

FRIDAY, 1 AUGUST 2025

ESTIMATES—HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE— HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Speaker (Hon. Pat Weir, Condamine)

Committee Members

Mr R Molhoek MP—Chair

Ms SL Bolton MP

Ms K-A Dooley MP

Mr JP Kelly MP

Mr DJL Lee MP

Dr BF O'Shea MP

Members in Attendance

Hon. SJ Miles MP

Hon. MC de Brenni MP

Hon. MC Bailey MP

Dr CAC Rowan MP

Mr MC Berkman MP

Hon. LM Linard MP

Mr MPT Healy MP

In Attendance

Hon. TJ Nicholls, Minister for Health and Ambulance Services

Ms Belinda McEniery, Chief of Staff

Queensland Health

Dr David Rosengren, Director-General

Office of the Director-General

Ms Melleesa Cowie, Executive Director

Metro South Hospital and Health Service

Ms Noelle Cridland, Health Service Chief Executive

Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service

Mr Ron Calvert, Health Service Chief Executive

Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service

Ms Deborah Carroll, Health Service Chief Executive

Clinical Excellence Queensland

Dr Helen Brown, Deputy Director-General

Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service

Ms Leena Singh, Health Service Chief Executive

Queensland Ambulance Service

Mr Craig Emery, Commissioner

The committee met at 9 am.

Mr SPEAKER: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee open. I acknowledge the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people of this state and their elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the former members of this parliament who have participated in and nourished the democratic institutions of this state. Finally, I acknowledge the people of this state, whether they have been born here or have chosen to make this state their home and whom we represent to make laws and conduct other business for the peace, welfare and good government of this state.

I am Pat Weir, the member for Condamine and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Under the provisions of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, I will preside over today's hearing. The members of the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee are: Rob Molhoek MP, the member for Southport, who is the chair; Joe Kelly MP, the member for Greenslopes and deputy chair; Sandy Bolton MP, the member for Noosa; Kerri-Anne Dooley MP, the member for Redcliffe; Dr Barbara O'Shea MP, the member for South Brisbane, and David Lee MP, the member for Hervey Bay. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the Speaker's discretion or by order of the committee. Please note that the first three rows of the gallery are reserved for department and ministerial staff supporting the minister. Members and others who are attending to observe are welcome to sit in the remaining rows or in the gallery.

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 House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. Today the committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2025 for the portfolios of the Minister for Health and Ambulance 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 health until 12:15 pm. The proposed expenditure for ambulance services will be considered between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm. We will suspend proceedings for an intermission from 10.30 am to 10.45 am.

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 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 for Health and Ambulance Services, the Director-General, officials and departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. Please remember to press your microphones on before you start speaking and off when you are finished. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of health 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 NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I do wish to, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and look forward to answering questions from the committee and its members. I am delighted to have the opportunity to address the committee and speak about what we have achieved in the past nine months and our forward program to support easier access to health services for Queenslanders no matter where they live in this great state.

Firstly, I want to thank the more than 130,000—and growing, I might say—dedicated Queensland Health and Queensland Ambulance Service staff. Meeting with staff members on my travels to hospitals and ambulance stations across the state has been one of the great privileges of the last nine months in this job. I have every confidence that if and when Queenslanders need public health care they are in safe, capable hands and on this, as some of you may be aware, I am speaking from very recent close personal experience. In that regard I want to say thank you to the dedicated clinicians and staff at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital for their support and care during a sad day for my family on Saturday, 19 July. It was outstanding.

Notwithstanding our dedicated and hardworking workforce, we have inherited a health system that has suffered a decade of dire neglect, a system in urgent need of reform and renewal and that is why the Crisafulli LNP government is taking strong, decisive action to overcome those challenges and to ensure everyone in Queensland, from the inner city to the Outback, whatever their postcode, has easier access to world-class health care closer to where they live. We said we would diagnosis, treat and cure and we are starting that process.

Our reform action started on day one and a delivery program was completed in the first 100 days which has continued at a rapid pace. In relation to real-time health data, our opponents spent 10 years saying it could not be done—well, we have delivered. We stopped Labor's patients tax. The general practice payroll tax that would have made GP visits more expensive and put an increasing demand on our public health system is gone. We are assessing staffing levels across all Queensland maternity services to create the path for restoration of services in hospitals like Biloela and Cooktown. We are ending patient confusion, with possible deadly consequences as identified by the Auditor-General, about the so-called satellite hospitals by providing clarity about the care provided at these satellite health centres. We have also delivered on our commitment to the provision of forensic medical examination, otherwise known as rape kits, to hospitals throughout Queensland. We have met our election commitments.

While we hit the ground running to deliver and improve services within the existing budget, the \$33.1 billion allocated in the Crisafulli government's first LNP budget is by far the greatest investment in Queensland's history in health care and it continues our capacity to cure Labor's health crisis. With this investment we are laying the foundation to deliver what we promised: reduced ramping, improved patient flow in our hospitals and shorter waitlists for elective surgery. Moreover, we have had to heavily invest in delivering underfunded, underresourced and unfulfilled commitments made by the former government, including \$157 million for the Women and Girls' Health Strategy; \$25 million missing to provide free flu vaccines; \$192 million in staff entitlements, including entitlements for our staff in relation to reproductive leave; and \$48.7 million for legislated midwife-to-patient ratios.

We are committed to delivering the largest ever expansion of Queensland Health's workforce—that is, 46,000 additional health workers by 2032, including 34,200 clinicians. This budget delivers an uplift of over 4½ thousand additional health workers in the next 12 months alone. Not only did our predecessors not have a plan to grow the health workforce, they had set it up for cuts. Under Labor's last budget the health workforce was set to decrease by 1,794 FTEs in 2025-26. I am happy to elaborate on many of these matters in the estimates process over the next three and a half, four hours.

Mr SPEAKER: I will go to non-government members. I will go to the member for Miller for the first question.

Mr BAILEY: Firstly, I thank all of our Queensland Health staff and Queensland Ambulance Service staff who work 24/7 to keep Queenslanders healthy. Your dedication is something that I admire and will always respect and certainly go in to bat for. Director-General, I refer to page 6 of the SDS and real-time health data. Have the department or staff within hospital and health services received reports of escalating occupational violence following the rollout of real-time health data?

Dr Rosengren: Before I respond to the question, I would like to reinforce the minister's comments and express my appreciation for the hard work that the many thousands of Queensland Health staff commit to to deliver health services across the state. As an emergency physician with more than 30 years experience in Queensland public health, it is a true privilege to have an opportunity to provide a contribution to the leadership of the extraordinary health services that Queensland Health delivers. I could not be more proud of the opportunity to be part of this process.

With regard to the open data website, we have implemented transparency of reporting around our performance across the system consistent with the government's policy objective. That has been implemented within the timeframe that was required and extensive consultation was undertaken across the sector, including with relevant representative organisations as well as Health Consumers Queensland and our clinicians. The information associated with that has been widely appreciated and a large volume of the community does access that information. I have not had any specific escalations relayed to me around any material changes in occupational violence in our emergency departments related to that particular implementation.

It is a very unfortunate circumstance that our frontline clinicians and our frontline workers, not just in health but in other components of public service, do find themselves exposed to episodes of violence, whether that be verbal or physical. From a Queensland Health perspective, we have a zero tolerance for occupational violence in our workplace and we have extensive strategies to support our staff to have a safe workplace environment.

Mr NICHOLLS: And we have an extra 12 security ambassadors employed through this budget as well.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, I table an RTI released to the opposition that reveals that real-time health data quality may be lower than the currently acceptable standard of performance reporting. I refer members of the committee to page 9 of the RTI.

Mr SPEAKER: Just hold it there until the director-general gets a copy.

Mr NICHOLLS: We would like to see it.

Mr BAILEY: Sure. I refer members of the committee, the minister and the director-general to page 9 of the RTI, point 10. Director-General, this has been released to the opposition. It is revealed that real-time health data quality may be lower than the currently acceptable standard for performance reporting. Is real-time data an accurate measure of how long the wait in emergency departments is, as was sold to Queenslanders before the election, given that within the RTI it has been said that the quality of the data may be lower than the currently acceptable standard for performance reporting, on page 9?

Dr Rosengren: It is important to note that the document that is being referenced is a document from a briefing note that was dated, certainly on my signature, 7 December. This was a briefing note in the preparation and the lead-up. It was identifying circumstances at that point in time. A substantial amount of work was done on data, data quality and data improvement at the time that the website went live. All of those issues that are identified in the briefing note and the advice that was provided had been addressed.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, are you aware that there were four or five hospitals and health facilities that had 'unavailable' status on their real-time health data this morning?

Dr Rosengren: Yes, I am aware that, as a result of the way that the open data website has been designed, to refresh data on a regular basis to ensure the data is accurate, on occasions there can be feed difficulties with information coming into the system. It is important that, rather than publishing data that may not be correct, if there has been an error in that refresh or the upload then that message is delivered to demonstrate that the data may not be completely up to date, but the quality of the data that is published is accurate and is a reflection of the performance in those facilities at the time the data is made available.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, what advice did you provide about the risks that real-time data would influence patient behaviour and ultimately impact their health outcomes?

Dr Rosengren: Again, that was advice that was provided to the minister in the early stages of the development of the open data website. It is important to recognise that the responsibility of the department is to provide advice to the minister, including around risks or issues that need to be taken into consideration in the finalisation of a product. I think you will note that, in response to the advice that was provided to the minister, he certainly did acknowledge and he did provide specific comment in response to the management of that risk. In the process of continuing to do the preparation work and the development of the website before it was finalised and made live, a substantial amount of work was done to understand and mitigate that risk.

As I said at the beginning of this series of questions, extensive consultation was undertaken with professional organisations, including the Australian Medical Association, the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union, representatives of the emergency medicine clinical bodies as well as Health Consumers Queensland. The potential risks associated with uninformed data transparency were

discussed in great detail with all of those stakeholder groups and mitigations were identified so that the final product that went live was a product that was strongly supported by the stakeholder groups and, in particular, by the clinicians in our emergency department environment.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, given what we know now, did Queensland Health rush the rollout of real-time health data, despite its IT limitations, to meet the government's election commitment?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker. My point of order relates to an imputation or inference that is contained within the question. I would suggest to you that that question needs to be rephrased.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to rephrase.

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, are you happy to answer that question?

Mr NICHOLLS: It was an opinion.

Mr SPEAKER: The director-general can answer it as he will.

Dr Rosengren: I am comfortable that the website, when it went live, was a quality product that was endorsed by the clinicians and the stakeholders, as per my previous responses.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, has real-time health data made a measurable difference on hospital performance and, if so, will you table that evidence?

Dr Rosengren: The real-time data was designed to provide transparent information to the community around the capacity of access in the system and that information has been made available in a transparent and a reliable manner. The feedback that we get from our community and from our consumers is that they value and appreciate access to that information.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, can you please provide the total number of patients on the elective surgery waitlist who are waiting longer than clinically recommended, at the latest count?

Mr NICHOLLS: It is a lot less than it was.

Dr Rosengren: Can I clarify, member: you are after for those waiting longer than clinically recommended, so the long-wait number?

Mr BAILEY: The total number of patients on the elective surgery waitlist who are waiting longer than clinically recommended, at the latest count.

Dr Rosengren: As of 1 June 2025, there were 5,820 ready-for-surgery patients waiting longer than clinically recommended.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, can you please provide the total number of patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care?

Dr Rosengren: Is the number that you are after the total number on the waitlist?

Mr BAILEY: Yes, the total number of patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care.

Dr Rosengren: As at 1 June 2025, there were 315,409 patients on the total waitlist, of which 303,211 were ready for care.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, can you please provide the total number of patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care waiting longer than the clinically recommended time?

Dr Rosengren: As at 1 June 2025, there were 123,724 ready-for-care patients waiting longer than clinically recommended.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, how does the number of patients on the elective surgery waitlist waiting longer than the clinically recommended time compare to the same period last year?

Mr NICHOLLS: Why do you not go and have a look? It is on the website.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the minister's interjections are not being taken. I would ask you to bring him to order.

Mr SPEAKER: I will look after this. The director-general is ready to reply. Director-General, you have the call.

Dr Rosengren: My apologies, member. Could you remind me which particular number you are after?

Mr BAILEY: Certainly. How does the number of patients on the elective surgery waitlist waiting longer than clinically recommended compare to the same period last year?

Dr Rosengren: The data that I have here is for May 2025. Compared to May 2024, there has been an increase of 2,521 patients waiting longer than clinically recommended on the elective surgery waitlist.

Mr BAILEY: The number of patients on the elective surgery waitlist waiting longer than clinically recommended compared to 12 months ago is up 2,521; is that correct?

Dr Rosengren: That is the answer I have provided.

Mr BAILEY: That would constitute, would it not, an increase of nearly or above 60 per cent compared to last year; is that correct?

Dr Rosengren: I do not have the percentage number in front of me. I will be guided by your mathematics on that one.

Mr BAILEY: Could you perhaps check that percentage and furnish the committee with the answer? I am happy for it to be by the end of this session.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, are you happy with that? Are you going to take the question on notice?

Mr NICHOLLS: The director-general can answer it.

Mr BAILEY: I am simply asking—

Mr NICHOLLS: The important thing is that it is less than last year's surgery waitlist of 66,000, which we inherited.

Mr SPEAKER: You will get your chance very soon, Minister.

Mr BAILEY: The question is before the director-general. I am happy, Director-General, if you wish—

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I am going to ask you to stop interjecting. We have 4½ hours to get through. Member for Miller?

Mr BAILEY: I am happy for the director-general to furnish that percentage at any time in the future. Before the break would be good.

Dr Rosengren: I am happy to answer if you can repeat for me what your number was, member.

Mr BAILEY: I approximate there are 2,521 additional people on the elective surgery waitlist waiting longer than the clinically recommended time. I would like to know what the percentage is compared to last year as well as the raw number. If you do not have that handy, that is fine. I understand that. If you could furnish that by the end of the session, that would be much appreciated.

Dr Rosengren: I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, how does the number of patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care compare to last year?

Dr Rosengren: The data I have here is based on May 2025 and May 2024. There are an additional 28,807 patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care.

Mr BAILEY: Could you repeat that number for me?

Dr Rosengren: It is 28,807.

Mr BAILEY: That is an increase of 28,807 patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care now compared to last year; is that accurate?

Dr Rosengren: The increase in patients on the outpatients list compared to the same time last year was 29,736. I would note that the previous increase on the same time from the previous year was 32,530. The year prior to that was an increase of 47,833, and the year before that was an increase of 87,143.

Mr BAILEY: The question was simply—

Dr Rosengren: The increase in the number of people on the waiting list is substantially lower than the year-on-year increase that we have seen over the preceding five years.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, how does the number of patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care longer than the clinically recommended time compare to last year?

Dr Rosengren: According to the information in front of me, there has been an increase in the number of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended on the specialist outpatient list of 12,943. I note that in the preceding years it had been 21,270 and 66,352.

Mr BAILEY: Just to clarify: the number of patients on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care in our hospitals waiting longer than the clinically recommended time compared to last year is actually up 12,943. Is that what you just said?

Dr Rosengren: That is correct.

Mr BAILEY: What percentage does that constitute compared to last year's figure?

Dr Rosengren: Again, as per the previous question, I will need to seek advice on that.

Mr BAILEY: My broad estimate is that it is approximately a 10 per cent increase, but if you can furnish the specific percentage we would very much appreciate it. Thank you. Director-General, the minister has claimed that the elective surgery waitlist has never been lower. How does that compare to the figures you have just quoted and what proportion—

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I will finish hearing the question and then I will take the point of order.

Mr BAILEY: How does that compare to the figures you have just quoted, and what proportion of the decrease in the elective surgery waitlist can be attributed to the massive rise in the specialist outpatient waitlist?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, my point of order relates to the member seeking an opinion and commentary with respect to that.

Mr BAILEY: To the point of order, Speaker: I have simply asked for a comparison. I have not asked for an opinion.

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, you can answer that question.

Mr NICHOLLS: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: the member for Miller claims I made a statement. I would like him to validate that statement.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Miller, can you authenticate the statement that you have just made?

Mr BAILEY: The minister has been claiming a lot of credit recently on elective surgery waiting lists. That is what I have referred to. It is on his social media. It is widely known.

Mr SPEAKER: Can you furnish the committee with that particular statement?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: we do require independent validation, given the response the member for Miller has now provided to the point of order that was raised by the health minister.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to rephrase the question.

Mr SPEAKER: The member may rephrase the question.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, the minister has claimed considerable credit in terms of the elective surgery waitlists. How does that compare to the figures you have just quoted—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Miller, this question is not very different from the first one, so try again.

Mr BAILEY: It has been adjusted. I have made it more to the point. Director-General, how do the figures you have quoted today in terms of the increase in the number of people on the waitlist for specialist outpatient care beyond the clinically recommended time compare with the increase that you have outlined for those on the elective surgery waitlists waiting longer than the clinically recommended time?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: there are two questions there, and it was asked as a double-barrelled question. I submit to you that it needs to be rephrased into one question.

Mr SPEAKER: The problem is that you are asking the director-general to make a comment on a comment that you say the minister has made. That is not the role of the director-general. I will give you another chance to rephrase the question.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to rephrase the question. Director-General, what proportion of the decrease in the elective surgery waitlist can be attributed to the increase in the specialist outpatient waitlist as well as the increase in the number of people on elective surgery waitlists beyond the clinically recommended time?

Dr Rosengren: My apologies, I am struggling to understand the specifics of the question. I am not quite sure how to answer it in the context of the way it has been asked.

Mr BAILEY: You are unable to respond to why there would be a substantial increase in the outpatients waitlist in relation to elective surgery?

Mr NICHOLLS: It doesn't make sense.

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, it is up to you how you answer the question.

Dr Rosengren: I am still uncertain of the specific direction you are requiring me to answer, I am sorry.

Mr SPEAKER: We will move to questions from government members.

Ms DOOLEY: My question is to the minister. I understand that the government's \$100 million investment in the Surgery Connect Surge has helped achieve the largest reduction in the elective surgery waitlist in over a decade. Can the minister outline why further investment to stabilise the elective surgery waitlist is necessary?

Mr NICHOLLS: Answering your question, member for Redcliffe, might provide some clarity in relation to the previous confusing mix of questions that we have received from the member for Miller. You are right: the government did invest \$100 million into the Surgery Connect Surge in February in order to deal with the burgeoning waitlist for elective surgery—a waitlist that expanded enormously under Labor.

Under the Labor government, from 2015 to October 2024—one decade—the elective surgery waitlist doubled, from 35,385 to 64,171. In fact, the tale of Labor's effort was that it reached more than 66,000 by December 2024. At the time of the election, when the Crisafulli government pledged to cure Labor's health crisis, the number of people waiting on the elective surgery waitlist had increased to 64,000. The number in December was 66,632.

The \$100 million Surgery Connect Surge that was announced in February has already overdelivered on its target, with 12,300 Queenslanders accessing the program. That is why the elective surgery waitlist has been able to drop and why we have seen a very substantial drop in that. The surge in elective surgeries through the Surgery Connect Surge initiative of the Crisafulli LNP government has led to the largest decrease in numbers in a six-month period since July 2015. After what has occurred over a decade, in nine months we have achieved the largest single drop in that increase in elective surgery numbers.

That is the commitment that the LNP made. Our commitment was to stabilise the elective surgery waitlist, and that is what we have done. In fact, we have managed to see that list drop quite substantially. It was in April 2025 that the LNP saw the biggest single-month reduction in the waitlist, of 2,750. As at May 2025 there are 61,232 Queenslanders on the waitlist.

I have met a number of people who have been referred through that waitlist program and subsequently received their surgery, including Russell, who had been waiting for more than 12 months to have his hip surgery done. Russell had that done within six weeks of the elective surgery surge being brought into play. He is now back at work as an active member of society and enjoying his family life. That is a practical, real outcome of the investment that we have made.

Given that success, the health budget this year delivers a record \$1.75 billion over four years for additional surgeries. This will help deliver 30,000 additional elective surgeries this financial year alone. That is 30,000 Queenslanders who would not otherwise have been seen within the timeframes in relation to their elective surgery now being seen or referred for surgery.

It includes a record \$1.27 billion investment for the Surgery Connect program. Forward planning is underway to make sure that we get the maximum value for our investment. Member for Redcliffe, you would appreciate the wise expenditure of money and making sure we do get value for money. While we are leveraging off the benefits of the private providers and supporting private providers throughout the state, we want to make sure we get the maximum value for our investment.

We did that with the \$100 million investment. We thought 10,000 surgeries and we have actually managed to get over 12,300 referrals. We hope to be able to drive further improvements and deliver even more outcomes for more Queenslanders throughout the state. Importantly, this is not just in the south-east. This is surgeries being delivered in Townsville, Rockhampton and Mackay. All across the state we are delivering those.

Importantly also, this is what the industry asked us for. The private sector asked for certainty and long-term funding. They were sick of the ad hoc arrangements that had previously been in place. They were sick of the underfunding that did not enable them to plan properly and to provide the care that is needed.

Our election commitment is being met. There is more work to be done. We have not finished. This investment will see the largest investment in Surgery Connect in Queensland Health's history, delivering better outcomes for Queenslanders.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, I refer to the information provided by you in your answer to pre-hearing question on notice No. 11 in relation to emergency department stays greater than 24 hours. Why is it so important to reduce the number of patients in EDs staying longer than 24 hours, and what measures have been put in place to achieve this?

Mr NICHOLLS: It is an important question, because I think there has been controversy in relation to it and some misunderstanding in relation to what the 24-hour stay means. I may also ask the director-general to elaborate a little on that, if that is acceptable to the member.

Firstly, I again want to thank our hardworking clinicians and support staff in our emergency departments who help Queenslanders at their time of need. I have visited some of them. Most recently, I had a very good experience through a sad occurrence of experiencing over seven hours at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital emergency department. I have also had a number of visits to Rockhampton, Mackay and Ipswich, which are certainly departments that are under pressure; there is no doubt about that.

We want to make sure that patients who present at our emergency departments get the best care possible and the timeliest care possible. It is clear that patients should not be in an emergency department for longer than 24 hours. The longer patients remain in an emergency department after their emergency phase of care the greater risk of harm. It is important after their emergency phase of care. In fact, the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine says 24-hour stays in an ED should be a 'never' event. I table a copy of a media release in relation to that from the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the committee happy for that document to be tabled? Leave is granted.

Mr NICHOLLS: I will read from it directly. It says—

ACEM recommends that no patient spends more than 12 hours in an ED and strongly believes that 24-hour stays should be a never event.

From March 2025, the director-general has, in consultation, instructed that public hospitals must report weekly on the circumstances that see a patient spending more than 24 hours in an ED. As a result, there has been a marked improvement in 24-hour ED stays since this has been implemented. In the first seven months of this government, the 24-hour breaches were 10,792. In the last seven months of the previous Labor government, the 24-hour breaches were 16,661. We have reduced that number by about one-third—5,819.

I can report to the committee that in May 2025 there were 910 breaches, where stays were greater than 24 hours. That compares to a year earlier, which has been of interest, when there were 2,078. There has been a more than 50 per cent reduction in the number of 24-hour stays. Director-General, you might elaborate on the reasons for that, given your 30 years experience as an emergency medicine physician.

Dr Rosengren: Thank you, Minister. I am very pleased. I have been putting in a substantial amount of work into trying to turn you into an emergency physician. I am not there yet but getting close.

It is very clear from the national and international evidence that prolonged stays in an emergency department have a direct and significant impact on morbidity and mortality for patients. That includes an increase in hospital length of stay, an increase in hospital acquired complications and an increase in the morbidity and mortality rate.

As a world-class best practice evidence-based health service, we understand categorically that our responsibility is to ensure patients get the best access to the best quality care. In consultation across the entire system, there is universal agreement from all of the health services and, in particular, from the clinicians that there is absolute priority to ensure patients get the best quality of care, and that is to avoid unnecessary and prolonged delays in the emergency department.

The system has responded exceptionally well to the challenge. As the minister has already identified, there has been a substantial improvement in performance across all of our emergency departments. The result of that is better patient care and better patient outcomes.

Mr LEE: For nearly a decade Labor neglected to fund the fit-out of level 2 of the Hervey Bay Hospital's emergency department. Can the minister provide an update on the works being undertaken at Hervey Bay Hospital and car park as part of the government's Hospital Rescue Plan?

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: can the member for Hervey Bay validate that statement?

Mr LEE: I am happy to rephrase. Can the minister provide an update of the works being undertaken at Hervey Bay Hospital and car park as part of the government's Hospital Rescue Plan?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for that question. The member for Hervey Bay has been passionate about the delivery of health services in Hervey Bay. I think that on three occasions now I have been up there at the Hervey Bay Hospital and various other health facilities with him. That is why he is such a big supporter of the Hospital Rescue Plan and what it is going to deliver for Hervey Bay.

What we know is that there had been a ward at the Hervey Bay Hospital that had been so-called cold shelved. Level 2 at the Hervey Bay Hospital had been sitting vacant for years. It was an issue for the member for Hervey Bay's predecessors bar one who raised it consistently and continues to do so. Congratulations to Ted. He has finally seen it come through. We all know who we are talking about.

The former government announced a cost blowout of \$40 million to \$94 million on the Hervey Bay Hospital expansion on the eve of the election, with no additional beds added to the scope of the program. Our independent review into the former government's failed capacity expansion program also highlighted that the project is experiencing delays of more than two years. The former plan said it would be delivered at the end of 2023. The end of 2023 has come and gone.

Under the Crisafulli government's Hospital Rescue Plan, works are progressing on site. The member for Hervey Bay and I recently inspected that site and had the opportunity to look at one of the biggest concrete pours that has ever taken place in Hervey Bay for the base of the new helipad and the roof of the building there. Thanks to the builders who did a great job there and the staff who are working around it. Works are progressing on site. The new roof pour was completed in May. It will be followed by an internal fit-out. In fact, that work is already underway. We also recently opened a 24-bed modular ward, which was delayed under Labor but is now open and operating, providing services to the community of Hervey Bay.

We are also getting on with the business of delivering an at-grade car park for the Hervey Bay Hospital. The letter of award was issued to RoadTek in July 2025 to deliver those at-grade works. The car park is well and truly underway, member for Hervey Bay. It is a suitable car park, not a Taj Mahal car park. It is a suitable car park that meets the needs of the constituents of Hervey Bay.

Site establishment works on the car park will commence in mid-August. As the member for Hervey Bay is well aware, this comes after the former government announced a multistorey car park for the hospital without telling anyone that they were going to do that and before downgrading it again without telling anyone that they were going to do that due to a lack of funds being made available for the development of it. Hervey Bay Hospital is going ahead gangbusters and a car park has gone out for construction by RoadTek, with site works established in mid-August 2025.

Mr MOLHOEK: Can the minister advise what previously unfunded commitments have been funded in the 2025-26 budget?

Mr NICHOLLS: Upon coming to government we were advised that a number of Labor's commitments had no funding source. Labor's legacy in health infrastructure is one of budget black holes, delays and blowouts and no real planning for the future.

This budget provides real money for these unfunded commitments. It includes \$1.8 billion of their existing enterprise bargaining agreements—that is, the agreements that are already in place that had no funding source. It includes: \$157 million for the Women and Girls' Health Strategy funded through the previous minister, the member for Waterford's, credit card without any funding source to back it up; \$142.2 million of their own medical retrieval contracts that were at risk; \$25 million missing to provide free flu vaccines; \$8.8 million missing for birthing services at Weipa; \$192 million for staff entitlements including employer super payments on parental leave and reproductive leave; and \$48.7 million for legislated midwife-to-patient ratios.

It also includes \$638 million for the operationalisation of the Mater Hospital Springfield—a true *Yes Minister* moment. When I came in and asked, ‘How will this hospital that will be completed next year going to be funded?’ there was no money in the budget. We had to find \$638 million in order to be able to meet the obligations for the delivery of the Mater Hospital Springfield. It includes \$5.952 billion to address the cost blowouts of the former government’s failed capacity expansion program; \$146 million for underfunded projects in the Accelerated Delivery Infrastructure Program; and \$350 million for underfunded projects in the Building Rural and Remote Health Program. It is a litany of promises made but unfunded in the last budget. We have funded those projects and will continue to fund those projects into the future.

Mr SPEAKER: We will now go non-government members.

Mr MILES: I table for the committee a Facebook post from the member for Clayfield which says, ‘We’ve seen the biggest reduction in elective surgery wait lists in a decade.’

Mr J KELLY: I table that document.

Mr MILES: I refer, Director-General, to your earlier answers which, among other things, highlighted that we have seen a 60 per cent increase in the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended for their elective surgery. I ask the director-general: isn’t the minister’s statement incorrect?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: it is my understanding that the member for Murrumba has been granted leave and is not substituting for a permanent member of the committee. As such, he would have to seek leave to have the document tabled.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I tabled the document.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted for the document to be tabled? Leave is granted. As far as the point of order is concerned, once again, the question is asking the director-general to comment on a post that the minister has made. I will allow the director-general to answer as he will.

Dr Rosengren: Can I ask for the question to be restated?

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Speaker: clearly the director-general is being asked for an opinion on statements made by the minister. I do not think it is appropriate to be posing those sorts of questions of the director-general and I ask that you rule the question out of order.

Mr MILES: Mr Speaker, point of order: it is not asking for an opinion; it is asking for a statement of fact. Has the number of people waiting gone up, as the director-general indicated earlier, or down, as the minister said in his Facebook post?

Mr SPEAKER: That is your question.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Speaker, point of order: you have already ruled on this matter and asked the director-general to respond. I see this tactic by the government as wasting time.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Greenslopes. Director-General?

Dr Rosengren: I have already provided the answer in relation to the number of people on the surgical waitlist. That answer has not changed.

Mr MILES: Director-General, on Tuesday the Premier said that information on the flu vaccination campaign would be provided by you at the hearing. How much has Queensland Health spent on the flu vaccination campaign this season?

Dr Rosengren: I will just have to get that information to hand. What I would note is that there was no funding allocated for a flu vaccination campaign preceding that, so additional funding needed to be identified. I do not want to mislead the committee by providing an answer that is not accurate, so if you can just bear with me I will get the specific number.

Mr MILES: I am surprised Mr Walker did not highlight to you that it would be asked.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not need any more commentary, thank you, member for Murrumba. The director-general is happy to answer the question.

Dr Rosengren: My understanding is that \$25 million was allocated for the program, but I just want to verify that. I will come back with that specific answer before the end of the session.

Mr MILES: Director-General, I think you will find that is the amount allocated to free vaccines. I am asking how much was allocated to the campaign to encourage Queenslanders to get their vaccine.

Dr Rosengren: My apologies; I misheard the question.

Mr MILES: I may have misstated it.

Dr Rosengren: I do not want to mislead the committee. I will have to formalise that answer for you.

Mr MILES: Is the director-general aware of how Queensland's flu vaccination coverage this winter season compares against other states'?

Dr Rosengren: I can confirm that \$675,000 has been spent on the 2025 campaign for influenza in Queensland. I am not in a position to provide a comparison with other jurisdictions around their campaigns.

Mr MILES: The member for Greenslopes will table a document outlining the current vaccination rates by state which I might get you just to have a look at, Director-General.

Mr J KELLY: I table the document.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted? Leave is granted. We will wait until the director-general gets this before we go to the question.

Mr MILES: Director-General, in that table you will see that across nearly every age group Queensland has the lowest flu vaccination coverage in Australia. Would that be your interpretation?

Dr Rosengren: On the information that you have provided in this table that is apparent, yes.

Mr MILES: How many people have been hospitalised in Queensland this year with influenza, Director-General?

Dr Rosengren: The number I have here indicates that from 1 March 2025 to 20 July 2025 there have been 3,362 hospitalisations where influenza has been identified.

Mr MILES: Do you have to hand what proportion of those people hospitalised were and were not vaccinated?

Dr Rosengren: Just bear with me for one moment. On recent data, 86 per cent of patients who end up in hospital with influenza have not been vaccinated against the flu.

Mr MILES: Earlier this week, in the Premier's estimates hearing, it was revealed that the advertising campaign for the Hospital Rescue Plan was \$1.67 million. Is it correct that Queensland Health has spent roughly three times more advertising your forward capital program than encouraging Queenslanders to get vaccinated? DPC indicated that was a question for you, Minister.

Dr Rosengren: Queensland Health as a department has approvals for advertising campaigns through a government advertising committee, so I would refer a question around that to the GAC.

Mr MILES: Perhaps you can answer this: is \$1.67 million roughly three times \$675,000?

Mr NICHOLLS: It is a maths class now.

Mr J KELLY: We can do maths. We are just asking questions.

Mr MILES: If the director-general does not want to answer, I am happy to move on. Director-General, I refer to page 9 of the SDS regarding sun exposure and skin cancer prevention. The member for Greenslopes will table data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare which identifies Queensland as the skin cancer capital of Australia.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Greenslopes, do you seek leave to table that?

Mr J KELLY: Yes.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr MILES: Is it correct that Queenslanders are being diagnosed—

Mr SPEAKER: Wait until the director-general gets a copy before going any further, please.

Mr MILES: Of course. My apologies. Is it correct that Queenslanders are being diagnosed with high skin cancer rates?

Dr Rosengren: Yes, that is correct.

Mr MILES: Director-General, funding was committed for sun safety social marketing campaigns to be delivered by Queensland Health from July 2022 to June 2026. Director-General, can you confirm how much funding has been allocated to the sun safety social marketing campaign for financial year 2025-26?

Dr Rosengren: I do not have that information immediately to hand. I would need to seek that and come back with that information.

Mr MILES: To assist you in that, Director-General, the member for Greenslopes tables the announcement of that funding. We understand that funding has been cut so, if you could confirm—

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, point of order: there is a clear imputation in relation to the commentary that has been provided by the member for Murrumba, so I would ask you to give some direction in relation to that.

Mr JKELLY: Mr Speaker, point of order: the question had not even been asked. I had not heard it. I am not sure how he can take a point of order on a question that has not been asked.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, my point of order relates to the commentary that is being provided outside of a question that is being asked. It is not an opportunity at the hearings to provide additional commentary beyond asking specific questions in accordance with the standing orders.

Mr MILES: Mr Speaker, point of order: I think the member for Moggill will find it is very relevant to these estimates if this government has chosen to cut funding for skin cancer awareness and is spending three times as much on promoting their capital program than it is on—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Murrumba, it is a point of order, not a speech. I want to hear your question.

Mr MILES: I will move on.

Mr SPEAKER: I will hear your question before I make a ruling on it. What is your question?

Mr MILES: The director-general has committed to coming back with an answer about whether the funding that was allocated for the skin cancer awareness campaign has indeed been cut, and I would appreciate it if he could.

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, you are going to come back with that information?

Dr Rosengren: Yes, I have made that commitment.

Mr MILES: Thank you. I refer to page 13 of the SDS and to the capital program. Director-General, in relation to the announcement that Klok Advisory director Sam Sangster would undertake the health and hospital review, it is noted that Klok Advisory is not on the standing offer arrangement with the Queensland government. What process was used by the department to recommend Mr Sangster undertake that review?

Dr Rosengren: At the time that Mr Sangster was identified, Klok Advisory was on the panel; that is my understanding. At the completion of the review process, Mr Sangster was engaged as an employee of Queensland Health and at that time it is my understanding that Klok Advisory was removed from the tender panel.

Mr MILES: Director-General, I have questions regarding both elements of your response. Was it a recommendation of the department, from the minister's office or from the Premier's office that Mr Sangster be appointed? I am talking now about the review, not his subsequent offer of employment.

Dr Rosengren: The process for identifying a reviewer to undertake a review for the department is always a decision that is determined by the department. An undertaking was done to determine the appropriate expertise across the nation, and Mr Sangster was identified to me as a very strong candidate as one of the very few people in the country with the skills, experience and track record to undertake such a significant piece of work.

Mr MILES: Who identified him to you, Director-General?

Dr Rosengren: I do not have a specific recollection or record of that, but at the time this process was undertaken I spent some significant time talking to people across the department who had significant understanding of industry expertise.

Mr MILES: So it came from officers within the department?

Dr Rosengren: I would have spoken to people within the department to identify an appropriate reviewer, as would be a standard practice for this style of review.

Mr MILES: So, to the best of your recollection, it was a suggestion from someone within the department.

Dr Rosengren: I would have received a range of suggestions and would have assessed those and Mr Sangster was approached.

Mr MILES: I am interested in identifying whether it was a suggestion that came from an officer of the department, the minister's office or the Premier's office. You are confirming it was an officer of the department and specifically not from the minister or Premier's office.

Dr Rosengren: It certainly would not have been from the Premier's office because my responsibility is with the minister. I would have discussed the process and the identification with the department. I would have discussed it with the minister's office. That would be normal practice in the determination of finding a suitable, experienced and qualified candidate to undertake that work.

Mr MILES: Going to the second element, Director-General, Mr Sangster was subsequently contracted to the department to oversee the hospital plan. After this, he was then appointed to, I understand, a deputy director-general position. What recruitment process was undertaken to appoint Mr Sangster to the deputy director-general role?

Dr Rosengren: Mr Sangster was not appointed to a deputy director-general role. Mr Sangster has been appointed as an employee to a leadership support role to assist with the oversight and the accountability for the implementation of the recommendations associated with the capacity expansion review report. Currently, Mr Sangster is in the acting deputy director-general role in a temporising measure. We are undertaking formal recruitment for a deputy director-general for Health Infrastructure Queensland and there is a small period of time between when the incumbent acting role departed and the ability to finalise and onboard a new deputy director-general. Mr Sangster is in an advisory role as his employment. It is a temporary role for up to a period of 12 months only. In the context of the standard processes for public sector employment, it is completely within the parameters to directly appoint someone for a time defined period.

It was an absolute intention to appoint Mr Sangster for that purpose. I am sure the committee will appreciate that there are very frequent times where very important reviews are undertaken and recommendations are provided around a pathway forward. I felt there was a strong sense of accountability by having the individual who provided those recommendations as part of the process to assist us in the oversight of the implementation. It certainly strengthens the validity of the quality of those recommendations to have that direct involvement in the practical implementation and delivery of the improvements as a result of that work that we have undertaken.

Mr SPEAKER: We will have one last question from non-government before we change over.

Mr MILES: Director-General, it has been highlighted several times to this committee that you are a highly experienced emergency physician with over 30 years experience and I note that you were indeed the emergency physician that Queensland Health allocated to show me how an emergency department worked. My question is: with all of that 30 years experience, on how many occasions have you seen an emergency department overloaded because patients had insufficient knowledge of Queensland Health's capital program?

Mr SPEAKER: That was a very long question.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, point of order: under standing order 115 I would submit to you that it is a lengthy preamble and there are some elements of the question as well which are seeking opinions.

Mr MILES: I can reword it, Mr Speaker.

Dr ROWAN: Whilst I respect the intent of where the member for Murrumbidgee is coming from, I suggest to you that some rephrasing would be appropriate with respect to the question as asked.

Mr MILES: I can reword it.

Mr SPEAKER: If you would, that would help.

Mr MILES: Again, noting your very extensive experience, Director-General, of the tier 3 escalations experienced at Queensland's hospitals this year, how many were you advised by the executives of those HHSs were caused by a lack of public awareness of the Queensland Health capital program?

Dr Rosengren: I am not quite sure I understand the question. As a clinician we would concentrate on providing clinical care so when I take history from a patient that would not normally be part of an interaction I would have with a patient. I do not believe we would capture that information in any process to be able to answer that question with any accuracy.

Mr MILES: So you would not normally ask them about the Hospital Rescue Plan—

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to the member for Southport for his question.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, are you aware of any wildly inaccurate or untruthful claims made about the postponement or cancellation of elective surgeries at any of the state's hospitals? Are you aware of any other untruthful statements made about the provision of health services?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Southport for his question because accurate information in relation to the delivery of health services is important to maintain confidence in our hospital system and confidence in our clinicians, and untruths or mistruths denigrate the efforts that are provided by both our hospital administrators and also our clinicians and services. Regrettably, we have seen some of this occurring in recent commentary. The most recent egregious example of this is the claim made by the member for Miller in a Facebook post of 24 July. I seek leave to table a copy of that Facebook post of 24 July.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr NICHOLLS: That claim is that there were 42 elective surgeries at Toowoomba Hospital that had been cancelled, and the screenshot shows that. Regrettably, the member for Miller has made those numbers up because the member for Miller received information in a briefing provided by the executive director of the Toowoomba Hospital on 24 July and that information quite clearly was that three category 2 and 3 surgeries had been rescheduled on that day and five category 2 and 3 surgeries had been rescheduled the following day, on 23 July. In mangocube land, eight rescheduled and non-urgent procedures have now become a public claim of 42 cancelled surgeries. I now table a letter written to Mr Bailey from the chief executive of the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service. I seek leave to table that.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr J KELLY: Can we read the document before leave is granted, Speaker?

Mr NICHOLLS: Well, leave has been granted. The chief executive of the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service, Adjunct Professor Annette Scott PSM, is here in the room today. Adjunct Professor Scott has written a letter to Mr Bailey and I want to quote from that letter. She stated—

Regrettably, your incorrect reference to 42 cancelled surgeries reflects poorly on us as a health service and undermines the trust the community has in us. Additionally, it impacts negatively on our workforce—

This is not a rookie error. Information provided in good faith by the hospital and health services to the member for Miller clearly identified the circumstances in relation to the events at Toowoomba Hospital on 22 and 23 July. The member for Miller has misrepresented the information provided. There are only two reasons that could possibly be the case: either it is intentional or it is incompetence.

I want to put the facts on the record in relation to those matters. In order to support patient flow and inpatient bed access during a period of surging presentations, a small number of elective surgery cases were rescheduled. In Toowoomba, eight of those matters were rescheduled on 22 and 23 July out of a total of 352 presentations—eight were rescheduled—and 71 elective surgeries were still carried out over those two days. I would like to thank our hardworking staff at the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service and the administrators who do the courtesy to the member for Miller of informing him of that information. He then repays that by going online, for cheap political purposes, and telling a deliberate mistruth. I call on the member for Miller to apologise to the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service and to Professor Scott for doing so right here and right now, because that would be the proper thing to do, as the member for Miller has had to do in relation to his claim in relation to perinatal beds.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Speaker: the purpose of estimates is for us to ask the minister questions.

Mr SPEAKER: That is correct. The minister is making his statement. While we are paused, you made a query about tabling this document from the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service. Are we all in favour of this document being tabled? Leave is granted. Minister, back to you.

Mr NICHOLLS: As I say, I have presented the facts as provided by the chief executive including, obviously, the disappointment that has been experienced there from someone who has extended the courtesy to the member for Miller to inform them of the circumstances there and has been misrepresented quite clearly on the member's Facebook page. It would seem to me incumbent on the member to apologise to the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service and the chief executive and the hardworking staff for that misrepresentation.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, in respect of the Hospital Rescue Plan—and I congratulate the minister on the plan—how has the 2025-26 budget addressed the budget blowouts of the former government's failed capacity expansion program?

Mr NICHOLLS: This is a matter that we have canvassed a number of times. We have also responded to a number of questions and debates previously in the parliament about it. It is an opportunity for me to again reflect on the great work that is being done by the Crisafulli government in this budget. I also particularly want to acknowledge the work that was being undertaken by Mr Sangster in relation to his review of Labor's failed capacity expansion program. Let us not forget the great work that has been done with the independent review by Mr Sangster, whom the member for Murrumba has shamelessly and without cause slandered in the Queensland parliament, under the cover of coward's castle. He still has not apologised for having done so. We will recall that the member for Murrumba made unfounded claims in relation to this matter.

Mr MILES: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I find offence in the member's statements and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The member has taken personal offence.

Mr NICHOLLS: I withdraw. We all remember the member for Murrumba's comments and the lack of evidence to support those. Mr Sangster, notwithstanding that, continues to do good work for the people of Queensland and is doing so in an appropriate fashion, appropriately appointed in accordance with the requirements for the appointment of people to their positions of executive director and is now an acting deputy director while that position is being filled through the proper recruitment process, despite imputations by the member for Murrumba to the contrary here today.

The independent review of the former government's failed capacity expansion program exposed major delays and \$7 billion in budget blowouts across the program. Members will, of course, have received a copy of the Hospital Rescue Plan, which outlines both the cost overruns and delays and the failings. Projects were described by Mr Sangster as undeliverable, and continuing with the former scope and programs would have been an exercise in futility. New funding of \$5.592 billion has been allocated in this budget to address the cost blowouts that Mr Sangster identified.

The review set the foundations for the Hospital Rescue Plan, which will see the largest investment in hospital infrastructure to date in Queensland. It will deliver more than 2,600 new beds across Queensland alongside more investment in a growing health workforce. Several projects are now being re-scoped and redesigned to address the omissions and failures of the former program planning under Labor.

The Bundaberg and Toowoomba projects are being staged so that all services can transfer to the new sites. The previous plan had two sites operating in each of those locations, and in Bundaberg the old hospital site is in a flood plain. At Coomera, replanning is progressing to fit 600 beds, which is what the hospital and health service had originally sought.

The member for Redcliffe and I have been out to the Redcliffe Hospital. I congratulate Cang Dang and his team out there for the great work they are doing. That hospital is being redesigned to ensure the safety of staff and avoid the culturally modified tree that caused major delays of up to \$50,000 a day while Labor failed to resolve that issue. I have spoken to the clinicians at Redcliffe who are now involved in the design and the planning for the redesign of that project. As the member for Redcliffe knows, we have gone out to market in relation to the car park that will be delivered there.

These projects do have a line item in the budget to continue works in 2025-26, and that line item is on page 70 of Budget Paper 3. I refer members to the budget papers for more information in relation to the very substantial investment we are making into the Hospital Rescue Plan.

Mr MOLHOEK: Continuing with the theme of the Hospital Rescue Plan and other matters that have been raised here today, I think it is important to seek further clarification around false and misleading claims. Minister, are you aware of any dangerous and false claims about health services, including perinatal mental health beds?

Mr NICHOLLS: I have already identified one instance, where the member for Miller has made a grossly incorrect claim and has misrepresented the information that was provided to him and done so on public social media networks. The other matter, of course, that would cause concern, especially to young mothers and babies, is in relation to the perinatal and infant mental health services. Of course, the government remains committed to delivering the perinatal mental health services and is providing funding for that to occur. There is, as we understand, an increased risk of mental health conditions during the time from preconception until two years after pregnancy ends and, nationally, one in five

mothers will experience perinatal anxiety and depression during this time. If untreated, perinatal mental illness can result in long-term challenges for parents and families. Some \$1.1 million in additional investment has been allocated in 2025-26 for perinatal and infant mental health services delivered by HHSs, and this includes—I have made some announcements in relation to it—additional FTEs for specialist community-based clinicians in Cairns and hinterland and at the Sunshine Coast HHS.

We are also in the process of procuring additional peer-led perinatal psychosocial services in Cairns, Townsville, Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast, to the value of \$2.4 million a year, and the government has committed to providing adequate funding and pursuing appropriate tender processes to deliver 30 new perinatal mental healthcare beds and additional community supports for new mothers and their families.

The new mother and baby beds—contrary to the misleading claims made by the member for Miller and indeed the member for Murrumba—will be located in Cairns, where there are four and there is an open-market procurement process; in Townsville, where there are eight and there is an open-market procurement process; and in Brisbane, where there are two additional beds with an open-market procurement process. On the Sunshine Coast, the HHS is leading a business case that includes an expression of interest for private beds but also is considering the delivery of those services. In Logan there are four—again, there is a HHS-led business case for refurbishment for the delivery of those services—and in Ipswich there are four currently under investigation by the department and the HHS. At this stage it is anticipated those beds will be progressively available from late 2025.

We are delivering on a promise and a commitment that was made by the former government that was unfunded to the extent it was necessary to deliver those services, and we are delivering those services as they ought to be delivered. Contrary to the claims made by the member for Miller and the member for Murrumba which served to reduce confidence in the system, we are ensuring those beds are delivered. I understand, and we recall, that the member for Miller did apologise in relation to the misleading claims for the perinatal beds and the question is: will he apologise for the misleading claims he made in relation to the Toowoomba surgery rescheduling?

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, how does the budget invest in the Redcliffe Hospital expansion project and how does the budget address the \$1 billion blowout on the hospital due to Labor's mismanagement of the failed capacity expansion program?

Mr JKELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the question contains an imputation. The question also contains information that should be verified.

Mr SPEAKER: Member, could you ask the question without the imputation, thank you.

Ms DOOLEY: Certainly. How does the budget invest in the Redcliffe Hospital expansion project due to Labor's mismanagement of the failed capacity expansion program?

Mr JKELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: there is an imputation in the question.

Ms DOOLEY: I am happy to re-ask. How does the budget invest in the Redcliffe Hospital expansion project?

Mr NICHOLLS: As we know, there was an abject failure by Labor in the delivery of their capacity expansion program. In fact, it would be appropriate to describe it as the 'failed capacity expansion program' that delivered a \$1 billion budget blowout. I note the point taken by the member for Greenslopes. For verification, he can go to Mr Sangster's report which highlights the cost blowout. In fact, for the information of the member for Greenslopes and others, I refer them to the Hospital Rescue Plan at page 14. Member for Greenslopes, I am sure it would make great bedside reading. It will not send you to sleep, though, it will keep you awake! It is a horror story of mismanagement and failure by the Labor party.

What did we find in relation to the failed Labor Redcliffe Hospital expansion? A more than \$1 billion cost blowout; a delay of more than two years; inadequate planning that ignored clinical advice; no paediatric outpatients; no mortuary; and no education or training facilities. It failed to address major safety concerns for staff in terms of their entry and exit, it had major delays due to site risks and it failed to resolve the cultural heritage issues which were costing Queenslanders \$50,000 a day when we came to office.

The design, which had originally received 1,000 comments from hospital and health staff, went ahead under Labor without any care or consideration for that information. We also saw that there were concerns in relation to the car park. So as a result of the work that has been done, work is now progressing to replan and redesign the hospital in close consultation with clinicians, the administration

and Metro North who are welcoming the engagement that they are now receiving. HIQ, Metro North Hospital and Health Service and the hospital are piloting a refreshed project governance model that will likely form the basis of the governance model that will be used across the state and respond to the Sangster report recommendations regarding project governance.

Once again, Redcliffe is the first place in hospital where good things are landing, member. The car park there is currently progressing and procurement activity has progressed on the Redcliffe Hospital car park expansion with the request for offer released only a few days ago on 25 July. Importantly, local tier 2 and 3 builders have now been able to bid on this project, thanks to the relaxation of the Labor government's restrictive BPIC practices—BPIC practices that the member for Miller and the member for Murrumba were instrumental in implementing that have led to cost blowouts being experienced not only in the hospital and health sphere but also across government. The register of interest was met with strong interest from the market, including from tier 2 and tier 3 firms, and the project is set to deliver more than 500 additional vehicle spaces. We all know how difficult it is to get a car park at the Redcliffe Hospital. I am sure that those 500 additional spaces will be welcomed by those consumers when they attend the new Redcliffe Hospital. I look forward to making some further and significant announcements in relation to that in the near future with you, member for Redcliffe.

Mr SPEAKER: I now go to the member for Noosa for a question.

Ms BOLTON: Director-General, regarding the response to question on notice No. 19, can you provide details on what options are being investigated with Ramsay Health Care to expand Noosa Hospital and a timeline for when actual progress is expected, given that there have already been years of investigations and negotiations?

Dr Rosengren: There have been ongoing conversations with Ramsay Health Care for quite some time with regard to future opportunities and expansions. Obviously the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service already has an existing relationship with Ramsay for the Noosa Hospital. In the context of conversations or negotiations that could be commercial-in-confidence I am not in a position to go into specific details around future plans and opportunities in that space, except to say that there is a strong commitment to continue to provide access to health services for the local community through that arrangement.

Ms BOLTON: Director-General, question on notice No. 20 provides that the Sunshine Coast will be funded for a number of new services—psychosis teams, mental health supports et cetera—will any of these be available after 4 pm daily, weekends or on public holidays?

Dr Rosengren: If I could just seek some clarification: are you referencing generally services being available after hours or is there a specific service that you are interested in?

Ms BOLTON: Yes, the ones that were mentioned in response to question on notice No. 20. So there was a mental health support team, additional clinicians, AOD treatment services—there were a number mentioned that were newly funded. My question is whether any of these will be available after-hours because that is where our shortfalls are?

Dr Rosengren: Look, I do not have the exact details of every single program, every single clinician and every single schedule except to say that Queensland Health is absolutely committed to providing services to the community across a seven-day-a-week 24-hour-a-day cycle. We have extensive investments in community mental health and community support services that are pre-existing and continue to have growth funding through the Better Care Together mental health program. If there is a very specific question around a specific program I am happy to take that under advice and seek some information to answer a specific response. Queensland Health absolutely provides—through its acute hospitals as well as through its community services—extended hours services to the community.

Ms BOLTON: Director-General, in relation to the \$1.75 billion investment through the Surgery Connect program, can you provide us with what the funding increases have been for those to occur at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, Nambour Hospital and Noosa Hospital?

Dr Rosengren: What I can say is that there has been a substantial increase in investment. The volume that is directed through the Surgery Connect program varies and fluctuates across the year so it would be very challenging to provide you with a specific answer to the number that the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service will utilise. The reason is that the demands around volume pressure, waitlists—as well as the capacity within the private sector—will fluctuate seasonally over time as it does in all parts of the healthcare system.

Typically, we work progressively with the hospital and health services as the year progresses around where there is capacity in the private system, the arrangements we have with the private providers and the volume of surgery that gets delivered. One thing that is for certain across the entire state, we do take advantage of the significant growth in funding allocated to the Surgery Connect program to ensure Queenslanders, according to where their needs are, are getting access to surgery.

It is very important to recognise that in the context that we currently operate under with the demands from the community for access to surgical care and the inability for us to have kept pace with capacity in the public hospital system, we do have a dependency on leveraging off the private sector to ensure Queenslanders do get access to care. Obviously over the coming five to six years as we invest in the—

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, I am letting you know that time has run out, so could you wrap up very quickly.

Dr Rosengren: We obviously have a significant investment through the Hospital Rescue Plan to invest in the long-needed capacity expansion to allow us to become more self-sufficient around surgery in the public sector.

Mr SPEAKER: The committee will now adjourn for a short break. The hearing will resume at 10.45 am.

Proceedings suspended from 10.30 am to 10.45 am.



Mr SPEAKER: Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of health. I call the member for Miller.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr LEE: Will the member for Miller apologise—

Mr BAILEY: Sorry, I have the call. You do not have the call. Don't try that on.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, member for Miller. I will chair the committee, thank you.

Mr BAILEY: I accept that, Mr Speaker.

Mr MOLHOEK: Perhaps the member might apologise—

Mr BAILEY: I have the call. The director-general said he was going to come back by the end of the last session with information about the elective surgery waitlists—the percentage of those waiting longer than clinically recommended and the percentage waiting longer than clinically recommended for specialist outpatient care. Is that available, Director-General?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: as per the proceedings of other committees, there is an opportunity to come back at the conclusion of all of the sessions, and that would be just before 1.30 pm today. Those matters have been taken on notice and there was an undertaking given that relevant information would be provided at the end of the entire session, which would be just before 1.30 pm.

Mr SPEAKER: That is the usual process. Ask the next question, member for Miller.

Mr BAILEY: That includes sun smart. Okay. My next question is to the chief executive of Metro South, Noelle Cridland, please. I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 7, regarding Queensland Health's capital program. When were you and Metro South Hospital and Health Service informed that plans for the new spinal injuries unit at the PA Hospital would not be proceeding?

Mr NICHOLLS: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the reality is that there was no plan for it to proceed because there was no money in the budget for it.

Mr BAILEY: That is not a point of order.

Mr NICHOLLS: The question is hypothetical and I would ask the member to validate his claim.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to rephrase it.

Mr SPEAKER: Member, do you have authentication to support your question, or are you going to move on to another question?

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to rephrase it if you request, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Okay, rephrase that.

Mr BAILEY: CEO, have you or the Metro South Hospital and Health Service been informed that plans for the new spinal injuries unit at the PA Hospital would not proceed?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand that the member has attempted to rephrase the question but, in essence, it is the same question and there is a supposition with respect to the question as asked. I would ask you to consider that, given the question has already been rephrased, you should rule it out of order.

Mr BAILEY: To the point of order, Mr Speaker, there has been a business case that has been funded in this. I have rephrased the question to be a simple, straightforward question: 'Have you been informed about it being proceeded?' It is a very simple yes-or-no question based on something for which there has been a business case completed for Metro South.

Mr SPEAKER: Member, when you were explaining that you made that question very specific, very short and to the point. Would you ask the question in those terms, please?

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I certainly will. CEO, have you and/or the Metro South Hospital and Health Service been informed that plans for the new spinal injuries unit at the PA Hospital, for which there is a business case—you would be familiar with that—are not proceeding? It is straightforward.

Mr NICHOLLS: Point of order: it is the same point of order. He can try and try, but the situation is the same.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the shadow minister is referencing a business case for this project, so there is evidence of this project being in existence. The shadow minister is simply asking a question that the HHS representative should be able to answer.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: there have been a number of attempts to rephrase the question to be compliant with standing orders. That has not occurred up this point. I would suggest and submit to you that the question now be ruled out of order because there has not been compliance in those attempts to rephrase the question as asked.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Miller, I am going to give you a chance, but you are going to have to ask just one question. You have two questions rolled in there, but ask one question and we will see how we go.

Mr BAILEY: Okay. This is the question to the CEO: is the new spinal injuries unit at the PA Hospital proceeding?

Mr SPEAKER: We can accept that?

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Speaker, no, I do object to it because there is no plan for a new spinal injuries unit at the hospital in the budget that the previous member's government was responsible for. There was no plan.

Mr BAILEY: There is a business case completed—a detailed business case—and you know that, Minister, so stop running interference.

Mr NICHOLLS: A business case is not a plan; it is a business case.

Mr SPEAKER: You stated the business case. Perhaps that is your question: is there a business case?

Mr BAILEY: CEO, there has been a detailed business case completed for the spinal injuries unit—

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Speaker, point of order: he is putting words in the CEO's mouth.

Mr BAILEY: I have not even finished the question yet. Are you kidding?

Mr MOLHOEK: Is it a question or a statement?

Mr BAILEY: This is ridiculous!

Dr ROWAN: Well, you should apologise.

Mr BAILEY: Filibustering, breaking the flow.

Mr LEE: Apologise to the people of Toowoomba.

Mr BAILEY: Nonsensical sense.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Speaker, point of order: the member for Hervey Bay is being deliberately disruptive. I would ask you to bring him to order and consider a warning.

Mr SPEAKER: And he is not the only one, member for Greenslopes. We need to proceed with this. Member for Miller, I am going to ask you to just ask your question—very simple, one question.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I can refer quite openly to an article in the *Courier-Mail* about this very issue, so it has been well reported. My simple question was: to the CEO's best knowledge, is she aware whether the spinal injuries unit, which was subject to the detailed business case completed in October—simply to her knowledge—is proceeding?

Mr SPEAKER: Ms Cridland, answer as you will.

Ms Cridland: To my knowledge there has been no announcement of a new spinal injuries building at the PA Hospital.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, what modelling has been completed on the need for increasing capacity for a Queensland spinal injuries unit?

Dr Rosengren: It is obviously a really significant challenge for Queenslanders who require the services of a complex spinal injuries service, so I think it is very important that we have a model of care that delivers the world-class care that that community of patients requires and in particular to have that care delivered close to home. We have done an extensive analysis or assessment of spinal cord injury service need and in December last year we finalised the release of a spinal cord injury service delivery model. This was a piece of work that went over an extended period of time and had extensive consultation with patients and with key spinal injury community service providers and, very importantly, it demonstrated the need to ensure that we had access to spinal services in regional areas to ensure that people could receive the expert advice closer to where they live where they have their families and their social connections.

So we have committed to a spinal cord injury service delivery model and there is a proposed plan to implement that over the coming 10 years, and some early initial investments have been made to strengthen the access to spinal services. Part of that process is understanding the needs for the greater Brisbane area and there are opportunities for us to understand where the best place for spinal services can be provided and we are in the process of working with the stakeholder groups, our consumers and our staff to identify the best way to deliver those services.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, in order to meet current and future need for spinal injury patients and their rehabilitation, how many extra beds are required to provide for that?

Dr Rosengren: I do not have that number immediately in front of me, but I do know that the modelling that was undertaken through the spinal cord injury service delivery model does identify the growth needs moving forward, but again not to mislead the committee and provide an inaccurate number I will need to get someone to give me that specific detail which we will do before the end of the session.

Mr BAILEY: Fantastic; thank you, Director-General. Notwithstanding that—and I thank you for providing that for the committee by the end of the session—the number aside, you would be aware, would you not, of what bed shortage we have for spinal injury rehabilitation in Queensland?

Dr Rosengren: I am aware that there is a need for substantial investment in ensuring that we have adequate spinal services for the community, including in the local region, and it is why there has been substantial investment to strengthen the quality and capability of the existing statewide spinal service at Metro South. As I have already stated, it is why we have also endorsed the consumer and community contributed spinal cord injury service delivery model with a 10-year plan to grow access to specialist spinal and rehabilitation services across the state and that involves a strengthening of the capability that we have within our existing facilities as well as in investing in new capability on the Gold Coast, in North Queensland and on the Sunshine Coast.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Director-General, that was helpful, but the question was: is there a current bed shortage for spinal injury patients here in Queensland?

Dr Rosengren: Yes. As a result of the inability to keep up with demands over the last decade, we have bed shortages across all of our services and facilities. That is why through the Hospital Rescue Plan we have demonstrated a commitment to invest in 2,600 additional beds across the state and we have been given the capacity in the budget—

Mr BAILEY: But, Director-General, respectfully—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Miller, the director-general is answering your question, so just let him speak; do not interrupt him—

Dr Rosengren: I am fine thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER:—so he can round out his answer.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Speaker, point of order: with respect, the director-general did not answer the specific question that was asked around the waiting lists.

Mr BAILEY: Correct. To the point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Miller has the chance to ask another question.

Mr BAILEY: The question was not specifically about the overall capital program; it was about whether there was a bed shortage for spinal injury patients in Queensland currently. It is a simple question. If you do not know the answer and want to come back to us, Director-General, I am happy for that, but is there currently a bed shortage for spinal injury patients in Queensland—a simple question?

Dr Rosengren: I apologise, but I felt I did answer. I said in the same way that there is a deficiency of beds across the entire sector, yes, there is a deficiency of beds in our spinal services.

Mr BAILEY: Okay, so there is; thank you. How many would be on the waiting list in terms of spinal injury patients currently with Queensland Health?

Dr Rosengren: I will need to seek that specific number for you.

Mr BAILEY: You will come back to us before the end of the session with that?

Dr Rosengren: Before the end of the committee hearing.

Mr BAILEY: Yes. I appreciate that. My next question is for the chief executive of Gold Coast HHS, Mr Ron Calvert. I refer to the Coomera Hospital project. I table a photograph of some very lonely elevator shafts going into the sky that have sat there for six or seven months. What is the projected completion date for the new Coomera Hospital?

Mr Calvert: The capital program is not in my area of expertise. I would suggest that you ask Mr Sangster that question.

Mr BAILEY: As the chief of the region, you would have some conversations in relation, no doubt, to the capital program and about future capital needs. There has been no completion date discussed with you by other members of Queensland Health?

Mr Calvert: As I said, I think it would be best to refer that to Mr Sangster.

Mr BAILEY: You are unable to give us a completion date on the Coomera Hospital construction?

Mr Calvert: I am here for my expertise on the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service. I would not want to mislead the committee with my assumptions.

Mr BAILEY: I appreciate your answer, but obviously you would plan for the future. There is no completion date that you are aware of for the Coomera Hospital construction?

Mr Calvert: I do not want to offer a date in case I get it wrong.

Mr SPEAKER: This will be the last question before we go to the other side.

Mr BAILEY: My next question is for the chief executive of the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service, Ms Deborah Carroll. What is the projected completion date for the new Bundaberg Hospital?

Ms Carroll: The new Bundaberg Hospital is certainly under the auspice of Sam Sangster, who is the director of the program. We are certainly looking at the options of being on a single site. You are best to ask him the question on dates et cetera.

Mr BAILEY: To this point there is no completion date being discussed in terms of when the Bundaberg Hospital may open?

Ms Carroll: We are doing further planning for the single-site option and, once again, I would refer to Sam Sangster, who is managing the project, for further details.

Mr SPEAKER: We will now go to government members' questions.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, in relation to the Sustaining Capital Program and a timely investment in infrastructure maintenance, how does this state budget address the shortfalls outlined in the Queensland Audit Office report in relation to asset maintenance, and are you aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Moggill for his question. As a clinician himself, he understands the importance of maintaining the capital stock of the hospitals within which our hardworking clinicians and staff operate. There have been concerns raised regarding the funding of the former Sustaining Capital Program and how the Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery Program and Building Rural and Remote Health Program were inappropriately funded from this source. A funding source set aside to fund the replacement of capital assets—things like a lift or heating, ventilation and

air-conditioning systems and other significant assets—was actually being depleted and used to fund promises made in other areas for which insufficient funding was made available. This occurred with the former failed Sustaining Capital Program in terms of what it was funding. Upon coming to government, you can imagine our surprise when we uncovered that all funds from the forward estimates of the Sustaining Capital Program had been drawn forward for sugar-hit announcements in 2024. This effectively left zero dollars in the forward years for the Sustaining Capital Program—zero dollars for critical maintenance until 2028-29.

What have we done in this budget to resolve this matter? Obviously, the Sustaining Capital Program has a bad reputation for actually doing what it should have done so we have changed the name of the program and it is now the new Timely Investment Infrastructure Maintenance Program, otherwise known, for easy reference, as the TIIM Program. This new TIIM Program has \$2.647 billion in new funding to address Labor's fiscal mismanagement. This includes \$671 million in the year concluded because Labor approved critical projects without the money necessary to do so. We have invested \$676 million in 2025-26 for the backlog of critical maintenance and previously approved but unfunded investments across the state. So we are putting \$670 million in for last year's unfunded expenditure and more in this year to catch up with the backlog of unfunded investments needed.

On top of that, we are putting in \$1.1 billion over the next two years, 2026-27 and 2027-28—\$550 million in each of those years—completely funding and uplifting the base capital allocation for maintenance, for the first time since 2010-11—the first and most significant increase in that time, despite the asset base going from \$8.6 billion to over \$30 billion, and then \$200 million ongoing from 2028-29. Having caught up—paid for last year—having invested and having met the needs, we can then make sure we have a sustainable funding source going into the future. We have also committed \$355 million to finalise the previously committed but underfunded Building Rural and Remote Health Program, delivering health services in rural and regional Queensland, and \$146 million in new funding for the Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery Program.

Thank you, member for Moggill, for an opportunity to clarify just exactly how much money is being invested to make sure that our capital facilities are properly maintained. Not only do we need to build new ones, which we are doing under our Hospital Rescue Plan, but also we are looking after the ones that are already in existence. As we all know, the Queensland Audit Office were quite scathing of the former government's failure to fund sustaining capital, noting the amount of money that needed to be spent over the forward years. We are picking up the cudgels and delivering what Labor failed to deliver in a decade.

Dr ROWAN: Well done, Minister—great for health clinicians.

Mr LEE: Will the member for Miller apologise for misleading the people of Toowoomba?

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Speaker: the standing orders are quite clear on who questions are to be directed to. I know that the member is new, but I would ask you to ask him to direct questions to the appropriate people.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hervey Bay, that was well out of line. You know the process. You may be new, but I am afraid that deserves a warning.

Mr LEE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The minister has spoken about recent dangerous and false claims about elective surgery cancellations. Can the minister please advise the committee about day-of-surgery cancellations and what the Crisafulli government is doing to stabilise the elective surgery waiting list?

Mr NICHOLLS: As I indicated earlier today, the member for Miller stood up and misled the community of Toowoomba about rescheduled surgeries. He falsely claimed that there were 42 cancelled surgeries when, in fact, there were eight rescheduled cases. I indicated the number of matters that were actually dealt with by the hardworking staff and clinicians at the Toowoomba Hospital. I am curious to know, member for Hervey Bay, whether the member for Miller or any of his then colleagues stood up at the time when hundreds of surgeries were being cancelled on the day of planned surgery under their watch, because I think it is important that we have a full understanding of the history of these matters.

Under Labor, over a four-month period between October 2023 and January 2024, at the Logan Hospital there were 119 days of surgery cancellations, 21 more than in the same period under the LNP. At the Mackay Base Hospital there were 87 days of surgery cancellations, 30 more than in the same period under the LNP. At the Toowoomba Hospital—and still we have not heard an apology—there were 95 days of surgery cancellations, 32 more than in the same period under the LNP. The member

for Redcliffe will be interested that to know that at the Redcliffe Hospital there were 71 days of surgery cancellations, 18 more than in the same period under the LNP. At the Townsville University Hospital—and I am very grateful for the support of the board and the board chair of the Townsville University Hospital in terms of what we are doing there—there were 173 days of surgery cancellations, 33 more than in the same period under the LNP. That is just a snapshot of some of the many days of surgery rescheduling that occurred under Labor's watch.

The Crisafulli LNP government's budget delivers a record \$1.75 billion over four years for additional surgeries, many more of them, and that will help deliver 30,000 elective surgeries in this financial year alone. That \$1.75 billion includes a record \$1.27 billion investment for the Surgery Connect program. That will be done externally to Queensland Health facilities but it includes \$500 million that will also be used within our own public hospital system to deliver the surgeries that Queenslanders so desperately need and that were ignored for far too long under the former Labor government.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, my question is in respect to ambulance ramping and patient flow. Thank you for the new triage bays at the Gold Coast University Hospital.

Mr NICHOLLS: There are more coming.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, can you advise how the 2025-26 budget is investing in our hospitals to improve patient flow and reduce ambulance ramping and can you advise why record investment in ramping and patient flow was required in the 2025-26 budget?

Mr NICHOLLS: The Gold Coast hospital network, in dealing with all of those matters, is one of the busiest in our state. In fact, it was the first of the hospitals that I visited on becoming health minister in the lead-up to schoolies week. I saw the great work that is being done there in relation to their transit lounge, their flow commander and other things. I am rapidly becoming very well acquainted with all the issues around ambulance ramping and patient flow. I thank all the clinicians who take the time to provide me with advice and information in regard to that and for the great work they do.

In 2025-26, the budget is restoring world-class health care in Queensland no matter where you live, including at the ever-growing and popular Gold Coast—the fabulous Goldie. It is increasing patient flow through hospitals to reduce ambulance ramping and elective surgery waitlists. We have \$55 million over two years to support tailored solutions to improve patient flow and reduce ambulance ramping in our state's busiest emergency departments. We have further funding of \$581.4 million over two years to keep access to 515 beds from the private sector. This helps maintain patient flow through EDs and medical wards and is necessitated by the former government's failure to plan or bring new hospital infrastructure online, on time and on budget.

The 2025-26 budget also provides 9.9 per cent growth in funding provided to HHSs to provide for the 2025-26 service agreements. Those agreements introduced a new KPI for ramping and elective surgery, a pricing incentive to invest in programs that improve post-surgical discharge, a pricing incentive that supports improved patient flow and a pricing incentive to further encourage the statewide uptake of rapid access clinics.

A lot of this is being driven, of course, by the experience of the director-general. He might like to elaborate on a couple of those matters that have been funded in this budget to provide further information to the committee.

Dr Rosengren: Obviously, we have had a substantial increase in demand continued for acute hospital services as the population grows, ages and has increasing complex comorbidities and increased disease burden. While we have had only a small volume of growth in demand on our emergency departments, we have had five times that volume of growth in ambulance demand and about nine times that growth in our category 1 and category 2 most serious patients requiring emergency department care.

One of the things that the most recent budget announcement does is gives us the capacity to invest in strategies along the patient journey throughout the hospital experience. A singular investment in the emergency department or in the ambulance space has the unintended consequence of creating additional pressure inside the emergency department rather than relieving pressure in the emergency department. There are a range of strategies, through the budget announcement, that provides us with the ability to invest in what we could call the limitation points that obstruct flow through the system. There are investments in transit lounges and in acute medical admission units. We are investing in the ability to deliver diagnostic services, particularly medical imaging, in some of our community settings

including our satellite health centres. We are also investing in the expansion of mental health services to help improve the flow of patients with mental health presentations through our emergency departments.

There is a very strong investment and a strategic investment in improving the performance across the whole patient journey. The absolute intention of that is to release the emergency departments from overcrowding and allow them to deliver the care that our frontline emergency clinicians wish to deliver.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, can you update the committee on progress to hire 46,000 additional health workers by 2032 and how this compares with what was inherited upon coming to government?

Mr NICHOLLS: As a registered nurse who has a deep and enduring passion for her community at Redcliffe, the member will know the importance of our health workforce. Unfortunately, under the former government's budget, the Queensland Health workforce was set to be cut by almost 1,800 FTEs in 2025-26. There simply was not going to be enough money to be able to pay for them.

Attrition rates were 6.4 per cent for the financial year 2023-24, up from 4.3 per cent for the financial year ending in 2019 so more people were leaving under the past five years of the former government. Attrition peaked at 6.75 per cent in the financial year ending 2022.

The data shows a steady move of staff away from rural and remote locations to metropolitan locations over the past 10 years. There was a 12.2 per cent rate of attrition in June 2014 to 9.7 per cent in June 2024. We are now seeing those rates stabilise. As of May 2025, Queensland Health rural and remote occupied FTEs, excluding the Queensland Ambulance Service, is now at 9.75 per cent.

I am pleased to advise the committee that, since our election, attrition rates have begun to fall in a number of areas, for example, nursing and midwifery. The nursing and midwifery stream attrition is at 3.94 per cent, which is lower than the rate for nine of the past 10 years. The medical stream attrition rate is at 2.7 per cent, which is the lowest rate of attrition in the past decade.

The government has committed to grow the health workforce by 46,000 additional health workers, including 34,000 extra clinicians, by 2032. We have committed to reduce the attrition rate back to historic averages from the current high of over six per cent. Since the beginning of November 2024, as at May 2025, the health workforce has in fact grown. It has grown by 4,692 since the Crisafulli government came to power, which is a growth rate of 4.2 per cent.

At the beginning of the year, we welcomed over 880 new doctors to Queensland Health. I had the pleasure of meeting a number of those doctors in Townsville on the first day of their induction at the Townsville University Hospital. That is one of the largest intakes in the state's history.

As at May 2025, there has been a 3.9 per cent increase in graduate doctors and a 12.9 per cent increase in graduate nurses and midwives compared to the year prior. What a terrific result that is. People want to work in the system. The 2025-26 budget delivers FTE growth of over 4½ thousand for 2025-26 alone, including 3,350 clinicians. Our budget initiatives accompany the government's \$24 million investment to financially support Queensland first-year GP trainees to continue their primary care training in 2025-26.

The Queensland government will also continue to expand the \$6.8 million single employer model pilot, which focuses on increasing the attractiveness of pursuing a career in general practice while improving the distribution of GPs in rural and remote Queensland, which is where we need them. The Crisafulli government is taking a considered and methodical approach to attracting and retaining Queensland's current and future health workforce. That is why we are delivering a fulsome and integrated system-wide health workforce plan, backed by data from a workforce gap analysis that is currently underway.

I was with the member for Redcliffe at the Redcliffe Hospital on 7 July to announce a boost in the security ambassador workforce. We were talking earlier about the security of patients and staff in emergency wards, and the 2025-26 budget provides \$8.7 million in increased funding to create 12 new security ambassador positions which will uplift healthcare security across the HHSs. That investment will ensure the uplift of the security officer and ambassador workforce to support the safety and security of Queensland Health's growing frontline workforce.

During Tropical Cyclone Alfred I was at the Royal Brisbane hospital talking to the staff who had stayed overnight and done a tremendous job. I met Cara, a security ambassador, who was doing a terrific job with some very agitated patients and managing what would have otherwise been a very difficult situation. That impressed me greatly. As a result, additional funding has been put into this budget to create those 12 new security ambassador positions, which will be distributed through the state in accordance with the need and in consultation with the HHSs. It is a very significant increase in investment in our workforce over the next 12 months. Thank you.

Mr SPEAKER: I will go to non-government members now. Member for Miller?

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, in relation to satellite health centres, can you provide the percentage of category 1 and category 2 presentations between November 2024 and now?

Dr Rosengren: Between what dates, sorry?

Mr BAILEY: Between November 2024 and now, what was the percentage of cat 1 and cat 2 presentations?

Dr Rosengren: In November 2024, 5.4 per cent of presentations to satellite health centres were cat 1 and cat 2. In May 2025 there were 969 presentations, which was 5.8 per cent of the total presentations.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, can you provide the percentage of cat 1 and cat 2 presentations to satellite health centres since they were renamed in February 2025, broken down by percentage each month?

Dr Rosengren: In February 2025, 5.7 per cent of the presentations attending satellite health facilities were category 1 and category 2. In March 2025, 5.2 per cent of the presentations to satellite health centres were category 1 and category 2. In April 2025, five per cent of the total presentations to satellite health centres were identified as category 1 and category 2. In May 2025, as I have already referenced, 5.8 per cent of presentations to satellite health centres were category 1 and category 2.

Mr BAILEY: Despite the name change, a higher percentage of patients with life-threatening conditions are going to the satellite health centres?

Dr Rosengren: I cannot confirm that. The Australian triage score system is a five-score system that is allocated to patients who present to an emergency department based on the urgency of their need for care, not the severity of their underlying condition. Drawing a direct link between the number of category 1 and category 2 presentations and 'life-threatening' does not fundamentally align with the purpose or intention of the allocation of a triage score to patients who present to an emergency department. I am unable to confirm that specific suggestion.

Mr BAILEY: The fact is that the percentages have increased for category 1 and category 2 since the name change, as you outlined. I will move on, though, to the next question. I table an email to the Queensland Health advisory network—

Mr NICHOLLS: Point of order, Mr Speaker: that is not what the director-general said. The member has misstated, as I have demonstrated. He has a history of doing that. I ask that the record be corrected or that the member withdraw.

Mr JKELLY: Mr Speaker, point of order: I am looking at the numbers that were presented and it is very clear there was an increase in category 1 and category 2. That is a factually correct statement.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: in addressing the point of order raised by the minister, there was an inaccurate characterisation of the testimony that was provided by the director-general in direct response to the question as asked.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Miller, you are here to ask questions. The director-general answered it. Your interpretation of it is your interpretation. You can ask your next question instead of providing commentary on the answer. Ask your next question, please.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to do that, Speaker. I thank the director-general for the numbers he presented. They were very helpful.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: given my other point of order in relation to the inaccurate characterisation of the testimony that was provided by the director-general in response to the member for Miller, I would submit to you that perhaps the member for Miller should withdraw the commentary that he provided after the response of the director-general.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the member for Moggill's request to you does not constitute an appropriate point of order. He is well aware of appropriate methods to deal with a complaint of that nature, and I would ask you to reject his point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: The point has been made. I have made my statement and *Hansard* will reflect that. Who has tabled this? Where did this come from?

Mr BAILEY: It is for the next question.

Mr SPEAKER: You may ask your next question.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, I have tabled an email to the Queensland Health advisory network. In the email it states—

... a shift in government priorities and funding with a decision recently made that the Queensland Puberty Health Education Project will no longer proceed.

Who instigated the review into the Women and Girls' Health Strategy funding that led to the decision that the puberty health education program would no longer proceed?

Mr NICHOLLS: Where is the email?

Mr BAILEY: It has been tabled. I draw people's attention to page 5 of the tabled RTI.

Mr NICHOLLS: The member for Miller said he has tabled an email to—

Mr BAILEY: I draw your attention to the lower half of page 5. That is what I referred to in the question, Minister. If you go to the second section, it is right there and I quoted it verbatim.

Mr SPEAKER: You are quoting from page 5 of this document, member for Miller?

Mr BAILEY: It is page 5 of the RTI that has been distributed.

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, do you have a copy of this?

Dr Rosengren: Yes, I do.

Mr SPEAKER: You may answer, Director-General.

Dr Rosengren: Can you restate the question for me, please?

Mr BAILEY: Sure. Who instigated the review into the Women and Girls' Health Strategy funding that led to the decision that the puberty health education program would no longer proceed?

Dr Rosengren: I would like to clarify that there has been no cancellation of funding, and the minister has been forthright about it in a public forum. I can confirm that the \$2.96 million allocated to the Ready, Set, Grow! puberty health education program has been committed and the work on delivering that program is well underway. The provider of that program has been notified that the program is continuing to be funded to be implemented as part of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, when was the decision made to continue the Ready, Set, Grow! program? Was it before or after it was reported in the *Courier-Mail*?

Dr Rosengren: There has been no decision made to not fund or continue with the program. As I already stated in my previous answer, \$2.96 million has been allocated to the Ready, Set, Grow! puberty health education program, and the staff within Queensland Health are continuing to do work on the development and the implementation of the program. The providers of the program are aware and are preparing for the implementation as was always planned.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Miller?

Mr BAILEY: I am happy for the member for South Brisbane to ask the next question.

Dr O'SHEA: My question is to the director-general. The Women and Girls' Health Strategy provides hope for women facing cancer or living with complex medical conditions to become mothers through publicly funded IVF. Can you advise how many women have accessed publicly funded IVF since 1 July this year?

Dr Rosengren: The answer is that we do not have a publicly funded IVF service in Queensland at this point in time.

Dr O'SHEA: I went through IVF so I know how important it is for women to have the hope IVF brings when they are trying to start a family. Why has publicly funded IVF not been provided as was promised in the Women and Girls' Health Strategy?

Dr Rosengren: I would consider that a policy question and I would refer that to the minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, do you have any comment to make on that?

Mr NICHOLLS: Certainly. You are right; ART does offer hope and the potential for families. We are currently in the process of undergoing a fairly substantial review of the rules in relation to ART given the rushed nature of the previous regulatory regime that was put in place with regard to it, noting, of course, that the former government had 10 years to take action in this particular field and chose not to do so and chose not to fund it or provide any sort of clinical guidance or framework in relation to the delivery of those services.

The proposal, as I understand it—and I was not part of that process—was to use private ART funders for the public ART service model. Given the fact that there are currently problems with the private ART funders, as you have seen in the media, the advice to me was that that matter should not

proceed until the service delivery programs and the regulatory regime in relation to the provision of ART have been resolved. I act on the advice provided by the department in relation to the delivery of those services, and I will continue to do.

I would say to you quite clearly that that service was not in place, had not been put in place and had not been adequately provided for as at the time of the change of government. The regulations in place in relation to it were inadequate, as we have seen in the paper. For example, the identification of gamete donors had not been adequately thought through by the previous government, necessitating a delay in the implementation of regulations and the reworking of that material because of the rushed and hasty nature of the implementation of this service last year. That is quite clearly one of the pieces of advice I received on coming to office.

Dr O'SHEA: So there is no publicly funded IVF at the moment. Director-General, my next question is to you. One action item from the Women and Girls' Health Strategy was to develop a service model for pelvic pain and endometriosis for Queensland and provide improved access to services for pelvic pain. Can you please provide an update on the pelvic pain clinic service?

Mr SPEAKER: Before I go to the director-general, I point out that I made a ruling about no commentary to answers before your next question. I will reinforce that.

Dr Rosengren: I would like to call forward Dr Helen Brown, Deputy Director-General of Clinical Excellence Queensland. As the portfolio owner of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy, I would like to give Dr Brown an opportunity to provide you with an answer.

Dr Brown: To start, I would like to thank the over 12,000 women and girls across the state who were part of developing this strategy and whom we were able to hear from and our clinicians and numerous stakeholders across the state who inputted into this strategy. With regard to the question, yes there has been great consultation in terms of what that program will look like. I am happy to report that we have now developed an options paper which is being progressed at present so that we can have a decision with regard to that moving forward, which will be of great benefit to women across Queensland.

Mr BAILEY: My question is to the director-general. Why was no public communication sent out by Queensland Health about IVF not proceeding?

Mr NICHOLLS: There was not any program to proceed.

Dr Rosengren: I am not sure I understand the context of the question from the member because, at this point in time, I am not aware that any formalisation of a decision to implement publicly funded IVF has ever been made. As I said previously, that is a policy position from government and I would refer that back to the minister to respond.

Mr BAILEY: The reason I ask that is because it is a part of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy which the government has said very publicly they are not cutting and that would start on 1 July. This is something the government is committed to and yet it has not gone forward so one must make conclusions about why it has not gone forward given the publicly reported commitment by the government to keep the Women and Girls' Health Strategy.

Mr SPEAKER: I would suggest that that question is probably better directed to the minister.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, we do remain committed to the Women and Girls' Health Strategy. I have answered numerous questions on notice with respect to the delivery of that service. I have explained that the commencement of the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act has been deferred by six months to 1 March 2026 based on advice from the Chief Health Officer to allow proper consultation with relevant stakeholders. As it was contemplated that the service be delivered by private providers, those private providers have to be brought within the regulatory regime. It is abundantly clear that, whilst the first act—that is, the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act—was rushed—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I am happy with that answer.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister to being responsive to your question.

Mr NICHOLLS:—there was just 10 weeks of drafting versus the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel's recommended timeframe of 12 months. The people who draft legislation say it would take 12 months and it was done in 10 weeks. Not all issues were considered. Given that and the fact that stakeholders had from 12 to 25 February—14 days—to provide feedback on a major piece of legislation for the regulatory regime, the advice is that it needs to be deferred. The result of that, of course, is—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I am happy with that answer and I happy to move on.

Mr NICHOLLS:—the failures that we saw. One of the great failures we have seen—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I am happy with that answer and I am happy to move on.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, point of order.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, point of order: I am fine with the minister saying a few words, but I am happy with that answer and I happy to move on to my next question.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Your point of order, member for Moggill.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am able to give the answer.

Mr BAILEY: It wasn't to the minister. I am happy for him to make a few comments.

Mr SPEAKER: I am taking a point of order from the member for Moggill. I only want to hear from the member for Moggill, thank you.

Dr ROWAN: The minister is being responsive to the question as asked in relation to assisted reproductive technologies and IVF. He is providing a comprehensive answer and the member for Miller should not be afforded the opportunity to constantly interrupt and interject on a comprehensive response that is being provided by the minister.

Mr SPEAKER: I referred the question to the minister because it was a policy question. Minister, have you got anything further to add before we move on?

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy to assist. We remain committed to it. Some \$157 million of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy out of a total \$247 million was not funded. We have put funding into the budget and put that in there for the future and we remain committed to the Women and Girls' Health Strategy.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, have you received any advice, either internally or from medical stakeholders, about changes or advancements in termination-of-pregnancy care, specifically MS-2 Step?

Dr Rosengren: I would like to again refer that question to Dr Helen Brown as the Deputy Director-General of Clinical Excellence Queensland. That is a specific question that falls within her portfolio.

Dr Brown: Sorry, could you repeat the question, please?

Mr BAILEY: Has the director-general received any advice, either internally or from medical stakeholders, about changes or advancements in termination-of-pregnancy care, specifically MS-2 Step?

Dr Brown: There was a change to the legislation last year to broaden it outside doctors so that nurses, nurse practitioners, enrolled midwives, RNs and midwives can prescribe the oral drug MS-2 Step. Also, under the Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy, we have introduced the Queensland virtual early medical termination-of-pregnancy service, which is a service delivered under the Queensland virtual hospital and provided on a statewide basis through our Sunshine Coast University Hospital.

It is really important that this service is there as a backstop, not to replace the wonderful work and services that our GPs and many private providers provide across the state delivering this important healthcare service to women across Queensland but for those groups who may not have access to a local GP or may be suffering financial hardship or may be from a minority group so that they can have access to this service. There is a self-referral portal that women can use online and there is also access through 13HEALTH, where a woman can be signposted to this service. I also thank Children by Choice for the service and counselling support that they provide to many Queensland women and pregnant people across this state, supporting them through this difficult journey.

The other component that we have also introduced and funded through the Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy is offering a free statewide phone service under 1800 4 WOMEN, where Women's Health and Equality Queensland is providing Queensland women free counselling support. That can be for any range of reasons including stillbirth, perinatal death, after a termination of pregnancy and for, unfortunately, women in Queensland who have suffered domestic violence. That is all being funded through the Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy.

Mr BAILEY: Director-General, will your department be reviewing the facts of a recent case involving a 12-year-old who appeared before the Supreme Court to grant access to abortion to understand if changes to legislation or clinical guidelines are required to improve clarity around consent?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: as the question was asked, I ask for your guidance or clarification as to whether this is a policy decision of government or whether this question should be more appropriately addressed to the Minister for Health.

Mr BAILEY: To the point of order, it is simply a matter of whether they are reviewing this very important case that has been recently reported. It is not a matter of whether they have a position on it. It is simply whether they are looking at it, Mr Speaker. It is a pretty soft question.

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, answer it as you will.

Dr Rosengren: I am not going to comment on the specific case, but I would have thought a question regarding adjustments to legislation or legal processes would be referred to the appropriate government agency that oversees that.

Mr SPEAKER: We will now change over to government questions.

Mr LEE: I refer to the \$12.7 million in the budget for illicit tobacco and vape enforcement. Can the minister please advise how the Crisafulli government's record compares to the former government and how this new investment will boost these efforts?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his question. I know the member for Hervey Bay has been a good supporter of the action being taken by the Crisafulli LNP government in relation to the trade in illicit tobacco and vapes, which are all of course illicit unless they are prescribed by a pharmacy. I want to thank our enforcement and environmental health officers in our public health units. In fact, I had the opportunity of visiting a number of our public health units in Cairns and Rockhampton to thank them for the great work they are doing. I have to say, they are delighted with the support that they are receiving from the Crisafulli LNP government in their efforts.

Having seen no substantial increase in their funding over many years, they are now going to receive \$12.7 million over two years for 43 new personnel. This will lead to 38 additional enforcement officers across the 11 public health units. We will have three enforcement officers in our central compliance unit—if you like, the flying squad—and two additional administrative officers because, with all this additional work going on, additional administration is required. That represents a boost to the enforcement capacity of about 25 per cent—a 25 per cent increase and 43 new personnel going into our public health units.

There have been some great successes by our public health units. In March 2025, Operation Appaloosa raided 30 locations, including across the south-east and Wide Bay area, and seized 76,000 vapes, 19 million cigarettes and 3.6 tonnes of loose tobacco, with an estimated street value of over \$20 million. In April 2025, the LNP government introduced the nation's toughest on-the-spot fines for the sale of illicit tobacco and vapes, and about \$20 million in fines has been issued since then. In June 2025, the Mackay Public Health Unit confiscated approximately 3.3 million cigarettes, 300 kilos of loose tobacco and 20,000 vapes from a single warehouse.

Since being elected, under the LNP government the public health units have seized 45 million cigarettes, \$5 million in fines have been issued and we are continuing to work hard. We continue to deliver—\$5 million in fines were issued versus less than \$250,000 fines each week under the former Labor government. We are collecting money; we are taking steps to stamp it out. We have also been successful in a prosecution to obtain six-month closures. That was successful last week. I think today, which is World Lung Cancer Day, that is an achievement to be celebrated. I want to thank our public health units for doing so.

We are not the only people involved in this, of course. Federal Labor control the borders. They have to stop the material that is coming in from the Middle East and from China in particular. They need to step up and do their job to stop these dangerous and illicit products from being smuggled in through our borders. We work closely with our police to crack down on the crime gangs that are behind it all. Of course, the public health units are there in a regulatory role, an investigative role, to determine those people who are doing the wrong thing.

As I say, we have done more in six months and achieved more than the Labor Party was able to do in the prior seven months. I think that is a great thing for the health, safety and wellbeing of our children in particular who are being introduced to smoking through the use of these illicit vapes.

Ms DOOLEY: My question is to the minister. Are you aware of any misleading statements about the Hospital Rescue Plan and how does the 2025-26 budget disprove these claims?

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that question contained imputations.

Mr NICHOLLS: Against who?

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Speaker: there was no-one specifically mentioned.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to allow the question.

Mr NICHOLLS: I might ask the member for Redcliffe to state the question again.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, are you aware of any misleading statements about the Hospital Rescue Plan and how does the 2025-26 budget disprove these claims?

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, I am aware, as you would imagine, about misleading statements made in relation to the fully funded Hospital Rescue Plan that we released earlier this year. Our 2025-26 budget delivers a record \$18.5 billion over five years for the fully funded Hospital Rescue Plan. I do note that the member for Bancroft has been referred to the Ethics Committee for his comments regarding the Redcliffe Hospital in parliament on 1 May.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: there is a matter that has been referred to the Ethics Committee that is being referred to in a committee hearing.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I caution you not to refer to that matter that is before the Ethics Committee.

Mr NICHOLLS: My apologies, Mr Speaker. As I say, I am aware of statements that have been made in relation to the Hospital Rescue Plan. I want to again take the opportunity to remind the committee of Labor's failures at the Redcliffe Hospital and they are, of course, manifest and great.

Member, you will no doubt have page 14 of the Hospital Rescue Plan well thumb-eared. Labor's failures at the Redcliffe Hospital include the failure to take on board clinical advice; no paediatric outpatients, no mortuary, and no education and training facilities; safety concerns; and resolution-of-design concerns regarding the culturally modified tree on site and the work we are undertaking to redesign it.

I am also aware of claims made by the Leader of the Opposition which are also patently misleading statements when he said on 20 May that the promise of 2,200 hospital beds will not be delivered at all. In fact, we are delivering 2,600 hospital beds, and we are delivering them sooner and more reliably and with greater consultation than the former government failed capacity expansion program was able to deliver. We have clearly mapped out in our Hospital Rescue Plan how that is to occur, delivering more and better beds across Queensland.

We are also investing \$5.5 billion in new funding to address the cost overruns that had previously been experienced. Member for Redcliffe, as there have been misleading statements in relation to the rescheduling of surgery at the Toowoomba Hospital and as there have been misleading statements in relation to the provision of the perinatal mental health beds I referred to earlier—and in fact which have gone out for tender, I might say, in the month of July for the delivery of those eight perinatal mental health beds in Townsville—there have also been misleading statements in relation to the Hospital Rescue Plan and its delivery. As you and I both know, that plan is being implemented as we speak. It is a fully funded Hospital Rescue Plan to deliver more beds sooner than would otherwise have been the case under the former government's failed capacity expansion program, which was described as unachievable.

Mr MOLHOEK: Can the minister advise how long-stay patients are impacting on patient flow in Queensland public hospitals, and why has the number of long-stay patients grown significantly?

Mr NICHOLLS: This is a critical issue in relation to the problems that are being experienced in our hospitals. It is raised with me almost everywhere I go. It is a concern not just here in Queensland but across the country. Long-stay patients are patients who are clinically fit for discharge but have nowhere to go. They remain in hospital for a number of reasons. It is a systemic challenge experienced by public hospital services across Australia and it leads to poorer outcomes. It has adverse effects on their health and wellbeing and poorer long-term outcomes in a number of instances. It also puts increased pressure on our hospital capacity and workforce. More patients in acute beds who do not really require acute care leads to high healthcare costs for the state.

As at 25 May 2022 there were 553 long-stay patients in Queensland Health facilities. That was when federal Labor was elected in May 2022. As at 26 May 2025 there are now 1,100 long-stay patients in our hospitals: 288 younger patients and 814 older patients. This challenge has grown significantly since May 2022 as a result of the Commonwealth government's underinvestment and inefficient provision of NDIS support and aged care. Of Queensland's long-stay patients, approximately 77 per cent of long-stay older patients are waiting for residential aged care.

Member for Southport, you would be aware that the provision of residential aged care is a Commonwealth responsibility. They are the primary providers of residential aged care facilities in

Australia. Approximately 58 per cent of long-stay younger patients, young folk who do not need an aged care bed but require care in order to manage their condition, are waiting for appropriate NDIS scheme supports. Again, member for Southport, it is the Commonwealth government that has been unable to come to grips with issues regarding the administration of the NDIS. Quite frankly, if the Commonwealth was able to step up to the mark and address the problems with funding aged care places and the NDIS, then a substantial amount of the problems that are being experienced in our hardworking hospitals would be resolved. Even a 15 per cent improvement would lead to an enormous benefit in terms of the flow of patients and the care and health and safety of those patients.

This really follows the Commonwealth government abandoning the commitment it made at First Ministers' meetings in December 2023 to increase its contribution rate to the provision of services in the states, leading to the 42.5 per cent Commonwealth contribution rate going eventually to a 45 per cent Commonwealth contribution rate. In fact, it has gone backwards since that promise was made by the Prime Minister in December 2023: it is now sitting at 37.5 per cent. Queensland taxpayers are paying more while the Commonwealth neglects its obligations in aged care, neglects its obligation to fix up the NDIS system, and fails to provide a pathway to the promise they made to increase the Commonwealth contribution rate.

I note that their state colleagues have been very quiet on the fifty-fifty funding split they were so vocal about between 2017 and 2022. I call on state Labor members to advocate to their federal counterparts to ensure that at least the promise that was made by the Prime Minister in 2023 is met and that the Commonwealth contribution rate is increased to deal with the increasing number of patients who are turning up in our public hospital systems. We are responsible for the delivery of public hospital systems. The Commonwealth is responsible for primary care and aged care, and they have made a commitment they are singularly failing to honour.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, can you please provide an update on the uptake and use of real-time hospital data available on the Open Hospitals website?

Mr NICHOLLS: I note that the member is very keen on the hospital in her electorate in relation to its utilisation rate. It has been doing pretty well, I think. It goes up and down a bit, as these numbers do, but in terms of the patient off-stretcher time or the ramping time it has had some very significant improvements. It will go up and down, of course, as presentations occur.

In terms of the Open Hospitals website, after 93 days in government, on 2 February 2025 the Crisafulli government delivered real-time data—something Labor could not achieve in 3,000 days. Queenslanders voted for a fresh start at the ballot box, and they were voting for real-time data when they did so. They have been voting for real-time data with their clicks since we announced the going live of the system on 2 February. The Open Hospitals website has had over 388,000 views since it went live and that number continues to grow. Queenslanders like knowing what is going on. They like visiting those sites.

We know there is no silver bullet to solve the ambulance ramping crisis left to us after a decade of Labor mismanagement, but our commitment to transparency and accountability is a necessary first step. During the development of the Open Hospitals website consultation was held with a number of stakeholder groups, who all support it. That includes primary health networks, Health Consumers Queensland and the QNMU. We spoke with New South Wales Health because they have a system, we spoke with the health service chief executives and we spoke with the Queensland government's Open Data Office. As the RTI documents that were referred to previously show—as if there was a smoking gun—I was consulted and advised of both the benefits and the risks in relation to the delivery of that service. We asked questions and we adjusted what was being done as a result of that, as any competent government does. We listen to the advice and we take steps to implement it.

As a result of that, we have received some stunning third-party endorsements in relation to it. Dr Danielle Allan of the Rural Doctors Association said—

It will have benefits for our General Practitioners as well when needing to refer patients from primary care into the hospital emergency department or minor illness and injury clinics.

Keith Tracey-Patte, CEO of Health Consumers Queensland, said—

We congratulate the Government for ensuring that the new website has been designed from the start with consumer input.

Dr Nick Yim of the AMAQ said—

This is a welcome first step in modernising our health system and something AMA Queensland has urged the government to do for years ...

Mr Speaker, as you can see, we have delivered real-time data in 93 days—something that the previous Labor government could not deliver in 3,000 days. We have seen Queenslanders vote with their mouse and their clicks: 388,000 views. We have received 49 instances of feedback and we respond to that feedback. We have put pop-up tools and tips explaining terms such as ‘median’ in plain language so that people can understand them, and they have been added to the website since its launch. Further work is being done to identify options to expand the webpage in consultation with clinicians and data scientists. I thank those who continue to make suggestions about how we can improve the site. We are also looking at how we can expand that site into other locations. It is a win for consumers, a win for openness and transparency and a win for competence.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maiwar, do you have a question?

Mr BERKMAN: I certainly have, Mr Speaker. My first question is to the director-general. Dr Rosengren, in January you issued a health service directive that banned the public provision of gender-affirming health care for children. Earlier this week the Premier told us that the decision to implement that ban was a decision of cabinet. Director-General, did you provide the minister or cabinet with any advice in support of that ban?

Dr Rosengren: You are referring to a health service directive that was issued by Queensland Health. That is a responsibility of the director-general for the Department of Health. I am fully aware of those responsibilities and was directly responsible for the issuing of a health service directive.

Mr BERKMAN: Indeed. I understand all of that. The question, though, was: based on the Premier’s information earlier this week—that it was a decision of cabinet that he stands by—did you provide any evidence to the minister or to cabinet in support of any decision they made in that respect?

Dr Rosengren: You are making reference to a decision around a cabinet process and I am not in a position to be able to breach cabinet-in-confidence. I would refer the question to the minister on that basis.

Mr BERKMAN: No, thank you. I have an alternative question for the minister, if I might. Minister, we have very limited time and this is a very short question. In relation to the independent review of stages 1 and 2 hormone therapies in Queensland’s public paediatrics gender services, the Vine review, can you guarantee whether the final report from the Vine review will be published in full?

Mr NICHOLLS: Professor Vine has a very wide remit to investigate this matter and to provide advice to the government. It is important to understand that Professor Vine and her committee and her fellow reviewers have, as I say, a very wide remit, including recommendations as to how her advice is treated. I have clearly and consistently said that the cabinet and the government will consider the advice by Professor Vine. I will be guided and will not pre-empt the decisions of cabinet in relation to how that advice is dealt with.

Mr BERKMAN: Director-General, in relation to the termination-of-pregnancy services, we have heard this government claim that it supports a woman’s right to choose an abortion in accordance with current law in Queensland, yet publicly funded hospitals like the Mater can still refuse abortions and some contraceptive services. How much public funding will be provided in this financial year to the Mater for maternity services while they continue to refuse to provide other reproductive health care?

Dr Rosengren: I think it is important to acknowledge that the Queensland Health responsibility is to ensure that women have access to the appropriate services, and I am very confident that all women—certainly in the metropolitan region—have access to those services through a variety of different hospitals. I do not have any specific concerns about a lack of capacity or availability of that service to women. With regard to the specific question around explicit funding to Mater for the delivery of women’s health services, with the minister’s permission I will have to take that on notice because I do not have that information at my fingertips.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy to advise that the Mater complies with all state and territory regulations in relation to the delivery of services and its funding act. This is the same funding that has been in place for a decade. There is no change to the services. The Mater complies with its obligation. There will be no change to the current funding arrangements for the Mater. We support the Mater in the delivery of its services. Mater provides pathways for people who seek a termination, in accordance with all legislative requirements.

Mr JKELLY: I have a question for the CEO of the Gold Coast HHS. Mr Calvert, is it correct that you currently drive a car that is worth more than \$100,000 of publicly funded money?

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order: relevance. We are all entitled to drive whatever car we want. I fail to see how this is relevant to an estimates.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Speaker: the question directly relates to the appropriation. I cannot see how it could be irrelevant.

Mr NICHOLLS: Speaker, I seek your guidance in relation to that. Firstly, we have an unsubstantiated claim. Secondly, how a well-regarded and respected administrator of more than I think 13 years experience at the Gold Coast hospital spends their money is not a question for estimates. If that is a question, that is a question that should go to the board about what their arrangements are with Mr Calvert around his employment. As I understand it, it is a longstanding practice that the private employment arrangements between the boards and their chief executives—other than the total remuneration—are not the subject of these sorts of things. If Mr Calvert wants to spend his money buying, I do not know, iceblocks as opposed to buying yoghurt, that is a matter for Mr Calvert, not a matter for the discussion of this committee.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Speaker: it is not his money. We are talking about publicly funded money.

Mr NICHOLLS: Once it is his income, it is his money.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to take some advice. Mr Calvert, are you happy to answer the question?

Mr Calvert: Yes.

Mr SPEAKER: I will hand it over to you.

Mr Calvert: I drive a Mazda CX-60. I do not think it is worth \$100,000. It is part of my package.

Mr J KELLY: Thank you. I will defer to the member for Murrumbidgee.

Mr MILES: Director-General, earlier in this session you said that the former government had not funded the free flu vaccinations for 2024-25. I take the extraordinary step of releasing a cabinet document from the former government which is the budget outcomes for Queensland Health. This is a CBRC document which specifically notes the \$40 million allocated in last year's budget. I also note that Budget Paper 4 of that budget identifies that funding allocation. I would like to offer the director-general an opportunity to reconsider his earlier statement before I write to you, Speaker, regarding the director-general misleading the committee.

Mr SPEAKER: Somebody needs to seek leave for this to be tabled.

Mr MILES: The member for Greenslopes will table it.

Mr J KELLY: I seek leave to table it.

Mr SPEAKER: The question was to the director-general. Have I got that clear?

Mr MILES: That is correct, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Do you have the document, Director-General?

Mr MILES: This is an opportunity for the director-general to correct the record.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker, in relation to my earlier point of order that the member for Murrumbidgee has not been substituted onto the committee. He has been given leave to appear so—

Mr MILES: It has been tabled by the member for Greenslopes.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Greenslopes tabled this document, if that is what you mean.

Dr ROWAN: Okay.

Mr NICHOLLS: Point of order, Mr Speaker: this document is of no value to anyone. It has so many redactions in it. It looks like a crossword puzzle without any clues in it.

Mr BAILEY: Point of order: that is not a point of order; it is a debating point.

Mr NICHOLLS: The real question ought to be whether the member for Murrumbidgee is prepared to release all of his documents in relation to their failed capacity expansion program. Is he willing to stand up and answer those questions? This is a document incapable of a sensible answer.

Mr J KELLY: That is not a point of order.

Mr MILES: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I am simply providing the director-general with an opportunity to correct his earlier statement before I write to you. Would the director-general like to correct his earlier statement?

Mr MOLHOEK: Speaker, point of order: given that the member for Murrumba has tabled a cabinet document, can the committee now move that the cabinet documents around the capital program also be tabled?

Mr SPEAKER: No, you cannot.

Mr MILES: This is simply an opportunity for the director-general—

Mr MOLHOEK: Following on the point that the minister raised, it is a sheet of paper where every column has been blanked out bar one—

Mr MILES: Except for the specific funding allocation that contradicts the director-general's statement.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order: we seem to be debating rather than taking points of order. Can we have a ruling, please?

Mr MILES: Mr Speaker, if the director-general does not want to take that opportunity, I am happy to move on.

Mr SPEAKER: I will allow the director-general to answer this as he sees fit.

Dr Rosengren: With regard to the funding for the flu vaccine that was allocated in that budget, my advice and my understanding is that was for the 2024 flu season, whereas the incoming government funded for the 2025 flu season, and it is just the way it appears. On my understanding and the advice I am provided is that is the way it appears in the budget papers, but that was for the 2024 flu season, whereas we were funded for the 2025 flu season which was otherwise not funded. That is the advice and my understanding in providing the answer to the question previously.

Mr MILES: That funding allocation was for flu vaccinations—

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr MILES:—through to the end of June.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: I am listening to a point of order, member for Murrumba. Wait until I take this point of order from the member for Southport.

Mr MOLHOEK: Clearly, the member for Murrumba is following the form of the member for Miller in seeking to mislead. The director-general has just explained to us that this is an old cabinet-in-confidence document and it would ordinarily not be applicable to even have those figures in the forward figures. This has been designed—

Mr J KELLY: With respect, what is the point of order?

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Director-General, have you completed your response?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order as well, Speaker. My point of order is that today's proceedings are supposed to be discussing this year's budget and, as I understand it, the information that has been tabled, the cabinet-in-confidence, predated the appointment of the director-general to his position.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. We have moved on.

Mr MOLHOEK: Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion.

Mr SPEAKER: You can move a motion.

Mr MOLHOEK: I move that this House calls on the Leader of the Opposition to approve by 5 pm on Wednesday, 30 April 2025 the release of all cabinet CBR documents regarding the previous government's performance.

Mr SPEAKER: This is not the parliament; this is a committee, so that is out of order.

Mr MILES: I am happy to move on, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Director-General, have you concluded your response?

Dr Rosengren: My response stands, Mr Speaker, in that the media release by the then premier, the Hon. Steven Miles, references the \$40 million Labor government commitment to back free flu vaccine in 2024, and it specifically in the statement says the 2024 free flu vaccination program concludes on 30 September 2024. The funding that I referenced earlier that was not being funded was for the 2025 flu vaccine.

Mr NICHOLLS: Zero.

Mr SPEAKER: We probably have time for one more question. There are only a couple of minutes left.

Mr MILES: Mr Speaker, I will be writing to you about that matter. Mr Speaker, earlier the director-general indicated he would investigate whether the funds had indeed been cut and reallocated for the Sun Safety campaign 2025-26, and I ask if the director-general has an answer to that question yet.

Mr NICHOLLS: No.

Mr SPEAKER: All of those questions taken on notice, member, we were going to deal with at the end of the next session, before we complete.

Mr MILES: Thank you, Speaker. Does that also mean that the director-general has been unable to calculate the percentage that elective surgery waitlists has increased over the year?

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order: he is impugning on the character of the director-general. He has had other things to deal with.

Mr SPEAKER: All those questions taken on notice will be answered at the end of the next session. Do you have another question? We have two minutes left, member for Murrumba.

Mr MOLHOEK: Two minutes to apologise.

Mr BAILEY: I call the CEO of Cairns and Hinterland HHS, Ms Singh.

Mr BAILEY: Good to see you again, Ms Singh. Did you provide advice that recommended all gender affirming care in Queensland be paused?

Ms Singh: No.

Mr BAILEY: So you did not provide that advice in any shape or form. Thank you. Obviously that would have been a decision by the government, not yourself.

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order: moving back into matters of opinion.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is a statement.

Mr J KELLY: What, are we running this committee by just people yelling out now? Is that how this is working? Point of order, Speaker: are we running this committee by people yelling out?

Mr BAILEY: Speaker, we are about to wrap. I am happy for the member for Greenslopes to ask a question before we close.

Mr SPEAKER: It will have to be a very quick one.

Mr J KELLY: Speaker, I am just seeking clarity. You made some statements around questions taken on notice. The committee earlier resolved not to take a question because it contained inaccurate data provided by the minister on pre-hearing questions on notice, and I am wondering if that is also included in the questions that are going to be responded to.

Mr MOLHOEK: Speaker, I think the deputy chair is referring to question 12, and I have already provided advice that there were some typos in that document which will be provided back to the committee by the close of session. I have been advised by the minister's office.

Mr SPEAKER: There is the answer for that. The time for this session has expired. We will adjourn for a short break and the hearing will resume at 12.30 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 12.15 pm to 12.30 pm.



Mr SPEAKER: Welcome back, minister and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of ambulance services open for examination. The question before the committee is that the proposed expenditure be agreed to. Minister, I invite you to make a short five-minute opening address.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. Welcome back, committee. I am joined today by representatives of the Queensland Ambulance Service and Commissioner Craig Emery. I am delighted to be here for the committee examination of the estimates and the budget regarding the extremely important component of my portfolio of ambulance services. The Queensland Ambulance Service is the busiest in the nation, answering a triple 0 call for help every 25 seconds and responding to more than 1.3 million incidents in the last financial year alone. I am sure the committee will agree that that is a very substantial number.

I have travelled around the state, visiting ambulance stations and operation centres, and I have met very many of our hardworking QAS staff, each providing extraordinary care for their community daily. I want to thank those Ambulance Service members. I think I am probably the first ambulance

minister to visit Mount Morgan in a heck of a long time. I went up there and although the officer-in-charge was on her day off, she made a special return journey to come and show me around the Mount Morgan ambulance station. I was very happy to go up there with the assistant commissioner and have a look at that.

It does not matter where I go, whether it has been Mount Isa, Geebung or at the Gold Coast, I am always warmly welcomed by our hardworking QAS staff who do a great job. They provide extraordinary care for their community daily. As members might recall, I have been a recipient of their care right from this very place. They do a great job. It is not a ride you want to take, but if you do need to take one, you want to take it in Queensland. I want to thank those paramedics, the emergency medical dispatchers, the patient transport officers, as well as support services and all those who are in the clinical hub. I had the pleasure of visiting the QAS Clinical Hub in the great electorate of Clayfield. I saw an impressive and wonderful multidisciplinary team working collaboratively to navigate patients through the health system—ultimately easing the burden on our busy emergency departments.

I want to acknowledge the hard work by Retrieval Services Queensland as a part of QAS. I often think people do not understand that this department of health and ambulance services also manages effectively a small airline, running fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft across the state. At any one time there can be between 25 and 30 aircraft on retrieval services throughout the state, managed from the control centre at Kedron. RSQ managed the aeromedical care and retrieval of more than 24,000 patients across our state in 2024-25. They also provide telehealth support to their rural and remote health partners year-round. I had the opportunity of visiting telehealth in Barcaldine—to chat, not to provide any guidance, obviously. I have witnessed that incredible service firsthand.

I have been extremely impressed by the extensive planning and coordination that occurs at the QAS behind the scenes to ensure Queenslanders receive quality and timely care. That is why we are delivering a record budget for the QAS and investing more than \$1 billion. This will lead to an additional 900 ambulance personnel across the state over the next four years. We are also investing \$250 million over the next four years in the first multiyear uplift in QAS base capital since 2008-09. It is the first uplift in the base capital funding for more than 16 years. This will enable the QAS to continue to provide world-class vehicles and equipment as well as state-of-the-art stations for our hardworking frontline as they continue to deliver excellence in ambulance services. New stations are being built at Beenleigh central and Southport east and we are expanding the hub that I have already mentioned at Kedron. That will be a larger project; I was at the launch of the expansion program earlier in the year.

I want to acknowledge that we are already in negotiations with our hardworking paramedics. I thank the team from the United Workers Union who came to visit me in my office to discuss what the future of the enterprise bargaining arrangements looks like. I know that Commissioner Emery and his team are well into negotiations and I look forward to delivering a successful outcome in relation to that. I thank those members of the union who came forward and explained some of the very real issues that their members face, and I have taken that on board.

We enjoy visiting the Queensland Ambulance Service. We enjoy their discipline, their friendliness and their absolute professionalism. I am proud to be the minister for an agile and innovative agency in the Queensland Ambulance Service delivering care to Queenslanders no matter where they live.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to the member for Miller for the first question.

Mr BAILEY: Commissioner Emery, could you please outline what modelling has been completed by the Queensland Ambulance Service to ensure growth in demand is met for the Queensland Ambulance Service both in this financial year and into the future?

Commissioner Emery: It is good to be here today. I am happy to give some information regarding our planning cycle. We have a five-year strategic plan. It focuses largely on the development of various models of care. The minister has already mentioned this morning the changing pace of ambulance services and the patient cohort that we service. It focuses on health integration and it focuses on capability development to lift our workforce to what is required of a modern ambulance service. That is underpinned by a 10-year strategic asset management plan and a five-year priority plan.

In answer to your specific question, our modelling is based on traditional and historical growth as we see it, but it also takes into account other health population metrics including changes in health service opportunities, health service integration, different models of care, the overall population growth and changes in technologies, with specific attention to—I heard the director-general mention this this morning—that vulnerable element of our community which is, in many ways, the aging population. We

know that last year, in 2024-25, 550,000 individual patients made up a million emergency responses across Queensland. Some 400,000 of those were aged 65 or over. If you are aged 85 in Queensland, you are likely to use the Ambulance Service at least eight to nine times. We overlay that.

We took 81,000 triple 0 calls for mental health or acute behavioural disturbance last year. Concerningly, the age group that is most prevalent is those between 15 and 29 years. It is an emerging and growing part of our businesses. One per cent of the patients who called us last year made up almost 10 per cent of the presentations to Queensland Ambulance Service, and five per cent of patients made up nearly a quarter of the patients that we transported last year.

When we overlay that onto our modelling tools, we get a prediction in terms of what workforce growth is. As the minister has already mentioned today, we have some fairly sophisticated tools that inform what it is we will need in capital—vehicles, equipment—and training that sits underneath that. All of that modelling has been put together.

We have an eight-year workforce pipeline. Of course, the further out you go the less reliable that becomes, given the changes to the demographic and the context that I already mentioned; however, we are very confident. Retrospectively we find that within about plus or minus one per cent we get the growth right, but it is the complexity of the changing nature of the patient that is a little harder to predict. That work has been done.

Mr BAILEY: What has this modelling demonstrated in terms of the growth in demand percentage-wise for the Queensland Ambulance Service?

Commissioner Emery: The first thing it has identified is that it is changing, which is interesting. In my time I have not seen the predicted changes that we are now considering. It is about the way that we deliver and model our service. Predictably, we have expected somewhere between 4½ and five per cent growth year on year in terms of the number of patients who call triple zero, the number of patients who need an ambulance. This year that figure is about six per cent. However, for the first time in my experience we have seen the requirement for us to deploy an ambulance much lower than that number, and that is because of those virtual options and the navigational options that the minister mentioned earlier.

This year, whilst there has been a six per cent increase in the demand for our service, we only had to respond an ambulance 3.3 per cent of the time, taking carriage of patients through those other models of care, those navigational services and some of the proactive work we do with complex patients. Because of that ongoing work, we only took less than two per cent additional patients to emergency departments. That is indicating to me that the work we need to do into the future is about not only how we triage those patients who absolutely need emergency care and need transport to an emergency department, but what more can we do for those patients who need to be navigated across what is often a complex health system, particularly in the primary care space.

Mr BAILEY: Commissioner, what does this growth equate to in terms of additional paramedics needed for both this year and over the next four years based on your modelling?

Commissioner Emery: The budget allocation is 900 FTEs over the forward estimates. That is a sufficient amount to deal with that 3.3 per cent incident growth that I discussed earlier, and the base capital that sits underneath that gives us the ability to plan forward, particularly the vehicle build, which has been difficult for us previously with a year-on-year base capital allocation.

Mr BAILEY: That is 900 FTEs over the forwards, I think you said?

Commissioner Emery: Yes.

Mr BAILEY: That equates to about 225 on average per year. Would that be about right?

Commissioner Emery: That is right.

Mr BAILEY: How many additional frontline ambulance staff will be recruited for this financial year in the budget?

Commissioner Emery: Sorry, can you repeat the question? How many frontline staff?

Mr BAILEY: How many additional frontline ambulance staff, that is paramedics, will be recruited in this financial year in this budget?

Commissioner Emery: The allocation is for 227 FTEs. As you say, it is an average of 225 over the forwards, but it is 227. Of those, 192 are dedicated front line with the rest being support services. Traditionally, the services I am talking about there are fleet, logistics, safety management and emergency management planning. These are specialist roles, so it is important that we continue to

support the front line through these support services. It is work that has to be done. Alternatively, we would just be retrieving paramedics from the front line to do this work and they are not best placed to do it. We are pretty resolute to make sure we keep as many people to the front line as we possibly can, but we also recognise the need to run a business that responds 1.5 million times a year with 6½ thousand staff the length and breadth of the state. There are support services that need to be offered.

Mr BAILEY: Is that an increase or a decrease in terms of frontline ambulance staff compared to the number recruited in last year's 2024-25 budget?

Commissioner Emery: We recruited 315 overall FTEs last year. Of those, 228—I think that was the number; I could get that checked for sure—were determined to be front line. We invested additional staff, though, in some of those innovative services that I have already mentioned to get them off the ground. We do not need to do that again—I am talking about mental health co-responders, the clinical hub major uplift last year and those navigational systems where we employ doctors, nurses, social workers, allied health professionals to inform not only our planning and strategy but also to plan our coordination and distribution of our resources. We did a one-off uplift last year to prepare ourselves for what is consistent growth moving forward. Those types of positions are essentially mainstream now.

Mr BAILEY: This year's figure is about 225 and last year's figure was 315?

Commissioner Emery: Yes, but as I said, last year we did experience five per cent growth. The way we have calculated it this year, if we continue to become more and more efficient—we are reporting 3.3 per cent incident growth, so that is the number of times we send an ambulance to a scene. We will have less resource consumption this year and predicted into the future than we have had in the previous years because of the efficiency of those innovative models.

Mr BAILEY: How much has the operating budget for Queensland Ambulance Service increased in this financial year as a percentage?

Commissioner Emery: As a percentage? It has gone from \$1.4 million to just over \$1.5 million. Yes, I do know that figure; it is 7.5 per cent.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you. What was the percentage increase in the operating budget for Queensland Ambulance Service in last year's budget?

Commissioner Emery: I would have to check that figure. I do not know.

Mr BAILEY: Are you able to get that figure for us by the end of the session?

Commissioner Emery: Yes.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you. That is very much appreciated. Commissioner, can you confirm the percentage increase—you might need to come back with that figure. To your knowledge at this moment, are you aware of whether the increase in the operating budget for last year was larger than the increase this year?

Commissioner Emery: No, it was about the same. I cannot remember the exact figure, but it was about \$100 million again. The major difference this year is the base capital uplift, because we have not had that equity injection like in previous years other than on a \$4½ million per year in terms of equity injection for capital and then we have relied on depreciation, one-off investments and capitalising operational money to deliver on ICT, for example. In the previous years we have capitalised approximately \$20 million of operational money to maintain our ICT capital, for example. We have used depreciation money to build our asset portfolio moving forward, meaning that we are not using depreciation money to maintain our asset. We have seen vehicle and property maintenance has continued to increase over the years. This base capital injection gives us the ability to not only plan but also afford the capital injection that supports simply putting on the FTE, as I am sure you can appreciate, simply putting more and more frontline workers on the ground in an ambulance service particularly without the capital for fleet, defibrillators, building. This additional \$250 million base capital over the forward estimates gives us A, the money and B, the surety.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Commissioner, for endeavouring to provide that percentage increase in last year's budget at the end of the session. That is great. In terms of the 1.4 per cent you mentioned as an increase, do you believe that will meet the growth in demand for Queensland Ambulance Services?

Commissioner Emery: Yes, I do. As I said, on the basis of what I have described, that is an approximately 7½ per cent uplift. There is cost escalation that sits within that in terms of operating of course; we still have to pay increasing wages and enterprise agreements. The price of fuel and oil in an ambulance service, for example, is about three per cent, which gives us another 4½ per cent to

cover off that approximate three per cent growth, which is what we are predicting. However, as I said, that does not take into account the fact that we have previously moved operational money to uplift the capital spend.

Mr BAILEY: Commissioner, does the 2025-26 Queensland funding model introduce any new financial incentives or disincentives?

Commissioner Emery: Incentives or disincentives for whom?

Mr BAILEY: For the Queensland Ambulance Service. Does the 2025-26 Queensland funding model introduce any new financial incentives or disincentives for the Queensland Ambulance Service and the way you operate?

Commissioner Emery: I am really not sure I understand the question. We are not in the business of saving money. We allocate every cent we can to delivering the very best ambulance services we can. We have the flexibility, I believe, in this funding envelope to look at opportunities for different models of care and new initiatives that I have already described. I feel like we have sufficient funds to be able to do that. I feel like the investment in those services, as I said earlier, not only has an impact on the individual patients and their care that they receive with us, but also navigates them into the health system and has ongoing effects for the broader health system and the patients themselves.

Mr SPEAKER: We will now go to the member for Redcliffe for her question.

Ms DOOLEY: My question is to the minister around the paramedic workforce. How does the 2025-26 budget invest in the growth of the paramedic and Ambulance Service workforce?

Mr NICHOLLS: The budget this year, as I say, invests over a billion dollars and it invests in growth over the forward forecasts. It is interesting to note that the previous year's budget by the previous government actually flatlined growth of the number of FTEs at 6,065, so the prior government's original forward estimates showed no growth from 2025-26 all the way through to 2028-29. The number of FTEs displayed was 6,065 and the budget allocation was \$1.49 billion in 2025-26 under the former government, \$1.48 billion in 2026-27 under the former government, \$1.48 billion in 2027-28—I wonder how they were going to pay for wage increases if that was the case—under the former government and in 2028-29 it was \$1.49 billion—ah, there it is! After the forward estimates it just goes up a little tickle.

In contrast, what we have done? We have funded the 2025-26 budget to \$1.52 billion and 6,178 FTEs—and the commissioner has given a very fulsome answer in relation to the number of extra people who are being employed—and we do it again next year with \$1.62 billion, so that is 6,400 employees, and we do it each year over the forwards to 2028-29. We will continue to provide funding that Labor in its last budget failed to fund.

Is there a common theme that we are finding here? Yes, there is: a failure to fund. It does not matter whether it was the Mater Hospital at Springfield or the women and girls' strategy, the so-called capacity expansion program or the Queensland Ambulance Service: it was all trickery, smoke and mirrors. There was nothing beyond last year's budget, as it was also with the free flu vaccine, which we have discovered was only available, according to the Labor government and their own media release, until 30 September 2024. We are continuing to deliver the services that Queenslanders demand and continuing to support our frontline staff.

I might point out that I had a very good conversation with the United Workers Union, which indicated to me their desire for more frontline staff, and that is understandable. I understand where they are coming from and I understand what their needs are, and those will be part of the very respectful negotiations that we will entertain with the UWU as we go through the enterprise bargaining process in the proper way. In fact, it was such a good meeting that members of the UWU wanted their photograph taken with me and I was happy to accede to that request. For the benefit of members there who might think I am stretching the truth a little bit, I table that photograph to show them that I did meet with those members and had a very valuable meeting with them.

Mr SPEAKER: Member, you are seeking to have that document tabled? Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, I seek leave to table that very outstanding photograph that has been provided.

The other issue that we need to deal with is one of the matters around workforce, and the number that has been referenced in this year's budget is the number that comes from the former government's health workforce plan that contemplated 900 additional staff for the QAS over the forwards. This is the

number, as the commissioner has explained, that he believes is adequate. It is a very good picture; thank you, member for Moggill. That is a number that we always remain alert to, and budgets are always an opportunity to revisit numbers if they prove that we need to be doing more. That is the case and we remain open to discussions with the commissioner about that in terms of the delivery of those services.

We grow our ambulance workforce by 900 staff over the forward estimates, with 192 frontline positions and 35 frontline and corporate support positions. It is important that we also recognise the work that frontline support do. Whilst our paramedics are out there delivering the services we want and answering the calls that we need to be answered, they need the kit to be able to do it and they need the support services to be able to make sure it happens. I want to call-out my mate Geoff at Geebung who has provided substantial advice to me on the need for a solid program of fleet purchases, and we have provided the capital for the first time ever to enable this to occur. We are providing the first uplift in capital funding for a very substantial time to allow that to occur, so that base capital funding program will deliver more vehicles—and those vehicles become more expensive, of course, as they have more capability. All in all, a great job is done by the QAS and the government is very pleased to be able to support them, according to their need.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, how was the QAS funded before this year and is a multiyear uplift to the QAS base capital program value for money?

Mr NICHOLLS: Clearly, as I indicated, under the former government it was not funded with any uplifts over the forward years for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 and a small uplift in 2028-29 in relation to those costs. In terms of capital, the QAS capital funding had not received a recurrent uplift since 2008-09 and each year the QAS had to wait until June before they knew what their budget would be. That meant that the QAS could not, for example, negotiate contracts to fit out our ambulance vehicles for more than 10 months at a time. As I indicated as Geoff indicated to me, that was one of the real problems that we had in terms of getting better value for money. We have now lifted that.

Without having a pipeline of funding, the QAS had to wait for election commitments for windfalls of cash, rather than proper planning and without consideration of capacity. For example, the Cairns operations centre announced by former Labor treasurer Cameron Dick in the 2017-18 budget—without planning for flood or stormwater issues endemic to Cairns—got punted by former health minister Fentiman in August 2023 from the QAS into HIQ in favour of building six ambulance stations. In 2025-26 the QAS will spend \$2.1 million for the continued work on the Cairns operations centre, which is still not complete despite having been announced some seven years ago. I am pleased that the MID, which has just been approved by the Deputy Premier, has been received and we are about to go out to tender on that particular project.

We are returning to proper budgeting. We are putting money in the budget for the forward years and giving the QAS a real budget to get across their job and to get on with it. It is interesting to note—and the commissioner touched on it—that historically the QAS had topped up its capital program by allocating up to \$20 million annually in operating funds for its ICT and digital programs of works and setting a \$4 million to \$5 million operating surplus target to support the purchase of acute ambulance vehicles. The result has been a diversion of funds intended for frontline service delivery to the community and an underinvestment in infrastructure. In 2024-25, \$37.1 million was diverted from delivering services to actually meet infrastructure needs. We have taken steps to remedy that by our capital program and by that very substantial uplift. There is more work to be done—the job is not over by any stretch of the imagination—but we are setting about restoring some proper balance to the budgeting process.

Mr LEE: Minister, under Labor at some points we had some of the highest ambulance ramping rates in Australia. How are paramedics and regional need incorporated into system planning and how does real-time data support this?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his question. He does identify the very many problems that we inherited upon coming to office in relation to ambulance ramping. Let us not forget that it had become the highest that has ever been experienced in the state. We have taken steps to start dealing with that, but that will be a long-term proposition as we aim for our target of reducing the ramping rate to below 30 per cent by 2028. There is no doubt that there will be ups and downs. We see that in the winter season, when there is typically a surge in presentations, and we see it at other times. We see it at the Gold Coast around schoolies week, for example, so it goes up and down depending on local issues, but we are working on bringing the total down, which is what our election commitment was. Obviously, working with the QAS is a very substantial part of doing that.

Our Easier Access to Health Services Plan demonstrates a commitment to clinician-driven decision-making and delivering services, importantly beyond the south-east corner, as I am sure you will appreciate. The QAS have a mature planning process where all regional assistant commissioners and local district directors are consulted on the pressing budget needs, and that includes an analysis of their responses by statistical area 2 level.

We all know about SA levels in our business and how they work. That is a quantitative analysis that takes place, but there are also, as I indicated, discussions about place-based issues. For example, following staff feedback after the recent weather event in Ingham, where the teams did a great job up there, two additional four-wheel drive emergency response vehicles were bought for Ingham and Home Hill. It is not set and forget. As experience informs us of need and as experience matures in those locations we can respond, and the QAS have capacity to respond to those matters. As you know, Ingham and Home Hill experienced very substantial disruptions as a result of Tropical Cyclone Alfred and so we are very pleased to be able to support that. I visited up there and saw the kits that are ready to go out in preparation. The preparation aspect of what the QAS do is an important part of their work. They have some great work and great planning in place to do that. They have been doing that for some time. I commend them for doing so.

Real-time data is, of course, important and we have demonstrated our commitment to real-time data. The value of that is demonstrated in the sophisticated LiveMUM system that Queensland Ambulance Service use every day to forecast regional need and distribute resources in real time. They look at what is going to happen and look at how they can distribute resources to meet that need—moving people around the system. Real-time data is critical clearly to the functioning of the health system. Not only does it provide openness and transparency, but also it aids functionality of the system. I might ask Commissioner Emery back and he might be able to expand on how regional needs are captured in the planning process as he is very invested in that. He explains it to me regularly and I am not quite sure I have quite got all of it.

Commissioner Emery: In terms of our planning, it is important, as the minister has pointed out, that in addition to what I mentioned earlier around our strategic planning, our five-year planning and our workforce modelling, we do take into account the local nuances. The No. 1 piece of feedback that we get from community and our stakeholders is: never forget that you are a community service. We hold that very dear to our hearts.

There are 313 ambulance locations across Queensland and they all have their local challenges and nuances. As part of our planning processes, as the minister has pointed out, we do have the capacity to, and we do, overlay all of our traditional workload numbers into decision-support software. We load two years worth of our case load data, geographically verified to a lat. and long., broken down into 15-minute intervals. That gives predictive information in terms of how we can resource at a base level, but it is how we take into account the other available options that are in community, and the minister has given a really specific example about Ingham. There are many of those.

This year just gone we invested resources into Townsville to support changes in the health services' approach to dialysis moving to a seven-day-a-week service. We invested resources to complement that. We put into facility transport options into the Redland area this year because we had improved our capacity to retrieve patients from the bay islands. This is information that is informed by local people. We do not know that from a macro level, but it is balancing the macro-level information with the local planning.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, funding for the Queensland Ambulance Service capital experienced a dramatic uplift in this year's budget, as it actually required. Can you please outline why that is the case?

Mr NICHOLLS: Of course we cannot keep operating out of the old systems. The old Coomera dispatch centre is effectively a big tin shed. It is inadequate for the needs, so there is a new Coomera centre. It commenced under the former government and it needs to be completed and that is why we continue to invest and that is why we put that capital uplift into the budget this year: to give certainty to the QAS around planning. I know that the commissioner will have further plans and further ideas.

We are continuing to deliver on previously committed projects. The Sandgate and districts ambulance station looks like it will meet practical completion by 13 June. The south-east operations centre at Coomera, which I have referenced, met practical completion on 29 April and we are undergoing handover. I think there is a station at Springwood that is currently underway and I understand that will be completed. Beenleigh is a project that was previously promised, but we are not being petty about it, we will continue to deliver that service as well. Those services will continue to be delivered where they are needed.

Obviously, we need to invest more. That was in the past. This is now what we are looking forward to in the future. With population continuing to expand by an average of around 100,000 people for the next 20 years, pressure on ambulance services will need to grow. We have an ageing population, increased complexity, increased acuity and so those services will continue to grow and that will be part of what the commissioner takes into account when he prepares for next year's budget, I am sure, when we will be back having a similar sort of discussion.

This year's budget provides the groundwork for that. It provides a realistic base level of capital that has not been increased, as I said, for the better part of 16 years and it provides a \$1.063 billion uplift to the QAS to meet those pressures. It does so by the additional 900 staff we have been speaking about. The staff are no good if they do not have the kit to go with them. You cannot send paramedics out without giving them an ambulance and the ambulance cannot go out if it does not have the defibrillators, the new stretchers, equipment for bariatric patients, for example, those types of things. That all needs to be done. By this investment we are doing that.

In 2025-26, \$6 million will be spent to complete the clinical hub upgrade at the Emergency Services Complex at Kedron, a fantastic piece of kit that helps manage people in the community and divert people away from EDs if they do not need to go there. As I said, \$3.4 million to complete the replacement of the Springwood ambulance station and the Sandgate and districts ambulance station and \$10 million to complete the statewide replacement of defibrillators, which includes the deployment of 1,405 devices with over 4,700 officers trained. I believe that statewide replacement with the new equipment has now concluded; is that right, Commissioner?

Commissioner Emery: It is all but completed. The formal project will come to a close in October, but almost all of it is done already by the end of July.

Mr NICHOLLS: Then we have the Cairns operation centre with the \$2 million I referred to; the planning for the Beenleigh Central Station is underway; the Pimpama Ambulance Station replacement, \$100,000; Southport East, member for Southport, in your part of the world, \$3 million; I have mentioned Springwood and I have also identified the new and replacement ambulance vehicles and we expect about 170 of those to be delivered at a cost of \$45 million. As you can see, we are getting on with the job of supporting the QAS in accordance with the needs that they have required, but we remain always open to discussions about meeting further and growing needs in the community.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to non-government members. Member for Miller.

Mr BAILEY: Commissioner, in 2025-26 there was the introduction of the new Queensland funding model. Are you aware of any new KPIs linked to ambulance performance?

Commissioner Emery: No, the KPIs in the Service Delivery Statements remain the same.

Mr BAILEY: I understand a new KPI has been introduced for ambulance ramping. If you are not aware of that, who would be impacted by the incentive and disincentive associated with the funding model?

Commissioner Emery: If you are talking about ambulance ramping, I am not best placed to answer it, but, yes, the ED access target, the ramping target, the posts, is a measure for emergency departments. If there are incentives or disincentives I presume it would be with them, but I do not know.

Mr BAILEY: We will move on. How many ambulances have responded to calls from general practices in 2025?

Commissioner Emery: I would have to check that number exactly. How many ambulances responded to a GP clinic? Is that the question?

Mr BAILEY: From general practices.

Commissioner Emery: I can get a precise number for you. It is difficult because of the way we collect our data: a medical centre is recorded differently to a GP clinic, which is recorded differently to potentially a primary health clinic, for example. The number will be around about 4,000 to 5,000.

Mr BAILEY: Could your people have a look at that for a more precise number and maybe furnish it, if they can, by the end of the session?

Commissioner Emery: Yes.

Mr BAILEY: How many ambulances have responded to calls from the satellite health centres in 2025?

Commissioner Emery: Again, I could get the total number for you, but I can tell you that since the inception of the very first of the satellite health facilities, by whichever name, we were responding one to two times a day. I think there are seven facilities across the south-east corner and we respond between 15 and 18 times a day to a satellite health centre.

Mr BAILEY: Commissioner, how many hours have our hardworking frontline paramedics lost while waiting at Queensland hospitals to transfer patients off stretchers since November 2024?

Commissioner Emery: The lost-time measure is not one that we report. It is information that we use in real time to determine deployment resourcing, how we allocate patients across the network, and we make decisions if there are delays in one facility to another, but it is not a performance indicator or a measure that we report.

Mr BAILEY: You do not report on it but you do have it and you use it for resourcing and planning reasons; is that right?

Commissioner Emery: We do not accumulate the data. We review it in real time. Most of our deployment decision-making is based on real-time deployment models, notwithstanding what I mentioned to you earlier about the inputs that we can have around population health, the number of patients and all of that modelling that I have talked to you about. In terms of the lost-time measure or the post measure, it is not something that we utilise other than in real time to determine resource allocation across the system.

Mr BAILEY: Commissioner, what percentage of overtime or shift extension for paramedics is attributed to being ramped at Queensland hospitals—that is, the off-stretcher times of over 30 minutes?

Commissioner Emery: Overtime in an operational system, of course, is inevitable. We operate about 15 million hours of work in the Ambulance Service each year. A little less than 10 per cent of that is made up by overtime. About 2.2 per cent of total hours worked is what is referred to as shift extension. It is not a large number particularly, but it is very important. It is a matter of issue in our enterprise agreement at the moment. It is an important issue to paramedics wanting to finish their shift and go home to their family and friends and loved ones, as I am sure you can appreciate. It has been a matter of issue in the last two enterprise agreements.

I am pleased to say that, with measures we have put in place over the past three years, we were able to reduce the end-of-shift overtime by 18 per cent. It has reduced the numbers and the proportionate numbers of how often paramedics experience overtime at the end of their shift. We were able to do that by putting in place some strict principles, rules, guides and procedures about not deploying staff after the end of their shift, only deploying them toward the end of their shift if it is to a critical patient and minimising it to the extent we can. Subsequently, the only overtime they then get is when we have to dispatch them close to the end of their shift and then they transport a patient to hospital. It takes some time to triage and clinically hand over the patient. The precise answer to your question is: about three-quarters of overtime that they incur is spent while they are at the hospital, with the rest being the time it takes for them to return, sign out drugs and finish their shift.

Mr BAILEY: Would you say the end-of-shift roster is helping to make sure our paramedics are finishing on time?

Commissioner Emery: Can you please repeat the question?

Mr BAILEY: Is the end-of-shift roster helping to make sure our paramedics finish on time?

Commissioner Emery: Yes. As I said, we had some significant improvement. I am sure everyone here appreciates—and every paramedic I have spoken to appreciates—that it is almost unavoidable that there will be some sort of shift extension overtime. If a triple 0 call comes in 10 minutes before the shift ends, try not sending the paramedic. That would be the challenge, I think. They would respond.

We have put lots of measures in place over the last little while to make sure we are only deploying them to the appropriate patients. Maybe we can manage a patient or hold a patient for half an hour for the next crew to come on. The clinical oversight and safety that we get through the introduction of the clinical hub, which has been mentioned by the minister here today, gives us the confidence to be able to potentially hold a patient, redirect them to virtual care, allocate a different resource—for various reasons, including minimising the shift extension or potential fatigue issues that go along with that. We have done a lot of work in that space and it is working, but inevitably, as I say, about 2.2 per cent of our work hours is shift extension.

I do not want to minimise the issue, because it is very important to paramedics—I am truly not trying to trivialise it—but, in terms of quantum, it does mean that a paramedic will experience about 50-something hours of shift extension a year, so an hour a week. I am not trivialising that number, because you need to go home to your family and loved ones. As I said, overall we have reduced that from nearly 70 hours in the previous three years. We have work to do.

Mr BAILEY: I have one more question and then the member for Noosa has a question or two. Commissioner, how many paramedics are required to cover the end-of-shift roster to ensure 24/7 coverage statewide?

Commissioner Emery: It would depend how we would go about it. Other jurisdictions around the country have introduced things such as not allocating overtime to anyone within an hour of the end of their shift. I have talked today about the decision-support models that we have available to us. When we loaded that data into our system, it broke it. It is just not realistic in an operational system to totally avoid and minimise operational overtime. If we wanted to zero that number, it would be thousands of staff. If we minimised it in the key locations, it could be as many as 200 or 300 staff. I do not think it is about allocating FTEs to that problem. It is about potentially putting mechanisms in place at the emergency department to minimise that shift extension.

Paramedics talk to me, and I am sure everyone would expect this to be the case: they have no issue in terms of being dispatched to an emergency case towards the end of their shift. It is about what we then do after that to try to minimise that.

Mr BAILEY: New South Wales has a measure like that already, doesn't it?

Commissioner Emery: I can speak authoritatively about this. New South Wales and Victoria both have attempted those models. It is impossible. It has not worked for them. It will not work for them. They try many various things in terms of staggering shifts and all sorts of things, but it has not worked for them. In fact, our jurisdiction has had the 18 per cent reduction and I am not aware that any other jurisdiction has.

Ms BOLTON: Commissioner, regarding the five-year strategic plans and modelling, you spoke about a lot of different things including local nuances. I am trying to understand how your planning interconnects with the Department of Health. We have 227 new paramedics or frontliners and there are 170 new or replacement vehicles. You are picking people up quicker, but when you get to an emergency department there is not the extra capacity there. I am trying to understand how that works in terms of reducing wait times instead of just increasing ramping.

Commissioner Emery: All of our planning is done in—I was going to say in consultation with the Department of Health but it is not; it is done hand in glove with the Department of Health. All of the population information that I spoke of we derive from the statistical areas within Queensland Health. We have formalised processes with our service planning team and with the Department of Health service planning team, and we have local consultation with all 16 hospital and health services across the state. In terms of that planning, we do it together. I am not best placed to talk about the workforce modelling in an emergency department, but we share information and we share data in terms of our ED presentations. That is provided daily if not rolled up monthly. The understanding of our projections in terms of the amount of patients that will be brought to an emergency department, if that is the specific area you are asking me about, is reviewed monthly within the Department of Health and projected forward.

Ms BOLTON: Can you provide the number of new or replacement vehicles and extra paramedics that will be allocated to the Sunshine Coast region along with the projected decrease in wait times for the Sunshine Coast region?

Commissioner Emery: I can definitely provide the staffing number to you. I am not sure if I can be specific about the fleet. The enhancement for FTEs for the Sunshine Coast is 23 of the 227 on top of the enhancement of 15 last year. As I said, I cannot provide the vehicle number to you because it is something we do on the basis of the need and the age of the fleet in the local area. We will work with the local team to determine how many of those 170 need to be replaced or how many additional new ones need to go in to support the 23 additional people.

Ms BOLTON: With those extra allocations in the Sunshine Coast region, has any modelling been done on how that will improve the current wait times being experienced in Noosa?

Commissioner Emery: Yes. As I said earlier, when we overlay those resources into our sophisticated system, we have geographical mapping that will demonstrate where we can cover hotspots or areas of concern or areas of demand. In fact, we do it in reverse. We look for the areas

where there is limited coverage, for example. I am not saying this is the case, by the way, member for Noosa, but is the best way to deliver better services for Noosa putting more staff into Cooloom? We can model that. We can put those sorts of assumptions into the system. We have to make good, local decisions about that. When we attempt to do that for the northern Gold Coast area, for example, the deployment software will say the very best thing you can do is close the ambulance station at Beaudesert. We are not going to do that. We have to make those local decisions with those people in mind.

All of the allocations of these resources, down to the time of day that they work, is about improving the response times for the entire Sunshine Coast and specifically for the areas where we have identified need. You would appreciate the co-dependence of the resources and the assets that we have in an area like the Sunshine Coast. It would surprise me if the resources allocated to Noosa did not do at least 40 per cent of their work outside of Noosa. Likewise, the resources in Cooloom would be doing 40 per cent of their work in Noosa.

The Move-Up Module—or LiveMUM, as the minister referred to it earlier today—is informed by that two-year workforce modelling. It bolts on to our computer-aided dispatch system that then gives predictive analysis of where the next case might happen, which gives us the opportunity to predeploy staff into the Noosa area, for example. I used to work on the Sunshine Coast—as you know—and Cooloom, Kawana and Caloundra are key station locations because they give us broad-level coverage across the entire Sunshine Coast. It does not mean we can keep an ambulance service in every community 24/7, of course, but it gives us the opportunity to respond quickly. The clever models are better at predicting than me, but that was the way we used to do it when I was there 20 years ago. It is about finding those key areas to deploy staff to and from.

Mr SPEAKER: We will just have one more question from the opposition and then we will go to the answers to the questions on notice.

Mr BAILEY: Commissioner, please thank all of our Queensland Ambulance staff across the state for all the work they do 24/7 to keep us safe. I was scooped up by an officer many years ago after getting car-doored, and we value very much all their efforts. Thank you to you and to all of your staff.

Commissioner Emery: Thank you.

Mr BAILEY: My final question is: what would the 2.2 per cent of overtime be in terms of the actual hours that paramedics work?

Commissioner Emery: The 2.2 per cent is just the shift extension. It is about 330,000 hours a year across the state.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. A number of questions were taken on notice. Who is going to start?

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Speaker, I will start off. There were two matters raised in relation to the prehearing questions on notice. One had a word missing, and I am happy to table that. That is question on notice No. 2, and the answer is provided.

Mr SPEAKER: Are you seeking leave to table that?

Mr NICHOLLS: I do not know that I need leave, but I am happy to seek leave.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr NICHOLLS: In relation to prehearing question on notice No. 12, some commas were missing from the data in the table that we had been provided. Pleasingly, the numbers look better than they already looked with those commas inserted. I seek leave to table that.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr NICHOLLS: There were a number of questions that were asked and we said we would get back to people by the end of the session. The member for Noosa asked about the Surgery Connect program at the Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service has been provided with \$13 million from the 2025-26 Surgery Connect budget allocation: \$10 million for elective surgery, which is expected to deliver over 1,000 procedures; and \$3 million for gastrointestinal endoscopy, which is expected to deliver over 900 procedures. Almost 2,000 procedures will be delivered there, member for Noosa.

The member for Miller asked a question on waiting list comparisons. The director-general undertook to advise on the percentages in relation to outpatients and elective surgeries. In relation to outpatients, the answer is 12,943 patients and 11.2 per cent. In relation to elective surgeries, the answer is 2,521 patients and 56.9 per cent. I note that there has been a decrease of 2,159 patients, or 23.7 per cent, compared to June 2022.

The member for Miller asked a question in relation to spinal patients. An expansion in bed capacity will be required to meet demand by 2036-37, with a total of 120 beds being required in both South-East Queensland and North Queensland.

The member for Murrumba asked about health campaigns. The marketing campaigns are not the only method by which Queensland Health delivers health promotion messages to the public. Queensland Health has a range of social media campaigns, including on sun safety. This is funded through Queensland Health's \$43½ million strategic comms budget. Since 1 November 2024 there have been 53 posts across Queensland Health's social media channels on sun safety. Also, \$400,000 has been allocated to deliver skin check clinics and GP training in regional and remote areas of the state.

The member for Miller asked about the spinal injury waitlist. The Queensland Spinal Cord Injuries Service provides care at the PA Hospital. As of 1 August 2025, there are 30 patients on the waiting list at the PA Hospital. In terms of the Queensland Ambulance Service, the member for—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, point of order: the minister's answer in relation to sun safety was not related to the specific question asked by the member for Murrumba. He asked specifically about the social marketing campaign being cut. The minister has given us a very broad answer, which is lovely, but it has not actually answered the question. Could I ask the minister to actually answer the question?

Mr NICHOLLS: I have answered the question. He gets to ask the question and I get to deliver the answer.

Mr BAILEY: So you are not going to answer it?

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy to say that, as part of the \$43½ million funded through Queensland Health's strategic comms budget, we have put 53 posts across Queensland Health's social media channels.

Mr BAILEY: That is the broad budget. That has nothing to do with the specific campaign.

Mr SPEAKER: It is up to the minister to answer the question.

Mr BAILEY: The question has not been answered.

Mr SPEAKER: I cannot force him to answer a question.

Mr BAILEY: He is hiding it. That is okay. We get it.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have answered the question. The member for Miller asked about last year's Queensland Ambulance Service budget. I am advised there has been an 8.5 per cent growth on last year. You asked about the ambulance pick-ups from GPs, and I am advised that QAS do not record that metric.

The member for Noosa asked about new vehicles on the Sunshine Coast, and the commissioner has indicated that it is done on an as-needs basis, which is based on the replacement of fleet and other things that happen. I think I said there will be 175 for distribution across the state, and I am sure there will be strong representations for those going forward not only from the member for Noosa but also from other colleagues.

Having answered those questions, I will finish off with my closing statement. It has been a privilege to be at the table to answer at least government questions in relation to the government's record investment in Health. If I had been asked at least one question by the opposition, I might have been able to answer a number of the matters they have raised. As it is in parliament, they seem too concerned to ask me a question and have gone hunting elsewhere. You have heard from witnesses and me, as the minister—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, point of order: I am not aware of there being a provision for closing. It is all right. I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: We are inside the last minute. We are down to about 30 seconds. Minister, could you round it out quickly?

Mr NICHOLLS: If I had been asked one question by the member for Miller or by the member for Murrumba I would have enjoyed answering it.

Mr BAILEY: You do not answer them.

Mr NICHOLLS: One question—just give me one.

Mr BAILEY: Why would I ask you a question when you—

Mr NICHOLLS: There we have it. That tells you all you need to know. There has been no apology yet to the Toowoomba Hospital and Health Service for misleading the public. We have laid the foundation stones for Queensland Health into the future with a record \$33.1 billion being allocated to the 2025-26 budget.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Speaker, point of order: I apologise for interrupting the minister, but it occurs to us that there was a question that the government said that they would return an answer to in relation to bed shortages for spinal injury rehabilitation in Queensland and the numbers on the waitlist. I do not think I heard a response to that.

Mr NICHOLLS: I gave that answer.

Mr SPEAKER: It being 1.30 pm, according to the motion agreed to in the House, the time for this session has expired. There were no questions taken on notice. Thank you, Minister, Director-General, officials and departmental officers for your attendance. The committee will now suspend proceedings until 2.15 pm when we will examine the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation.

Proceedings suspended from 1.31 pm to 2.15 pm.

**ESTIMATES—HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE—
ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM; SCIENCE AND INNOVATION****In Attendance**

Hon. AC Powell, Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation

Ms Kate Samios, Chief of Staff

Mr Sam Jackson, Senior Policy Advisor

Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

Ms Patricia O'Callaghan, Director-General

Environmental Services and Regulation

Mr Kahil Lloyd, Acting Deputy Director-General

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships


Mr Ben Klaassen, Deputy Director-General

Tourism

Miss Natalie Patch, Acting Deputy Director-General

Tourism and Events Queensland

Mr Craig Davidson, Chief Executive Officer

 **Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): Good afternoon. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Under the provisions of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, I will preside over today's hearing. The members of the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee are: Rob Molhoek MP, the member for Southport and chair; Joe Kelly MP, the member for Greenslopes and deputy chair; Sandy Bolton MP, the member for Noosa; Kerri-Anne Dooley MP, the member for Redcliffe; Dr Barbara O'Shea MP, the member for South Brisbane; and David Lee MP, the member for Hervey Bay. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion or by order of the committee. Please note that the first three rows of the gallery are reserved for departmental and ministerial staff supporting the minister. Members and others who are attending to observe are welcome to sit in the remaining rows or in the gallery.

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, members included. 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 2025 for the environment, tourism, science and innovation portfolio area until 7.15 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the times specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage. I also remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly.

In respect of government owned corporations and statutory authorities, standing order 180(2) provides that a member may ask any question that the committee determines will assist 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 advisers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general.

Please remember to press your microphones on before you start speaking and off when you are finished.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of the environment 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 POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, chair, deputy chair, members and staff, thank you for the opportunity to provide opening comments on the environment, tourism, science and innovation portfolio. The immense importance of this portfolio is reflected in this year's budget, with \$1.4 billion allocated to the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

The 2025-26 budget lays the foundations to deliver a fresh start for Queensland's future. The budget delivers the commitments we made to the people of Queensland in October last year. I want to thank all staff within the department for the passion and dedication they have shown for Queensland's environment. It has been a great pleasure meeting with staff right across the state and hearing not only their stories and insights about what makes our natural environment so special but also their ideas and insights on the processes they operate within.

Queensland is one of the most naturally and culturally diverse places on earth, and the Crisafulli government is determined to make sure it stays that way. The 2025-26 budget includes a strong focus on the environment, with more than \$133 million in new funding to increase efforts in expanding and caring for protected areas, environmental stewardship and wildlife protection throughout Queensland.

I remind the House of the lack of results from the former government. For 10 years they talked about the environment, wailing about the state of Queensland's natural habitat, and did nothing to preserve or improve it—all talk, no action. Instead, we will introduce a range of initiatives to ensure our incredible natural assets are preserved, protected and shared into the future.

The More Rangers, Better Neighbours program will see \$84.6 million over five years as well as \$29.6 million ongoing for the enhanced management of national parks and protected areas including up to 150 additional Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Indigenous land and sea rangers. We will increase our efforts to keep protected areas healthy and reduce bushfire risk to communities, with \$11.2 million to support improved bushfire management and community safety which will include vital new fire vehicles, fire units and infrastructure upgrades.

We will continue growing the statewide network of national parks and other protected areas. This morning I released a discussion paper titled *A fresh start for private protected areas*. This is the first step in developing a new and improved strategy for protected area expansion in Queensland. I invite Queenslanders to help shape the future of private protected areas as part of its commitment to boosting Queensland's protected area estate through strategic acquisitions and voluntary partnerships with landholders.

The amount of \$39.6 million has been committed in 2025-26 for high-priority land acquisitions to expand our public protected area network and protect our unique environment for future generations. Sick and injured wildlife will receive better care with more than \$39 million to expand and enhance wildlife hospitals that will contribute to better conservation and recovery outcomes for our native wildlife.

A major challenge our government has inherited is managing the waste we create. Under Labor recycling rates failed to meet targets and councils were abandoned in their efforts to reduce landfill. We are working with local government across this great state to divert waste from landfill with our \$130 million Resource Recovery Boost Fund. That is on top of \$70 million over four years for resource recovery infrastructure in partnership with the Australian government under the SEQ City Deal. Zero Litter to the Bay will see hundreds of tonnes of litter diverted from Moreton Bay by 2030, with \$35 million of new funding to support partnerships with local governments to upgrade stormwater network infrastructure.

Consultation on our new draft *Queensland Waste Strategy 2025-2030—Less landfill, more recycling* has recently closed. Once finalised later this year, the strategy will set the clear direction for how we move forward to a future with less landfill and more recycling. We know Queenslanders want to do the right thing, and the Crisafulli government will be delivering a fresh start for improved environmental outcomes.

To put it simply, we are doing what we said we would through this budget. We are delivering on the promises we made to Queenslanders when they elected us, and we are paving a brighter future for our state.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister, for your opening statement. We will proceed to non-government questions. I look to the member for Greenslopes or delegate? I call the member for Nudgee.

Ms LINARD: Good afternoon, Minister and Director-General, and I warmly acknowledge all of the departmental representatives who are here today and those who are watching online. Thank you for your ongoing service to the conservation of nature, science and innovation in Queensland. My first question is to you, Director-General. With reference to the addition of more than 6,550 hectares of additional protected area announced on 1 June 2025 and referenced in question on notice 12, how many of these transfers commenced prior to 26 October 2024?

Ms O'Callaghan: Securing more protected areas for the state's endangered species, biodiversity and threatened flora is certainly a key priority for this government. In terms of recent acquisitions, the nearly 9,000 hectares announced in June 2025 of expanded protected areas primarily included an upgrade of tenure for the Malbon Thompson Forest Reserve to national park—a tenure decision made by the current government. The process continues and we are actively negotiating a number of land acquisitions at the moment. This remains a high priority for us.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, looking at the department's website, actually a majority of these occurred under the former government—almost 90 per cent. Can you please confirm what percentage of those hectares—it was asked in question on notice 12 but not answered?

Ms O'Callaghan: I will seek to find that information.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you going to look for it now?

Mr POWELL: We will endeavour to get back to the shadow minister before the end of the proceedings.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, how many of the conservation agreement negotiations for the 18 new nature refuges announced on 1 June 2025, referenced in question on notice 12, commenced prior to 26 October 2024?

Ms O'Callaghan: All of those negotiations commenced.

Ms LINARD: All of those negotiations commenced under the former government?

Ms O'Callaghan: Yes.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, the government has announced that they will expand protected areas by more than 1.88 million hectares this term. What is the department's plan to deliver on this target and what interim targets have you set for each of the forward years of this term?

Ms O'Callaghan: Having a clear target for this term of government ensures a focused effort and actions will progress to deliver it. The department has several active negotiations to secure land for public protected areas which are commercial-in-confidence but will contribute up to 0.18 per cent to the protected total area. In addition, conservation agreements have been executed for two nature refuges which will add 0.05 per cent to the protected area total. There are also properties with rights and interests yet to be resolved which will contribute to this target.

The department is also working closely with Australia's major conservancies and philanthropic partners who continue to play an instrumental role in supporting the Queensland government to achieve its goal of expanding the state's protected area network. Further, the Queensland government is also continuing to work with and support the state's farmers and other landholders to enhance their stewardship of Queensland's unique species. The minister announced a discussion paper earlier today. Certainly we will be looking across the range of government initiatives to work closely with our landholders to ensure that we are striving to meet these targets. Progress towards protecting 1.8 million hectares in this term of government has been estimated and certainly within the financial year we are aiming to get to 8.71 per cent.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, is the \$39.6 million for high-priority land acquisitions included in Budget Paper 3 the remaining uncommitted funds from the former Labor government's \$262.5 million historic protected area expansion fund?

Ms O'Callaghan: The \$39.6 million allocated in the 2025-26 budget for land acquisitions to expand the protected area network will be drawn from the capital remaining from the 2022-23 state budget with an endeavour to ensure we spend all of that and further budget considerations to be attributed back to government.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, am I correct to take from your answer that there was actually no new or additional funding by the Crisafulli government in this budget? That was a carryover from the former Labor government's budget for expansion of public protected area?

Ms O'Callaghan: This government signed off on the budget of \$39.6 million.

Ms LINARD: So yes or no? There was no new and additional funding?

Ms O'Callaghan: The budget was drawn down from the \$250 million.

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Director-General; no new funding. Director-General, when will the 54,000-hectare Greater Glider Forest Park, announced last year to expand and link protected areas of eastern hardwoods from Conondale National Park near Maleny northward to Cordalba National Park near Childers, transition to natural capital reserve tenure?

Ms O'Callaghan: I am aware of this project. I know that when I commenced in the role it was raised with me. The Greater Glider Forest Park was an initiative announced previously, as you are aware, and certainly was a deliverable. We know there were previously identified approximately 54,000 hectares of state forest land to be dedicated as protected area. These identified areas included parts of state forests located within South-East Queensland, as you are aware. The proposed protected areas sought to expand and link existing but fragmented protected areas of essential habitat for threatened species, primarily our iconic greater gliders, Australia's largest gliding possum. The Queensland Future Timber Plan will certainly consider the appropriate tenure for these state forests.

Ms LINARD: Am I to take it, Director-General, that this area will continue to be logged and is now not going to be protected for greater gliders?

Ms O'Callaghan: Currently we are working through a process, and the Queensland Future Timber Plan will consider the appropriate tenure for these forests.

Ms LINARD: If this is still under consideration, Director-General, can you advise why there are no conservation groups represented on that future timber action group if this is an important consideration for the environment sector?

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: that is a question regarding the timber plan, which sits within Minister Perrett's portfolio. It is probably a question best put to him when he appears before the committee.

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the member should substantiate the claim that there is no-one. I would like to know the basis of that. Is that documented somewhere?

Ms LINARD: It is on the public record.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the plan you are referring to sits within the portfolio of another minister, perhaps that question would be best addressed to that minister next week. Member, do you have another question?

Ms LINARD: Director-General, broader consultation on the next step of the Cape York World Heritage nomination was due to commence in late 2024 or early 2025. Has this commenced?

Ms O'Callaghan: This process did commence prior to my starting in the director-general role, but obviously, having started, I acknowledge there has been a lot of feedback on it. The department has been reviewing the World Heritage tentative listing process for Cape York Peninsula. This review includes targeted engagement with traditional owners who were involved in the original process. As this review is ongoing, it is premature to provide advice on the progression of the full World Heritage nomination. However, I can say that we are trying to engage with as many groups as possible to hear from them with an intent to provide a recommendation to the minister. For further background and context, what we know as well is that, to ensure independence in this consultation, we have a senior leader from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, in our partnerships division, who has been appointed to lead the review so we can ensure we are doing it comprehensively.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, is it correct that 10 traditional owner groups gave consent to have their cultural landscapes included in the Cape York Peninsula World Heritage tentative listing?

Ms O'Callaghan: I will be seeking to get some further clarification on those 10 letters. What I do know is that we have included letters to the 12 traditional owner groups, and eight landholding entities have been invited to provide cultural authority and landholder consent during the initial process regardless of whether consent was provided. In terms of your question, I am just seeking that information. I will be a moment.

Mr POWELL: Just to clarify, we have gone back to every one of the traditional owner groups that were consulted originally, whether they gave consent or otherwise, to confirm that they adhered to that process, that they felt they were listened to and given respect in that process. The number that the director-general gave then included those who also did not give consent for their listing.

Ms LINARD: Thank you, Minister. Just to clarify, 10 traditional groups did provide by FPIC approval in written form as required to be included in that. They are the 10 groups I am talking about, rather than groups that were not included, which seems to be what you are including in addition to that.

Director-General, what consultation have you or the minister undertaken with those 10 groups about the state government potentially withdrawing its support for reviewing the World Heritage tentative listing?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just a moment. Before we go to that question, Director-General, you did initially say you were seeking some additional information. Then the member asked another question. Director-General, do you want to continue your answer to the first question about the 10 groups?

Ms O'Callaghan: The team is still seeking confirmation on the 10 letters.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sorry to interrupt you, member for Nudgee; I did not want to get past the first question, which the director-general was coming back to, before we moved on to the next question.

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: there were some imputations in the way that question was phrased. I ask you to remind the member to ask a question and not make statements.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Southport. Member for Nudgee, as I said, I am sorry for interrupting. I just wanted to make sure we were not getting off track. Would you ask the second question again, please?

Ms O'Callaghan: I have the answer.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are back to the first question. Director-General, do you have that detail?

Ms O'Callaghan: I do. I can confirm from the team that we received seven letters. I will say that through this new process we are going back to all groups, including the ones that have provided consent, to ensure they also have another opportunity to provide that consent.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, the question that I asked after that was: what consultation have you or the minister undertaken to meet with the original groups that did indicate their desire to be part of that tentative listing and are now part of the submission on the UNESCO website?

Ms O'Callaghan: Our team is in active engagement with those groups at the moment, but I personally have not been up there yet. That is due to be scheduled before the end of the year.

Ms LINARD: Minister, have you met with any of those relevant original 10 groups that indicated they wished to be included and were included in the tentative listing?

Mr POWELL: I will have to go back through my diary and check whether I have on other matters, having met with a number of Indigenous groups from the cape. In terms of meeting them about their specific ask around the World Heritage listing, no, I have not met in that regard. If I may add, I do need to correct the record on a matter the shadow minister raised.

I have not said we will not be progressing the World Heritage listing. In fact, that is quite false. It is not the case at all. What we heard very clearly was that a number of traditional owner groups on Cape York felt the process had been rushed, felt they had not been given time to seriously consider whether a World Heritage listing was in their best interests or not. We have undertaken to go back to those traditional owner groups and the broader cape communities to ascertain that.

I appreciate those opposite might want that to be expedited, but that repeats the problem of the previous process. We do want to take our time. We are being respectful. Letters and communications have gone to the traditional owner groups that gave consent as well as those who were engaged that did not. We are also engaging with some of the broader cape stakeholders. I have given some direction that I would like that process to be finished by this calendar year. If I get feedback that to achieve that we would have to unduly expedite some consultation with those traditional owner groups then I am not going to rush it. We want to confirm that those traditional owner groups entered into this in good faith and understand what it is they are entering into. If they do, we will progress the nomination as it stands.

Ms LINARD: Minister, I can confirm that you have not met with any of the groups that indicated they wish to be a part of that tentative listing. You said in 2012 when your previous government then withdrew support for a World Heritage listed Cape York that the cape was over consulted and indeed more consultation would be a waste of money. Now you are reviewing the tentative listing on the basis that the consultation was not broad enough. What is your position on listing the cape?

Mr POWELL: I think the difference here is that a number of groups have given consent. What I would question is whether that was freely given or whether it was due to a rushed process. The Crisafulli government is taking a very different approach from the previous government. We are being consultative, and we are taking our time, whether it is with traditional owners on the cape or, as we will discuss later on, with the broader tourism industry, the broader conservation sector or farmers. We will consult around protected area estates and we will land a position on this once we have consulted.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will move to questions from government members now.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS I note that you have today released a new discussion paper on private protected areas. Could you please update the committee on the Crisafulli Liberal National Party government's vision for this important part of our overall protected area estate?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for Moggill for the question because it is an important question and I know it is important to you personally and also to your constituents in the electorate of Moggill. The Crisafulli government is committed, as I mentioned in my opening statement, to expanding Queensland's protected area estate, but we will do that while respecting landholders and ensuring all Queenslanders can enjoy their natural environment. The former Labor government promised to expand the estate to 17 per cent but delivered just one per cent over the course of three terms, nearly 10 years. Our commitment is clear and the Premier has given me the goal of adding more than that in one term—so that is one per cent in four years. That is more than they did in 10 years and we will do it through voluntary agreements on productive and manageable land and we will also do it through acquiring public protected area estate.

Specifically, the discussion paper that we launched this morning is designed to improve how we conserve our environment and to do that in partnership with those private landholders. As I mentioned previously, we are a consultative government and we want to ensure that we bring people on the journey and, to be blunt, learn from their experiences and hear their ideas. It is amazing the kinds of things you can come up with when you listen to people. Interestingly, since launching the paper we have already received a level of feedback from some of the stakeholders. Jo Sheppard, Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Farmers' Federation, said—

The QFF welcomes the release of the discussion paper as an important step in ensuring private protected areas work for farmers. Landholders are already strong environmental stewards, and the agriculture sector appreciates having the opportunity to provide input to ensure the design of these programs reflects the realities of modern agriculture and is accessible and useful to landholders. We look forward to working with government to assist in developing a private protected area framework that supports the future viability of farm businesses and delivers enduring conservation outcomes.

Chris Norman, Chief Executive Officer of NRM Regions Queensland, said—

The Regional NRM organisations have worked closely with nature refuge participants across Queensland for many years and understand the need for incentives, practical support and clear guidance. We look forward to contributing to the consultation process to ensure the private protected areas program delivers benefits for both biodiversity and regional communities.

Dr Liz O'Brien, CEO of the Queensland Trust for Nature, said—Queensland Trust for Nature welcomes the release of the discussion paper as an opportunity to scale up conservation in Queensland. We are proud to support voluntary partnerships for private protected areas estate. QTFN looks forward to contributing insights from our work. We value the co-design approach.

Again, there is an opportunity to co-design. Dr O'Brien continued—

An input from organisations like ours is essential to build a strong private protected areas program.

The Crisafulli government is unashamedly committed to working with farmers, landholders and the conservation sector to increase our private protected area estate. We will do it as a voluntary scheme. We will ensure that it continues the productive use of that land. We will make sure it is manageable into the future.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, I would like to turn to the Crisafulli government's More Rangers, Better Neighbours policy on page 2 of the SDS. Can you provide an update on that commitment?

Mr POWELL: Thank you for the question, member for Southport, and for your chairing of this committee. I would be pleased to talk to you about our More Rangers, Better Neighbours policy. It builds on what we have just talked about. We want our protected area, particularly our public protected area

estate, to be better managed. For years, our poorly managed protected areas have damaged not only the environment and conservation outcomes but our reputation with surrounding landholders. When those areas are not managed properly, we risk losing the very reason they were worth protecting in the first place.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service was actually created 50 years ago by a conservative government. That is why just one day after World Ranger Day—and you may notice that the member for Nudgee and I are wearing our 50 year anniversary badges, and it was World Ranger Day yesterday—I am proud to update the committee on our More Rangers, Better Neighbours initiative, which is one of the largest boosts of our ranger base in Queensland's history.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, it is \$84.6 million over five years, with \$29.6 million per annum ongoing. It will deliver 150 new Queensland Parks and Wildlife and Indigenous land and sea rangers. As a guide, it will probably be 120 Parks and Wildlife rangers and 30 Indigenous land and sea rangers. Importantly, this includes 40 permanent specialist fire management rangers—39 of whom were promised by the previous government but would have been axed in the 2025-26 budget because they only gave funding for it for one year. The Crisafulli government is investing in the people who care for our parks, who protect our biodiversity and who work hand in hand with farmers and the surrounding landholders. We will deliver better outcomes for our environment and stronger relationships with the communities in which we operate.

Mr LEE: Minister, over the last decade there have been longstanding local concerns about the management of dingoes on K'gari Fraser Island. Could you update the committee on what the Crisafulli government is doing to ensure that visitors and locals are safe around dingoes on K'gari Fraser Island?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his question and also for his ongoing advocacy for K'gari Fraser Island and the continued visitation to it in a respectful, light-touch way to ensure the conservation values of that special place continue. I want to acknowledge his interest in the Fraser Island dingoes. They are a unique species.

I need to be clear at the outset. The Crisafulli government has made some very strong statements that we will put public safety first, but I think there is an opportunity on Fraser Island to get a balance between public safety and conservation of the dingo. It is not lost on me that it was a former member for Hervey Bay who advocated to me as the former environment minister some 12 years ago to establish the first ever Fraser Island dingo management strategy. It is interesting to see that a lot of the practices that were put in place over a decade ago are continuing. As you would be aware, dingoes are protected under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 in all Queensland national parks and are managed on K'gari Fraser Island in accordance with that strategy.

We are looking at a number of initiatives. We want to: ensure there are regular and targeted ranger patrols informed by interactive reporting data; provide safety briefings to visitors and tourism operators; ensure there is infrastructure maintenance and capital upgrades of dingo exclusion fences around townships and campgrounds; have responsive temporary closures where there are heightened risk areas—and I stress 'temporary'; have dingo safe visitor messaging, including multimedia public communications and information signage; use targeted education and media campaigns for difficult to reach audiences; have continued investigations into new and innovative technologies for risk intervention—something that the innovation side of my portfolio is assisting with too; and use data from things like GPS tracking collars to assist us in understanding their movements more and their interactions with the visiting population.

What I would also say is that Americans visiting Yellowstone National Park acknowledge that they are walking into bear country and wolf country. When you visit K'gari Fraser Island, you are entering dingo territory. There is a responsibility on the public to work with us to ensure they are kept safe and we can continue to conserve the dingo on that island.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, I refer to page 1 of the SDS. How will the Crisafulli government support grassroots and community-based environmental care and stewardship groups across Queensland?

Mr POWELL: Member for Redcliffe, it is wonderful to have you in this chamber and on this committee. I know that you are a strong advocate in our electorate as well for grassroots environmental outcomes. Often when you can encourage your communities to participate in on-the-ground environmental outcomes locally, it is when you get the best conservation value, because you are not only improving the local environment but also enthusing your community and generations to come in conservation and giving them an appreciation of the environment. It is something we are very passionate about—again, something I want to build on in terms of the legacy from the previous term as the environment minister.

There are a couple of particular initiatives that we have already started working on. There is \$100,000 that we have provided to a local community group to clean up Mudgeeraba Creek. If you have spent time around the member for Mudgeeraba, you know exactly how passionate she is about Mudgeeraba Creek. We will be investing in Bulimba Creek in terms of weed control and rehabilitation programs, thanks to the efforts and advocacy of the member for Chatsworth. There is \$100,000 to help Noosa Council develop a Burgess Creek catchment management plan, thanks to the advocacy of former mayor and our LNP candidate, Clare Stewart, and \$630,000 to tackle pest and weed problems at Burleigh Heads National Park, with recurrent funding available to the volunteer groups right across the complex for restoration and rehabilitation works without the worry of applying for grants every few months.

The Crisafulli government is backing our local groups to know their environment best, and we are delivering the resources and certainty they need to protect Queensland's unique natural areas now and for future generations.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, in relation to the budget, what is the Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government doing to back local conservation groups in the electorate of Moggill?

Mr POWELL: I was talking about a passionate advocate in the member for Mudgeeraba. I think the member for Moggill would go close to being even more passionate about local environmental projects in his electorate. My apologies, Deputy Speaker: maybe you are up there as well. I know Brisbane's leafy west has a beautiful natural environment. I know that the member for Moggill is doing all he can to ensure that environment stays an intrinsic part of what makes that part of Brisbane such a beautiful place to live.

We have made a number of commitments and we have now delivered in this budget, exactly as we said we would, a couple of financial contributions to local conservation groups. In particular, there is \$75,000 going to each of the following: to Kholo Creek Catchment Group; to Pullen Pullen Catchments Group; to the Moggill Creek itself; to Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network; and to the Hut Environmental and Community Association. That is pretty significant, member for Moggill. Again, I put that all down to your continued advocacy for those local conservation groups on the ground doing their part to maintain that beautiful part of the world that you represent.

Dr ROWAN: I certainly appreciate that, Minister, thank you.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, I know that bayside communities like mine in Redcliffe will be some of the biggest beneficiaries of the Crisafulli government's Zero Litter to the Bay commitment. With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you outline how the Crisafulli government will clean up Moreton Bay and the benefits it will have?

Mr POWELL: It does not surprise me that the member for Redcliffe is very excited about our Zero Litter to the Bay initiative, given she represents part of the jewel in the crown in terms of the Moreton Bay community. Just about everywhere you stand in Redcliffe you would be looking out over the bay, wouldn't you? I know how important it is to her. It is not just a local treasure, though. It is globally recognised as a marine park. It is home to a rich diversity of species and particularly migratory birds, and it is also a great natural asset here in Queensland. If I get an opportunity later on, I might be able to talk about the tourism aspects of it, too, but they only come if you continue to protect it, which is why we made the \$35 million commitment, which we have now put into this budget, to make it a reality—a project that is designed to install specialist stormwater filtration devices in high-litter catchment areas right across the Moreton Bay region.

We estimate this will remove some 6,000 wheelie bins of plastic and litter from Moreton Bay each and every year. That has to be a huge improvement to the health of the bay and the environment, to the waterways and the marine life in them. We will do that in partnership with local governments. We are aiming to achieve at least 100 major stormwater drains upgraded to intercept rubbish before it reaches the bay. They will be in known hotspot areas for litter. We have already started planning and site assessments. That is underway. We are looking forward to seeing those first installations. It really is just a tangible demonstration of our commitment to protecting Queensland's pristine environment.

Our bayside lifestyle, which you emulate there in Redcliffe, as I said, is such a drawcard for locals and visitors alike. By taking action now, the Crisafulli government is ensuring Moreton Bay remains a healthy, thriving ecosystem, supporting marine life, tourism and recreation so that future generations can enjoy it as much as we do today.

Mr MOLHOEK: I am so excited about this question because I pretty much grew up at Sea World as a young child, and I have swum with the dolphins and everything. Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you update the committee on the Crisafulli government's commitment to the Sea World Marine Hospital?

Mr POWELL: Member for Southport, I understand why you are so excited about this. I was down at Sea World just the other day with the member for Surfers Paradise, your neighbour, complete in resplendent skivvy as he normally is—

Mr MOLHOEK: I know it is his electorate, but I still claim it.

Mr POWELL: I understand why. We were able to confirm that this budget has backed in our \$10 million commitment to build the world-first marine wildlife hospital in the Southern Hemisphere at Sea World. It is part of our commitment for \$39.6 million to fund six new or expanded wildlife hospitals across the state.

I really got a firsthand experience when I was down there to hear how the Sea World Foundation Wildlife Hospital will be equipped to rescue and treat a huge range of marine life—from dolphins, sharks and seals even up to whales and birds and other sick or injured sea animals. With equipment to treat larger, dolphin-size marine mammals onsite and rescue vehicles docked at the hub for rapid deployment, as I said, this will be the first of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere—something I think you can be very proud of as a Gold Coast MP.

I try not to cross over the elements of the portfolio, but it will also deliver on the unique ecotourism experience because, like the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, it is meant to be interactive. People will be able to go in and see firsthand the work that is being done to rehabilitate and help our sick marine life. I love it when you can combine conservation and education, and this facility will save more marine animals while giving the public a chance to witness firsthand what our veterinarians and marine scientists do each and every day. I really have to commend them. It is extraordinary work. We are proud to deliver this project, a project that will protect Queensland's unique wildlife, while strengthening our reputation as a world leader in conservation and ecotourism.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will go to non-government questions and to the member for Noosa.

Ms BOLTON: Director-General, given the determination of the federal government that the clearing of koala habitat at the Kin Kin Quarry is a controlled action under the EPBC Act, is consideration being given to review the SARA process, including publishing technical environmental advice from DETSI which has not been accessible since SARA was set up?

Dr ROWAN: I have a point of order, Deputy Speaker. My point of order relates to whether this is under this portfolio area given that SARA is under state development. There was an opportunity earlier this week to pose that particular question through those hearings.

Ms BOLTON: Deputy Speaker, I am happy to rephrase that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you can ask a question relating to it that is relevant to this area, you may; otherwise, I will need to ask you to move on. Please rephrase.

Ms BOLTON: Director-General, will DETSI submit for the evidence they provide to SARA to be made public as it was previously?

Ms O'Callaghan: I do not have any advice that we are releasing that information publicly, member, but I can follow that up further with you. Normally our advice is provided through to SARA and the process is managed from there.

Ms BOLTON: Can I clarify: will DETSI be making an application to have that reviewed so that evidence can be provided into the public domain?

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a little bit uncertain of the question. I think the member is asking about a federal process.

Ms BOLTON: No.

Mr POWELL: Is the member asking whether the federal government is going to request our information?

Ms BOLTON: No, what I am asking is whether DETSI—since SARA has been set up, the evidence that DETSI gives is not in the public domain—will be requesting that their evidence to SARA is?

Mr POWELL: But again, the consideration of what SARA made public will be a question for the Deputy Premier who has responsibility for SARA, I am sorry, member.

Ms BOLTON: I am asking in respect of information from DETSI.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: to add to the point of order raised by the minister the matters related to SARA and the processes are within the remit of the Deputy Premier. There was an opportunity earlier this week to pose the question. I do understand, as the member for Noosa is asking that question; however, it does relate to the Deputy Premier's portfolio given the responsibilities of SARA within those portfolio areas.

Ms BOLTON: I am happy to move onto the next question.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I do recall the director-general say that she would give us that information so if she has taken that question on notice then it should be followed through.

Mr POWELL: To be clear, I do not think she took it on notice.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Certainly you can take things on notice but, member for Noosa, if you are willing to move on that would be probably handy for you. Director-General, if you have some information to come back with either now or later—

Ms O 'Callaghan: I do. We are advised that our information is provided through SARA and it is a matter for SARA as to whether it is released.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you. With regard to the \$130 million for a Resource Recovery Boost fund, can the director-general provide some details on what types of council infrastructure will reduce waste levy costs and maximise recycling? That was mentioned in the response to question on notice No. 5.

Ms O'Callaghan: The minister has announced the \$130 million recovery boost fund. We know that fund has not only been well received by councils but also the private sector and the industry. The guidelines for that recovery boost fund are being created and designed at the moment. The minister has asked us to co-design that with our councils and industry so we will certainly be working through that process at the moment. What I can say is that the intent around that fund is certainly about helping councils to implement their regional waste management plans, as well as reducing their ongoing exposure to the waste levy. We also know that there is certainly some infrastructure projects that would be a consideration, so we will be taking all of this feedback on, helping to design the guidelines and then the minister will sign off on those.

Ms BOLTON: Regarding the \$2 million allocated to expand collection points for batteries including lithium, is there any allocation for the disposal given this is problematic and expensive?

Ms O'Callaghan: Earlier this year it was great for the minister to announce those funds. It was certainly designed as a result of some feedback that we got from our councils. The intent behind that is to support our councils expand collection points for problem batteries like those found in vapes and e-scooters. We are working with industry on practical ways to disseminate this so we are taking that feedback into consideration.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr BERKMAN: Director-General, you would be well aware that Queensland persistently has the highest rates of land clearing in the nation. My question is around the state's compliance in the monitoring of the vegetation management framework. Can you indicate what funding, if any, within the department of environment and heritage has been allocated for that compliance and monitoring work and can you provide a list of what compliance and monitoring actions have been undertaken in the last six months?

Dr ROWAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to a potential imputation: I would like the member to authenticate some aspects of the question he has asked.

Mr POWELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the compliance activities around the Vegetation Management Act—and the member used the term 'clearing'—all sit within the portfolio of Minister Last. There will be an opportunity next week to put those questions to him.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, that is a valid point of order. Member for Maiwar, it is in a different portfolio area, do you have another question?

Mr BERKMAN: Yes, I have. Again to the director-general: as described in the minister's charter letter, a new SEQ koala conservation strategy is to be developed this year. Can you advise what funding has been allocated for the development of a new SEQ koala conservation strategy and any associated projects?

Ms O'Callaghan: I know that at DETSI we take our role in koala conservation very seriously. We are currently working through the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy. What I can say is we are committed towards working towards a new strategy to certainly halt the decline of this species. The first stage in developing that strategy is to review the effectiveness of the current strategy and to identify options for new and improved koala conservation measures. Forty-five of the 46 actions under the strategy have been completed and the remaining action is to further review the targets. That will conclude in August this year.

Importantly, as well, we are working hard to raise community awareness, koala research, habitat mapping, habitat restoration, support for our SEQ wildlife hospitals and our koala carer groups and our threat reduction programs are continuing. We are also engaging with our delivery partners and key stakeholders to gather information about the effectiveness of the current strategy. Consultation and engagement with our stakeholders is critical through this if we want to ensure the future of our programs. The broader community will certainly have their say and funding for the strategy will certainly be met within the existing resources.

Mr BERKMAN: So no additional funding for the SEQ koala conservation strategy?

Ms O'Callaghan: I think what we can certainly table today is we do have \$15 million attributed to koala policies and programs this financial year. We have an additional \$12 million in 2026-27, over \$10 million in 2027-28 and over \$11 million in 2028-29. I will note that once the koala strategy is complete, any further budget considerations will be a matter for government.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, in May 2023 the Commonwealth and Queensland governments committed to significant actions for protection of the Great Barrier Reef that were sufficient at the time to prevent an endangered listing; are all of these commitments on track to be delivered?

Ms O'Callaghan: I know for DETSI the Great Barrier Reef is certainly an exceptionally important priority. Having lived in North Queensland and on the doorstep of the Great Barrier Reef, I know how important this is to the government as well. Certainly when it comes to the department, we are working with the Australian government and looking at a number of different programs. Can I clarify what specifically you were looking for in terms of information so I can provide a fulsome response?

Ms LINARD: I am referring to commitments that the former federal environment minister and I made in May 2023 on behalf of the Commonwealth and Queensland governments that the department continues to report to UNESCO on. They are the May 2023 commitments.

Ms O'Callaghan: We have a range of programs that we are currently funding when it comes to the Great Barrier Reef. In what I can see in front of us, we have a range of different investments. I might start by taking you through those investments, and if there are any gaps in information we can certainly look at that. Included in recent investments, for example, under the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program is a new joint Queensland and Australian government \$24 million Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund. This fund is about fast-tracking innovation for reducing water pollution flowing to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon from urban landscapes. We have also—

Ms LINARD: Apologies, if I can interrupt you: I have the commitments, if that helps. I appreciate there is a large amount of information you may have, but this is the document I am referring to, if that is helpful.

Mr POWELL: That would be very helpful. I am also happy to point out that—

Ms LINARD: It is these specific commitments I am referring to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can someone table that document, please?

Mr J KELLY: I will table it.

Mr POWELL: I am happy also to report that all existing commitments between the Queensland and Australian governments are continuing. There has been no change—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could you pass those to the director-general, please?

Mr POWELL:—other than if there were limited-life funding programs; they would have ceased. Otherwise, everything continues as per the agreement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The document has been tabled and the director-general is having a look at it.

Mr POWELL: If we may, Mr Deputy Speaker, we will review that. If we have missed anything we will come back to the member for Nudgee before the end of the session, but I am pretty confident that what is in there is continuing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will come back to that with more detail if necessary.

Ms LINARD: I appreciate that. Thank you, Minister. Minister, the Premier labelled international bodies such as the UN and UNESCO 'boffins' in recent comments. Do you share the Premier's views on the UN and UNESCO?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: is there any independent validation that the member could provide to the committee to validate the assertion—

Mr JKELLY: I am tabling a document for the benefit of the committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Greenslopes is tabling something that is apparently authenticating that.

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: it is common practice when documents are tabled that all members of the committee are provided with copies.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, that has been the case.

Mr MOLHOEK: This is the second document now that has been tabled and we are not able to see it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you have copies for everyone or not?

Ms LINARD: No, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would not have expected I needed to table every media article with a comment from the Premier. I apologise; there is only one copy to authenticate that he said it.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may, can I clarify? Was that a question to me or the director-general? Me? I am happy to take the question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It was to the minister.

Mr POWELL: If I can get a copy of the article it will assist, but I am happy to answer the question. The Queensland Crisafulli government is very much committed to ensuring the Great Barrier Reef continues to be the wonderful World Heritage and natural icon that it is. We will work tirelessly, as we always do, to ensure it is protected. We do that in partnership with the Australian government, particularly around the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and their operations; many of their officers are focused on compliance activities in the Great Barrier Reef. They are even embedded with our teams, as the member would know.

Across the reef catchment, our focus is largely on the inshore and the catchment side of it, and work that commenced over a decade ago around best management practice programs and water improvement quality programs continues. We will do that in the same way I know the former government did. We will do that in partnership with the Australian government. We will work with UNESCO on that. I would point out that the document the member tabled actually has nothing to do with the Great Barrier Reef; it was around youth crime. I think the member is being a bit loose with the truth there.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Ms LINARD: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will go to the member for Moggill first.

Dr ROWAN: I believe that for the committee to authenticate these things—and I accept the minister was willing to answer the question—we should be provided with the relevant documentation to authenticate the basis of questions as asked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That would aid the committee members. Could we take that into account, please? Did you have a point of order, member for Nudgee?

Ms LINARD: Yes. My question clearly articulated that he labelled international bodies 'boffins'. I never referred to the fact that he referred to them in respect of environment. I take personal offence and ask that the minister withdraw his comment about not being asked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, the member has taken personal offence. Would you withdraw that comment?

Mr POWELL: I withdraw, but I would—

Ms LINARD: Next question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just withdraw it and speak additionally if you could.

Mr POWELL: I withdraw.

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the member for Nudgee, as virtuous as she is trying to present herself, did seek to mislead the committee by drawing on comments that were out of context.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, please cease. If you have a concern about that, that is a matter of privilege; there is a process for dealing with that. It would involve writing to the committee, not that.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, the greatest single risk to the health of the Great Barrier Reef is human induced climate change. Do you accept this science?

Ms O'Callaghan: I accept that science.

Ms LINARD: Minister, the greatest single risk to the health of the Great Barrier Reef is human induced climate change. Do you accept this science?

Mr POWELL: Yes, I do.

Ms LINARD: Minister, given climate change is the greatest single risk to the health of the Great Barrier Reef, do you remain committed to achieving net zero by 2050?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: it relates to a policy within a portfolio area and that relates to questions which need to be put to the energy minister, who earlier in the week was here at the estimates. That would have been an appropriate time to ask that question.

Ms LINARD: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may be heard?

Mr POWELL: Just to clarify, the climate change component of the department has transferred to the Treasurer's portfolio, to back up what the member for Moggill said.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are saying that it is not in your portfolio?

Mr POWELL: Neither the office of climate change nor the decisions around energy mix and deliverables. They sit within the Treasurer's portfolio.

Ms LINARD: The administrative arrangements indicate climate science remains with the minister and his charter letter says—

Work collaboratively with the Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Home Ownership to progress Queensland toward net zero and reduce our emissions in a sustainable and practical manner.

I would think the environment minister can answer questions in respect of emissions reduction.

Dr ROWAN: I raise a further point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the member for Nudgee wishes to rephrase the question or move to an alternative question, that would be appropriate. However, the question as asked relates to the portfolio of the Minister for Energy, the Treasurer's portfolio.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, if it would assist, I stand by the request of me in my ministerial charter letter to work with the Treasurer on that and in delivering that program.

Mr J KELLY: Minister, last week the media reported that there would be a motion put to the LNP convention next month calling for the federal coalition to reject net zero. I ask: does your government remain committed to achieving net zero by 2050?

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for that point of order. I think, member for Greenslopes, the question that you have asked relates to the party. The minister has already answered the question of the member for Nudgee in relation to net zero and his charter letter. I would ask you to move on to another question, please. The LNP convention is not within the minister's portfolio responsibilities.

Mr J KELLY: That is the preamble. The question actually relates to the net zero target by 2050.

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: it was clearly articulated that this is not within the remit of the current estimates hearing and the purpose of that in relation to the expenditure under the minister's portfolio. It relates to a policy forum of a political party and, therefore, the question is not appropriate as asked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes; member for Moggill, thank you. Member for Greenslopes, I agree with that point of order and I also consider that in substance the question you have asked has been answered by the minister.

Mr J KELLY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Director-General, prior to the election the LNP supported Queensland's emissions reduction targets. Now in government the LNP are reviewing the Clean Economy Jobs Act, have extended the life of publicly owned coal-fired power stations, are expanding gas exploration and have cancelled renewable energy projects. What advice—

Mr LEE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order.

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order.

Mr J KELLY: I have not even asked my question, so I am not quite sure how you take points of order.

Mr MOLHOEK: You are doing a lot of preamble.

Mr LEE: It is a long preamble.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members to my right. I will hear the question and if there are points of order that arise from it we can hear them then.

Committee members interjected.

Mr LEE: Waffle.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr J KELLY: I take personal offence at that statement and I would ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Which one?

Mr J KELLY: I will not restate it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry, from which member?

Mr J KELLY: I believe it was the member for Hervey Bay.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Hervey Bay, would you withdraw that statement, please?

Mr LEE: I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Hervey Bay. Member for Greenslopes, you can ask your question.

Mr J KELLY: Director-General, what advice have you provided to the minister with respect to the risk that the reef may be listed as 'in danger' due to the government's mixed messages and uncertainty regarding emissions reduction?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: there are imputations and inferences contained within that question. It is disorderly and I would ask you to rule it out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Greenslopes, there are a number of points here. I am advised that your question contains arguments and also the preamble relates to acts and measures that are not within the minister's portfolio responsibilities.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, can I maybe just assist. I understand these questions were put to the Treasurer on Tuesday and the Treasurer and his team made the statement that we remain committed to 2050, so I do not know why this line of questioning is even happening, but I agree with the points of orders made by my colleagues.

Ms LINARD: With respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, these are commitments under the very question I asked earlier that we made to UNESCO so that the Great Barrier Reef is not listed as 'in danger' by the environment minister. It comes under the environment minister—

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, which is—

Ms LINARD:—and if the charter letter and administrative arrangements are not correct—

Mr POWELL: We remain committed—

Ms LINARD:—that is a reflection on the government to correct.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is a statement or a speech, not a question, member for Nudgee. Is there another question to be asked?

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: it is also a reflection on the chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southport, I am keenly aware of any reflections being made on my rulings or the Speaker's rulings. I would ask that the member for Nudgee or Greenslopes continue their questions.

Ms LINARD: Minister, your colleague the Minister for Primary Industries said on 10 December 2024 in the parliament that he has instructed his department to conduct a thorough review of the reef structural adjustment packages arising from the Future Fishing Taskforce recommendations. Do you as environment minister remain committed to the phase-out of gillnet fishing in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area by 2027? It is one of the commitments we made to UNESCO in the document I have distributed that you indicated you remain committed to.

Mr POWELL: To save going to-and-fro again despite the fact that this actual commitment, even if the former minister may have made this commitment, sits clearly under another portfolio, let me be explicit, and we told the member that we would get back to them before the conclusion of this session: I can confirm that all commitments committed to by the former member in partnership with the Australian government are still being progressed as per that commitment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your answer, Minister. We might head to government questions now.

Mr LEE: Minister, can you outline how the Crisafulli government's QCoast 2100 grants are helping coastal communities in my electorate of Hervey Bay?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for the question—again, something I know that he is very passionate about. When we recently visited for the blessing of the whale-watching fleet it was something that his mayor also got in my ear about regarding some coastal erosion challenges that are being faced by the Fraser Coast Regional Council. We know how much Queenslanders love their beaches and they love their coastal recreation, and you have a gem of a location up there in Hervey Bay, member. That is why the QCoast 2100 program, which is delivered in partnership with the Australian government and the Local Government Association of Queensland, has been so well received. The program gives councils the tools and the funding they need to better prepare for coastal hazards like storm tides and erosion—and, gee, haven't we seen that this year? It also helps address rising sea levels, so it is about protecting the places we love, the iconic beaches, the marine habitats as well as community infrastructure like parks and boardwalks as well as roads.

In the latest round—round 4—the Crisafulli government has supported 12 coastal councils and they will receive a share of \$5 million in funding to support coastal hazard resilience projects. This round includes projects such as new monitoring infrastructure, coastal adaptation planning and the design of protection structures. You specifically asked about your part of the world. Fraser Coast council will receive \$158,000 to establish two wave rider buoys to provide a long-term wave record for the Hervey Bay beaches. Whilst I do not want to stray into my science part of the portfolio, understanding the actions of waves is an important part of understanding erosion and coastal hazards full stop.

I would also point out to the member that not through QCoast 2100 but as per our election commitments—and, as I said before, we are delivering on what we said we would—I am thrilled to announce the \$1.5 million that we committed to a number of communities along the Fraser Coast. Largely I understand they are actually in the member for Maryborough's electorate, John Barounis, but that \$1.5 million for combating erosion along the Great Sandy Marine Park is also being delivered as part of this budget. The Crisafulli government is delivering the fresh start our communities voted for with practical support like these grants that protect our coastal communities, their homes and their beloved coastal infrastructure, and will do so for generations to come.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, I would like to briefly draw you back to the QCoast 2100 program. Can you advise how my community of Redcliffe is set to benefit from the Crisafulli government's investment in combating erosion?

Mr POWELL: We have all of these coastal MPs representing the government on the committee, which is great to see. I know, again like the member for Hervey Bay, coastal erosion is a big challenge for your part of the world and indeed the entire City of Moreton Bay foreshore and I know you want to do what you can alongside your community and your local government to ensure we combat that coastal erosion, both within the built and the natural environment. The Deputy Premier made an announcement just a couple of days ago about the important work we will be doing, alongside the member for Caloundra and the member for Pumicestone, to fix the Bribie Island breakthrough. It is why my team, particularly at Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, is playing an essential role in that as well as in the remediation of the Gold Coast beaches.

I am thrilled to announce today that the Crisafulli government is backing the Redcliffe community and the Moreton Bay City Council with a \$1 million grant for the Charlish Park seawall stage 1. Council is proposing the demolition of the existing dilapidated seawall and the construction of a new upgraded seawall which will provide a high degree of protection to significant built assets located along Redcliffe Parade, and I can see the smile on your face already. This is a conventional seawall but engineered for future adaptation to sea level rise and the new dissipative rock design reduces wave reflection as well, which will benefit natural coastal processes out in the bay. The Crisafulli government is always going to back our coastal communities, member for Redcliffe, and when the community of Redcliffe have an advocate like you I know that you will be fighting for and delivering for locals, as you have in this instance.

Mr LEE: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, could you provide the committee with an update on the work the Crisafulli government is doing to expand our protected area estate and protect koala habitats in and around my electorate of Hervey Bay?

Mr POWELL: There is a lot happening in the environment space around the Hervey Bay-Fraser Coast area. It is great to see. As I have outlined, we remain steadfast in our commitment to expand Queensland's protected area estate and I have been given that goal of doing so to the same tune in four years as the previous government did in 10. We will particularly be doing that where we can find critical habitats for things like the koala and particularly in areas like the Fraser Coast and Hervey Bay.

Our commitment to preserving our natural wonders has grown stronger, with more than 2,400 hectares of land added to two of the state's iconic national parks. Grongah National Park in the Fraser Coast region has expanded by 2,435 hectares. The good thing is: not only will that protect the koala; it will further protect ironbark woodlands, mixed eucalypt and rainforest as well as habitat for other species such as the glossy black cockatoo, the collared delma lizard and the powerful owl. It is a real win-win. We have also added an additional 6.9 hectares just a little bit further north from the member for Hervey Bay, up in the South Cumberland Islands National Park in the Mackay region. Again, that is to further protect key ecosystems and wildlife, including migratory species and the majestic white-bellied sea eagle.

The focus of our protected area growth will be trying to find those critical habitats of our threatened species and ensure we can add them to our estate. It demonstrates our commitment to our public protected area but also our commitment to voluntary strategic growth of our private protected area. I mentioned earlier our discussion paper, which is out at the moment. We do want to work with Queenslanders, landholders, local communities, conservation groups, ag groups and the resources sector to ensure that we can protect those critical habitats for koala populations around Hervey Bay and the broader state.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, as a Gold Coaster—I think I have already said that—I have seen firsthand how the beaches have been eroded by ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred and, might I add, in the seventies, in the eighties and in the early noughties. I remember lying in bed as a child listening to trucks rumbling down from the hills full of boulders to save the beaches. It is a matter that is very near to my heart and requires a lot of attention. Noting the work of the QPWS as outlined on page 4 of the SDS, I think it would be great if you could outline the work that the Crisafulli government is doing to restore the Gold Coast beaches yet again.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order: given the concerns the Deputy Speaker raised about my preamble before, I think the preamble to that question was excessively long.

Mr MOLHOEK: I wanted to go longer.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take your point of order. Member for Southport, I am not going to ask you to repeat the question, but would you please be mindful of shorter preambles for future questions.

Mr POWELL: I can understand the longevity of his introduction because of his longevity as a Gold Coast resident and his clear knowledge of history, particularly around coastal erosion along the Gold Coast. I note how passionate he is about his part of the world and in particular those beautiful Gold Coast beaches.

The Crisafulli government is very strong in our commitment to protect coastal communities, but we also want to build in that resilience for future weather events. We are backing this up with real on-the-ground work in partnership with all levels of government. I have to acknowledge at this stage the hard work of Mayor Tom Tate and his team along those beaches. Boy, they copped a whack during ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Again cutting across to tourism briefly, we know that was at a really bad time just before the Easter holidays. We needed to be decisive in our response.

Following ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, the City of Gold Coast contacted the department on 26 March 2025 to support a beach renourishment campaign, to expand the dredging footprint and use material from a new storm bar. Updates to the environmental authority and land use approvals were needed. Basically, for the council to do what they needed to do we needed to update our approvals. They contacted us on 26 March. They submitted their application on 31 March. By 3 April the department had finalised the necessary approvals and passed them on to both the City of Gold Coast and SARA. That demonstrates how serious we are about working with proponents like the City of Gold Coast and other local governments when it comes to fixing up coastal erosion following extreme weather events.

To be blunt, it could take up to three years to get all of the Gold Coast beaches back to where they were pre Alfred. There are still dredges out conducting rainbowning and nourishment works to this day. I love that term 'rainbowning'. It is a new concept to me. Picture it: it is a dredge literally throwing sand in a rainbow fashion up on the beach.

Mr MOLHOEK: It is a work of art.

Mr POWELL: I will take that interjection; it is a work of art. Additionally, I am pleased to announce that the City of Gold Coast has received a QCoast2100 grant for a dune shield. This project is designed to enhance coastal erosion resilience by actively monitoring dune volumes along Gold Coast beaches and investigating techniques to investigate dune plant growth intended to trap the sand and build those dunes. This enables a long-term strategy for dune volume enhancement—a technical term for making the dune bigger—that ultimately provides protection from storm waves. As environment minister, I want to make this commitment to the people of the Gold Coast: the Crisafulli LNP government will have your back every step of the way.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, can you outline how much waste is currently going to landfill and how the Crisafulli government's new draft *Queensland Waste Strategy 2025-2030—Less landfill, more recycling* will reduce waste going to landfill, boost recycling and drive down costs for councils and ratepayers across Queensland?

Mr POWELL: There is a lot in that question. How long have I got? I am keen to unpack some of that. The member asked how much waste is currently going to landfill. It is a good question because, sadly, under the previous government the amount increased from 1.7 million tonnes in 2015 to nearly two million tonnes today. That skyrocketing landfill rate is putting more pressure on our local governments, and if they continue at the current pace we are going to have to find land for landfill which then encroaches on our greenfield housing opportunities. As you know, we are a government that is committing to solving Labor's housing crisis and we just cannot have that. Also, as we develop more housing it is going to create more waste so that real pressure comes.

Sadly, Labor also left Queensland with the second-worst resource recovery rate in the nation. We are ahead of only the Northern Territory. I like my friends up in the Northern Territory, but that is not a reputation I want to have, certainly not as the environment minister. Our new waste strategy—we have put a draft out for consultation and consultation has now closed—will focus on reducing waste sent to landfill. It is literally called that, as you said, member—'less landfill, more recycling'. We want to identify recycling and remanufacturing opportunities to drive down costs for Queenslanders. We know that Queenslanders want to do the right thing. We are working to make it easier for them to do that.

The \$130 million Resource Recovery Boost fund—the member for Noosa asked a question about this—will support councils to develop initiatives and, importantly, the infrastructure. It is important that it is the infrastructure that will actually divert waste from household red bins to green and yellow bins. When you do that, it means it does not end up in landfill. Alongside that, we are also reviewing the current waste levy arrangements. We want to consider the potential impacts of New South Wales increasing their levy rate and we want to watch what happens in terms of cross-border waste movement as well. We want to see the influence of payments to local governments on achieving their waste targets and we want to look at waste types that are excluded, exempt or discounted from paying the waste levy.

Unlike the previous government, we are going to work with councils to do this. We are going to work with the not-for-profit and the profit sector to keep waste from landfill. The Crisafulli government is committed to ensuring Queenslanders can continue to enjoy the benefits of a clean environment, and the only way we do that is by tackling waste.

Mr LEE: Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, the Crisafulli government has made history by establishing Australia's first officially recognised conserved area, Weranga Scarps. Can you outline exactly what this is and why it is a big win for our environment?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for Hervey Bay. This is something I am really excited about. It goes to the heart of our commitment to work alongside landholders to increase our private protected area estate. We want to do that, as I have said, on a voluntary basis. We want to ensure ongoing productivity of the land. We are protecting potentially part of it and we want to make sure that, in doing so, the landholder can continue to manage that special part of that property.

We want to grow our estate. It is as simple as that. This initiative at Weranga Scarps, which is just south of Dalby, is actually the first ever in Australia of what is known as a conserved area. It is a shortened way of saying other effective area-based conservation measures—OECMs. This 48-hectare private property contains habitat for things like the yakka skink, the koala and, again, the glossy black cockatoo.

Under this OECM framework, conserved areas allow for the formal recognition of an area that can achieve long-term biodiversity conservation outcomes even if biodiversity is not the primary land-use objective. This is a great opportunity that we have to protect some really important biodiversity while acknowledging that the land may actually have another primary use. It differs from nature refuges because, as opposed to a formal legal recognition, OECMs are born out through an MOU with the landholder, who agrees to undertake certain conservation measures on their land. I think this is the way of the future. It is an opportunity for us to enter into these MOUs with landholders to protect some brilliant parts of the state whilst allowing them to continue to make a living from the land on which they live. I look forward to hopefully hearing more feedback through our discussion paper on ways we can increase this at a far more rapid rate than we currently do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a response to a question that we said we would come back to you on before the end of the session, but I am also conscious that there is a little time left.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let's have it now.

Mr POWELL: In relation to protected areas, the member for Nudgee asked what percentage of the additional land was commenced prior to 26 October. It is fair to say that the Crisafulli government, as I have said pretty much ad nauseam throughout this session, is committed to Queensland's protected area estate through strategic acquisitions and voluntary partnerships with landholders. Of the tenure upgrades announced on 1 June 2025, all lands were held by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and partnerships prior to 24 October 2024. However, it was the decision of this government and myself as minister to gazette them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have time for one more question from each side. I will call the member for Redcliffe and then non-government members.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, with reference to the Crisafulli government's \$39.6 million commitment for six new or expanded wildlife hospitals across Queensland, can you please update the committee on the status of the Moreton Bay wildlife hospital, right around the corner from my community of Redcliffe?

Mr POWELL: If I can pause for one moment, I need to correct the record. I think I mentioned earlier that it was under my tenure that the first-ever Fraser Island dingo management strategy was put in place. That was not correct, but we did a significant review of it. I apologise and correct the record.

The Moreton Bay wildlife hospital is a fantastic initiative. As a fellow member who represents the City of Moreton Bay and as a kid who grew up just around the corner from where this will go, I am really excited about this. This is a commonsense, tangible outcome that will enable us to do the right thing by our animals and our ecosystems. As I have mentioned, it is one of six that will come out of our \$39.6 million wildlife hospital commitment.

I am delighted to share with the member for Redcliffe our plan to build that new hospital in partnership with a number of partners, including the City of Moreton Bay, in Dakabin which is right around the corner from her place. We are delivering \$15 million and the lion's share of that funding is going to support a state-of-the-art wildlife hospital and education hub in the Moreton Bay area, providing critical care for Queensland's native animals. A bit like the marine hospital at Sea World that we talked about, there is an educational opportunity to this. It is about encouraging future generations to come and see how we care for our native animals. It will ensure injured wildlife from the area can be treated locally in Moreton Bay rather than having to be transported, in some cases up to two hours to either Wacol or Australia Zoo in my part of the world. When it comes to the LNP delivering for Redcliffe and Murrumbidgee as well as Kurwongbah, just around the corner, this is exactly the kind of fresh start that we promised.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to non-government members.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, you previously headed up Destination Gold Coast so I am certain that you are very familiar with the proposed Gold Coast sky rail project. What is the proposed route of the project and what are the next steps in its progression? Will a business case and environmental impact study be completed?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nudgee, could you tell us how that relates to the portfolio, please?

Ms LINARD: It relates to national parks because it is proposed to include the national park and it is an ecotourism project on both sides of the portfolio.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the department is not the project proponent in this instance so it is a hypothetical question as we wait to see which project proponent comes forward.

Ms LINARD: May I ask another question?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, I note at the parliamentary Health, Environment and Innovation Committee in February that when commenting on the Whitsunday Skyway project you labelled it 'an exciting new attraction'. Given the decision-making role you have as chief executive under section 35 of the Nature Conservation Act, have you sought advice from the Integrity Commissioner about potential conflicts and will you commit to absenting yourself from decisions or referring your relevant decisions under the act to another party to give Queenslanders confidence that the environment will be conserved and protected?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, Minister and member for Nudgee, regrettably the time for the examination of the environment estimates has expired. It being 3.45 pm, the committee will now suspend proceedings for 15 minutes until 4 pm, when we will resume for the further examination of estimates.

Proceedings suspended from 3.45 pm to 4.00 pm.



Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Welcome back to the LCC, members and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of science and innovation open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I am of the understanding that the minister would like to make an opening statement.

Mr POWELL: Queensland's scientific excellence entrepreneurs and innovative businesses contribute to the health and protection of Queenslanders, our natural environment and, indeed, our great state as well as support our growing economy. They are also the future. They are providing solutions to some of society's most vexatious issues. Whether it is medical initiatives, the environment itself or issues of complex geopolitics, science and innovation are critical components of those solutions. The 2025-26 Crisafulli government budget provides continued funding for core science and innovation programs and initiatives to support these vital sectors to continue building a better future for Queensland.

We have spoken a lot already about the Great Barrier Reef, our wonderful World Heritage listed natural wonder. In partnership with the Australian government, we have announced a \$24 million Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund to drive cutting-edge solutions for improving water quality in the Great Barrier Reef. We know that our tourism operators in this incredible part of the world are contributing to citizen-science projects to ensure continued protection for corals and their associated ecosystems.

More broadly, the Crisafulli government's investments in science include: \$25.3 million for quantum and advanced technologies, which will boost the local talent base, develop infrastructure and support technology commercialisation in Queensland; \$5 million for critical research infrastructure in eight leading Queensland research facilities; \$1.5 million to support regional universities and industry collaborations through the Regional University Industry Collaboration Program; and \$575,000 for the National Indigenous Science Translation Centre, something that I am particularly excited about.

Over the coming financial year, the science division will continue to work on quantum and advanced technologies. These technologies have the potential to be vital for our future growth and development, promising to create high-value jobs in research, development and commercialisation. Queensland researchers have forged a global reputation for excellence in delivering cutting-edge quantum science and innovation over the past 30 years, contributing to technologies used in our everyday lives such as MRI machines, better batteries and, of course, those dreaded smartphones. Our proximity to the Indo-Pacific also puts Queensland in the front seat to be a gateway to untapped markets in this space.

Our state has a strong ecosystem of emerging and traditional science-based industries as well as a network of advanced fabrication and materials facilities, providing a golden opportunity to expand and apply solutions from quantum and advanced technologies to diverse sectors, including energy, logistics, manufacturing and cybersecurity. By strengthening our quantum sector, we are not only investing here in Queensland but also opening the doors to global investors and research partners. We are creating opportunities for collaboration with leading institutions and technology hubs worldwide.

One opportunity we have identified is the development of our capability in semiconductors. We have all seen how essential chips are in modern technologies, and I am excited about the role that Queensland could play in this space. As we delve into the semiconductor industry, we are looking to capitalise on local expertise, value-add to our sources of critical minerals and drive innovation and economic diversity, potentially supporting thousands of highly paid jobs in engineering, manufacturing, R and D and technology.

We are addressing the challenges facing Queensland to drive economic growth, investment and productivity through continued support of our world-class innovation ecosystem. This includes continued support for the \$100 million Innovation Economy Fund, in partnership with the Australian government, which backs infrastructure projects within innovation precincts to deliver the jobs of the future. Through investment of nearly \$5 million in the Ignite programs, we will support innovative businesses to bring new ideas and new products to market and provide tailored business support to accelerate their growth and global reach.

We will invest almost \$3 million to deliver initiatives that support female entrepreneurs and founders to grow and scale their innovative businesses, including through the new Female Founders Investment Readiness program. One of those grant recipients—Kirsty Richardson of GravityFit—this week won the Queensland heat of the Startup World Cup 2025, her efforts earning her a trip to the USA to compete in the grand final of the Startup World Cup in October. GravityFit builds science backed tools and apparel that strengthen deep muscles, improve posture and enhance movements—we all could use a little of that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

To put it simply, we are doing what we said we would through this budget. We are delivering on the promises we made to Queenslanders when they elected us, and we are paving a brighter future for our state through science and innovation. I welcome the committee's questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go first to questions from non-government members. Member for Nudgee?

Ms LINARD: Director-General, does Queensland have a chief entrepreneur?

Ms O'Callaghan: I understand the chief entrepreneur role was vacated in 2024. Currently, the appointment of a Queensland chief entrepreneur is being considered as part of the science and innovation strategy and policy that the minister has asked us to develop.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, when will a new chief entrepreneur be appointed?

Ms O'Callaghan: Our role as the department is to develop the science and innovation policy to table with the minister, and the appointment of the chief entrepreneur will be with the government.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, has there been any direction or advice from the minister regarding the position of chief entrepreneur?

Ms O'Callaghan: The direction from the minister is to develop the science and innovation policy with consideration of a chief entrepreneur, and that will be a decision for the government.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, what advice has the minister sought from the Chief Scientist in her role as an ex-officio member of the Clean Economy Expert Panel on achieving the emissions reduction targets and ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Queensland?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I submit to you that this is not directly related to the portfolio responsibilities of the minister in the hearings that are taking place here this afternoon.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I would put it to you that this is a question relating to the Chief Scientist giving scientific advice, so it would seem very relevant to the department of science and innovation.

Mr POWELL: Could I seek some clarification? I am not disputing that the position of Queensland Chief Scientist sits within my portfolio and that I meet with the Chief Scientist and we discuss scientific matters, but the specific question referred to her additional role with regard to the Clean Economy Expert Panel, which sits under the Treasurer's portfolio.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you saying that does not sit in your portfolio?

Mr POWELL: No. It sits under the Treasurer's portfolio.

Ms LINARD: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Scientist gives scientific advice to the Minister for Science and this issue is the No. 1 risk to the terrestrial and marine space. I would assume the environment minister would have an interest.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nudgee, the minister's information about his portfolio indicates that the Chief Scientist also provides advice to another minister on other matters which are not in this portfolio. In that respect, the question is not in order for this session but would have been for the Minister for Energy.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would also point out that there is a difference between an interest and a direct line of report around a panel, and the panel does sit with the Treasurer.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps you can ask another question, member for Nudgee.

Ms LINARD: Noted: climate change is not of relevance to the environment minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nudgee, that is not necessary. That is a statement, not a question, and that is not what I ruled.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I take offence at that statement, and I would ask that the member withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear a personal reflection on you, Minister.

Mr POWELL: It was very much personally directed, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you have taken personal offence—

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I do not believe there was any personal reference to the minister.

Ms LINARD: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I might clear all of this up because we are losing time—

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order.

Ms LINARD: I was not reflecting on your ruling. I was absolutely reflecting on the minister, so he has a right to take personal offence. Of course, in keeping with the standing orders, I will withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you still want to take a point of order, member for Moggill?

Dr ROWAN: No, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, with reference to the member for Maiwar's question earlier about vegetation monitoring, can you please confirm that your department delivers the vegetation clearing Early Detection System and what trends it is showing in the last six months?

Ms O'Callaghan: This is a question that I will seek some advice from my team on to make sure we give you an accurate statement.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, your SDS indicates that there appears to have been a 10 per cent reduction in the number of staff in the innovation service area. Can you please explain what this workforce reduction represents or where it has come from?

Ms O'Callaghan: Apologies, I was speaking to my deputy director-general at the start of that question. Could I ask you to repeat that question?

Ms LINARD: Director-General, your SDS indicates that there has been a 10 per cent reduction in the number of staff in the innovation service area. Can you please explain why this workforce reduction has occurred?

Ms O'Callaghan: The 10 FTEs in the innovation team were allocated on a temporary basis through previous departmental workforce management strategies to support delivery of the innovation work program. As the FTEs were known to be temporary, the division managed staff employment under the previous cap, resulting in no impacts to permanent staff employment when the 10 FTEs ended at 30 June 2025.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, can you please outline any new or additional funding in the 2025-26 budget for the innovation service area when compared to the 2024-25 financial year?

Ms O'Callaghan: My understanding—and I know the team are seeking some information at the moment—is that in 2025-26 the Queensland government will invest \$100.2 million on the innovation service area, including support for new activities and new partnership and milestone payments under

programs and activities that help innovators and innovative businesses grow their ideas, businesses and highly skilled workforces here in Queensland. As part of that investment there is some new funding through the South East Queensland City Deal.

Ms LINARD: Just to confirm—and I am aware of the city deal: is there any new or additional, not new or changed priorities or actions, funding that was provided to the agency from consolidated revenue or is this just reprioritised funding from last budget?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, is that not the same question?

Ms LINARD: No, she did not answer that question. It is same question, but it was not answered.

Ms O'Callaghan: If I have your definition of new correct, the South East Queensland City Deal money is new but any further funding to the innovation department area will be considered as part of the minister's request to us to develop the science and innovation strategy and policy for the state.

Ms LINARD: You did. In 2024, close to \$15 million over three years was approved from the Research Infrastructure Co-investment Fund to eight research facilities for projects. Can you please advise whether the \$5 million allocated in this year's budget to the Research Infrastructure Co-investment Fund is new and additional to this previous commitment?

Ms O'Callaghan: I am seeking that information so I can provide that to you. I think the funds that you are referring to are within existing budgets.

Ms LINARD: My understanding though was that that \$15 million was fully committed to projects already. The way the papers seem to represent it—and maybe this is my interpretation so I appreciate you clarify it—is that it looks as though \$5 million has been allocated so tertiary institutes or research institutes could apply for it, but there is actually no available funding or grant round that will be open because it is all committed; is that the case?

Ms O'Callaghan: That is the position at the moment.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, can you please outline, much like you did for innovation, any new or additional funding in the 2025-26 budget for the science service area when compared to the 2024-25 financial year—not reprioritised programs, but any new or additional funding?

Ms O'Callaghan: As we can see in the science service area, we have \$135 million allocated. In terms of new funding for the science budget, at the moment no additional new funding has been allocated pending the development of the science and innovation strategy that the minister has asked us to develop, and further budget consideration will be made in light of that.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, I note in question on notice No. 14 that all investments listed in that question are the former Labor government's funding and policy commitments. Can you please explain what the department meant or indeed did you ever advise the minister that there had been a failure to manage science policy given this quote '... to shape and better manage science policy going forward' engagement is occurring with stakeholders?

Ms O'Callaghan: Just to clarify that quote; where was it stated?

Ms LINARD: That was in question on notice No. 14. I know your department will have it because they will be well prepared.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can have a look at it, Director-General.

Ms O'Callaghan: I might take a moment to look at the question, Mr Deputy Speaker. Member, what was the question again?

Ms LINARD: There is a comment that the government is currently engaging with key stakeholders 'to shape and better manage science policy going forward'. I ask: did you ever advise the minister that there has been a failure to manage science policy in Queensland?

Mr POWELL: I am actually thinking circumspectly that the shadow minister is asking for a government policy decision.

Ms LINARD: No, I am asking the director-general for advice.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question was about advice provided and whether there was advice provided.

Mr POWELL: The advice I have given to the director-general is to help me—

Ms LINARD: I am asking about what the director-general gave to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is the question.

Mr POWELL: The reference in terms of consulting with stakeholders is something that I have directed the department to do.

Ms LINARD: I am asking if the director-general or the department ever provided that advice, with respect, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, the question is to the director-general. It has been asked.

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the member for Nudgee has a bit of form on presenting documents and then—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do not make a statement. What is your point of order?

Mr MOLHOEK: She has referred the director-general to question on notice No. 14. I think as a courtesy she should be allowed to least have the time to find the quote. I am trying to find the quote that was allegedly made by the minister and it is not there.

Ms LINARD: Look in the second paragraph.

Mr MOLHOEK: I cannot see it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is the second paragraph apparently. It is for the director-general to find that quote and to answer the question in a relevant way.

Ms O'Callaghan: I have found the quote, thank you very much, member. I acknowledge that the minister has provided this answer to the question on notice, but in terms of advice from our department, the advice is aligned to ensuring that the initiatives, projects and programs that we are putting forward are connecting with the current government policy.

Ms LINARD: Just to clarify: am I to take away from your answer that that would be an edit that might have been made in the minister's office rather than the answer that the department provided in that regard or was that the advice the director-general and the department provided?

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nudgee, could you cease, please. I have two points of order, I believe. Member for Southport?

Mr MOLHOEK: The shadow minister is being argumentative. I think she is crossing the line in terms of asking a question. It is not for her to be asking the director-general for an opinion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Moggill?

Dr ROWAN: My point of order is that there seems to be a supposition and characterisation in relation to the responses provided. I would submit that some guidance needs to be provided with respect to that.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I believe the member is asking questions in relation to advice that has been provided. I do not believe that is seeking an opinion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That was not the question asked in the last question. I am advised that the question could be considered argumentative and potentially hypothetical in terms of asking whether there were edits to a question on notice. Member, could you ask a factual-based question without inserting an argument before the question, please?

Ms LINARD: Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity. Director-General, is that the advice the department provided in response to question on notice 14?

Ms O'Callaghan: Member, I acknowledge the sentence that you are referring to, but if I could give an example of maybe where that statement came from—for example, the direction from the minister is just to ensure the current programs, as I mentioned, are in line with current government policy or opportunities where we can improve. Commercialisation of research, for example, is an area where we feel there could be further opportunities. I cannot speak on behalf of the minister. Maybe as a result of some advice from me around that, that could be where the premise of that statement comes from.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to government members' questions.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, I would like to turn to an important area of Queensland's future—defence. Can you outline how the Crisafulli government will be using science and innovation to back in Queensland's growing defence industry?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for Southport, because he gives me an opportunity to announce an important commitment the Crisafulli government is making. As you mentioned, member, Australia's defence spending is accelerating to strengthen defence capabilities to address emerging security challenges right across our Indo-Pacific region. It is critical that Queensland positions itself at the forefront of this national effort, because we are strategically located. We do have a strong defence industry base. We are uniquely positioned to support Australia's defence priorities and regional security.

The increasing presence of the Australian Defence Force in North and Far North Queensland in response to the Defence Strategic Review presents opportunities for that state's defence industry in our regions. That means more opportunities for industry in Townsville, Cairns and even as far south as the Darling Downs and Ipswich. You would have heard, I suspect, from the Deputy Premier earlier in the week that the Crisafulli government is committed to growing and attracting investment for our state's defence industry sector. I understand that the Deputy Premier has just returned from Darwin, where he saw the conclusion of Exercise Talisman Sabre.

Just as importantly, we need to be leading the upstream pre-commercialisation research to ensure we have a full-service, vertically integrated defence industry that manufactures ideas as well as products. That is why I am pleased to announce that the Crisafulli government will be committing \$2 million over the next four years to continue to support the work of the Queensland Defence Science Alliance.

I will give just a couple of key facts about it. The QDSA, the Queensland Defence Science Alliance, is a collaborative partnership between the Australian and Queensland governments, local research institutions and industry. The key objective of the alliance is to attract new investment that helps defence related research in Queensland translate into outcomes that meet the needs of the Australian Defence Force and help grow the state's research and industry capability.

The alliance also supports a broad range of activities aligned with its three core pillars of connection, communication and collaboration. Over the past year it has conducted more than 80 activities and engagements, demonstrating its ongoing dedication to fostering meaningful partnerships and initiatives. The alliance has four partner universities in Griffith University, James Cook University, the University of Queensland and Charles Darwin University.

It is an important investment in Queensland's future—one that seamlessly blends the power of science and innovation with the state development and manufacturing work being led by my colleagues the Deputy Premier and Minister Last. Queensland is uniquely positioned, as I said, both geographically and economically, to seize on this initiative. The Crisafulli government will keep delivering in this space for Queensland.

Mr LEE: Minister, could you outline how the Crisafulli government will support our science and innovation sectors?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his question. I know that through his work in the healthcare sector, including in the Defence Force, might I add, he understands how important STEM is to our everyday lives. I keep telling my department that, whilst I have a science degree, I am not going to pretend to be a scientist. I may not be as proficient in coastal geomorphology as I once was. Although our outstanding mapping professionals in the science division may be just a touch more skilled than I am, they love a visit from me because I get right into the weeds with them when I am there. I can say that the Crisafulli government is unashamedly supporting science and innovation however we can.

Whilst there are existing science and innovation strategies in place—and this may relate back to some of the questioning from the member for Nudgee—Queensland does need a better approach. That is why, with the appointment of our new deputy director-general for innovation, the Crisafulli government is going out and consulting with universities, with researchers, with schools and with the private sector to establish how we can take science and innovation in Queensland to the next level.

In the meantime, we are not wasting a moment getting on with the important grassroots work that matters. In 2025-26, \$1.821 million has been allocated for strategic international science partnerships, drawing on international and local expertise to deliver results for Queensland. There is \$25.3 million in science-based innovation programs in the quantum and advanced technology space, as I mentioned in my opening statement. There is continuing investment in the Research Infrastructure Co-investment Fund of \$5 million in this financial year to progress projects in priority areas including critical minerals, quantum, biomedical science and energy. As I said, the Crisafulli government will continue to back science and innovation in this great state of Queensland.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, how is the Crisafulli government working with local schools and young people to boost science and innovation engagement?

Mr POWELL: I am glad the member for Redcliffe asked me this question because it was back in April, wasn't it, that we visited the wonderful Clontarf Beach State High School? We caught up with Principal Cath Pfingst and some of her wonderful teaching staff but, excitingly, some of her year 12 students in their marine science program. I do not know about you, member, but I was absolutely amazed at how engaged those students were in telling us about the work they are doing in their aquaponics labs. They even explained how they do scuba diving as part of their school curriculum. I love the fact that Clontarf, in particular, is embracing marine science. It is a natural fit.

I have also been to the Whitfield State School with the member for Barron River. Up there it was a case of robotics and coding and young kids using a session to code little mobile robots to follow a maze that was printed on the ground. The skill blew me away. I wish I had the ability to do something like that. They have certainly grabbed it with both hands.

I have also mentioned already that, whilst we build the new wildlife hospital in partnership with the City of Moreton Bay at Dakabin, there will be a citizen science component and an opportunity to educate budding young zoologists and veterinarians as they see animal rescue firsthand. You and I both know the importance of continuing to work with John-Paul Langbroek, the Minister for Education, to ensure STEM is front and centre of our education system.

Importantly, back in March we announced our 2025 recipients of the Engaging Science Grants program. I want to mention a couple of those recipients, if I may. The amount of \$17,000 was provided to St Patrick's College in Townsville to empower and engage North Queensland girls aged between 10 and 15 in STEM through a free one-day conference involving hands-on activities that encourage students to envision their futures in STEM fields. The event is designed to inspire the next generation of female leaders by offering a full day of interactive learning and empowerment. The day will include a STEM themed keynote session and two STEM related workshops facilitated by professionals working in various STEM disciplines, fostering real-world connections.

We also provided \$20,000 for three rotating workshops at James Cook University's Townsville campus which will help equip students with foundational skills essential for engaging in three citizen science initiatives they will apply to a field trip to Orpheus Island, of all places. Additionally, participants will participate in an informal panel with First Nations marine professionals to learn about careers in marine science. There is also \$19,200 to engage under-represented local school groups with STEM academic scientists and community groups through a series of activities held at Griffith University's Logan campus. Students will engage with equipment, resources and expertise not available at schools by participating in events including hands-on STEM workshops, in-class presentations and lab visits, which will enable students to grow in a range of STEM skills and competencies. The Crisafulli government will continue to back our primary and secondary school science students. They are the future of our state and they will contribute to our ongoing economic success.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, as you know, I am a specialist physician and I am very passionate about public health initiatives—

Mr POWELL: I am glad you reminded me.

Dr ROWAN:—and the importance of disease prevention. Minister, could you outline how the Crisafulli state government is supporting our vaccine development sector?

Mr POWELL: I am sorry, I should not have been so glib at your continued interest in this focused area. You know firsthand the importance of the power of vaccines in keeping Queensland healthy. From an industry perspective, the benefits this important area of research and development provide are immense. Queensland has proven over many years that we stand at the forefront of that.

I recently had the privilege of attending the UQ vaccination hub, which has undertaken some incredible, groundbreaking research into molecular clamp technology. On that note, I would like to use this as an opportunity to update the committee on an important development in this sector.

Many of you would have heard of a company called Sanofi. It has a base here in Queensland. They have agreed to acquire Vicebio, a biopharmaceutical company formed to develop that UQ molecular clamp technology, to produce vaccines against life-threatening respiratory viruses. I understand that purchase came with a total up-front payment of US \$1.15 billion. I previously met with Sanofi and personally reiterated the Crisafulli government's wholehearted support for their ongoing medical research. My understanding is that UQ will continue to use the technology for pandemic preparedness, research and collaboration with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

They also advise that the deal is the largest involving a company commercialising intellectual property from an Australian university in the history of Australia. The acquisition will accelerate the technology through the final stages of translation into vaccines to address global health challenges.

This is one example of the great things that can come from the Queensland government working with university partnerships. As the director-general mentioned earlier, it is a particular focus of mine. I want to see us assist our researchers and innovators to translate their learnings and findings into commercialisation.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, was that at the UQ Institute for Molecular Bioscience?

Mr POWELL: Correct.

Dr ROWAN: It is a great translational institute.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to non-government questions and the member for Nudgee.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, given the extensive science with respect to the long-term impacts of PFAS in the environment, is Queensland still leading work to establish a nationally harmonised approach to addressing it?

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst science might be feeding into the work around PFAS, the policy work the member is referring to actually sits within the environment part of the portfolio and probably would have been better put in the last session.

Ms LINARD: Deputy Speaker, our Queensland scientists have published major work in this area, particularly with regard to bioaccumulation in freshwater turtles. They are some of the leading scientists on PFAS, and that is why I am asking the question in this session so it was not ruled out in the environment session.

Mr POWELL: I am not disputing that scientific aspect, but the question asked for a broader interpretation of PFAS policy development across Australia. If the member wants to focus on the scientific work that some of our scientists have done rather than policy frameworks I am happy for that to occur, but the other questions potentially should have been—

Ms LINARD: Deputy Speaker, Queensland was leading the work because the scientists are leading scientists—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, it is not an opportunity to make a speech.

Ms LINARD: I am merely responding to what the minister was seeking clarification around.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was accepting the minister's clarification on portfolio areas and responsibilities. Member, would you like to ask your question in relation to PFAS and the work undertaken by Queensland scientists which sits within the science portfolio. Could you ask your question again, please?

Ms LINARD: Do you want me to ask it again?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do, and I will give advice to the director-general.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, given the extensive science with respect to the long-term impacts of PFAS in the environment, is Queensland still leading work nationally because of the leading nature of our science to harmonise an approach to addressing the impacts of it in our environment?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, I heard the advice provided by the minister in relation to that being part of the environment portfolio more broadly. I will allow you to answer the question as you see fit as it relates to the science and technology aspect of the minister's portfolio.

Ms LINARD: I can narrow my question further if it is still not okay.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will allow the director-general to provide a response in respect of the science and technology aspect of the minister's portfolio.

Ms O'Callaghan: I will not comment on any policy decisions around harmonisation or engaging with the federal government, but I can talk generally about the work we are doing on PFAS. As you have noted, member, it certainly is a global challenge and Queensland has been doing some great work in taking action. We acknowledge that Queensland was the first state in Australia to phase out PFAS in firefighting foams.

In terms of the work we are conducting, we do co-chair the Queensland government's PFAS Interdepartmental Committee to coordinate efforts and manage PFAS contamination in Queensland. We do continue to work collaboratively with other agencies as well as other levels of government to manage contamination risks and protect communities.

I can talk generally about PFAS in compost. We know that composting is a significant industry in Queensland. It turns over a million tonnes of organic waste into useful products, keeping it out of landfill. We kept our promise to peer review the department's advice about PFAS limits, and that has been completed as a result of the government's election commitment.

We do have a role in regulated waste. We are working through with the department how we make it easier to recycle waste and reduce costs to businesses, increasing the regulated waste threshold for PFAS so materials with very low levels do not need special disposal. In summary, we are working with different levels of government. We are working with federal agencies. If there is anything more specific I can provide, I am more than happy to do that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, you have a couple more yet for the science and innovation portfolio. Member for South Brisbane.

Dr O'SHEA: My question is for the director-general. When will updated koala habitat suitability mapping in the northern part of the South-East Queensland bioregion be released?

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I think we have strayed back into questions about the environment.

Mr POWELL: I am happy to accept that the mapping sits within the science portfolio and allow the director-general to answer the question.

Ms O'Callaghan: In terms of the 2023 updated mapping of koala habitat in the South-East Queensland regional planning area, I can note that future updates to koala habitat maps are being considered in light of the review of the koala conservation strategy. That is due before the end of the year.

Ms LINARD: Director-General, what does the emerging research work by our Queensland scientists on PFAS indicate about the risks to Queenslanders posed by this contaminant?

Ms O'Callaghan: Are you referring to a specific document or some advice that we have recently put out?

Ms LINARD: I am just referring to the expertise of the scientists in the department about the key risks of PFAS to the health of Queenslanders.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I re-emphasise that I think this does relate to the environment portfolio area. However, I will let you make a determination on that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nudgee, the point of order has been raised about it being an environment portfolio matter. I have no way of addressing this other than to ask the minister. Is it in the portfolio of environment or innovation and science?

Mr POWELL: I am happy to accept that there is clearly a role that science plays in it. The member would be aware that a lot of scientific studies have demonstrated that it is not great, as we have seen from PFAS in firefighting foam. We all appreciate and understand that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your clarification, Minister.

Ms O'Callaghan: I can advise that our scientists work very closely with the regulator arm. They work with a number of different agencies. If your question is referring to human health in particular, the impact of PFAS on human health is a matter for Queensland Health, but whenever we are called on for support and advice we certainly provide that.

Ms LINARD: I absolutely appreciate that. Given I am a former environment minister and I was given that advice by scientists in the department about impacts on humans as well as animals and others, can you please advise what the scientists say about the impacts on humans—other than just firefighting foam?

Ms O'Callaghan: It is really clear that PFAS as a forever chemical has certain impacts on human health. I think that is widely published. Our scientists know that. If there are specific areas that they are asked for advice on, we certainly do that. It is pretty much all out there in terms of that advice. Whenever they are called upon, we are able to provide that advice.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The director-general has answered your question. Do you have a further question?

Ms LINARD: No.

Ms BOLTON: Director-General, within the budget there was \$100 million for stimulating Queensland innovation. I am trying to get a better understanding of how you collaborate with departments from the aspect of industry challenges around workforce. For example, who identifies the training and education that is needed? Are there any partnerships regarding the infrastructure needed for that training and education—for example, in advanced manufacturing?

Ms O'Callaghan: Innovation is a driver of productivity, prosperity and wellbeing in the state and we certainly take that seriously. We are delivering a number of different programs through the initiatives and partnerships that we have. As the minister noted earlier, we have also been tasked with developing a science and innovation policy that our programs can align to. Ongoing investments in our partnerships that connect customers with Queensland innovations that tackle the big challenges facing the state are also key. We know that workforce is an area that has been tabled.

In terms of specifics around advanced manufacturing, we certainly look at opportunities for smaller businesses in this space to connect into our programs, and we can connect them to further put them on a global stage. We also look at ways we can drive different initiatives and economic outcomes—for example, for females and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders where we have some really specific initiatives trying to solve some real-world problems. We are always evaluating our existing programs and initiatives and considering those best practice approaches. We certainly would be cognisant of any workforce shortages, but our role is to connect businesses with further entrepreneurs and capital and even help put them on the global stage.

Ms BOLTON: To clarify, you would have no involvement in funding going into infrastructure to provide that training and education for the workforce?

Ms O'Callaghan: Unless I am corrected, we do not fund specific infrastructure for workforce challenges, but we certainly support infrastructure that would drive innovation, such as innovation precincts.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you.

Mr J KELLY: Deputy Speaker, a document was tabled earlier to authenticate a question. It was missing several pages so I now table a full document for the benefit of the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I appreciate that.

Mr POWELL: Was that pertaining to the reef? Was that in this session or a previous session?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It was for a previous session. That has been tabled by the member for Greenslopes. Thank you.

Dr O'SHEA: Director-General, how many koala habitat map amendment requests have been received since 1 November 2024? How many were approved? Can you please outline the nature of these requests?

Ms O'Callaghan: To ensure we are providing a fulsome response, I am going to seek, through the minister, some time to clarify and make sure we get you that detail.

Mr POWELL: We will try to get that back to you before the close of this session.

Dr O'SHEA: Director-General, how many exceedances of standards have been identified by air-monitoring stations since 1 November 2024? What did those exceedances relate to?

Mr POWELL: If I may, Mr Deputy Speaker, we are happy to get the information, but that is a very technical question and may take some time to collect. We will endeavour to get that back to you before the end of the science and innovation session. If not, we will get it before the end of this evening's proceedings.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I assume that would be satisfactory for the questioner.

Dr O'SHEA: Thank you.

Mr POWELL: Can you repeat it so we are clear on what we are getting?

Dr O'SHEA: How many exceedances of standards have been identified by air-monitoring stations since 1 November 2024? What did those exceedances relate to?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. We have a record of it too.

Ms O'Callaghan: I have a broad statement on those exceedances, but we need to get you the direct number. I do have the answer to an earlier question on koala mapping. Since the koala habitat area mapping was introduced in 2020, we have received a total of 149 requests that have been submitted by landholders to make, amend or revoke a koala habitat area determination on their land.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am going to move to government member questions.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, I would love to talk about making sure we are boosting science and innovation in all corners of the state. Can you advise how the Crisafulli government is doing that?

Mr POWELL: I know one particular area of the state that the member is particularly passionate about is his own electorate of Southport, and sitting in Southport electorate is the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct, somewhere I recently visited. It provides a really a huge opportunity—200 hectares, an innovation hub that already employs 16,000 people, supported by Griffith University and the Gold Coast University Hospital. It has the ongoing support of both the Crisafulli government and the federal government, I know, in trying to take that to the next level. I know it is something he is particularly passionate about and has some ideas about how we can use it. I look forward to working with the member on how we can deliver some of that.

To speak more broadly about all parts of the state, as I mentioned earlier, we continue the work in the Regional University Industry Collaboration Program with \$1.5 million in this financial year to support small to medium enterprises in their partnerships with regional universities. We mentioned earlier the Research Infrastructure Co-investment Fund—\$5 million in this financial year to support those eight leading Queensland research facilities and priority areas such as critical minerals, quantum, biomedical and energy. That \$5 million leverages \$76 million from the Australian government.

Heading up north, we are also backing the Smart Precinct NQ in Townsville where I recently attended the Circular Futures NQ summit with the member for Townsville. While I was there, I also popped out to the James Cook University Cyclone Testing Station with the members for Townsville, Thuringowa and Mundingburra—a great initiative and one that I look forward to working with in the future.

Going even further north again, we also supported this year's Tropical Innovation Festival in Cairns. I travelled in June to take part in opening that with the member for Mulgrave and the member for Barron River and also getting some pictures from some really incredibly innovative entrepreneurs in Far North Queensland. This concept that everything sits here in South-East Queensland is just wrong. There are great ideas happening all around the state.

I am also really excited that we are also backing First Nations entrepreneurship. The First Nations Innovation Acceleration Program is a new partnership with First Australians Capital and a national first at providing direct investment into First Nations founded businesses. I look forward to seeing what that new program delivers in the coming years.

It is all part of, as I said, the Crisafulli government delivering for all of Queensland, and it makes no difference whether it is environment, tourism, science or innovation.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, how is the Crisafulli government using innovation to deliver outcomes in sport?

Mr POWELL: The member for Redcliffe has a few passions, and I know sport is one of them. Is it every week that we get the good old Phins Up in the lead-up to the Dolphins' game? As another Dolphins fan, gee, I hope next year is a better season than this year, but they are showing some promising signs, aren't they? I am really excited to share with the member the huge role innovation plays in sport. I want to acknowledge the Australian Sports Technologies Network's *Sports Innovation Report 2025*, which estimates that the sport tech sector generates annual revenue of around \$5.65 billion and employs more than 18,000 people. Having a daughter who is just about to finish her clinical exercise physiology degree, I know that the growth in sports science and sports research is just incredible. More than 20 per cent of Australia's sport tech companies are now based in Queensland. We as a government want to grow that even more.

One particular thing I want to talk about—and I acknowledge it started under the previous government, but we are Team Queensland, so if it is good for the state, we are backing it—is the innovative three-year partnership with the NRL launched earlier this year. As part of Magic Round, we provide \$250,000 per year to support innovation in sport. In particular, it leads to a 10-week tech sprint with eight businesses selected to tailor innovative products to the NRL's needs. Innovations have included micro wearable sensors, including in your jocks, 3D scanning and immersive technology to boost fan engagement, athlete performance and wellness.

At Magic Round, I had the opportunity to meet some of this year's successful innovators. There was one—Imagine Realities—which actually gives fans the chance to 'become' NRL players and learn how to tackle and feel what it is like to be tackled. It is quite an immersive experience and quite fun.

Then there is another Queensland great, Crowd Canvas, which is a fan platform which allows attendees to be part of an interactive light show, showcasing future entertainment opportunities. They have been doing this with some of the AFL teams down south. Depending on your team's colours—Dolphins' red and white—by scanning a code, you can literally be part of what is going on in the stadium and flashing up various colours at various times in time with music and the like. I know there is so much more that we can do in this space. There are plenty of cutting-edge ideas emerging in the world of sport, and we look forward to continuing that work across the government, particularly in partnership with my good friend, the Minister for Sport.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, can you outline how the Crisafulli government has supported key innovation precincts through the SEQ Innovation Economy Fund, part of the SEQ City Deal?

Mr POWELL: On 28 March this year, the Australian and Queensland governments announced a joint commitment of over \$94 million in funding to eight successful recipients under the Innovation Economy Fund. I might list them, if I may, member. Southern RNA at Brisbane Technology Park was awarded almost \$3 million to establish advanced infrastructure and capabilities for the local development of mRNA lipid nanoparticles, supporting clinical trials and accelerating innovations in treatments for infectious diseases and cancer.

The AATLIS Innovation Precinct Industry Biotechnology Centre in Toowoomba will receive \$25 million for an integrated biotechnological facility to support the rapid design, building and testing of new solutions for the agriculture sector—again, our department supporting other departments and, in this case, Minister Perrett's aim to really grow our agricultural production.

The Translational Research Institute's Supercharge Project will receive almost \$7 million to enhance the new translational manufacturing facility at Boggo Road Innovation Precinct with advanced infrastructure, equipment and expert support to help emerging medtech and biotech companies overcome challenges, drive innovation and accelerate lifesaving healthcare advancements.

UQ will receive nearly \$22 million for the Queensland Animal Science Innovation Hub in Gatton to enable the development and commercialisation of innovations in farming and biosecurity.

Therapeutic Innovation Australia will receive \$3 million for Australia's first bio production hub at Boggo Road Innovation Precinct, designed to accelerate the production of biologics, vaccines and mRNA therapeutics for early-stage clinical trials, again something I know you would have a lot of interest in, given your health profession, member.

The Future Skills Lab at the University of the Sunshine Coast Innovation Centre will receive almost \$3 million for five specialist innovation labs, delivered in partnership with industry and equipped with the latest tools and resources to accelerate the design, prototyping and testing of cutting-edge digital innovations.

Griffith University's Health and Advanced Technology Research and Innovation Centre at the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct, which I mentioned to the member for Southport before, will receive \$25 million to build on the region's leadership in biomedicine, biotechnology and additive manufacturing, again aligning with the Deputy Premier's specific focus in state development.

The Urban Utilities' Luggage Point Innovation Precinct Expansion has been awarded over \$7.5 million to create new spaces for pilot projects, sampling and research, and innovation enabling infrastructure to drive development and commercialisation of innovative water-related products and technologies.

Again, we are working with the Australian government to deliver innovative solutions for South-East Queensland through the City Deal.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we did give a commitment to get a couple of answers back before this session closes. I have one ready to provide now if you would like.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I think that would be a good idea. Go ahead.

Mr POWELL: The director-general was asked regarding vegetation clearing, an early detection system, and has there been any trends for the last six months. The department provides the science support for the early detection system. Satellite imagery is used to detect change in vegetation cover in regulated vegetation across the state. That change detection data is then provided to the Department of NRM—NRMMRRD—I can never remember all of that acronym, but take my word for it—for further analysis and assessment enabling the department to undertake early and proactive liaison with landholders in relation to clearing events. It is recommended that the member direct their question to the minister responsible for the Vegetation Management Act next week.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The final question for the day will be from the member for Redcliffe.

Ms DOOLEY: As a proud founder of a private nursing service, it gives me great pleasure to ask this question: Minister, what is the Crisafulli government doing to support female founders in Queensland?

Mr POWELL: Female founders represent the fastest growing category of entrepreneurship worldwide. They drive job growth and economic prosperity, and we are backing them in the Crisafulli government in this state. According to *The state of Australian startup funding 2023* report, 75 per cent of women founders believe their gender has impacted their ability to raise capital, compared to just nine per cent of male founders. Gender should never be a barrier. That is why the Crisafulli government will continue to support innovative women all over Queensland.

Since 28 October 2024, five grants to the value of \$200,000 each have been provided under the Female Founders Co-Investment Fund including—I am conscious of time, I will just list them—Alphalitica Pty Ltd, Beyond the Clinic Pty Ltd, The Laundry Lady Pty Ltd, East Forged Pty Ltd and Eclipse Ingredients Pty Ltd. In this budget we will invest another \$3 million so I cannot wait to see that program going from strength to strength.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Members, the session for the examination of the science and innovation estimates has expired. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and resume at 5:15 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 5.00 pm to 5.15 pm.



Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will resume the hearing. Welcome back, Minister and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of tourism open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement not exceeding five minutes, please?

Mr POWELL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I welcome back the committee and welcome the member for Cairns. I would like to begin by acknowledging Queensland's tourism industry. Their passion for showing their part of Queensland to the world is infectious. Tourism is not something that simply just happens when a plane touches down in Brisbane, the Gold Coast or Cairns or a family queues up at a family park; it is the result of deep and methodical collaboration between government and the tourism industry, including our many family and small business operators. I want to say from the outset to the tourism industry: we see you and we hear you but, more importantly, we have a plan that you have helped design and, collectively, we will champion.

The Crisafulli government's first budget includes a record total investment of more than \$1 billion over four years for tourism. This investment lays the foundations for a fresh start for our state and includes \$446 million to kickstart the delivery of our visionary 20-year tourism plan Destination 2045. The sad fact is that under the previous shambolic Labor government one of the state's greatest economic powerhouses—the visitor economy—was being ignored, disregarded, disrespected and defunded. For 10 years, the operators, the regional tourism organisations and the aligned businesses could not get a return phone call from the then Labor ministers. They did not even recognise the work of their own tourism department, with funding for the people who deliver tourism policies and grant schemes and liaise with industry set to plummet from \$160 million to just \$7 million by 2028—a funding cut of 95 per cent. This is another sad indictment on the way the former government treated public servants and disrespected their contribution to Queensland. Furthermore, Tourism and Events Queensland was set to lose limited-life program funding. That is right: programs to attract visitors to Queensland were set to expire under the Labor government. They had no plan for tourism—just years out from the biggest event we will host in a generation, the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In stark contrast, the Crisafulli government is determined to deliver a fresh start for tourism. Destination 2045: Delivering Queensland's Tourism Future, is ready to roll. Some \$200 million over four years has been allocated towards aviation and product development. We will unlock new and better air routes through the new Connecting Queensland Fund, which will connect Queenslanders with the world and improve connectivity with the regions. Just yesterday, I joined aviation leaders and the member for Barron River in Cairns to attend the Centre for Aviation conference to discuss the incredible opportunities for the sector. We want to fly more tourists into Queensland and then make sure they have seamless connections to explore amazing landscapes the length and breadth of our state.

We will support the rollout of iconic new tourism attractions and infrastructure, and we are backing tourism operators through new programs, boosting industry capability and enhancing Queensland's tourism experiences. We have restored funding for Tourism and Events Queensland, providing \$146 million to ensure they are appropriately resourced to continue their vital work of positioning

Queensland as the 'home of the holiday' in order to deliver sustainable economic growth for our state. There is \$100 million that will establish our first ever dedicated Mega Events Attraction Fund. The fund will give us the ability to unashamedly pursue the very best events for Queensland to make us the events capital of Australia.

Regional tourism organisations—RTOs—are the beating heart of Queensland's tourism industry and are critical to driving visitation and growth in every corner of our state. That is why we are providing a funding uplift of \$3 million, bringing their funding to \$10 million for 2025-26 and beyond.

This budget is a defining moment for Queensland tourism—a new chapter for the state we proudly represent. A core pillar of Destination 2045 is growing Queensland's ecotourism offerings and making it easier for industry to establish sustainable ecotourism experiences across Queensland—experiences that inspire travellers from near and far to walk beside us hand in hand to protect our unique environment for generations to come. They want to travel with a light footprint and take home lasting lifelong memories in their hearts and minds. We will deliver 45 ecotourism projects by 2045, creating more amazing experiences in nature and showcasing our natural assets. Our newly combined portfolio sets us up to do this sustainably and responsibly, to position Queensland as a global ecotourism destination.

In the 2025-26 budget, significant ecotourism project commitments will see us start paving the way forward for our state's natural gems. There is \$19.7 million to deliver the next stage of the Wangetti Trail; \$15½ million to upgrade the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park; \$4.4 million to develop a Palm Island tourism development plan; and \$5 million to support the proposed Whitsundays skyway.

Destination 2045 is about jobs, connection and community. It is about building a stronger, smarter economy, creating places that bring people together and enriching the regions and environments that make Queensland so special.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will start questions from non-government members. I am looking to the member for Greenslopes.

Mr J KELLY: I defer to the member for Cairns.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I welcome the member for Cairns as a participating member.

Mr HEALY: It is great to be here. It is fantastic. I left Cairns this morning and it was beautiful. You have obviously all had a very exciting day, so I will add to that. Director-General, could you advise total funding to support First Nations tourism in the 2025-26 budget, please?

Ms O'Callaghan: I can say that we have just over a billion dollars committed to Destination 2045 across the forwards. Of that, \$446 million is new and there will be a number of programs within that that our First Nations tourism operators will be able to take advantage of. When we look at the different products and initiatives that the minister was talking about—if I can take some time to talk them through—for example, of that \$446 million, \$200 million will be committed to product development and aviation. I know within product development there will be First Nations specific experience tourism development programs and I know we will be working closely between the department and TEQ.

I also know from an events perspective that we have had \$100 million committed over the forwards. With regard to that, we know that the government is also very focused on supporting our First Nations experiences through events. In terms of the targets for events we know there is a commitment for half of that to be placed into regional areas.

If you want specific budget items or line items around this financial year's budget to specific First Nations initiatives, I will seek some information from the team. I know it will cut across ourselves and TEQ, but there will be a number of programs that our First Nations tourism operators will be able to take advantage of as well.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, did anyone from the Department of Education or Arts Queensland consult with you or your department on the negative impacts on cultural tourism following the Crisafulli government's cancellation of two First Nations cultural centres in both Cairns and Brisbane?

Ms O'Callaghan: With regard to the Department of Education liaising with my office, to the best of my knowledge that consultation did not occur, but that would be a matter for the Department of Education as well.

Mr HEALY: And Arts Queensland? Did anybody from Arts Queensland consult with your department regarding the negative impacts of this?

Mr POWELL: Can I seek some clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker? The decision the member is referring to was a government decision, not a departmental decision. I understand it was made by the government, not by directors-general. Perhaps he might like to direct the questions to me.

Mr HEALY: I am just asking what the process was. I understand that is the decision. I am just wondering if you were involved.

Mr POWELL: Given those projects sat within the portfolio of education and the arts, that is possibly a question better put to the relevant minister for that portfolio.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the shadow minister is asking specifically around advice that the director-general may have been involved in giving or receiving, so I would think that that is relevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: In relation to tourism?

Mr HEALY: Yes.

Mr J KELLY: Yes, that is the cornerstone of the question, the cultural centres, which I assume are tourism attractions of some sort.

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I cannot help but feel we are straying a bit from the portfolio. We are talking about tourism and we are straying into questions around Arts Queensland and cultural centres. I think the minister has already clarified the fact that it is really a question better directed to the Minister for Education and the Arts.

Mr HEALY: Mr Deputy Speaker, the question relates to other departments and their engagement with the tourism department. This is a product which would be a tourism product. All we are trying to ask is: what was the process and what was the engagement? There were two areas that were involved in it: education and Arts Queensland. All we want to know is: was the tourism sector in the government involved in this decision? Were they consulted, because it is a tourism product and the question relates to cultural tourism.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, you have already answered one part of the question in relation to education.

Ms O'Callaghan: I thank the member for the question and I will seek some advice from the team on that matter.

Mr HEALY: Thanks for that. Minister, did the Minister for Education and the Arts consult you on the negative impacts on cultural tourism following the Crisafulli government's cancellation of two First Nations cultural centres in Cairns and Brisbane?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: there is an imputation or inference contained within the question. I would submit to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that perhaps there may be an opportunity to rephrase the question, although given your previous ruling and the information that has been provided by the minister, perhaps again this line of questioning is best addressed to the Minister for Education, and there will be an opportunity to do that next week.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may, I will put to one side the imputation contained in the question.

Mr HEALY: I am happy to rephrase it.

Mr POWELL: The short answer is: that was a decision made by cabinet and I am not going to breach cabinet confidentiality with regard to those conversations.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Cairns, could you ask your questions without imputations, please?

Mr HEALY: Minister, how many times have you met with the First Nations tourism industry council?

Mr POWELL: Can I seek some clarification from the member that he is referring to a council that sits within the auspice of Tourism and Events Queensland?

Mr HEALY: That is correct, yes.

Mr POWELL: I have not met with that body in the capacity of meeting as a body, but I have met many of its members over the course of destination Queensland and through our consultation as part of the formation of Destination 2045.

Mr HEALY: Minister, Destination 2045 outlines: 'work with First Nations peoples to support culture and country and create access to valued tourism experiences'. First Nations people were expecting two cultural centres. The government has made it quite clear that they intend to work with our First Nations people but these did not proceed. Can you shine any light on that for us?

Mr POWELL: As that sits within the portfolio of the Minister for Education and the Arts that is actually a question that needs to be put to him. I am happy to refer to some of the initiatives that we are undertaking as part of Destination 2045 if that would assist the member, but the specific aspect of the question that I think he is seeking an answer to needs to be put to the relevant minister.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, can you advise where the funding for the First Nations DestinationQ event has been allocated in the 2025-26 financial year or across forward estimates?

Ms O'Callaghan: We will be seeking clarity on that budget line item considering it is very specific. I can attest that Destination 2045 is budgeted for in DestinationQ, but I will seek to get information on that line item.

Mr HEALY: That is great; we look forward to that. Director-General, has your department been instructed to remove all acknowledgements of country from official departmental documents, publications and correspondence, including email signatures?

Ms O'Callaghan: I can confirm that we have not been directed.

Mr J KELLY: Director-General, in the minister's opening statement he said that former Labor ministers were not returning phone calls to tourism industry leaders. I am wondering if the former minister to my left here, the member for Cairns, returned your phone calls when you made them in your former roles.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, that is not a question that is—

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order.

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—relevant to this portfolio or this budget.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I am referencing something that the minister raised in his opening statement. Surely I can ask questions in relation to matters that have been raised by the minister in his opening statements.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: my understanding is that the questions that are submitted need to relate to the financial allocations with respect to the budgetary processes under the minister's portfolio remit. With respect to the session today in relation to tourism, I would submit to you that those are the questions that should be asked of the minister. Although the opening statement is an opportunity for the minister to outline matters relating to his portfolio, we are wanting to talk about financial and budgetary matters in this particular session.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Moggill.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: by raising the behaviour of former ministers in this way, the minister is attempting to demonstrate a different approach to financial management and engagement with stakeholders, so I would say it is directly related to the appropriations bill that we are now discussing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I will seek some advice. Member for Greenslopes, the director-general and officers of the department are here to answer questions of a financial and technical nature in relation to the budget and the department. I would suggest that your question does not relate to that.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, could you please advise what consultation has been undertaken regarding projects in Springbrook National Park, in particular as part of the government's Destination 2045 plan?

Ms O'Callaghan: I can confirm that the Springbrook National Park project—sorry, member, are we speaking about something specific? Can I get you to clarify that question?

Mr HEALY: Yes. Could you advise what consultation has been undertaken regarding projects—so there could be a number of projects—in Springbrook National Park, in particular in relation to the government's Destination 2045 plan?

Ms O'Callaghan: Thank you, member. There are a number of different projects that are occurring through Springbrook National Park, and obviously Queensland Parks and Wildlife are overseeing the national park. I know that we are very proud to be supporting a range of different projects within that particular area through Destination 2045. I can also say that there were a number of representatives from that area who participated in our consultation forums and who provided submissions. We made sure there was no stone unturned when it came to listening to the community as well as the industry, so I would say that there was a large amount of consultation. I would also acknowledge that we have also consulted with the City of Gold Coast during that process.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, does your department have any conflict-of-interest management plans in place with government MPs around the Springbrook National Park?

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the member for Cairns is, by the nature of his question, impugning some sort of wrongdoing or some inappropriate behaviour. This is a project that has been talked about for decades—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr MOLHOEK: I think the member's question is inappropriate and suggests that the department has done something wrong. He should ask a question, not—

Mr J KELLY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order.

Mr MOLHOEK:—reflect on the character of the department or its decisions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay; thanks, member for Southport. Yes, member for Greenslopes?

Mr J KELLY: The question does not reference the department at all. It asks completely valid questions of a general nature around any government MP and their pecuniary interests in relation to Springbrook National Park, and I do not believe the point of order that was raised is based on standing orders; it is just a statement of inappropriateness and I do not think that can be supported.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. Member for Greenslopes, the question that was asked did not actually refer to a government MP but your point of order did. Member for Cairns, could you restate your question, please? I just want to make sure that it is relevant to this portfolio.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, are you aware of any government MPs who have a pecuniary interest in the Springbrook National Park?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns, that is a question in relation to national parks, but if the director-general is willing to answer—

Mr HEALY: Well, national parks are mentioned quite extensively in Destination 2045.

Mr POWELL: Just to be clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, we acknowledge that, whilst they sit under Environment, there are a number of ecotourism projects that we are developing in national parks. I am happy for the director-general to answer.

Ms O'Callaghan: As far as I am aware, I do not have any information of any government MP around the state declaring any conflict of interest on any national park we have consulted on.

Mr HEALY: Minister, have you at any stage discussed the plans for Springbrook National Park outlined in Destination 2045 with the member for Mermaid Beach, given it is a reported fact that the member has a pecuniary interest?

Mr POWELL: No, I have not. What I would point out is that the project we are working on in the Springbrook National Park as a department is a significant QPWS upgrade to the visitor entrance and car-parking arrangements in Springbrook National Park. I suspect from the wording of the member's questions that he might be talking about something else, but the answer, regardless, is no.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: One more, member for Cairns, and then we will go to government members.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, the Premier has indicated that he is in full support of beach clubs. Has your department been tasked with any work to enable beach clubs or bars as tourism offerings?

Ms O'Callaghan: I want to acknowledge that the Destination 2045 plan has a very strong focus on product development. There is \$200 million that has been allocated to product development across the forwards and I know new products to experience our natural assets are certainly a lot of the feedback that has been coming through those consultation sessions. We also know beach experiences are key drivers of visitors to Queensland. Certainly when it comes to specific advice, member, is your question in regard to specific advice sought from the Premier just in general?

Mr HEALY: What I was asking was has your department been tasked with any work to enable beach clubs or bars as tourism offerings?

Ms O'Callaghan: I thank the member for clarifying that. Specifically not on beach bars, but I would say supporting any new experience or product development through the grants and initiatives that we are providing could be considered.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to government members' questions. Member for Southport?

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, before we even get to Destination 2045, I think it is important to talk about the state government's own tourism capabilities. With reference to pages 8 and 20 in the SDS, can you outline how the Crisafulli government has invested in both the tourism division of DETSI and Tourism and Events Queensland compared to previous governments?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for the opportunity to outline this. I think it is important to set the scene for our further discussions in this session. It is no secret tourism accounts for one in 11 jobs in Queensland. If you head to Tropical North Queensland it is one in six. If you go to the Whitsundays it is one in three. That means when you back tourism funding you are helping Queenslanders put food on their own tables and live a better lifestyle.

Sadly, member for Southport, the member for Cairns did not agree. Instead, the member for Cairns and the now Leader of the Opposition hatched a secret plan to basically obliterate government support for the tourism division and Tourism and Events Queensland in the out years. Let me unpack that a little bit more. There was going to be a 95 per cent funding cut to the tourism division, from \$160 million in 2024-45—the year we have just finished—to just \$7.6 million in 2028-29. There was also an almost \$100 million funding cliff for Tourism and Events Queensland with no plan once limited-life funding ran out in 2027-28. They were going to go from \$146.6 million in 2024-25 to \$52.9 million in 2027-28. I am disappointed to hear the member for Cairns laughing at this. Labor's plan would have meant less international marketing, it would have meant fewer events being attracted to Queensland, it would have meant fewer tourists, thousands of businesses shutting down, not to mention hundreds of public servants losing their jobs.

The Crisafulli government unashamedly champions tourism in Queensland. That is why the first action of this budget, before we even turn to Destination 2045, as you said, member for Southport, was to restore funding and make it sustainable across the forwards for our critical tourism support agencies so that unlike Towards Tourism 2032, Destination 2045 will have the resources and the capability to actually be delivered.

Words are one thing, member for Southport, but actions are another. Whilst the former minister for tourism wants to try to reinvent his track record of incompetence as a legacy of delivery, what we know is clear: he was a tourism minister who wanted to basically tear the life out of the tourism division and Tourism and Events Queensland. He would have abandoned every single mum-and-dad tourism operator in our state; told them to fend for themselves right at the pivotal point as we lead up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. What an opportunity that would have been missed. Even though the former Miles government decided to cut and run from Queensland tourism, we have chosen to stand and deliver alongside them.

Mr HEALY: Deputy Speaker, I have a point of order. I take offence and I ask that the member withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Cairns has taken personal offence at some comment directed at the member for Cairns. I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr POWELL: I withdraw. But just to be clear, we have fixed Labor's 95 per cent funding cliff. We have delivered Destination 2045 because that is exactly what a fresh start for Queensland tourism is all about.

Mr LEE: Minister, you have been critical of the former Labor government's handling of the Wangetti Trail in Far North Queensland. Can you provide an update on the project, the challenges it has faced and how the Crisafulli government is overcoming those?

Mr POWELL: At the outset I want to acknowledge in particular the members for Barron River and Cook who have been relentless in providing me feedback on the Wangetti Trail and giving me assistance in determining how we move forward with delivering this transformative ecotourism product. Unfortunately it is yet another debacle left to us by the previous government. We are going about fixing it calmly and methodically. The previous government had a decade to deliver, but what have they actually given us? They have given us cost blowouts, project uncertainty and a first stage that really has left a lot to be desired. It has not really delivered on what was promised. I know the member for Barron River would love to interject at this point and say that locals have gone so far as to rename it 'Wrongetti', which is just a travesty.

Let me just go back a little bit. When it was first announced in 2018, the former government claimed the entire trail would be delivered for just \$36 million. By February 2021 that figure had jumped to \$41.4 million. By July 2023 it had blown out to \$47.1 million. Despite that, only eight kilometres of the

trail have actually been delivered at a cost of \$22½ million. This is a trail that is going to be 90 kilometres so delivering just eight kays for \$22½ million suggests there was no way they were going to deliver this for \$47.1 million. Nearly half the budget was blown on just eight per cent of the product.

In 2023 the Queensland Audit Office released its *Growing ecotourism in Queensland* report which found that in the 10 years prior, only three nature-based ecotourism products had been approved, with just two more in development. The report found that in the 10 years there was no statewide policy on ecotourism that clearly defined how the state's tourism and entities will work towards its vision. We are committed to seeing this project through and we are going to fix it. We have allocated an additional \$19.7 million over the next two years to deliver the next stage through to Wangetti itself. That will be a connection of about 25.2 kilometres from Ellis Beach to Wangetti. We are also going to deliver a section between Port Douglas and the Mowbray River. While we do both of those pieces of work we are going to the market to work with commercial operators on what really is the iconic section, the piece that will be the jewel in the crown, that section between Wangetti and Mowbray River. I assure you we will be leaving no stone unturned, to use the phrase used by the director-general, to ensure we deliver a Wangetti Trail that will be a world-class ecotourism asset that not only Far North Queensland can be proud of but also the entire state can be proud of.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, can you outline how Destination 2045 will deliver a lasting tourism legacy for Queenslanders, both leading up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond?

Mr POWELL: I sure can, member for Redcliffe. The 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games are Queensland's opportunity to shine on the world stage, are they not? We are going to have rowing in Rocky, archery in Maryborough, sailing in the Whitsundays and, as you and I both know, a new indoor event centre in Moreton Bay at Petrie, as well as a range of other events across South-East Queensland and the rest of Queensland itself. There is literally going to be no corner of Queensland unnoticed, which is why Destination 2045 is really about leveraging on that green and gold runway. I love my sport, I know you do too, but the Olympic and Paralympic Games are far more than just a sporting event. The real opportunities for this state are in two areas: transformative transport infrastructure and a tourism legacy that transcends not only the time the Olympics are on but also decades afterwards.

Destination 2045 is all about making sure we are positioned to grab that opportunity and take it to the next level. That is why we are investing an additional \$446 million over four years to support the plan. In particular, as the director-general mentioned, there is \$200 million that will go to both aviation and product development over the next four years. We have bumped up that black hole that Tourism and Events Queensland were going to fall in with \$146 million and we have put \$100 million to event attraction. Part of that will be about using our homegrown knowledge. We have some great events, and I am sure we will have an opportunity to talk about those a bit more.

As we develop our venues in the lead-up to the Olympics, I am working hand in glove with the Minister for Sport to make sure that we are attracting national and international sporting events to trial our venues, to get international teams used to coming to Queensland—and guess what? While they are here we are going to market the living daylights out of the place to ensure they keep coming back. When the world's spotlight is on this state, we want them to come for the sport and stay for the state.

Destination 2045 is built around six key pillars. Ecotourism: as we have spoken about already, this is about immersive sustainable nature experiences. Events: we want to be Australia's event capital. Experiences: we want to elevate some of our existing iconic experiences and we want to create new attractions. Connectivity: we want to bring tourists in from overseas and around Australia, but then we want to move them around the state as well. Brand: we want to have world-class marketing to grow visitation. Industry: it will not happen unless we back our tourism operators and, as I have said before, many of them are small and family businesses so we will be empowering them to modernise, to boost jobs and to strengthen the economy.

We are delivering the fresh start we promised—unlike Labor, that wanted Queensland to be embarrassed on the world stage. The Crisafulli government knows our state deserves to shine, so Destination 2045 is how we are going to deliver that future for Queensland's tourism industry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to non-government members' questions.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, this week Skyrail announced an \$85 million investment into upgrading their world-class tourist attraction in Cairns, which is terrific. Can you advise what financial support the government has given Skyrail in the form of funding, subsidies, in-kind support or waivers to any fees, charges or levies?

Ms O'Callaghan: As that matter is relative to Transport and Main Roads, it is a question best referred to them.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, on 11 February 2022 the former Labor government launched the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund, which I note is still being used by this government but just renamed, like a lot of strategies. It is a \$200 million partnership with the government and our four international airports. As of 31 March 2025, can you advise how much money was remaining in the AAIF of the original \$200 million that had not been committed?

Ms O'Callaghan: We have data to the end of the financial year. Would that be appropriate?

Mr HEALY: As I said, from 31 March this year, what was left in the kitty?

Mr POWELL: Just to clarify, I do not think the director-general is not trying to answer the question. By picking March, we operate on the funding year. We could give you the number from the start of this financial year as allocated in this budget. I know off of the top of my head that, with contractual arrangements outstanding and underspend still sitting in the AAIF—if I recall correctly, it is about \$45 million that is contractually acquitted and about \$9 million to \$10 million of unfunded so that comes to about \$55 million. As the member for Cairns would have heard me state yesterday when I spoke at the CAPA conference in Cairns, when you add that to the \$75 million that we have put aside for the Connecting Queensland fund it brings the funding for aviation to a minimum of \$130 million over the next four years. If I am wrong on that, member for Cairns, I will get the director-general to advise me.

Mr HEALY: I would be keen to know because, as I said, there was a \$200 million fund and a significant percentage of that, we understand, has already been allocated. Yesterday you announced that there was going to be a new \$75 million component and then you said you were going to be spending \$130 million. I am wondering where that extra money came from. Are you talking about existing money that you did not explain? Is that what you are saying?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is that a question to the minister?

Mr POWELL: I am happy to take the question, Deputy Speaker. As I said at the conference yesterday and as I just reiterated, with the components of this there is roughly \$55 million of AAIF remaining. Of that, roughly \$45 million is contractually set, so those are long-term arrangements set with airline and airport partners and that is locked in. There is about \$9 million to \$10 million sitting unfunded or unallocated out of AAIF. Those buckets of money are distinct from the \$75 million for the Connecting Queensland fund. We will ensure those contracts are adhered to and the unfunded or unallocated component of AAIF of roughly \$9 million to \$10 million—and I will get them to correct me if I misspoke—is put with the \$75 million, and that brought up the roughly \$130 million that I mentioned yesterday.

Mr HEALY: Minister, with the money that has been allocated already that you referred to, have there been any new agreements with any airlines since the Crisafulli government got in? Obviously prior to the Labor government trying to 'destroy' the tourism industry, has any money been allocated by the Crisafulli government to any aviation agreement?

Mr POWELL: The answer is yes. I will get the specific new contracts that we have entered into. Up until the 2025-26 budget, we were continuing to use the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund. I am not hiding the fact that that fund had bipartisan support, which was for a very good reason. Its purpose was to restore inbound visitation to our international airports post pandemic. It was about working with our international airports to ensure we could bounce back following the pandemic. The goal set through the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund was to get 100 per cent of patronage back to the 2019 level. We have continued that work. I am pleased to say that I think it was a Cathay Pacific flight into Brisbane earlier this year that saw a return to 2019 numbers here in the state of Queensland. Does that mean we have turned off the tap with the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund? Not at all. We know that many of those contracts were long term. They have continued to be paid. There is a small residual amount left over from the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund and we will continue to use it.

As I shared at the CAPA Airline Leader Summit yesterday, there are a couple of key things about our Connecting Queensland fund. One is that we will continue to explore strategic international links. The Premier has given me the commitment that before the end of this term I have to deliver a direct flight between India and Queensland. We are working very hard on that. I am hoping that the plane manufacturers who need to deliver the type of plane we need are equally working very hard on that so that I can deliver on the Premier's request. We are also working with the likes of Cairns, the Sunshine

Coast, the Gold Coast, Brisbane and the Whitsundays to ensure we can always find strategic routes. In some cases it may be bumping an existing route up from three to five days a week into hubs like Singapore, Japan or the Middle East. We will continue to look at those options.

The reason Connecting Queensland is a different fund is very specific. With Destination 2045, we heard loud and clear that bringing tourists into Queensland is one thing; moving tourists around Queensland is a completely different kettle of fish. That is something that we need to get serious about. The importance of the Connecting Queensland fund is that it will allow us to work with our domestic airline partners and all of our airports right across Queensland to ensure we improve connections. I might add, we are also looking at rail and road options.

Mr HEALY: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I asked a very specific question. This is a very broad response.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Cairns. It was about new funding agreements entered into post-2024, was it not?

Mr HEALY: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think that information may be coming. Minister, do you have the information?

Mr POWELL: I am happy to share with the member that, since the election of the Crisafulli LNP government, we have secured a direct flight to Doha, Qatar through a partnership with Virgin Australia. I was there the first day it left. We have secured a direct flight to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia with Malaysia Airlines. We have secured another Hong Kong flight with Cathay Pacific, as I said. In addition to that, Fiji Airways is now flying from Nadi to Cairns. There are four of them. May I give the director-general the opportunity to answer an earlier question?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sure. Which was one that, Director-General?

Ms O'Callaghan: It is to the member's earlier question around funds left in the aviation attraction fund. The minister was right, but we did get approval of the deferral last night, so instead of \$55 million we have a total of \$61.2 million remaining in the existing fund. Some of that is contracted and it is just a timing issue in terms of getting out because \$42 million of that is contracted under the AAIF to support international services through to 2028-29.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Director-General.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, earlier you spoke about connections and community. Regarding the 45 ecotourism projects that are yet to be identified, will communities be consulted alongside industry, which was mentioned in the response to question on notice No. 20?

Mr POWELL: The short answer is yes. We went to great lengths as part of preparing Destination 2045 to hear from as many people as possible. We held 16 workshops across the state. We held six deep dives. It was not restricted to operators or RTOs. We had members of the community, members of the conservation sector and people who are operating in transport and logistics businesses. We are open for business, but we are also open to ensuring we hear from everyone.

Ms BOLTON: Director-General, the response to question on notice No. 1 stated that Destination 2045 will be delivered in partnership with key institutions and organisations. Can you outline what partnerships with environmental organisations have already been developed?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Did you say with environmental organisations?

Ms BOLTON: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: OK. Director-General?

Ms O'Callaghan: I just want to touch on Destination 2045. We put a symbol of partnership out when we were developing it through the consultation. As you are aware, we had 16 workshops across the state, we did six deep dives, we had over 1,500 people attend and we had hundreds of submissions come through. I have to say that our conservation groups were highly involved in all of that. The minister and I made a real effort in the regions as well to meet and engage with conservation groups because they are critical in terms of our Destination 2045 priorities, especially around ecotourism.

We know ecotourism is a key priority for this government. We are now working through those initiatives. As the minister said, we have \$200 million for product development and aviation and \$100 million for events. We certainly have good relationships with our conservation groups and they are providing input into the design of our guidelines for grant programs and the implementation of those initiatives as well as our experienced development initiatives. They will play a key role in the

development. I will finish by saying the ecotourism policy was announced by the minister in line with the Destination 2045 strategy and our conservation groups were very important in providing their feedback to that as well.

Ms BOLTON: I have one quick final question because I want to leave time for the member for Maiwar. I realise this is crossing over into the other portfolio area. As you know, my concern with increased tourism is mitigating and managing the impact on areas that are currently struggling. Will the More Rangers, Better Neighbours policy have funding not only for the rangers but also for the things they need, like drains et cetera?

Mr POWELL: I do not know if you directed the question to anyone in particular. Are you happy for me to answer that question, member for Noosa?

Ms BOLTON: Absolutely.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you happy to take that, even though it is a national parks question as it relates to tourism?

Mr POWELL: Yes. I appreciate that ecotourism is a central pillar of Destination 2045 and some of that ecotourism will occur in our national parks. As part of Destination 2045, we listed a number of projects that have already commenced in our national parks, including the Lake Eacham day-use area up in the Atherton Tablelands. I hear what the member is saying, and I believe it is very important.

We are looking at how we allocate those 120 rangers. I will point out that 40 of those are dedicated fire rangers, so they have a specific purpose. The remaining 80 will be working through a process around where they need to go, where they are most needed. To be blunt, some of that will be in Western Queensland where we have large national parks with a very small presence of people on the ground and they will need some.

I also appreciate there are some very high-visitation national parks, particularly in the member's own electorate and in her backyard, and there is a need for investment in infrastructure. We have just completed some work in the Noosa National Park. We are always doing work on K'gari Fraser Island. If the member has a specific request, I am happy to hear from her as to where she would like us to consider putting more rangers.

Ms BOLTON: Can I pass to the member for Maiwar?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready? I acknowledge the member for Maiwar, who is a participating member of the committee, and give him the call.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am always ready with a question. I have been listening to the member for Cairns's questions about the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund. I think I am coming at it from a slightly different angle, so I apologise if there is any repetition. Are you able to tell the committee the total amount of funding that was spent by the AAIF in the last financial year? Is that a number that can be readily given?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is that question for the director-general?

Mr BERKMAN: I intended it for the director-general.

Mr POWELL: Can I seek some clarification? With the AAIF, you enter into a contract, so there might be an initial up-front payment but then there are contractual payments over a number of years. Is the member asking for any new contracts entered into in the last financial year, or is he asking for new contracts entered into plus ongoing contractual payments?

Mr BERKMAN: Total spend is what I was getting at.

Mr POWELL: Total spend is much clearer. I thank the member for that. We will commit to get that information and come back before the end of the session.

Mr BERKMAN: I have some other related questions, if I might, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have asked these questions in previous years. You would be well aware of the significant impact flight noise is having on urban communities, including my electorate. Can you provide the details of the weekly number of flights and the flight numbers for routes that have been subsidised under the AAIF since the beginning of the last financial year? I appreciate it might not be something that can be given now, but that list has been provided previously and there are the four additional flights that have been mentioned in this session.

Mr POWELL: We would have to go away and crunch that level of detail, as in the number of flights—and I assume the member is only seeking Brisbane as well. To be blunt, that probably should have been put as a question on notice. Let's see what we can do between now and the conclusion of

this session. Can I just be clear: in addition to the total spend on the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund for 2024-25, the member is seeking the number of flights per week being added to Brisbane through AAIF funding; is that correct?

Mr BERKMAN: I am talking about the total number. I realise there have been flights added over the last financial year. You listed those four previously. In previous estimates hearings we have been given a comprehensive list of the flight numbers that have been subsidised under AAIF. Additionally, I am keen to know, which we have been provided previously, how many of these flights arrive or depart between 10 am and 6 pm. I am sure the former minister can remember me badgering him about this in previous years.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the minister and the director-general have an understanding of the question. There is a high level of detail there.

Mr POWELL: What I can share is that through the course of the AAIF funding there are 26 new flights in total flying into Brisbane. They include: United Airlines from San Francisco; Air Canada from Vancouver; Qatar from Doha; Qantas from Haneda and Narita; China Airlines from Taipei; Eva Airways from Taipei; Qantas from Auckland; Jetstar from Auckland; Qantas from Christchurch; Emirates from Dubai; Philippine Airlines from Manila; Korean Air from Incheon Airport, Seoul; Vietjet from Ho Chi Minh; Cathay Pacific from Hong Kong; Jetstar from Incheon; Jetstar from Osaka; China Southern from Guangzhou; China Eastern from Shanghai; Singapore Airlines from Singapore; American Airlines from Dallas Fort Worth; Delta Airlines from Los Angeles; Qantas from Manila; Jetstar from Bangkok—and, as I said before—Virgin from Doha; and Malaysia Airlines from Kuala Lumpur. You are saying after 10 pm?

Mr BERKMAN: Between 10 pm and 6 am.

Mr POWELL: An average weekly schedule in June 2025 at Brisbane Airport has nine AAIF supported services that have flights which are scheduled to arrive and/or depart between 10 pm and 6 am, which is approximately 68 inbound and outbound flights per week.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you kindly. If I could just push my luck with one further question. Given that I have just learned about the Connecting Queensland Fund, is there going to be any stipulation around flights that are subsidised or funded under the Connecting Queensland Fund? Will they be required to fly at hours that are not going to increase particularly that late-night air traffic in and around Brisbane?

Mr POWELL: As I was just explaining, whilst we will be continuing to explore strategic international flights—and I mentioned the India to Queensland flight that will fly into Brisbane; I am not sure at what time as it is still a number of years off—the real focus of the Connecting Queensland Fund is interstate and intrastate flights. All Aussies and Queenslanders would rather fly during the day than overnight. Whilst I will not speculate on numbers and so on, the vast focus of the Connecting Queensland Fund will be moving people around the state.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, did you have something to add?

Ms O'Callaghan: I have an answer around the expenditure on AAIF in the last financial year. To close that question out—and we have data since the machinery-of-government changes—as of 1 November, \$9,951,572 has been spent.

Mr BERKMAN: The precision is admirable, thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Director-General.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to government members questions.

Mr LEE: Minister, we all know that Hervey Bay is the whale watching capital of Australia. With reference to page 1 of the SDS, could you explain how the Crisafulli government is seeking to reduce red tape for tourism operators like whale watching tour businesses in Hervey Bay?

Mr POWELL: As I said before, it was great to join him in Hervey Bay for the blessing of the fleet as another whale watching season kicked off in Hervey Bay. I have to agree with him—and I know we have whale watcher operators right around the state; I even heard from one in the Whitsundays the other day who said it had been magic there—that we know they come and rest and play in Hervey Bay and that it is the best place to go and see them, particularly as they rest up on their way back south with their young calves.

I have to reflect on a story from our consultation on Destination 2045. It was at our consultation in Hervey Bay where I heard from one of the operators just how many different permits he had to apply for to run a single tour. It struck me that we can put money into this industry but we can also make it easier for them to get on and do their job so that they do not have to spend all the time when they are not out on the boat doing paperwork to get approval to get out on the boat. It seems nonsensical.

I am pleased to report that as part of Destination 2045 and as part of our agenda for this year, we are cutting red tape so that tourism and event businesses can really focus on what matters. We are going to streamline laws, regulations and permits, with initiatives already underway. We are going to set up a tourism support hub. We will be launching that in September of this year. We are also doing a full review of the Major Events Act 2014. By years end we will introducing legislation for a single permit for tourism operations in protected areas. We are working with other agencies on further reform.

I look forward to going back to that operator in the member for Hervey Bay's electorate and telling him that the days of spending all his hours when he is not out on the water filling in permit paperwork are gone because he will only need to fill in a single permit for tourism operations in a protected area. These changes will help operators thrive. They will create jobs. They will keep Queensland competitive.

When it comes to tourism, we know there is a time for government to stand up and help and we know there is a time for government to get out of the way. That is why we are cutting unnecessary red tape as part of our fresh start for delivering for the Queensland tourism industry.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, we heard you talk about Destination 2045 being an industry-led plan. I was privileged to join nearly 300 people on the Gold Coast at one of your workshops. Can you tell us how you have worked with tourism operators across the state to develop this plan and how that contrasts with previous approaches?

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for the question. The answer is pretty simple. We built an industry-led tourism plan by getting out there and listening to the industry. We heard from the industry that often under the previous government their plans were dictated from 1 William Street without genuine consultation. We took quite a different approach. We went out on the road to every corner of the state.

I have to note at this stage that the shadow minister stated that Destination 2045 was a government plan not an industry plan. Member for Cairns, you should probably hear what the peak tourism body said. They said that the plan is an indication of consistent engagement between government and industry and acknowledged the progress reflected in this budget. We have sat down with tourism operators, small businesses, regional organisations and community leaders to make sure this plans reflects the real opportunities and challenges our industry faces.

You have heard us say before that we held 16 sessions in Brisbane, Roma, Airlie Beach, Bundaberg, Gold Coast, Longreach, Mackay, Hervey Bay, Sunshine Coast, Mount Isa, Torres Strait, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville, Cairns and Gladstone. At this point, I want to acknowledge the efforts of the member for Barron River, my assistant minister, who took on some of those opportunities for me because I could not get to all of them.

We held six deep dives around the six core pillars of the strategy and brought hundreds of people into those. In the end, we had 406 survey responses, 3,344 discussion paper downloads, 350 email submissions, 1,444 participants at the workshops, a 3.5 million social media reach; 127 participants at the six deep dives and 22,894 visits to the Destination 2045 website and the InLoop surveys. If I recall correctly, we had something like 14,000 Post-it notes that we had to trawl through from all the feedback that we received.

Mr MOLHOEK: I think about six of them were mine.

Mr POWELL: Is that all! That extensive consultation has ensured Destination 2045 is genuinely industry led. Therefore, it is backed by the people on the ground who will work with us to deliver it. We continue to work as a government side by side with the tourism industry to unlock new opportunities, to grow jobs, to deliver world-class visitor experiences that Queensland is famous for. It is a plan built by Queenslanders for Queenslanders and it will set up our industry for long-term success.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, can you explain how Destination 2045 will deliver for the Gold Coast?

Mr POWELL: I certainly can. Again, he and I both know, as much as sometimes I have to grit my teeth when I say it being a Sunny Coaster, the Gold Coast is one of Queensland's most iconic destinations.

Mr MOLHOEK: Can you just say that a bit louder?

Mr POWELL: I will say it again: the Gold Coast is one of Queensland's most iconic destinations. Destination 2045 is unashamedly a plan for all Queensland. As part of that we are going to make sure we are delivering for operators in your neck of the woods on the Gold Coast.

There are a couple of key projects that we already have underway on the Gold Coast. There was reference earlier obliquely to some work being done in Springbrook National Park. Excitingly, we are transforming Springbrook Plateau with upgrades to the Purling Brook Falls precinct, to the lookouts, to the walking tracks and a new visitor hub. I mentioned earlier to the member for Noosa that we have just finished some work in the Noosa National Park. Those who visit Springbrook should look at that as an example of what we will achieve. It is going to be brilliant.

We are bringing major events to the Gold Coast. Here is just a taste: we have the Asian Football Confederation Women's Asian Cup 2026. We are also building on the success of existing events like the Gold Coast Marathon. Did you participate in the Gold Coast Marathon?

Mr MOLHOEK: Yes. Contrary to media reports, I did the five-kilometre walk, not the 21 kilometres.

Mr POWELL: I know you were in that. You probably were not in the world surfing championships but you possibly got along to Blues on Broadbeach.

One of the other key things that we are trying to do is really grow business events. Often our big events occur over weekends, and they are great for boosting visitation in hotels, cafes and restaurants over weekends. What business events do is they fill up your hotels during the week. We want to grow the events calendar to \$2 billion particularly in key areas where we have event locations like the Gold Coast. As I have mentioned ad nauseam already, we are looking for improved connectivity into the Gold Coast. Some of that will potentially be international flights. Where can we also bring in interstate flights to the Gold Coast but then also use Gold Coast as a hub to fly people to other parts of Queensland. The future looks very, very bright for the City of Gold Coast, member for Southport.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, can you outline how Destination 2045 will deliver for Moreton Bay and my electorate of Redcliffe?

Mr POWELL: I notice a pattern of questioning here. Why wouldn't you ask about what is happening as a result of Destination 2045 in the great part of the City of Moreton Bay that is Redcliffe? Back in April, as I said earlier, I had the pleasure of joining the member for Redcliffe to visit Peninsula Distilling. I might be sampling some of that product later on after 7.15 pm. What a magnificent local business producing outstanding locally sourced spirits. I mention that because a couple of key things that we want to do really focus around those small businesses particularly in the food and agribusiness space. I will give a couple of key facts. The City of Moreton Bay said about our plan—

The Queensland Government's new Destination 2045 strategy outlines a clear direction and investment to grow the state's tourism industry sustainably, authentically and with economic diversity. This creates an opportunity for City of Moreton Bay's tourism sector to align with the government's vision through strategic tourism product development.

That is another ringing endorsement from another great part of the state. As I mentioned before when I was answering the member for Southport's question, events play such a pivotal role. You are home, aren't you, to the Moreton Bay Food and Wine Festival, which is coming up soon. Are you looking forward to it?

Ms DOOLEY: Yes.

Mr POWELL: We also stopped in at Tempest Seafood Restaurant at Scarborough when I last visited. We did not get a chance to really sample the freshly caught seafood that time from the legendary Morgans, but I know firsthand just how much the Redcliffe community has to offer in that space. I know that event, with the support of TEQ and the Crisafulli government, will just keep going from strength to strength.

A bit like the member for Southport, I know that you put your running shoes on just recently as well, or was it walking shoes—

Ms DOOLEY: Walking.

Mr POWELL:—and completed the Jetty 2 Jetty Half Marathon & Fun Run. Again, that is an important local event that the government and TEQ are really happy to support.

If we move a little further afield into our combined interest in the broader City of Moreton Bay, I do not know if you caught it but I donned my medieval garb just the other week and supported the member for Pumicestone at the Abbey Medieval Festival. For history nerds like me, it is quite an opportunity. Just stay away from the jousting if you are faint-hearted! Again, it is another wonderful local event which we supported to the tune of \$400,000. This helped fund a permanent grandstand as well as VIP amenities for history buffs and families alike.

We know how brilliant the Redcliffe Peninsula is. I am proud that Kerri-Anne Dooley, our member for Redcliffe, and the Crisafulli government are using Destination 2045 to deliver for Redcliffe and the broader City of Moreton Bay.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, I would like to turn to the Connecting Queensland Fund. Can you outline what role rail, road and all connectivity will play in delivering Destination 2045?

Mr POWELL: We have spent a lot of time talking today about the air aspects of connecting Queensland. We have spoken about the importance of continuing to bring strategic international routes in, to bring interstate flights in and to move people around the state with intrastate flights. I think it is also important to take a moment to reflect on the fact that it is not just about air connectivity.

The really exciting thing for me is that, as part of the Tourism Cabinet Committee, I sit alongside colleagues like Minister Last, the Minister for Natural Resources, who has responsibility for land tenure in a lot of places including our Great Barrier Reef islands. I sit alongside Minister Leahy in her capacity as the Minister for Local Government. We know that in many locations it is the local government that are the heart and soul of their tourism organisations. They run the visitor centres and the like. I sit alongside the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier around planning. I also sit alongside the Minister for Sport and the Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. As I said, we have a shared interest in events.

I also sit alongside the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. That gives us exciting some really opportunities because I think there are some missed opportunities to date particularly in rail. That is going to be a gnarly problem for us to crack as part of the Tourism Cabinet Committee. How can we continue to provide a service to our western and northern communities but also potentially grow a tourism offering through those? I have had many people come in to talk to me about the state of the Savannahlander and how we can continue to maintain that. That is an important option.

Our delivery as part of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games delivery plan around the Wave, the duplication of the north coast rail all the way through to Beerwah and then on to—

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I have lost count how many times today the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker have made directions around questions that relate to matters outside the portfolio area. Here we are getting a very large and lengthy tour through the transport portfolio and the Olympics portfolio. I am wondering whether this is relevant to this particular appropriations hearing.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the minister is responding to the question as asked and he is providing a comprehensive outline of all of the matters related to the question as asked. I would submit to you that he be allowed to continue to answer his question given how the question was asked.

Mr J KELLY: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: he may be responding to the question as asked, but what I am saying is that the question as asked is about portfolio matters that are outside his portfolio, and that has been ruled on multiple times today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If my memory serves me correctly, the question was about the Connecting Queensland Fund.

Mr POWELL: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is part of your tourism portfolio, is it not?

Mr POWELL: Correct. As part of that, we will be working in partnership with the Department of Transport and Main Roads around rail. I will wrap it up.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: To take the member for Greenslopes point of order, if you could keep your comments relevant to that part of your portfolio, that would be appreciated.

Mr POWELL: In conclusion, another real key piece of feedback we received from every workshop we went to is the importance of road infrastructure, particularly the Bruce Highway. I am really pleased to see the \$9 billion investment we have been able to achieve with the federal government on that. Let's face it, road tourism is so important to this state right across the state. We will be exploring every opportunity through Connecting Queensland, whether it be air, road or rail.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, the member for Greenslopes just tabled a document. It is an article that appeared in the *Courier-Mail* in which you are quoted as saying that the idea of a tourism levy is 'not a new concept' but it was worth exploring. Is this the advice that you would have provided to the minister?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Take a moment to review that document if you need to, Director-General.

Ms O'Callaghan: The matter of a tourism levy is a matter for government.

Mr HEALY: I appreciate that. I note that you have been quoted as saying that it is 'not a new concept' but it was worth further exploration. Is that the advice you gave the minister in your role?

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the article the member refers to is from June three years ago and has absolutely no bearing on today's inquiry into the budget.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the article may be three years old, but the director-general has stated publicly on the record what her views on the matter are. The question relates to whether there was any advice based on that publicly available information.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is about the advice the director-general may or may not have given government.

Ms O'Callaghan: I note that the levy concept required further discussion with government. That was an opinion I had at the time when I was a CEO of Destination Gold Coast.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, is your department currently preparing any proposals, briefings or documents related to the introduction or consideration of a tourism levy, colloquially known as a bed tax?

Ms O'Callaghan: No, we are currently not.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, could you advise the committee where in the document there is any reference to—I am talking about Destination 2045, because this was something the industry had been seeking—any discussion that was made about the implementation of a bed tax?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could you repeat that question, please? I did not quite understand it.

Mr POWELL: I might be able to assist.

Mr HEALY: No, we can move on. Director-General, the member for Greenslopes is tabling another document from the *Gold Coast Bulletin* dated 4 April 2025 in which the minister stated—

As part of our community consultation, a number of councils have sought the ability to apply their own levy. These requests are being considered through the finalisation of the Crisafulli government's 20 Year Tourism Plan.

Could you advise what consultation was received on the application of a local bed tax as part of the consultation process for Destination 2045?

Ms O'Callaghan: I am aware that a number of councils wrote to the department, but we will need a moment to seek some clarification on that. Through the minister, I am happy to find that information to table.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you happy to have a look for that, Minister?

Mr POWELL: I can also assist the member by providing some answer to that question myself. I am aware that we received submissions from Far North Queensland, Cairns and Tourism Tropical North Queensland. We received them from the Whitsundays, we received them from the Gold Coast, and I believe Brisbane may also have mentioned it. If I may, the media article the member tabled does refer to the fact that we were interested in hearing it from stakeholders in this space.

What he has not tabled is a subsequent statement where I made it very clear we were ruling out a tourism levy or a bed tax. I note that the member is on the record previously as supporting one, but I understand that his side of politics does not support one either. I am interested to know where the member is going with this line of questioning.

Mr J KELLY: I make the point that the question was to the director-general and not to the minister.

Mr POWELL: Understood, and we are getting the information.

Mr HEALY: I think we are asking the questions.

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: they are asking questions about policy that should be directed to the minister, not to the director-general.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns, do you have a further question?

Mr HEALY: I do. Director-General, could you advise the committee where in the document there is any reference to the argument for or against the implementation of a local bed tax?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is in Destination 2045?

Mr HEALY: That is correct.

Ms O'Callaghan: There is no reference.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, did any draft versions of the Destination 2045 plan include any references to levies, taxes or a bed tax?

Ms O'Callaghan: Sorry, member, can I get you to ask that question again?

Mr HEALY: I would be happy to do that. Did any draft versions of the Destination 2045 plan include any references to levies, taxes or a bed tax?

Ms O'Callaghan: To the best of my knowledge, member, I am not aware of any versions of the Destination 2045 document having a reference to a tax or a levy.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, could you advise of the total breakdown of marketing and advertising costs borne by the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation in 2024-25 and the estimated cost in 2025-26?

Ms O'Callaghan: We can get that. It will require some time to analyse some documents. We will seek to provide that before the end of the session.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, while you are at it, I might take the opportunity to ask, seeing you have sufficient resources, how much of the 2024 advertising costs were spent on advertising the Destination 2045 tourism plan.

Ms O'Callaghan: I do have that information available, so if you just hold a moment I can provide that to you. In regards to the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation spend into the Destination 2045 campaign, we have invested \$2.5 million into that marketing campaign. To put it in perspective, it is a quarter of one per cent of the \$1 billion investment the Queensland government is going to be making into tourism over the next four years.

Mr HEALY: Mr Davidson, could you advise the total breakdown of marketing and advertising costs borne by Tourism and Events Queensland in 2024-25 and the estimated cost in 2025-26?

Mr Davidson: If you give me one minute to clarify the total expenditure for the 2024-25 year and the budget for the year following. Our total expenditure for 2024-25 was \$152.49 million. I can say that \$125 million of that was base funding and that has been confirmed for the next four years. The remainder will be made up of programmatic work, aviation and AAIF work that we do and a range of other programs that we deliver.

Mr HEALY: Mr Davidson, how much of the 2024-25 advertising costs were spent on advertising the Destination 2045 tourism plan?

Mr Davidson: Our focus is on our current brand and campaign platforms, so all of our moneys are focused on our current brand and campaign platforms.

Mr HEALY: Can I assume from that that you have not spent any money on promoting the Destination 2045 plan?

Mr Davidson: That is correct.

Mr HEALY: Mr Davidson, were TEQ involved in the consultation process relating to the Destination 2045 plan?

Mr Davidson: Our role, again, is to focus on our brand and consumer marketing campaigns so our focus was on that.

Mr HEALY: So you were not involved in the consultation process of Destination 2045?

Mr Davidson: No, our focus was on our brand and campaign programs.

Mr HEALY: That is remarkable. That is extensive consultation, Minister. Mr Davidson, are you aware why Tourism and Events Queensland was not consulted or involved in the development of the government's Destination 2045 tourism plan?

Mr Davidson: Can I just clarify. We were consulted as part of the plan. I was answering the question of whether we were consulted on the marketing of the Destination 2045 plan. We of course were aware of the 2045 plan and the marketing program, and we were extensively consulted with putting together the 2045 plan.

Mr HEALY: Just going back to the last question, are you aware why Tourism and Events Queensland was not consulted or involved in the development of the government's Destination 2045 tourism plan?

Mr Davidson: We were consulted as part of the development of that plan.

Mr HEALY: Minister, why were Tourism and Events Queensland not involved in the development of the plan when their own SDS said they will be responsible for supporting the delivery of that tourism plan?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr POWELL: I am happy to clarify this through you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Moggill, do you have a point of order?

Dr ROWAN: My point of order just related to the question as asked. It was in direct contradiction to what had been further provided by the other witness.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is okay; the question is still relevant. The minister has the call.

Mr POWELL: I thank the member for the question. It does provide me an opportunity to clarify. As Mr Davidson, the CEO of Tourism and Events Queensland, said he misheard the question. He understood it was asking whether TEQ was involved in the development of the Destination 2045 plan marketing campaign. No, he was not, nor was TEQ because their focus is on marketing Queensland. The marketing of the plan was done in the tourism division, in-house. However, I can assure you that at every single one of our 16 workshops on the development of our Destination 2045, all of our deep dives, TEQ were front and centre, alongside representatives from the tourism division.

I can also point out that Mr Davidson's predecessor, our acting CEO of TEQ, Ollie Philpot, the acting deputy director-general of tourism, the DG and I actually sat in Tourism and Events Queensland's boardroom and thrashed through those 14,000 post-it notes of feedback that we received from all of the participants of those workshops. I want to genuinely thank our Tourism and Events Queensland team for doing not just the work they normally do around Queensland but also assisting us to bring together a great industry plan.

Mr HEALY: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the question has been answered and we are ready to move onto the next question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question was asked about why TEQ was not consulted. I think the minister has explained that they were but he was not finished with his explanation. Minister, was there anything else you had to add?

Mr POWELL: Yes, I am a bit disappointed. It was clearly a simple misunderstanding of the question and I am worried the member for Cairns is actually verballing a public servant, which again is form of those from the previous government.

Mr JKELLY: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: that is not what is occurring here. The member for Cairns is asking questions and raising valid points of order. I believe the question has been asked and we are using up non-government time when we would like to be asking questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your answer, Minister. Member for Cairns, do you have any further questions?

Mr HEALY: I do. Director-General, how will the formula for appropriating funding through the \$100 million for event attraction in the SDS be considered and implemented?

Ms O'Callaghan: We are currently working through the process of that \$100 million. There was a lot of feedback around the state on how that should be portioned, the types of events it should be supporting. We are taking all of that into consideration at the moment and we will have that feedback to you in due course.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, did your department provide any advice to the government in relation to this fund, including on ensuring Queenslanders are not charged more for events?

Ms O'Callaghan: What I can confirm is that the \$100 million is going to be predominantly focused on driving visitors into Queensland. The framework and the criteria, which is still currently being developed, will have that as a primary objective. I can genuinely say that there is no conversation about charging Queenslanders more for events.

Mr HEALY: Mr Davidson, is Tourism and Events Queensland concerned, or have any stakeholders raised the concerns, that event managers, promoters and organisers may attempt to negotiate higher prices based on the knowledge that the government has a dedicated \$100 million to attract and host events?

Mr MOLHOEK: Point of order: the member for Cairns is asking a hypothetical question of Mr Davidson.

Mr HEALY: I am happy to reword it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thanks, member for Cairns. That would be helpful.

Mr HEALY: Mr Davidson, have any concerns been raised by stakeholders that the \$100 million fund may see promoters and organisers attempting to put higher prices in place?

Mr Davidson: No, I have not.

Mr HEALY: That is a good thing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns, we might move to government questions for a short time and then we will come back to you for a short time as well before the close.

Mr MOLHOEK: Minister, can you update the committee on the Great Barrier Reef and the Outback Queensland education experience programs?

Mr POWELL: I certainly can. I am proud to say that the Crisafulli LNP government has saved both the Outback Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef education experience programs from extinction, which is the future they faced under the previous Labor government. There is really nothing better than seeing our schoolkids get out and enjoy the great Queensland outdoors, whether that is heading out west or up north-west, into our outback or into our wonderful Great Barrier Reef. To make it even better, it provides a much needed boost for tourism operators on the reef and in the outback. Despite representing one of the seats that benefit the most from the Great Barrier Reef Education Experience Program, the member for Cairns and those opposite did not think that it or the Outback Queensland Education Experience Program deserved to survive beyond the 2024-25 budget.

Since 2021, over 38,200 Queensland primary and secondary school students have been approved for the \$150 subsidy under the Great Barrier Reef Education Experience Program. Since 2011, more than 10,000 students have benefited from the Outback program. In April 2025, the Crisafulli LNP government successfully saved both programs, securing their future, and the benefits they deliver for students and tourism operators. Let's face it, member for Southport, these programs not only educate and inspire our young people but also support our regional economies, and that is why the Crisafulli government will always stand up for initiatives that give our kids opportunities and back our tourism industry.

Ms DOOLEY: Minister, how does Destination 2045 back RTOs and tourism operators?

Mr POWELL: As I have said before, tourism supports one in 11 jobs in Queensland, making the industry the heart of Destination 2045 and the heart of our economy. As part of our \$200 million commitment to boost aviation, a new product development will be launching programs to build tourism experiences in each of the regions, and our RTOs will be front and centre in developing those opportunities across their networks. Importantly, though, we are also increasing annual funding for the Regional Queensland Tourism Network by \$3 million a year to \$10 million in this financial year 2025-26, and we are doing that across the forwards as well. That is locked in—\$10 million. This uplift demonstrates our commitment to the regional tourism organisations, those RTOs that drive our regional visitation. In 2024-25 and 2025-26, that uplift will be delivered under the existing funding model, while TEQ, which oversee this funding, work through a sustainable long-term funding model for implementation from 2026-27.

As I said, we are doing all of this because we know the tourism industry needs to know the government has their back. With the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games just around the corner, we need the RTOs as much as our tourism operators know that they have sustainable funding and that they are able to work with us to deliver every aspect of Destination 2045 and make the most of that golden opportunity.

Mr Lee: Minister, how does Destination 2045 support First Nations tourism?

Mr POWELL: One of the things I have learned and heard loud and clear is that our tourists these days are very different. They are looking for experiences and they want to get in touch with First Nations history, culture and immersive experiences. We heard that loud and clear as we went about the state on our Destination 2045 consultation program. We know that First Nations Australians have a unique tourism asset to share with the world.

To make sure Queensland leads the pack when it comes to First Nations operators, we are going to do a couple of key things. We list in the plan a number of very specific items that are focused on First Nations tourism. For example, I have previously mentioned that we are working on a Palm Island tourism master plan, and that will be backed by \$4.9 million, and I understand Townsville Enterprise mentioned that would be a game changer, which is great.

If you look at the actual actions at the back of the plan, there are three I want to mention. Appendix 1.7 says—

We will work with First Nations people to support culture and country and create access to valued tourism experiences.

On that note, I had a great deal of pleasure standing up with the Bandjin and Girramay elders in Townsville as we launched Destination 2045 to celebrate the opening of the Thorsborne Trail on Hinchinbrook Island, something they are doing in partnerships with World Expeditions, but they are front and centre in the experience. That is going to be a wonderful First Nations-led experience, doing that multiday trek on Hinchinbrook Island.

Appendix 2.2 talks about delivering a diverse events portfolio that showcases Queensland's regions, celebrates First Nations cultures and highlights the state's creativity, heritage and natural environment. Again, as part of our events funding, First Nations events will have a strong place.

We will also deliver and support First Nations tourism experiences that enhance employment opportunities and enhance industry capability. On that point, I do want to acknowledge we will be working very closely with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council's Tash Wheeler and her team as they assist us in growing the capacity and capability of all tourism operators, but with a particular focus on First Nations tourism operators.

Mr MOLHOEK: The member for Cairns might be interested in the answer to this question. Minister, how will Destination 2045 deliver for Cairns and for the Far North?

Mr POWELL: I am pleased to know that the member for Southport appreciates the Far North and Cairns as much as he does the Gold Coast. I was just doing some calculations of the number of flights that I have done since becoming the Minister for Tourism. Do not quote me on this, but I think it might have been 18, and I understand that something like seven or eight of them have been to Cairns. That is how important a part of this state it is when it comes to tourism and particularly to Destination 2045. As the member for Barron River often tells me, everything in Destination 2045 can be delivered in Cairns and Far North Queensland. They have all the offerings. I know there might be others around the table and around this parliament that might beg to differ in that their region has a lot to offer, too, but they are really front and centre when it comes to supercharging our state's tourism industry into this new era that we are building around growth, sustainability and global leadership. We want to continue to have great access to the Great Barrier Reef. We want to continue to have great access to the Daintree Rainforest, the wet tropics, and we want that particular region to continue to be the ecotourism powerhouse that it already is, but again to go to the next level.

There are a couple of key things we will be delivering as part of Destination 2045 in Far North Queensland and, in doing so, I want to acknowledge the work of Mark Olsen at Tourism Tropical North Queensland. He has been a passionate advocate for that region and he has been an intrinsic partner in the development of Destination 2045. At the time, he was the chair of the Regional Queensland Tourism Network. He and I had many conversations about what needed to be in this document. I have been chuffed with the feedback he has given since; we have certainly listened to the industry.

A couple of key things: improved connectivity—we talked about the new flight coming in from Nadi to Cairns on Fiji Airways; we still have work to do in that space. In regards to the Great Barrier Reef island rejuvenation work, I have been working with my good colleague, Minister Last, and we have made an announcement already around Double Island. As we have said, we want Queensland to be Australia's event capital. We want to grow half of that in the regions, and Tropical North Queensland already has a number of fantastic events. We want to take it to another level.

Wangetti Trail: we spoke at length how we need to clean up Labor's mess in that space and deliver something that the region and the state will be proud of and that the world will want to visit.

The Smithfield Mountain Bike Trail: we can end up with 52 kilometres of the expansion of the Smithfield mountain bike network in Cairns.

The Daintree cultural and ecotourism centre will be a new First Nations centre offering visitors an unforgettable cultural and tourism experience in the heart of the iconic Daintree National Park.

One more, member for Southport—I mentioned it earlier to the member for Noosa: upgrades to the Lake Eacham day-use area to improve visitor experience with new infrastructure and improved accessibility with a more natural and welcoming environment.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, as a doctor and former president of the AMA, I know firsthand just how important physical activity and exercise are to human health but from a tourism and events perspective, we also know that running events are a huge drawcard and a big driver of tourism revenue. In fact, each year I participate in Run Army, the Bridge to Brisbane and my local Moggill marathon but in the modern era of Strava and run clubs, how is the Crisafulli state government leveraging this momentum by supporting running events?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a long preamble, member for Moggill.

Mr POWELL: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Did you know the member for Moggill was a doctor and a former president of the AMA? Thanks for reminding me! Look, running is not my thing—I am more of a CrossFit guy—but I know what an important part running events play in our state event calendar. As you said, I am also very aware of the health benefits that come from people aspiring to those kind of running events and, therefore, training and preparing. I hope that the Minister for Health who appeared before this committee earlier on appreciates what we are doing in the space of preventive health by continuing to support running events.

Let me give you a list of events the Crisafulli government will be supporting: the Gold Coast T100 Triathlon; the Gold Coast Marathon—it was a huge success just recently; the Toowoomba Marathon; the Ironman 70.3 on the Sunshine Coast; the Noosa Triathlon festival in the member for Noosa's patch; the Runaway Noosa Marathon; Ironman Cairns; the 7 Cairns Marathon Festival 2025; the Guzzler Ultra presented by The Trail Co. 2025; Jetty 2 Jetty half marathon and fun run; the Yeppoon Running Festival. If you want to head out west, member for Moggill, you can take part in the Julia Creek Dirt n Dust Festival which includes a run; the McDonald's Townsville Running Festival; and the Sunshine Coast Marathon festival as well. To add to that, I am thrilled to announce that the advantage of being both the tourism and environment minister has meant that we have actually waived the QPWS park entry fee for low-impact park runs so that they can continue to access protected areas. I know there is one in Parklands in the member for Nicklin's patch and there is one in part of the D'Aguilar National Park in the lower part of my electorate, too, so that is a huge win for weekend runners as well.

The Crisafulli government is led by a running addict. There are plenty of them across cabinet and the party room. So I am sure the Premier is thrilled to know—I know you are, member for Moggill—that we are continuing to back important events right across our state including running.

Dr ROWAN: Great news. Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, do you have any questions to come back to the committee with at the moment?

Mr POWELL: I do. I have two and there might be a third that will arrive. We still have a couple of minutes but I am happy to acknowledge these. I gave a commitment to come back on air quality exceedances. The question was: how many incidents of exceedance standards have been identified by air monitoring stations from 1 November 2024 and what did those exceedances relate to? The answer is: the department currently operates a statewide network of 35 stations and 63 particle smoke sensors that continuously monitor ambient air quality. All data is published in near real-time and all exceedances are published in monthly bulletins on the department's air reports and plans website. That website is www.qld.gov.au/environment/management/monitoring/air/air-reports. So all of the information that was being sought earlier on today can be found there, including the exceedances which are in those monthly bulletins.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The next one.

Mr POWELL: We were asked earlier in this session about support for DestinationiQ, a Destination Indigenous Queensland event: I confirm that the Queensland government supports both DestinationQ and DestinationiQ; however, it is actually QTIC that delivers the events. I can assure all members of the committee and confirm for them that our government is in active discussions with QTIC about both of these events—not only for this year but for the years going forward so they will continue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no more at this stage?

Mr POWELL: There is one more to come. We have not got an answer yet but we will try to get it too.

Mr HEALY: We were asking if there had been funding allocated for those events. So there has not been funding allocated—you are in discussions but there has not been funding allocated?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you talking about DestinationIQ?

Mr HEALY: Yes.

Mr POWELL: To be clear: that is contractual discussion with QTIC. Those conversations are occurring but I can guarantee, through you Mr Deputy Speaker, that those events will be funded.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Come back to us with the other ones when you have them to hand please.

Mr LEE: Minister, how will Destination 2045 deliver for Mackay and the Whitsundays?

Mr POWELL: Like the member for Southport, I am pleased to see the member for Hervey Bay knows there are a few areas north of Hervey Bay and the Fraser Coast. It gives me a great opportunity to talk about the fresh start that we are offering through Destination 2045 for Mackay and the Whitsundays. One of the things I want to do at the outset is acknowledge Tim Booth who is the head of the Whitsunday regional tourism organisation and he is now the chair of the RTO network again, so he has taken over from Mark Olsen. It has been great to work with him.

There are a couple of specific things that we are working on. One was an election commitment that we gave and something we are really excited about and that is the Whitsunday skyway. Those opposite would be well acquainted with the Cairns Sky Rail. We heard earlier that there will be a significant investment in reinvigorating that. We reckon the one at Whitsunday skyway will be just as good an offering. From the top of the Conway Range national park there are 360 degrees of the national park and the spectacular Whitsunday Islands. I just cannot wait to see that project come to fruition.

Excitingly, we have launched the Thorsborne Trail in Hinchinbrook and, as well as that, we have launched the new Ngaro track in the Whitsunday Islands National Park. It will link two iconic Whitsunday Island features—Whitehaven Beach and Tongue Point. It will allow visitors to explore 32 kilometres of the island's dramatic coastline. Again, World Expeditions—global leaders in small group multi-day sustainable walking experiences—will offer guided walks and cultural experiences on the track in partnership with the Ngaro people. We talked about First Nations opportunities—how good is that? You will get to do 32 kms on a Whitsunday island in one of the most spectacular places on earth and you will get to hear about the First Nations culture while you do it.

I mentioned Great Barrier Reef island rejuvenation. That applies as much to the Whitsundays as it does to tropical North Queensland. There will be improved connectivity. We have spoken about air, road and rail—what I have not mentioned is cruise ships. Cruising is a growth industry for the Whitsundays particularly with a stop-off at Airlie. Imagine them getting off the cruise ship getting onto Airlie Beach and jumping on the Whitsunday skyway and going up. It will be an absolute 'game changer' to use someone else's words.

We want to continue to grow the events calendar in Mackay and the Whitsundays. We want to grow agritourism offerings with product to plate. We want to boost drive tourism with multi-stop road trips and journeys. I know TEQ is working on that as we speak. We mentioned road infrastructure upgrades as part of road tourism, well, the Goorganga Plains will be delivered as part of our \$9 billion commitment in partnership with the federal government—so it is all happening in Mackay and the Whitsundays as well.

Mr MOLHOEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I just have got one quick question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am conscious that there are three inquiries still to come back.

Mr MOLHOEK: I was hoping to ask the minister about the Sunshine Coast.

Mr POWELL: It is all right, I spruik the Sunshine Coast all the time. Can I clarify which three because we understand there is only one, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The committee has noted inquiries taken on notice by the DG in relation to consultation of cultural centres and tourism with the education department; also by the Director-General applications received and what consultation is done with local government regarding levies; and for the DG, the total cost incurred by DETSI in creating and developing Destination 2045.

Ms O'Callaghan: Thank you. I did answer the last one, the total cost for the Destination 2045 marketing campaign, which was \$2.5 million. In terms of the first question on consultation with Arts Queensland, to the best of my knowledge I have not received any advice of any consultation with Arts Queensland. Then in regards to the second question, we have received five letters from councils across the state on the levy. That should answer all three questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns, do you have a question?

Mr HEALY: I do. Director-General, the SDS refers to the government's \$5 million election commitment over two years to the Whitsunday Skyway. Has that project received federal environmental approval?

Ms O'Callaghan: I note that the Whitsunday Skyway is currently going through the state development exclusive transactions process and we are unaware—

Mr HEALY: The question was: has this project received federal environmental approval?

Ms O'Callaghan: We are aware that the project proponents have made a submission to the Commonwealth government for the project to be assessed under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. We have not received a further update from there, so it is currently being assessed.

Mr HEALY: Has the proponent submitted the required paperwork to receive federal government environmental approval; are you aware?

Mr POWELL: That is a question for the federal government.

Mr HEALY: It is not a question for the federal government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order across the table please.

Mr POWELL: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The EPBC Act is overseen by the Commonwealth government and not the state government. The director-general just expressed that to best of our knowledge they have made a submission but that is the last update we received. Any other line of questioning probably needs to be put to the Commonwealth government.

Mr HEALY: Director-General, in what financial years is the \$5 million profiled to be delivered and how much per year?

Ms O'Callaghan: I will just take a moment to seek that detail. I am just making sure we have those details right. I can acknowledge that there is \$5 million committed but there is no funding allocated for 2025-26. The \$5 million is allocated in future years to allow finalisation of design and project processes and approvals. It will be within the 2026-27 and 2027-28 years to the best of our knowledge as the project has been tabled.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Director-General. Members, there is—

Mr J KELLY: I have one final question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I understand a government member may too. We will ask the member for Southport.

Mr MOLHOEK: I was simply going to give the minister a moment to comment on Destination 2045 for the Sunshine Coast and any other closing comments he may wish to make. The question is: how will Destination 2045 deliver for the Sunshine Coast?

Mr POWELL: I declare a conflict of interest as a sunny coast MP, but let me quickly run through them. There is Maleny Dark Sky. We have heard astrotourism is a huge thing. There is \$250,000 to replace many of our state controlled light bulbs with environmentally friendly ones. This is one of the closest opportunities we have to look up and see the Milky Way and we want to keep that. We have, mentioned a number of the improved connectivity projects. Noosa River jetties is a project where three jetties will be replaced like for like with modern upgrades. That helps with commercial tour operators accessing the Cooloola Recreation Area. We are going to grow agritourism, and I was at the Curated Plate event just last week, a fantastic event. We will be boosting drive tourism and there will be more to say on that. As I said, there are plenty of events, many of them I have already listed, and we are going to grow that as well. Excitingly, we will be delivering with the member for Maroochydore new public moorings off Mudjimba Island so people can get out and enjoy that as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may use the 60 seconds remaining I want to quickly thank some people. Firstly, I thank the parliamentary staff: you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for facilitating this hearing; and the Hansard staff. I would also like to thank Director-General Trish O'Callaghan and Executive Director Lauren Poynting and their hardworking teams; the deputy directors-general Ben, Kahil, Rob, Mark, Jasmine, Nat and Wietske and their teams; Chief Finance Officer Brad Lang, Redmond O'Hara and the finance team; our estimates coordination officer Mike Kirton, Lyn Low and Kerrie-Ann Clarke. I know a tonne of officers throughout DETSI have made a contribution today.

I also acknowledge Tourism and Events Queensland CEO, Craig Davidson, and our former acting CEO Ollie Philpot as well as Lisa Backhouse and the team over there. They did a wonderful job in assisting us on Destination 2045 and have helped launch the new brand 'That Holiday Feeling' which will take us into the future. I finally acknowledge my ministerial team, who have worked tirelessly to assist in preparation for today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: This session has expired now at 7.15 pm.

Mr J KELLY: Mr Deputy Speaker, is there any chance I can put my question on notice? I indicated earlier that I had another question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, the session has expired. It being 7.15 pm, we have reached the end of the time allocated. Thank you, Minister, Director-General, officials and departmental officers for your attendance. This concludes this hearing of the committee for the 2025 estimates. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 7.16 pm.