting your comments, Minister, that you say you were not satisfied with the performance of CS Energy, why were bonuses paid in addition to the very generous salaries to CS Energy executives in the 2022-23 financial year? I can list those generous bonuses, if you would like me to. Minister, you have said you were not satisfied with their performance but then you paid them bonuses.

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The remuneration of government owned corporation staff is entirely a matter for the board. The board made those decisions. In respect of the former chair and the former CEO, I want to make it clear that—and I have previously indicated on record—they decided to depart the business. I was comfortable with their decision to depart. I did not seek to ask them to stay any longer. I had, as I expressed, a general dissatisfaction—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Did you push them?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, the minister is being responsive to the question.

Mr de BRENNI: I had a general dissatisfaction with the performance of the board and the CEO. We have taken steps by appointing a new chair and a new board. That board has appointed a new CEO. I have just heard the CEO reflect that he is very clear on the expectations of this government around the organisation's performance going forward.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, you said you were not satisfied with the performance of CS Energy, yet you have constantly said—and in media reports—that you did not know anything about the maintenance issues at CS Energy until I think it was June of this year. Minister, how can you say you were not satisfied with their performance if you did not know about the maintenance issues? You cannot have it both ways.

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I will just clarify for the benefit of the record that the first time I saw the report relating to the technical issues that led to the outage was Saturday, 15 June. It was received by the department on Thursday, 20 June. The Department of Energy and Climate briefed me on the details on Sunday, 23 June, which is the first time I read it. On Tuesday, 25 June that report was uploaded to the CS website. On Tuesday, 16 July—

Mr HEAD: So you only became dissatisfied in June?

CHAIR: Order! As I said, there will be no interjections when a minister, DG or any other official is responding to a question.

Mr de BRENNI: What I am pointing out, Chair, is a pretty flimsy attempt by the opposition to try and conflate two issues for their political benefit. We are here to deal with the facts as they occurred. The facts as they occurred, as I have just outlined, are that I did not become aware of the observations in the report until June this year. As I also said in my previous remarks, I had a general dissatisfaction with the performance of the organisation. As I have said in the public domain, and it has been well recorded—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: But did not inquire about the maintenance.

Mr de BRENNI: Excuse me, I am trying to answer the question. I was generally dissatisfied at the time taken to reach agreement with the joint venture to make the necessary investments to return the power station to full operation. Let's remember as well that this is a unit that is half owned by private interests. It was those opposite, in the construction of this power station, that chose to privatise half of it. It made it very difficult—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Are we back in 1998?

Mr de BRENNI: Yes, it was back in 1998. The National Party, of which they are members—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Were you born then, Mick?

Mr de BRENNI:—decided to privatise the power station. This is their record of privatisation, and it made it difficult. I was dissatisfied—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is a bit of a stretch, Minister: 1998 to an explosion in 2021.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango!

Mr de BRENNI:—with the time it took for the then leaders of the organisation to reach agreement. I was dissatisfied with the time it was taking to ensure the unit was able to return to service.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Pretty desperate, Minister.

Mr de BRENNI: It was for those reasons I expressed my dissatisfaction. The reasons for the chair and the CEO to depart are a matter for them.

CHAIR: We might shift to government questions now.

Ms PEASE: In relation to page 43 of the 2024-25 capital statement, can the minister please outline for the committee how the Queensland government is investing in the state's publicly owned electricity generators with sustaining capital over the last three years, what it intends to spend in the current budget period, and what results they are delivering for Queenslanders in terms of reliability and affordability.

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. As we have said, the Miles government expects publicly owned businesses to implement appropriate asset management and improvement strategies and ensure supply reliability and security. Asset maintenance and overall investment decisions are made by independent boards of government owned corporations, or GOCs, based on their own rigorous assessments. GOC boards are accountable for their investment decisions and have an obligation to notify and seek approval from shareholding ministers for proposed investments above specific thresholds which are set out in the annual statements of corporate intent. GOCs are required to seek prior written approval from shareholding ministers to proceed with investments that are at or above \$15 million. At all times shareholding ministers have supported and approved without change GOCs' requests for investment in maintenance and overhauls. Generators coordinate scheduled overhauls and outages with the Australian Energy Market Operator to minimise impacts to energy system reliability and security and maintain availability of their own portfolio.

Queensland's generator assets continue to be reliable and secure. The Australian Energy Market Operator's *2023 Electricity Statement of Opportunity Report* forecast Queensland has one of the best reliability outlooks over the next several years. This was further demonstrated earlier this year when the state achieved a record maximum operational demand of over 11,000 megawatts. That occurred on 22 January. Despite a very hot and humid summer there were no electricity shortfalls in Queensland, including that day, 22 January. I can confirm that as at 1 April 2024: Stanwell assets had a reliability factor of 99.1 per cent; CS Energy assets had a reliability factor of 94.6 per cent; and CleanCo assets had a reliability factor of 85.7 per cent, noting its Barron Gorge power station was offline due to sustaining material damage to the Kuranda weir from ex Tropical Cyclone Jasper in 2023 and noting those figures exclude Callide C.

Maintenance spend is cyclical in nature. GOCs establish asset management strategies and overhaul plans to maintain the integrity, reliability and performance of generation units. They do this in a number of ways: they conduct statutory inspections; they correct defects; and they complete routine maintenance activities in line with predetermined timeframes based on the asset in question. Yearly spend fluctuates based on the timing of major and minor overhauls for generation assets. For example, major overhauls for coal-fired generators occur every three or five years depending on the specific attributes of the plant, the asset management strategies or other factors I have outlined.

Over the three years from 2021, generator government owned corporations have collectively invested approximately \$1 billion on upgrades and maintenance for existing power stations: Stanwell spent \$507.7 million on overhauls and maintenance; CleanCo invested \$223.9 million; and CS Energy invested \$525.1 million on overhauls and maintenance at its power stations. In the 2024-25 Miles government budget, Queensland's three publicly owned generators are together investing around \$376 million for upgrades and maintenance at existing state owned power stations, contributing to the continued reliability of supply to Queensland and more broadly the National Electricity Market. Our generators will continue to invest in asset overhauls and maintenance. This supports supply security and reliability throughout Queensland's energy transformation, as they are required to do as part of their statutory obligation to operate in the National Electricity Market.

In concluding my response in respect of the maintenance of these assets—and I indicated this before—the only government that has demanded cuts to asset maintenance was the Newman LNP government in 2012. Under the direction of then minister Tim Nicholls, CS Energy's maintenance budget was slashed by \$72 million. The minister then—

Mr WATTS: Minister, we know you are desperate but this is not relevant to these hearings.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North!

Mr WATTS: It is not relevant to these hearings, Minister.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango!

Mr WATTS: What is relevant is \$50 million in legal fees.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North! Do not make me get to my feet again or you will be warned.

Mr de BRENNI: Then minister Tim Nicholls instructed CS Energy to—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Share your ministerial directions.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango—

Mr de BRENNI:—in his words, 'aggressively rightsize the organisation' and effectively threatened to—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So the last decade, Minister?

Mr de BRENNI:—shut down or sell off the Callide power station.

CHAIR:—I gave you a good run.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Pretty desperate.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. Minister, in relation to page 1 of the SDS, how is the Miles government championing consumer protections to ensure energy prices are fair and affordable?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for Mundingburra for the question. Labor has been a long-time and well-known champion for Queensland consumers' interests. In the energy space, the better bills guideline compels retailers to periodically advise households whether they can get a better deal. Earlier this month I attended the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council, where we successfully agreed a host of new consumer protections for Queenslanders. Queensland was able to secure an outcome on an issue that I have been engaged with Queenslanders on for some time—that is, where customers are moved to time-of-use tariffs without their consent following smart meter installation. I am pleased to announce that there will be a rule change putting in place a moratorium on tariff changes without consumer consent. This is an initiative that was spearheaded by the Miles government.

In my position as Queensland's energy minister, I advocated for the Commonwealth to work together with states on options for customers to more easily access available state concessions. Thanks to the Miles government's first budget, around 628,000 vulnerable Queensland households are

currently receiving the additional \$372 rebate. As such, I am happy to announce that work is now progressing between Services Australia and the states and territories of Australia to ensure those people identified as the most vulnerable receive their full rebates without further applications.

Other very practical measures to get people's bills down were also agreed and they include: preventing price increases for a fixed period under market retail contracts; making it easier to switch to a better offer; ensuring energy plan benefits last the length of the contract; and requiring retailers to ask consumers about their eligibility for concessions or rebates. As minister, I will continue to prosecute these changes with the Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Energy Market Commission over the coming period towards implementation.

I can inform the committee that the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council also approved the publication of a National Consumer Energy Resources Roadmap. It sets out an overarching vision and plan to unlock consumer energy resources at scale. The Roadmap provides a national approach to reforms to ensure Australians, especially Queenslanders, are able to harness the full potential of their rooftop solar and batteries, helping lower costs for all consumers by offsetting the need for billions of dollars in grid scale investment. The Roadmap will deliver equity in the energy transition and coordinate vision for household solar and batteries. This is good news for the 849,000 Queensland households and businesses that have already installed solar but also for those that are yet to access or are unable to access the benefits of solar. As the Miles government continues to champion clean energy and consumer protection reforms, Queenslanders can look forward to a future where affordable, reliable and sustainable energy is accessible to all.

Ms PEASE: In relation to page 1 of the SDS and the department's commitment to drive energy affordability outcomes, can the minister please advise what actions the Miles government is taking through this budget and through the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan to keep energy affordable for households, including vulnerable Queenslanders and renters?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I am happy to again inform the committee of the results of the Australian Energy Regulator's most recent quarterly report, released on 24 July 2024. It shows that Queensland has the lowest wholesale prices for energy in the National Electricity Market. In Queensland our wholesale price has reduced by 22 per cent, which is the equivalent of \$30 per megawatt hour. Of course, as we all know, households pay retail, not wholesale. There is good news there, too. Thanks to our rebates, Queensland households pay the lowest price per kilowatt hour in the National Electricity Market.

The Miles government is committed to supporting Queenslanders with the cost of living. We are doing this by delivering rebates in the short term, retaining public ownership in the medium term and delivering cleaner, cheaper renewables in the long term. We are providing real support with the largest cost-of-living relief package in the nation.

The Premier's first budget includes an \$11.2 billion nation-leading package of cost-of-living relief and concessions. This is a budget designed to take pressure off Queensland households by delivering an up-front rebate on every household's energy bill from 1 July 2024. The new Miles government budget has allocated \$3.2 billion to provide energy bill relief including: \$268.1 million for a range of ongoing energy rebates and concessions; \$2.96 billion to deliver a cost-of-living rebate of \$1,000 to around 2.2 million households, and the federal government's contribution brings the total support to those Queensland households to \$1,300; as well as a \$325 rebate, matched by the Albanese government to make a total of \$650, for up to 210,000 small businesses. Eligible seniors, pensioners and concession card holders are therefore receiving \$1,672 off their power bills.

In addition to providing direct electricity relief, this budget supports eligible vulnerable Queenslanders through a range of initiatives including: the Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity Concession Scheme, supporting people with chronic medical concessions who require temperature regulation; the Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate, supporting eligible customers, including pensioners, seniors, veterans and low-income households; and the Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme for households experiencing financial hardship due to unforeseen short-term financial crises or those who hold a valid concession card who are in hardship.

The Miles government is delivering all of this through public ownership and it is enabled through coal royalties, making multinational companies pay their fair share, ensuring Queenslanders' rebates are delivered in a way that is fast and fair. As I said earlier, Queenslanders know the LNP has promised to the resources sector to cut progressive coal royalties and refused to support public ownership of our energy system.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I do not think anyone believes you, Minister.

Mr WATTS: You're getting desperate.

Mr de BRENNI: Queenslanders remember that the last time they were in government energy prices went up by 43 per cent and they refused to help Queenslanders.

Mr WATTS: You're getting desperate, Minister.

Mr de BRENNI: They are the only government in Queensland's history to ever cancel a rebate supporting Queenslanders.

CHAIR: I welcome to the table from the crossbench the member for Mirani, Stephen Andrew, and also the member for Maiwar. I will go to the member for Mirani with the first crossbench question.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, could you give me a total cost of the implementation of the Queensland Hydro project in my electorate, please—the total finished cost?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The member would be aware, based on discussions that he and I have had and questions that have been put in the Legislative Assembly, that the final cost for this nation-building infrastructure is yet to be determined. We have made it very clear that, following the very positive results of the geotechnical drilling that is occurring in the project footprint, the geotechnical investigations have shown us that there is highly competent granite—better than what could have been hoped for—on that project site. I think that vindicates the many years of work that has been done by the Department of Energy and Climate and others in the identification of the site as the best site to build long-duration pumped hydro energy storage.

Based on those geotechnical findings, Queensland Hydro is considering a range of options put before it, including the ability to make the project even more powerful—not bigger but more powerful—to be able to power more homes from the same project. The investigations into those options are being detailed through the detailed analytical report. I am advised that that is due to be provided to government by the end of 2024. It would be premature to try to identify different figures for the proposed project until the finalisation of the detailed analytical report.

This project—like CopperString, like the battery storage projects, like the new wind and solar projects, some of which are the most significant wind and solar projects in the nation, if not the Southern Hemisphere—is important to the future of Queensland's economy. In terms of the delivery of reliable, clean energy, the businesses that employ many hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders rely on getting this right. I am comfortable with the work that is being done by Queensland Hydro to ensure that this project is maximised. The final cost determination will follow the completion of the detailed analytical report, just as it did with the Borumba project.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, could you please explain to people in my electorate where the top-up water and evaporation water will come from? Will it come from aquifers under the ground or will it come from groundwater that feeds our ecosystems into the Pioneer River system?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. We have been very clear with the communities which will host renewable energy projects that we will seek to minimise the impacts on those communities—whether it is a wind farm, a solar farm, installation of a battery or transmission. Because Queensland's energy system is led primarily by government owned corporations, which have been tasked with delivering on the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, their key focus is on supporting the best outcome for Queenslanders. They consider a range of criteria. In addition to that, I have been very clear that the minimisation of impacts must be a factor that we take into account. That is why we are delivering renewable energy zone readiness assessments right across every region that is hosting renewable energy projects. Your community is no different to that.

I have made it clear to Queensland Hydro that the government's expectation is that the environmental factors—issues like environmental flows into tributaries et cetera—must be considered and best practice achieved in relation to those. We need to ensure all of these projects sustainably manage a range of resources, and in this case you are referring to water. We will ensure, I am advised, that the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project complies with the Pioneer Valley and the Burdekin Basin water plans. Existing entitlement holders can be assured, that means, of their continuing water security.

Mr ANDREW: Could the government provide for the public environmental impact statements for all of the renewable projects we are about to unleash in my area, particularly in relation to the wind factories and pumped hydro? Is there public access to environmental impact statements, Minister?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. It depends—

Mr ANDREW: It depends?

Mr de BRENNI: It depends for which sort of project you are asking the question. If you are asking in relation—

Mr ANDREW: For wind farms—wind factories—and the hydro project, two of the key providers for your portfolio. Do we have an EIS for either of them?

Mr de BRENNI: In respect of the Pioneer-Burdekin project and other major projects of that scale, they will go through a full environmental impact process. There will be public consultation. The materials and findings of those will be made public.

Mr ANDREW: So we are spending an unknown quantity of money going forward with no EIS?

CHAIR: Member, I believe your question was just quite comprehensively answered.

Mr ANDREW: I did not get one answer, to be honest, Chair.

CHAIR: Minister, do you have anything further to add?

Mr de BRENNI: The member indicates that he believes there has been a—

Mr ANDREW: I do not believe anything; I just want to see facts.

Mr de BRENNI: I can confirm for the member that the investment to date in the project is \$136.9 million, as at the end of June 2024. There is a further \$1 billion equity investment in the budget that we are here to examine. That will include a \$38.45 million spend in financial year 2024-25. As I said, the final investment decision has not yet been made. That will be made once we receive the detailed analytical report. I acknowledge your advocacy around environmental studies. They will be done in accordance with the ordinary course of business for projects of this nature.

Mr BERKMAN: I want to put a few questions around the administration of the \$1,000 electricity cost-of-living rebates. I will direct these to the director-general, if I might. I suppose the first general question is about the mechanism for payment of the retailers. Obviously, they are playing a key role in the administration of the rebate. I am wondering at what point and how the payments to those retailers are calculated and made.

Mr Martyn: Thank you for the question. The department uses the government's coordinated call centre SSQ to assist us in those engagements. Once the rebates were announced by the government, we engaged with all of the retailers to explore this with them. We have done this in previous years, so the systems and processes are relatively well established. We reimburse retailers for those rebates based on the number of customer households they have.

Mr BERKMAN: Inherent in the notion of reimbursement is that, even if customers are receiving the rebate over a number of payment cycles, that payment only goes to the retailer after it goes to the customer; is that correct?

Mr Martyn: It is important to understand that this year the payment is being made once, so there is only one payment to each household, so one set of payments to retailers.

Mr BERKMAN: In effect, then, any excess payment sits as a credit on the customer's bill and is, in essence, held by the retailer until such time as the customer spends any residual?

Mr Martyn: Yes, there would be a credit. I want to clarify: the rebate is paid in advance to the retailer based on the number of customers that we believe they have. There may be a true-up if that is different.

Mr BERKMAN: I am interested, then, in a circumstance where a household still needs to be connected to the grid and have a retailer even in circumstances where they are a net generator of electricity and do not themselves pay any electricity—for example, if they have substantial PV generation capacity on their roofs. What happens in those circumstances? Does the retailer just hang on to the rebate at that point? What mechanisms are established for the customer to actually receive the rebate?

Mr Martyn: The scenario you have supplied is that a household has solar PV and its own generation exceeds its own use. I am advised that it is possible for the householder to apply for a refund from the retailer for that amount.

Mr BERKMAN: So we are reliant on the conduct of retailers and their goodwill? To what extent is there a clear and strict obligation about making full and timely refund payments?

Mr Martyn: I would note that the Premier and the minister convened a meeting with retailers only two weeks ago to work through with them their obligations under this scheme. Obviously, the department's payments to retailers are through a legal instrument and there are obligations that apply for that. I would observe that if ever there are any concerns about the conduct of retailers they can be directed to the Energy and Water Ombudsman.

Mr BERKMAN: Do you have any advice or recommendations for customers who might find themselves in that circumstance? Is there any particular way they should be approaching the retailer or any application process or the like?

Mr Martyn: At first instance, contact the retailer. If there is no satisfaction, often retailers have internal dispute resolution processes. If that is unsuccessful, the Energy and Water Ombudsman provides a very good service. I must say, looking at my department, we have not had significant concerns raised with us in the past, and I say that retailers have been of great assistance in providing support to Queenslanders and, after all, their customers.

Mr BERKMAN: One final question because it has just occurred to me: the fact that retailers will be holding payments made in advance before they go back to the customer actually represents quite a substantial windfall potentially for the retailers, by whatever means—they have the increase in their balance sheet or they are able to invest in certain ways to get further returns on the basis of what are quite substantial payments, I would imagine.

Mr Martyn: What I would say is the payments are scheduled to be made in the first quarter of this financial year. I am advised that 800,000 payments have been made to date. The retailers have applied these payments to people's bills or are in the process of so doing. I think it is fair to say that there are administrative complexities associated with the rebate that have worked through and worked very successfully in recent years. We have no reason to suspect that the payments are being unnecessarily delayed. Certainly if there is evidence of that, we would very much appreciate hearing about it.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will ask permission from the minister for this question. I note the Premier's comments last Tuesday in this House where he said, actually twice, 'There will be an opportunity in these estimates hearings to speak with the CEO of Queensland Hydro.' Given Mr Cusack, the CEO of Queensland Hydro, is sitting here in the room, will the minister allow Mr Cusack to answer questions directly put to him by the members of this committee, as the Premier—

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I think you are very well aware—you are a very experienced MP in this place—Queensland Hydro is not on schedule 7. You are asking a question that is out of order and out of the committee's schedule 7. Move onto your next question that complies with the way we are conducting proceedings today, thank you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Minister, will you allow Mr Cusack to answer questions on your behalf?

CHAIR: Minister, if you would like to answer the question, but as I just said, member, you are an experienced MP and you are well aware that they are not included on schedule 7.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was just that the Premier said it twice.

Mr de BRENNI: Chair?

CHAIR: Minister?

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. Before I answer that, I will address that I may have misspoken before in relation to a question put to me by the member for Nanango when addressing the information in the Brady-Heywood report first came to me. I will clarify that. On Saturday, 15 June, the department received the draft report, and it was Thursday, 20 June, that I was briefed by the department.

In relation to the CEO of Queensland Hydro, it is a matter of record in this House that the House has already determined the witnesses to this committee, but it has also been my practice that, notwithstanding under schedule 7 that was agreed by the House that the officers of Queensland Hydro, the independent implementation supervisor, the Brisbane 2032 Organising Committee, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner or the Legal Services Commissioner, were not witnesses agreed—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Why did the Premier say we could?

Mr de BRENNI: I am just answering the question—were not agreed by the House.

CHAIR: I am closing down this line of questioning. I am the chair of these proceedings. Schedule 7 is very clear. Please move onto your next question, member for Nanango.

Mr de BRENNI: Chair?

CHAIR: Minister?

Mr de BRENNI: Chair, thank you. You are correct; the schedule does provide for those names. All I am simply pointing out is that—the members opposite have been quite well aware—I am, notwithstanding that, quite comfortable for the CEO of Queensland Hydro, with your indulgence, Chair, to respond to any questions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: That is very generous of you, Minister, and—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a question for Mr Cusack, CEO of Queensland Hydro.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, you will wait for me to make the call. I am chairing these proceedings. With the indulgence of the minister, if Mr Cusack would like to come to the table.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Welcome to the table.

Mr Cusack: Thank you, Chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Cusack, it is great to have you here. Has any direction been issued to yourself or any of your staff to withhold information from what is being said in emails and/or writing, or have directions been issued to any Queensland Hydro staff to withhold information from being what is said in those emails or writing?

Mr Cusack: Thank you, member, for the question. I am not aware of any direction that has been provided to withhold information in emails. Necessarily, through the development of the detailed analytical report for Pioneer-Burdekin, that information is highly sensitive, and so there is a very small subset of people who have access to the detailed information with respect to the costs of the project.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Does Queensland Hydro communicate directly with the minister's office, or is this via the department? Where is the line of communication, via the department or the minister's office?

Mr Cusack: Thank you, member, for the question. We have regular contact with the minister's office with respect to all manner of matters, particularly around public announcements, press releases et cetera. We have regular and ongoing contact with the Department of Energy and Climate as well. It is difficult to answer, but in general we have contact with both the minister's office and the department.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Cusack, as of today's date, what is the estimated cost of Pioneer-Burdekin?

Mr Cusack: I thank the member for the question. As the minister outlined earlier, the Pioneer-Burdekin project is currently in the technical investigation phase and Queensland Hydro is completing a range of studies to inform a detailed analytical report, akin to a business case, for consideration by the government. Many factors influence cost, and our role is to understand those factors fully. It is not possible, nor would it be accurate, to provide an estimate at this stage without having completed the detailed analytical report. The DAR, as it is called, will identify the expected financial, environmental and social costs of the project for consideration by the Queensland government. It will also identify the substantial financial, economic, environmental and social benefits that the project is committed to achieving.

Upon completion, it is anticipated that the DAR will be over 6,000 pages, including all appendices. This will include more than 2,500 pages of environmental technical reports and over 2,000 pages of engineering technical information. There is a detailed and peer-reviewed economic and financial analysis currently being undertaken for inclusion in the DAR, and prior to the submission of the DAR, Queensland Hydro will go through an independent gateway review—gate 2, as it is called—which is a requirement under the Infrastructure Proposal Development framework from the department of state development and infrastructure. These assurance processes will provide the Queensland government with greater clarity about the costs of the project, so I say again that it is not appropriate, nor would it be accurate, to comment on cost estimates ahead of these independent assurance processes taking place.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Industry insiders estimate that the proposed Pioneer-Burdekin could cost in excess of \$20 billion; do you think that is a fair assessment?

CHAIR: I will allow some latitude in how you respond because there are plenty of hypotheticals contained within that question and some large assumptions.

Mr Cusack: I thank the member for the question. Without understanding the basis on which those numbers were put forward, it is very difficult for me to comment. I would simply say that the numbers that have been published—\$12 billion—came from very early estimates of the project cost. I would say, again, it is too early for us to say. I would not like to prejudice the process by putting a number on the project at this stage.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: What is Project Kruger?

Mr Cusack: That is an interesting question. Project Kruger is simply a project where we look at the strategy for what options are available to us as an organisation in Queensland Hydro.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Project Kruger is a project that looks at proposed sites; would that be a good way of saying it?

Mr Cusack: Thank you for the question. When we were given the projects by Powerlink, there were a number of studies that were conducted on various sites. Queensland Hydro undertook to finalise those alternative studies and they have been closed out and completed.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is Project Kruger still ongoing?

Mr Cusack: Project Kruger is not ongoing to the extent that, as I said, those studies were closed out.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: What remains of Project Kruger?

Mr Cusack: What remains of Project Kruger is the information that we assembled at the time when those projects were closed out.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Has that information been provided to the minister's office or the department?

Mr Cusack: Thank you for the question. No, that information has not been provided to the department or the minister's office. With respect to the studies that were conducted, I am certain that the department is aware of those because that was handed to Queensland Hydro when we were first formed.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Have any issues been raised in respect of water quality or turbidity at the Pioneer-Burdekin site following water sample tests?

Mr Cusack: Thank you for the question. There have been no concerns raised with respect to water turbidity sampling for Pioneer-Burdekin that I am aware of.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I apologise, did I hear you say that there has not been any water turbidity? I apologise, I missed the answer.

Mr Cusack: With respect to water turbidity sampling for the Pioneer-Burdekin project—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There have been none?

Mr Cusack:—there have not be any issues with respect to water turbidity that have been raised with me.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How many staff members of Queensland Hydro were terminated, rather than resigned, in the last financial year?

Mr Cusack: Thank you for the question, member. With the indulgence of the minister, I would need to come back with that information. I can do that before the end of the session.

CHAIR: Minister, are you happy with that?

Mr de BRENNI: Chair, it is the nature of a business like Queensland Hydro that is working through the development of early-stage infrastructure projects that it brings on specific teams and a range of contractors for specific projects. I am more than happy for the CEO to provide me with some detail and I will see if I can furnish the committee with some further information. It may very well be that the ordinary contract periods for consultants—of which there have been many—have simply concluded.

CHAIR: Whatever information you are able to garner, thank you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Cusack, would any option assembled as part of Project Kruger serve as an alternative to Pioneer-Burdekin?

Mr Cusack: Thank you for the question, member. There are many alternatives to Pioneer-Burdekin. Certainly the department has, through its hydro study report, looked at many alternatives. In terms of being alternatives to Pioneer-Burdekin, yes, there are sites that would be alternatives to Pioneer-Burdekin.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is it the case that Project Kruger is furnishing the government with alternatives in the event the government is returned to power and then know they cannot proceed with Pioneer-Burdekin given the lack of information there is around Pioneer-Burdekin?

Mr Cusack: Thank you for the question, member. The mandate of Queensland Hydro is crystal clear. Our role is to develop the Borumba Pumped Hydro project and the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro project for the government. For the Borumba project we have produced the detailed analytical

report, we have received the final investment decision and that is in active execution. For the Pioneer-Burdekin project we are doing all of the work that is necessary for the development of the detailed analytical report and we will be submitting that to government later this year. In the context of what Queensland Hydro is working on actively, they are the two projects that we have the mandate from the government for and we are putting those two projects at the top of the priority list.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So I am clear: so the government has said they are all in on Pioneer-Burdekin, so why do we need Project Kruger to give alternatives? Is this to provide an alternative in case Pioneer-Burdekin does not stack up?

CHAIR: I will give you some latitude in how you respond, I think you have already answered this question in your early responses.

Mr Cusack: I thank you for the question, member. I would simply say there are always alternatives. As we saw with the atlas of potential sites from Professor Blakers, there are thousands of them. In the context of Pioneer-Burdekin, we are invested in closing out the detailed analytical report and putting forward the most robust report that we can for the government to consider.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We have heard reports from government that the Borumba coordinated project is now estimated to be \$14 billion. I note the Coordinator-General, when he was here last week, said that he was working with Queensland Hydro. What is the current cost that you are working on in those conversations with the Coordinator-General in relation to Pioneer-Burdekin?

Mr Cusack: I thank the member for the question. We will go through an approvals process once we have navigated a positive financial investment decision for the project. At this stage, our discussions with the Coordinator-General are very general and high-level in nature. Until such time that we have navigated the final investment decision we are not talking about the overall cost for the project. In that context we have not shared anything with the Coordinator-General that is not already in the public domain.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The estimated \$12 billion cost that the minister talks about is \$2 billion less than the \$14 billion for Borumba even though it is a much larger project. My understanding that was over two years ago, so surely the estimated cost would be north of \$12 billion now. This is an important question; it is a lot of money for Queenslanders. I am trying to understand the estimated cost that you are working on for such an important project for the Miles government.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Chair. The rules for questions in this place are very clear that questions should not ask for an opinion or be based on hypothetical assertions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to move on.

Mr de BRENNI: The CEO has been generous. I have been generous in allowing him to appear. There have been repetitive questions about this. He has just explained in some detail that it is not possible for him to place a final proposed investment envelope into this project until the completion of the detailed analytical report.

Mr HEAD: We are asking for the estimate.

CHAIR: Member, I am listening to a point of order and I will take that in silence.

Mr de BRENNI: He just explained that very clearly and eloquently—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to move on.

Mr de BRENNI:—and yet the member has then returned to him and asked for him to hypothesise about what the results of that work might be. That is not appropriate.

CHAIR: That is a very valid point of order. Member for Nanango, move to the next of line of questioning, thank you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Cusack, how can Queensland Hydro or you know the viability of the project and its impact on consumers' power bills if Queensland Hydro cannot estimate the cost of this massive project?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, we have just had a point of order on this very style of question. If you would like to move to your next line of questioning, please.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will continue—

CHAIR: If you are out of questions, I am very happy to move to the government side of questions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am not out of questions. We have many questions.

CHAIR: Then move to questions that comply with standing orders.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Cusack, I have a final question in relation to Pioneer-Burdekin. Can I again please have a confirmation of the estimated cost that Queensland Hydro is working on given that the former estimated cost, which was \$12 billion, was over two years ago?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, really? That is three times in a row.

Mr HEAD: It is an incredibly important question to Queenslanders. It is an incredibly important question.

CHAIR: This is the same question that has been asked three times over. As I said, if you do not have another valid question, I am very happy to move to government time.

Mr WATTS: This should not be hidden from Queenslanders.

Mr de BRENNI: I might be able to provide some assistance to the members opposite. As I have said—

Mr WATTS: It is information to Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, I am listening.

Mr de BRENNI: As I said and as Mr Cusack has said, it is not possible for them to provide that information because the inputs for it are not yet completed, and that work will be complete later this year. If it is of benefit to the committee, I understand the director-general of the Department of Energy and Climate is able to provide further information to the committee about the preliminary cost estimate and what that was based on. Perhaps that would help answer the question that they are seeking.

Mr WATTS: Is it north of \$12 billion?

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North. Would you like to hear from the DG, member for Nanango?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to continue my line of questioning.

CHAIR: Would you like to hear that further advice from the DG?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No.

Mr WATTS: Is it north of \$12 billion, Minister?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I can get to the DG.

CHAIR: That is surprising.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a final question to Mr Cusack. Mr Cusack, has anyone put a figure to you around the estimated cost of Pioneer-Burdekin?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I am ruling that question out of order. It is the fourth time you have asked that question. You have just—

Mr WATTS: It is a very valid question, Chair. It is very important—

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, do you want to—

Mr WATTS: It is key to the infrastructure.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, do not test me.

Mr WATTS: Chair, I think you are running a protection racket for the minister—

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, you have just been offered—

Mr WATTS:—when we all know it is north of \$12 billion.

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, you are warned. I have said from the get-go if I had to get to my feet again that is what I would do. Do not make me get to my feet again. We are going to move to government questions.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 12 of the Capital Statement and Queensland's target to be powered by 70 per cent renewables by 2032, can the minister outline how the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan will create good jobs and new careers across Queensland?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for her question. The Miles Labor government has a plan that is delivering clean economy jobs. The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan will deliver up to 100,000 jobs by 2040 and this detailed plan will protect existing jobs across Queensland, especially in trade exposed, emissions-intensive industries including mining, manufacturing and farming. Modelling by Ernst & Young released with the plan indicated that investment from the Queensland Energy and Jobs

Plan will create up to 100,000 direct and indirect jobs across the economy by 2040 which include up to 28½ thousand direct jobs per year in construction, onshore manufacturing and maintenance of new transmission and renewable generation. A total of 20,000 of those jobs are forecast to be in regional Queensland; up to 35,000 indirect jobs per year in services, hospitality and other industries across Queensland as a result of the capital investment under the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan; and approximately 36,000 jobs through resultant economic activity. They are in minerals extraction, 8,600 jobs; in refining of metals, 5½ thousand jobs; in green hydrogen, 10,000 jobs; and in battery manufacturing, 12,000 jobs. Since the release of the plan there has been an increase already of approximately 1,400 green industry jobs, mostly driven by activity in wind, transmission, electric vehicle chargers and batteries.

Delivery of our renewable energy zones is anticipated to deliver new jobs, with up to 900 renewable energy construction jobs from the North and Far North Queensland renewable energy zones, up to 1,400 renewable energy construction jobs from the Central Queensland renewable energy zones and up to 2,200 renewable energy construction jobs from the Southern Queensland renewable energy zones. As well as delivering thousands of new jobs in new industries, the Energy and Jobs Plan also protects workers in existing industries.

The Miles government legislated Job Security Guarantee is an investment in Queensland's energy talent. It ensures affected energy workers have secure futures, choices and clear employment opportunities and pathways. Earlier this year on 18 April the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024 was passed by this parliament. It established the Job Security Guarantee and Fund and created a transparent framework for how the \$150 million will be used to support workers. This includes defining the workers eligible to receive support from the fund and the types of support available for each of them. Broadly, the job security fund will make available the following types of support to affected eligible energy workers. They include personal support services including mental health, career and financial planning and job-seeking services; support to undertake training or upskilling or undertake short-term employment opportunities to upskill; provide financial assistance to voluntarily relocate and other support required to ensure affected energy workers can transition to another sector. The fund will also be used to ensure sufficient workers with the necessary skills are retained at publicly owned coal-fired power stations to ensure safe and reliable operation and to remunerate the chairperson of the energy industry council and the Queensland Renewable Energy Jobs Advocate as well as funding the work of the council.

Implementation of the Job Security and Guarantee Fund has been informed by the advice of the tripartite Interim Energy Industry Council, which has representatives from relevant energy unions, government and Queensland's publicly owned energy businesses. Engagement with workers at publicly owned coal-fired power stations has been occurring since January this year. These engagements have sought to understand the preferences and pathways that affected energy workers are seeking as part of the energy transformation. These insights will inform ongoing implementation of the Job Security Guarantee.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. With reference to BP2, can the minister update the committee on what this budget provides towards delivering regional coordination of the energy plan and share with the committee what programs are being delivered to ensure regional Queensland communities benefit from our clean energy transformation? Can the minister outline any alternative approaches?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. As the committee knows, the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and the SuperGrid infrastructure blueprint work together to outline a pathway to clean, reliable and affordable power which will require substantial public and private investment in clean energy infrastructure. I can inform the committee that 95 per cent of this investment is expected to occur in regional Queensland. The Miles government understands how vital it is for Queensland communities to remain at the centre of the energy transformation. That is why this budget continues to invest in programs and initiatives to empower communities across our state and deliver lasting benefits. This includes \$9.25 million for the Local Energy Partnerships framework to ensure local voices and choices shape the form of the renewable energy transformation and that benefits from the development are flowing through to local communities and businesses.

We are funding the Queensland Farmers' Federation \$500,000 to deliver an energy information service for Queensland landholders and the Queensland Conservation Council \$800,000 to identify programs that deliver significant environmental benefits. Further initiatives under the Local Energy Partnerships framework include \$1 million to establish the First Nations engagement and capacity program to ensure communities can drive the right outcomes for themselves from renewables

development; \$3 million for industry to improve its practice when engaging communities and delivering better outcomes across the design and development process; \$1.1 million towards a capacity-building partnership with the Local Government Association of Queensland, plus \$300,000 for the development of a local government toolkit; and \$1.5 million to support Coexistence Queensland activities.

The budget also supports the \$200 million Regional Economic Futures Fund designed to support communities to seize industry development opportunities presented by global decarbonisation. Some \$20 million has been allocated from that fund to action the key findings identified from the renewable energy zone readiness assessments, with the aim to boost social, economic and environmental outcomes in communities hosting clean energy infrastructure. Budget Paper 2, as you identify, at page 171 allocates \$8.5 million to deliver transmission infrastructure including renewable energy zone works and \$192 million for Powerlink to develop transmission and training hubs in both Townsville and in Gladstone. Interim facilities in both of those locations are currently open and work is underway as we speak on the permanent sites.

The Miles government is committed to advancing Queensland's reputation as a global leader in establishing a cleaner economy, continuing to put Queenslanders and regional communities at the heart of our energy transformation, with public ownership being a key feature enabling us to deliver those outcomes in marked contrast to the LNP's policies which we know will always prioritise big business over people and communities. We know that they will sell off our publicly owned assets. How do we know this? The member for Nanango actually said it on Friday, 14 June 2024. When asked if energy assets would be publicly or privately owned under the LNP, she said—

It's all in the mix. It's all in the mix ... Everything is on the table and it's all in the mix.

That is on the record.

Ms PEASE: With Queensland's renewable energy sector poised for rapid growth through this budget's \$26 million investment in the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and in relation to page 1 of the SDS, can the minister please further outline for the committee how the partnership between the Queensland Farmers' Federation and the Queensland government is assisting landholders on how to benefit from negotiations with energy industry representatives about accessing land and developing renewable energy projects?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to unpack that particular initiative further because it is a very important one in regional Queensland. It is vital that communities like those remain at the centre of the energy transition. It is why the Miles government is investing in programs and partnerships across the state to deliver real benefits to those communities. It is why we developed the \$9.25 million Local Energy Partnerships framework. It will ensure local voices and choices shape the energy transition and that benefits from the development flow through to local communities and businesses.

We have partnered with a trusted independent service to make sure of it. We have, as outlined, invested \$500,000 from the fund to support the Queensland Farmers' Federation. Queenslanders already know them as a vital source of information and support in the agricultural sector. With the Miles government's investment, they have established an Energy Information Service for Landholders. It is available to call now on (07)33297500. This is a phone line that supports farmers and landholders who want to explore renewable energy options on their land by delivering tailored information and guidance to help them make informed decisions that are right for them.

Hosting a renewable energy project on your land can be a big decision. It can be hard for landholders to find the information that they can trust, so that is why in consultation with the Miles government the QFF developed the Queensland Renewable Energy Landholder Toolkit that was released last year. It is an easy-to-understand, very popular free guide for landholders containing the essential information they need to get the most out of hosting a renewable energy project. These programs with the QFF are just two of the many initiatives we are undertaking and are funded through the Local Energy Partnerships framework and these are further funded in the forward estimates.

The clean energy transition represents enormous opportunities for Queensland farmers, landholders and their communities. We know, however, that all of that is at risk with the LNP's lack of planning, their opposition to renewable energy targets and their fixation on nuclear. I want to conclude my remarks by referring to the former LNP prime minister Malcolm Turnbull when he recently said this of Peter Dutton's nuclear policy. He said it—

... offers Australians the worst of all energy worlds. It is designed to delay and obstruct the rollout of renewables, it will increase, massively, the cost of electricity, and it will extend our reliance on burning coal.

The Leader of the Opposition in Queensland may say he is opposed to nuclear, but as Colin Boyce said on Sky on 24 June—

Well, I think you'll find he'll backpedal on that. He had to backpedal on the Great Artesian Basin issue, he had to backpedal on the treaty issue, he had to backpedal on the voice issue, ultimately he will backpedal on the nuclear issue as well.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Member for Mirani.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: I will just give some guidance on timings here, so we will give you roughly four minutes.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you. I call the CEO of Queensland Hydro to the table.

Mr de BRENNI: Chair, that is okay with me.

CHAIR: Mr Cusack from Queensland Hydro, if you would like to come back. Thank you. I am not sure if you just heard, but we are on a strict time limit for this one.

Mr ANDREW: Mr Cusack, given we have a short time, sometime in 2022 I was given a map by your people that showed other positioning for alternative hydro projects in the Pioneer Valley in my electorate. Because there is such a large amount of infrastructure going in there with the transmission lines, Mr Cusack, could you let me know: are there any alternative plans to piggyback on to that arrangement to include extra hydros in that area to make the most out of those transmission assets?

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order: the question that has been put to the Queensland Hydro CEO is about projects that are hypothetical and he has just indicated that he does not have a mandate to consider—

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr de BRENNI: That question could possibly—

Mr ANDREW: I have a map here.

Mr de BRENNI: That question could possibly be better asked of myself or it could be asked of the CEO of the transmission company, but for Queensland Hydro that is delivering only two projects to deliver that answer I think is way outside of its scope.

Mr ANDREW: Okay; thank you.

CHAIR: Let us try again.

Mr ANDREW: I will ask one other question. Will people in my electorate be able to recreate at any of the hydro upper or lower dams—use them for swimming, use them for boating?

Mr Cusack: I thank the member for the question. With the rate of change in the water that we expect for the upper and lower reservoir, we are putting the safety of the public first and recreating on those reservoirs would not be available at the current time. Should we navigate the final investment decision, there will be funds available for community benefits and if the desire of the local community is to have a recreational facility whereby they can swim in the valley or indeed at Dalrymple Heights then we would be happy to hear from the community about those submissions. I would also say that within the local region there is Eungella Dam, Kinchant Dam and a number of other places to recreate that are very close by.

Mr ANDREW: How much did you spend on the campaign to show that everyone was swimming at Queensland Hydro's assets, upper and lower dams, that you have proposed for the pumped hydro?

CHAIR: I am struggling myself with the context of that question, member for Mirani.

Mr ANDREW: It is because it is misleading. The people of my electorate are angry about it.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, I have been very generous in providing some government time to allow you to ask reasonable questions. Could you put your question to Mr Cusack in a way that we can all understand?

Mr ANDREW: Given the situation that we have money allocated for the pumped hydro, how much of that money allocated in this budget did you spend making an ad that shows people recreating in the Queensland Hydro area, upper and lower dams?

CHAIR: I will give you some latitude in responding to that, Mr Cusack.

Mr Cusack: I thank the member for the question. I will first go to the expenditure. On our committed expenditure, we have committed \$1.5 million for the production and creation of the 'Hydro is How' education and awareness campaign. We have spent approximately \$1.1 million this financial year. In addition to that, we also have \$1.28 million set aside for the advertising and media-buy component for the 'Hydro is How' education and awareness campaign. All told, we expect for the expenditure to be \$2.78 million.

With respect to people swimming in the reservoir, we are focused on the two project areas for the ad campaign: Gympie and the Sunshine Coast for our Borumba project and Mackay and the Whitsundays for the Pioneer-Burdekin project. We currently have recreation that people can do on the lower reservoir of the Borumba development. The intention is that that would stay that way for the Borumba project. That is part of the reason that you can see people recreating in the advertisement. I would also say that it is pretty standard for that to be the case. Wivenhoe, for the last 40 years, has had the same. Personally, I think that it does not misrepresent what pumped hydro is and how it looks. The whole purpose of it was the education campaign.

Mr ANDREW: I was specifically—

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, your time has expired. Member for Nanango?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Through you, Chair: there are a lot of people in this room. I want to know if anyone in this room can tell the committee how much the Pioneer-Burdekin project will cost. This is taxpayers' money.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I will direct that question to the director-general from whom the minister offered to provide that information earlier. You have asked if anybody in the room—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: If the minister can provide that information—

CHAIR: You have asked if anybody in the room can and you had that offer earlier that you did not want to take up. Director-General, would you like to respond?

Mr Martyn: What I can say to the committee is the estimate of \$12 billion that is in the public domain—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: From two years ago.

Mr Martyn:—was derived from a 2022 concept study by engineering firm SMEC, which bring about 70 years experience in energy projects. SMEC was commissioned by Powerlink to undertake the concept study, which was done both by desktop and with site visits. It was built on an earlier 2020 advanced concept study that SMEC did.

Mr HEAD: Concrete has gone up a lot since then.

Mr Martyn: SMEC estimated a cost of approximately \$9.12 billion for the direct construction of the scheme. Powerlink provided a further cost estimate of \$1.89 billion for transmission and land costs. It was on this basis that the current costing of \$12 billion was arrived at.

Mr HEAD: How much for the pamphlet?

CHAIR: Member for Callide, there will not be running commentary. The director-general is being responsive to the question. Thank you, Director-General.

Mr Martyn: It is important to note that this preliminary estimate, which was a class 5 estimate in industry parlance, was used as the basis for the government's commitment to progress the project into feasibility investigations and for the purpose of budget forecasting. This is a typical gateway approach to infrastructure development and is consistent with the Queensland government's business case development framework, which outlines a staged approach to investment decision-making.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That was the figure in 2022. We are now in 2024. Can the director-general say what the estimated cost is that the government is working on? While we are at it, can the DG confirm that he is the chair of Queensland Hydro? As chair of Queensland Hydro and the DG of the department, surely the DG is able to give—

CHAIR: You have the question there; let's put it.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Surely the DG is able to give us a more concrete, up-to-date cost estimate of Queensland's biggest project?

CHAIR: Director-General, over to you for a response. I think the question has been put.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Or is it a hoax?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango.

Mr HEAD: It is not real.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango and member for Callide, you know what you are doing.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am happy to move on.

CHAIR: No, you have asked your question. Director-General, it is over to you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would be happy if it could be answered.

CHAIR: Director-General, over to you.

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Mr HEAD: It looks great on an election pamphlet.

CHAIR: Member for Callide!

Mr Martyn: I can say that the costs that have been developed on the basis of the SMEC review that are in the public domain have very much been the result of considerable analysis. We know that the Pioneer-Burdekin site was identified through the hydro studies report that was conducted over three years. We know that the need for a scheme of the scale of Pioneer-Burdekin was identified through the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan.

Mr HEAD: Sounds like the Gabba of the energy world.

CHAIR: If you could hold just for a moment, Director-General. Member for Callide, I do not need to remind you again about behaviour. The member for Toowoomba North is on a warning. If you would like to be in the same position, keep that behaviour up. Director-General, back to you.

Mr Martyn: As I was saying, the fact that we have these reports that justify the figure that is in the public domain should give the committee confidence in the work that has been done to date. As the committee has been aware—and I think it has been alluded to today—we are going through the process of a detailed analytical report, which is due to the government at the end of the year. That will help us to fully validate the costs of the scheme. It is important to note that there are a range of—

Mr HEAD: Probably right after the election—

CHAIR: Member for Callide!

Mr Martyn: There are a range of options in terms of the design of the scheme that need to be explored. Those options require detailed geotechnical analysis and bear directly upon the costs so it is not possible at this stage to provide that, but it will be once the detailed analytical report—

Mr HEAD: Not convenient with an election looming.

CHAIR: Member for Callide!

Mr Martyn:—is delivered to the government at the end of the year.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have further questions to the CEO of CS Energy. Mr Busine, I refer to the incident at the Callide Power Station that occurred on Friday evening, 26th July. Noting there have been well publicised maintenance backlogs, as noted in the report by forensic engineer Dr Brady, as well as maintenance issues, my question is: was all maintenance current for the boiler house in Callide B1?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. We had an injury to one of our workers on Friday night. It was a subcontract worker working on the overhaul. The purpose of the work is to undertake scheduled overhaul work. We take our safety responsibilities very seriously. We immediately stopped work in the area and we had a safety reset for all of the overhaul teams on the following day.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: In relation to the incident, I have a question that I will pass to the member for Callide.

Mr HEAD: I have been informed that there are workers who have not returned to work at the Callide Power Station since the C4 explosion because they believe their lives were at risk. Unfortunately, we have seen yet another incident at Callide on Friday, this time leading to personal injury. Are workers' lives at risk because of the failures of the Miles Labor government in adequately resourcing the plant?

CHAIR: Member for Callide, you can rephrase that question without the ending next time. Mr Busine, would you like to respond?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. As the CEO who took on the role last July, my priority has been around ensuring that we run these assets safely and reliably. We are investing in improvements across the business. We had improvements in our safety record this year—in the year just finished—achieving well below our targets.

It is not acceptable that somebody got injured on Friday night. We undertake significant work on overhauls, to induct people into the safety environment. We are getting a range of new workers coming into those environments. We undertake that work and ensure that they are appropriately inducted. As I say, we did some safety resets. I attended site on the weekend and I communicated to all staff about my expectations of people, reminding people they have the opportunity to stop work at any time.

We have recently released the Brady report and alongside that we have released our plan to be a safer and better organisation. We are committed to being a high-reliability organisation and we have a plan under which we will do that. I take my responsibilities to the organisation and to our staff very seriously.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Are there any outstanding workplace health and safety regulator investigations relating to the explosion that happened in May 2021?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. To my knowledge, there are no outstanding investigations that relate to that incident. There were notices that were issued at the time which were subsequently released. There are a number of notices that we have had from Workplace Health and Safety at various times which we respond and report to the Workplace Health and Safety department.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Dr Brady's report refers to the absence of a critical risk program. How many staff are now in the process safety team for the Callide power plant?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. We currently have an FTE complement of 4½ people in our process safety team for CS Energy. We have invested in additional consulting expertise that we have engaged into the business to assist us. As I said a couple of times, we have engaged in a plan for a better and safer CS Energy. As part of that, we have engaged an independent advisory group which will assist us and oversight the work we are doing.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I refer to the explosion at Callide. The Auditor-General has said it has cost consumers. The Queensland Competition Authority has said it has cost consumers. The union has said it has cost consumers. Does the CEO acknowledge that the explosion at Callide has impacted Queenslanders' power bills?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for the question. As I stated before, we have expressed our apologies for the incident and for not maintaining the world-class standards that we should expect. There was a short spike in prices that did occur immediately after the incident. Queensland prices have since that time largely tracked with the rest of the country. As has been said today, in the last quarter, Queensland wholesale prices, which form part of the retail price, have been below those of the rest of the country.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How many whistleblower notifications are you aware of in the last five years and were any of these whistleblower notifications about safety?

Mr Busine: I thank the member for that question. I do not have the information in front of me. I have not been made aware of any. With the indulgence of the minister, I will endeavour to source the information and provide it to the minister before the end of the hearing, but I will confirm that I have no notifications that have been provided to me in relation to whistleblowers.

CHAIR: Just on that, we are in the last throes of this particular session.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How many more minutes?

CHAIR: We break at 10.30 am, so whatever information you are able to come up with in that period of time.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a question to the minister. I want to be really clear. We have a room of energy experts right here. Minister, did anyone in this room tell you about the maintenance issues at Callide?

Mr de BRENNI: I have been very clear with the committee that the Brady report, prepared by Brady-Heywood, was provided to me just a few weeks ago—in June, in fact. I have outlined the dates on which that was provided to the department.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: So no-one told you about maintenance.

CHAIR: The minister is being responsive to your question, member for Nanango.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Well, he is not.

CHAIR: Let's hear it in silence.

Mr de BRENNI: What that report in fact identifies is that there are a number of contributing factors. In fact, on page 11 of the report it says, 'The key organisational factor that contributed to the incident was a failure to implement effective process safety practices.'

Mr HEAD: The Callide cover-up continues.

CHAIR: Member for Callide.

Mr de BRENNI: The chair, on behalf of the board and the executive, took responsibility for that. He said, as the CEO has said today—

As the current Chair of CS Energy, I apologise to our employees, the Government and the people of Queensland for CS Energy not having maintained the world class performance which they have rightly come to expect ...

Mr HEAD: Maybe the minister was walking around with earpods in.

CHAIR: The member for Callide.

Mr de BRENNI: The report also indicates 'that the Board is responsible for "[s]etting the Risk Appetite of CS Energy and ensures appropriate oversight of risk ...'

Mr HEAD: Blindfolds and earplugs.

Mr de BRENNI: It is clear from the report that there are a number of factors. I have made clear when those factors were brought to my attention.

An opposition member: Extraordinary.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, it is extraordinary. I will take that interjection.

CHAIR: You are not taking interjections on questions, so put your question please.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I have a question to the minister. I note the following: we have the explosion at Callide; we have the cover-up; we have the collapse of cooling towers; we have the lack of safety, as noted in Dr Brady's report—\$10 million-to-date report; we have the highest increase in power prices in the nation—three times the national average—as revealed in the CPI data; and now we have a significant safety incident just on Friday night. Why won't the minister resign given these failings?

CHAIR: Minister, I will give you a lot of latitude in how you would like to respond to that question.

Mr de BRENNI: It is well known to all members of the committee that the operations of a government owned corporation are the responsibility of the board. The chair and the CEO released—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Isn't it up to the minister to ask questions about maintenance?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Well—

CHAIR: Honestly—

Mr de BRENNI: As the current chair of CS Energy said—

CHAIR: If you could hold for a moment, Minister.

Mr HEAD: Shareholders generally ask questions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That is a good point. Most shareholders do ask questions.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, you put a question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I did.

CHAIR: The minister is being responsive to your question. Let's hear in it in silence.

Mr de BRENNI: As the chair said in his statement released on 17 July—

As the current Chair of CS Energy, I apologise to our employees, the Government and the people of Queensland for CS Energy not having maintained the world class performance which they have rightly come to expect from their government owned assets.

In releasing these reports, I acknowledge there are lessons for both CS Energy and the broader energy industry, and we are committed to sharing these lessons so that we can help the whole industry maintain best practice.

Mr HEAD: Most mum-and-dad shareholders ask more questions than this minister.

CHAIR: Member for Callide.

Mr de BRENNI: I would also like to confirm that in the report in question at pages 11, 191, 174 and 299, it said—

... internal and external messaging presented a confident view that an effective process safety program had been established within CS Energy.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was not even there.

Mr HEAD: That is the messaging, not the reality.

CHAIR: Member for Callide, we do not need your running commentary. You did not just fall out of a coconut tree.

Mr de BRENNI: If there is any further doubt, in his apology to the government and the people of Queensland on 17 July, the current chair of CS Energy accepted that the information that was provided to the government—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The former chair, I think, spoke to the minister a few times, didn't he?

Mr de BRENNI: He says—

I acknowledge that the information which CS Energy used to brief the Government was ambiguous and did not include any commentary on the maturity of CS Energy's process safety management systems or details of the maintenance backlog. For this, I also extend my apologies to Government.

For the benefit of the record, I will clarify that in my statements in this House I have relied on that information that was provided to me by CS Energy management at the time.

Chair, I was asked to take on indulgence a couple of matters. With your indulgence, I will happily provide responses to the committee in relation to that. I can confirm that CS Energy advise that there have been no references of whistleblowers advised to them, nor are they aware of any whistleblower notifications. Secondly, in relation to terminations at Queensland Hydro, I am advised that during 2023-24 there were two terminations that occurred.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for providing those answers. We will take a short break now and resume at 10.45 am.

Proceedings suspended from 10.31 am to 10.45 am.



CHAIR: The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of clean economy jobs, emissions. Welcome to the table, member for Bonney.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, 20 per cent of the government's modelled emissions reduction is due to come from the Energy and Jobs Plan. How much of the modelled emissions of this plan rely on the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro project?

Mr Martyn: As the member points out, the decarbonisation of the energy system is absolutely critical to the state achieving its emissions reduction ambitions. Not only does it take direct emissions out of primary energy production; it also directly enables the electrification of the rest of the economy. What we know from the work that is contained in the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, particularly in the infrastructure and blueprint, is that the decarbonised energy system we target—80 per cent by 2035 renewable energy penetration—will require significant long-duration storage, so more than 6,000 megawatts of that storage. The work that has been done through the Queensland Hydro studies and the plan has identified the two most prospective sites in Queensland, one being Borumba and the other being Pioneer-Burdekin. Pioneer-Burdekin will provide 5,000 megawatts of long-duration deep storage which will be critical for providing the long-term reliability of our energy system. Those hydro schemes and hydro as a technology I think are widely regarded—together with batteries and gas backing up a largely renewable system—as the best way to achieve a system that is clean, reliable and affordable.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, my question was specifically about Pioneer-Burdekin and the portion of the 20 per cent of the 75 per cent by 2035 it relates to.

Mr Martyn: Because energy is a system, you need to see it in its entirety. The plan provides for the gradual withdrawal of 8,000 megawatts of thermal generation, which allows the entry of 22,000 megawatts of new wind and solar resources. It provides for, as I said, over 6,000 megawatts of long-duration storage, at least 3,000 megawatts of gas, plus the addition of significant amounts of batteries. It is not possible to pull apart that modelling to isolate any one area, although the plan does make it clear that in a system that is largely reliant on renewable energy long-duration pumped hydro storage will be critical for the reliability of the system. For opening up the rest of the system, particularly for solar energy, the presence of pumped hydro is absolutely critical. To answer your question, in that sense achieving the plan's objectives rely on pumped hydro. Pioneer-Burdekin is 5,000 of the 7,000 megawatts of planned long-duration storage. That is obviously supplemented by medium private pumped hydro projects as well.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, where did that 20 per cent figure come from? With this megaproject, which various government ministers have talked about as being the cornerstone of the plan, where did that 20 per cent come from if you cannot specifically say the importance of this project to our emissions reduction?

Mr Martyn: The modelling that was conducted for the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan showed a 95 per cent reduction in emissions from the energy system by 2035. That modelling was used by Queensland Treasury in developing the components of the 75 per cent target.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, what proportion of that 95 per cent reduction is attributed to Pioneer-Burdekin?

Mr Martyn: The 95 per cent reduction comes from a range of factors. It comes particularly from the removal of the 8,000 megawatts of thermal coal-fired power. The only way you can do that is obviously to have sufficient renewables to replace that power. That is 22,000 megawatts of wind and solar, but that needs to be firmed by long-duration pumped hydro storage, batteries and gas.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, the 2022-23 state budget allocated \$35 million to 'advance a statewide search for a second potential pumped hydro energy storage site in Queensland', and two months later Pioneer-Burdekin was announced as the site. When was this \$35 million piece of work undertaken and what were the outcomes of it?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do not have my last year's estimates folder with me, but I do recall that that \$35 million was enabling work on the Borumba Pumped Hydro project. The member will recall that I think it was in 2021 that the government announced that it was doing the exploratory works around the Borumba site—the Borumba site having been preserved for pumped hydro for decades.

CHAIR: I welcome the students in the gallery. I hope you are enjoying your day here in the people's place in the Queensland parliament.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, the work specifically referred to—and I would have thought you would have been across this as the chair of Queensland Hydro—the identification of 'a second potential pumped hydro energy storage site'. It was a \$35 million piece of work. I am just wanting to know how it was possible for that work to be announced in June and then the site to be selected by September. I have the press release if you would like it.

Mr Martyn: I thank the member for the question. The work on Borumba started in 2021. The government announced—

Mr O'CONNOR: Point of order: DG, not Borumba, the second site which is Pioneer-Burdekin.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, the DG was not even 10 seconds into his response before you interjected. Please allow the DG to respond.

Mr Martyn: Member, I think I will need to see that document if you do not mind.

Mr O'CONNOR: I am happy to have that tabled. It is the press release from that time.

CHAIR: We are not tabling it. The DG just wants to have a look at it so an attendant will assist.

Mr Martyn: I think you are talking about Borumba.

Mr O'CONNOR: No, not Borumba. It was a \$35 million study 'to advance a statewide search for a second potential pumped hydro energy storage site in Queensland'.

Mr Martyn: If I can have a look at this, if you do not mind.

Mr O'CONNOR: It was from June 2022.

CHAIR: It is okay, member for Bonney. He has the press release in front of him. He is having a look. Give him a moment

Mr Martyn: What I would say to the member is that that funding was expended on, as I understand it, the Borumba Pumped Hydro site. I am happy to confirm that at a later stage. Since that time, the government has announced \$6 billion in equity to pursue the Borumba site and \$1 billion to pursue the Pioneer-Burdekin site.

Mr O'CONNOR: I will go to the minister. Minister, could you enlighten us on this \$35 million study and the outcomes of that?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The director-general is correct that the transition to a clean energy system relies on providing firming to ensure that the power system remains reliable. That is an underpinning philosophy of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. It is a key tenet to ensure that the power grid remains reliable and secure—that we can assure all Queenslanders whether in households or businesses that their power remains reliable. The member is correct that pumped hydro energy storage is one of the key ways that we will do that.

I want to provide some context for the member. The Energy and Jobs Plan also outlines that we will invest in the firming capacity of large grid-scale, utility-scale household level batteries so they are being rolled out currently by government owned corporations, including the generators, the transmission companies and the distribution company. This budget funds local renewable energy zones featuring local level storage in both Caloundra and Townsville.

The renewable energy that would be stored in the Pioneer-Burdekin project allows around 15 gigawatts of renewable energy to enter the system and be firmed. That is 15 gigawatts of an additional 22 gigawatts by 2035 to allow us to transition out of reliance on coal by that time. The additional \$35 million is being expended on a range of activities. Member for Bonney, at the previous hearing earlier this morning I made it clear to other members of the crossbench who were appearing that the work to reach a final investment decision for the second pumped hydro energy storage scheme in Queensland remains ongoing, so the \$35 million was expended in that process. The search to settle includes not only the identification of the site but also a range of identification of community benefits, the work done on environmental studies and the work done on geotechnical studies. It is not correct to characterise the choice of words used in that press statement.

Mr O'CONNOR: They were your words, Minister. I was quoting you directly—'advance a statewide search for a second potential pumped hydro energy storage site in Queensland'.

Mr de BRENNI: It is not appropriate to characterise them in the way you have done. We have made it very clear that the work on the detailed analytical report continues. The government has been very clear that our hydro studies summary, which has been published, has identified Pioneer-Burdekin as the best site in Australia—potentially one of the best in the world—to deliver this sort of firming capacity. It will unlock the ability to add significant renewable energy that will decarbonise industry across Queensland. That will allow emissions intensive, trade exposed industries, particularly in manufacturing heartland places like Mackay, Gladstone and Townsville, to continue to operate to be able to export the products they make to an increasingly globally emission sensitive market. That is why we invested funds at that time. It is why this year's budget continues to invest funds now.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, can we get a breakdown of how much of that \$35 million has been expended? The minister just used two tenses there. He said it is being expended and then it has been expended. Can we get some clarity on how much has actually been spent?

Mr Martyn: I thank the member for the question. I am advised that \$22 million of the \$35 million was on Pioneer and \$13 million was on other sites which ultimately resolved into the Pioneer-Burdekin site.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you. Minister, how was the decision made to proceed with Pioneer-Burdekin, when all of the money your own government funded to select Pioneer-Burdekin had not been expended?

Mr de BRENNI: Firstly, I will just correct the member's assertion in relation to the characterisation of those funds. My quotes in this press release say, and I quote—

Powerlink is managing the design and cost analysis, while extensive community and stakeholder consultation will heavily inform all final decisions.

I went on to say—

The Borumba Pumped Hydro Project Stakeholder Reference Group met for the first time in March and will be critical to achieving outcomes for the community and Queensland.

I go on to say—

This includes on issues that have emerged as fundamental to building social licence for the project: that there are no impacts to environmental low flows, there is no off-river storage infrastructure on the Mary River, the economic viability of the project, and a lasting community legacy.

All this will make sure we deliver the best outcome for Queenslanders.

I correct the record there for the member for Bonney.

Mr O'CONNOR: If you flip it over, Minister, you can see the rest of it, where you talk about finding a second site. Do you want to quote that?

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, you were not in here for the start of this session. I will not tolerate running commentaries, so allow the minister to complete responding to your question.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you very much, Chair. Had the member taken an interest in the session that was scheduled for consideration of energy projects, which was the previous session—I appreciate your indulgence for allowing him to stray from the particular matters in question—he would know that the *Hydro studies summary* that was released earlier this year goes into significant detail about the decision-making process for pumped hydro projects in Queensland over many, many years. I encourage the member to inform himself of the contents of this report. If he had read it, he would know the answer to his question.

In addition to that, the director-general in the previous session this morning referred to a piece of work that was commissioned of SMEC, in partnership with Ranbury and Powerlink—a significant piece of work which provided the advice to government to be able to make a decision to proceed to the next stage of project evaluation. That is the detailed analytical report. We have been providing funding to steps of this process for a number of years now and, as I advised the previous committee hearing, the project detailed analytical report would be provided to government and expected by the end of the year.

I just want to conclude my response to the question. There is a lot of discussion around alternatives to pumped hydro, and I know that the LNP have a fascination with private projects. They are very supportive of private pumped hydro. They have announced that they will build 70 small pumped hydros.

Mr O'CONNOR: Not correct, Minister.

Mr de BRENNI: Just for a moment, committee, imagine the impact on communities of 70 of these projects across this state—70 times the transmission, 70 times the interruptions. They have not been able to provide any indication of the costs of those.

What we do know is that replacing a project like this with batteries, based on the Swanbank battery project that is in construction at the moment, would cost \$81 billion, and that would need to be replaced every 10 to 15 years. Batteries have their place, but relying on them to deliver this sort of long-duration, deep storage is not practical.

We also know that the leader of the LNP, a Queensland member of the federal parliament, has announced their plan for nuclear. I think all Queenslanders are concerned that the leader of the LNP in Queensland has had it made very clear to him that he will, as has been described, roll over if he gets the chance and pursue nuclear. We saw on the weekend Queensland senator Matt Canavan reveal the LNP's actual plan. Their opposition to pumped hydro is because they want to pursue a nuclear plan. They know that will take 15, 20 or 25 years and, as Matt Canavan announced on the weekend, the LNP would need to build new coal-fired power stations. The member for Bonney is very interested in emissions. He ought to know that additional coal-fired power stations would increase emissions. That is his party's plan for Queensland—more emissions—because they are committed to nuclear, building more coal-fired power stations.

Mr O'CONNOR: Wasn't that desperate! Director-General, of that \$22 million you were just discussing, how much was expended before the September announcement of Pioneer-Burdekin?

Mr Martyn: I will have to come back to the member with that information; I do not have it to hand—with the minister's indulgence.

Mr de BRENNI: Director-General, I would be happy for that. I note that it is not technically subject matter for this particular hearing—that has been communicated to the committee—but for the purposes of transparency—

CHAIR: Member, you are aware that this session—you have read the minister's response on what this session is—

Mr O'CONNOR: Absolutely, and I would have thought the biggest renewable project in Queensland's history is relevant to emissions reduction, but if the minister thinks otherwise that is his prerogative. Director-General, the \$13 million you mentioned is yet to be spent?

Mr Martyn: I was talking about the allocation of the \$35 million. I would have to look into that. I think it is highly likely that it has been spent.

Mr O'CONNOR: I am happy to get some clarification on where that went as well. Thank you very much. Director-General, how was the decision made to proceed with this site after such a short period was spent investigating whether this should be the site?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. I think there is some very important context here around how we got to where we got to. Over a period of three years, there was an extensive and exhaustive analysis of pumped hydro sites in Queensland. The hydro studies report that the minister referred to is a summary of that process. That process distilled sites that had been identified through the ANU atlas of pumped hydro and a range of other pre-existing studies, shortlisted those down to 50 and then gradually, through a multicriteria analysis, reduced them to two sites that were the most prospective in Queensland. Those sites were analysed and determined through looking through a range of criteria—obviously the energy system contribution but also environmental factors, proximity to other forms of infrastructure et cetera. This study over three years narrowed it down to two sites:

Pioneer-Burdekin and Borumba. There was then extensive technical work done on those two sites, as the minister said. There were studies undertaken. He referred to the SMEC/Ranbury study of the Pioneer Valley project.

What was important was that the modelling that was done to underpin the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan really underlined the need for long-duration storage as part of Queensland's energy transformation. That modelling indicated that at least 6,000 megawatts was needed.

You have hydro studies and you have the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. One is identifying the sites; the other is identifying the scale required. Then you have the detailed technical studies that were done—the concept studies—on both sites. That led to the inclusion of both sites in the plan.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, there was some discussion in the previous session about Project Kruger, which I imagine you would be across as the chair of Queensland Hydro. Can you enlighten us as to the emissions implications of the alternatives identified through Project Kruger?

Mr Martyn: I thank the member for the question. I am not aware of Project Kruger.

Mr O'CONNOR: How is your CEO aware of it, then?

Mr Martyn: You would have to ask him.

Mr O'CONNOR: Okay, Director-General—

CHAIR: Actually, the time for non-government questions has expired. We are moving over to government questions. Member for Lytton?

Ms PEASE: In relation to page 1 of the SDS, can the minister please advise what modelling it undertook to set the state's emissions targets and provide a basis for its stated objectives of more jobs and lower emissions?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. Decarbonising Queensland's economy is really about embracing opportunity and about future economic growth. The approach the Miles government is taking will secure traditional jobs, create new jobs and protect Queensland's lifestyle. In 2021, the Australian Labor Party developed the Powering Australia plan. RepuTex was engaged at that time by the ALP to analyse the greenhouse gas emissions and economic impacts of the Powering Australia plan. RepuTex found that the Powering Australia plan was projected to achieve a 43 per cent reduction in national greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Queensland Treasury modelling set out in the *Queensland's 2035 Clean Economy Pathway* document shows that we can reduce emissions whilst growing the economy. Not only are those goals compatible but also, in fact, they are mutually reinforcing. The modelling shows that as emissions reduce to 75 per cent, employment numbers will grow from 2.51 million in 2020 to 3.1 million in 2035. We are already seeing it happening, members. Between 2005 and 2022, Queensland delivered the largest reduction in emissions of any state or territory—that is, a reduction to 124.1 million tonne. Queensland achieved this while our population increased at the same time by 1.3 million people. Employment grew by almost 42 per cent. Our economy grew by 63 per cent.

However, the Queensland Treasury modelling is not the only modelling that has been done. The Deloitte report, titled *Toward a Net Zero Queensland*, found a 75 per cent reduction in emissions by 2035 will add 87,000 jobs to the economy as industry-scale development invest in new technology and attract a new workforce. Industries like construction, clean energy generation, critical minerals and green hydrogen will all boom under this pathway. Deloitte forecasts an additional 145,000 jobs to 2050, with the majority of those in the regions. They forecast 84,500 new jobs in North and Outback Queensland. They forecast 43,500 new jobs in Central Queensland and in the Wide Bay, and 17,000 new jobs in South-East Queensland. The report also notes that—

Queensland has a \$430B economic opportunity from an orderly transition to meet the 75 per cent target by 2035.

Members, over \$270 billion of new investment to 2050 and a higher standard of living and reduced business costs for Queenslanders are the results.

The report, however, also warns of the dangers of inaction. They say it is just as great with Queensland risking \$350 billion of exports by 2050 if we delay or if we slow our transition. The Miles government is ensuring workers and communities benefit from the energy transformation. Ernst & Young modelling shows 64,000 of the 100,000 jobs under the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan will be through the rollout of energy infrastructure—28,500 in direct construction, manufacturing and operations and 35,000 in supporting industries. Another 36,000 jobs will be created through resultant economic activity in industries, including minerals, mining, metals, refining, green hydrogen and battery manufacturing.

Queenslanders know the way to bring down the cost of living, grow our economy, increase jobs and protect the environment is through a Labor government, and it is only the Miles Labor government that will ensure Queensland stays on track to reap the rewards of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan.

Mr WALKER: Minister, in relation to page 1 of the SDS, how does the Miles government plan to ensure Queensland meets its emissions reduction targets, and are you aware of any risky alternative approaches?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. Chair, the Miles government is taking action to meet Queensland's emission reduction targets and we are doing this through a range of means, including the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. In April this year, we passed the Clean Economy Jobs Act 2024. It establishes a structured, credible approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, an approach that grows Queensland's economy and jobs.

Members, scientists have confirmed that last year was the warmest on record. March 2024 was the warmest month of March on record. Last Sunday, 21 July, was the hottest in the Earth's recorded history. The evidence shows that we must act now and we must act decisively if we are to tackle climate change. Our Clean Economy Jobs Act guides the Miles government's plan for a measured and orderly transformation of our economy. It legislates Queensland's emissions reduction targets: 30 per cent by 2030, a target we have already surpassed with emissions reduction currently at 35 per cent below 2005 levels; 75 per cent by 2035; and net zero by 2050. We have always said, though, that our targets are a floor and not a ceiling. Exceeding the 2030 targets eight years earlier reinforces that the 75 per cent by 2035 target is credible and achievable.

Chair, investors are seeking opportunities to invest in clean industries and technologies, and consumers are demanding clean products, and that puts Queenslanders in the driver's seat, but only if we stay on track with our targets and our renewable energy plan. Even the Queensland Resources Council acknowledge, 'Global decarbonisation represents one of the greatest opportunities for Queensland's resources industry that we have ever seen.'

Members, all of that is at risk. The LNP supported our emissions reduction targets in April, but now, a few months later, they are changing their tune. Federally, they are backing away from climate targets as they turn their focus to nuclear—

Mr WATTS: Desperate pitch again. Let's focus on the hearing, hey?

Mr O'CONNOR: Hit the Dutton button.

Mr HEAD: Broken record.

CHAIR: Members!

Mr de BRENNI: As I mentioned, we read earlier this week, Matt Canavan, their senator from Queensland.

Mr O'CONNOR: Very relevant stuff here, Minister.

Mr WATTS: Did not hear it in the Senate hearing.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney and member for Toowoomba North.

Mr de BRENNI: The LNP's Matt Canavan said, 'Australia should end net zero targets,' and he demanded that Australia build new coal and nuclear power stations. He said, 'build new coal and nuclear power stations'. This is all in the face of the best industry and expert advice, including from the Insurance Council of Australia that said—

Legislated targets will offer Queensland businesses and industries a stable and predictable investment environment, one that enables businesses and investors to make long-term plans and allocate capital towards green and climate friendly initiatives.

Michelle Grattan, writing in *The Conversation*, warned of the danger of walking back our targets. She wrote—

Rejecting a target to which Australia has committed would carry international consequences ... that could carry significant economic costs, if not sovereign risk.

Chair, members, Queensland cannot risk the LNP. They supported emissions reduction targets without having a plan to meet them, and now all they have is a nuclear-sized policy black hole.

Mr WATTS: Desperate, Minister.

Mr O'CONNOR: We do support it. You are contradicting yourself.

CHAIR: That is enough.

Mr WALKER: Minister, page 4 of the 2024-25 SDS refers to procurement practices that leverage government's buying power to prioritise Queensland businesses and jobs. Will the minister please advise of any significant achievements that have been delivered under the Buy Queensland procurement approach?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The Miles government takes its responsibility to invest Queenslanders' money on their behalf very seriously. We are committed to extracting value from every dollar that is invested, which is why I am particularly proud of the Labor government's record of supporting Queensland's small and medium enterprises under Buy Queensland, our nation-leading procurement approach. Since 2019, we have invested an additional \$5 billion into small and medium businesses across the state and it keeps on growing year on year. In fact, I have been advised, as I announced earlier today, that if current trends continue, in four years, by the end of the forward estimates, we will see an annual investment of over \$9 billion into small and medium enterprises. That is the kind of investment in Queensland businesses and Queensland workers that matters.

Chair, the member's question asks about the government's achievements to date with Buy Queensland. I am happy to inform the committee that from 1 September 2017, when the Buy Queensland approach to procurement commenced, through to 30 June 2024, almost \$80 billion has been invested with well over 85,000 Queensland registered businesses.

In the 2022-23 financial year, there was a procurement investment of \$6.74 billion in Queensland's small and medium enterprises. This is an increase, on average, of 11.17 per cent per year since May 2019. In the first half of the 2023-24 financial year, the Labor government has spent around \$3.54 billion on Queensland SMEs and we are on track to exceed our 2022-23 spend. Buy Queensland's successful suppliers are local, sustainable, ethical and diverse. Since the introduction of the procurement targets, spend with Queensland SMEs has increased, on average, by over 11 per cent per year for the last four years.

The Buy Queensland approach continues to put Queensland first by: supporting genuine, quality, secure and ongoing local jobs and businesses and by capitalising on opportunities from Brisbane 2032; supporting a thriving, resilient and decarbonised economy by using procurement to drive sustainable economic growth, encourage innovation and increase supplier diversity; ensuring a responsible, intergenerational value for current and future generations of Queenslanders by driving a responsible public procurement approach and strengthening compliance; and delivering excellent outcomes through leading procurement policy and practice by investing in our procurement capability and making it even easier for buyers to apply policy requirements and for suppliers to do business with our government. Buy Queensland sets government and Queenslanders up for success to deliver on renewable energy and our emission reduction targets.

Mr ANDREW: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 2 of the SDS and the establishment of the Clean Economy Expert Panel to deliver sector emission reduction plans, could the minister please advise whether this will include our renewable sector and whether the department has done modelling on the total emissions produced by the proposed wind, solar, gas, battery, pumped hydro and hydrogen facilities over their lifetime, including the raw material extraction, the manufacturing process, transport, construction, energy use, plant operation and the decommissioning of those assets?

CHAIR: Member, I suggest that it is probably better for that question to be taken on notice given the amount of content, but I will allow the minister some latitude in responding.

Mr ANDREW: He can take it on notice.

CHAIR: You should have provided it as a written question.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for the question. The director-general responded to a question a few moments ago about the emission reduction that is expected in the energy sector. It has been modelled as a 96 per cent emissions reduction by 2040. I refer the member to the published Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. You will find those details in there.

The Clean Economy Jobs Act that was passed by this parliament a short time ago in April 2024 requires the minister to do a range of things: to appoint the Clean Economy Expert Panel—we have done that; to require the government and the minister take or receive advice from the Clean Economy Expert Panel; and to, by the end of this year, outline a program for the development of sectoral plans. That is important for the member because the member is asking about embodied carbon, I presume, in things like concrete and steel. He is asking about—

Mr ANDREW: The commissioning of it.

Mr de BRENNI:—the carbon emissions from the transport sector—

CHAIR: Which I note do not fall within this portfolio.

Mr de BRENNI: Understood, Chair, and thank you. Whilst they do not, I am seeking to assist the member. Those sectoral plans will identify how emission reductions are achieved, the pathway, the support for industry and how much those emissions will contribute. Those sectoral plans, as prescribed in the act, are due to be provided by the end of 2025. Whether it is in a renewable energy project, a road, a house or any other activity across the economy, there is a pathway for identifying how each of those sectors will contribute to our eventual net zero plan. I assure the member that in due course his question will be answered.

Mr ANDREW: I wonder how we make a decision going forward if we do not know what our position is. How do we make a comparison between where we are now and what the proposed plan is?

Mr de BRENNI: I happy to provide some further advice to the member. We do know, based on emissions reporting data, what the baseline of emissions are. For instance in Queensland currently, public electricity accounts for 36.2 per cent of Queensland's emissions; stationary and industrial energy, 20.8 per cent. The member asked about emissions in transport, 17.3 per cent; in agriculture, 16.9 per cent.

I indicated that a program for the development of those plans will be released by the end of 2024. The plans will then be developed transparently and collaboratively. They will build on existing actions like the Queensland Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy and the Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap. Each sector, of course, will have its own unique role to play. Our target of 75 per cent is an economy-wide target; it is not a requirement of each sector. The Commonwealth is currently developing six plans across electricity and energy, industry, resources, built environment, agriculture and land and transport. Each of those sectoral plans will resolve how we reduce emissions across those particular sectors.

Mr ANDREW: What does this mean for our farmers? How many less cane farms, orchards, grain fields, cattle, pigs and livestock will it take until the economy taskforce is satisfied? I will give you one example that I fell upon yesterday—we have not even started this. Three or four years ago, coral trout—

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, I have provided some latitude. There are standing orders that exist in terms of preamble and the way you put your question. If you could get to the point of your question, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr ANDREW: The price of coral trout went from \$30 up to \$99, Spanish mackerel has gone from \$12 up to \$55. We have not gone down this road. What impact will we see from emission reductions as far as livability and affordability to live in this state when this is rolled out?

CHAIR: I will give you some latitude in how you respond, minister.

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. What the agricultural sector has made clear—not just here in Queensland but globally—is that the greatest risk to their future, their prosperity and their operations is climate change and, in particular, the impact of severe weather. Whether it be heatwaves, cyclones or the tornados we have seen in Queensland, they have all had a significant, detrimental impact on Queensland's agricultural sector. That is why the agricultural sector is working so closely with the Queensland and Australian governments. It is why they are working so closely with governments globally to address emissions. It is not accurate to characterise the prosperity of the agricultural sector as a mutually exclusive outcome to addressing emissions reduction. In fact, they go hand in hand. I have made it clear in the session today that addressing emissions is the way in which we will secure the economic future of Queensland's agricultural sector, whether it is in aquaculture as you mentioned, whether it is in fishing or whether it is in cropping or cattle grazing.

Queensland is one of the most emissions intensive jurisdictions. Per capita it is only just behind Western Australia. That is because of our exposure to emissions intensive industries like grazing and farming, and those industries are very keen to see government support. That is why a sectoral plan developed by the end of the 2025 will be so important for that sector. I thank the member for the question and his interest in that area.

CHAIR: We will have a change of seats. Member for Mirani, your time has expired. I am calling the member to Maiwar to the table.

Mr BERKMAN: I want to start by following up on my prehearing question on notice regarding CleanCo's renewable energy generation assets excluding offtake agreements. I understand that the answer was that CleanCo is planning an additional five gigawatts of renewable energy generation. There was a second limb to the question that sought forecasts for each financial year, what the overall amount of publicly owned renewable generation would be. Is that something that can be provided? I will ask the DG for this one.

Mr Martyn: Can you ask the question again, please?

Mr BERKMAN: Can you provide planned or forecast figures for each financial year for the total generation capacity from renewable energy generation assets that are owned and operated by CleanCo?

Mr Martyn: I can advise the member that the public ownership strategy under the energy legislation will be released next year and those details will be contained in that strategy.

Mr BERKMAN: Those forecasts are on their way?

Mr Martyn: It is essential that we understand the role of gas in the future and that we model that.

Mr BERKMAN: Can I clarify? That answer indicated that CleanCo would own five gigawatts of the total forecast 22 gigawatts.

Mr Martyn: That is their target.

Mr BERKMAN: How does that align with what I understand is the current policy of maintaining majority public ownership of generation assets?

Mr Martyn: The legislation prescribes 54 per cent ownership of generation.

Mr BERKMAN: My question really is: five gigawatts out of a total 22 gigawatts is clearly substantially less than 54 per cent.

Mr Martyn: It is important to understand that the public ownership target is to be achieved over the life of the legislation to the period 2035 and the public ownership strategy, which the minister will update periodically, will articulate how that is achieved.

Mr BERKMAN: Can I clarify this as well? My understanding of the renewable energy targets methodology that was released and tabled quite recently is that it excludes pumped hydro storage; it is a secondary source, so it does not count directly towards renewable energy targets and, I assume, the public ownership of renewables?

Mr Martyn: I thank the member for the question. It is a good point. Whilst pumped hydro generates, it also consumes, so it was important not to double count. The legislation also provides for a target for long-duration storage. That is where the two large pumped hydros in particular that the government has invested in are being accounted for. It was designed not to double count.

Mr BERKMAN: I have one final question on that topic. Given that preparation of the public ownership plan is a statutory requirement—

Mr Martyn: Yes, it is.

Mr BERKMAN:—so short of the opposition actually repealing that legislation should there be a change of government in October, short of any legislative reform, that will have to be produced in any case?

Mr Martyn: The legislation has timelines in it that must be adhered to.

Mr BERKMAN: I want to move on to a different issue in relation to CleanCo's Barron River hydro project. Am I able to put questions directly to the CleanCo CEO?

CHAIR: That was the previous session.

Mr BERKMAN: Excellent. I will put it to the DG and try my chances. I understand that CleanCo has had to work along with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Indigenous rangers to actively manage the Amazon frogbit. This might sound a little obscure, but it is an invasive aquatic plant that is being managed in the Barron River as it has blocked intake pipes for the Barron Gorge hydro power station. Is that something you are able to address, Director-General? Specifically, what was the total cost for CleanCo in repairing, maintaining and whatever mitigation work was associated with protecting that station?

Mr Martyn: I would like to be able to help you but unfortunately I cannot. CleanCo would have been able to answer that question in the previous hearing. It is an operational matter for them.

Mr BERKMAN: Sad.

CHAIR: Next question, member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: Those were the questions I had.

Mr O'CONNOR: I will pick up very briefly on the topic I was asking about before. Minister, the DG, who is also the chair of Queensland Hydro, confirmed he was not aware of Project Kruger, which the CEO ran through in detail in the previous session. Were you aware of Project Kruger before today?

Mr de BRENNI: No.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, who is running the show? If you are the minister and he is the DG and chair of Queensland Hydro—

CHAIR: You have put your question. Minister, you will have some flexibility in your response.

Mr de BRENNI: I am not going to dignify that with an answer.

Mr O'CONNOR: Extraordinary! Unbelievable!

Mr HEAD: He does not know about Callide.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney and member for Callide.

Mr HEAD: He does not know about pumped hydro. He does not know about Project Kruger. Does he know about anything?

CHAIR: Member for Callide, you are warned. Member for Bonney, do you have a question?

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you, Chair. I will go on to another topic. In 2022 transport emissions were shown to have increased 20 per cent on 2004-05 levels. Director-General, I am interested in the government side of this. Could you let me know what percentage of QFleet's passenger fleet is zero emissions?

Mr Martyn: I have a number but not a percentage. I am just getting that now. The number is 13.5 per cent of QFleet's total fleet is electric vehicles.

Mr O'CONNOR: Are you including hybrid vehicles in that?

Mr Martyn: No, hybrid is accounted for separately. I will get the number for hybrids. We will come back to you shortly, with the minister's indulgence.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Energy and Jobs Plan lists one of its implementation activities as to 'replace all eligible government fleet vehicles with electric vehicles as leases expire and where a suitable alternative is available and appropriate for business needs by 2026'. Will this be achieved?

Mr Martyn: Yes.

Mr O'CONNOR: With such low figures, are you confident of that?

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, you have asked your question and you have had the response.

Mr Martyn: It is important to say that 54 per cent of eligible vehicles have been transitioned to EVs. Your question was of the total fleet. This is about eligible vehicles.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, does the department have any data on the carbon emissions of ministers and their activities?

CHAIR: Could you ask that question again?

Mr O'CONNOR: Do you have any data on the activities of ministers and the executive arm of government?

Mr Martyn: The department collects the data on emissions of a range of government activities undertaken by departments, hospital and health services et cetera. We do not collect data specifically on any one individual cohort of employees of the Crown. If you are asking about the ministerial fleet, then I can advise that 95 per cent of the ministerial fleet has transitioned to EVs.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, a fairly easy one to you then: how important is it to lead by example to reduce our carbon emissions?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. We have released *Queensland's 2035 clean economy pathway: 75% by 2035*, we have enacted the Clean Economy Jobs Act and we have delivered and enshrined in legislation the first sectoral plan, which is the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. It is clear that the new Miles government, including through this budget, is determined to ensure that the opportunities that come from supporting decarbonisation of all sectors of the Queensland economy and achieving net zero is something that we take very seriously.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, is the department still implementing the Queensland climate transition plan? It mentions leading by example, and I will quote from it. It says—

To demonstrate government leadership, the Queensland Government will reduce its own emissions from government operations. The first step is to reinstate the requirement for all government departments to report on their emissions from energy and fuel use and air travel by 2018 to manage emissions from government operations.

Has this occurred or is this currently happening?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. Yes, the department is collecting data on emissions from air travel and fuel use.

Mr O'CONNOR: Can we get some of that data, DG, on air travel by government departments?

Mr Martyn: Yes, I am able to provide some advice. If we look at overall government emissions, in the 2022-23 financial year overall government emissions were 1,117,440 tonnes of carbon. If we look at the trend over time, which I suspect is what the member is interested in, the emissions figures were significantly impacted by COVID which may have artificially depressed them. If one takes out all of the COVID years, so to speak, and one goes back to 2018-19, total emissions were 1,238,584 tonnes, so overall there has been a reduction from that number to the current number of 1,117,000 tonnes, so that is a significant decrease. What is important to say is that as part of the sectoral road map process that is outlined in the legislation the department will work with other agencies to develop a whole-of-government emissions reduction plan to systematically reduce emissions across the board and a lot of work is going on towards that goal.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you. Minister, how do you and your ministerial colleagues try to reduce your emissions when travelling by air?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The Miles government has been working with the transport industry on the development of various options for sustainable aviation fuel. There are great opportunities for us to onshore the manufacturing of that product and to create significant jobs, particularly in North and Far North Queensland. I can advise the member that, whilst all sectors of government operations are important to address emissions reductions from and the director-general has outlined that it is our intention to continue to deliver a whole-of-government approach to that, 87.4 per cent of emissions in the previous reporting year were from government electricity, 8.3 per cent of emissions were from fuel, 3.2 per cent were from aviation and one per cent was from leased building electricity.

In terms of the share of those emissions, almost 51 per cent of those are attributable to Queensland Health, 14 per cent of them are attributable to the Department of Education, almost 10 per cent are attributable to transport and main roads, 6½ per cent to the Queensland Police Service and 19 per cent across other departments. As I said, the amount of emissions from air travel is only a minority—a very small proportion—of overall whole-of-government emissions. However, as the director-general has indicated, inside government we will be delivering a further strategy to continue to reduce our emissions and we will be supporting industry through the development of a sectoral plan for transport. As I indicated earlier, later this year a program for the development of sectoral plans will be released based on advice from the Clean Economy Expert Panel and then by the end of 2025 an overall plan that would seek to reduce emissions from the transport sector in total would be delivered, and we are encouraged by the development of initiatives by other ministers in other portfolios particularly around sustainable aviation fuels.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you, Minister. Minister, the *Courier-Mail* reported on 25 April following the Premier's private jet scandal that the second plane taken, the Cessna Citation CJ2+, is listed as emitting an average of 1.53 tonnes of carbon emissions per hour, meaning the 10½ hours of flying time on that trip from the Monday would have emitted 16 tonnes. According to the global carbon budget, the average Australian person emits 15 tonnes of CO₂ each year. Is this leading by example?

CHAIR: Before the minister kicks off, I welcome the students in the gallery. I hope you are enjoying your day in Parliament House. Minister, over to you.

Mr de BRENNI: I am supportive of the work of all ministers to govern for all Queenslanders and on occasion that requires ministers to use aviation transport, whether it is commercial or chartered, to be able to achieve those objectives. I have just been very clear with the member. Whilst he seeks to make a political point, what we are serious about is supporting industry to reduce emissions. This budget provides for funding for initiatives through a range of other portfolios. It also importantly provides funds to the Department of Energy and Climate to support the development of emissions reduction plans for transport overall. Whilst the member for Bonney might have some curious obsession with a particular media article, what this government is interested in is genuine emissions reductions for the benefit of all Queenslanders right across the entire economy.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thanks, Minister, but it is about leading by example. My next question to you is have—

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, I might just remind you of standing order 234 with regard to personal reflections on members.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you, Chair. Minister, have you conducted any training with the Premier or his office on the importance of considering their carbon emissions when booking their travel arrangements?

Mr de BRENNI: I have just made it very clear to the member for Bonney that this government takes emissions reduction across the economy incredibly seriously. The director-general indicated that our government would continue to develop a strategy for whole-of-government emissions. It was the Premier's first announcement after his appointment that this government would tackle emissions reduction, so I found it very disingenuous when members of the LNP came into this House and pretended to be in favour of emissions reduction but then voted against the most significant emissions reduction approach that one could imagine which would be to reduce emissions from electricity, yet that is what they did. We now hear the LNP saying that their approach is to build nuclear power stations and a new coal-fired power station. We simply cannot take seriously the LNP on emissions reductions if their policy is to build new coal-fired power stations and delay emissions reductions.

Mr WATTS: With respect, it is not relevant. You were asked a very clear question: have you trained the Premier about his air travel and emissions?

CHAIR: Member for Toowoomba North, do not ask to be on a second warning before lunch. Member for Bonney, do you have another question?

Mr O'CONNOR: If the Premier takes it so seriously, why is he not factoring this into his travel, Minister? As the minister for climate action, have you counselled him about this?

CHAIR: Minister, over to you with some latitude in how you respond.

Mr de BRENNI: I have made it very clear how seriously we take this and how disingenuous they are. I will invite the director-general to provide any further context, with your indulgence, Chair.

Mr Martyn: It might assist the committee to know that next month the department will be seeking industry input into an approach for carbon offsetting, which will be included in the new QTravel panel arrangement. This approach will take into consideration offsetting of air travel, accommodation and also short-term car rentals. This is coordinated with work being undertaken by Queensland Treasury in developing a whole-of-government approach to carbon offsetting. It is fair to say that we are getting very close to a coordinated approach. One of the things that we are really conscious of with carbon offsetting is that it has to be genuine carbon offsetting and ideally, of course, Queensland carbon offsets. That work is underway. As I say, next month we will be going out to industry on that.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, will you be encouraging the Premier to take this carbon offset option? Will you be helping him to plant some trees himself to overcome the emissions of the multiple private jets that he is flying around in for press conferences?

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, I am not sure how that question even remotely—

Mr O'CONNOR: The DG said it is an option for—

CHAIR:—relates to the estimates before us. Think about your questions and put your next one, please.

Mr O'CONNOR: It is directly relevant, Chair. The DG just mentioned carbon offsetting—

CHAIR: No; not asking whether the Premier is going to be out planting trees, member for Bonney. Please move on to your next question.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, the *QFleet emissions reduction guide* says—

Everyone can and should play a part. The CEO who makes decisions about departmental vehicle policy; the senior officer who authorises vehicle selection and vehicle utilisation decisions; the fleet manager who determines vehicle deployment; the agency carpool coordinator ... each can influence the environmental impact of their agency's vehicles.

Is any work being done to inform the future decisions of ministers and how that might impact emissions?

Mr Martyn: I thank the member for the question. I think I talked about the ministerial fleet, which is already transitioning. Ninety-five per cent of the ministerial fleet is electric vehicles. In relation to offsetting air travel, which obviously is an important part of operational emissions, as I said next month we will be going out to industry on a QTravel panel arrangement that looks at how we can offset that work. In terms of the use of vehicles and the use of air travel, there are things being undertaken at the moment that provide the ability for people across the public sector, no matter where they are, to choose to reduce their emissions.

Mr HEAD: Director-General, Queensland is an incredibly vast state with many rural and remote communities. The electorate I represent, for instance, is larger than Tasmania. There are teachers working in Queensland and specifically in Callide who should be allocated government vehicles for their

roles in rural communities. Instead, they are having to use their own vehicles due to the government's policy on strictly purchasing new electric vehicles. Does the government know how many governmental staff working in rural Queensland are not driving QFleet vehicles when they should be due to the government's procurement policy aligned with these targets?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. Operational decisions about fleets are made by individual agencies. In that case, it is a question for Education.

Mr HEAD: So the QFleet procurement policy to reach emissions targets is not disadvantaging rural Queensland staff and that is something that the departments themselves have decided to do?

Mr Martyn: We work closely with eight client agencies to ascertain their needs. QFleet is a fleet management service. We buy the vehicles and provide them to agencies. Agencies make operational decisions about how they use them.

CHAIR: We will move to government questions now. Member for Mundingburra?

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. Noting page 6 of the SDS, would the minister detail how the Miles government is supporting Queensland communities to address climate change, take action and build resilience?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is committed to supporting communities throughout the state to manage the risks generated by climate change. An increase in average global temperatures will have significant impacts on the day-to-day lives of Queenslanders. Queenslanders are already contending with more frequent and intense heatwaves. They are contending with droughts. Rising sea levels are a reality now as are increasingly severe extreme weather events. These challenges place greater pressure on communities, prompting more reliance on disaster preparedness and resilience strategies.

That is why the Miles government is continuing critical partnerships like the Queensland Climate Resilient Councils program. It is delivered in collaboration with the Local Government Association of Queensland. Since its launch in 2016, the program has provided services and products to help 54 councils best prepare for the impacts of climate change. Chair, I am pleased to announce the Miles government has committed a further \$2 million to extend the program to 2026. The key deliverables under the program extension include a First Nations climate risk and resilience strategy, the continuation of the Far North Queensland and South-East Queensland alliances, the establishment of three new alliances to identify regional priorities and support councils with adaptation strategies, the establishment of a climate resilience advisory panel to advise on things like incorporating risk into council planning schemes, and a climate risk and resilience funding pool to help councils to identify, understand and respond to climate risks.

Another key Miles government program, also undertaken in partnership with the Local Government Association of Queensland, is QCoast 2100. Since 2015-16, we have invested \$20.2 million in the QCoast 2100 coastal hazard adaptation funding program funding local governments to develop coastal hazard adaptation strategies guiding council decision-making on coastal hazard mitigation works, asset management planning and development assessment. An example of this is the Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council, which was funded \$225,000 to undertake a dune revegetation project to improve the stability and protection provided by the dunes and prevent further erosion in an area of high recreational, cultural and heritage value to the community.

With your indulgence, Chair, I might provide some extra context to the question in relation to electric vehicles in regional Queensland. The director-general was correct when he responded to queries about the transition of the electric vehicle fleet that our target is for 100 per cent of electric vehicles by 2026, to transition to EV. Currently, we have transitioned 54 per cent. We are on track. We are ahead of schedule. There are 1,449 active EVs.

What makes a vehicle eligible for transition is that it is appropriate for the use in the circumstances. What is eligible is determined on an agency-by-agency basis. It is based on a range of factors such as the practical range of the vehicle. For instance, if you require a four-wheel drive that has long-range fuel tanks then, of course, that would not be eligible to be replaced by an electric vehicle.

The characterisation of the transition approach by the members opposite as being one of leaving regional Queenslanders out or forcing them to drive their own vehicles is incorrect. I can advise the committee that there are 467 Queensland fast chargers over 161 sites, which is up from 94 at the end of 2022. The members of the LNP ought to be aware that there was \$42 million committed and being

delivered over the forward estimates for electric vehicle charging in public buildings, including \$30 million for the Queensland Government Accommodation Office to install EV chargers. I am advised that, as of June 2024, 443 have already been installed across the state. There are a further 1,346 pending.

The distribution of electric vehicle chargers and the options for eligible vehicles are expanding every day. In fact, I was in Outback Queensland just a couple of months ago. We were inspecting the installation of new electric vehicle chargers there. Whilst the uptake for electric vehicles rapidly grows in Queensland, the Miles government is supporting, through this budget and previous budgets and across the forward estimates, the transition for the government fleet, as well as the necessary charging infrastructure in the appropriate locations.

Mr WALKER: Minister, Budget Paper 3 commits significant money to deliver the QEJP. What is the Miles government's approach to rolling out the renewables needed to reduce electricity sector emissions and deliver climate action that does not cost the earth?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. The new Miles government is committed to global-leading practice when it comes to the renewables rollout. That means delivering a transition that is good for workers. Members will see the Job Security Guarantee; our commitment and our enshrining in legislation of public ownership; best practice industry conditions in constructing the projects. It means that it is good for communities. Will see the transition of existing power stations into clean energy hubs and the delivery of community benefits. This rollout will be good for households. They are already seeing that now with nation-leading rebates, they are seeing it through the retention of public ownership that is important to Queenslanders and they are seeing it through renewables that put downward pressure on power prices.

This rollout is good for the climate as well. As I have indicated, we have forecast 96 per cent emissions reduction from the electricity sector by 2040. This rollout is good for nature. As I indicated earlier, the greatest threat to nature is climate change. Global warming is contributing to what many describe as an extinction crisis. We need action now, and that is what is being delivered by Labor and this budget, but climate action cannot come at the expense of protecting Queensland's natural environment. Climate action is, in fact, an opportunity to deliver better systems than those we have inherited, and our energy system is the best example of this. It acts to transform from a dirty, inflexible system, exposed to conflict and natural disaster, to one that is a clean, dispatchable, distributed, resilient and increasingly made here in Queensland. How we get there does matter. That is why we are committed to this global-leading practice. That means delivering a nature-positive transition. Existing frameworks were not set up for this, so we are changing them.

The energy act empowered significant changes such as the renewable energy zone framework, which is delivering region-level coordination, setting clear targets for renewable energy zone generation and addressing cumulative impacts at regional, not just project, level; and such as the mandatory code of conduct announced by this government which will apply to all renewable projects—wind, solar, hydro, hydrogen and transmission. Community leader councils will guide development of the code, which will set a new standard for developers who must uphold or risk their eligibility for a generation authority.

Of course, government and our publicly owned energy companies need to lead the way. The department has commissioned the Queensland Conservation Council to identify better environmental outcomes from renewable energy projects. We are setting the bar with the most important element of the energy plan—Queensland's publicly owned pumped hydros. Queensland Hydro themselves are in the process of defining 'nature positive' at their projects. We know that Pioneer-Burdekin and Borumba together will save millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide—four million tonnes at Borumba and seven million tonnes at Pioneer-Burdekin—each year. They will also leave a legacy: more protected areas; enhanced biodiversity through better land management practices; and establishing, restoring and improving habitat for threatened species and ecosystems.

The Miles government's nature-positive commitment goes beyond meeting the regulatory minimum. Queensland Hydro will be supported to deliver well in excess of any offset requirements on top of enabling existing government commitments to protected areas around their projects. As an initial demonstration of the Miles government's commitment to global-leading practice, in February this year I announced a \$5 million initial community investment package. This is delivering restored general practice services for the community of Imbil; it is delivering the feasibility and design work for the Mary Valley Mountain Bike Park; it is delivering early works for stage 2 of the Mary Valley Rail Trail; and it is delivering support for Imbil township upgrades in partnership with Gympie Regional Council. I look forward to providing further updates on these projects and others in the near future.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 12 of Budget Paper 2, can the minister explain the government's plan to deliver the objectives of the QEJP and describe what effect nuclear would have on affected communities and meeting those objectives and legislative targets?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. Underpinning the ongoing transformation of the Queensland economy to a decarbonised future are the Clean Economy Jobs Act 2024 and the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024, which I mentioned just a moment ago. Both of these enshrine our commitments, and the latter enshrines the changes to Queensland's energy grid into law. The state's legislated emissions reduction targets of 75 per cent by 2035 and net zero by 2050 work in tandem with the legislated renewable energy target of 80 per cent by 2035. Together they are intended to drive direct action on climate change, support job creation and give local and international investors the confidence to invest here in Queensland.

The Miles government has a real plan—in contrast to the LNP's plan to fail. Our plan is 22 gigawatts of new firming renewables versus the LNP's plan of two gigawatts of nuclear and 70 small-scale pumped hydros. Our plan is 96 per cent emissions reduction by 2040 versus the LNP's additional 320 million tonnes of CO₂ and their plan for no significant contributions to emissions reduction before 2050, which would see Queensland blowing out its carbon budget by 2032.

Our plan is cheaper—\$150 in lower household energy costs, \$1,495 for small businesses by 2032, the cheapest power per kilowatt of any state in the National Electricity Market—versus their electricity prices, which would be up to \$625 more expensive with nuclear power. Our plan is secure, dispatchable 24/7 power with pumped hydro, consumer energy resources and renewables versus their lack of a plan which would see investors re-evaluating projects and no doubt leaving Queensland and leading to grid instability and minimum load problems.

I can report to the committee that our plan is on track. We have reached in Queensland now 27.4 per cent generation from renewables in 2023-24. We have 55 large-scale renewable energy projects online or under construction; we have more than 6,600 megawatts, 9,000 jobs, \$12 billion of investment and 16 million tonnes of carbon saving per year; and we have a 50-gigawatt pipeline of early-stage proposals versus their nuclear future—15 to 25 years till the first nuclear kilowatt in Queensland and 10 years, I am advised, just to get the regulations in place.

Globally, new renewable energy is coming online at 100 times the pace of new nuclear. If the committee have any doubts, they should look at our previous record. Under new Premier Miles we have legislated the energy act, securing renewable energy targets, public ownership, a Job Security Guarantee and a mandatory code of conduct. The LNP voted no to the energy act. Let's be clear: they voted no to renewable energy targets, a Job Security Guarantee and a mandatory code of conduct and eventually voted no to a bill which enshrined public ownership.

In terms of uranium mining, the Labor government restored the ban on uranium mining as promised. Last time the LNP were in office, they overturned the ban on uranium mining despite promising not to do so.

The Miles government makes multinational mining companies pay progressive coal royalties. The LNP, on the other hand, tells them they should be free from royalties. Apparently, they can take the Leader of the Opposition's word 'to the bank'. Our government banned toxic substances in the Great Artesian Basin, protecting water security for agriculture. With an LNP government Queensland risks contamination of the Great Artesian Basin, Boondooma, Wivenhoe, Awoonga and Callide dams. The Miles Labor government has runs on the board with cleaner, cheaper and more reliable energy; the LNP knows the Leader of the Opposition will say whatever it takes to get them elected. That is not me saying that, it is Keith Pitt. I will leave the last word to the federal shadow minister for agriculture who said, 'Crisafulli will roll when pressed.'

CHAIR: Member for Bonney.

Mr O'CONNOR: Sorry, Chair, I am just processing that desperation. Pick a scare campaign, Minister.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, if you do not have question I am quite happy to come back to the government side.

Mr O'CONNOR: No, it is all good, Chair.

CHAIR: Then put your question.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, solar is an important way of reducing household emissions. Around one in three Queensland households has solar panels on their roof and many of the remainder are renters. The department did run a trial of the Solar for Renters program which, based on your

website, seems quite successful. It found an average \$600 saving for renters who took part in that trial. It even talks about a success story. That was last updated on your website on 12 December 2023. I was wondering if you could update the committee on what that trial found and what future actions could be taken.

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. In 2019, as the member mentioned, the Queensland government developed the \$4 million Solar for Rentals trial to address the principal barrier to widespread PV uptake on rental properties. The trial offered up to 1,000 rebates of up to \$3,500 for eligible landlords in regional Queensland to install solar and monitoring on their rental property and share the system value with their tenants. Solar is a valuable investment, however, landlords need to balance this with rent increases to cover system costs. The key learnings of the trial found that, even with generous assistance from the Queensland government rebate, the average payback period for landlords was around nine years. The Queensland government remains committed to directly benefiting consumers, including renters. That is why the government is providing cost-of-living relief at the moment.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, just to clarify, you just picked out one of the findings of the trial. What did it find in terms of the cost savings?

Mr Martyn: Part of the challenge with the trial was that the cost savings had to be shared between landlord and tenant. The feedback we got was that the landlord was not sufficiently benefiting. It was good for the renter but not good for the landlord, and they ultimately were the ones who had to pay for the installation.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, that contradicts what the Premier said. When the LNP announced a Solar for Renters policy, he said it would involve giving thousands of dollars to a landlord. Your Director-General just told us the trial was not beneficial enough to landlords. What comment do you have to that?

Mr Martyn: If I can just clarify what I was saying. The \$3,500 was not a sufficient incentive for landlords to make because of the payback period. I was not trying to cast any aspersions on landlords in saying that. It is just they are making a rational economic calculation.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, the question still stands. Why won't your government support rental properties to get solar panels?

Mr de BRENNI: As the Director-General has just indicated, we trialled the Solar for Rentals scheme and it found that equity and the intended results were not delivered. The most difficult thing to navigate with this is the LNP's proposal, which would leave 225,000 rental properties that are apartments ineligible for the scheme. We think that renters who live in apartments or duplexes should be eligible for support from the government. That is why we have delivered—

Mr O'CONNOR: You are just making it up, Minister.

Mr de BRENNI:—at least \$1,300 in energy rebates to 632,000 renting households. It does not matter whether you live in a house, apartment or duplex, the Miles government has delivered that level of rebate to every single household. That is more than \$820 million in cost-of-living support right now, right when renters need it. That is not \$820 million to their landlords, as the LNP would propose; it is \$820 million directly into the pockets of renters.

I want to talk further about what we are doing in terms of rooftop solar, including for renters, because it is pertinent to the question. As the committee would be aware, Queensland is a world leader in rooftop solar: 849,000 households and businesses have installed 5,250 megawatts of rooftop solar currently. That is nearly two-thirds of our coal power generation capacity. We see a future where everyone can benefit from rooftop solar, not just those with the means to install panels. While the LNP's Solar for Rentals in our view seeks to imbed inequality, Labor will deliver energy for all, whether you are a renter, whether you live in social housing or whether you live in an apartment. I will explain how we are doing that beyond the nation-leading rebates we have delivered now. Our approach to supporting households in Queensland is fast, fair and deliverable. Every single renting household benefited from that. I will explain what we have funded in this budget: \$80 million—

Mr O'CONNOR: How does the rebate help with solar panels?

Mr de BRENNI: The Local Renewable Energy Zone announcements made in Townsville and Caloundra see an investment in this budget of \$80 million to help the community generate more renewable energy, store it and share it locally across existing electricity infrastructure. They allow the benefits of renewable energy—

Mr O'CONNOR: Point of order, Chair: it was a very specific question around the government's policy to get solar panels on rental properties.

CHAIR: I am listening very carefully and the response is around solar panels and renters. Please continue, Minister.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. As I said, the two local renewable energy zones, in addition to the significant support we are providing to every renting household right now, \$1,300—

Mr O'CONNOR: The question was not about rebates, Minister.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, cease your interjections.

Mr de BRENNI: The Local Renewable Energy Zone initiatives—

Mr WATTS: How does a rebate reduce emissions?

Mr de BRENNI:—in Caloundra and Townsville are the first of two. They will be in the market in the first month or two of 2025. We are taking expressions of interest from renters right now in Caloundra and Townsville as the first in the state. It will allow the benefits of renewable energy to be shared amongst all households, including renters, vulnerable consumers and those who live in apartments. The LREZ allows households with rooftop solar to transport the energy they generate during the day into local batteries to be transferred back to additional households during the night-time when energy usage is at its peak. That means that households that do not have access to cheaper electricity generated through rooftop solar will now be able to access the benefits of solar as if they had it themselves. In the meantime, the best way to support all Queensland renters is through our nation-leading energy rebates.

I reiterate that equity is clearly a dirty word for the LNP. Their plan to enrich landlords could cost up to \$2 billion and take literally years, if not decades, to deliver. It leaves 225,000 rented apartments ineligible for the scheme. There is no detail in their announcement—and that is all it is—how renters would be protected from unreasonable rent increases. The LREZ shows instead how new technologies can become levellers when it comes to the question of energy equity. I would encourage the LNP, whilst they are out there stealing what is now an old idea—

Mr O'CONNOR: From you, the idea you are criticising.

Mr de BRENNI: They cannot think of individual subsidies for landlords. The more sophisticated way is to provide rebates directly to renters right now and to initiate local renewable energy zones where everybody benefits equitably.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, you just said there that the results were not delivered in the government's trial of the Solar for Renters scheme. Your own website is very positive. It talks about a success story. It talks about, on average, the tenants who took part were \$600 a year better off. That is an ongoing benefit, not just a one-off rebate. What were you referring to when you said it was not delivered? It is your own website. It is very positive

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. There are 632,000 renting households across Queensland. We wanted to make sure that every single Queensland household benefited. That is why we are providing \$1,300 energy rebates and an additional \$372. That is \$1,672 for renting households right now. As I said, our approach is fast, it is fair and it is deliverable. We are also investing in the sorts of technology and regulatory frameworks which will be piloted in both Townsville and Caloundra. The world moves on. Technology moves on. Policy initiatives become more sophisticated over time. That is the pathway that we have adopted.

Mr O'CONNOR: So, Minister, it is your view that we do not need more solar panels on rental properties. You have specifically outlined a policy there that was designed to—

CHAIR: Member, I think you are actually putting words into the minister's mouth. That is not as I heard it. If you want to think about how you are phrasing your question, please.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, what policies have you got to put solar panels on rental properties, because you just outlined one that did not do that?

CHAIR: Member, you are treading a fine line. Minister, I will give you some latitude in response.

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I have been very clear. We think the best way to ensure equity in the renewable energy transition is through the initiatives that we have announced, the local renewable energy zones in both Caloundra and Townsville. Then every single household, every single renting household across Queensland, has received \$1,300 and will receive up to \$1,672 this year which I am advised would significantly exceed the benefit of solar on rooftop.

Notwithstanding that, as I mentioned earlier this morning—and again the member was not here—the Miles government championed the development of a Consumer Energy Resources Roadmap. That was agreed to by ministers at the most recent Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council meeting. That will start to ensure better orchestration of rooftop solar, batteries, renewables across the sector and electric vehicles to ensure that the grid can accommodate additional rooftop solar. All of those initiatives work together to encourage more rooftop solar.

In addition to that, we continue as a nation to fund significant support for property owners to invest in rooftop solar. There remain the solar subsidies in place. There are a range of programs that we have delivered—the Climate Smart Energy Savers program, the Battery Booster program, the Enable Grants Program, all funded through these budgets. I refute and reject categorically the member's assertion that there is not support there for households to install rooftop solar. What we have said is that the fastest, fairest and most deliverable way to do that is to provide direct support to renters rather than support to landlords.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, why has the Queensland government not joined the Commonwealth's \$300 million Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative, which will fund the installation of insulation, solar panels and energy efficient appliances for social housing tenants which could save these tenants thousands of dollars a year?

CHAIR: Minister, is that within your portfolio?

Mr de BRENNI: I am happy to take the question. I thank the LNP committee member for pointing out the significant support of the Albanese Labor government to Queensland households.

Mr O'CONNOR: Which is not coming because you have not signed up.

CHAIR: That is enough, member.

Mr de BRENNI: Here you have a new Labor government federally and a new Miles Labor government here in Queensland—

Mr O'Connor interjected.

Mr de BRENNI:—delivering significant results to Queenslanders, supporting them with their cost of living.

CHAIR: Member, you have asked a question and I am struggling to hear the minister respond.

Mr O'CONNOR: Sorry, Chair.

Mr de BRENNI: Of course, the detailed implementation of the arrangements between the Albanese and Miles governments is subject to negotiations and a settlement of those terms as we speak. They will be rolled out and that support will be provided to those households in due course.

Mr O'CONNOR: Minister, who was the energy minister before December last year?

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, I do not know how that relates to estimates.

Mr O'CONNOR: He is talking about a new government.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, what is your next question? If you do not have one, again I am very happy to come back to the government side.

Mr O'CONNOR: New South Wales have signed up to this scheme. They have received almost \$90 million to reduce emissions and cut the bills of the homes of 24,000 social housing tenants. The ACT, Victoria and Tasmania have all signed up. It is federal money that is ready to go. When will Queensland get on board? Do you need to pick up the phone and talk to your federal colleagues?

CHAIR: Member, you have asked your question.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. As I have said to the member many, many times, we are delivering the most significant cost-of-living relief in this nation's history directly to every single household right now. In case the member missed it, there is \$1,300 in energy rebates being delivered directly to those households as we speak, with a further \$372 and a range of programs for vulnerable consumers. As I said in response to the question just a moment ago, and perhaps it bears repeating for the member for Bonney—

CHAIR: Possibly.

Mr de BRENNI:—the Queensland government and the Commonwealth government are currently settling the terms of our arrangements and it will be rolled out in due course. In the meantime, we provide significant support that is fast, fair and deliverable and does not amount to a \$2 billion plan to enrich landlords at the expense of those 632,000 renting households.

Mr O'CONNOR: Do I need to table the minister's own website showing the success of the Solar for Renters trial? It was your own program that we are looking to expand.

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, this is the last time I am going to say this. If you do not put questions appropriately, I will come back to the government side. I have more questions and I have more time that could be allocated, so I suggest you use your time wisely and ask appropriate questions.

Mr O'CONNOR: I will go to the director-general. In relation to question on notice 7, how much did the Deloitte modelling it referred to cost?

Mr Martyn: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Deloitte modelling was undertaken by the Queensland Treasury Corporation so the funding for that is not part of this department's budget.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, what additional information was Deloitte given to conduct this modelling compared to the previous EY modelling?

Mr Martyn: My understanding is that Deloitte used their own proprietary model to model what would be the impacts of the 75 per cent by 2035 target on the Queensland economy, regions and households.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, can we have a copy of this modelling? Are you happy to table it or publicly release it?

Mr Martyn: It is on our website. You can download the Deloitte report there.

CHAIR: We could possibly get the link for the member for Bonney.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you. Clearly, I was looking at other parts of the website which related to the success of the Solar for Renters scheme. Director-General, with regard to the Clean Economy Expert Panel, we heard the announcement of the chair this morning. The minister referred to other sectors that would be represented on that panel. Do we have the membership of that panel? Are we able to get that?

Mr Martyn: The clean economy legislation provides for a minimum of two and a maximum of five members of the panel in addition to the Queensland government Chief Scientist, who is an ex-officio member. The government's intent is to ensure that, whilst all panel members have deep knowledge and experience, the panel has a broad range of views. The first member is Professor Frank Jotzo, who is the chair. Professor Jotzo is a leading academic from the Australian National University's Crawford School of Public Policy and has expertise in environmental, energy and climate change economics.

The second member is Dr Neville Plint. He is the chief executive officer of Mining3, which is a mining industry research and development company. He is a former director of UQ's Sustainable Minerals Institute. He has expertise in the mining sector and new technologies and I think was chief scientist of Anglo American. The third member is Dr Andrew Ash. Dr Ash is an agricultural systems and applied climate scientist. He has had senior management and research roles in CSIRO, with 35 years of experience in agricultural systems in Northern Australia.

The fourth member is Kylie Porter. Ms Porter is the chief executive officer of the Greater Whitsunday Alliance, GW3. She is a community and business leader from Central Queensland with expertise of regional economic development. The final member is Monica Richter, who is a senior manager for low-carbon futures at WWF Australia. Ms Richter has decarbonisation expertise in the built environment and construction and in corporate engagement. Of course, Professor Kerrie Wilson, the Chief Scientist, is an ex-officio member.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, noting the legislated timeframes in the '75 by 35' legislation, do you have any rough idea of when the plan to put together the sector plans will be completed by government?

CHAIR: There is some latitude in how you respond to that because there is an opinion piece within it.

Mr Martyn: The legislation provides a process whereby the minister tables the program of plans, so that allocates which sectors will have plans and which ministers will deliver them. That is required and will be tabled by the end of this year. The legislation provides that the plans themselves must be completed by December 2025.

Mr O'CONNOR: So we do not have clarity on the sectors that will be required to have a plan? That will be coming out when the minister tables it later this year?

Mr Martyn: Engagement has already occurred across government and with industry on these issues. We have sought industry's feedback. As the member would appreciate, some sectors are very easy to identify; for others there are crossovers; and there are, of course, matters that go across sectors. All of that work is going on and the government should be in a position to say something about that in the future.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, these sector plans contribute approximately 15 per cent of the government's plan to reduce emissions to 2035. Can you run us through how that figure was arrived at?

Mr Martyn: In the government's clean economy pathway document, the analysis by Treasury was undertaken of the pathway to get to 2035. That included the existing emissions reduction, which at the time of the modelling was 29 per cent but is now 35 per cent, based on the latest data released by the Commonwealth. Twenty per cent of that—we have touched on that before, member—is about the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan; five per cent is other existing state plans and market improvements—that is existing effort; there is six per cent attributable to the safeguard mechanism; and 15 per cent, as you say, is for the sector plans. That is the benefit of coordinated action. Treasury modelling was about what the benefits of that coordinated work could do, based on what we know of emissions reduction pathways across multiple sectors.

Mr O'CONNOR: So that was their analysis of the current actions being taken by the broad sectors of the economy? That is where they got that 15 per cent from?

Mr Martyn: But also their assessment of emissions reduction potential. Obviously, that will be grounded through the sectoral plan process. Also, the member asked about a web link to the Deloitte report. The Deloitte report is actually hosted on their website and not the department's, as it was an independent report.

Mr O'CONNOR: There you go! I think the chair might need to apologise to me for some to those comments before.

CHAIR: I asked the director-general to provide you with the link.

Mr O'CONNOR: It was implied that it was on the department's website, but thank you.

CHAIR: I did suggest for him to provide you with the link.

Mr Martyn: Chair, I will say that there are many good things on the department's website and I encourage people to go there.

CHAIR: So one might suggest that I was being helpful to the member for Bonney in requesting you provide that link.

Mr Martyn: I very much appreciate that.

CHAIR: Your recollection and mine are obviously very different, member for Bonney.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, just to pick up on something you mentioned—the 29 per cent emissions reduction that was the most recent available data when the '75 by 35' legislation was put together—what advice did you provide to the government on legislating a 30 per cent reduction by 2030 when the progress already made was 29 per cent?

Mr Martyn: There is a range of considerations that go into developing policy around emissions reductions. What is really important is to focus on what are the conditions that industry needs in order to get there and what the data tells us. Our focus was on certainty for industry and an achievable trajectory. What we know is that emissions reductions efforts are already picking up and already Queensland has shown significant progress, but as we move towards 2035 that effort will start to pick up.

What is important is that, from a policy point of view, we do not set artificially high benchmarks too early in order to create expectations that cannot be met. It is fair to say that the target has already been exceeded, but we should note that that data is two years out of date. We need to see progress going forward. What is important is that we need to maintain that progress over time as well.

Mr O'CONNOR: It is certainly achievable if you are at 29 and you are setting a target of 30. Is there any further information you can provide us on the advice to government of setting a target so close to what the actual figure was?

Mr Martyn: The government has the capacity to review the targets. Obviously, that needs to be balanced with the certainty that is provided to industry. One of the things I would also observe is that the data is two years in arrears and is provided by the Australian government; it is not Queensland data.

The decision we have made very clearly is to use the national greenhouse inventory data as it applies to Queensland in order to give us an objective benchmark and to enable us to compare against other states. The other critical point is that targets are a floor and not a ceiling in terms of effort.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you, Director-General. The minister previously said that Pioneer-Burdekin would contribute a seven-million-tonne emissions reduction every year, but at the start of the session I asked you about the proportion of the percentage of our emissions reduction that it would provide. I would have thought if you can estimate the tonnes that it will offset you would be able to have a more detailed breakdown on how it contributes to our emissions reduction. How do you reconcile those two things?

Mr Martyn: I understood your question to be what percentage of the 20 per cent that was referred to in the clean economy pathway document was—

Mr O'CONNOR: Yes.

Mr Martyn: The minister is talking about a reduction of energy sector emissions. You were asking about, of that 20 per cent, what percentage. The point I made—I think the minister also made this point—was that to achieve that 20 per cent you require a number of things to happen. You require 22 gigawatts of renewable energy; you require the withdrawal of eight gigawatts of coal-fired power; you require the 6,000 to 7,000 megawatts of long-duration pumped hydro; you require other storage, being batteries and private pumped hydro and gas. I understood your question to be 'can we pull out that bit and what happens if that bit is not delivered?' I thought that was the question you started with.

Mr O'CONNOR: I am happy to break that down further. If you have the amount of tonnage of carbon dioxide that the 20 per cent will be, I imagine it is not a long stretch to figure out what Pioneer-Burdekin's contribution to that will be, if it is seven million tonnes a year.

Mr Martyn: We know from the Energy and Jobs Plan that 96 per cent of energy sector emissions will be reduced through the decarbonisation of the energy system under the QEJP. What we also know is that some of those electricity generators are caught under the safeguard mechanism, so that will also contribute. I think the minister was referring to what long-duration storage contributes. I am talking about it from a system point of view.

Mr O'CONNOR: Director-General, we had extensive questioning from my colleague the member for Nanango about Pioneer-Burdekin and the fact that it is not a coordinated project; the feasibility study has not been completed; there has not been an investment decision made; obviously, not being a coordinated project, the environmental impact statement process has not begun; the cultural heritage management plan would not have been done either; the federal—

CHAIR: Member for Bonney, do you have a question?

Mr O'CONNOR: Yes, thank you. Despite all that, Queensland Hydro states that it anticipates the project to come online sometime between 2032 and 2035. It relates to my initial question about the impact this will have on the 75 per cent emissions reduction for Queensland. Where in that three-year period do you anticipate it coming online, despite all of that other work not being completed or even begun?

Mr Martyn: I have a couple of things to say there. The detailed analytical report, which is being currently prepared, will consider a wide range of factors in relation to the hydro scheme. It will consider a range of technical factors and a range of economic factors. We talked today in this hearing extensively about cost. It will look at emissions reduction and it will look at environmental, social and cultural heritage factors and bring all that together into a significant piece. This goes to your question earlier about the interim targets that have been set under the legislation and how you step up towards a 75 per cent target. We know, and the feedback to us from industry is, that that effort will accelerate over time. It will not be a straight-line journey; it will be a curve. As we partner with industry on pragmatic solutions that enable industry to both decarbonise and continue to grow and advance productivity, that effort will gradually mount and the results will become clearer.

From an energy system point of view, the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan through the Super Grid infrastructure blueprint, has a phased approach to the retirement of coal-fired power units. What is very clear from the plan is that the coal-fired power units will be withdrawn or their mode changed gradually over time. What the plan shows is that that will increase progressively and accelerate into the 2030s, in line with the Pioneer-Burdekin scheme coming to fruition. What that also does is—and this is where a system view is very important—as you are withdrawing the coal, you simultaneously allow the renewables to come in, but what the hydros do is allow that long-duration storage, which maintains system reliability.

At all times, from a system point of view, which I talked about earlier, what we seek to do is to balance a range of factors and to ensure an orderly change in the system. That orderly change underpins low cost, it underpins certainty for industry, and it allows us uniquely in Queensland to be able to give certainty to industry and households about the trajectory of that change. Also, as that change occurs emissions reduce, so the contribution of the plan towards overall emissions reduction will gather pace and will accelerate towards 2035.

CHAIR: This will be your last question, member. Whomever the question is directed to will have about a minute to respond, and then we will have three minutes for the minister to wrap up in government time.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you, Chair. Director-General, you are also the chair of Queensland Hydro. That organisation says that Pioneer-Burdekin will come online sometime between 2032 and 2035. I am wondering how you arrived at that estimate. With all the uncertainty and all the pathways that have not even begun, let alone completed, how can there possibly be a clear pathway to achieving the 2035 target with all of those unknowns?

CHAIR: I will provide you with some latitude because I believe that question has been asked many times so far in this session today.

Mr Martyn: What I would say to the chair and the committee is that it is good to be able to thread together the various matters we traversed this morning. In the first session, I talked about the concept study that was undertaken for the scheme in 2022 by SMEC and Ranbury and others, and I talked about the Queensland Hydro study and about the plan. All of that work led the plan to specify a two-stage process for the powering up of Pioneer-Burdekin—stage 1 in 2032 and stage 2 in 2035. That is very clear from the plan and associated materials. That has been built up based on the detailed work done by SMEC, but also upon our energy system modelling.

CHAIR: Thank you, Director-General. Minister, I hand over to you for a wrap-up as we come towards the conclusion of this session.

Mr de BRENNI: Thank you, Chair. I thank the director-general for that important summary of bridging across the two sessions today. I thought that was useful. I wanted to provide some further advice back to the committee, as I indicated with its indulgence that I would do. I can inform the committee that I am advised that 19 per cent of total QFleet vehicles are hybrid, which is 2,101 vehicles. That builds on the 54 per cent of electric vehicles. In respect of the 2022-23 budget, \$35 million has been fully expended by Powerlink and Queensland Hydro, including commencing the detailed analytical reports for both projects.

Chair, I thank you and the committee members and visiting MPs for their questions today. I thank the parliamentary staff for coordinating today's events. Preparing for estimates is a significant undertaking and I would like to especially acknowledge the highly skilled staff of the Department of Energy and Climate particularly under the leadership of its director-general, Paul Martyn. I would also like to acknowledge the incredible efforts and leadership of the staff and all those involved at Queensland's publicly owned energy organisations. I thank those working on the policy development and delivery of our renewable energy and climate actions. Alongside thousands of dedicated public servants, they all work tirelessly for this outcome and that is a better future for Queenslanders.

I also want to thank my staff, who always go above and beyond in their efforts and have done so again and were able to ensure we could answer all of the committee's questions today. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. We have now reached the end of the time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for areas of responsibility administered by the Department of Energy and Climate. I note there were no questions taken on notice. Thank you to the minister, the director-general and all of the officials who have been here today. That has been very helpful to the committee.

The committee will now adjourn until 1.30 pm, when we will resume to examine the estimates for the portfolio areas of resources and critical minerals. Thank you very much to everybody for participating today.

Proceedings suspended from 12.46 pm to 1.29 pm.

ESTIMATES—CLEAN ECONOMY JOBS, RESOURCES AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE—RESOURCES AND CRITICAL MINERALS

In Attendance

Hon. SJ Stewart, Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals

Mr C Lees, Acting Chief of Staff

Department of Resources

Mr W Agnew, Director-General

Mr S Ferris, Deputy Director-General, Georesources

Ms A Rosanowski, Deputy Director-General, Lands

Mr S Case, Executive Director and Chief Finance Officer, Finance and Digital Strategy Business & Corporate Partnership


Mr L Hinrichsen, Executive Director, Lands Policy and Support

Resources Safety & Health Queensland

Mr R Djukic, Acting Chief Executive Officer

Coexistence Queensland

Mr W Squire, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** Good afternoon, we will resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Kim Richards, the member for Redlands and chair of the committee. With me here today is Mr Pat Weir, the member for Condamine and deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Mr Bryson Head, the member for Callide; Mr Les Walker, the member for Mundingburra; Ms Joan Pease, the member for Lytton; and Mr Trevor Watts, the member for Toowoomba North. We also have Mr Dale Last, the member for Burdekin, joining us. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today and we will see them transition in and out throughout today's hearing.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the chair's discretion or by order of the committee. As I mentioned earlier this morning, I have a high expectation of the committee in terms of orderly conduct and behaviour. I remind everybody that I intend to conduct the proceedings today in a very respectful manner. 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 phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if they are not in use. Food and drink is not permitted in this chamber. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the resources and critical minerals portfolio until 4.45 pm. We will adjourn for a short break between 3.00 and 3.15 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times that are specified for the area, as agreed by the House. I refer members to the program that is available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage.

I 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 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, director-general, officials, 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 that is referred to them by the minister or director-general. I now declare open the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of resources and critical minerals 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 5 minutes.

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Chair. Before I begin, I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I thank the committee for the opportunity to appear before you all today. I acknowledge the following people who are joining me today: Chris Lees, my chief of staff; Warwick Agnew, Director-General; Shaun Ferris, Deputy Director-General of Georesources; Amy Rosanowski, Deputy Director-General of Lands; Celia Venables, Deputy Director-General of Business and Corporate Partnership; Rob Djukic who is the acting CEO of Resources Safety & Health Queensland; Warwick Squire, the CEO of Coexistence Queensland; and Jane Pires, who is the Land Access Ombudsman.

From the outset, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of the staff of my department for their ongoing dedication and work in this portfolio. I would also like to acknowledge Resources Safety & Health Queensland for their tireless work. Safety is my No. 1 priority. It is my expectation that all Queensland resource workers come home safe each and every day. 2024 is an exciting time to be in the Queensland resources industry. It is an industry that employs more than 78,000 people and contributed some \$86.5 billion to Queensland's economy last financial year. The \$10.54 billion in royalties that the coal sector generated for the 2023-24 financial year supported funding for public services, infrastructure and tackling cost-of-living pressures.

A lot has changed since I last spoke to you all in 2023. For one, my job title has changed and I am proud to be the resources and 'critical minerals' minister. It is only two words but it speaks volumes as to what the government sees as a priority for our industry. It is a global ambition that I have been spruiking to anyone and everyone I meet in my role—to be more than a producer of raw materials, to create a true pit-to-product critical minerals industry. This ambition is underpinned by the \$315 million Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy that was launched last year and we are full steam ahead in delivering on the goals that we have set. In September last year we reduced the rent for mineral exploration permits to zero dollars for five years. This initiative supports companies by allowing them to redirect funds towards exploration activities and it positions Queensland as the lowest cost jurisdiction in Australia for holding a mineral exploration tenure. Other significant milestones have been the launch of the Queensland Critical Minerals Prospectus. It is a sophisticated and comprehensive resource that not only showcases our state's vast opportunities but also positions Queensland as a global supplier of critical minerals. It is backed by the critical minerals investor hub—an online tool designed to connect investors with government agencies and project proponents.

Amid potential gas supply shortages, we are backing the gas industry. We have dedicated \$21 million to our Frontier Gas Exploration Grants Program, which has already seen 90 per cent of funds allocated to encourage the acceleration of gas projects in the Bowen and Galilee basins. As we move towards net zero, we need to deploy every available technology and resource to reduce carbon emissions. This includes renewable energy sources like wind, solar and battery technology, as well as natural resources such as hydrogen. That is why, as part of the 2024 budget, we are investing \$4 million to explore a hydrogen industry in Queensland. We are partnering with research organisations to investigate viable sources and the economic feasibility of this cleaner energy resource. Hydrogen offers a cleaner energy option that could become a key part of Queensland zero emissions future.

Another part of our campaign to tackle climate change through emissions reduction is to regulate tree clearing in Queensland through the Vegetation Management Act. The latest SLATS—Statewide Landcover and Trees Study—data demonstrates that our strategy is working, with land clearing rates falling by 64 per cent over the last four years.

Chair, we take our commitment to Queensland's First Nations communities seriously. We are working collaboratively and earnestly to rebuild their trust. Recognising native title is one way to demonstrate our respect for our First Nations communities and to recognise their strong and enduring connection to their homelands.

The Miles government knows that our islands are an important part of the Queensland tourism industry. We have a duty on behalf of all Queenslanders to ensure they are developed responsibly for the jobs and business opportunities that they create. This is why we acted when the lessees for Great Keppel Island and Double Island failed to follow through on their countless promises. My department has been managing these sites but it is not safe and a lot of work needs to be done. That is why this budget is investing in making these areas safe and secure. We believe in our tourism potential and in the jobs and business opportunities it will create in Queensland. The Miles government's 2024-25 budget is investing in a diverse and resilient resources industry that will provide a sustainable future for our lands and, importantly, more Queensland jobs now and into the future. I look forward to questions from members.

CHAIR: Terrific, thank you very much.

Mr LAST: My question is to the minister. The Police Commissioner advised at estimates last week that on 22 April you were on a charter flight that was part of travel that cost taxpayers over \$167,000. Were any of your staff or departmental staff on that flight?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I was in Brisbane for a cabinet meeting and there was an important announcement that was being made by the Premier in Townsville. I wanted to be there to help inform my community who were present. I was fortunate to be able to join the Police Commissioner who was already travelling on that charter flight to Townsville and there was a spare seat for me. I did not travel anywhere else in that week. I travelled by myself; no staff travelled with me.

Mr LAST: None of your departmental staff or your own staff were on that flight?

Mr STEWART: Just me.

Mr LAST: Just you?

Mr STEWART: Just me.

Mr LAST: Thank you. I have a question to the director-general. The passing of the Resources Safety and Health Legislation Amendment Bill added a substantial amount of work to the Board of Examiners. Does the board have sufficient resources to complete that work and when do you expect the examinations for the certificate of competency and practising certificate to commence?

Mr Agnew: Could I refer that question please to Resources Safety & Health Queensland.

Mr Djukic: Thank you for the question. Yes, the Board of Examiners has the arrangements in place to implement these changes, as discussed at the hearing for the inquiry on the bill before this committee. Those resources have been provisioned as part of the plan to implement those new certificates of competency. The five-year transitional period for mines and persons at mines to obtain those certificates of competency will commence upon proclamation, which at this stage is proposed to be from 1 June next year.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, the Board of Examiners annual report 2022-23 shows the number of applications for site senior executives—SSEs—has reduced by two-thirds since 2019-20. What steps are being taken to ensure Queensland has enough SSEs?

Mr Djukic: To give some context, the requirement for an SSE to have an SSE notice commenced in 2018 off the top of my head. Of course, an SSE was an existing position in the mine structure. We would expect that there would be a peak in persons seeking an SSE notice and that would diminish over time. In terms of ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of SSEs, I am not aware that there is a paucity of SSEs. The requirement for an SSE to obtain an SSE notice is a law exam and a few other minor requirements and, of course, they are subject to CPD. As I said, I am not aware of any lack of numbers or issue there in terms of numbers of SSEs available for mines.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, will the examinations take into account concerns raised at the Coal Mining Board of Inquiry with regard to the need for mutual recognition applicants to complete a law exam?

Mr Djukic: That is my understanding, yes.

Mr LAST: How many certificates of competency and notice holders currently participate in the voluntary continuing professional development scheme?

Mr Djukic: I have that number. I will just double-check that so I can give you an exact number. Can I come back with that number?

CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, the annual report also highlights the ageing demographic of certificate holders. Has the minister sought advice from the Board of Examiners about ways to address this and have the suggestions been implemented?

Mr Djukic: I am not aware of any requests to the Board of Examiners. However, I know that is a matter that the Board of Examiners, the Queensland Resources Council and other stakeholders are looking at in terms of how to increase the number of suitable persons as applicants for those positions.

Mr LAST: I have a question to the minister. Given the importance of mineworker safety, why have you not addressed the serious concerns raised by people like Greg Dalliston?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I meet on a fortnightly basis with the acting CEO of Resources Safety & Health. We discuss a whole range of matters and a whole range of concerns raised by industry and we look at ways of addressing those concerns and ways that we can

be proactive. We continue to look at how we can attract high-quality, high-performing people into those roles as well. We will continue to do that, looking at a proactive approach but bearing in mind that we also do not want to sacrifice any of our quality. We do not want to just put in any old random off the street, for want of a better term. We want to make sure we have high-performing people who have the capability, the capacity and also the passion to take on those roles. We look at a whole range of strategies and we will continue to do so.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, when did you last review RSHQ's performance report and were there any concerns raised as a result of that review?

Mr Djukic: Thank you for the question. Could I clarify what the member means by the 'last performance report'?

Mr LAST: The last performance review of RSHQ? When was that conducted?

Mr Djukic: The Commissioner for Resources Safety & Health prepares an annual report and part of the commissioner's functions is to review the performance of the regulator. I have been in the position since November-December last year. I have certainly reviewed the commissioner's most recent report. In terms of specific actions, there are none that I am aware of that would require specific action. However, of course, we are committed to continuous improvement and are continually reviewing our own performance and our activities.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, your strategic plan refers to a review of all competencies undertaken by Simtars. Were any gaps or other issues identified? If so, have those concerns been fully addressed?

Mr Djukic: I apologise. I do not have that information at my fingertips, but I can attempt to obtain that, with the chair's leave, before the end of the hearing.

CHAIR: Are you happy for that, Minister?

Mr STEWART: Yes, we will come back. Thank you.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, how many regional industry forums were held in the last financial year and where were they held?

Mr Djukic: I can again obtain that information, with the chair's leave.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, improvements to reporting systems was the top suggestion made by participants in the state of safety reporting culture report. Given that, were you consulted with regard to the new incident reporting system?

Mr Djukic: Yes, RSHQ is developing the new incident reporting system consistent with the recommendation of Dr Sean Brady in his 20-year review of fatalities in the mining and quarrying sector in 2020.

Mr LAST: Minister, I refer to the Commissioner for Resources Safety & Health strategic plan 2021-26 and note the responses provided by participants to a questionnaire regarding reporting in areas of improvement. I note the top three suggestions were identified as: one, improvements to reporting systems; two, addressing fear of reporting; and, three, providing feedback on reports. What action have you taken to address these issues?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I also thank both commissioners, the previous commissioner and the acting commissioner, for their work on that particular report. It was an extensive report. There were many responses to that survey. In fact, I travelled with the acting commissioner to two different mines which had the largest number of responses. We were able to present back to that particular workforce in some detail outlining some of those key issues that you mentioned.

The fear of reprisal is certainly something that I know is common with a lot of workers. However, when we looked at some of that survey data we saw some responses that we did not expect. In other words, we expected the percentage of workers who feared reprisal to be much higher than what was reported in that survey. It is continuous work that we do all the time. In the 3½ years that I have been in this job the conversations I have been having with every single one of the industry representatives at every single opportunity have been about developing a reporting culture. Of course, they have a fear of reprisal as well—the fear of reprisal from RSHQ. The work that we have been doing with RSHQ, with the commissioner and with ourselves is around the fact that we welcome a reporting culture. A cultural shift, particularly when you have 78,000 workers, takes a lot of time. More importantly, it takes trust. The ability to report something without fear is something we are seeing more and more. We are hearing back from industry, particularly from the MEU, that that is improving.

The MEU is not seeing some of those things that I am sure the member is aware of from some of your constituents such as fear of reporting something and then having a shift change away from your work crew and getting some of those really terrible shifts and those sorts of things that we have heard in the past. That is not happening, from what the MEU is telling me, but there is more work to do and we continue to do that work.

The work that I also do with each of the SSEs and with every one of our industry seniors is around that feedback system. As you know, I am an old teacher and that teaching approach is the best way of doing things. The example I provide is that if an incident is reported you need to provide feedback either to the individual or to the crew because that is how you generate that trust. That is how you develop that really strong reporting culture. That reporting culture works both ways. It helps retain safety so that people know that they are safe when they go to that workplace. If they report something, they know that it will be attended to but they also know that they get that feedback, which is absolutely essential. There is no use reporting it without getting that feedback. It develops that trust.

What we also say to the industry is that if you do early intervention and prevent some of these safety risks, you continue with your production. It is a win-win situation for everyone. At the end of the day, I am sure the member will agree that we want everyone to be able to leave that pit the way that they entered.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, I refer to the key deliverables on page 1 of the SDS—namely, to deliver reliable, efficient and effective regulatory support. How many HPIs did we see in the surface coal, underground coal and surface mineral sectors, and how does this compare to previous years?

Mr Djukic: I thank the member for the question. I am just obtaining that specific information. In looking at HPIs, we want to see HPI reporting increasing so we want to see an increase in numbers. Importantly, I suppose, we look at the frequency rate rather than the raw number, bearing in mind that worker hours vary from year to year. In the coal underground sector the HPI frequency rate for this year was 58.3 compared to last year's 28.1, and surface was 22.6 compared to 21.7.

Mr LAST: Do you have the raw numbers there in terms of the total HPIs?

Mr Djukic: I do; I apologise. For the coal sector it was 2,408 compared to last year's 1,916.

Mr LAST: What explains the increase predominantly between those two figures—the rise?

Mr Djukic: To reflect on the minister's earlier comments, we have placed a lot of emphasis on encouraging the reporting of HPIs. We have also sought to make our systems for reporting easier to use so that we are seeing that uptick in HPI reporting that we want to see while also removing the stigma around HPI reporting and that it is a good thing. Identifying hazards, investigating them thoroughly and implementing better controls is what we want to see. We have dedicated quite a lot of effort—the inspectorate through the advisory committees, the commissioner and the minister—to, as I said, destigmatising reporting and encouraging so that we do see that uptick.

Mr LAST: In terms of those HPIs, how many confidential reports of HPIs were received from workers and have all of those been investigated?

CHAIR: Is that to Mr Djukic?

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, yes.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Djukic: The requirement to report an HPI rests with the site senior executive of the mine. It is a requirement—a statutory requirement—so they will not be confidential. Generally, what we receive as confidential information is a complaint from a worker. That is a different subset of data.

Mr LAST: Given your response, how many complaints would you have received, as opposed to the reporting of those processes through the SSE?

Mr Djukic: I do have that information. If I could just clarify the question, you were asking how many complaints?

Mr LAST: Yes.

Mr Djukic: This year in the coal sector we received 61 complaints and in the mineral mines and quarries sector 39 complaints.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, how many of those have been finalised and how many remain outstanding?

Mr Djukic: Of the 61 received this year—I should say that is 61 complaints received from the coal sector in the last year. In the last year, 79 complaints were finalised, so obviously some of those were ones from the previous year. There were 16 open at the time of these statistics. Those are the numbers for coal. For the mineral mines and quarries sector, 39 were received last year and 35 were completed last year and six remain open.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, do you have a timeframe for the finalisation of those complaints?

Mr Djukic: Every complaint is different, so it depends upon the nature and complexity of the complaint. Sometimes it can depend upon whether or not the complainant agrees to be identified. That can pose some issues with how the investigation is taken forward, so I cannot put a number on it.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, of those that are not finalised, what would be the longest outstanding matter or complaint to date?

Mr Djukic: I am afraid I will have to follow that up, if that is okay.

CHAIR: So you will come back before the end of the session if you can find that information?

Mr STEWART: Yes, thank you, Chair. I will do that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, the Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry part 1 report states that the implementation of these recommendations would significantly increase the regulator's workload. Does RSHQ currently have—and I will use the report's words—'appropriate resources both to perform its work and to engage in a program of continuous improvement'?

Mr Djukic: I thank the member for the question. One of the board of inquiry's recommendations to the regulator was to work with the Public Sector Commission—or the then Public Service Commission—to look at the attraction and retention scheme to be able to attract suitable resources to do the work of the regulator. We completed work on that recommendation in, I believe it was, 2022 and that system has been in place since then. Our inspector numbers have increased since that time and, yes, we have dedicated more resources to following up that work.

Mr LAST: How many vacancies in that space do you have at the present time?

Mr Djukic: We currently have 54 mines inspectors—30 of those are in coal and 24 are in the Mineral Mines and Quarries Inspectorate—and we have three recruitment processes currently in progress, with two about to commence. In terms of vacancies, though, in the last year we had six departures from the mines inspectorate but we had seven join us, so we are up on numbers there.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, how many of the Coal Mining Board of Inquiry's recommendations relating to RSHQ have been fully implemented?

Mr Djukic: I thank the member for the question. RSHQ received 30 recommendations. A number of those were directed at potential legislative amendment and the majority of those were dealt with with the passage of the Resources Safety and Health Legislation Amendment Act earlier this year. Five of the recommendations did not proceed further on the basis, for two of them, that the Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee gave advice that those recommendations were not supported. The other three were recommendations that RSHQ consider whether further amendment was needed and we took advice and determined that existing legislative arrangements covered the matters that were the subject of the recommendation. There are seven outstanding recommendations that will be completed with the making of recognised standards or other steps to implement the bill that has now been passed.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, when do you envisage those seven will be finalised?

Mr Djukic: A number will be finalised through the making of regulations before the end of this year or with work to implement the provisions of the bill once they commence, either in September this year or June next year. The making of recognised standards, I understand, are nearing completion. They are going through a tripartite process for development.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, the 2022-23 annual report refers to upskilling for coal inspectors, including two coal inspectors achieving their first-class certificates of competency in 2023-24. Were those qualifications achieved and how many coal inspectors now hold first-class competencies?

Mr Djukic: In relation to those two inspectors who are pursuing their qualifications for first-class certificates of competency, I understand that they are intending to sit their examinations currently before the end of the calendar year. I am sorry, I missed the second part of your question.

Mr LAST: How many coal inspectors now hold first-class competencies?

Mr Djukic: It is three.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, what other upskilling has been achieved as per the board of inquiry's recommendations?

Mr Djukic: In implementing the new attraction and retention scheme, we have broadened the skill set of the coalmines inspectorate, recognising that the role of the regulator goes beyond the purely technical skills. Through broader targeted recruitment exercises, we have expanded through the greater breadth of experience in the coalmines inspectorate.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, the Brady review raised considerable concerns regarding data collection and the board of inquiry was told one system was not totally effective. Have all relevant data systems been fully upgraded to address the concerns raised by Dr Brady and the board of inquiry?

Mr Djukic: As I have mentioned earlier, Dr Brady's recommendation was to implement a reporting system that was more user-friendly for industry. We have progressed that work in the years up until now. We have now soft launched the system with a number of pilot mines that are using it, with a full implementation of the system to follow in the next year or so.

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

Mr ANDREW: I have a question to the minister, with reference to page 4 of the SDS and the department's role in creating safer mine practices. Can the minister explain why the inspectors' investigation reports for North Goonyella September 2018, Grosvenor 6 May 2020 and Grosvenor 8 June 2020 have never been released? Will the minister commit to holding a full royal commission into those mine accidents and deaths, with a full inquiry into RSHQ Coal Inspectorate policies and practices as part of its brief?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question, particularly when it comes to the Grosvenor incident that happened on 6 May 2020, severely injuring five workers. No doubt the member is very aware of that particular incident. At the time, Resources Safety & Health Queensland launched their investigation and the then minister of natural resources, mines and energy, Dr Anthony Lynham, also launched a board of inquiry. The board of inquiry supersedes the work of Resources Safety & Health Queensland so it was not necessary to have the two. I will ask the Acting CEO, Rob Djukic, if he could expand on my comments.

Mr Djukic: Thank you, Minister, and I thank the member for the question. As the minister stated, the former minister established a board of inquiry into the Grosvenor incident and tasked it to investigate the nature and cause of the incident that resulted in the injuries to those five workers in 2020. The board of inquiry did comprehensively, in two parts, report on the nature and cause of that incident and made a number of findings and recommendations as to the nature and cause of the incident and how it could be avoided in future. Those reports have been published and have been consumed publicly.

In relation to the member's question about North Goonyella, compliance action was taken in relation to two statutory position holders at the mine at the time and their certificates of competency were revoked under that process. That process is subject to some ongoing review action by those individuals so at this time it is not appropriate to release those reports.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, this year is the 30th anniversary of the Moura No. 2 disaster. The legislation requires the SSE to ensure that each mine entrance has the capability of being sealed, something that was first recommended after the Box Flat explosion in 1972, which was 52 years ago. Today we are unable to seal the mine. Can the minister advise why the mine cannot be sealed and what steps are being taken to get it sealed as soon as possible?

Mr STEWART: Can you give me a bit more detail on which particular mine?

Mr ANDREW: Can you advise why we cannot reseal some of these mines?

CHAIR: Was your request for clarification on which particular mine?

Mr STEWART: Yes.

Mr ANDREW: Moura No. 2.

Mr STEWART: Moura No. 2 has been sealed, as far as I am aware. I will seek clarification with the acting CEO of RHSQ in a moment. What we do know, particularly from that last incident at Grosvenor a couple of weeks ago, is that what we saw was very similar to what happened at Box Flat. In fact, the Box Flat memorial is tomorrow, so it is 52 years tomorrow. What we saw, particularly in the

Grosvenor incident, was the need to basically seal the mine. Thankfully, everyone was evacuated without any injuries, which was great to see. It shows that the safety that they have in place worked exceptionally well. They evacuated everyone by 7.03 am, to be precise. The sealing of that mine continued over the next couple of days. The GAG was implemented after they failed to extinguish the fire through some initial methods where they had used nitrogen gas that they pumped back into the mine.

The sealing of that particular mine has happened, including all the various vents. Anglo needed to starve that mine of any oxygen so there was no ability for it to reignite. I know that the recommendation that you are talking about was certainly used very quickly and put in place for this latest Grosvenor incident. The GAG now has been put in place. The GAG is a large jet engine that pumps in nitrogen to put out the fire.

Mr ANDREW: I was going to inquire about the competency. A lot of people come to me asking about how people are being passed out in the different roles and the competency that they have within the mining industry. Minister, do you think that we have enough training on board with the competency that is being put in place on some of the mine sites at the moment with SSEs and some of the other statutory roles?

Mr STEWART: I think the competency you are referring to is the ability for people to be able to gain accreditation and recognition against a set of standards.

Mr ANDREW: That is correct.

Mr STEWART: Maintaining those high expectations and also those high levels of safety that we pride ourselves on, particularly in Queensland but right around Australia, give us some of the best reputation that we have when it comes to mine safety and we will continue to do everything we can each and every day. A constant conversation that I have with the acting CEO of Resources Safety & Health Queensland is how we attract high-performing people and also how we make sure that they have currency in their role, particularly with the way that we see those technologies advancing and developing.

Because of that, we introduced some key competencies for the safety critical roles. As minister, I will be appointing an independent chair for the board and members with expertise for the assessment of those particular competencies. The bill that we recently passed introduced five new certificates of competencies. These roles are: surface mine manager, surface and underground electrical engineering manager, and surface and underground mechanical engineering manager at coalmines. We also have to look at ways we can work with industry to ensure people have the opportunity to gain those competencies but ensure we attract those high-performing people.

Mr ANDREW: In relation to critical minerals and mining going forward, how much land will be involved in mining critical minerals in Queensland compared to coalmining? What will that look like? Will it be twice the size of the coalmine industry? Will we be digging up dirt—I worked for Freeport and we moved 1.1 million tonnes a day up there. I am trying to grasp what that will look like in a futuristic situation.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. It is almost a hypothetical but I will answer it the best way I possibly can. We are doing a lot of work in this space, particularly when it comes to the exploration of critical minerals. No doubt the member would be aware that copper has been a large part of the North West Minerals Province. You only have to fly over Ernest Henry or, as you are approaching Mount Isa, George Fisher Mine and see that great expanse, or Mount Isa Mine. They are very deep holes and very big holes.

What we will see in time to come is some of these mines getting smaller, but we are constantly looking for that next discovery. That is why we invest in our Collaborative Exploration Initiative grants. That is about assisting explorers with finding critical minerals. It is hard to determine the size and the amount. We will do everything we can to help facilitate the exploration of critical minerals. I refer to Deputy Director-General of Georesources, Shaun Ferris, who may be able to add to my comments.

Mr Ferris: As the minister said, it is a bit of a hypothetical in some respects around how expansive our critical minerals industry will be. As the member knows, some of these mining plays that ultimately come into production are on the back of exploration. There are parts of Queensland which are underexplored or are currently under exploration. Whether they actually move into a critical minerals operation will depend on a whole range of factors—the commercial aspects of the potential operation, the commodity price, the supply chains, the markets et cetera. In terms of hypothesising around what the additionality would be in terms of tenure across the state when compared to coal and petroleum and gas, it is a difficult one to provide a definitive answer on.

CHAIR: It is over to you, member for Mundingburra.

Mr WALKER: With reference to page 1 of the SDS, can the minister provide an update on the status of Grosvenor mine?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. As the Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals, my No. 1 priority is ensuring every worker returns home safely after their shift. I know that the member for Mundingburra shares that priority. He has had many conversations with me about that. My expectation is that Queensland mines are always operating to the highest standards of safety and health.

I was advised on 29 June this year by Resources Safety & Health Queensland that an ignition of methane at Grosvenor underground coalmine was reported to the Queensland mines inspectorate as a high-potential incident. This was the result of two coalmine workers observing an orange glow and flame present on the longwall tailgate area at approximately 5.42 am. All personnel had been withdrawn from underground by approximately seven o'clock that same morning.

Coalmine inspectors from Resources Safety & Health Queensland were deployed immediately, arriving on that same day. They issued directives to the site which included suspension of all operations underground and establishing exclusion zones on the surface of that mine. The mine attempted to quench the underground fire through nitrogen inertialisation. However, the event escalated and, with circumstances not improving, representatives of the mine operator commenced an emergency process to seal that mine.

Queensland Mines Rescue Service arranged for the transportation of a GAG unit—this is a large jet engine inertialisation unit designed to suppress coal seam fires—from its Dysart headquarters. This unit commenced operation on 1 July this year, just two days after the incident took place. The Queensland Police Service and the Isaac Regional Council were notified of combustible materials potentially coming out of the mine. The site has been directed to ensure workers are not exposed to any contaminants from the event or in response to it.

Communication occurred between the state and federal officers of the Mining and Energy Union, Isaac Regional Council Mayor Kelly Vea Vea, Burdekin candidate Anne Baker, the department of environment and science, my office and me to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of not only the workers but the broader Moranbah community was upheld. I am advised that work was done to seal the mine, but it is still too early to determine whether that mine will reopen or not. We do not want to create any false hope or anxiety at this stage. At present, exclusion zones will remain in place at the site as long as required to ensure no-one is injured during response efforts, especially in the event that there are further explosions.

RSHQ's Serious Incident Investigation Unit has commenced its investigation into the incident. It is my expectation that Anglo American assist with this investigation as well. My thoughts are with the 1,194 affected Grosvenor mineworkers and their families and the Moranbah community, as you can imagine. I can tell you, member for Mundingburra, that I received a phone call yesterday afternoon from the CEO of Anglo American, who informed me that, of their 500-plus permanent workers, 85 per cent have been offered full-time work at other Anglo mines. They have said to me that all of the resource companies are working together like they have never seen before. They have one central point for the resumes of all of the workers from the Grosvenor mine who are looking for work, and mines—whether they be Anglo, BHP or whoever—can all access that one point. It is great to see industry working together. I had the CEO repeat back to me a term that I always use about everyone working together—that is, the rising tide lifting all boats. That is exactly what we see in this particular situation.

Mr WALKER: With reference to page 1 of the SDS, can the minister update the committee on work being done to support the community of Mount Isa?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is committed to a prosperous future for the North West Minerals Province to ensure the growth of Queensland's economy and secure jobs in that region. We know that the announcement from Glencore—that is, Mount Isa's underground copper mine operations and copper concentrator and its Lady Loretta zinc mine will cease operations in mid to late 2025—will certainly have a big impact on that region. I want to make something very clear: this is a commercial decision from Glencore, and they advised government that there was no support that could be provided to change that decision.

The Miles government, however, sees a future for this great city and for the broader north-west region and we are committed to ensure that happens. That is why we announced that a support package of \$50 million would be available for workers and the community impacted by that decision, consisting of two elements: firstly, a \$30 million package to accelerate development of the resource projects in the North West Minerals Province over the next five years; and up to \$20 million for an economic structural adjustment package through the Mount Isa Transition Fund.

Today I can announce that more than 2,500 jobs will be created through the \$30 million Mount Isa Mining Acceleration Program, which is great news. Alongside Queensland Treasury, my department identified suitable projects for accelerated mining project development in that region, which contains major deposits of copper, zinc, cobalt, gold, graphic, vanadium as well as silver and phosphate against the following criteria (1) timeline for development is one to five years, with one to two years the priority; (2) number of jobs utilising the residential workforce from Mount Isa; (3) benefits to Mount Isa, for example, the copper supply chain; and (4) whether there are discreet and actionable items other than funding that government could also assist with. The projects selected for this acceleration work include: Harmony Gold Eva copper mine, \$20.7 million; North West Phosphate Paradise South project, \$5.77 million; and Vecco Group critical minerals project, \$2.33 million. This funding will accelerate these mine projects via a variety of early works projects, including items such as site access roads, civil works, site camps and early surveying and geotechnical drilling.

These projects are forecast to create up to 1,592 jobs in total during the construction phase, which is 2024-25, and up to 969 long-term operational jobs once they are commissioned. These projects represent great opportunities. The Eva copper project near Cloncurry is already calling for expressions of interest to boost local businesses' involvement in their particular projects. That is great news. At the same time, my department has also been contributing to the delivery of the \$20 million Mount Isa Transition Fund, which is being led by the Department of State Development and Infrastructure with the support of a range of stakeholders. This is important work that is needed to help this particular city, its residents and businesses while we look at these new resource projects and the opportunities they present.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 3 of the SDS and the department's objective to facilitate native title land transfers, will the minister please provide an update in relation to the transfers.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The Department of Resources administers Queensland's land rights legislation: the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991. These acts provide for the grant of land as inalienable freehold title, which means it can never be sold. It must be held in trust for two reasons: firstly, the native title holders of the land; or, secondly, Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islander people particularly concerned with the land. Since 1991 approximately 6.7 million hectares, which is only 3.93 per cent of the land across Queensland, has been granted for the benefit of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people under these acts.

The grant of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land recognises the spiritual, social, historical, cultural and economic importance of land to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. In the 2023-24 financial year my department transferred 11 parcels of land, which included nine Aboriginal deeds of grant in trust parcels and two unallocated state land parcels. Any allocation of land under these acts as a result of an expression of interest application is subject to a prerequisite that the land's most appropriate tenure is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land following a land evaluation. An application does not guarantee that land will be made transferrable. An application does not give the applicant the right to be granted the land under these acts.

My department presently has applications within the following areas: Augathella, Boonaroo, Croydon, Duchess, Eurong, Happy Valley, Laura, Maryborough, Mount Isa, Rainbow Beach, River Heads, Roma, Thargomindah, Theodore and Toobeah. The Department of Resources received an expression of interest for the area known as Toobeah Reserve on 1 July 2021. Toobeah Reserve was dedicated as a reserve in 1906 to cater for the needs of travelling stock and associated camping pursuits. It was also a place of refuge where Aboriginal families could live and stay together within the confines of the Queensland government's policies and practices of the day. It is not, and has never been, a recreational reserve for the general community. Lawrence Springborg, a former LNP leader and Mayor of Goondiwindi Regional Council, has and continues to support the transfer of Toobeah Reserve. My department will continue to engage with the Bigambul people and council regarding the proposed transfer of Toobeah Reserve and ensure the best outcome is achieved for all stakeholders. My department has ensured that easements for essential community water infrastructure, an area for future town expansion and safe continuity for travelling stock are maintained over the reserve.

I am proud of the Miles government and my department's role in their ongoing commitment to working alongside First Nations people, recognising their deep spiritual connection to their land and supporting their preservation of culture, customs and traditions. It is a positive step forward from a dark history of the dispossession of our First Nations in this state. It is a positive step forward for truth-telling, reconciliation and healing.

Ms PEASE: Can the minister please advise the committee what work has been undertaken by the Department of Resources since the committee inquiry into island management.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I would also like to thank the members of the former Transport and Resources Committee for their work on the inquiry. As a government, we are committed to the responsible development of our island resorts for the jobs and business opportunities they create in regional Queensland. The government supported seven of the recommendations, supported another nine recommendations in principle, and did not support two. The committee's recommendations related to the responsibility of a suite of agencies managing regulated activities, such as: the Department of Tourism and Sport; the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation; the Department of State Development and Infrastructure; the Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works; and the Department of Transport and Main Roads, among others. My department continues to work with lessees, other agencies, local governments and key stakeholders to facilitate the redevelopment and rejuvenation of island resorts.

Let me be clear: work was well and truly underway by my department to look at non-operational island resort leases well and truly before the inquiry began. My preference is for the department to work collaboratively with leaseholders to ensure compliance with their conditions. This is not just limited to islands but to the thousands of leases right across Queensland, whether for Scout halls or cattle leases, but when action needs to be taken we will take it. As the committee is aware, this has already happened for two closed resorts: Great Keppel Island and Double Island. This action aligns with key recommendations contained in the committee's report. I can inform the committee that community consultation has in fact begun this week on the potential future of Double Island. The Department of Resources has a detailed understanding of compliance and the condition of infrastructure on all of the islands based on an extensive audit program that has been conducted over the past three years. This information, along with recommendations from the parliamentary committee inquiry, is being used to prioritise the next steps in our compliance and audit program for the tourism islands. We are continuing to work through the recommendations from the committee that the government accepted. We are continuing to actively engage with the lessees of other island leases and key stakeholders to facilitate redevelopment and rejuvenation of island resorts.

These resorts are operated by private investors and not the state government. As a government, we will continue to facilitate and support sustainable investment in the tourism sector; however, ultimately these developments need to stack up economically.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. With reference to page 1 of the SDS, can the minister advise the committee on the progress of establishing the Byerwen coalmine workers' camp in Glenden.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The Miles government is committed to securing the future of Glenden and supporting over 750 jobs at the Byerwen coalmine in Central Queensland's Bowen Basin. To support this intent, the Mineral Resources Act 1989 was amended on 25 August 2023 to include provisions relating to the Byerwen Mine. The amendments require QCoal to transition the accommodation of its workforce into Glenden between 2025 and 2029.

Let me be clear. No worker will be forced to live in Glenden. I repeat that: no worker will be forced to live in Glenden. This is not about forcing people to live in Glenden. It is only about where workers will be housed while they are on shift. This is nothing more than what QCoal committed to publicly and in their EIS when they were seeking approval for their mining lease in the first place. In fact I am happy to quote from the EIS that QCoal submitted for the benefit of the committee. I quote—

Byerwen Coal will secure land in Glenden for the facilities and ensure the development meets the required local government approval requirements

facilities will be of a standard commensurate with other facilities in the Bowen Basin

Appendix 8 of the EIS states under commitment No. 316—

QCoal will also implement their Workforce Accommodation Strategy, which includes formulation and application of a Glenden Urban Design Master Plan that provides the blueprint for residential growth and development in Glenden.

Commitment No. 7 states—

Byerwen Coal will transport the majority of workers from the accommodation village in Glenden to the mine site by bus, with some transport movements in light vehicles.

It seems clear to me that what QCoal committed to doing is exactly what the Department of Resources has been working on with key stakeholders since the legislation passed in September 2023—to identify pathways for the reallocation of current land tenure held by Glencore under the Land Act 1994. This has led to the development of the draft Glenden Tenure Implementation Pathway Plan that has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders. To achieve this plan, my department has been conducting site visits to assess land valuations, surveying, native title and available housing stock and undertake engagement with the three key stakeholders to collaboratively develop a plan that transitions tenure to support a strong future economic outlook for Glenden.

Since September 2023 my department has met regularly with Glencore, Isaac Regional Council and QCoal initially to establish the department's expectations for each party and discuss the sharing of information as part of the discovery phase. These parties play a critical role in determining the way forward for Glenden, and their continued participation and timely decision-making will impact the timeframes for the proposed transition of tenure. As such, the plan will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect that progress.

I will not shy away from backing regional Queensland, and that is exactly what we have done through these recommendations. We want to ensure that we protect places like Glenden, like Middlemount, like Dysart, like Tieri, like Collinsville. These are the backbone of regional Queensland.

CHAIR: I call the member for Burdekin.

Mr LAST: If I could go back to you, Mr Djukic. Does the inspectorate have any role in investigating incidents affecting workers on the roads in the vicinity of mines? If so, are the results of those investigations provided to TMR or councils, depending on who is responsible for the road?

Mr Djukic: I thank the member for the question. In the first instance, accidents occurring on the road are investigated by the police force. Usually the Forensic Crash Unit is involved. Where there is a suggestion that some factor related to mining operations is involved—for example, fatigue—then it will be referred to the mines inspectorate to look into that particular aspect. In the first instance, the investigation will be undertaken usually by the Police Service.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, the minister advised in question on notice 9 of 2024 that recommendations 17 and 24 of the Coal Mining Board of Inquiry will not be implemented. Given the recommendations were made by a District Court judge and a former chief inspector of mines, what advice did RSHQ seek in order to advise the minister the recommendations were not needed?

Mr Djukic: RSHQ obtained advice from external legal providers to determine whether existing legislative arrangements were adequate and performed its own analysis in relation to those matters.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, what was the total number of inspections planned for coalmines for the 2023-24 financial year?

Mr Djukic: Could I clarify? Was that the total number of inspections planned for coalmines?

Mr LAST: Yes.

Mr Djukic: It was 400.

Mr LAST: What was the total number of actual inspections of coalmines undertaken for the 2023-24 financial year?

Mr Djukic: It was 481.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, RSHQ advise on their website that, in 2021-22, 590 coalmines were inspected and that, in 2022-23, 592 coalmines were inspected. Given the fact that RSHQ says that inspections are fundamental to our compliance program, why have the number of inspections decreased?

Mr Djukic: I thank the member for the question. Of course no two inspections are the same. Depending upon the subject matter of the inspection, the hazard that is the focus of the inspection, inspections may vary in complexity and duration so the fluctuation in numbers is a function of that reality. As focus has particularly in the last year been around particular hazards, including gas management, those inspections tend to be more complex and of longer duration so that will affect the total output for the year.

Mr LAST: So in terms of inspections, on a percentage basis, are unannounced inspections as compared to announced or planned inspections up or down over the last 12 months?

Mr Djukic: In terms of whether they have increased, yes, in the last financial year, the number of unannounced inspections for coalmines increased.

Mr LAST: By how much?

Mr Djukic: Sorry. I have the numbers, just not the year to year numbers at my fingertips.

CHAIR: That is okay. Take your time.

Mr Djukic: Could I find that out and—

CHAIR: Do you want to come back with that?

Mr Djukic: Yes, thank you.

Mr LAST: Minister, we have just heard about the importance of mine safety. Chair, I seek leave to table a mine record entry dated 9 September 2023. I have sufficient copies.

CHAIR: We will have a review of that in the next break before we agree to table it. Do you have a question?

Mr LAST: I do. Minister, that document states that an inspector of mines has been raising safety concerns for two years at a Central Queensland coalmine and that in that period there were 33 separate incidents involving mobile plant resulting in unplanned movements. Within this data, 24 of the unplanned movements involved rear dump trucks and/or articulated trucks. As a consequence a directive was issued by the acting regional inspector of mines to suspend operations at the mine for an unacceptable level of risk involving the whole of mine. Can you explain to the committee and to mineworkers why it takes two years and 33 potentially fatal incidents for operations to be suspended under your watch?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I will take some direction from the chair about this particular document. Chair, this is the first I have seen it.

CHAIR: We have not agreed to table it. I am going to have a look at it in the break.

Mr STEWART: What would you like me to do with that question then, because it does refer directly to that particular document?

CHAIR: Perhaps we will come back to that question after the break. Is that okay?

Mr LAST: Yes, certainly, Chair.

Mr STEWART: Thank you, Chair, for your direction. Could I ask for sufficient copies for others here at the table? Thank you.

Mr LAST: Minister, the RSHQ website shows that the chief executive officer, the chief operating officer, the commissioner and the chief inspector of coalmines are all appointed on either an interim basis or an acting basis. When will workers have an assurance that key staff with responsibility for safety are permanent appointments?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. It is important that we ensure the safety of each and every single one of our workers. I do not believe in any way that people who are acting in a role are less capable of implementing safety regulations, implementing legislation or implementing the requirements to keep people safe. What we do know is that the chief is a permanent appointment. We will ensure we do everything we can to provide safety as our No. 1 priority.

Mr LAST: Minister, do we have a timeframe for when those positions will be permanently appointed?

Mr STEWART: We are continuing to work through that.

Mr LAST: You do not have any timeframe?

Mr STEWART: There is a process that we will work through, but I do not have an exact position. As you know, we have an acting CEO at the moment.

Mr LAST: You have lots of actors.

Mr STEWART: That does not mean to say he cannot do the job.

Mr LAST: I did not say that. It is a simple question: when will they be filled permanently?

Mr STEWART: That process is underway. I do not have any direct input into that; nor should I.

Mr WATTS: I refer the minister to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements and the department's strategic priorities and specifically to point 5, which says 'positive stakeholder and public sentiment on our policies, programs and people'. Minister, in that context, I refer to your media statement on 19 April 2024 where you stated—

- the GasFields Commission Queensland ... will be given a wider remit and become known as Coexistence Queensland.

Minister, what is the budget allocation for Coexistence Queensland to undertake this wider remit?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. No doubt the member will be aware of the outstanding work that the GasFields Commission undertook, particularly in the area the member is certainly well aware of. The expansion of the GasFields Commission into Coexistence Queensland to expand their particular role is to encompass a much bigger undertaking, particularly with renewable energies. I will refer to the chief financial officer, who will be able to provide you with that further information.

Mr Case: Just so I am able to answer the question most accurately, could I please have the question again?

Mr WATTS: It was about the budget allocation for Coexistence Queensland to undertake the wider remit it has been given.

Mr Case: I thank the member for the question. There is \$2.593 million, as per their existing annual budget allocation, from the Department of Resources. Coexistence Queensland also receives additional funding from other agencies.

Mr WATTS: Minister, how many additional staff does Coexistence Queensland now have to cater for this wider remit, and have they all commenced?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Before I answer that question, I have an update in relation to the member for Burdekin's question. The commissioner needs to get cabinet approval, and then through Executive Council, for the appointment of the CEO position. We are anticipating that to occur late August or early September.

To answer the question from the member, I ask Warwick Squire, the CEO of Coexistence Queensland, to come up and provide further detail about the number of people employed under his remit.

Mr Squire: In terms of budget and the rollout of Coexistence Queensland, the first point I will make is that the Queensland government committed some additional allocation for preparatory work to set up Coexistence Queensland as part of this financial year—an amount of \$765,000. That involved the appointment of two temporary staff to manage that rollout. As a result of that work, we opened the doors of Coexistence Queensland on 1 July 2024 and are now operating successfully as Coexistence Queensland. Budget discussions around further allocations for Coexistence Queensland are ongoing at this point. We do not yet have a final number in terms of additional FTEs, but we do have an in-principle agreement for some additional resources.

Mr WATTS: Just to clarify, positions have been funded or they have not been funded? Are there any actual people in the seats doing those jobs?

Mr Squire: We have not yet recruited any additional staff, other than the two FTEs that have been part of the set-up process for Coexistence Queensland. That is in addition to the 11 FTEs that we currently have on the books and had historically as the GasFields Commission.

Mr WATTS: Minister, could you advise how the government is planning to address coexistence between renewable energy projects that have no formal objection process or ability to be referred for approval reviewed in the same way that resource projects are?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. A number of people have raised this issue with me, particularly when it comes to things such as coexistence on those particular sites. For example, how do we know if there are some resources that are suitable underneath the ground? The moment you put particular renewable projects on top of those, it sterilises that part of the ground. The same thing happens when you come to farmland, particularly that good cropping and agricultural farmland.

We need to ensure that Coexistence is able to work between the community and the government—to work with that community to ensure there is a great understanding as to what the process is and what is happening but also to listen to the concerns of community members, of those stakeholders, and then also be able to resolve some of those problems. When it comes to renewables and that approvals process, that will actually sit with Minister de Brenni and his people and not with Resources.

Mr WATTS: A couple of things come out of that. I am curious how we are going to resolve matters where there may be an existing exploration and resource industry project that has a formal land access agreement in comparison to a renewable project that is not required to have the same or similar agreements with existing resource projects, particularly if it is going to be managed out of two different departments with Coexistence sitting under one but not the other.

Mr STEWART: Absolutely. I thank the member for the question. This is one of those things that we spoke about last year in our estimates session. I think I referred to the great Oklahoma land grab, where whoever first sticks that stake in the ground is the owner and you cannot refute that. There is proactive work that Coexistence Queensland will do with the departments. That is why we have relied on extending the remit that the GasFields Commission had previously. The GasFields Commission has such a great track record in working particularly in those areas. As for their expanded remit, they understand the importance of being able to get these particular aspects right because, as I said in my previous answer, the moment you put a renewable project on top of the land it sterilises it for any resource abilities to access that. That will be the work that Coexistence Queensland will do across departments. They are pretty flexible. They work really well already in that space.

Mr WATTS: Further to that, the focus and actions planning going forward will be to address some of this. I am curious, will one of those actions be reviewing all land access agreements between renewables and underlying resource project tenements?

Mr STEWART: Again, that will be the work that Coexistence Queensland will do as the applications come in. They will work across various departments to make those determinations.

Mr LAST: Director-General, I refer to the key deliverables on page 1 of the SDS and the goal to enable smarter, quicker and more transparent decision-making to deliver social outcomes. Following the amendments to the Land Act earlier this year, has a tenure evaluation been undertaken with regards to the proposed emergency services precinct at Happy Valley on K'gari?

Mr Agnew: Thank you very much for the question. Given the specific nature of that exact tenure, I will take some quick advice on that. We will need to come back to you to see if we have undertaken a review of that particular tenure.

CHAIR: Will you come back before the end of the session?

Mr Agnew: We will, certainly, thank you.

Mr HEAD: Minister, I refer to the government's proposed subsidence framework. Will the minister outline how the proposed subsidence framework the government recently attempted to legislate does not overlap or duplicate the regulatory requirements applied by the federal government or readily available processes under the Regional Planning Interests Act?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The Queensland government recognises that the agricultural sectors are a billion-dollar industry that supports thousands of jobs and helps underpin Queensland's economy in regional communities. That is why Queensland's resource sector operates within a coexistence framework that balances the interests of resource companies and landholders, manages environmental impacts and provides economic benefits to the people of Queensland. I am aware that some concerns have been raised by landholders from the Dalby region in relation to potential impacts of coal seam gas induced subsidence on high-value agricultural land. However, I also note that there are other stakeholders in the region who are accepting of coal seam gas on their farms and the benefits that the industry can bring. There is a large continuum with a range of people right across that particular continuum.

The GasFields Commission Queensland, now known as Coexistence Queensland, undertook a review of that regulatory framework that deals with coal seam gas induced subsidence and provided me with a report with eight recommendations in 2024. As you have already highlighted, member, on 18 April I introduced the Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 into parliament. This bill addressed eight recommendations made by the then named GasFields Commission, proposed to establish a clear regulatory pathway to assess and manage the impacts and potential impacts from coal seam gas induced subsidence occurring on Queensland prime agricultural land.

As the member is aware, this committee's report on the bill, tabled on 7 June this year, recommended it be passed. However, it also recommended that the Department of Resources undertakes further detailed consultation and activities on the subsidence management framework. To address this recommendation, the subsidence management framework was removed from the bill and is currently undergoing further consultation to address some of those key issues, not only that our

stakeholders have highlighted to us but also any unforeseen impacts that may be occurring. This is about giving people time to provide us with that feedback and those unseen impacts that we may or may not be aware of.

Mr LAST: Director-General, I refer to vegetation clearing codes. Can the director-general advise in the last financial year how much land was converted from category X into either category A or B across Queensland?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question. I will seek advice from the Deputy Director-General for Lands on that specific detail. While the Deputy Director-General for Lands is looking for that detail, I am happy to provide additional information to the question I was to come back to, if that is fine by the member.

CHAIR: That would be great, thank you.

Mr Agnew: Confirming that the department did hold an information meeting in Maryborough on 20 June to provide stakeholders with a preliminary review of our outcome of land valuation assessments being progressed by the department, for state land surrounding Happy Valley and Eurong townships. At that information meeting, the Happy Valley Community Association did raise concerns at its request for state land to be allocated to allow for the establishment of water tanks for firefighting purposes within the township, raising concerns that that provision had not been achieved. We are also in receipt of an application to a leased area of land within the Happy Valley township. That application was from May 2023. We are assessing that claim and confirming that the area identified by the community for that establishment is not actually contained within the leased area, but we have scheduled a meeting with the community for this week. It is happening later this week to talk through that provisioning for the firefighting.

CHAIR: How did you go?

Ms Rosanowski: We do not have that information. We will endeavour to get that for you.

Mr Agnew: If we can, by the end of the session, through the minister.

Mr STEWART: Yes, thank you.

Mr LAST: Director-General, in relation to the information you have just given me, given that section 16 refers implicitly to the objects of the act, can you advise what steps were taken to ensure consultation with both the Happy Valley rural fire brigade and the Fraser Coast Regional Council as per the objects of the act?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question. In relation to all transfers, we certainly are required by the act to consider any potential easements, community infrastructure and so forth. I have been advised that we have followed that process with the community. I am not in receipt of specific dates or meetings. I could not furnish you with that at this particular point in time, but certainly with the approach the department takes to all transfers and considerations, community need through councils particularly, if there is any infrastructure needs or easements, is a key consideration.

Mr LAST: Minister, are you confident that the level of consultation regarding the Happy Valley Community Association's proposal has been adequate under section 16 of the act, given that the association and the Fraser Coast Regional Council both claim to have not been properly consulted?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. What I can say is that I can only go on the information that has been provided. I do not get involved in the ins and outs of the daily operations of the department, as you can no doubt appreciate. I am of the understanding that every time we look at these parcels of land, that we undertake the right process, that we follow the processes that are prescribed to us, and we continue to do the necessary consultation that is needed. However, more is being done right now, as you have heard, and consultation is certainly ongoing. That is my understanding.

Mr LAST: Minister, the construction of CopperString, something the opposition has long supported, is a critical piece of infrastructure which depends on many factors. The Southern Spur route, which provides opportunity to unlock economic activity in the local region, has all required approvals in place, but the time for construction to commence is running out, placing the time to act on those approvals in jeopardy. Could the minister confirm that all steps will be taken to ensure construction commences in the immediate future and before any approvals expire?

CHAIR: I let you know, Minister, you have one minute to answer.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. CopperString is certainly one of those huge investments for us. We are working very closely with Powerlink to ensure, for every parcel of land, infrastructure is put in place and certainly continues, but we know it will be the coal royalties that is paying for CopperString in place. We know that CopperString certainly will open up the North West Minerals Province.

Mr HEAD: Even when the coal price tanks?

CHAIR: Member for Callide.

Mr STEWART: We will continue to ensure we work very closely. This is something, as you have already highlighted member, that is the big golden ticket that will open up that North West Minerals Province.

Mr LAST: Will any of those approvals expire before that commences?

Mr STEWART: Of land tenure?

Mr LAST: Yes.

Mr STEWART: Not as far as I am aware.

CHAIR: That concludes the time for this session. We will adjourn for a brief break and be back at 3.15pm, thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 3.00 pm to 3.14 pm.

CHAIR: Welcome back. We will now resume our hearing. In regards to the document that was presented for tabling, I will grant leave for it to be tabled; however, it will not be published until such time as the document is redacted and we can verify it. Member for Burdekin, I invite you to repose that question in relation to the document.

Mr LAST: Minister, the document that you have a copy of it states that an inspector of mines has been raising safety concerns for two years at a Central Queensland coalmine and that in that period there were 33 separate incidents involving a mobile plant that resulted in unplanned movements. Within this data, 24 of the unplanned movements involved rear dump trucks and or articulated trucks. As a consequence, a directive was issued by the acting regional inspector of mines to suspend operations at the mine for an unacceptable level of risk involving the whole of the mine. Can you explain to the committee and mineworkers why it takes two years and 33 potentially fatal incidents for operations to be suspended under your watch?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. As this is only one piece of information, it is difficult for me, at this stage, to determine whether there were any further reports. I will say: safety is the responsibility of absolutely everyone on that site. As this is an operational issue, I will ask the Acting Chief Executive Officer of RSHQ, Mr Rob Djukic, if he would add further to my comments.

Mr Djukic: Thank you, minister. Yes, the mines inspectorate has the power to suspend operations at a mine where they believe risk is at an unacceptable level. I will double-check this detail, but my understanding is that the 33 separate incidents that you have referred to were not at this mine; they were across the industry as a whole. The mines inspectorate across that period published information about incidents of this kind to inform industry. They took corrective action where they considered there was a basis for doing so. In this instance, at this mine, the inspector formed the view that risk was now at an unacceptable level and issued that directive but I will double-check that detail on those numbers to be sure.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, you appreciate that this was a serious incident if a directive such as this was issued?

Mr Djukic: Again, where the individual inspector forms the belief that the level of risk is unacceptable level, they have the power to issue a directive to suspend operations and that is what they have done.

Mr LAST: Mr Djukic, how long did it take until the suspension at that mine was lifted?

Mr Djukic: I do not have that information in front of me but I can find out.

Mr LAST: I would be very interested to know.

CHAIR: Before we move to the next question from the member for Burdekin, in terms of granting leave for that document to be tabled but not published, can I seek leave from the committee?

Ms PEASE: Aye.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr LAST: Minister, can you advise if there have been any other mines issued with a suspension notice in the last 12 months?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I do not issue suspension notices, RSHQ does. To answer that particular question I will refer to Rob Djukic, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of Resources Safety & Health Queensland.

Mr Djukic: Could I ask for the question to be repeated?

Mr LAST: Can you advise if there have been any other mines issued with a suspension notice in the last 12 months?

Mr Djukic: Certainly a number of mines have been issued with suspension notices in the last 12 months.

Mr LAST: How many?

Mr Djukic: In the 2023-24 financial year, 46 coalmines were issued with directives for suspending operations and 50 mineral mines or quarries were issued with directives for suspending operations.

Mr LAST: How many of those suspensions remain in effect today?

Mr Djukic: I do not have that information in front of me. I would not want to comment without that information in front of me.

Mr LAST: Are you able to ascertain that information?

CHAIR: Before the end of the session?

Mr Djukic: Yes.

CHAIR: The list is mounting.

Mr LAST: Minister, would you agree that the number of suspension notices that have been issued in the last 12 months is a damning indictment?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. It shows that when Resources Safety & Health Queensland determine that a suspension needs to happen, it is a serious incident and so they act responsibly. They do not issue those suspensions willy-nilly. Those suspensions are taken into full consideration to ensure every single worker is safe. That is my expectation and that is RSHQ's expectation because I communicate that on an almost fortnightly basis. It is also the expectation that I have of industry and I communicate that as well—whatever it takes to keep our people safe. I will back Resources Safety & Health Queensland to ensure they act swiftly and they implement whatever they need to keep people safe.

Mr LAST: Minister, is mine safety improving under your watch?

Mr STEWART: Mine safety is improving under my watch. As I have said in answer to some of your earlier questions, what we have seen is an increased number of reports of HPIs. This is exactly what we wanted. This is what we have said to industry. We have said time and time again: report those instances without fear of reprisal. That is what the workers say to us, that there is a fear of reprisal, as I said in answer to an earlier question. We need to do the same.

When industry reports those HPIs with confidence, it also allows us to communicate that to other mines to make them aware as well. That shows that everyone is working together. Whether it is industry, government, the Mining and Energy Union, which is the predominant union in the coalmine workforce, or the AWU, which is the predominant union in the minerals workforce, this is about everyone working together to ensure that we are safe. We are continuing to work every single day to keep people safe. At the end of the day it is every single worker on every single worksite who needs to call out behaviours that they think are risky or could lead to injury, and that is the culture we are trying to develop.

Mr LAST: Minister, I take you back to your response regarding CopperString. In further developing that project there have been discussions of a substation being located at Julia Creek. This substation will unlock critical mineral assets in the region providing significant economic and community benefits. Can the minister advise if there are plans to commit to this substation?

Mr STEWART: I am not the responsible minister for CopperString. We know the benefits that that would bring, but Minister de Brenni is the responsible minister for that particular CopperString project.

Mr LAST: Minister, I am aware that the Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals and the Minister for Transport and Main Roads recently initiated yet another review into the effectiveness of the Townsville to Mount Isa rail line, including a \$2 million commitment to again look into the Townsville eastern access rail corridor, which is the alternative rail line from the port through to Stuart. Can the minister tell me how many reviews on the Townsville to Mount Isa rail network corridor have been completed by this government, which has been in power for a considerable period of time; how much have these reviews cost cumulatively; and how many of those recommendations and actions have been implemented?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. The most appropriate minister to answer that question would be the Minister for Transport and Main Roads.

CHAIR: I was going to say perhaps that is better asked in the following session.

Mr STEWART: Yes, in the following session you will be able to ask those particular questions.

Mr LAST: So you have given him notice.

Mr STEWART: You have asked the incorrect minister. I will say that we understand the importance of unlocking that North West Minerals Province. That is why we have invested into CopperString. That \$5 billion project will unlock those critical minerals. We understand the importance of transport and what that will do and what we need to have in place.

My understanding is that when the initial review and the feasibility study was done in 2015 it did not take into account the expansion in the critical minerals that we are seeing. That is why I asked and advocated for a revisit of that feasibility study. As we are expanding that critical minerals industry we are going to need that infrastructure in place. We are going to need to have that infrastructure in place ready to go, not when it is in high demand. I can see that you are actually agreeing with me because you and I both know the importance of all that infrastructure lining up. That is part of attracting that investment. That is what is in the prospectus and our online hub. It demonstrates not only the particular mines and their capabilities and what the returns are on those particular mines, but also the associated infrastructure that will support that investment and those mines and, more importantly, the jobs that will come with them.

Mr WEIR: I have a question to the minister. I refer to the minister's answer to a question on notice 795 pertaining to the Condamine alluvium. You state that there are at least 993 holes drilled in that particular area—they are exploration coal holes—yet there is only data for 18 of these 993 holes. Minister, why does the department not have the data for these holes that are drilled into one of Queensland's most valuable sources of water?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Can I just clarify that that is for coal exploration?

Mr WEIR: Yes.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I will refer you to Mr Shaun Ferris, the Deputy Director-General of Georesources, who will be able to provide you with a full response.

Mr Ferris: Thank you for the question. You are correct that QoN 18 that was fielded prior to this estimates hearing was answered and you have correctly stated there are 993 holes in the Condamine alluvium that have been drilled between 1960 and 1979. We have the information around the number of wells. However, in relation to their location, because they are actually contained within paper-based reports, as we have answered in the question on notice, it would take a significant amount of departmental effort to unpack the information that you have asked for as part of this committee process. I think we have said it would be in excess of 100 business days to undertake that work. We are progressively moving the data that has been provided as part of historic exploration activities, whether that is in minerals, petroleum and gas, or coal, from paper-based into electronic form. That is a continuing and progressive exercise that the department is undertaking. When it is available it will be uploaded into the GSQ Open Data portal, which will then be available for further interrogation.

Mr WEIR: What level of risk is there to the Condamine alluvium while you do not know the whereabouts of these holes and you do not know the condition of these holes? What is the risk of gas leaking into the alluvium?

Mr Ferris: Again, thank you for the question. Just to clarify, do you mean the risk in relation to the gas itself?

Mr WEIR: If CSG extraction started underneath the Condamine alluvium and the gas became mobile and it finds these coal exploration holes, I have been told by drillers that it would find its way into the alluvium depending on the integrity of those holes.

Mr Ferris: Absolutely, depending on the integrity of those holes. As I said earlier, those 993 holes were drilled primarily between 1969 and 1979. As I know the member appreciates, the standard to which those holes were plugged and abandoned at the end of their exploration usefulness will vary differently to current and modern-day standards around the plug and abandonment and the rehabilitation. We have been made aware in the past of historic coal boreholes that have been expressing gas to the surface, and we take that particular issue very seriously. Our abandoned mines team within my division within the Department of Resources has the responsibility in those circumstances where we have those reports of those coal boreholes expressing gas to the surface to essentially make them safe and secure.

For example, we have two coal boreholes—again it is in the question on notice—that have been reported to Resources Safety & Health Queensland by third parties and they have been known to leak gas. One of those boreholes is located at Clifford Road in Yuleba located between the towns of Miles and Roma. That one is within a road reserve and it was, in that case, expressing gas to the surface. We are undertaking a plugging and abandonment exercise on that coal borehole at the moment for which we have allocated \$300,000 this financial year. We have a second borehole which is located at Baking Board Road or Baking Board near Chinchilla in the Western Downs. It is on private property and we have allocated funds for the plug and abandonment of that bore for the bore itself and for civil works to access the site given it is on private property.

We very much rely upon in these circumstances where there is gas expressing to the surface for that information to be reported to the department. As I have said, we do not hold those comprehensive records at this point in time in relation to the location of those coal boreholes. Even if we had that data in terms of their location, it is not necessarily the case that those coal boreholes would be expressing gas because in many of those circumstances there has been some form of rehabilitation of the coal boreholes and in some cases those boreholes have been known to self-seal over time as well just through the geology and the geotechnical aspects of those particular boreholes.

Mr WATTS: As a follow-up to that, your staff said that they have a paper and a number are being transferred across. Given the high value of the Condamine alluvium and the number of penetrations through it and the risk that that poses to significantly valuable cropping land, is there any form of prioritisation going on over which part of the paper database is being transitioned into digital?

Mr STEWART: I will ask Shaun Ferris, the Deputy Director-General, to respond to that.

Mr Ferris: Thank you, Minister, for the referral and thank you, member, for the follow-up question. As I said earlier, we just have a process where we are moving through a lot of our paper records. In modern times we have reporting frameworks in place which are based on certain schemes for explorers and producers of whether it is petroleum and gas, coal or minerals to provide to the department in electronic form and they are immediately uploaded into our GSQ Open Data Portal. However, this state has a very long resources history and many of the reports prior to modern times are in paper-based format, so it is a very long exercise for us to go through those reports.

Mr WATTS: If I may, the question relates to the prioritisation. Is it just being done in terms of what is on top of the pile or is it being done on supersensitive areas first such as the Condamine alluvium?

Mr Ferris: Thank you, member, for the follow-on question. If the minister is happy, I can continue.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Ferris: In relation to the paper-based reports that we have, we do prioritise. For example, we look to where reports might be available in high-prospectivity areas across the state of Queensland in terms of mineralisation or geology and certainly the sorts of matters that the member is raising here in terms of important water bodies. The ability for these coal boreholes to express gas to the surface is a matter for us in terms of that prioritisation thinking.

Mr LAST: Director-General, how many mines in Queensland ceased operating in the last financial year and how many new mines opened?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question. I am looking to Shaun Ferris again for some information on his data. Thank you.

Mr LAST: Your lucky day.

Mr Ferris: Thank you, Director-General, for the referral. Just to clarify, that is in relation to the number of mines that have closed—come to the end of their mine life or—

Mr LAST: Yes, or for financial reasons, or whatever the case may be, might have closed—

Mr Ferris: For financial reasons and mines that have opened?

Mr LAST:—and then how many opened, new mines?

Mr Ferris: If it is okay with the minister and the minister is obliging, it is a question where there is a little bit of extra detail that we would need to go through in terms of particularly those that have closed. We have had a number of mine sites over the last 12 months, for example, that have come to a position where they have gone into, say, carer maintenance because they are in administration or they have been disclaimed to the state, so there are a couple of different categories there. However, I am sure by the end of the session today we can come back to you with some additional information.

Mr LAST: Would you know how many have opened then?

Mr Ferris: We will be able to provide that to you as well. However, member, it depends on your definition of 'mine'. If we are talking about mining leases for minerals projects and coal projects, then that is straightforward, but if you are starting to pull in mining claims, for example—

Mr LAST: Yes, mineral and coal is fine.

Mr Ferris: Mineral and coal? Okay. We can come back to you.

CHAIR: For mineral and coal? Terrific.

Mr STEWART: Chair, I was going to seek clarification because, as the member for Burdekin is no doubt aware, there are opal mines and goldmines where you have a sole operator. That would take a lot of time.

Mr LAST: Just mineral and coal. I would not want to put you to too much trouble.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Burdekin.

Mr LAST: Director-General, I refer to the \$2 million in funding from the Financial Provisioning Scheme to investigate and prepare options to inform future remediation of the Jumna, Chariah and Golden Gate tailings storage facilities in Far North Queensland. The funding grant was provided over two years, with \$567,000 expended in 2022-23 and the remaining allocated for the 2023-24 financial year. What was the outcome of the \$2 million spent by the FPS to investigate and prepare options for remediation in Jumna, Chariah and Golden Gate tailings storage facilities in Far North Queensland?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question and I again refer you to Mr Shaun Ferris, Deputy Director-General of Georesources.

Mr Ferris: I thank the member for the question. May I, with the minister's approval, come back in relation to the specific outcomes of the work that was done in relation to those particular sites that you mentioned? Just for clarification, Chariah at Charters Towers—

Mr LAST: Yes, as well as Jumna and Golden Gate.

Mr Ferris: Of course. Thank you.

Mr LAST: I will hand over to the member for Toowoomba North.

Mr WATTS: Director-General, at the same time that the Department of Resources is trying to grow resource development in the north-west, I am aware the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water has this year started a two- to three-year review of the gulf water plan. When did the Department of Resources become aware of this and what are the consequences on water security?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question. I can confirm that the department has been aware for some time in fact, partnering with the department of regional development and water in that specific endeavour. The provision of water and its availability, in particular for our critical minerals development in the north-west of Queensland, is a high priority. Water is one of those key supply chain infrastructure needs of that sector so we are a key stakeholder, as that sector is, in water usage in the north-west of Queensland. In fact, we are a part funder of water investigations for the north-west in that space and have partnered with not only the department of regional development and water but also Sunwater in undertaking investigations.

Most recently, I think two to three weeks ago, the executive director for Critical Minerals Queensland, who is our sector lead based in Townsville, held some stakeholder meetings with council, proponents and the community around the key findings of that first part of the work that was undertaken by Sunwater. The bigger part of the picture, of course, is the broader gulf water plan. My briefing from

the director-general of that department is that that gulf water plan has been brought forward to recognise the broad needs, including of the critical minerals sector as I say, so that as much prework and surety can be put to key sectors, not only critical minerals, for the north-west of Queensland.

Mr WATTS: You say it has been brought forward. It was originally a two- to three-year plan. Do we know when it has been brought forward to?

Mr Agnew: The undertaking of the review has been brought forward by two years. It is my understanding from the director-general of that department that that review would have commenced in two years time. That is my understanding.

Mr WATTS: I guess what I am searching for is: are we aware of the end date when we will actually have the outcome?

CHAIR: That might be a question for that particular department.

Mr Agnew: That is a question for the other portfolio.

CHAIR: I welcome to the table the member for Maiwar. Over to you for your first question.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Chair. I will put my first question to the director-general, if I might. It is in relation to the latest SLATS report, which shows that nearly 323,000 hectares of woody vegetation were bulldozed in the 2021-22 financial year, including 24,500 hectares of unexplained and potentially illegal land clearing. I understand \$9.8 million over four years was committed in last year's budget to reduce emissions from unexplained land clearing. Director-General, what has that funding been spent on so far and how many instances or hectares of illegal land clearing has it identified?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question. I can absolutely confirm that we received an additional \$9.8 million over four years from the 2023-24 state budget and had some discussions at this committee last year in that regard. That support is there for supporting landholders to comply with the vegetation management framework. Our posture here is first and foremost compliance education in that regard. The \$1.573 million allocated to the 2023-24 financial year has been used to hire an additional 12 staff in the Department of Resources. The 12 staff will be increased to 16 for years 2 to 4 of the program. As a result of the increased funding, we have been providing more support to landowners and, as I say, our posture is around its understanding.

In particular on our actions with the 12 staff, I am happy to report that 73 vegetation audits were undertaken as part of the annual compliance program. The department attended 89 workshops and field days across the state, informing and guiding our stakeholders and the broader community about their obligations and encouraging voluntary compliance. Some 358 advisory letters were sent to landowners giving the department an opportunity to support and educate them on their obligations. Where noncompliance is identified, we use our risk-based approach to determine the most appropriate action and to deter future noncompliance. Whilst most landholders do the right thing, in the 2023-24 financial year, 34 formal warnings and four penalty infringement notices for noncompliant vegetation management practices were issued.

Mr BERKMAN: There is a lot in that answer. From the activities you have described, it does not sound as though there is a specific number of instances or an amount of clearing that can be attributed to having been found through that program; is that a fair comment? Obviously there is the penalty infringement notices and those advisory compliance letters, however described.

Mr Agnew: Again, our key posture is on prevention and seeking landowners to understand their obligations so that we are preventing any further clearing. In terms of data for those, we did issue notices to; I do not have that detail I am sorry.

Mr BERKMAN: That is okay, thank you. The response to my prehearing question on notice said that departmental officers conducted only 31 field inspections in the 2023-24 financial year. That struck me as a surprisingly low number. Director-General, can you advise how that number compares with the number of incidents of clearing that were reported to the department in the same period?

Mr Agnew: On the direct relationship between any reports and those audits, I cannot comment directly in terms of what mobilised our officers into the field in relation to specific reports. That would be a level of detail I cannot furnish you with right now. In terms of our broader compliance and auditing, obviously the satellite imagery is very useful to us. That is something that we do use as a department, again, to proactively seek to view and look for disturbance before it gets to a level beyond an existing level of clearing and any activity of tractors and so forth in areas that we might suspect need to be addressed.

Mr BERKMAN: Going back to the SLATS report, it tells us that 78 per cent of the clearing that occurred was in category X, which is unsurprising given that it is unregulated, although category X does not necessarily mean that that is vegetation without potentially significant ecological value. Does the department have any measure of or any idea of how much of that clearing in category X was vegetation of high ecological value?

Mr Agnew: I would need to seek advice from one of our experts in that particular area. If it is okay, member, I will ask Mr Lyall Hinrichsen to come to the table. He is our vegetation clearing expert.

Mr Hinrichsen: I am the Executive Director, Lands Policy and Support in the department, so thanks, Director-General, for the referral. In relation to that question, we rely very much on the science that is performed by the department of science and innovation. I do not have a particular number as to how much of that vegetation might have been of high environmental value. The point that the member makes around some of that category X vegetation having regenerated since it was designated as category X is acknowledged. That point was certainly highlighted in the scientific expert panel work that was done in relation to vegetation management in Queensland. That identified that there was opportunity to identify that vegetation and to use incentives to work with landowners in looking to protect those areas. That is work that is certainly ongoing between our department and the department of science and innovation in looking at the likes of environmental offsets and carbon credit units and securing those areas so that that vegetation can be maintained, recognising that a lot of the category X is land that had been cleared and has been frequently re-cleared. The focus of our vegetation management has always been on the higher value either regrowth vegetation that is more than 15 years old or the remnant vegetation.

Mr BERKMAN: That leads me to my next question. I also noted there was what seemed like a concerning 22 per cent jump in the clearing of high-value remnant areas, which accounted for 20 per cent of all clearing, with almost two-thirds of this clearing resulting in full removal of woody vegetation. Director-General, can you comment on what additional work this has spurred on within the department or is this particular cause for concern within the department?

Mr Agnew: I will refer to Lyall to answer the question, but I can say particularly from the department's perspective that the latest SLATS report I think did highlight and prove the case to be where we are at in terms of employing additional compliance activities in a proactive nature across the department. The support to ultimately have 16 officers onboard in the department to be working in that space, I think, is supported by the data we have just seen and supplied.

Mr BERKMAN: I am content with that response, unless you have anything further to add, Mr Hinrichsen.

Mr Hinrichsen: No.

Mr BERKMAN: I will move on to another issue. Minister, I heard earlier your statement about the government response to the announced closure of Glencore's operations in Mount Isa, especially within that the statement that the closure is a commercial decision by Glencore, although I understand there are some differing views in the industry about whether there is a commercially viable resource left at that site. How does the situation in Mount Isa and Glencore's announcement relate to the objectives stated in the Resources Industry Development Plan of maximising commercial opportunity of abandoned mines? Has that been considered specifically by the department?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I have met with the member for Traeger a couple of times. He has asked questions during question time as well. In terms of the viability of that particular resource, we knew that by 2019 Glencore had indicated to us—

CHAIR: I am going to jump in to remind everybody at the table that we do have a bill before the committee at the moment, if you can keep that in mind as you are responding to that question.

Mr STEWART: Thank you. I appreciate your guidance, Chair. Glencore indicated to us that by 2019 that resource would be almost exhausted. They did apply for an extension. As I said in response to a question previously, they have indicated that that is it. It is not commercially viable for them anymore, and that is a commercial decision that they have made. However, what we have said on many occasions—and will continue to say to industry and to investors—if there are interested investors who want to continue to pursue that mine or look at alternatives in pursuing that particular resource, our Department of Resources looks at facilitating how that can happen rather than regulating and saying, 'No, you cannot.' We are an open door to listen to any proponents who come to us with a genuine offer of pursuing that resource.

Mr BERKMAN: I will try to zoom out rather than focus on the specific project, given the private member's bill before the committee. How does that objective within the Resources Industry Development Plan work in practical terms? What is the department's approach where there is an existing leaseholder, be it Glencore or anyone else, who is not using the resource? Can the state rescind the mining lease and reissue it to other relevant authorities? How does it work in practice?

Mr STEWART: I think we are sailing a little close to the wind.

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr STEWART: What I will say is that there is a procedure. What is happening with Glencore is they have not walked away. They are still continuing those operations. They have indicated to us that they will close in 2025. What happens across mines quite often is that we do not get this lead time like we have seen with Glencore in Mount Isa. There is an opportunity for Glencore to sell that lease to another proponent, if they choose to do. We need to ensure there is a process—that they stack up environmentally, socially and financially. We want to continue to ensure workers live in Mount Isa, as they have done for a hundred years now working with Mount Isa Mines.

We are always open to looking at ways that we can continue those mines. In fact, we now have proponents looking at reactivating some of the old mines that have been abandoned. A great example of this is EQ Resources in Far North Queensland. There was an old abandoned tungsten mine and they have taken it over. They are reprocessing and, in fact, they are going gangbusters now. They are also going into Wolfram Camp mine. It is also an old abandoned tungsten mine. We worked actively with proponents to reinvigorate this.

Through our Critical Minerals Strategy we are looking at ways that we can reprocess tailings dams. Rather than mining proponents and companies digging another big scar in the ground, there are opportunities that exist—and we have some funding associated with that—where they can reprocess. Mount Isa Mines are targeting lead, zinc and copper. We know that, for want of a better word, in cohabitation with copper is usually cobalt, which was a waste product. Now it is highly valuable for the batteries needed for electric vehicles.

It allows those proponents, as I said, not to dig a new scar. It means that they can bring that product much more quickly to market. In fact, when we were in South Korea we met a company that was very keen to reprocess some of the tailings in the North West Minerals Province. We have seen that happening at Rocklands, where the University of Queensland is working with JOGMEC, which is a Japanese organisation, to reprocess those tailings dams to bring that product to market more quickly.

CHAIR: I call the member for Mundingburra.

Mr WALKER: With reference to page 1 of the SDS, will the minister provide an update on the RSHQ's unannounced and announced inspection program?

Mr STEWART: Chair, before I answer that question, can I work out the timings because we do have a number of responses?

CHAIR: I intend to return to the opposition at 4.18 pm.

Mr STEWART: How much time will we get at the end?

CHAIR: There is 25 minutes before you will have two minutes to wrap up the session.

Mr STEWART: Should I respond to some of those questions during this period now?

CHAIR: No, in the next session. We have some government questions. Then we will come back to non-government questions and they will come out of their time.

Mr LAST: If the minister provides a response now then I will not have the opportunity to ask any follow-up questions, will I, because it is the government's time?

CHAIR: You have a 25-minute session.

Mr STEWART: We have a 25-minute session now?

CHAIR: No. We are going to have about 20 minutes of government questions. Then we will revert to the opposition.

Mr LAST: That is when you provide responses.

Mr STEWART: That is when we can provide the responses to you.

Mr LAST: Yes.

Mr STEWART: I have it now. Thank you for your guidance. I thank the member for that question. Some historical context is important. In response to recommendations from the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee in 2019, the then Mines Inspectorate obtained advice from an independent expert of risk management that a range of between 10 and 20 per cent of unannounced inspections was appropriate and consistent with other high-hazard industry regulators.

In response to this, the inspectorate increased the proportion of unannounced inspections to sit within that particular range. In February last year, the then Queensland parliamentary Transport and Resources Committee tabled the *Inquiry into coal mining industry safety*. It recommended—

RSHQ increase the number of unannounced inspections it undertakes at Queensland coal mines to 25% of all inspections by the 2023/24 financial year;

I needed a little bit of evidence that this would make a difference. RSHQ acknowledged the committee's recommendation and undertook a review of inspection data to critically assess whether the current rate of unannounced inspections should be changed. RSHQ reviewed over three years worth of inspection data for coalmines, mineral mines and quarries. This review analysed 5,941 inspections of coalmines, mineral mines and quarries, spanning over 46 months.

I am advised by RSHQ that the results showed no real difference between announced and unannounced inspections in the rate of noncompliance or substandard practice detection. The findings indicated that whether inspections were announced or unannounced there was no perceived advantage to either approach. RSHQ currently targets 10 to 20 per cent of total inspections to be unannounced based on that expert advice and sound regulatory practice. However, the actual number is driven by assessing current activities and risks in the resource sector.

Each of RSHQ's inspectorates has consistently achieved the current range target. RSHQ formulates its inspections in the audit program based on risk to scheduled inspections and audit amongst mines. Sites are prioritised based on various factors which include, but are not limited to (1) parts where elements of the mine operations are due for inspection; (2) ratings from previous inspections and audits; (3) current or changing mining activities or processes occurring; (4) changes in management, key personnel, contractors or labour hire; (5) shifts in mining phases such as startup, shutdown or infrequent operations; (6) the site's history of serious harm, incidents or injuries reported; (7) regulatory action, including any trends; and (8) the investigation of complaints. Most inspections at underground sites or small mines need to be announced to ensure site access and the attendance required of personnel. Unannounced inspections are valuable for performing spot checks on operating practices in response to a work complaint and for monitoring the effectiveness of personal safety controls. All inspections are planned but may either be announced or unannounced, depending on the inspector's focus.

Ms PEASE: Minister, with regard to page 1 of the SDS, will you update the committee on the status of the board of inquiry's recommendations.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. Of the 65 recommendations made by the board of inquiry: 30 were made to Resources Safety and Health Queensland; 30 were made to the coalmining industry, including three made specifically to Angelo American's Grosvenor mine; three were made to the union appointed industry safety and health representatives; and two were made to the independent tripartite Coalmining Safety and Health Advisory Committee, or CMSHAC. I am advised that RSHQ worked with the Public Sector Commission to address the recommendations of the board of inquiry in relation to attracting, retaining and developing experienced industry statutory ticketholders to the two mines inspectorates. Inspectors with really good operating procedures are snapped up by mines and usually put into their own safety areas. They can pay them a whole lot more. One of the recommendations is to pay them a bit more and then maybe they will be retained, and that is exactly what happened.

Ten recommendations were developed as policy proposals for the Resources Safety and Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and were the subject of a public consultation process in the same year. The bill was introduced to parliament on 18 April this year and referred to the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee for their consideration and report to parliament. The bill passed with amendment on 12 June this year and was assented to on 18 June this year. Two recommendations were not progressed in the regulatory impact statement following advice from Resources Safety and Health Queensland that they were adequately addressed in existing legislative provisions. Five recommendations relating to legislative amendments did not proceed based on further consideration, including advice from the Coalmining Safety and Health Advisory Committee. The

remaining five recommendations will be implemented through the making of new or revised recognised standards, which are nearing completion, or through regulatory action to implement the legislative amendments contained in the Resources Safety and Health Legislation Amendment Bill.

With regard to the 30 recommendations made to the coalmining industry, in August 2022 during estimates I announced that the then Transport and Resources Committee would conduct an inquiry into the industry's actions to implement the recommendations it received from the board of inquiry. Public hearings took place in Moranbah and Brisbane in November of that same year and January the following year. The committee tabled its inquiry into coal mining industry safety report on 16 February last year. I tabled the government's response to that report in May of that same year. Following this report RSHQ requested that surface coalmine operators report on the implementation of board recommendations applicable to them. Responses have been provided to RSHQ, which will take appropriate follow-up action where needed.

I recognise that the learnings from Queensland's Coal Mining Board of Inquiry apply to all high-hazard industries, not just the coalmining sector. I fully support the work the board of inquiry and the Transport and Resources Committee have completed in identifying improvements for safety within Queensland's coalmining industry. As I have said a thousand times—and I will say it again—safety should be everyone's No. 1 priority when it comes to Queensland coalmine workers.

Mr WALKER: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can the committee be advised on the work being undertaken by yourself and the Department of Resources to promote critical minerals in Queensland.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I was proud to announce the launch of the Critical Mineral Prospectus just last week, and I seek leave to table copies of the prospectus. This document, along with the interactive map I have already spoken about, launched on the Department of Resources' website as a tool for investors to see the amazing work already being done by the Queensland resources sector, supported by the Miles government. For those who are interested, you can go online to see the Queensland map light up where each individual project is according to the mineral they are planning to mine. You can see who operates these projects and the infrastructure that supports them such as railways, ports and refineries. My favourite part of the inactive map is where recipients of the Queensland government's Collaborative Exploration Initiative grants are located. If you click on the icon, the map of Queensland lights up with a large number of projects the CEI grants have supported, particularly in that North West Minerals Province region.

The committee would also be familiar with our Critical Minerals Strategy in the Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan, which we previously released but continue to work on delivering in full. The Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy outlines our ambition to transform the state and global economy with the responsible use of Queensland's critical minerals, creating sustainable economic prosperity for Queensland. This strategy oversees \$315 million in investment to grow Queensland's critical minerals sector. Since the launch of the strategy in June last year at the World Mining Congress, we have progressed implementation of the nine actions, including (1) establishing the Critical Minerals Queensland office in Townsville and announcing the appointment of Paul Holden to head the office in May of this year; (2) progressing the \$75 million critical mineral zones program to coordinate industry development by undertaking a place-based approach—Critical Minerals Queensland is leading the development of the zones, commencing with projects currently being scoped for the Julia Creek-Richmond area; (3) launching the \$5 million Collaborative Development Program in April this year to back companies that will explore and undertake assessment activities in mine waste at abandoned and operating mine sites earlier; (4) commencing a review of the regulatory framework to facilitate reprocessing opportunities in mine waste; (5) reducing rent to zero dollars for five years for all exploration permits for minerals with granted or anniversary dates between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2028—this \$55 million investment in foregone revenue will support investment and exploration activities in Queensland; (6) develop an interactive investor hub to showcase high quality and up-to-date information about Queensland's critical minerals activities; (7) progressing the now \$170 million Queensland Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund which opened in June of last year with strong interest from the mining and battery technology sectors; (8) partnering with the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy to understand and build ESG capability in the industry; and (9) progressing an \$8 million research alliance to undertake research and development in the circular economy and mining.

Our approach to critical minerals has been applauded by industry. We have and will continue to listen to the sector about what they need to ensure Queensland's critical minerals producers are globally recognised for their ESG credentials and the quality of our mineral resources and our very talented workforce.

CHAIR: Is leave granted to table the critical mineral prospectus? Leave is granted.

Mr WALKER: Minister, in reference to page 1 of the SDS, when will the Queensland Resources Common User Facility that was committed to in the Critical Minerals Strategy be operational?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. I even think it is in your electorate. Am I right?

Mr WALKER: That is correct

Mr STEWART: The Queensland government recognises that global demand for critical minerals is rapidly increasing given their key role in the development of modern technology and specialised equipment required to decarbonise global economies. Queensland's North West Minerals Province is one of the world's richest mineral-producing regions, with major deposits of copper, lead, zinc, cobalt, gold, graphite, vanadium as well as silver and phosphate. The Queensland government is committed to developing the North West Minerals Province to drive prosperity and support the transition to renewable energy resources. A key action from the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan will deliver this by building an Australian first, government owned common user critical minerals demonstration processing plant in the Cleveland Bay Industrial Park in the member's electorate.

The Department of Resources is working in partnership with Queensland Treasury and the Department of State Development and Infrastructure to progress the development of the Queensland Resources Common User Facility. We must get this design right. There is no use starting to build the facility before we fully understand the purpose and the scope of that particular project. As I said previously, vanadium is an emerging mineral resource for the world and this technology is new. Getting the design right on this facility will mean maximum value for the proponents who will use it, which is our priority. You cannot slip down to the Fairfield Waters Bunnings and pick up these parts. These are purpose-built.

On 7 December 2022 the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment, the Hon. Cameron Dick, announced \$75 million has been committed to the Queensland Resources Common User Facility. The facility will initially focus on vanadium and is being designed to trial processes for extracting vanadium ore from projects located near the towns of Julia Creek and Richmond in the North West Minerals Province.

In late March last year my department purchased a 3.5-hectare site for the facility at the Cleveland Bay Industrial Park, a state development area near the Port of Townsville and in the members electorate. In November 2023 Queensland company Sedgman, a member of the CIMIC Group, was appointed as the managing contractor to lead the detailed design and delivery of that facility. The Queensland government is now in the very final planning stages of that facility with Sedgman. The Queensland Resources Common User Facility is intended to be operational for vanadium processing in 2025, with capacity to expand over time to encompass processing other critical minerals like cobalt and rare earth elements.

This Australia-first common user facility will cement the place of Queensland as a player in the future of the global economy as a trusted partner in the production of critical minerals. Vanadium is Queensland's secret weapon when it comes to critical minerals and the clean energy future.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 1 of the SDS and the continued implementation of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, can the minister please provide a progress update on the status of the actions of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. We are two years into delivery of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan, or QRIDP, working closely with lead agencies, industry and community stakeholders to progress the 43 actions under the plan that will build a resilient, responsible and sustainable resources sector that grows as it transforms. QRIDP delivers on a Labor government election commitment. The QRIDP sets a 30-year vision for the resources industry to ensure it is resilient, responsible and sustainable and grows as it transforms. The plan identifies six key focus areas where government and industry need to take action: grow and diversify the industry; strengthen our environmental, social and governance credentials and protect the environment; foster coexistence and sustainable communities; ensure strong and genuine First Nations partnerships; build a safe and resilient future workforce; and improve regulatory efficiency.

In just the past year we have: delivered the \$570 million Queensland Battery Industry Strategy under action 9 which was released in February this year; continued progress of the \$75 million Queensland Resources Common User Facility in collaboration with Queensland Treasury and the future users, with managing contractor Sedgman announced in November last year to progress the detailed design of that facility, which is action 12; and unveiled the FlexiLab common user facility concept at the Resources Centre of Excellence in Mackay in January this year, which is action 18. I give a shout-out to Steve Boxall who is doing an outstanding job managing that facility.

Progress continues under the government's key focus of ensuring strong and genuine First Nations partnerships with the resource industry, including the development of a new whole-of-government First Nations Economic Strategy. Since the release of the plan in June 2022, 14 of the actions are complete, three are progressing under the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy and 26 are in progress. I invite all Queenslanders to monitor progress through the Department of Resources website which transparently shows our progress on all 43 actions.

The completed actions include: establishing the ministerial advisory group; investigating and delivering promotion strategies; completing the pilot program to recommercialise the area which includes former Wolfram Camp Mine, Bamford Hill Mine and surrounding exploration areas; finalising the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy; rent deferral for critical minerals projects; developing the guidance framework to facilitate common user infrastructure; completing the Bowen Basin pipeline study; establishing hydrogen and other clean energy sources by completing the regulatory review; remaking the Land Access Code to support the long-term relationships between resource companies and landholders; delivering a new mapping layer to improve stakeholder understanding of coexistence; delivering the \$100 million Resources Community Infrastructure Fund; implementing reforms to allow steel casing to be used in horizontal gas wells where there is no overlapping coal tenure; develop a fit-for-purpose framework for extractive industry assessment; improve cost recovery for government services provided to industry; and review rent settings so existing tenures are actively explored and developed.

The remaining 26 actions remain in progress but all actions have commenced work. The Queensland government and the Department of Resources are actively working towards achieving all 43 actions of QRIDP in order to support the sector for the next 30 years as the plan unfolds.

CHAIR: We are going to head into the final section of this session for today with non-government questions. I remind the committee that we have quite a few items that we need to come back to.

Mr LAST: Minister, are you happy to provide the responses to those questions that you have taken on notice now?

CHAIR: Did you want to start with those?

Mr LAST: I am happy for the minister to do that.

Mr STEWART: Thanks, I appreciate that. I will ask Mr Djukic for his follow-ups.

Mr Djukic: If I can provide a clarification on some information I provided earlier. The member for Burdekin asked how many coalmines inspectors hold first class certificates of competency. I think I might have said three. The number is in fact four.

In relation to the other matters that the member for Burdekin raised and the question about how many competency holders have registered voluntarily for continuing professional development, the number is 1,536. The CPD scheme will become mandatory with the commencement of the act changes later this year, anticipated in September. In relation to the member's question about how many industry forums the Mines Inspectorate conducted in the last financial year, the Mines Inspectorate conducted 30 industry forums across the sectors we regulate at locations including Townsville, Rockhampton, Emerald, Toowoomba, Mackay, Dysart and Brisbane.

In relation to the member's question about the change in the proportion of unannounced inspections year on year, 17 per cent of the total inspections conducted by the coalmines inspectorate last year were unannounced. That is compared to 14 per cent the preceding year.

In relation to the question relating to the longest outstanding complaint matter received last year, the oldest open complaint was received on 22 August last year.

In response to the member's question about Simtars undertaking a review of competencies and the gaps that were identified, Simtars undertook a training gap analysis for each inspectorate within RSHQ and created individual training plans to close any identified skills gap. Simtars was also engaged by the Commissioner for Resources Safety & Health to review competencies of mineworkers

recognised by the Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee and the Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee. The review was completed and a report was provided to the commissioner in October 2022.

In relation to the matter the member raised about the suspension directive that was given to a mine for unplanned movements of mobile plant, that suspension directive was given on 9 September 2023 and was fulfilled and lifted on 15 September 2023.

In relation to the question how many of the suspension directives issued by the mines inspectorate last financial year remain open, there are six—one by the coalmines inspectorate and five by the Mineral Mines and Quarries Inspectorate.

Mr LAST: Can I ask for clarification on what the six entail?

Mr Djukic: I understand that the one issued by the Coal Inspectorate relate to the ongoing matters at Grosvenor mine.

Mr LAST: Is that previous fire or the most recent fire?

Mr Djukic: The most recent. In relation to the Mineral Mines and Quarries Inspectorate, I do not have that detail with me. I can attempt to find that out before the end.

Mr LAST: I would appreciate it if you could.

Mr STEWART: Chair, it has been brought to my attention that I need to correct the record. In answer to an earlier question about the coal seam gas induced subsidence management framework, I made reference to the former GasFields Commission Queensland report on the regulatory review of CSG induced subsidence being published in 2024. I would like to take the opportunity to correct that reference. The report was published in November 2022.

In response to another question, I mentioned that Wolfram Camp was reopened and that reprocessing is being undertaken. I would like to clarify that currently only exploration works are occurring at Wolfram Camp under an exploration permit for minerals. I will ask the director-general to follow up on his questions.

Mr Agnew: In relation to the three questions that we had essentially taken on notice, I will hand over to my Deputy Director-General Pires. By way of very quick clarification, I mentioned a meeting organised for this week with the community in relation to the Happy Valley properties. That meeting is in fact scheduled for 8 August. We are going to meet on K'gari with the Queensland Fire Department and the Happy Valley and Eurong residents associations on 8 August. That is the second such meeting. There was a meeting earlier in July.

Mr LAST: Is the rural fire brigade invited to that?

Mr Agnew: The Queensland Fire Department, yes.

Mr LAST: That is fine.

Ms Rosanowski: In relation to the question, 'In the 2023-24 financial year, how much land was transferred from category X to category A and B areas?', the last mapping update to the vegetation management maps was released on 22 November 2023, which is in line with the Queensland government's commitment to update the maps based on the best available scientific information. The maps were updated based on the information provided by the Queensland Herbarium, which follows a published scientific methodology to update the vegetation mapping across Queensland.

The update resulted in a reduction in the category A areas by 101 hectares, or 0.056 per cent of the area of category A, which is at 179,999 hectares, and an increase in category B areas of 1,008 hectares, which is less than 0.01 per cent of the area of category B, which is 138,315,624 hectares.

I would also like to stress that existing category X areas on property maps of assessable vegetation, PMAVs, were not affected by these changes. The update process was done transparently, and peak stakeholder groups were briefed on the annual update process and were advised of the release before it occurred.

Mr HEAD: You mentioned the Queensland Herbarium and consultation related to changes to those categories. Can you clarify why the category of this land was changed and what was in that advice?

Ms Rosanowski: Category A areas can increase if offsets, exchange or restoration notices are made over an area of category X, B, C or R, and category B areas can increase where areas of category C, R or X which do not have a PMAV over them regrow to remnant vegetation. Category B areas can decrease if the landholder successfully applies for a PMAV to change the lawfully cleared area to category X. That is generally what would affect the category rating.

Mr HEAD: You said that category B can generally decrease with successful PMAVs, but you just said that there was a 1,008-hectare increase in category B. What was the trigger for the significant increase in category B?

Ms Rosanowski: The category B increase was 1,008 hectares. That can increase where areas of category C, R or X—X where there is not a PMAV—regrows to remnant vegetation. It will be one of those factors.

Mr HEAD: That is not in a PMAV?

Ms Rosanowski: That is right.

Mr HEAD: Minister, when changes to categories are proposed or made, what notification is provided to landholders and what steps are taken to ensure landholders are aware of these changes?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. As you can imagine, any changes to that will affect those landholders or any who have interest in that particular area. It is important that we actually communicate that early to ensure they have a full understanding of exactly what is happening. One of the things we pride ourselves on when it comes to vegetation management is education, because we know that once people have the right information they are very good at managing their property. I will ask the deputy director-general for lands to add further to my comments.

Ms Rosanowski: Thank you for the question. As I said, stakeholder groups were briefed on the annual update process. In addition to that, the department advises all clients who have downloaded a vegetation map or property report since the previous year's update was done. As part of our ongoing education campaign, we also make sure that landholders are encouraged to check if their property is affected by changes to ensure they are operating in accordance with the vegetation management laws by requesting a free property report from our website. Landholders can always contact our dedicated Veg Hub for further information.

Mr HEAD: Does the department collect statistics regarding inquiries to the Veg Hub on thinning vegetation?

Ms Rosanowski: We do not capture information by the topic of the call, no.

Mr HEAD: With Veg Hub, you just take the total number of calls coming in without recording what those inquiries are about?

Ms Rosanowski: I believe so, but I will have to double-check that.

Mr HEAD: If you could, that would be fantastic.

Mr STEWART: We have some further follow-ups.

Mr Ferris: In relation to the question around the work and the activities that are being carried out at Golden Gate, Chariah and Jumna tailings dam in particular, the abandoned mines team, again within our department, sought an initial grant from the Financial Provisioning Scheme to undertake engineering and remediation designs for those three mine sites—Jumna, Chariah and Golden Gate. It was really an exercise of detailed engineering to put us in a position that we were, I will call it, shovel-ready, to undertake remediation activities or rehabilitation activities on that site. The work around that initial grant funding was completed in late 2023 and, as I stated, the outcome of that work from that initial funding was remediation designs to support future funding requests to carry out activities on the site. Of the three sites, Chariah near Charters Towers was prioritised and a funding request was then submitted to the scheme, and that funding request was approved. That is for \$2.5 million over the next two financial years from the Financial Provisioning Scheme, to carry out activities on that site. Those works include a decommissioning of a processed water pond on the site, remediation of contaminated processed waste, also at the Chariah site, and the two remaining sites, Jumna and Golden Gate, as I said earlier, now with that initial funding, we have designs in place ready for future funding requests to move onto those sites.

Mr LAST: Any timeframes regarding that work?

Mr Ferris: The initial funding for \$2.5 million for Chariah is over the next two financial years, and the balance of that work will be subject to consideration by the Financial Provisioning Scheme in terms of a funding allocation for those works.

CHAIR: Mr Djukic, did you want to add?

Mr Djukic: Thank you, Chair. The five directives for suspensions issued by the Minerals Mines and Quarries Inspectorate were issued to quarries for matters including an ineffective safety and health management system, inadequate guarding and structural integrity of plant and design of plant.

Mr LAST: Are they still operating?

Mr Djukic: The suspensions remain in place.

CHAIR: Noting we have one more matter that will be coming back to on the Veg Hub.

Mr LAST: Minister, given the importance of exploration, why was the Department of Resources' Collaborative Exploration Initiative not extended in the 2024-25 budget.

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for the question. We know the importance of the Collaborative Exploration Initiative. As I have highlighted already through the interactive map that is online, you can see where those are contained. You can see the importance of those particular projects. We know that the big discoveries have already been made. The Mount Isas have been made, the Ernest Henrys of this world have been made. We need to work with explorers. You need to have that exploration in place to be able to then develop the next series of mines. The Collaborative Exploration Initiative continues to be a great success when we announced those particular projects and programs because what we see is that it is working with those explorers. We have heard on many occasions that the success of that particular program is quite often the shot in the arm that they need to continue to do their work. We will be operating two more funding rounds to complete the current program in the 2026-27 financial year. The mineral of greatest focus for explorers and by the Collaborative Exploration Initiative recipients is largely copper because we are seeing a great demand for copper. I will ask Mr Shaun Ferris if he would like to add further to my comments.

Mr Ferris: Thank you, Minister, for the referral. I thank the member for the question as well. As the minister said, the CEI program has two further rounds. The CEI program is a \$22.6 million program over a five-year period that was an outcome of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan. As I have said, we have two more funding rounds to complete in the current program which will take us out to 2026-27. The minister has spoken that one of our focus areas is copper, but it is also worth noting that our grants program has and will continue to support the search for a whole range of other minerals, whether that is rare earth elements—silica, graphite, lithium, amongst others—highlighting their direct link to the minerals that are in great demand to support the renewable energy transition and the manufacturing of critical low-emissions technology.

A couple of examples of some of the good work that is being done as part of round 7: Mount Isa Mines flew a large airborne gravity survey over the region targeting structurally hosted copper deposits. As the minister said, copper is an area of focus for us as a department, with a number of targets identified as an outcome of that particular funding, and Australian Silica Quartz was another funded program in round 7 which investigated the suitability of the Georgetown region—White Springs quartz as a feedstock for high purity silica processing flow sheet that they are in the process of developing. We have a number of pretty exciting projects as part of this current round, round 8, that have also been funded as part of the CEI program. There is a lot to step through, but they are all on our Department of Resources' webpage for members, committee and for the public to take a look at.

Mr LAST: Chair, I think there was one question on notice still remaining regarding new coalmines and mineral mines and closure of those mines. Is that still—

Mr Ferris: We are still working through some of that detail.

Mr HEAD: Director-General, the Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies 2023 found 60 per cent of respondents expected to wait at least seven months for permits to conduct exploration activities. Ontario, by comparison, found half of respondents expected to wait two months or less. Are you aware if the minister has sought any advice on how to address this issue?

Mr Agnew: I thank the member for the question. In relation to our approach to improving our processing of all approvals, at all stages of tenure in the mining resources space, there is always that ongoing balance between ensuring we are undertaking quality assessments and supporting the objectives of our legislation and also supporting our objectives in terms of supporting investment, attracting investment in a way that gives as much certainty as possible, and we must consider a number of requirements along the way in all of them. That is not just the Department of Resources. There are environmental approvals, of course, involved. There is advice that we provide across that whole range to a minister before they are deciding any of the tenures in relation to mining—on court proceedings needing to be resolved, on any compensation agreements they may have with affected landowners, any consent in relation to any overlap of any of those tenures, of course, negotiated outcomes from native title bodies and assessment applications as well.

Mr HEAD: Specifically, it was whether you were aware if the minister sought advice on how to improve that?

Mr Agnew: One of the key actions for us under the QRIDP, a 30-year plan for the resources industry on which we have a lot of support from all of our stakeholders and industry, is continuing to work on the improvement of the approvals process across government.

CHAIR: The minister is there; you could ask him directly if he sought the advice. Possibly, member for Callide?

Mr HEAD: Further to that, the same survey found that 60 per cent of respondents said that the time it takes to obtain a mining permit had stayed the same or lengthened. Has the minister sought any advice on how to address this specific matter as well?

CHAIR: Is your question to the minister or the director-general?

Mr HEAD: To the director-general.

Mr Agnew: I am sorry, I missed part of your question.

Mr HEAD: It is a follow-on question that relates to the same matter: 60 per cent of respondents said the time it takes to obtain a mining permit had stayed the same or lengthened. Has the minister sought any advice to address this?

Mr Agnew: Our approvals process is an ongoing area of advice to the minister. Again, not every application is the same. We must consider those requirements that I outlined which are not all with the department. They are with other agencies and a number of elements are solved with the proponent.

CHAIR: I note that it is now 4.40, and we will be coming to a ministerial wrap-up. I want to check in with Ms Rosanowski and Mr Ferris in regard to the two outstanding items.

Ms Rosanowski: Thank you, Chair. In regard to the question around the data that the Veg Hub queries, we do not have that level of specific detail for the reason that people make an inquiry to Veg Hub. In 2023-24 we had a total of 4,986 inquiries in relation to general vegetation management, but we do not have the level of data you were seeking.

CHAIR: Terrific. Mr Ferris?

Mr Ferris: Thank you, Chair. I have some information here to help answer the earlier question from the member. We have information which details the tenures granted and the tenures surrendered and terminated. For the financial year 2023-24, there were 96 mineral mining leases that were surrendered and three mining leases that were terminated. In terms of the mineral mining leases that were surrendered, it is important to note that does not necessarily mean the closure of a mine. They may have decided to surrender the mining lease because there is no mineralisation or no economic opportunity on that particular mining lease to continue mining. That is a normal part of business by companies that we are familiar with in the resources sector.

In terms of coalmines, Queensland had 56 producing coalmines in the March quarter of 2024, compared to 54 in the March quarter of the previous year. That is a net increase of two additional coalmines, but it also reflects that some mines are stopping production and others are starting. Some mines might take a pit or part of a tenure into care and maintenance again because they have come to the end of the particular reserve on that site, or the site has come to the end of its reserve.

Mr LAST: Is there time for a question?

CHAIR: The time has expired. I will now hand over to the minister to make some final remarks.

Mr STEWART: We can catch up for a beer and talk about that question, if you like! Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. It is an important part of our parliamentary system. I am always happy to be talking about my passion—the resource industry—and how important it is for our great state. I express my sincere gratitude to the staff from the Department of Resources, Resources Safety & Health Queensland, Coexistence Queensland and the Land Access Ombudsman—who still has not stepped up for a question—for the incredible amount of work that has gone into preparing for these hearings. This team does an incredible amount of work, often in the background and I appreciate the work that they do. They continue to provide me with the advice and information I need to support the great resource industry that powers our amazing state—quite often in those wee hours of the morning—not only during estimates hearings but throughout the year, whether it is through developing our Critical Minerals Prospectus or building our resource industry to support regional Queensland and the broader state.

To my director-general, Warwick Agnew; my deputy director-generals, Shaun Ferris, Amy Rosanowski and Celia Venables; as well as RSHQ Acting CEO, Rob Djukic; Coexistence Queensland CEO, Warwick Squire; and the Land Access Ombudsman, Jane Pires and their combined teams, I thank you for your leadership and for the boundless knowledge you have of this outstanding portfolio.

I would like to thank my team: namely Chris Lees, my right hand, arm and leg, he is an amazing man; and Stephanie Kameric, Michael Riordan, Travis Dawson, Bella Hickson, Izzy Manfield, Kash Greene and Lucy Gazenbeek. They continue to support me in my position as the Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals. I thank them for helping me to carry out the Miles government's vision for the people of Queensland. I also thank all of the parliamentary staff—whether it is secretariat, Hansard, tech services or our amazing assistants, I thank each and every one of you. To the committee: I thank you for the ability to talk about resources for the last 3½ hours.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. We have now reached the end of the time that was allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for areas of responsibility administered by the portfolio of resources and critical minerals. I note that all questions have been responded to so there are no questions on notice. I thank the minister, the directors-general and the department officers and staff for appearing before us today. Thank you to the secretariat, Hansard, our attendants and everybody who makes today possible. I declare this part of the hearing closed. The committee will now adjourn for 30 minutes and we will return at 5.15 pm to examine the estimates for the portfolio areas of transport, main roads and digital services.

Proceedings suspended from 4.45 pm to 5.14 pm.

ESTIMATES—CLEAN ECONOMY JOBS, RESOURCES AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE—TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS; DIGITAL SERVICES

In Attendance

Hon. BJ Mellish, Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services

Mr B Reed, Chief of Staff

Department of Transport and Main Roads


Ms S Stannard, Director-General

Cross River Rail Delivery Authority

Mr G Newton, Chief Executive Officer

Queensland Rail Limited

Ms K Stapleton, Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** Good afternoon. We will now resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Kim Richards, the member for Redlands and chair of the committee. With me here today are: Mr Pat Weir, the member for Condamine and my deputy chair. The other members of the committee are: Mr Bryson Head, the member for Callide; Mr Les Walker, the member for Mundingburra; Ms Joan Pease, the member for Lytton; and Mr Trevor Watts, the member for Toowoomba North. We also have at the table the member for Chatsworth, Steve Minnikin. The committee will be joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend who will transition in and out through the course of 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. I intend to finish my day as I have started it and that will be expecting a level of contribution that has rigour but respect. I look forward to the questions of the estimates proceedings today.

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 transport and main roads and digital services portfolio areas until 9.15 pm. We will adjourn for a short break from 7.15 pm until 7.30 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 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 that 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, director-general, officials, departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisors to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of transport and main roads and digital services 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 MELLISH: I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Yagara and Turrbal people, and offer my respect to elders past, present and emerging. It is an honour to serve as Queensland Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services in the Miles Labor government. I am so proud to be part of a government that is driving down the cost of living for Queenslanders.

Next Monday, 5 August, will see the start of our 50-cent fares for a six-month trial period. Everyone I talk to is very excited about it. On top of this, all Queensland vehicle owners will see a 20 per cent reduction in their rego over the next 12 months. Additionally, we have secured a better deal for Queenslanders on Airtrain including a better deal for the 20,000-plus workers who work at the airport precinct.

In the digital space, my priority as Minister for Digital Services is ensuring regional connectivity. I was particularly proud to recently visit the Cherbourg digital centre, opened in March 2022, as a partnership with the Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council with support from TAFE Queensland to deliver digital services to its foundation client, Fujitsu Australia. The centre now employs 18 First Nations community members from the local area. The Miles government is also investing \$200 million between 2023 and 2026 to implement actions from the action plan including into improving regional connectivity, further cementing our status as a digital leader.

In terms of road safety, every life lost and serious injury on our roads has a tragic impact on individuals, families and communities across our state. The Miles government is investing almost \$1.9 billion in infrastructure improvements through our Targeted Road Safety Program. On top of this we have more than \$474 million in Camera Detected Offence Program revenue which is invested straight back into road safety.

In terms of infrastructure, our \$37.4 billion transport big build is setting up Queensland for the future. Right across Queensland we are investing in transformational road, rail, public and active transport projects. In my first week as minister I made it clear that I would be up-front and transparent with Queenslanders about any changes to the cost and delivery of our Big Build projects. I released the latest update on 7 June 2024 on significant projects over \$50 million where there was a cost escalation. Earlier this year I tasked TMR's director-general with undertaking work to improve TMR's delivery of major infrastructure projects and better manage projects on behalf of taxpayers. This review, led by Rodd Staples, an acknowledged leading Australian infrastructure expert, found that a range of external factors are influencing transport infrastructure delivery in Queensland. These include: market-wide cost escalation, capacity constraints and population growth, global supply chain impacts caused by geopolitical unrest and exposure to extreme weather events in Queensland, in addition to the Commonwealth government's review of its funding arrangements.

The highest priority recommendations of this review were that: TMR implement a deep dive review of sample capital projects to understand how costs are developed and monitored over the development cycle; update the business case guidelines to ensure that the requirements are fit for purpose to manage project implementation risk; conduct a strategic review of commercial models and client-side capability to provide clearer direction across TMR; and introduce changes to the assurance process governance to increase risk management during procurement and delivery. I am advised that work has commenced on all of these recommendations.

In relation to Cross River Rail, just like many of our mega projects, this is about bringing our SEQ rail network into the 21st century. It builds capacity into the train network for decades to come so the tunnels will be able to handle up to 24 trains per hour at full demand. With stations in more convenient locations and journeys quicker door to door, Cross River Rail will literally transform rail travel across South-East Queensland. Our new high-capacity stations will also help move high volumes of passengers during the Olympic and Paralympic Games held in Brisbane.

With regard to the Bruce Highway, in June this year we released the 15-Year Vision and Action Plans for the highway and the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan. This is the work of the independent Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council, taking politics off the Bruce. The Miles government has \$6 billion on the Bruce Highway and from 2027 we will invest \$250 million per annum on the Bruce—an increase of \$50 million every year. There are major projects like the Rocky Ring Road, Goorganga Plains near Mackay and safety upgrades right up and down the Bruce.

We welcome the Australian government's support in delivering projects like the second M1 and also acknowledge that the challenge to deliver projects in this global inflationary environment has been exacerbated by the Australian government capping funding on road corridors and moving to a fifty-fifty funding arrangement for regional transport projects. I will continue to advocate every day for a return to the historical 80-20 funding arrangements.

Just this morning I was pleased to join the Premier and the member for McConnel to welcome back into service the last of the 75 NGR trains that we have rectified following the LNP's embarrassing debacle where they ordered noncompliant trains from overseas. The New Generation Rollingstock Train Commission of Inquiry described them as 'seriously flawed'. In relation to other rail infrastructure, the Sunshine Coast direct rail line is the single largest investment ever made into public transport on the Sunshine Coast. While this work is underway on stage 1 to Caloundra, planning will continue for subsequent stages to ultimately deliver passenger rail to Maroochydore. The business case makes it clear that the entire line to Maroochydore cannot be built by 2032.

Mr WEIR: How are we going, Chair?

CHAIR: Nearly there.

Mr MELLISH: In relation to other projects, we are committed to building a new bridge over the Barron River. The LNP of course are still on the fence with this project, with the member for Chatsworth repeatedly saying that the LNP will only repair the bridge.

In conclusion, we have transformational projects like Cross River Rail, we have Australian first initiatives like 50-cent fares, we have many hundreds of upgrades we have completed on the Bruce Highway, we have smart ticketing and we have the Bruce Highway Advisory Trust Council's 15-year vision and plans. We are delivering the transport and roads and digital services that a booming state needs. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. The first question will be from the member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Chair, and good afternoon, Minister. Minister, what is Project Craft?

Mr MELLISH: Sorry, but can you repeat the question?

Mr MINNIKIN: What is Project Craft?

Mr MELLISH: I would have to come back to you on that. I have never heard of Project Craft.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you. Chair, I call the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, Mr Newton, to the table.

CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Newton.

Mr MINNIKIN: Good afternoon, Mr Newton. Mr Newton, whistleblowers have informed the opposition that Project Craft involves renegotiations of key project milestone dates with the tunnel builders. Can you please confirm this?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. Project Craft is an internal name given to a piece of work that we were doing in dialogue with the contractors. It was an internal title. There is nothing special about that.

Mr MINNIKIN: So nothing special, but it did involve renegotiation of key project milestones; is that correct?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. You would have to be more specific about which milestones you are talking about.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will come to that. Mr Newton, can you confirm that the provisional acceptance date for the project that was originally 2 April 2024 is now 30 October 2025 and the final acceptance date that was originally 30 June 2025 is now 15 December 2026?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The elements of the contract you are referring to are commercial-in-confidence and it would be inappropriate to disclose that detail.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, when was Minister Mellish first briefed by you on these changes to the provisional acceptance and final acceptance dates for the project?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. Given my previous answer, the details of those are commercial-in-confidence. However, in relation to briefing the minister, I brief the minister on a regular basis—on a monthly basis—and I meet with the minister weekly.

Mr MINNIKIN: The project plan from earlier this year showed that the full system testing would commence once the project reaches final acceptance. Mr Newton, is this still the case?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. Could you please repeat the question? I am trying to understand the context of it.

Mr MINNIKIN: I certainly will. My question, Mr Newton, is this: the project plan from earlier this year showed that full system testing would commence once the project reaches final acceptance. Is this still the case?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. Again, what you are referring to—those milestones—are part of commercial-in-confidence contractual arrangements.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, this system testing was due to run for nine months based on a December 2026 final acceptance date. That would make the opening date approximately September 2027, would it not?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. I think that is speculation. I do not understand the context of the question.

Mr MINNIKIN: No, it is called the Gregorian calendar. Would you like me to repeat the question?

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I would like to end the day the way we started and ensure that we are respectful in the commentary that we use with our words.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I could just repeat the question. We are talking about a multibillion dollar project here—the single biggest project of this government, infrastructure wise. This system testing was due to run for nine months—not eight, not 10, nine months. Based on a December 2026 final acceptance date, that would make the opening date approximately September 2027, would it not?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The timeframes you are referring to there are out of context, so I would need to have a better understanding. What I can say is the system testing or the operationalisation of the rail system does require a whole range of different tests to be undertaken—trial runs, staff training, emergency procedures. Standard operating arrangements need to be put in place as well as final inspections, but really the arrangements that are being put in place are ones that are lessons learnt from overseas and from Sydney and Melbourne. We speak regularly to our colleagues down there, so the milestones and the amount of time allocated is consistent with those. What is probably relevant for the committee to hear is that in Sydney they are in the process of the very final throes of opening up Sydney Metro. It is an extension of an existing railway and that project is due to be open on 4 August. However, they only announced the opening date on the eighth, one month earlier.

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order: relevance. With respect, the project that Queenslanders are interested in is Cross River Rail.

CHAIR: Actually, member for Chatsworth, I believe Mr Newton has been quite responsive in drawing on reasonable comparative projects. I am keen to keep hearing your response, Mr Newton, so if you would please continue.

Mr Newton: Thank you, Chair. I guess the context is that these milestones are brought from insights from other projects. They are brought from experience that has come onto the project from other projects. Also, we monitor and we speak closely with those other projects. We get insights as to what is required in those phases and that informs the time that needs to be allocated to each one of those projects.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, how long have you been the CEO? How long have you held this position?

Mr Newton: I was appointed in 2017.

Mr MINNIKIN: There is absolutely no way that Cross River Rail will be open to the public in 2026, will it?

Mr Newton: On the program as we are working at the moment, the majority of the construction will be completed in 2025 with the plan for opening to passenger services in 2026. The precise date of the opening, as has been said several times publicly, will be known as we move closer to that date because of that experience from overseas. The world's best practice is one where you keep a span of time and as you move closer and the detail becomes more available then you hone in on a specific date.

Mr MINNIKIN: Madam Chair, I will take a leaf from your book in relation to allowing Mr Newton to comment on a project in New South Wales. It was quite astounding that he seemed to know more about the Gantt chart sequencing and project dates of that project. Again, the Queensland public need to know when Cross River Rail will be opened and they will be able to catch a train, not in Sydney—

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, you have put your question and I believe that Mr Newton has already answered it in response to the former question. Mr Newton, would you like to remind the member for Chatsworth again what you have just advised in your previous answer? That would be terrific.

Mr Newton: The majority of construction on Cross River Rail is expected to be complete within 2025 and first passenger services are expected to commence in 2026 once sufficient time has been allowed for safety testing, commissioning, familiarisation and integration with existing public transport services. The precise month of commencing passenger services will be determined closer to the opening date.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the minister. Minister, do you agree that Queenslanders should know when the project is expected to open, accurately?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I have answered this question many times in many forums. I am happy to answer it again. As I spoke about this morning, specifically on a question on notice I got in March 2024, the answer has not changed from that. It is that the majority of construction on Cross River Rail is expected to be complete within 2025 and first passenger services are expected to commence in 2026 once sufficient time has been allowed for safety testing, commissioning, familiarisation and integration with existing public transport services. I am advised that the precise month of commencing passenger services will be determined closer to the opening date.

I would also add, Chair, there is an article this afternoon that I have read about the opening date for Sydney's new metro line, which the CEO mentioned before. Even four days out from Sunday, when it was due to open, they have had to push their opening date back from that given that there are approvals in these large rail processes that are outside of the control of delivery authorities. That specifically related to national rail safety regulators, in relation to their dates. They are four days out and they are pushing the date of the opening in terms of that. In terms of asking for a specific hour or minute of the day for a project that is two years away—a project that would have been opened by now if the LNP had not cut this project and had the LNP not—

Mr HEAD: It would be open without the CFMEU blockading sites.

CHAIR: Member for Callide, let us not go down that path again.

Mr MELLISH: Had the LNP not rejected money from the federal government for this project, I could have caught the Cross River Rail here today. I would have been here in 30 minutes from my home on the north side of Brisbane were it not for the LNP's three wasted years on Cross River Rail. Let us be very clear about that when we are talking about the timeframes for what is a fantastic project, a well supported project and a project that will benefit millions of people in Queensland.

Mr MINNIKIN: Let us talk times, then.

CHAIR: We have been, but please proceed.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, the government that you serve in has been in power for just under 10 years. In relation to Cross River Rail being open to passengers, can we at least try to have a best estimate of the quarter—quarter 1, 2 or 3 or 4—in 2026 or after nine months of testing more likely 2029?

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I suggest that your line of questioning has got extraordinarily repetitious. I suggest that you have had a reasonable answer—

Mr HEAD: Queenslanders just want answers.

CHAIR: Member for Callide, we do not need you chiming in either. Member for Chatsworth, would you like to put a new line of questioning, given that you have been responded to in the last five questions on this matter?

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question to the director-general. Director-General, I believe you are on the board of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. Will you confirm when you knew about any delays in relation to the actual opening of the Cross River Rail project and when you may have told the minister?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. The member is correct: I am on the board of Cross River Rail. In fact, I am the chair of the board. The board meets every two months formally and every month for an update briefing. During the course of the year, the CEO gives updates to the board on project progress on commercial matters. Those updates have given us understandings of the risks being managed by the project.

It is an extremely complex program of work, as I am sure you can understand, with digital signalling being rolled out for the first time in the South-East Queensland network, tunnelling work occurring, brownfield rail connections occurring, fitment of ECTS level 2 trains ready for operation in the tunnel—so a very complex program of work with multiple commercial packages. We routinely receive updates on the progress of each of those packages of work. My updates to the minister are about the sponsor requirements—are we achieving the sponsor requirements—which is the end result that we are looking for with the tunnel. Reporting from the delivery authority to the minister is as the CEO has outlined in his monthly updates.

Mr MINNIKIN: Ms Stannard, can you confirm that Mike Kaiser, the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, is also a director?

Ms Stannard: That is correct: the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Mike Kaiser, is a member of the board.

Mr MINNIKIN: Is it your understanding that Mr Kaiser would have briefed the Premier in relation to any delays to the project?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. The CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority provides updates to the board through an appropriate mechanism that provides those updates to us. For example, when there is industrial relations impacts or changes to commercial matters those are distributed to board members so we do receive that information. I could not tell you what updates the director-general of DPC gives to the Premier.

CHAIR: That is a question better placed to sessions last week.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the minister. Minister, can you advise when you first spoke to the Premier about delays to the opening of the Cross River Rail project—when you advised or spoke to the Premier?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I reject the premise of the question in terms of what you have put to me there. That is not a conversation that I have had.

Mr MINNIKIN: Just to be crystal clear: you have not spoken with the Premier at all or sent a text or SMS about the likelihood of the Cross River Rail project not opening on time?

Mr MELLISH: The director-general has run through, in pretty great detail, what the reporting structures are in that regard. I do not have anything further to add. We have been over the timeframes. We have been over the scheduled discussion of the project. I do not have anything further to add in that regard.

Mr MINNIKIN: That was not my question but I will move on. Minister, just to confirm, the Premier said at estimates last week that the opening was still scheduled for early 2026. Based on what is available today, how could he have not known about the delays?

Mr MELLISH: I would ask you to verify those comments that you have stated just now that the Premier has made.

Mr MINNIKIN: He said it in estimates last week that it was going to open in early 2026.

Mr MELLISH: I would be happy to see a transcript of the Premier saying those comments.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, was the strategy to ensure that the minister and Premier had plausible deniability if they were asked about delays to the project? What is going on here, seriously?

CHAIR: Minister, I will give you some latitude in how you would like to respond to that.

Mr MELLISH: I feel like I have answered this question at length, as has the director-general and the CEO.

Mr HEAD: Responded, not answered.

CHAIR: Member for Callide, I really do not want to go back to the warning system, so do not continue with that sort of behaviour.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, in relation to any undisclosed delays to Cross River Rail, when you were going to tell Queenslanders a different opinion to the Premier—that it is not going to open in early 2026?

CHAIR: Minister, I will provide you with some latitude. I believe this question may have been responded to on a multitude of occasions within the last 16 minutes. Feel free to answer how you would like to.

Mr WATTS: Responded, not answered.

Mr HEAD: They have to answer questions, not just respond.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. As I have stated before, the majority of construction on Cross River Rail is expected to be complete within 2025 and first passenger services are expected to commence in 2026 once sufficient time has been allowed for safety testing, commissioning, familiarisation and integration with existing public transport services.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Newton, can you advise how many lost days there have been on site due to industrial action in the 2023-24 financial year and what these delays would have cost taxpayers?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The time period that I have in front of me is since April this year. Could you please repeat the time window you were referring to?

Mr MINNIKIN: I am talking in relation to the 2023-24 financial year.

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The days in which there has been notifiable protected industrial action relates to 21 days.

Mr MINNIKIN: If I just go back to—I will help the minister out here. In relation to the *Hansard*—

CHAIR: You do not need to help the minister out. You just need to put the question.

Mr MINNIKIN: He asked for help, so I am happy to help him do his job here. This was an extract from *Hansard* from last week. There was question from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Crisafulli. He was talking about the opening of the Cross River Rail project. He asked: 'The commitment was for early 2026. Does this remain the case?' The Premier, Mr Miles, responded: 'I do not have any advice suggesting that that date has been revised.' Minister, would you care to comment on that?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. That is not phrased as you put it to me in your earlier question. My response stands regarding timeframes of the project.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, your diary shows that you met with the CFMEU on 31 January 2024. Can the minister advise if the storming of the TMR building or the impacts of industrial action on government projects was discussed?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am happy to advise that I did meet with members of the CFMEU on 31 January, as the member mentions, and also on 6 June 2024. In terms of details of meetings, it is not for me to canvass the ins and outs and every single thing that was canvassed in relation to these meetings, but I am very happy to say that these are publicly out there. These are in the diary. These are the meetings that have occurred and they are on the public record.

Of course I do condemn any intimidation and violence and note that, in relation to Cross River Rail in particular, contractors are required to inform police where appropriate. I understand that contractors can also seek court injunctions which need to be abided by, and all sides must respect the law. In terms of that, I would say that I support that more broadly as well. It is not for me to go into line by line the ins and outs of what has been discussed at each and every meeting.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, when will the government actually stand up to the CFMEU and get this project on track? Seriously, get it on track.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am strongly encouraging all parties, and specifically contractors and relevant unions, to sit down and negotiate out the current issues on Cross River Rail, I suppose, whether it is protected action or other action on the site. The CEO may have a bit more to add in terms of recent progress in that regard. I am still always encouraging the contractor and the relevant unions, as the relevant parties in this under federal industrial legislation, to sort out this project. Queenslanders want to see it delivered. They want to see it delivered in a timely manner, as do I.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, whose side are you on—Queenslanders or the CFMEU? Whose side are you on?

CHAIR: You may have some latitude in how you respond to that, Minister.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am happy to give him a serious answer to a silly question. In my role as transport and main roads minister, of course I meet with a range of contractors. I meet with a range of unions. Of course, in relation to recent media stories in regard to the CFMEU in general, I will not be meeting with them for the foreseeable future while those issues are being investigated primarily at a federal level but also related to Queensland.

My focus as Minister for Transport and Main Roads is to see the delivery of all our projects in a timely manner so that Queenslanders can benefit from them. Cross River Rail is a transformational project. I am looking forward to, as are many Queenslanders, seeing this project completed and seeing what it can do to our rail network in Brisbane, our rail network in South-East Queensland and our broader public transport network.

In terms of bringing it down to a binary whose side are we on, as Minister for Transport, I am keen to see these projects delivered. I am keen to see workers paid a good wage on these jobs. I am keen to see these projects deliver real outcomes for Queenslanders.

Of course this project would not be delivering any outcomes, there would be not be any industrial action on this site, because there would not be a site if the LNP were in power, because the LNP did not want to build this project. They actually scrapped this project. They rejected federal money for this project. We would not be having any of these discussions if it were the LNP in power in Queensland.

CHAIR: With reference to Budget Paper 4, Budget Measures, will the minister outline how the Miles Labor government is delivering cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders?

Mr MELLISH: I thank you for the question on cost-of-living matters. I was really pleased as transport minister in a Miles Labor government to be able to join with the Premier and the Deputy Premier to announce 50-cent fares for every trip taken on a Translink contracted service from 5 August. I think I commented on the day as transport minister that this is like winning a Champions League final and an Origin all in one day. I want everyone to be able to access public transport easily and affordably, and this initiative will go a long way in achieving that.

We will be looking very closely at the results of the trial to determine if it meets our goals of providing critical cost-of-living relief. Those goals also extend to reducing road congestion and encouraging more people back on to our trains, trams, buses and ferries. More importantly, this initiative means more money back in the pockets of Queensland families. We know that they are feeling the pinch.

I was also very pleased to join with the Deputy Premier and Premier to announce a 20 per cent reduction in rego fees for 12 months—a cost-of-living measure that we anticipate will benefit around 5.7 million car owners across the state. This builds on our previously announced freeze on rego increases set to come into effect very soon. For a family with a four-cylinder car, the reduction will mean an \$85 saving on their rego fee—money that can be spent on groceries, the mortgage, rent or put into savings.

Not only does our rego reduction benefit millions of Queensland drivers, but it will also put more money back in the till of more than 480,000 small businesses across the state. The rego reduction will apply to the rego fee and the traffic improvement fee for all light vehicles regardless of purpose of use. The fee will also apply to trailers utilised by mobile small businesses across the state.

We know that vehicle expenses can have a big impact on the bottom line for Queensland's hardworking small and family businesses, especially those who need to run a fleet. From a tradie's journey to the job site, to the school drop-off and to students getting to uni, our cost-of-living relief will deliver savings everyone can see. I am proud to be part of a government that is listening to Queenslanders to help deliver the relief they need to make ends meet.

I was very pleased to join the Deputy Premier in June to announce half price Airtrain for six months. This initiative will benefit tens of thousands of travellers as well as 20,000 people who work at the Brisbane Airport. For too long Queenslanders have been short-changed on Airtrain fees by a dud deal struck by the former LNP government. This government has a plan for transporting Queensland, and only a Labor government can deliver the infrastructure and cost-of-living relief that matters to Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, for the 50-cent ferry fares. It will make a very big difference to the members of my community. With regard to the Big Build outlined in Budget Paper 3, can the minister advise what significant investment the new Miles government is making to road and transport projects across Queensland and what this investment means for jobs and economic activity, and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the chair for the question. We know that Queensland is an incredibly diverse state. From the cape all the way down to the coast, our transport network relies on a well-resourced Queensland Transport Investment Program to build the infrastructure needed for our growing state. Each year, alongside the state budget the government publishes our transport and main roads projects over the next four years. I am pleased to report to the committee that this year's QTRIP is our ninth

record investment, with \$37.4 billion over the next four years being spent on priority transport and main roads infrastructure. This will help create a better connected Queensland and will support over 28,000 direct jobs right across Queensland. There is over \$21 billion allocated to be spent outside the Department of Transport and Main Roads' metropolitan region.

We have the biggest road network of any state in Australia. This is why we have made the biggest ever road and transport investment in our history. Transport investments include the continued delivery of major projects such as the Coomera Connector stage 1 and the one billion dollar Gateway Motorway Bracken Ridge to Pine River upgrade. In QTRIP there is also substantial ongoing investment to fund major upgrades to the M1 Pacific Motorway as well as almost \$1.9 billion for road safety infrastructure, which is funded by the Camera Detected Offence Program.

Our rail revolution is full steam ahead, with billions of dollars in this year's QTRIP committed to the rail network through significant investments in the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line, the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project and Beerburrum to Nambour.

Our regional communities are big winners too, with construction underway on the \$1.73 billion Rockhampton Ring Road, the over one billion dollar Gympie bypass, which will open later this year, as well as \$96 million for the Townsville Connection Road, University Road to Bowen Bridge Road, which I know the member for Mundingburra is a big fan of. We have also invested \$76 million in 2024-25 for the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, which reinforces our commitment to work with local governments on local roads and transport networks in regional areas.

With regard to the Coomera Connector, this is a great example of our Big Build commitment. Stage 1 is game changing for the Gold Coast and its commuters. It is expected to take 60,000 cars a day off the M1 once it progressively opens. It will support more than 1,000 good jobs. In addition to the Coomera Connector, our government—in partnership with the federal government—is building a better M1. A quick trip down the M1 makes it clear the projects the Miles government is delivering, including the jointly funded \$750 million Eight Mile Plains to Daisy Hill upgrade and the \$1.5 billion Varsity Lakes to Tugun upgrade. These projects are adding capacity via additional motorway lanes and upgraded interchanges to improve access to and from the M1. The Eight Mile Plains to Daisy Hill upgrade also includes an extension of the busway to Springwood Road and a dedicated V1 veloway.

The Miles government has a plan for transport in Queensland, and only a Labor government will deliver the transport infrastructure and cost-of-living relief that matters to Queenslanders. The same cannot be said for the LNP. The member for Chatsworth, who was a former assistant minister for transport in the Newman government, was part of a government that cut \$1.6 billion from the roads and transport budget in the first QTRIP they delivered. We know, and Queenslanders know, that they would do it again. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Chatsworth need to be up-front with Queenslanders and tell them which projects they plan to cut and which projects they plan to prune.

Ms PEASE: Minister, with reference to page 13 of the Transport and Main Roads Service Delivery Statements, can you outline how the new Miles government is investing billions of dollars in rail projects and are you aware of any alternative projects?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. Right now Queenslanders are aiming for gold in Paris, but back home here in the Sunshine State we are already entering our golden age. Eight years out from our own Olympic and Paralympic debut the Miles Labor government is investing a record \$37.4 billion for transport over the next four years. Over \$14 billion of that alone is in rail transport, and that is not even counting Cross River Rail. Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail will create much needed capacity on the line south for some of our fastest growing suburbs and help reduce congestion on our roads, duplicating some 20 kilometres of track between and Kuraby and Beenleigh and delivering nine completely rebuilt stations. The project will also remove five level crossings at Kuraby, Woodridge, Bethania, Holmview and Beenleigh, making a faster commute by rail and road. A new continuous active travel path connecting to stations along the 20-kilometre route will also encourage Queenslanders to bike or scoot instead of taking the car. The project is out to tender, with contracts to be awarded later this year.

Then there is the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line, which will connect tens of thousands of Queenslanders to the rail network for the first time ever, including Aura and Caloundra stations for stage 1. Trains will be able to travel up to 160 kilometres an hour, creating one of the fastest rail lines in the state. This will make a peak hour trip between Caloundra and Brisbane at least 45 minutes faster than the car during peak periods. Direct Sunshine Coast rail will not just transport people; it will transform the local economy, encouraging commuters, tourists and day-trippers alike to use public

transport for regional journeys. While the project team sounds out the market to continue the line to Birtinya, preparations are underway for geotechnical investigations and environmental surveys have begun. By 2026 construction will be well underway.

On top of that, this Labor government has invested or committed over \$1.5 billion to transform more than 80 stations since 2015, including improvements, partial upgrades and full rebuilds. Six Queensland Rail stations are currently upgraded through the Station Accessibility Upgrade Program. This is the largest number of stations that Queensland Rail has upgraded at the same time. These include: Lindum, which the member for Lytton would be well aware of and I have visited with the member; Morningside; Banyo; Buranda; Bundamba; and Burpengary. These upgrades will deliver a mix of new lifts, accessible foot bridges and full-length raised platforms to improve accessibility for all passengers, from those in wheelchairs to parents with prams. These stations will re-open to the public in the coming months, whilst Buranda will open in 2025. Another 12 stations have been upgraded under the same program since 2015. These include: Alderley, Newmarket, Graceville, Nambour, Dinmore, Morayfield, Boondall, Strathpine, East Ipswich, Dakabin, Cannon Hill and Auchenflower. Cross River Rail is delivering another 15 new or upgraded stations, including three brand new stations on the Gold Coast at Pimpama, Merrimac and Hope Island.

If it were up to the opposition they would cut the Station Accessibility Upgrade Program and send the rail system backwards. We all know what the LNP thinks of the program. Instead of being a champion for creating accessible stations, the shadow minister for transport, the member for Chatsworth, said this money 'has been flushed down the proverbial toilet' when it came to station upgrades. This is a slap in the face to the one in five Queenslanders who live with a disability—the same attitude the LNP showed towards Queenslanders when they ordered trains that were not disability compliant.

For the new Miles Labor government, upgrading stations is all about creating a more modern, safer and accessible rail system. We are not doing it just for the Olympics; we are doing it for Queensland and its citizens to provide a golden legacy for generations to come before and long after the last medal is awarded in 2032.

Mr BERKMAN: I wanted to start with some questions in relation to the new smart ticketing system. I understand the government has allocated an additional \$22.8 million on top of the initial \$371 million for Cubic, the private contractor to roll that out, noting again that the ongoing annual cost remains a secret. Director-General, when this smart ticketing system is finally delivered will it have the capability to handle 50-cent flat rate fares, including in circumstances where there is a failure to tap off?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the question. We are in the process of delivering smart ticketing, and the member will know we have fully rolled out on the rail network for the use of EMV cards that customers already have in their wallet, similarly on ferries and the Gold Coast Light Rail. Smart ticketing is also working to deliver new digital channels that will enable customers to self-serve and will be very helpful for them.

The flat fares that we are seeing trialled from 5 August can be implemented in that system. There are fare tables behind the system and we have done an upgrade to that fare table in readiness for the 50-cent fares so a customer on the rail network who would use their EMV would be charged 50 cents. In the process of preparing for the implementation, we have also changed the penalty that occurs if a customer fails to tap off. That is important; we need customers to tap off so that we get that good data about where customers are travelling from and to. We have lowered that fee. If customers make a mistake—and we understand that can happen—they are able to contact our call centre and we can reset. We call that the default fare. We have lowered that for the period of the 50-cent fares.

Mr BERKMAN: What has it been lowered to? What is the default fare now?

Ms Stannard: I am going to make sure I have got this right but I believe it has been lowered to \$2.50. If customers tap off, they will be charged 50 cents. If they fail to tap off, there would be a \$2.50 charge. That is the lowest default fare we had on the network prior to the implementation of the 50-cent fare so we thought it was fair to lower everyone to that point.

Mr BERKMAN: Again, in relation to the finally delivered smart ticketing system, will it have the capability to offer concessional fares as well with contactless payment and also, for example, for customers to access their trip history and tax invoices?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. Yes, the fully rolled out system will certainly do that. Part of the plan is to enable concessions. What happens in smart ticketing is an account-based system is provided. Instead of the card containing smart information, which we have at

the moment—the go card has information on the card—in the future with smart ticketing the information is held in the computer system, in the cloud, in the back office. It would know me as an adult fare paying customer and it would know a concession entitled passenger as a concession customer. Their EMV card, their credit card, their debit card or a token—the new Translink token, the card—would be associated with their account and every time it was presented to the system the system would know that is a concession and charge them accordingly. That is in the fully rolled out solution.

As you can imagine, we are concentrating at the moment on getting EMV onto the bus network. That is the next stage of the rollout. At each stage of this rollout, you would have heard us talk about customer trials. This is new for customers to be bringing their bank card and touching the network, trusting us with that information. We take that very seriously. Each time we roll out new functionality, we make sure that works well on that rollout. That is why you are seeing us test and trial as we go forward.

Mr BERKMAN: There is an allocation of \$510,000 in this budget for marketing and advertising for the new system. I am curious to know how much of this money the government has already spent prior to this financial year on marketing the new ticketing system, and does any of that include Cubic branding?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the question. I cannot answer to the spend on the \$510,000 right at the moment. I will need to seek some advice about what has been spent.

Cubic's branding is not something we invest public money in specifically. There are some small logos that are on some of the equipment. You might have seen it on the base of the vending machine or the podium style tapping equipment that we use. It is just equipment labelling. We do not seek to promote Cubic as the vendor in our marketing spend.

We do focus a lot on how customers can use the system accurately so a lot of our marketing and communication is about what new technology has enabled, you can now tap with your smart watch, you can tap with your phone. Our communication has definitely focused on all of those multiple ways to pay to make sure customers understand how they will be charged based on their use of that system.

I can seek some advice from my team during the session about what we have spent. Can I just understand that the question was, of the \$510,000, how much has been spent?

Mr BERKMAN: That is right. How much has been spent prior to this financial year? What is left to be spent?

Ms Stannard: Okay, thank you.

Mr BERKMAN: I will move onto another issue but still sticking with questions to Ms Stannard. In relation to the plan we have heard from Labor and the LNP for a new toll tunnel on the north side, has the department held discussions with Transurban—notably a Labor and LNP donor—about privatising the toll tunnel once it has been constructed with public funds?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. I believe you are referring to the Gympie north tunnel.

Mr BERKMAN: Indeed, yes.

Ms Stannard: Under the delivery of that, Queensland Investment Corporation are undertaking those pre-construction activities. Transport and Main Roads have been allocated some funds to look at the surface of the road network. We are looking at detailed planning for public and active transport—what we could achieve on the surface if a tunnel was built under Gympie Road. The government has announced they are doing a detailed investment proposal and that proposal was developed by North Brisbane Infrastructure. They are a subsidiary of QIC.

We meet with Transurban on a regular operational basis. I have conversations with them about how they are managing the road network, what flows of traffic they are seeing, some of the technology they are using on the network, but we have not discussed with them anything to do with the bypass tunnel on the basis that it is being developed by QIC.

Mr BERKMAN: So these would have been questions for QIC in the Treasury session on that basis, I assume.

Ms Stannard: That is correct.

Mr BERKMAN: On this issue, I will put one question to the minister. I have seen claims on your social media that the new privatisation ready toll road would save motorists 30 minutes, which appears to me to be pulled from a *Courier-Mail* article from November last year. My understanding though is that that article accounts for time savings from the existing Airport Link tunnel in that 30-minute figure. Can you clarify where that number came from?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am happy to add to the director-general's answer to the question before as well. I can say that I have certainly had none of those discussions with Transurban in that regard either as minister or local member.

In terms of the time savings of the proposed project, I understand there are some consultation outcomes and initial study outcomes on the websites of I think either QIC or North Brisbane Infrastructure. I understand some of the time savings are outlined on the websites in terms of some initial work they have done and not related to Airport Link or other road infrastructure.

Mr BERKMAN: So your understanding is that that 30-minute time-saving figure does not include the existing Airport Link tunnel?

Mr MELLISH: Again, further to what the director-general said, the project is being led through QIC through the Treasurer's responsibility. My understanding is that the time figures that have been put out there publicly—whether that is each direction or a cumulative in and out—would not include Airport Link unless it clarified and said that it did.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks, I will move on. I want to spend a moment discussing the Airtrain, particularly in relation to the government's deal with Airtrain for the six-month trial of half-price fares from August that I know has been discussed already. Director-General, has the department modelled how many additional Airtrain trips this initiative is expected to generate over the six-month trial, and what are the targets or conditions that might need to be met at the end of the trial for another form of fare discounts or for those prices to be extended?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the question. Can I just confirm: you are interested in what are the thresholds for Airtrain as a successful model post the trial.

Mr BERKMAN: Yes. Sorry, it was a bit of a double-barrelled question. How many additional trips is it expected to generate, and what would be deemed a success to extend those discounted fares on Airtrain?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the question. Airtrain is a private company and obviously a number of the criteria that we have agreed with them are commercial-in-confidence so some things I cannot talk to. I think you are aware that ticket prices will reduce from \$21.90 to \$10.95 for a customer travelling on go card and \$11 for a customer travelling on a paper ticket. That is a 50 per cent reduction. A similar reduction has been applied to the Airtrain worker ticket.

We do estimates of these kinds of changes, but it is not the kind of thing we can model in detail. What you will find in the patronage on a line like that is a mix of customers, some of whom are very price sensitive. Backpackers coming to Queensland on a working holiday visa or that kind of travel might be more price sensitive than, say, someone travelling for work if their employer is paying for their travel. In that mix of customers there will be a wide variety of responses to a pricing change like that.

In terms of the success of the trial, we are focused on these initiatives first and foremost as a cost-of-living measure. The first benefit we are really targeting is that customers who are already on board save money, at a time when that is very important to us in terms of the range of customers who are on there, particularly those who might work at the terminals. There is not a lot of parking for workers there. It is a spot that is hard to travel to if you are not on public transport. If you are working there, you may not want to pay that level of parking. First and foremost, those customers will save money, and that is one of our key criteria.

It is a really a policy decision, then, that I would have to defer to the minister about—what would make a government choose to continue to offer that reduction. We definitely want to see more customers on public transport, but the sustainability of the pricing is really a policy matter for the government.

Mr BERKMAN: Without meaning to rehash the question, I take from your response that at this stage there is no set policy as to what might happen at the end of the trial in terms of success or otherwise?

Ms Stannard: We have flagged a number of criteria that we are monitoring: cost of living first and foremost; an increase in public transport usage secondly; and, thirdly, hopefully that will benefit everybody on the transport network, including on the road network, who might perceive some congestion reduction. All three criteria are very important to us and we will be monitoring those so that the government can make a decision about whether such a trial would continue.

Mr BERKMAN: Does the existing deal with Airtrain include a guaranteed minimum payment to Airtrain from the state government?

Ms Stannard: I might need to take some advice from my team. I am fairly sure that I cannot disclose the detail of the commercial agreement we have struck with Airtrain, just because it is a commercial agreement with a private sector entity. I do not have notes in front of me that would enable me to answer that at this time. I will take some advice and see if there is anything else we can advise.

Mr BERKMAN: I am happy to move on if that is difficult at the moment. I have one question about the Cycle Network Local Government Grants Program. I was very pleased over the weekend to see the announcement of three particularly significant projects to my electorate. Funding was announced for design. I am curious, though, about those three projects. Of all of the projects that Brisbane City Council has, I assume, applied for and had funding granted, the three projects in or very close to Maiwar, specifically in the Walter Taylor ward, do not include any contribution from the local government. Is that simply because BCC has not shown any interest in contributing funds? How has that circumstance come about?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. We have a strong commitment to investing in active transport. As the member would know, it is one of the most sustainable ways for people to travel. The investment this budget is \$315 million from the Queensland government to those standalone active transport initiatives and further through projects where we deliver them in a complementary way. There are a number of projects in the program, and the member is correct in that our usual approach, where we can, is to do that on a 50-50 basis with local government whereby we seek to share in the contribution of those costs. It is not always the case that we only do that. Where there are significant projects on the principal cycleway or that provide key connections, we may choose to provide 100 per cent of the cost. It certainly aids local governments in their submissions if they bring forward money to that program. Of course, we can then build more together because we have both funds for that program.

To the specific projects you are referring to, I cannot answer at this point why they would be 100 per cent funded as distinct from others, but I am happy to ask the team if there is any particular reason for that.

Mr BERKMAN: If there is more information, that would be great. Thank you.

CHAIR: Are you happy for that, Minister?

Mr MELLISH: I probably can add, to be helpful to the honourable member. I actually asked a very similar question to the department. The department will come back to you with the specifics, but I understand that it may be related to design rather than construction for those projects. The department might be able to clarify in a more sensible way.

Mr BERKMAN: If I could just be cheeky with one more very brief question—

CHAIR: No. You are already very over time, sorry.

Mr BERKMAN: I just did not hear Taringa in the list of station accessibility upgrades.

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth?

Mr MINNIKIN: Ms Stannard, you said that you a director on the board of the delivery authority. Is there any reasonable chance that the Cross River Rail project could open to the public in the first quarter of 2026?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. The stated position that you have heard tonight from a number of us is for an opening to passenger services in 2026. That is our target at this time.

Mr MINNIKIN: No-one is going to give me an answer. I will move on. Ms Stannard, I note that the TMR website shows that the Beams Road open level crossing project will be completed and open in late 2025 and the Coomera Connector stage 1 will be open progressively from late 2025. If there are no commercial-in-confidence reasons why these opening dates cannot be released, why can the Cross River Rail planned opening date not be?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Cross River Rail program is a very complex piece of work. It is different from the opening of a road project. The road program we are responsible for is very large and there are complexities in that program, as we have seen on Coomera Connector. When we open that infrastructure, we have built a piece of civil infrastructure, we have signed off that it is suitable and operations commence by people bringing their cars to that. In the Cross River Rail program, as you would know, the operator is an accredited rail operator under national rail safety law. One of the reasons the minister talked about Sydney Metro is that they are at the point of liaising with the National Rail Safety Regulator about the suitability to commence opening. What we

have learned from looking to international experience and local experience is that we should keep a window for that opening until we get much closer, because the National Rail Safety Regulator has to approve that at that time.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is a very broad window. Minister, I will quote from the Professor Peter Coaldrake's review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector, *Let the sunshine in*. Minister, are you familiar with one of the paragraphs, which I am happy to quote to you? The report states—

Nor are the community's perceptions of integrity assisted when governments invoke 'commercial-in-confidence' to shield taxpayer gaze from the costs and immediate consequences of major decisions. We see this in the underwriting by various governments of new hospitals, transport systems, correctional centres or quarantine facilities.

For the last time I will ask: are you able to give a direct response to when this project will open?

CHAIR: Minister, a number at the table have responded to this. I am quite surprised that the member for Chatsworth is not familiar with commercial-in-confidence processes.

Mr MINNIKIN: I certainly am.

CHAIR: Minister, I will allow you some latitude to respond.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I have not memorised the Coaldrake report, but I agree with what the member has characterised there and those principles. Of course, where things are commercial-in-confidence we should be saying so, but where they are not we should be being very open with the public about these things. With regard to the second half of your question, we have very thoroughly covered that in a series of earlier questions and I have nothing further to add in that regard.

Mr MINNIKIN: And told us nothing. I have a further question for Mr Newton from the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. Mr Newton, you would know more than anyone that time is money in construction. Last financial year the Cross River Rail property, plant and equipment expenditure was around a quarter of a billion dollars more than forecast. Are there further cost blowouts in Cross River Rail that have not been disclosed?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. It is very broad. I do not quite understand where you are coming from.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will make it a lot simpler. This time last year, things were tickety-boo. We have now found out that with that particular line item, Cross River Rail property, plant and equipment expenditure, there was a quarter of a billion dollar blowout. That is pretty specific. On that basis, Mr Newton, are there any further cost blowouts on Cross River Rail that have not been disclosed to the best of your knowledge?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. Could you give me a reference to, as you are referring to, the quarter of a billion dollars?

Mr MINNIKIN: I will happily do that. I will come back to you on that.

CHAIR: You do not have that now, member for Chatsworth?

Mr MINNIKIN: I will come back to that, Madam Chair, but in the interests of time, I will keep moving. Mr Newton, I know that the forecast expenditure can be impacted on by factors such as weather, but how can you be off by a quarter of a billion dollars with estimations?

CHAIR: Mr Newton, I would reserve response to that question until such time as that \$250,000 can be identified to you. Next question, member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: I correct the record. I said 'quarter of a billion'. It is a quarter of a million dollars, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Newton: That is why I did not—

CHAIR: I did see you go a little bit grey there, Mr Newton.

Mr MINNIKIN: Given the fact that there have been a series of questions asked over several years during this estimates process to Mr Newton that things appear to be okay, but then we find out that with each subsequent year things are not on time and not on budget, it was that line of questioning, Madam Chair. Mr Newton, media reports from 2020 spoke of a massive land bridge that would be constructed as part of the Cross River Rail project from the Woolloongabba station across to the Gabba. Mr Newton, can you confirm whether this is still part of the project, this massive land bridge?

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. That never was part of the project. It was part of a precinct strategy that was outlined at the time and published at the time. It was a concept which was predated to the Olympic Games announcement and it was a concept which was looking to link the station to the stadium. However, it was part of the precinct strategy, so was not part of the actual Cross River Rail Project.

Mr MINNIKIN: If I can ask a series of questions, please, to the Queensland Rail CEO.

CHAIR: Welcome, Ms Stapleton.

Mr MINNIKIN: Welcome to estimates, Ms Stapleton. The existing EMU, Electric Multiple Unit, trains built between 1979 and 1986 were to be retired from 2025 to coincide with the new trains coming online. Could you please advise if the retirement of these trains will be delayed or will there be fewer trains in the Queensland Rail fleet between 2025 and 2027?

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question. The EMUs are part of the Queensland Rail fleet. We currently have 21 three-car sets, and it is Queensland Rail's intention to overhaul 12 of them and ensure they continue in operations.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, in relation to the SDS, page 59, key deliverables, I have some questions about the European Train Control System project. I want to go back to the business case and compare that to what we have now. Firstly, to the extent of the network covered, the proposed scope, according to the business case, was for the surface network between Northgate station and Milton station plus the entirety of the Shorncliffe line, which is defined as the pilot line. Excluding this station from Cross River Rail to Moorooka, which is a recent \$554 million extension to the project's scope, could you please confirm that all of these network sectors will in fact have ETCS on completion of the project?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am happy to correct the member at first in terms of the premise of his question. ETCS is not a specific project; it is a program of works. This is more than one project and this is about bringing digital train signalling to the South-East Queensland rail network progressively over the next decade and into the future. ETCS will increase network capacity by up to 20 per cent across the South-East, allowing more trains to run closer together more often. ETCS semi automates trains inside Cross River Rail tunnels, for example, helping speed up the pick-up and drop-off of passengers. It will also help reduce service disruptions through the digitisation of the network. For example, if there is a breakdown, the ETCS automatically calculates the best alternate route for impacted trains, eliminating or severely reducing delays.

ETCS is more than one specific project; it is a rolling program of works. It is like bundling up every road project in Queensland and saying that we are never going to be completed upgrading roads. ETCS will be going on for a number of years as we progressively roll it out and I am keen to continue the progressive rollout of this across various parts of the network. Of course, from time to time where that is going will change in terms of where the priorities are and where it is rolling out next, but the more it is rolled out on the network, the more trains we can run closer together, the more trains we can safely run, and the better it is for rail congestion, the better it is for road congestion in terms of boom gates at level crossings. We will never apologise for continuing to roll out European Train Control Systems right across the network.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, Channel 9 News has reported that the Exhibition station will not be ready for the Ekka this year due to the actions of the CFMEU. Is the CFMEU holding the Ekka hostage because this Labor government is refusing to hold this union to account?

CHAIR: Minister, I will give you some latitude in how you respond to that question.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am as frustrated as anyone that it looks like people will not be able to catch trains to the Ekka using the Ekka station which was going to open temporarily for the length of the Ekka, and this is due to a range of factors, including industrial delays on the Cross River Rail project over the last fortnight in particular. As has happened in previous years, there are nearby rail stations and there are shuttle buses that can run. I will pass to my director-general to outline a bit more how that will operate, but I am disappointed and I am frustrated that people will not be able to catch trains to the Ekka.

Ms Stannard: Thank you, Minister, for the suggestion to outline the alternate transport scheme. It is important that we have a backup plan. It is in fact the plan that we used last year when the station was under construction and customers were able to use a number of locations around the Exhibition grounds. Fortitude Valley station is a key access point where customers will be able to arrive by train

and access the Exhibition station. We provided a shuttle from there for people with mobility needs who needed transport closer to the facilities. In addition, the Herston busway station is also a short walk to the Exhibition grounds, so buses on the busway station will be key for access. We will talk more about that detail so that customers can plan ahead in the coming days as the confirmation comes through.

CHAIR: And I am sure they will be very pleased to be taking 50-cent fares to the Ekka.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, 11 of 15 possible work days have been lost in the second half of July alone. Minister, when will you take action against the thuggish behaviour of the CFMEU and put the interests of Queenslanders ahead of those Labor aligned to the CFMEU?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. As I indicated in my previous answer, I am frustrated that people will not be able to catch trains to the Ekka and that there will have to be alternate transport modes taken there. In regards to current negotiations, they are between the contractor and the relevant unions, which is only right. I will refer to the CEO of the delivery authority who may be able to go into a bit more detail about how progress is going on those negotiations as well.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Newton.

Mr Newton: Thank you, Chair. I just want to give a bit of background. The current enterprise bargaining agreements with Cross River Rail project were formulated in 2019 between the contractor and the AWU. They expired in October last year. There has been ongoing dialogue between the contractor and the various representative unions. The nature of the work on site has evolved quite a bit, therefore we are seeing a lot more subcontractors come on who are more service-based subcontractors.

In the rail corridor area, however, there are still a lot of civil contractors. That dialogue has been going on for some time and the contractor has proposed two new enterprise agreements and has continued to negotiate those. I am advised today that the contractor has started consultation with the workforce and is looking to put one of those draft agreements to the workforce for a vote in the coming weeks.

Mr MINNIKIN: A question to the minister. Minister, footage has emerged of the CFMEU violently preventing non-aligned non-CFMEU workers from entering the Cross River Rail sites. What action have you as the minister taken to ensure all workers who want to go to work can do so safely?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. As I have said before, this is a negotiation between the contractor and the relevant unions. This is under federal Fair Work legislation. Any illegal industrial action is a matter for the relevant federal authorities. If there is violence and intimidation on worksites that is a matter for the Queensland police and I strongly encourage people to contact Queensland police when specific issues arise.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, is it the case that the Labor government cannot control the CFMEU because it is the CFMEU that is actually controlling this government?

CHAIR: The question is out of line.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I completely reject the premise of the question.

Mr MINNIKIN: When was it known that the Ekka station would not be ready for the Ekka and that you would need to apologise to Ekka goers for the failure to deliver this station as promised?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I might defer to the CEO of the delivery authority for the specifics, but there is no doubt that this is an issue that has been building over the last few weeks.

Mr MINNIKIN: Few weeks!

Mr MELLISH: I have been kept up-to-date on this. I am answering the question, member. This is an issue that we have been getting advice on and the decision was made today. As for the date when we knew it would not be possible, I will refer to CEO for a few more details.

Mr Newton: I thank the member for the question. The work at the Ekka has been ongoing for some time. It was on schedule to be delivered for this year's Ekka prior to the disruptions. Translink, the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority and Queensland Rail have been working very closely on this. The project team, UNITY, supported by Queensland Rail's advice, has been working flat out to get this project done so that it would be ready for the Ekka. It is disappointing that it will not be available for the

Ekka. Today we had a meeting of a joint assurance group which was a prescheduled meeting because there is a meeting tomorrow for the rail configuration change panel. It was at that meeting that the decision or the recommendation, if you like, was made that the issues in relation to operating rail at that station would not be sufficiently progressed and, therefore, the recommendation to that group would be to not proceed and to revert to the support plan which was the alternative transport program.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the minister. What alternative arrangements will be put in place due to this government's inability to deliver the train services to the Ekka this year?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. The director-general answered this question in quite some detail before, but I am happy to address it again in terms of nearby stations, alternate bus transport and shuttle buses.

CHAIR: Did you want to add anything further, Director-General?

Mr MINNIKIN: So we will have enough buses—

CHAIR:—And they will be 50 cents. Director-General, did you have anything else you wanted to add?

Ms Stannard: Thank you, Chair. I thank the member. The alternative transport that we prepared as a backup—until we had the advice today—is to do a very similar service level to what we did last year when the station was under construction. We utilised Fortitude Valley station, which is quite proximate to the Ekka, with the train services that are regularly running through there. For customers with a mobility need we will provide a shuttle service from behind the rail station closer to the gates of the Ekka. We also utilised the Herston Busway station. It is a convenient walk away from traffic. For customers who want to walk or push a stroller we have some level areas there so that it is a bit easier for someone who might be bringing children to the Ekka to walk from the busway station at Herston through to the grounds. We will add extra shuttle services onto the busway which will ensure there is a good level of service for customers to access the great event.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the minister. In response to question on No. 292 from March this year the minister refused to disclose the Cross River Rail budget allocation for land acquisition, citing commercial-in-confidence, which is the excuse his predecessor used to use. Can the minister explain why the overall project budget for land acquisition—

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, you do not need to include that imputation within your question. It is disappointing that you are choosing to do so. Please put your question.

Mr MINNIKIN: Can the minister please explain why the overall project budget for land acquisition is commercial-in-confidence?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the minister for the question. I do not have the response to that question on notice in front of me. I receive more questions on notice than any other minister in the government so having those answers top of the mind is a ridiculous notion. In relation to land acquisition and compensation for Cross River Rail, like any large infrastructure project, land acquisitions are necessary to build Cross River Rail. Since 2017, the delivery authority has been working closely with property owners, tenants and businesses through the acquisition process. Compensation is paid to affected owners and tenants to reflect fair market value, as outlined in the Acquisition of Land Act 1967. I am further advised that the delivery authority has acquired all the surface land that is required for the project. It has been a significant consultative process to secure the tenure of these sites.

I am further advised that the delivery authority continues to work with impacted property owners, tenants and businesses to support them through this process. In regard to whether it is commercial-in-confidence or not, that would not be a question necessarily that I could answer without having the question on notice in front of me. Where there are matters that are commercial-in-confidence, I would advise there would be very good reasons for that not being able to be disclosed.

Ms PEASE: Page 8 of the Budget Paper 3 refers to the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, or QTRIP. QTRIP refers to a number of significant investments that will benefit Gold Coast commuters, including a significant investment in the Pacific Highway—the M1 upgrades and the Coomera Connector. Can the minister please outline how the new Miles government's investment will benefit the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. The Gold Coast, of course, is Queensland's second largest city and Australia's sixth largest city. The commuter corridor between the Gold Coast and Brisbane—Australia's third largest city—also includes the Logan local government area. These three local government areas combined continue to experience significant population growth. It is essential that our transport infrastructure investments keep up with this growth.

Road investment is critical in keeping up with the Gold Coast population growth, in particular. That is why in 2020 the Miles government committed to building a better M1. You only have to drive along the M1 to see the projects that we are delivering. This includes work being well underway for the \$1.5 billion Varsity Lakes to Tugun upgrade. The road is widening to three lanes in both directions, all entry and exit ramps are being extended and improvements are being made to the Burleigh, Tallebudgera and Palm Beach interchanges. The \$750 million Eight Mile Plains to Daisy Hill upgrade will add additional capacity on the motorway for motorists who are travelling to and from the Gold Coast. The upgrade also includes an extension of the busway to Springwood and the dedicated Veloway 1. It will also provide a new park-and-ride facility for the Logan community.

We completed the \$82 million exit 41 Yatala South interchange upgrade last year and the exit 49 Pimpama interchange upgrade is in full swing. Improving safety and reliability for the community of Pimpama, the \$140 million exit 49 upgrade is expected to be completed in late 2024.

Additionally, the Miles government, in partnership with the Australian government, is contributing \$1 billion towards the Daisy Hill to Logan Motorway upgrade. This is a significant upgrade. This project will be staged following Infrastructure Australia feedback, and this planning work is ongoing. The Queensland government has also undertaken planning to upgrade exit 38, the Yatala North interchange. Funding has also been allocated to plan for a future upgrade to exit 45, the Ormeau interchange.

In addition to upgrades of the M1 itself, the Miles government is delivering the \$3 billion Coomera Connector stage 1 between Coomera and Nerang. This project is the single largest road project in Queensland's history, supporting over a thousand jobs. Once completed, the Coomera Connector will take 60,000 cars a day off the M1. By constructing additional crossings of the Coomera and Nerang rivers, stage 1 will provide an alternate route for local residents in this fast-growing Northern Gold Coast area. We look forward to seeing the Coomera Connector progressively open from late 2025.

These projects are only a reality under a Miles Labor government because, I am happy to remind the committee, not a single dollar was spent on the M1 by the LNP. The Newman-Crisafulli LNP government also cut the Coomera Connector from strategic planning documents. They did not even preserve a corridor. We know their record speaks for itself. They also cut \$1.6 billion from the road and transport budget, they sacked 700 road-building RoadTek workers and they sacked more than—

Mr HEAD: This government cut the Gin Gin driver reviver.

CHAIR: Member for Callide.

Mr MELLISH:—20 per cent of TMR staff.

Mr HEAD: They sacked the Gin Gin driver reviver volunteers.

CHAIR: Member for Callide.

Mr MELLISH: The LNP need to come clean with Queenslanders about what projects they will cut, what workers will be sacked, what critical upgrades they will prune, because the Miles government has a plan for the M1 and we are getting on with it.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 7 of Budget Paper 3, can the minister please outline how Cross River Rail will benefit from the introduction of the European Train Control System and what impact ETCS will have on the broader South-East Queensland rail network and passengers?

Mr MELLISH: Cross River Rail is not just creating a second river crossing; it is connecting parts of South-East Queensland to the rail network for the first time ever—from Albert Street in the CBD to Woolloongabba, to Hope Island, Pimpama and Merrimac on the Gold Coast. The megaproject is also delivering 15 new and upgraded stations, adding to our state's rail revolution. The \$6.3 billion project is often criticised for the sake of political pointscore from the opposition but is little understood or appreciated. This project will create a three-sector network essentially, ultimately unleashing untold capacity in the rail network more broadly. The European Train Control System is the key to unlocking that, increasing service capacity by up to 20 per cent on the South-East Queensland rail network.

Installed inside the Cross River Rail tunnels and currently being tested on the Shorncliffe line, it uses cutting-edge technology to constantly relay the position of trains on the network back to the control centre. The system then calculates the optimum speed each train can travel at, allowing Queensland Rail to run more trains closer together more often. ETCS is essential to delivering capacity and efficiency, allowing up to 24 trains per hour through Cross River Rail by semi-automating trains while they are inside the tunnels, delivering passengers from Roma Street to Albert Street to the Gabba in less than four minutes. The new underground stations are expected to handle tens of thousands of passengers every day including the first station in the Brisbane CBD in more than a century, Albert Street. The station will be easy walking distance to key locations like Queen Street Mall or the soon-to-be-opened Queen's Wharf or even Queensland parliament. For example, it currently takes a commuter up to 13 minutes to walk from Roma Street station to Queens Street Mall. From Albert Street station it will take just three minutes. That is 20 minutes a day on their daily commute Queenslanders can get back.

Just think, if the opposition did not give back \$715 million to the federal government and can the project, Cross River Rail would be open today. ETCS will also help reduce service disruptions through the real-time digitisation of the network. For example, if there is a breakdown, ETCS calculates and suggests the best alternate route, eliminating or severely reducing delays. There is also \$544 million in additional funding in the forward estimates to expand the current signalling system to Moorooka, part of a program of works to replace an ageing and increasingly obsolete analogue signalling system with a state-of-the-art digital one. We know the LNP love to cut, but the opposition would be kneecapping Queenslanders if they scrapped ETCS, sending South-East Queensland's rail network back to the 20th century.

Only a Miles Labor government understands the value of generational infrastructure. We do not just talk about it; we put our money where our mouth is, investing more than \$14 billion in rail over the next four years alone. ETCS is just a small but important part of building a 21st century transport system and will be progressively rolled out on the South-East Queensland rail network over the next decade, helping deliver a safer, more reliable train service for passengers.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. With reference to the Service Delivery Statements can the minister outline how the new Miles government is investing in First Nation communities and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. We know that regional and remote communities in Queensland experience unique challenges because of where they live. The cost of freight is significantly higher which means everyday items such as bread, milk or eggs are often more than double the price compared to a city centre like Cairns. This is why our government, off the back of the Cost of Living Summit held in the Torres Strait, announced a 5.2 per cent discount on essential goods in the Torres Strait's gulf and northern peninsula regions. This discount was designed to equalise the costs of essential items to a similar price if purchased in Cairns. However, the member for Cook, Cynthia Lui, continued to travel throughout these communities and found that the 5.2 per cent was not closing the gap enough. This is why our new Premier was very proud to announce that we would increase this discount from 5.2 per cent to 20 per cent.

This major uplift in the regional communities freight assistance scheme will make a substantial difference to the weekly grocery shop. This is what it looks like when you are doing what matters for Queenslanders. This means that the cost of essentials like milk, bread, fruit, vegetables and detergent will be reduced by 20 per cent, reducing inflation on the cost of goods generally associated with freight. For example, a one-litre bottle of detergent in the region can cost up to 12 per cent higher than that charged in a similar size retail store in Cairns. If it cost \$3.46 at full price in the region, it would come down to \$2.77 with the subsidy applied. A two-litre bottle of milk could cost \$5.40 at full price in the region. It would come down to \$4.32 with the subsidy applied. This scheme is all about driving down the cost of essential goods by putting money directly back in the pockets of locals at the check-out.

Providing reliable infrastructure is also critical in these Far North communities. This is why our \$323 million Cape York Region Package Stage 2 funded jointly with the federal government will mean that once work is completed, less than 150 kilometres of the Peninsula Development Road will remain unsealed. One of the most impressive projects along this stretch of road is the construction of the Archer River bridge. This jointly funded project will make a massive difference to our Far North Queensland communities. The bridge is designed to withstand being submerged during the wet season, which can see the river swell to up to eight metres.

Built into all our construction contracts along the PDR are key result areas relating to economic opportunities, training and local industry participation, particularly for First Nations peoples. Over stage 1 of the Cape York Region Package our KRAs resulted in 84 Indigenous trainees in civil construction who commenced or completed nationally recognised competencies; more than 150,000 hours of Indigenous training and employment; 108 local traditional owners employed to provide over 10,000 hours of cultural heritage monitoring; 19 local Indigenous businesses engaged to work in civil construction, vegetation and road maintenance works; more than \$42 million worth of work completed by Indigenous businesses; \$84 million spent on local Cape York businesses; and 321 Indigenous workers employed to deliver works on the Peninsula Development Road. Under stage 2, almost 70,000 hours of Indigenous and non-Indigenous training has been delivered alongside the engagement of 39 Indigenous businesses and \$55 million in local procurement.

In partnership with the regional councils, the \$47.5 million community access roads program is continuing, which progressively seals sections of community access roads that connect to the PDR. The new Miles Labor government has committed \$60 million to future stages of the Cape York Region Package Stage 3, available from 2026 onwards. Our big build along the PDR is delivering for First Nations peoples and their communities. It is projects like these that would be under threat if the LNP is elected in October. When they were last in government they cut the Local Fare Scheme, which provided subsidised flights for these communities to connect with one another or travel to health and education services. It is only a Miles Labor government that will deliver for the Far North, and our record reflects that.

CHAIR: I know that the member for Cook is extraordinarily pleased and excited for her community about the difference that will make. I think anybody who has been to the Torres Strait will appreciate those significant challenges, so thank you.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. Regarding the Big Build outlined in Budget Paper 3 and in QTRIP, can the minister advise the committee what the new Miles government approach is to investment in Central Queensland and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. We have a big vision for Queensland. Our transport big build outlines a total investment of \$37.4 billion. We have over \$21 billion of this committed outside the metro region and of this \$3.3 billion is committed to Central Queensland, supporting over 2,700 direct jobs for the region. Member, I have had the privilege of visiting Central Queensland many times since becoming the transport minister. One of my very first visits was with the Prime Minister and Premier to see the construction underway on the Rockhampton Ring Road—an outstanding project. This \$1.73 billion Rockhampton Ring Road is fully funded by the Miles and Albanese Labor governments. Work is powering ahead on the project, delivering 17.4 kilometres of new roadway incorporating 18 bridges and 14.7 kilometres of new alignment for the Bruce Highway to the west of Rockhampton. The Rockhampton Ring Road is a transformational project for the Rockhampton region. The engagement of local content on this project is also a priority for the Miles government. It is incentivised under the collaborative project agreement contracts. I can advise the committee that just over seven months into construction local content is tracking at 77 per cent. We have seen over \$62 million in contract value awarded to real local businesses and 99.5 per cent of total contract value has been awarded to Queensland businesses.

Our Big Build is not just for Rockhampton but for all Central Queenslanders. We have \$107 million in early works already commenced on the \$1 billion inland freight route between Charters Towers and Mungindi jointly funded with the Australian government. The upgrade will deliver for industry and community, reducing congestion and long distance truck movements by up to 49 per cent on the Bruce Highway. We are also delivering a \$500 million commitment for Queensland beef corridors. We have committed \$47.5 million for early works to kickstart this initiative and a re-elected Miles government will also invest \$157 million to key Bowen Basin roads to support the resources sector. Projects such as these improve safety and productivity on our road networks and reduce congestion on regional roads. We know the importance of working with local governments to deliver safe regional road and transport networks. I recently visited local mayors from Blackall-Tambo, Barcaldine and Longreach councils to see firsthand the benefits our investment has made over the last nine years on our roads in the central west.

Across the broader region the Miles government has further committed to the following projects, including \$250 million on the Bruce Highway from Gladstone to Rockhampton, jointly funded with the Australian government; \$125 million for access to the Gladstone port upgrade, jointly funded; \$122 million towards Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road, jointly funded; \$75 million towards the Capricorn Highway from Emerald to Alpha, jointly funded with the Australian government; \$45 million for the

Capricorn Highway Emerald to Alpha package 2, jointly funded; \$37.6 million on the Bruce Highway from Rockhampton to St Lawrence and the Bolsover Street upgrading intersection, jointly funded; a \$22.5 million commitment for Dawson Developmental Road from Springsure to Tambo, jointly funded; \$24 million on the Capricorn Highway near Emerald; \$19.6 million funding for the Capricorn Highway from Emerald to Alpha; \$6 million on the Thomson Developmental Road pavement rehabilitation, and I was pleased to visit that a few weeks ago; \$5.6 million on the Landsborough Highway from Tambo to Blackall to rehabilitate pavement; \$5 million on the Clermont-Alpha Road, jointly funded with the federal government; \$4.5 million on the Diamantina Development Road; and \$3 million on the Barcaldine-Aramac Road for pavement rehabilitation.

These projects are all at risk under the LNP. They would have to severely cut projects and jobs if they are to fulfil their \$6.6 billion black hole created by their wild claim to build Sunshine Coast rail direct to Maroochydore by 2032.

Mr WATTS: Little bit desperate, Minister.

Mr HEAD: You will get plenty of money by scrapping the Pioneer-Burdekin.

Mr MELLISH: I have touched a nerve.

Mr WATTS: Focus on what the Labor government are doing.

CHAIR: That is enough, gentlemen.

Mr Watts interjected.

CHAIR: That is enough, gentlemen.

Mr MELLISH: We know they have a plan. They sacked more than 2,500 TMR workers when they were last in government—20 per cent of the TMR workforce. They sacked over 700 RoadTek road builders. They have a plan for cuts.

Mr HEAD: Here we go. Cannot stand on his own record.

Mr WATTS: Desperate minister who cannot stand on his own record.

CHAIR: Gentlemen, that is enough.

Mr MELLISH: We have a plan. I have outlined the record in the central west and the Central Queensland region alone just over the last few minutes. We have a record of delivering jobs and prosperity for Central Queensland, and there is more to do.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Chair. I have a series of questions to the director-general in relation to the Bribie Island bridge, and I am referencing budget reference QTRIP page 71. Director-General, regarding the Labor government's election commitment to duplicate the Bribie Island bridge that was announced on 2 July, can you tell the committee when the department was advised that this announcement was being made?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. We were advised on the morning that the media release would go out that this announcement would be being made.

Mr MINNIKIN: Right, so you were told on 2 July?

Ms Stannard: Yes.

Mr MINNIKIN: Can you advise if the materials like the maps and diagrams used at that announcement were supplied by the department and, if so, when?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am not familiar with exactly what materials were used at the announcement. We do not provide materials to the government for the purpose of election commitments. We do provide regular briefings about projects that we had underway and we have a business case underway for the Bribie Island bridge, so there are regular briefings to the minister that would have materials in them. There is also material on our website about that business case that is underway, so I could not talk to exactly what materials were used at the announcement. I am not clear on exactly what they were.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, the TMR website previously stated that the planning for the Bribie Island bridge would be completed in early 2024. Could you please advise the status of the business case and if any draft copy has been provided to the minister?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do have some notes, so I will refer to those. The Queensland government has increased its funding commitment, as you are aware, and our efforts are underway at the moment on the comprehensive project evaluation. We have spent significant time in technical investigations to inform that business case. We have also conducted two

phases of community consultation with over 4,000 comments received from the community. Our analysis of the feedback has informed the concept design and that will then feed into the finalisation of the business case. We are continuing to work on that technical design. We have made a commitment to release the options analysis—some might call that a preliminary business case—during September. As we will call that, the preliminary evaluation is currently scheduled for final submission in September 2024. The draft business case will be complete approximately then and the final business case is scheduled for submission in December 2024.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, the government has stated that the cost of the new bridge is \$700 million. Was that price provided by the department prior to the government's media announcement?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. We provide advice on the project as the costings evolve during the development of the project. We also provide advice to the government through the budget process, and that includes responding to stakeholder submissions that are raised through that process, so there has been advice provided to the government during the budget process. I cannot talk to the details of that.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, can you confirm that the current QTRIP contains no money for the construction of the new Bribie Island bridge?

CHAIR: I will let the director-general respond, but I think the answer is simple.

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question. To my knowledge—and my team will correct me very quickly if I am wrong—there is no money for construction at this stage in the QTRIP program. The government has made a commitment to that for future budgets but not in the current QTRIP. We have funding for the development of a business case in QTRIP.

Mr MINNIKIN: So the cost in fact could change?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. Costs do change.

Mr MINNIKIN: They do in this government.

Ms Stannard: Unfortunately, I am running a big infrastructure program and I am told in programs there are usually overs and unders. At the moment we are in a period of extreme cost escalation and a lot of pressures in the infrastructure delivery market. We only—

Mr HEAD: Thanks to the CFMEU.

CHAIR: Member for Callide! I ask you to hold for one second, Director-General. The director-general is here to answer questions. She is not here to listen to the sort of nonsense that you are putting out in your chatter from this side of the table while she is being responsive to a question, and being fairly responsive. So I would suggest if you do not want to be warned please remain silent while the director-general is responding. Show some respect. Director-General, back to you.

Ms Stannard: We do our best in that estimate of a business case phase to have a reliable estimate. I would really say to you that until a contract is signed we are not at the final price. We obviously go through a period of tendering. Things change each year as we go to market but we are, through that business case, developing that cost estimate bottom up.

Mr MINNIKIN: Could I ask a series of questions to the CEO of Queensland Rail, please?

CHAIR: Yes, certainly. Ms Stapleton, welcome back.

Mr MINNIKIN: In relation to December 2023, it was reported that a Queensland Rail employee pushed a young girl onto the tracks at Kippa-Ring. The train crew member was apparently stood down. Obviously, it is a very serious allegation. Can you please provide an outcome of the investigations into that incident?

CHAIR: Before you proceed, can I confirm that this is not a sub judice matter, in terms of action?

Mr MINNIKIN: That is a fair point.

Ms Stapleton: Can you please repeat that?

CHAIR: In any response that you give, I want to be very careful that there is nothing that would prejudice any action before the courts at the moment in relation to that matter.

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do recall the incident. It was reported in the *Courier-Mail*. In terms of the status of the matter, the employee was stood down. An investigation took place and subsequent disciplinary action took place.

Mr MINNIKIN: A Queensland Rail whistleblower has advised that there has been a four-month investigation but the crew member has returned to duty without any disciplinary action. Can you confirm this?

Ms Stapleton: Noting this incident, if I may take some advice from our HR people to ensure that I provide the right information? The train crew member did return to work. I want to ensure that I provide the appropriate advice.

Mr MINNIKIN: A Queensland Rail staff member allegedly pushed a child onto an active rail line. I understand she suffered cuts and abrasions, but it could have been so much worse obviously. She could have been killed by a passing train. Why is this person still employed at Queensland Rail?

CHAIR: Ms Stapleton, answer that as you see fit whilst you are seeking some further information to come back with.

Ms Stapleton: I reiterate that we take the safety of both our staff as well as customers very seriously. We investigate all incidents very diligently. As I mentioned earlier, if I may seek advice from our HR staff to confirm the status of what took place subsequent to the investigation.

Mr MINNIKIN: Ms Stapleton, it is possible then that we have a Queensland Rail employee with a history of pushing a child onto a railway track who is still working with Queensland Rail in a public-facing role?

CHAIR: You may come back again, thank you, Ms Stapleton. Member for Chatsworth, your next question?

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the CEO. In December, a report into a serious safety issue on the rail network on 7 May 2020 was released. It involved a work crew who was given access to an active rail corridor. A train was just seconds away from colliding with an excavator that was on the track. It gets worse. The excavator operator was told to remove the vehicle while the rail corridor was still active, resulting in the following train almost colliding with the excavator. A spokesman for Queensland Rail has advised that improvements have been made. Can you please advise what those improvements actually are?

Ms Stapleton: I believe the member refers to the Thorneside incident. If I may take a moment to look at my notes?

Mr MINNIKIN: Sure.

Ms Stapleton: In relation to the Thorneside incident, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau final report was released in December 2023. That related to an incident in March 2020. I wanted to make sure that was the same incident that the member relayed.

First of all, Queensland Rail acknowledges the final report and noted that the ATSB had closed all safety issues as adequately addressed. Queensland Rail's first priority, as I mentioned before, is the safety of its customers and the safety of its staff. In terms of the number of actions that Queensland Rail took, these were undertaken under an EVU, which is an enforceable voluntary undertaking, and Queensland Rail successfully discharged all of them as was confirmed by the regulator.

Mr MINNIKIN: Chair, I have a further question to the Queensland Rail CEO. Queensland Rail employees have contacted the opposition, concerned about Queensland Rail's digital Track Access System. A recent question on notice has shown that, since October last year, there have been seven outages of the system. Is the system reliable and fit for purpose?

Ms Stapleton: I believe the member refers to the TAS, which is the Track Access System.

Mr MINNIKIN: Correct.

Ms Stapleton: I believe there was a question on notice and we provided a response. In terms of the Track Access System, we are always looking for opportunities and digital enhancements to improve the safety of our staff who access the rail corridor. The TAS is software that allows an electronic request for a track authority in remote-controlled signalling territory, which is a process to provide safe access to the danger zone. Prior to the implementation of the software from 2022, Queensland Rail was using a paper-based system. Of course, in this digital age we are always looking for opportunities to do things better. As was reported, there were certain outages of the system. We have listed in our response the number of outages and the hours of the outages, with the last one in January 2024, which took approximately 33 minutes. Since this outage, we have conducted a number of improvements and upgrades. Since 25 January, we have not had any further incidents.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a further question to the CEO. An ATSB report into a 2021 fatal accident at a rail crossing in Wynnum West stated—

Queensland Rail had not been managing risk at level crossings in accordance with the requirements of its level crossing safety standard. In particular, the standard stated that public and pedestrian level crossings were to be assessed every 5 years or sooner. However, the Kianawah Road level crossing had not been assessed for 19 years. Some other level crossings with high instances of incidents and accidents had also not been assessed for 20 years.

Have all 1,138 public level crossings now had their five-yearly inspections undertaken?

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question, which relates to the Lindum incident. I wanted to make sure that was the one. This is probably a multilevel question. If I may first of all talk about the incident that took place in 2021? We were very saddened and pay our condolences to the person who died and to their family and friends. I want to first of all acknowledge that very tragic incident in 2021.

Queensland Rail took immediate action at that crossing. There was a boom gate—I think it was a 13- or 20-metre boom gate; I cannot recall exactly—that was installed. We also worked with the Brisbane City Council, for them to make some changes. They had to repaint some lines. There was also a traffic island that had to be built. We entered into an interface agreement with the Brisbane City Council. We are also in a tripartite team with the Brisbane City Council and the department of transport to look at options at this crossing. As the member may have heard earlier, the committee is undertaking a significant station upgrade at that station.

Mr MINNIKIN: With respect, my question specifically is in relation to the fact that that level crossing, like all, are meant to have a five-yearly inspection. That one had not been assessed for 19 years—14 years past its inspection date. What confidence do the people of Queensland have, with the 1,138 level crossings, that they have had their five-yearly inspections undertaken?

CHAIR: I think Ms Stapleton is getting to that part of her response. She did acknowledge when she opened that she was addressing it in two parts. I am very interested to hear the information that she is sharing. Please continue, Ms Stapleton.

Ms Stapleton: Again, I want to put into perspective that Lindum had a significant effect on Queensland Rail, and we took action on that. In terms of the approach to level crossings, it is not just five-yearly inspections that we undertake. We actually undertake a number of inspections. We undertake weekly inspections, monthly inspections, yearly ones, as well as the five-yearly audits. Obviously the weekly ones are different from the monthly ones and the annual ones and the five-yearly ones, but there is a strict protocol as to what has to be undertaken at each one of these reviews.

In terms of the ALCAM, the report identified that Queensland Rail did not have sufficient trained staff, so we have now upgraded that as well. It was reported in the ATSB report that Queensland Rail did take action and did complete those reviews.

Mr MINNIKIN: To the point you have just made, you are right. The report also said that, between 2016 and 2021, Queensland Rail had just one person qualified to assess all their crossings. Why didn't Queensland Rail have safety systems in place to check that these inspections were being carried out and what has changed since then?

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. I cannot comment on what happened in the past. I can certainly comment on what it is that we are doing not just from 2022 but since the previous incident. Safety is our No. 1 priority. It is very clear for the whole company that that is always the priority. We have taken a number of steps to improve safety at level crossings: first of all, the way we undertake inspections—as I mentioned, the weekly, monthly, annual and five-yearly audits. We have also increased the number of staff who are qualified to do ALCAM assessments and the calculation on how to assess the risk of a level crossing. Both the regional team as well as the SEQ team are very clear in the way they report back to our risk committee on the status of level crossings.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is pretty incredible though that when these inspections were not being done why didn't someone speak up and say, 'Hey, these inspections are simply not being done'? Did anyone speak up at all? Were people being ignored? What was the underlying issue? We are talking five-yearly inspections at 1,138 crossings not being done and one of them, 14 years late, resulted in a tragedy. There was nothing said? Nothing was raised by anyone?

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, I think Ms Stapleton has quite comprehensively responded to your question and this particular line of questioning. I do not know what more you can add in terms of your response. It has been quite clear and comprehensive, as I have just said. If you have anything further you would like to add, Ms Stapleton—

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: No. I am giving Ms Stapleton the opportunity to provide a further response. Ms Stapleton, do you have anything further?

Ms Stapleton: Thank you, Chair, for that statement. What I can say is, since becoming CEO in 2022—this was subsequent to the event—it has been reinforced very clearly to the entire company, and it has also been reinforced to me as CEO by the board, that safety is the No. 1 priority. It is absolutely, I would say, critical that everyone has the ability to speak up if they see something is not happening—I hope that happens; we encourage that—and that people do not feel that they cannot say something. I do spend time in the field. The member for Maiwar is no longer here. I did go to Taringa to have a look. I try to get out there and see for myself how the network is operating. Member, all I can say is that our company is focused on safety.

Mr MINNIKIN: This is my final question in relation to this topic. The ATSB report focused on level-crossing inspections. How can Queenslanders be confident that other inspections are being done on time and in full—as a learning exercise?

CHAIR: Again, I think you have provided a good response so far. Ms Stapleton, you have roughly 30 seconds to respond before we break.

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question. The status of level-crossing reporting goes through a number of governance committees, which obviously oversee the status of those level crossings and the completion of audits.

CHAIR: There might be time for a bit more, member for Chatsworth—maybe 30 seconds if you are super quick.


Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, Translink has historically been responsible for security on the public transport network. Why has there been a change in focus with Translink network officers now being hired by the service operators rather than the historical practice of Translink employing senior network officers?

CHAIR: If you can make it a really quick response that would be terrific, or come back to it after the break.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am happy to come back after the break.

CHAIR: We will adjourn and resume proceedings at 7.30 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 7.15 pm to 7.29 pm.

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of transport and main roads and digital services. Minister, I note we have Ms Stapleton back at the table, who I understand has a response to one of the previous questions.

Ms Stapleton: Thank you for the opportunity to take advice from my HR team. What I have been advised is that due process has been followed. The actions of the driver were certainly not appropriate. During the interview the driver was very honest and deeply remorseful. The footage was reviewed, and it was very clear there was not a deliberate push action. It was a reflex action. It was certainly not intended to be deliberate at all. As I mentioned before, this was not the standard that HR expects so it was a breach of conduct. The driver has now received a final warning. The expectation is this is not the way QR people conduct themselves.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, I drove the Bruce Highway the week before last. When was the last time you drove the full length of the Bruce Highway from Cairns to the Pine River Bridge?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I note the member has well documented his travels down the entire Bruce Highway in one go, and in that time he did not announce a single dollar of new funding for the Bruce Highway. Every single time I have been on this particular road in the six months—maybe less—since I have been minister, I have either been ticking off a milestone for a great project or we have been announcing new money for additional projects or we have been opening roads on the Bruce Highway, additional lanes, opening upgrades and things like that. When I am talking about all of our road network, but particularly the Bruce Highway, it is about what we are doing on it, not where we are at a particular point in time.

Right now we have 15 projects in construction on the Bruce Highway: 27 in design and 21 in planning. These include projects like: the \$1.73 billion Rockhampton Ring Road, which is creating new parts of the Bruce Highway; the over a billion dollar Cooroy to Curra section; the Mackay Ring Road; the Mackay Port Access Road; and the Tiaro bypass. We have the Bruce Highway, Gladstone to

Rockhampton. We have funding for the Cairns Southern Access Corridor. We have \$470 million for the Mackay to Proserpine Goorganga flood immunity upgrade. We have fantastic projects like the Gateway Motorway to Dohles Rocks Road upgrade. We were there recently with representatives from the federal government to announce the north facing ramps are getting underway. There are really great projects right up and down the Bruce Highway. Every time I go to the Bruce it is about a milestone, it is about new money or it is about opening road projects we have funded.

Mr MINNIKIN: So you have not driven its full length and you are sorry. Does the minister agree with my assessment that the section of the Bruce Highway from Mackay to Rockhampton is some of the worst?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. The Bruce Highway is a significant road, a key artery of our state. We have projects right up and down the Bruce Highway in general and in this particular part. Every time I am on the Bruce Highway it is about new money, it is about milestones, it is about projects. Let's be clear about the work we have done on the Bruce Highway: Gin Gin to north of Mackay we have completed inspections of the road upgrades up there. We have completed inspections of projects. There is always more to do on the Bruce Highway. That is why we have worked with industry to come up with a 15-year vision and action plan for the Bruce Highway. We have had advice from the advisory trust. In terms of specific sections, of course there is always more work to be done. The Bruce Highway will never be completely finished. There are always upgrades we can do. We are a growing state as people keep moving to Queensland. In terms of specific sections, I am always happy to work with the federal government. I would prefer it if they funded 80 per cent rather than 50 per cent, but I am really keen to keep those discussions going and I am keen to see what else we can do on this particular highway.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, Labor disbanded the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council in 2022 after just six meetings. Why?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. Let's be clear: the Bruce Highway Trust was there to do a specific job. They were there to finalise a 15-year vision, including three five-year rolling action plans and the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan to unlock economic growth, build flood resilience and improve safety. We have released the 15-year vision and action plan following the federal government's infrastructure review once we knew the full outcomes of that in 2023 and then leading up to our budget process. We are committed to safer roads right across the state. In terms of the Bruce Highway Advisory Trust, there was a specific body of work they were tasked to do. They completed that body of work. They delivered that to government. We have released it. In terms of being disbanded, I would completely not agree with that assertion. They were there to do a job. They did the job very well.

Mr MINNIKIN: The minister released the Bruce Highway Vision and Action Plan on 7 June this year. Meeting records show this plan was signed off by the Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council on 7 September 2022. Minister, why did it take almost two years for the government to release this report?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. The member may have noted there were significant changes in federal funding arrangements in that intervening period. The federal government first announced and then undertook their infrastructure review. The findings of that review were delivered to the department, to all state agencies. We had to act on the outcomes of the infrastructure review and realign and refocus in terms of what we can deliver with the available money from the federal government. When we are talking about road projects, we want to talk about road projects that we can deliver. We do not want to make fake commitments, particularly on the Bruce Highway. I note at the last election the LNP promised over \$33 billion worth of upgrades on the Bruce Highway and a few days out released \$30 million in funding. It was out by many orders of magnitude. When we are talking about road upgrades, we want to make sure we are talking about what we can deliver and what we can deliver in the context of significant events like the federal government review.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, the Cross River Rail project was originally supposed to be a \$5.4 billion project. Officially it is about \$7.8 billion now, but my guess is it going to be a lot more than that. At least it has blown out significantly from \$5.4 billion originally. Could the director-general advise if the official \$2.4 billion blow-out amount would be enough to implement wide centre lines for the Bruce Highway?

CHAIR: I think that is seeking an opinion, but I will give you some latitude in how you would like to respond to that.

Ms Stannard: Thank you for the question about wide centre line treatments. I would be pleased to talk about those as an important and effective treatment to reduce the risk of head-on crashes. We estimate that 95 per cent of head-on crashes can be reduced through the provision of median barriers of some form, but wide centre line treatment has also been shown to be very effective, reducing 60 per cent of head-on crashes. Wide centre line treatment is obviously much more cost-effective than a centre median, and therefore it allows us to implement a much longer section of the network within a road's existing sealed width or with minor widening. If we have a narrower carriageway we do not have space to put a wide centre line treatment in the middle. We may need to widen the road at the edges to allow a space for the wide centre line. Along the highway you will know there are a number of bridges and structures, and some are too narrow to allow wide centre line treatment. The other places where it is difficult to implement are at intersections—for example, a T-intersection where a road is coming onto the Bruce where again we would need sufficient width for that movement to occur. I note that to say it is not always just about having the money to implement the treatment. Some of the configurations of roads and structures prevent the easy rollout of wide centre line treatment.

At the present time and depending on those site conditions, the cost to construct wide centre line is of the order of \$8 million to \$10 million per kilometre. With those numbers, we could calculate the distance that it would be possible. When we identify those safety treatments, the cost-effectiveness and other operational factors come into that. That includes how we maintain them once implemented and any impacts to vehicles that need to access property. For example, some sections of the Bruce do have access for rural properties to access directly onto there so we would not be able to prevent those movements of turning vehicles. Wide centre line treatment can have impacts for that if it is continuous.

Since the beginning of the Bruce Highway Upgrade Program in 2013-14, more than 800 kilometres of wide centre line treatment has been rolled out on the Bruce. While there are some single line sections that do not have wide centre line treatments, it is expected that we would continue to roll out wide centre line as we upgrade going forward.

Mr MINNIKIN: If we added the \$3.15 billion cost increase for the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail, it is about \$5½ billion. At \$8 million to \$10 million per lineal kilometre, that would give a fair bit of ability to be able to do that wide centre line treatment. How many kilometres did you say had been done thus far? Was it 800 kilometres?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the question. Since the beginning of the upgrade program in 2013-14, we have done more than 800 kilometres of wide centre line treatment. I am more than happy to talk to the cost changes in the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project which is still in the planning phase. It has not been through a contract award at this stage. As we have been able to refine that information, we have been able to understand more about the cost of delivering the project. It is important we do that before we are through that contract award phase.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, could you advise the total cost of the cassowary bridge built on the Bruce Highway between Innisfail and Tully and if, to the best of your knowledge or anyone's knowledge, cassowaries are actually using it?

Ms Stannard: I thank the honourable member for the question.

CHAIR: Was that whether cassowaries are using it?

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, cassowaries. It was a \$10 million project that blew out to \$40 million.

CHAIR: I was just clarifying.

Ms Stannard: Yes, we have implemented a particular road safety treatment for a cassowary crossing. This is an endangered species native to Far North Queensland, the southern cassowary. They do live in rainforests and a number of the habitats that are adjacent to the highway. The increase of human population and road traffic means it can injure the birds but it can also cause vehicle strikes and be dangerous for accidents, as well as deaths for the cassowary, the endangered species.

To minimise the risk of cassowary death and injury and to support the conservation efforts, we did do extensive consultation with advocacy groups for cassowaries, including those in Kuranda and Mission Beach communities through the cassowary recovery team. We continue to work with those partner agencies. They are local experts. In 2020 we published the Cassowary Conservation Management Plan to position the department so that we can respond to cassowaries on the state controlled road network.

In May we completed the project to construct a southbound overtaking lane on the Bruce Highway at Smiths Gap, which is a known cassowary habitat. The project cost was \$40.724 million to construct that. It includes a world-first dedicated cassowary fauna crossing. Planting of that crossing began in May 2024 to make sure there is suitable vegetation to encourage the species to use that. The project is funded under the Australian government's Bruce Highway overtaking lane project.

Members of the public can report cassowary sightings so we are collecting information about usage of the bridge. We have rolled out specific cassowary wildlife signage within that habitat and the strike zone. We are conducting research with the University of Sydney and the Queensland University of Technology supported by the iMOVE cooperative research centre to use what is called a large animal activated roadside monitoring and alert system. It is a behavioural science project to evaluate the performance of that real-time hazard detection. To your point, the importance of assessing the value of the spend is being conducted with those research agencies to inform future works.

Mr MINNIKIN: Director-General, the TMR website for the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 4 says as at 21 November 2023 that the preliminary business case had been completed but was under review. Can the director-general advise when Minister Mellish was briefed on the outcome of the preliminary business case?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, TMR is a big organisation so I do not give every briefing to the minister. You will excuse me if I just confirm.

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly.

Ms Stannard: It is likely that was a briefing by the regional director or the project director on the project. We have been planning for the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 4 project. It is to serve the continuation of that corridor where we have the light rail currently in operation. The project is an opportunity to improve public transport between Burleigh Heads and Coolangatta. We have done extensive community consultation on that light rail stage 4 since 2020. Each time we get feedback from community, we do update the minister on that feedback.

The cost range we have estimated is a wide range from \$3.13 billion to \$7.6 billion. That final cost would be subject to completion of the detailed business case. We are doing further work to refine the total project cost as well as to identify risks. The community did identify a range of suggestions about the corridor and we do take that very seriously as we finalise that business case work. I do not have in this information the time when we would have briefed the minister on that. I can advise that the minister approved us to engage with Gold Coast city council in May 2024.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you.

Mr MELLISH: I am happy to add to that question, if I may. I am happy to give the specific timeframes, but I understand there was not too much of a gap between me becoming minister and when we put out the preliminary business case for stage 4. This is a large project. The business case work is underway. We committed to doing the business case with \$15 million on the table from us and \$15 million from local council. I understand the LNP have a particular view that they do not want to proceed with the business case, that they want to scrap it and throw all that work out the window. We are committed to the business case. We are committed to seeing if this project stacks up, to seeing the costs of this project. There are significant bridge crossings—Tallebudgera Creek, Currumbin Creek. This is not a small extension to the project. This is quite a significant extension to it, but we are committed to doing that work. I do know the LNP is committed to scrapping that work.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, when were you briefed on the outcome of the preliminary business case? That is the question.

Mr MELLISH: As I just indicated, I have a range of meetings with the department—probably multiple meetings a day with the department. I am happy to come back to the member on specifics around that and around the timing of when we released the preliminary business case.

Mr MINNIKIN: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr MELLISH: Again, in terms of this preliminary business case, we are keen to get out there what we could without breaking commercial-in-confidence in some regards. This would be a project if we were doing it we would still have to contract for it, we would still have to get people to build it, so this is not something you can dump all the information out there as it comes to hand. This is also a project that is being done in conjunction with the Gold Coast city council. This is not just a sole decision of the director-general or me as to the timings of putting out the outcomes of work that has been funded by more than one level of government.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, why did the government only release the preliminary business case after the LNP asked for details from it in a question on notice in March this year?

Mr MELLISH: I am happy to come back to you on specific timings of that. I am sure it was very well publicised that there was a preliminary business case underway and someone calling for the release of the preliminary business case. They are two pretty closely related steps. It is an obvious link for an opposition to do. In terms of the timeframes, I am not driven by what the LNP is doing and what the LNP is calling for. It is very clear that the LNP want to scrap this project, that they do not want to proceed with light rail. At every step of the way, we have had the LNP having it both ways. They oppose the project locally. They back interests locally that benefit from opposing light rail stages. We saw that in light rail stages 1, 2, 3 and even 4, but then when those stages progressively open—

Mr WATTS: That is not really part of the question, Minister.

Mr MELLISH: When those stages progressively open, the LNP jumps in and pretends that they backed it all along. The mayor also clearly supports this project. They have been great delivery partners on all three stages so far. We are working with them on stage 4. It would be good to hear what the LNP want to actually do about stage 4 rather than this back to the drawing board.

Mr MINNIKIN: My question to the minister is in relation to the Beerburrum to Nambour rail duplication, with reference to SDS page 13. Four years ago the project had a budget of \$550 million and was due to be completed by 1 July this year. Now the budget is over \$1 billion and completion is not forecast to happen until 2028-29. What has gone so wrong with this particular project?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. This is a significant project for that part of the world in terms of boosting rail capacity on the north coast line, which also ties in to the Sunshine Coast direct rail project. Our government and the federal government have committed \$1 billion towards stage 1 of Beerburrum to Nambour. The upgrade will increase capacity, improve reliability and reduce travel times for passengers and freight in this growing region.

The Australian government committed to increasing funding during their federal budget process, acknowledging the market pressures on all construction projects. These market pressures are not just Queensland issues or national issues; they are international issues. There have been dramatic increases in the cost of things like gravel, up by 62 per cent; bitumen, up by 28 per cent; asphalt, up by 31 per cent; concrete, up by 36 per cent; fuel, up by 60 per cent; and steel reinforcing, up by 40 per cent. You cannot build a complicated project like Beerburrum to Nambour with air; you actually need these components to build it.

In terms of what the project will deliver, it is being completed in stages to deliver community benefits while funding for future stages is being investigated. Early works construction is complete. This includes the opening of new park-and-ride facilities at Landsborough and Nambour, a new bus interchange at Landsborough station and a realigning of a section of Steve Irwin Way near Glasshouse Mountains in August 2023. The remainder of stage 1 includes duplicating the rail track between Beerburrum and Beerwah, addressing three level crossings and expanding the park-and-ride at Beerburrum. Detailed design is expected to be complete later this year, with construction starting shortly after. It is a great project and it is one we are committed to.

Mr WALKER: With respect to the big build outlined in Budget Paper 3, which outlines several important investments in North and Far North Queensland, can the minister advise how the new Miles government's budget is delivering infrastructure in this region, and is the minister aware of my alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. Tropical Cyclone Jasper caused the most significant damage across North Queensland since severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2011. In my first week on the job I hit the ground running, providing whatever assistance I could as minister to the recovery and response efforts in the north. I think on the first day I was phoning mayors until 10.30 at night, until they stopped taking calls from an unknown number. Our RoadTek crews were out there straightaway, working overtime upon overtime to prioritise emergency works. Since then, critical recovery works have continued and are still underway across Far North Queensland. Whilst these works continue and remain a focus for the government, we have a pipeline of works to support the region.

The transport big build of course outlines \$37 billion over the next four years, with over \$21 billion of this committed outside the metro region. In North Queensland this means over \$3 billion committed, supporting over 2,460 direct jobs. We have money on the table for important safety, capacity and flood immunity projects including a \$359 million funding commitment for the Captain Cook Highway, Cairns

CBD to Smithfield, jointly funded with the federal government. We have a \$300 million funding commitment for the Cairns Western Arterial Road, Redlynch Connector Road to Captain Cook Highway, jointly funded. We have a \$262.5 million funding commitment for Kuranda Range road upgrade, jointly funded with the federal government. We have a \$225 million funding commitment for the Bruce Highway, Cairns Southern Access Corridor stage 5—that is, Foster Road—jointly funded with the federal government. We have the \$96.9 million Burdekin River Bridge rehabilitation program, funded with the federal government. We have the \$41.5 million Cairns Southern Access Cycleway to construct the cycleway, jointly funded with the federal government. One that I know the member for Mundingburra is very passionate about—I was very pleased to drive on it about three weeks ago when I was up there—is the \$99.8 million Townsville Connection Road, University Road to Bowen Road Bridge project. The member and I announced the beginning of construction earlier this year. This project is fully funded by the new Miles government and is expected to be complete in 2025.

On this side, we understand the importance of improving road infrastructure for our remote communities and the Cape York region also. Local communities in the region rely on the road infrastructure for connectivity, access to essential health and wellbeing services, and economic opportunity. That is why we are proud to say that we are delivering the \$323 million Cape York Region Package stage 2. This program of work upgrades critical infrastructure on Cape York Peninsula. This includes roads such as the Peninsula Developmental Road and several community access roads.

We also know how important the Barron River bridge is for communities in the Far North. We listened to the community, who overwhelmingly told us that they wanted a new bridge. That is why, along with the Premier and our local members, we recently visited Kuranda and announced that a re-elected Miles government would build a new \$450 million bridge over the Barron River. We will continue to monitor the existing bridge to ensure it remains safe and operational.

Of course, North Queenslanders remember how the LNP delivered nothing for the region except for savage cuts when they were last in power. More recently, it is of note that the LNP's candidate for Barron River has said that their plan was to replace the Barron River bridge whilst the member for Chatsworth told everyone the LNP wanted to repair it. The LNP's plan for the Barron River bridge is as clear as mud. They cannot be trusted to deliver for North Queensland. What Queenslanders can be assured of is that the member for Broadwater has promised to spend more, tax less and lower debt, and the only way they can do this is by cutting jobs, services and projects and vital infrastructure to North Queensland.

Ms PEASE: Regarding the capital allocations to active transport projects outlined in QTRIP and the associated references on page 8 of Budget Paper 3, can the minister please advise what the Miles government's approach is to active transport?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for Lytton for the question. More Queenslanders are getting active than ever before, be it for commuting to work, riding with the family on the weekend or staying in shape. I am proud of our commitment to Queensland's riders and walkers. We recognise the vital and growing role that active transport plays in Queensland's transport system. That is why we are committing \$315 million over the next four years towards active transport initiatives including bikeways, shared paths and bridges across the state. This is on top of the \$400 million commitment we have already invested since 2015 to support active transport infrastructure, adding hundreds of kilometres of infrastructure across our state.

Just last Friday I announced over \$6.5 million through the popular cycle network and walking local government grants to support the delivery of new bike-riding networks and walking networks planning over the next two years. We know that investing in bike riding and active transport is just common sense. It means better health, a better transport system and better communities. It is also a zero emissions transport option which is better for our environment. It is encouraging to see how many people are choosing to walk or ride across Queensland.

Through the Queensland Cycling Strategy 2017-2027 and the Queensland Walking Strategy 2019-2029 and their accompanying two-year action plans, this government has delivered more than 173 actions to encourage more Queenslanders to walk and ride more often. I look forward to continuing this important work in conjunction with our stakeholders.

Queensland is also leading the nation with regard to the regulation of personal mobility devices, PMDs, such as e-scooters. In 2022 this government released the PMD safety action plan, which was developed in consultation with key stakeholders. The plan aims to improve the safety of both users of PMDs and Queenslanders using our cycleways, shared paths and footpaths. I can update the committee that we have already achieved 16 of the 18 actions set out in the safety action plan. Part of

this plan was an important package of reforms to our road rules that came into effect on 1 November 2022. These new rules were developed with safety as a key priority and were as a result of extensive road safety research and consultation by TMR. These new rules reduce the speed limit of 12 kilometres per hour on shared paths and 25 kilometres per hour on separated cycleways or on-street cycleways where the signed speed limit is less than 50 kilometres.

To build on these reforms, I introduced new laws into parliament to further enhance the safety of riders as well as other members of the public that they interact with. This included a new careless riding offence on road-related areas such as footpaths. The new laws also streamline driver obligations to ensure PMD riders are required to stop and render assistance and exchange details in the event of a crash.

To ensure PMD riders are following the rules, the Queensland Police Service have conducted several high-profile enforcement blitzes to target riders. From November 2022 to February 2024, over 5,300 infringements have been issued to PMD riders for doing the wrong thing. My department will continue to work with QPS to make sure everyone is safe on our road and path network. Over the next 12 months we will also continue to deliver the remaining actions of the safety action plan. This includes investigating solutions for improved parking of PMDs, exploring options to crack down on drink-riding and looking into best practice PMD dimensions.

PMDs are a great way for Queenslanders to get around the state and reduce emissions by choosing a green alternative to travel, but we must make sure we get the regulatory settings right so they are safe for all footpath and road users.

When it comes to the LNP's record on active transport in the state, Queenslanders will never forget that the LNP cut almost \$100 million from active transport when they were in government, calling it gold plating.

Mr MINNIKIN: Madam Chair, are we going to be consistent in relation to this—the cheap shots?

CHAIR: Are you raising a point of order?

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order. Are we going to be consistent in relation to the status?

CHAIR: I am going to be consistent. The minister is just closing up.

Mr MELLISH: Thank you, Chair. I am always very happy to compare and contrast funds that we have allocated in our budget—

Mr HEAD: I thought this was about the budget in front of us.

Mr MELLISH:—versus previous budget considerations. In comparison, the Miles government has expanded the Cycle Network Local Government Grants Program across Queensland, and we have ensured active transport is delivered on all major transport projects when the LNP were, of course, the architects of \$1.6 billion in cuts to the road and transport budget, including active transport projects. Only this Labor government has a plan for active transport. Thank you, Chair.

Ms PEASE: Thank you, Minister. My family are very delighted to hear about all the work in active transport with cyclists and walkers, as you would be very well aware. Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS which states 'a key objective of the department is to support a thriving digital economy to benefit Queenslanders', can the minister please advise what the Miles government approach is to the digital service and transformation, and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. Member, the Miles government is hitting the ground running when it comes to digital transformation. In April last year, we launched Our Thriving Digital Future: Queensland's Digital Economic Strategy. The strategy provides the vision, directions and actions required to further accelerate growth of our state's digital and broader economy. It invests \$200 million to implement our 2023-2026 action plan which will further cement our status as a digital leader. Funding will deliver new initiatives across three key focus areas and six enabling projects, including: \$130 million for digital market initiatives, including \$120 million to improve digital connectivity across the state, focusing on remote and First Nations communities; \$26.5 million for digital customer initiatives that will help close the digital divide through the development and implementation of a digital inclusion strategy plan, additional Indigenous knowledge centres, engagement of regional digital development officers, and delivering contemporary digital government services; in addition to \$43.5 million to further enable digital government through statewide cybersecurity and First Nations digital strategic plans. These initiatives are integral to closing the digital divide and making sure that all Queenslanders, no matter where they live in our vast state, can take full advantage of our digital economy revolution.

The strategy ensures Queensland continues to invest in digital transformation that supports good jobs and better services, opening up new opportunities for Queenslanders across the state. It is essential to ensuring that Queensland has the right digital infrastructure, capability and services to take advantage of global opportunities in sectors such as cybersecurity and new emerging technologies.

One of the most central parts of our digital economy strategy is the support it provides to First Nations communities. This is an area I am passionate about and I want to ensure Queensland First Nations communities can take full advantage of the digital economy. Priority actions will build on the work already underway to further improve digital connectivity in First Nations communities to ensure they are connected and can economically benefit from digital developments. This includes our co-contributions to the federal government's Regional Connectivity Program and Mobile Black Spot Program which we co-contributed over \$22 million last year, helping to fund 22 important projects. These projects will improve broadband internet and mobile voice and data services in regional and remote Queensland, and I look forward to seeing these projects progress.

We are already seeing some incredible success through the Cherbourg digital service centre. I had the great opportunity to visit the centre earlier this year in my role as ministerial champion for Cherbourg, and it was great to see the opportunities the centre has provided for the local community. The Cherbourg digital service centre was the first community owned and operated digital business in Queensland to operate in a remote Indigenous community. The centre is boosting economic participation of the Cherbourg community in digital transformation with the centre expanding in June 2023 to deliver digital services to Smart Service Queensland, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and commercial company DB results. The centre currently employs 18 First Nations local community members from the local area which is an outstanding achievement. It is great for the community and highlights the very real opportunities a digital future can offer. Our digital transformation does not stop there and I would like to congratulate the department on some really good work they did in Cherbourg.

Our Queensland digital licence has now been downloaded by over 580,000 people and the feedback—

CHAIR: I downloaded it last week myself.

Mr MELLISH: There you go! Isn't it easy? The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The digital licence is the first digital licence in Australia that is compliant with the international standard. This will enable Queenslanders to travel internationally and have their licences validated where other jurisdictions have built to the standard. We are proud of our Queensland licence and we are proud that Queenslanders can feel confident knowing their data is secure. We are focused on our digital future, unlike the LNP. When they were last in power, the LNP did not just sack people in TMR—

Mr MINNIKIN: \$54 million, five years later. Come on!

Mr MELLISH:—they also targeted our digital services employees. The LNP had plans to sell off CITEC. More than 340 jobs were at risk—

Mr HEAD: So desperate. Doesn't have anything good to sell. He keeps coming up with this.

Mr MINNIKIN: No wonder you are spending time in Aspley.

Mr MELLISH:—and Queensland would have lost essential ICT infrastructure, security and reliability. Thankfully, CITEC was saved in 2015 and has now been operating for more than 50 years. The LNP is a clear risk to Queensland's data, cybersecurity and our state's digital future. Chair, only the Miles government is preparing Queensland to take full advantage of the digital transformation.

Mr MINNIKIN: In regards to the 50-cent fares, Minister, can you please advise as to why six months was chosen for the trial period—specifically six months?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. 50-cent fares is an outstanding initiative that we want to introduce to do a couple of things. It is about delivering real, effective, immediate cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders, and it is also about by making public transport practically free by only charging 50 cents per trip, we really want to see what the demand is out there. We really want to see how many more people we can get on buses, on trains, on ferries and on trams. We want to see what the uptake is in that regard. We are still sitting at, I think, 87 per cent of pre-COVID travel on our public transport network. We want to see that get up to at least 100 per cent. It is a six-month trial. It will begin on 5 August and will run as a trial for six months.

This is a really great initiative to not only promote public transport, it is a way of getting people on trains or buses who may not have considered it before, for whom the cost may have been a barrier, but also in terms of delivering real cost-of-living relief to Queenslanders while we are in the current inflationary environment internationally. In terms of the timeframe, it is about it being a trial for public transport and it is about real cost-of-living relief that we can deliver right now.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, why six months? Is that how long you need to evaluate the data? Why specifically six months?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I have pretty much answered that in the previous answer. This is about a couple of factors. This is about real cost-of-living relief in the current inflationary environment, and it is about a length of time for a trial that is a long enough period of time to be able to see what the real benefit is on the network. If you do it for too short a period, you will not get the impacts. If you do it for too long a period, people may not realise this is a 'use it or lose it' trial. As the Premier has said, we want to see the uptick this will bring about on the network. There is a real and present opportunity from next Monday for people to use this 50-cent fares initiative and see how much we can boost public transport patronage. One of the factors that really appeals to me is the flat nature of it. Previously, someone from Logan or Caboolture would have to pay orders of magnitude higher than someone from inner city to travel to work every day. The flat nature of this—

Mr HEAD: No-one in Callide gets to benefit from it.

Mr MELLISH: I am happy to keep talking about the benefits of the 50-cent fare initiative, despite some members not wanting to hear it. This is about delivering a flat structure for some people who may not have been able to commute to work every single day, or travel on the weekend. We want people to go to South Bank and GoMA and to travel about our network on the weekends to go down to the Gold Coast—change to the light rail at Helensvale and go all the way to Surfers Paradise. It is disappointing that the LNP do not support the 50-cent fare initiative. They do not support it being for six months. I want to see it being taken up by locals. It is a great initiative.

Mr MINNIKIN: If I could ask a couple of questions to the CEO of Queensland Rail again, please.

CHAIR: Welcome back, Ms Stapleton.

Mr MINNIKIN: Could you please advise how many morning peak hour Citytrain services currently run and how many additional services will be run once the 50-cent fares are implemented?

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question. We have 8,392 services per week. I have a booklet which tells me how many morning and afternoon services and, unfortunately, I did not bring it in my folder so if you can just give me a moment to obtain that. There will be no additional services provided for the 50-cent fare, though.

Mr MINNIKIN: Could you repeat that—there will be no additional services?

Ms Stapleton: No additional services will be provided.

Mr MINNIKIN: Given the utilisation of the fleet, how many additional services do Queensland Rail have the capacity to deliver?

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a modelling scenario that I would probably have to undertake separately. I do not think I would have the opportunity to do so tonight. Our fleet is composed of both NGRs as well as our own fleet. We have 145.5 what we call six-car assets, 75 NGRs and rest of them are our own fleet three-car sets. We require 114.5 six-car sets to provide services in the morning peak.

Mr MINNIKIN: Can you please confirm whether Queensland Rail were consulted prior to the government's 50-cent fare announcement?

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question. In terms of patronage, firstly, I would like to start by outlining the patronage take-up since COVID. In FY24 we achieved 47.25 million patronage trips which was a 4.4 million person, or trip, increase from FY23. That is still in the mid-80 per cent in terms of the recovery from COVID so we have additional capacity on the network. In terms of the—

Mr MINNIKIN: A point of order, Madam Chair, on relevance. The question was: can the CEO confirm that Queensland Rail was not consulted prior to the government's 50-cent fare announcement?

CHAIR: I am sure Ms Stapleton will get to that. She is providing valuable context and contribution to the premise of your question. Please continue, Ms Stapleton.

Ms Stapleton: Thank you, Chair. We are always discussing what could be done to drive patronage back on the network both with the department of transport—so Translink—as well as other operators around Australia. In terms of the 50-cent campaign, from recollection I did receive a phone call from the director-general on the Friday before the announcement on the Sunday.

Mr MINNIKIN: Whistleblowers have advised the opposition that Queensland Rail has been urgently seeking to complete safety audits of railway stations in advance of August with concerns about overcrowding. Can you confirm whether this is correct or not?

Ms Stapleton: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have no such knowledge. We want to ensure we are ready for the 50-cent campaign. As such, we have actively platform management. We are making sure we have sufficient staff. The RMC, our rail management centre, has over 12,000 cameras across the network so we will be watching very closely from what we call our 'engine room' which is situated at the RMC, but I have no other knowledge, member.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a question to the minister. Can the minister assure Queenslanders that our public transport network has sufficient capacity to cater for any patronage uplift that comes from the reduced fares which start next month?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. What I can say to the member is that we are very keen to see the outcomes of this 50-cent fare initiative. Patronage levels are still well below pre-COVID levels at 87 per cent which shows there is capacity on the network. We are working closely with delivery partners across the state to determine services and routes that may experience some pressure across the peak periods during the week. Pleasingly, we struck a deal with Brisbane City Council to ensure Brisbane locals will have access to reliable public transport services on their bus network. An additional contribution of \$75 million for the next 12 months will be provided by the state towards the Transport for Brisbane bus network. This deal will include an additional 160,000 bus services across Brisbane every year and it will fund additional buses during the 50-cent fare trial to assist with providing additional capacity on our network.

We also have 50 sweeper buses that we can deploy across the network. Last week we were at Volgren where a number of rail replacement buses have been built here in Brisbane—here in Queensland—and are rolling out. We have 50 additional buses ready to provide to delivery partners across the state—not only in Brisbane but also elsewhere.

In terms of the rail capacity, we have just accepted the last of the NGR trains—I think it was Sunday—that we had to get retrofitted following the LNP purchasing trains that did not meet disability standards. The LNP purchased cheap trains from overseas that we had to retrofit. We had to go back and completely redesign the interior of these, and that work has only been completed now. The workers in Maryborough did an outstanding job, but I would have preferred if they were building new trains—not fixing existing ones. Seventy-five trains had to be progressively taken out of services, fixed up and retrofitted with what they should have been built with in the first place. That is a cost to the government. It is a drain on the manufacturing capability—

Mr WATTS: I call a point of order on relevance, please. Can the minister try to answer the question that we have asked—

CHAIR: I do not think the minister had completed his response to the question.

Mr WATTS:—rather than the minister would like us to ask.

CHAIR: Are you talking over the chair, member for Toowoomba North?

Mr WATTS: No, I was still finishing my point of order so I do not think I was talking over anybody.

CHAIR: The minister had completed his contribution. Member for Chatsworth, do you have a question?

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Chair. There will be no overcrowding and nobody left behind at a bus stop or rail platform when 50-cent fares are introduced?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. The nature of public transport travel is that people can change their habits on a daily basis. We want to see what the demand is out there. We are pulling out all stops to make sure the network is ready for the increase in demand. The government has done this in the past. In 2016, the Fairer Fares initiative was a program that dramatically reduced fares—we have learnings and experience from that. We have looked at international examples. The department has been hard at work modelling this from a bus, ferry and train perspective. Gold Coast Light Rail is able to provide two extra trams for the services during the period. That transport mode has been kicking on and getting great patronage figures—we want to see that increase. These are, in a

sense, good problems to have. We want to see people on the transport network. We want to see people making a decision to use public transport, maybe for the first time or for the first time in a few years. We want to see what can be done.

Mr MINNIKIN: This is a question to the director-general. My question relates to the Riverway Drive project which is listed in QTRIP on page 151 as a \$95 million project, putting it below the \$100 million threshold for BPIC. Whistleblowers have told the opposition that the department knows that the project value is above \$100 million but to avoid BPIC they will sign the contract at a value of \$95 million and immediately sign a variation to reflect that the actual value of the project is, in fact, over \$100 million. Can the director-general confirm this has occurred?

CHAIR: I will allow some latitude in the answer to that question because my interpretation sees a fair bit of hypothetical contained within it. I will allow you to respond as you see fit, Director-General.

Ms Stannard: Thank you for the guidance, Chair. Thank you for the question, member. The Riverway Drive Stage 2 project's detailed planning was completed in 2020 and several project complexities contributed to the project's \$95 million cost estimate. That included the number of intersections and access within the project alignment, drainage and afflux considerations, and pavement conditions. TMR commenced detailed design work and stakeholder consultation in 2021 and detailed design was completed mid-2022. Construction was originally expected to commence in mid-2022 and be completed by 2024. The project has been delayed due to timeframes for Townsville City Council's pipeline duplication project; it must be constructed prior to TMR commencing the road upgrade project.

The project is less than \$100 million and that means the Queensland government's best practice principles policy and the transport best practice industry conditions, BPIC, are not applicable. The Riverway Drive Stage 2 project details were reviewed prior to tender evaluation and award when the department was confident of the market pricing. The QTRIP value is \$95 million. It was under the \$100 million threshold prior to going to market. The P90 estimate and the tenders received indicated the \$95 million project value was a credible valuation, supporting the outcome that this project is moving forward on the basis that it is not subject to the BPIC policy requirements. For any contracts awarded of a value under \$100 million where, during the project lifetime, additional funding is made available which may take the total project value over \$100 million, there is no retrospective application of the BPIC policy. That is important because the tender conditions are made clear at the time we are tendering the project.

In early 2024 Townsville City Council advised TMR that construction and commissioning of the water main is expected to be completed by mid-2024 and this delay has had an impact on forecast total cost. Based on the timing for completion of the water main works, TMR called tenders for construction of the roadworks on 14 March 2024. While the pipeline project has impacted the original timeframes for Riverway Drive, shoring up water supply for Townsville is important as is the road upgrade. The construction tenders were called on 14 March, they closed on 16 May and a contract was awarded to BMD Constructions on 9 July 2024. There is no intent to price the project below a BPIC threshold.

Mr MINNIKIN: Just to be crystal clear, this Riverway Drive project will not exceed \$95 million?

CHAIR: Gosh, Director-General, that was the most comprehensive response to a question I have heard all day but we are getting it restated.

Mr MINNIKIN: Madam Chair, I just want it on the record. That is all.

CHAIR: I think it is well on the record. In fact, it is just plain repetitive, but it is your time that you are wasting. Director-General, if you would like to respond I will leave it with you to maybe repeat that all again.

Ms Stannard: I thank the chair for the clarification and I promise not to repeat it again. I thank the member for the clarification. I cannot crystal ball gaze the future of a project delivery. I can tell you that we do our absolute best to price a project accurately when we go to market and we do not seek to game a threshold around a policy.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you. I have a question to the minister in relation to the Gold Coast faster rail project—Capital Statement page 97. In a recent question on notice the minister was unable to advise how much faster the faster rail project would make a trip from the Gold Coast. Minister, why not?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question about this. It does reconfirm for me a suspicion that the LNP are keen to scrap this project in favour of the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line project all the way to Maroochydore, which they have made it clear they want to happen. Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail is essential to increasing capacity on the Beenleigh and Gold Coast lines, especially during

Brisbane 2032 and beyond. The estimated \$5.75 billion project would unblock a choke point and unlock capacity by doubling the tracks from two to four between Kuraby and Beenleigh. It involves a complete rebuild of nine train stations and removes five level crossings.

The local members down that way, the mayor—everyone is very supportive of this project. This will be a great boost in terms of the travel speed on that network, the frequency of services on that network and the time someone has to wait for a train on that part of the network. This is a really great project for that part of the world. It is primarily about addressing track constraints south of the Cross River Rail tunnel. Currently all services on the Gold Coast and Beenleigh line are constrained by single tracks in each direction. This leads to a pinch point between Kuraby and Beenleigh where express services compete with all-stop services, resulting in some all-stop services being delayed so that express services can pass. These constraints also prevent more peak services being added.

The section of the alignment between Kuraby and Beenleigh is also amongst the oldest on the network with sharp curves requiring trains to slow down to 40 kilometres per hour at certain points, slowing express and all-stop services. By removing these sharp curves from the alignment and, importantly, doubling track capacity from two to four tracks, the project aims to free up the movement of trains on the Gold Coast and Beenleigh line, allowing more frequent, reliable and faster services.

It is anticipated this project will result in travel time improvements. The key benefits will be the increased frequency and reliability of services on the Gold Coast and Beenleigh line. The exact travel time savings for the project will be determined at the point of timetable redesign. Let's be clear; when you are doubling the tracks from two to four, you can dramatically increase the number of all-stop services, the number of express services and the number of connecting services. People want to know if it takes them five minutes less, 10 minutes less or 15 minutes less to get to their job from the point they get to the station. That is what is important to them.

Mr MINNIKIN: That is right and you cannot answer it. I have a question to the minister. The Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project has blown out in cost by \$3.15 billion, an increase of 121 per cent. Can you please explain the reason for such a massive increase in cost blowout?

CHAIR: Is that question to the director-general or the minister?

Mr MINNIKIN: The minister.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. As I have detailed earlier, there are dramatic pressures on infrastructure projects not just in Queensland, not just nationally, but internationally as well. I am further advised that the initial cost was an initial estimate made in 2021. Since then it has been well documented that costs have increased, impacting material, supply chains and labour. The project is currently out for procurement with contractors asked to consider innovative design and construction processes to help ensure the project stays within budget. That is an important point. This is currently out for procurement. When you are putting it out for procurement, you actually have to put a believable number out there if you want someone to bid for it. If we want someone to bid for and build this project, which we absolutely do, we need to be doing that at a price point that people will actually bid for it and want to get the project done. This is an outstanding project. I have never heard a word of support for it from the LNP. We want to get it done. It is crucial to our network. It is crucial to South-East Queensland. It is crucial to having more all-stop services, more express stops and it is a key part of our network going forward.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, QTRIP includes a note about this project that, 'Cost and timing is subject to confirmation following market engagement and consideration'. How can Queenslanders be confident that we will not see any further cost increases?

Mr MELLISH: I am pretty sure I have just answered that question in that the project is currently out for procurement with contractors being asked to come back with their designs and what they propose to do in terms of the construction to help ensure the project stays within budget. Since coming into this portfolio the director-general and I have done some good work in this regard in terms of the future cost of projects and what we can deliver in Queensland. We want to make sure that when we are coming into these projects we are coming in with our eyes open. We want to make sure that we are assessing the full risks of these projects and the full costs so that some of these increases we have seen in the past do not happen into the future. To be quite frank, we want to get this project done and we want to make sure that when we put a number out to the market, it is a number that the market can deliver the project for.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have another question to the minister. Questions on notice last year showed that the Ormeau main line connection works and the Ormeau feeder substation are essential for the delivery of the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project and the maintenance facility at Ormeau. Why are these works included as a separate line item and not part of the faster rail or QTMP projects?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. If these were questions on notice from last year, I would suggest that they might be before my time as minister, but if they relate to—

Mr MINNIKIN: You are the minister.

Mr MELLISH: Before my time as minister, as I indicated. I would further add that, if these are QTMP projects, which I suggest they may be, the right minister to question for that is not myself but Minister Butcher and those questions should have been addressed during his session.

Mr MINNIKIN: It could have been part of the faster rail project. I will move on to the Northern Transitway. With the Northern Transitway project, which you would be all too familiar with, what went wrong with it? It is not complete. What went wrong?

CHAIR: He heard. Give him a chance to respond.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. The Northern Transitway project is a fantastic project on the north side of Brisbane which is additional bus lanes extending up from, essentially, the northern end of the Northern Busway and the Airport Link project, delivering high-quality public transport along Gympie Road—dedicated bus lanes during peak hours. I know the LNP want to scrap this project. At every step they have wanted to knock it back. They have wanted to cancel it at every step. We are committed to delivering it. In terms of this project, it has faced significant challenges including significant public utility plant asset relocations, poor ground conditions resulting in an increased pavement reconstruction and significant fibre-optic equipment relocation and upgrade costs along the project corridor. As the local member for the part of the world to the north of this project, I am very keen on this project. We have delivered the project up to Rode Road. I rode on it last week.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes, not Hamilton Road.

Mr MELLISH: It is a great addition to the transport network. As part of this year's budget, the member may be aware that we have committed an additional \$17 million towards surface works for the Gympie Road bypass tunnel—another outstanding project we are pushing through in this part of the world. As part of those surface works we will be assessing the further extension of the Northern Transitway. This is a project that is supported in that part of the world. We have brought Brisbane City Council around. They are now very supportive of this project. It seems the only people who are not supportive of this project is the state LNP in Queensland.

Mr MINNIKIN: Fascinating. Minister, the unfinished worksite is an eyesore, it is a safety hazard and it is impacting small local businesses. What is the future of the Northern Transitway project? When will it be complete to Hamilton Road, not Rode Road?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. As I have just indicated to the member, we have an additional \$17 million in the budget to assess surface works related to the potential Gympie Road bypass tunnel. That project would dramatically open up what you could do on the surface in terms of public transport for the future. What I am not keen to do is to build something that we then have to come back in five years and rip up and do again. Part of this work is if the Gympie Road bypass tunnel goes ahead what can we do on the surface that would dramatically increase the public transport use and the active transport use and essentially make Gympie Road a much more livable part of the world? We committed to doing that extra work. In terms of the surface work at the moment, I have been out there. I inspected it several weeks ago. The department will be undertaking further work in the near future to rectify some of the issues that are there on the surface, but let us be clear: this whole Northern Transitway project is something the LNP opposed.

Mr MINNIKIN: So that is years away?

CHAIR: Member for Chatsworth, you have another question?

Mr MINNIKIN: You have not answered the question again. Minister, in relation to the inland freight route and referring to the Capital Statement at page 108, the Queensland government has previously announced that it would bring forward funding for the inland freight route. Can you explain, Minister, why last year's budget forecast an expenditure of \$40 million in the 2024-25 financial year but this year's budget shows only \$30.8 million will be spent?

Mr MELLISH: In terms of the inland freight route, this is an important commitment from this government. These are important projects that we are keen to deliver and that we are keen to get done across Queensland. In terms of specific changes in QTRIP from one year to the next, I understand that

sometimes projects come in and projects come out in different years. This is a project that we are committed to. It is jointly funded with the Australian government. The \$1 billion project between Charters Towers and Mungindi will deliver for industry and community. We are already delivering our \$107 million early works package along the inland freight route and this project, when complete, would reduce travel time for truckies from Far North Queensland to Melbourne by four to five hours and Sydney by over an hour. Importantly, it would reduce congestion on the Bruce Highway, reducing long distance truck movements by up to 49 per cent. Again, let us be clear: when we are talking about significant investment into significant roads, before the last state election the LNP promised \$33 billion worth of works on the Bruce Highway but they had only budgeted for \$30 million.

Mr MINNIKIN: I have a couple of questions about the Linkfield Road overpass, Minister. Documents released under RTI show that in August 2023 the department put together a community newsletter for the Linkfield Road overpass that stated that construction would start in 'early 2024'. It was never released. Here we are in the third-quarter of 2024 and the government has only promised early works would get underway in the coming months. Given the multiyear delay in starting the Beams Road crossing project, can you please advise if the constituents in your electorate are sick of the delays and excuses when it comes to Labor's promised road projects?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I would point out to the member that there has been a significant federal infrastructure review in that intervening period which has caused a rethink of changing the schedule and changing the scope of a number of projects that we are delivering in conjunction with the federal government. The federal government is funding this project to the tune of \$125 million and the Queensland government is contributing \$50.5 million. In terms of the budget allocations for this, these have been squared off in this year's federal budget and then following that the Queensland state budget. We are proceeding with early works very imminently—very soon—on this project. I am keen to get it done. I note that the former federal government announced this project with much fanfare—announced their funding—and then did not fund any of it within their forward estimates. I had to actually run a local campaign to get them to bring their funding to within their own forward estimates, which was pretty significant given that they were a majority funder of this project. We are working much better with the current federal government and I am really keen to see this project get underway and get done.

Mr MINNIKIN: Minister, given what you have just said, last year's budget showed that \$31.4 million would be spent in the 2024-25 financial year. That figure has been reduced to \$5.8 million. Why and what will this small amount of funding deliver?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I have answered this part of the question before. There was a federal infrastructure review in the intervening period where that had to be dealt with first before proceeding with the broader project.

Mr MINNIKIN: The August 2023 newsletter on this project that was never released showed the project completion date as late 2026, so what is the current forecast completion date now for this project?

Mr MELLISH: I feel like I have answered that part of the question a number of times. I am happy to refer to my director-general for some more specifics about this project if she is able to add anything. In terms of the timeframes for these projects, when there is a significant federal government infrastructure funding review that is going to change the timeframes for these projects. When the federal government changes their funding arrangements on the Bruce Highway in particular from 80-20 to fifty-fifty, that is going to affect what the state can deliver in the immediate short term and into the future. I will just see if my director-general has anything to add in that regard.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you.

Ms Stannard: The Australian government's \$125 million commitment forms part of its significant investment to the Bruce Highway. The Queensland government is also contributing \$50.5 million to help with this critical infrastructure. Post the Australian government's review that the minister referred to, the project can now move ahead and the Queensland government has already released \$10 million to the Department of Transport and Main Roads to ensure early works can begin in the coming months, as the minister referred to. Those works will pave the way for construction to commence at Bald Hills. The upgrade will address the issues of congestion and queue lengths, as well as provision for active transport. You will note, as passengers and drivers do in that section, that a bridge strike on Gympie Arterial Road can cause significant impacts and you will be pleased to know the project design increases the clearance height from 4.7 metres to six metres. We are now in the process of finalising

the planning following that community consultation. I am just skimming through to try to find the key answer. I am sorry, but I do not have in front of me a timeframe for the project main works. We will seek to get that to you before the end of the session.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Director-General. I appreciate that.

CHAIR: Member for Lytton?

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 78 of the Queensland Transport and Main Roads Investment Program 2024-28, can the minister please outline how the government is investing \$5.5 billion in the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line and any other transport investments in the region, and is he aware of any risky alternatives?

Mr MELLISH: The Sunshine Coast is booming, as everyone knows, bringing more people and, unfortunately, more cars to the region. By 2041, daily trips around the Sunshine Coast are expected to increase by 45 per cent between 2021 and 2046. That is over 800,000 additional daily trips on the local network by 2041. The region needs a big boost to public transport and the new Miles government is delivering. We have secured \$5.5 billion in joint funding with the federal government to build stage 1 of the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line. That is 19 kilometres from Beerwah to Caloundra. More than half of the entire new line is being built in stage 1.

The Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line will make a daily commute at least 45 minutes quicker than a car during peak times. That is 90 minutes a day, 7½ hours a week, 15 days a year that residents are going to get back in their lives. The Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line will also help ease congestion. Up to six trains an hour will run during peak, which will spread passenger demand and help minimise vehicle flows around stations. The \$5.5 billion in funding includes building a park-and-ride, a bus interchange, kiss-and-ride facilities and bike storage at every station. There will also be new footpaths and dedicated cycleways connecting high-growth areas to new stations.

As part of Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line, the department is planning for increased bus services along and around the rail line, including high-frequency services to Caloundra, Birtinya or Maroochydore. The new Miles government is also doing a \$16.5 million detailed business case to find the best routes and optimal services for the coastal corridor. We already announced last year that increased bus services on a dedicated corridor are the preferred option. Further technical investigations and assessments to refine the design of the coastal corridor, including station locations and active transport options, are underway.

The business case is also looking at improving the existing Sunshine Coast bus network, including increasing services to ensure the broader region gets integrated and improved public transport. There is the \$1 billion Beerburrum to Nambour upgrade, of course. Early works on this are complete and they include the opening of new park-and-ride facilities at Landsborough and Nambour, a new bus interchange at Landsborough station and a realigned section of Steve Irwin Way near the Glass House Mountains. The rest of stage 1 includes duplicating the rail track between Beerburrum and Beerwah, addressing three level crossings and expanding the park-and-ride facility in Beerburrum. The detailed design is expected to be completed later this year, with construction starting shortly after.

What is the alternative from the opposition? Scaremongering about Caloundra becoming a car park! Experts know the best way to reduce congestion and get cars off the road is to invest in public transport, but we also know it does not happen overnight. That is why we are increasing the north coast road network, including almost \$1 billion on the Bruce Highway and Gateway Motorway to Dohles Rocks Road upgrade, over \$700 million on the Bruce Highway between Anzac Avenue and Uhlmann Road, \$290 million on the Bruce Highway Dohles Rocks Road to Anzac Avenue upgrade, over \$15 million for improving safety on Nicklin Way and building a new intersection at Third Avenue, \$11 million upgrading the intersection at Glass House Mountains Road and Caloundra Street, and \$6 million to construct a pathway and a pedestrian bridge at Eumundi-Noosa Road, Eumundi.

Of course, the LNP previous government cut \$1.6 billion from Queensland transport and roads budget, they opposed light rail on the Gold Coast and they sacked more than 20 per cent of the TMR workforce. The opposition leader, of course, sat at the same cabinet table.

CHAIR: Before I go to the member for Mundingburra, I remind you that we are in the last section of government time for questions before moving into the final piece of non-government questions, for which there will be 20 minutes. I note that there are a couple of things to come back to. I remind everybody that is the space we are in before we hand over to the minister to wrap up the session. Member for Mundingburra, over to you.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. Regarding the significant investment for the Bruce Highway, outlined on page 8 of Budget Paper No. 3, can the minister advise what this investment means for jobs and economic activity in regional Queensland and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: The Bruce Highway, of course, is the backbone of Queensland, moving freight, commuters and tourists up and down our state. In June this year, we released the 15-year vision and action plans for the Bruce Highway and the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan. This was the work of the independent Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council, established in 2017 for the specific purpose of taking politics off the Bruce. It is a plan for the next 15 years on the highway and includes three five-year rolling action plans and the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan. It outlines the high priority upgrades that will guide our future investment in this nationally significant corridor.

The Miles government has \$6 billion on the Bruce. From 2027 we will invest \$250 million per annum on the Bruce, an increase of \$50 million every year. This builds on the already-strong Miles government record on the Bruce Highway. In terms of this government alone, we have delivered 98 projects worth over \$4.6 billion.

I note the member for Chatsworth's recent drive along the Bruce Highway. Upon review, it seems he must have missed the major projects currently underway on the highway, including the \$1.73 billion Rockhampton Ring Road, the \$1.1 billion Gympie bypass and the almost \$500 million Mackay Ring Road project. Our Bruce Highway upgrade program also outlines the following investments: the \$350 million Mackay port access, the \$336 million Tiaro bypass, the \$250 million Gladstone-to-Rockhampton project, the \$225 million Bruce Highway Cairns southern access, the \$470 million Goorganga flood immunity upgrade, the almost \$1 billion Gateway Motorway to Dohles Rocks Road upgrade and the Dohles Rocks Road to Anzac Avenue upgrade as well.

The member must have also missed the projects we have completed on the Bruce recently, including the six-lane upgrade between Caloundra Road and the Sunshine Motorway, and between Caboolture-Bribie Island Road and Steve Irwin Way, which was I was very pleased to open earlier this year. Major projects in Central Queensland include the Yeppen floodplain upgrade and the Rockhampton northern access upgrade. In North Queensland we have the Haughton River floodplain upgrade, the Townsville Ring Road, the Cattle and Frances creeks upgrades, and various upgrades to the southern access of Cairns.

The member must have been distracted to have missed some key safety initiatives delivered along the Bruce, including over 255 kilometres of wide centre line treatment, over 100 new overtaking lanes constructed, over 209 protected right-lane turns installed, over 66 new and upgraded rest areas, over 530 kilometres of roadside safety barriers installed, almost 75 kilometres of highway duplication and eight flood immunity upgrades. Eighty per cent of the Bruce Highway now has either a wide centre line treatment and audio tactile markings or a concrete barrier.

The member also neglected to mention the critical projects we are investing in to take heavy vehicles off the Bruce Highway, building safer and more resilient roads for everyone so truckies can get to where they need to go. Early works are underway on the \$1 billion second Bruce, the inland freight route from Mungindi to Charters Towers, and work is underway on our \$500 million investment in beef roads in the broader Central Queensland region. By taking those heavy vehicles off the Bruce, we make it safer for everyone and make sure freight and heavy vehicles can get to where they need to be.

As transport minister I have travelled over a dozen times on the Bruce Highway this year, but when I drive on the Bruce I announce funding, deliver projects and meet our workers on site. I will always make a point of meeting our workers on site. I speak regularly with local MPs and our local TMR officers to hear firsthand what is happening on our roads. That is what matters to Queenslanders, not some staged political drive by the member for Chatsworth. But what else would we expect from a party that delivered the famous Bruce Highway hoax—a \$33 billion commitment with no funding for construction and minimal planning money for a consultant to tell us what we already know. We know the LNP have a \$6.6 billion black hole, created by their wild claim to get the sunshine direct rail to Maroochydore by 2032. We know they sacked over 20 per cent of the TMR workforce. We know they cut \$1.6 billion from Queensland transport and roads budget when last in government. They have a plan for cuts. We have a 15-year plan for the Bruce Highway and we have a record we can stand behind.

Mr WALKER: My question is to the minister. With regard to TMR's objective to enhance the safety of the transport system through quality regulation and road safety programs, referenced on page 6 of the Service Delivery Statements, can the minister advise what the Miles government approach is to road safety, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. Tragically 277 people lost their lives on Queensland roads in 2023. These are not just numbers; these are people whose lives have been cut short and who have left families and friends behind. The Miles government is committed to bringing down the number of lives lost on our roads. We want to see this number dramatically decrease. In fact, no level of trauma is acceptable and we will not stop investing in road safety programs, campaigns and initiatives.

The Queensland Road Safety Strategy 2022-2031 and subsequent action plan is our plan to reduce the number of lives lost on our roads. We make no apology for taking a hard line stance on road safety. The strategy and action plan work together to help us prioritise safety upgrades, improve driver education, make school zones safer and develop policies to reduce road crashes and trauma.

Further, in January 2023 a Road Safety Roundtable was convened that brought together more than 40 transport experts, stakeholders and industry leaders to explore further options to reduce road trauma. As a result of the round table, this government has invested millions of dollars into multiple initiatives that address high-risk roads and support our most vulnerable road users, including schoolchildren.

Other key reform initiatives delivered by this government include tougher penalties for high-risk driving offences such as speeding, running red lights and not wearing a seatbelt; move over and slow down laws; new rules to improve personal mobility device safety which I went through earlier; developing child restraint video guides for parents and carers; the introduction of cocaine to roadside drug testing; boosting community road safety grant funding to support our road safety education providers and the Learner Driver Mentor Program; and the introduction of a new grants program for motorcycle rider courses. We have also removed fees for the popular PrepL Supervisor Course, an online learner program recommended for people who will supervise learner drivers.

We are commencing a pilot of rural intersection activated warning signs at high-risk rural locations. We have a further expansion of our existing Camera Detected Offence Program and the rollout of speed cameras in roadwork zones and school zones. Those are two pretty important initiatives. As I have travelled around the state I have talked to a lot of RoadTek staff in particular who say the more we can roll out speed cameras in roadwork zones the more beneficial that will be to them feeling safe in their place of work.

CHAIR: Minister, I am going to have to interrupt you there to ensure that we comply with our timeframes. I turn to the member for Chatsworth for the next question.

Mr MINNIKIN: My question is directed to the director-general in relation to cybersecurity. I refer to Budget Paper 4 page 93 regarding the critical cybersecurity protections for customers. The minister would be aware of the Auditor-General's report 12, *Responding to and recovering from cyber attacks*. The report notes, 'Entities relied heavily on third parties ... when dealing with responses to cyber incidents ...' However, none had tested how these third parties would perform in a crisis. Have all third parties used when responding to cyber attacks now been tested?

Ms Stannard: Thank you, member, for the question. We certainly provide at a whole-of-government level, through the Queensland Customer and Digital Group, support in terms of how agencies should manage their cyber risk. The Queensland Audit Office did table a report—you referred to it—*Responding to and recovering from cyber attacks*. Queensland government services are heavily dependent on digital technology, as we all are. We recognise also that that threat landscape is evolving rapidly.

The government has invested significantly in response to the increase in global threat both from cyber criminals and nation states. The QAO did note that the government committed an additional \$73.5 million in additional funding to the Queensland government Cyber Security Unit over a four-year period. The increase in funding reflects the increase in risk but also the government's commitment to improve cyber hygiene across all state energies, including statutory entities and local governments.

The 2024-25 budget further reinforces the government's commitment to preparedness and resilience with a further \$10 million invested to extend the Cyber Security Unit program. That will assist agencies with specific initiatives targeted at the agency requirements but delivered locally in each of those agencies.

The audit noted that the expertise of the Cyber Security Unit is of 'great potential value to public sector entities' but not all the entities were aware of that Cyber Security Unit. In response to that, we have taken forward all the recommendations and findings in the report. They have been accepted and planning is underway to address the recommendations. This includes the release of a Cyber Security

Unit strategic plan in 2024. The plan will promote the portfolio of services offered by the Queensland Customer and Digital Group to all agencies so that agencies are aware of the support we can give. That awareness will help them to prepare through the kind of test and practise strategies.

It is also intended that the government will release the Queensland government cybersecurity strategy later this year. That strategy would align to those budget commitments, together with the investments in cyber resilience across the government.

Mr WEIR: Minister, I table some photos of turf that has been laid over the road base on the Warrego Highway between Hatton Vale and Minden. Can the minister advise how much money was wasted on this pointless exercise?

Mr MELLISH: I might wait for the photos, if that is all right.

CHAIR: Is leave granted for the images to be tabled? Leave is granted.

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am not a road engineer, but I would not expect that laying turf on a road base is something that should be done. I would not say that that is a good use of money. I am happy to ask my director-general about this one. I would hazard a guess to say that the director-general may not be aware of this specific project at this point in time. I am happy to agree with the member on that. That does not look like a wise use of resources.

Ms Stannard: Can I just confirm the location?

Mr WEIR: It is between Hatton Vale and Minden on the Warrego Highway.

Ms Stannard: Thank you for the detail. Maybe I will offer just one comment. Drainage is obviously very important as the road will have a concave shape at the top so that water can run off. It is possible that that is a permeable surface allowing some water to run in, but I do not know the location specifically, so I will take some advice.

Mr WEIR: Can you come back and let us know if there are any other sections of bitumen being turfed?

Mr MELLISH: We will see if we can come back in the time. We might not be able to come back in the time on that particular one.

Mr WATTS: My question is to the director-general with reference to QTRIP on page 60. In April a question on notice advised that the welding repair works on the Bremer River Bridge would be completed by mid-2024. Can the director-general advise why this work has not yet been completed?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the question. The Warrego crosses the Bremer at Karalee, as you know, and connects Brisbane with Toowoomba. There are about 30,000 vehicles crossing the Bremer River westbound every day including about 4,000 heavy vehicles. It is a very important crossing in your part of the world. The Warrego and Bremer are also important parts of the National Land Transport Network. There are two separate bridges that make up the Bremer River crossing. The eastbound concrete bridge was constructed in the 1980s and the westbound—

Mr WATTS: Point of order, Chair: because time is very short, could we just go to the answer? The question is: can you advise why this work has not yet been completed? I have some further questions.

Ms Stannard: All I can say is that we identified fatigue cracks in mid-2023. In early 2024 we did an options analysis that identified replacement and repair needs. The westbound rehabilitation works are targeted to start in 2025 and continue through 2026, and they are subject to the tendering and construction market.

Mr WATTS: Can you provide a little bit more information about the replacement of the deck on the main spans which will be required to be removed so that we can get the current speed and weight restrictions lifted? That is additional work to what was originally supposed to be completed mid-2024?

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the supplementary question. You are correct: there are short-term works, welding and other repairs that are being carried out to ensure the bridge remains open and safe for all road users, and we have installed some traffic signals to support that crossover. In addition, we have identified that medium-term work you referred to, which is the concrete deck and the steel girders—the superstructure that needs to be replaced. That is the preferred approach because it extends the life of the bridge and allows us to remove those load restrictions. The westbound rehabilitation works are targeted to start in 2025 and continue through to 2026. Your initial question was about the short-term welding and other repairs. They are being carried out to ensure the bridge can be safe for all road users.

Mr WATTS: We now know when the re-decking is expected to occur, but the restrictions on traffic and/or the bridge being closed to achieve that, will that take days or months? How long will it take? When will communication about the restriction on traffic flow be communicated to the people of Ipswich, Ipswich West and beyond?

Ms Stannard: The rehabilitation works are expected to commence in 2025 to extend the life of the existing bridge structure. There will be significant traffic control measures, as you have identified, and that would include a long-term speed limit reduction. The replacement with a new bridge would take a minimum of five years to plan, design and commence building. The existing structure would still require strengthening and rehabilitation. I do not have a duration to do that work. I can only say to you that, from my knowledge as an engineer, it will take significant time to remove the bridge deck and replace it. I think it would be definitely months rather than weeks. If my team is quick, they might get me some advice to you about that before we close.

Mr WATTS: I have a final question on this issue.

CHAIR: I want to remind everybody that it is now 9.01. We will be ending questions at just after 10 past 9, so if you have things you need to come back on after the member for Toowoomba North's next question, you could start on those. If we have time left we will take further questions.

Mr WATTS: I understand that the Bremer River Bridge is the same design as the Barron River Bridge, which is planned to be replaced. Isn't replacement the inevitable outcome for the Bremer River Bridge as well?

Ms Stannard: You are right in the sense that the Barron and the Bremer are of the same vintage—a time when we found the steel has a brittle element which we need to respond to. As I understand it, the issue for the Bremer is about restoring the level of surface that we had. We need to restore the bridge so we can maintain that level of service. It is a cost to deliver the same, and we are working on that. In terms of the Barron River, we have a business case underway and detailed design underway for the replacement of that bridge. They are quite different environments in which those bridges are situated. The Barron is very steep, there are a lot of significant and extreme weather events, so in order to provide a resilient bridge structure replacement is suitable. In contrast, the Bremer offers us a decent foundation where we can repair and restore that access.

Mr WATTS: When you said the bridge will potentially be closed for months, is that a full bridge closure? We will be down to two lanes 24/7, or what will that closure look like? That is a significant bottleneck and financial impost and time impost on everybody using the Warrego.

Ms Stannard: I thank the member for the clarification. I would not suggest we would have full closures for months. As you note, that is a significant impost. I will not try and pretend I know the construction methodology proposed. I think I would be giving you information beyond the detail I have. We are happy to provide that level of information when it is developed, perhaps in an appropriate briefing.

Mr HEAD: Madam Chair—

CHAIR: I want to make sure we cover off on anything that is coming back with a further response, and if there is time you will get a question, member for Callide. Director-General, do you have anything you want to come back on?

Ms Stannard: We do have a number of matters that the member for Maiwar raised. I will try and keep it quick so you can proceed. There was a question about smart ticketing. I can confirm that no money is being spent at all by TMR on Cubic branding. I can confirm that our marketing spend is used to undertake essential customer education and behavioural change activities, including raising awareness of smart ticketing, explaining how to use smart ticketing and providing on-the-ground support to our customers. The total marketing budget for the project is \$3.6 million. The member pointed out there is a budget of \$510,000 in the 2024-25 budget. That represents the budget that is remaining of the \$3.6 million, so in each of the preceding years we have spent a small amount of that on appropriate marketing. The remainder is the \$510,000 in this year's budget.

In terms of the Airtrain deal, I can confirm that the terms of the Brisbane Airport Rail Link deed are commercial-in-confidence, as are any related documents. I have to fulfil my commitments to maintain that confidentiality under those arrangements.

The member asked a question about the cost of the Bribie Island bridge. I can confirm that the department did provide advice to the government, informing stakeholder emerging transport priorities on a strategic cost estimate to deliver the proposed concept design for a new bridge to Bribie Island. The figure is based on investigations that have been undertaken during business case planning. That business case planning is expected to be finalised in late 2024.

The member asked me why certain projects were given 100 funding and others were given fifty-fifty funding. The minister correctly pointed out that we offer 100 per cent funding for the design phase and fifty-fifty funding for construction, so it is that those are in design.

Mr MELLISH: I have a few as well. There was question from the member for Chatsworth about the timing for completion of Linkfield Road. I can advise that a key preliminary activity is the relocation of the Energex public utility plant. That is scheduled to commence in the coming months but is subject to Energex's program. Following that we will have a better idea of when the project will be completed.

Regarding the member for Maiwar's question on travel time savings on the Gympie Road bypass, I can advise the committee of the following: North Brisbane Infrastructure states in their Gympie Road Bypass—Investment Proposal Summary of June 2024 that an example of best travel time savings including up to 32 minutes per day on a return trip when travelling on the Gympie Road bypass during peak periods at opening. The summary report is available on North Brisbane Infrastructure's website.

In relation to the member for Chatsworth's Gold Coast Light Rail question, I can advise that my office received a copy of the preliminary base case summary report on 27 March 2024 and it was released publicly on 9 April 2024, so I would say that is a pretty good turnaround. I also answered that as per question on notice 421.

I would also like to take the opportunity to clarify my response to the member for Chatsworth regarding the timeframe for the delivery of the Cross River Rail project. In the transcript from the Premier's estimates session last week the Premier clearly confirms that the target for opening remains 2026. The only mention of the word 'early' is made by the Leader of the Opposition. The Premier is clearly referring to the Cross River Rail target date as 2026. I would suggest that the member for Chatsworth was potentially misrepresenting the Premier's remarks in his questions earlier in the session.

Ms Stannard: My apologies, I missed one. The member asked about cyber risks and the Queensland Audit Office findings. There are external providers. They are experienced providers who respond to many incidents nationally. Familiarisation processes have been concluded with three of the four and the fourth one is underway now. I can also confirm the default fare during the 50-cent trial will be \$2.50.

CHAIR: Member for Callide, you have all of two minutes.

Mr HEAD: Minister, I refer to media reports from 2022 that the new Callide Power Station C4 generator was stuck at the port of Gladstone because TMR owned bridges were unable to carry the weight of the equipment. We have recently seen further delays in the commissioning of the new generator. Can the minister advise how long transport of the equipment was delayed due to the unsuitability of TMR bridges?

Mr MELLISH: I am happy to answer the question as best I can.

CHAIR: Given that a substantial component of that relates to a portfolio we had in here earlier this morning where that question could have been asked.

Mr MELLISH: I would say it is a different minister and also before my time as this minister. We would be unlikely to be able to come back to you in this session on that answer.

Mr HEAD: Thank you. I will move on to the next question. How many bridges and structures are on the TMR network right now?

Mr MELLISH: I have an answer for you on that one. We have over 3,205 bridges owned on the TMR network. That is quite a few. Our bridges are on average 45 years old, with the oldest being 139 years old. They are mostly made of steel, concrete—

Mr HEAD: Thank you, Minister. You did answer that question.

CHAIR: You are interrupting.

Mr MELLISH: I was excited about bridges.

Mr HEAD: It was just about the number.

CHAIR: Member for Callide, you are not chairing this session. Minister, have you completed your response?

Mr MELLISH: Last year we built 36 new bridges is all I would add.

Mr HEAD: Keeping our structures properly maintained is of course vital to Queensland's economic security. As of March 2022, TMR had 30 structural engineers. As of September 2023, that number had fallen to 26.3. What is the reason for the decline?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. We spent over \$5 billion in this year's QTRIP on maintenance. It is the largest ever spend on maintenance. We will never be cutting a corner when it comes to that. We will always be spending what we need to maintain our growing road network because we are always building new infrastructure. The department is chock-full of engineers. I would be surprised if we had fewer engineers than at the same point as a certain time in the past. Every time I turn around, there is another engineer at TMR.

Mr MINNIKIN: Chair, point of order, if I may. The minister a few moments ago read from the *Hansard* transcript that I referred to earlier and I would like to table that. I read directly from two lines—one from the opposition leader and the response from the Premier. I table that and I believe he has been misleading the committee with what he just said.

Mr MELLISH: I am happy to check the record.

Mr HEAD: Isn't that what you just—

CHAIR: I will have silence while I am reading it and considering it.

Mr MINNIKIN: I read those two passages.

CHAIR: So the passage before that from Mr Miles says, 'I again thank'—

Mr MINNIKIN: No.

CHAIR: My understanding from the way it was put is that the Premier had said that it opens early 2026. The piece before it, that was the assertion within the body of the question. Mr Miles in the *Hansard* transcript said—

I again thank the member for Broadwater for his question. All of the latest advice provided to me confirms that the target for opening remains 2026.

I believe that is what the minister has, so I do not think there is a point of order. I am very happy to table this document. Is leave granted? Thank you. Minister, over to you for closing remarks.

Mr MELLISH: Thank you, Chair. I thank you, the committee, all the members on the committee and others who attended to ask questions today. I would like to thank you, Chair, for ensuring this session and the two before this one ran smoothly and on time. I would like to thank all of the parliamentary staff who worked long, long hours missing the Olympics to support the estimates hearings. I would like to thank the cafe and the cafeteria who always provide world-class service. I would like to thank my director-general, CEOs of our GOCs and all the people behind them and in other rooms. This is a very busy time of year and their work has not gone unnoticed. Lastly, I would like to thank my ministerial staff—even if they have written it for me here. I probably would have thanked them even if it was not written on my speaking notes. They worked tirelessly to support me today but more importantly to support the people across the state. I am very thankful for their efforts, the department's efforts and the committee's efforts. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We have now reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the transport, main roads and digital services portfolio area. I note there was one question on notice on the turf on the side of the road. Are you happy to take that on notice, Minister?

Mr MELLISH: Yes. We are happy to take that on notice.

CHAIR: Thank you. If we could get a response back to that by 10 am on Thursday, 1 August 2024, that would be terrific. I take this opportunity to thank everybody who has participated in what has been a very long day of estimates hearings. I thank the minister, the director-general and the departmental staff who have participated. I thank my secretariat for the wonderful support they provide our committee regularly. To the *Hansard* staff and the technical service operators, thank you very much for contributing to a very important process which is the parliamentary estimates process. I declare this hearing closed. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 9.14 pm.