

FRIDAY, 31 JULY 2026

ESTIMATES—LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICES COMMITTEE—CUSTOMER SERVICES, OPEN DATA, SMALL AND FAMILY BUSINESS

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Jon Krause, Scenic Rim)

Mr Speaker (Hon. Pat Weir, Condamine)

Committee Members

Mr JP Lister MP—Chair

Mrs M Nightingale MP

Mr A Baillie MP

Mr MA Boothman MP

Ms NA Boyd MP

Hon. MC de Brenni MP

Ms JE Pease MP

Members in Attendance

Dr CAC Rowan MP

In Attendance

Hon. SJ Minnikin, Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business

Ms Alissa Lang, Chief of Staff

Mr Benjamin Nance, Policy Adviser

Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business

Mr David Sinclair, Acting Director-General

Ms Amanda Edie, Acting Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services

The committee met at 9.00 am.



Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Good morning and welcome back to the Legislative Council Chamber for the last day of estimates 2026. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee open. I acknowledge the Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Islander people of this state and their elders past, present and emerging. I acknowledge the former members of this parliament who have participated in our democratic institutions and all Australians who serve and have served our nation to protect our democracy. Finally, I acknowledge all Queenslanders, whether they have been born here or have chosen to make this state their home, for whom we are elected to make laws for the peace, welfare and good government of this state.

I am Jon Krause, 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 this morning's hearing. The members of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

are: Mr James Lister MP, member for Southern Downs and chair of the committee; Mrs Margie Nightingale MP, member for Inala and deputy chair of the committee; Mr Adam Baillie MP, member for Townsville; Mr Mark Boothman MP, member for Theodore; Mr Mick de Brenni MP, member for Springwood, who I understand is substituting for Mr Michael Healy MP, member for Cairns; and Ms Joan Pease MP, member for Lytton. 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 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 proceedings to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. Staff who are assisting our witnesses here today are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present to ensure phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if not in use, including and especially members of parliament. 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 2026 for the portfolios of the Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business and Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers. 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. The first session will examine the proposed expenditure of the small and family business portfolio area until 11 am. We will then suspend proceedings for a short break, from 11 am until 11.15 am.

I remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. In particular in relation to the use of props, the rules of the Legislative Assembly apply equally to these committee hearings. 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, the acting director-general, officials and departmental officers, members of the public and everyone else who is viewing these proceedings in the gallery or online. 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 acting director-general. Please remember to press your microphones on before you start speaking and, of course, off when you are finished.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of small and family business 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. Would you like to make an opening statement, Minister?

Mr MINNIKIN: I would

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr MINNIKIN: Good morning to you, to the chair and also to committee members. I wish to start the final day of estimates hearings by thanking my departmental staff for the great work that they have done which has been vital in achieving meaningful outcomes for our state. I really do take this opportunity to thank them all. I would also like to acknowledge the work of parliamentary staff over the past fortnight and that of the Speaker and yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, in delivering the smooth running of the estimates process.

Over the past 12 months Queenslanders, and in particular Queensland's 508,000 small and family businesses, have shown remarkable resilience as we continue to navigate a challenging global economic period. As Minister for Small and Family Business, I am proud of the initiatives we have delivered to help small and family businesses grow, thrive and contribute to Queensland's economy. I do acknowledge that small and family businesses are doing it tough at the moment and I would like to take this opportunity to inform the committee of the reasons why.

Both the NAB Quarterly Business Survey Q2 2026 and the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Consumer Sentiment Index show a decline in business confidence driven by a range of external factors. The Business Chamber Queensland Pulse report also recorded a fall in business confidence, although I can inform the committee that confidence remains above levels recorded under previous Labor governments in both 2008 and 2020. Factors impacting business confidence include federal Labor's handling of the global fuel supply crisis, inflationary pressures and triple interest rate rises. But nothing showed me the decline in business confidence as much as midway through Queensland Small Business Month back in May. Federal Labor, in handing down its budget, broke the faith with many small and family business owners by changing the capital gains tax arrangements and the taxation of discretionary trusts to the detriment of many small and family businesses. During Queensland Small Business Month there was no greater contrast in business confidence than before and after federal Labor's budget.

Despite these challenges, Queensland small and family businesses continue to demonstrate resilience and we remain committed to ensuring our policies and initiatives are responsive to their needs, helping them navigate challenges and position them for future growth. Importantly, the Crisafulli government has committed to no new or increased taxes, ensuring Queensland remains a low tax state so our small businesses can reinvest, hire staff and expand. Small businesses can expect to see their electricity usage costs drop by eight to 14 per cent thanks to our Energy Roadmap. We are also supporting small and family businesses with the cost of water through the freezing of the bulk water charges in South-East Queensland. We are also supporting small and family businesses by freezing WorkCover premiums for the second consecutive year. These are the structural supports and changes businesses need to grow and thrive as opposed to short-term sugar hits. It means more money back onto businesses' balance sheets to manage costs and remain competitive.

The Crisafulli government's 2026-27 budget continues to invest and deliver on the initiatives we committed to in our Small and Family Business First Action Statement. It is our blueprint for streamlining access to government services, providing tailored support to help businesses start, grow and thrive and addressing key barriers such as red tape and capability development. I am pleased to inform the committee that the \$40 million Secure Communities Partnership Program has now delivered two rounds and is supporting businesses and business precincts with security measures to deter crime and boost confidence, with the latest round benefiting more than 170 small businesses across Queensland. We are investing \$11½ million to upskill small businesses through micro-credential courses in areas like artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and procurement.

We are also investing \$10 million in AI uplift grant programs for small businesses, helping them harness the power of technology to improve efficiency and grow their operations. We have allocated \$16.8 million for ongoing financial counselling and wellbeing support through the Small Business Support Network, ensuring small business owners have access to the advice and assistance they need to navigate tough times. Our regions are also being supported through the Regional Business Gateways program, with \$16 million in funding for chambers of commerce, councils, industry groups and business networks to deliver initiatives that unlock regional opportunities and build long-term economic capacity.

Our commitment to skills development extends to apprenticeships through our Small Business Apprenticeship Program. Last week I joined Minister Bates to announce that our initial \$19 million pilot program has been doubled with an additional \$19 million, now allowing 4,000 apprentices employed by small businesses to access the program. These programs are giving small construction businesses the confidence to employ apprentices whilst building the skilled workforce that Queensland needs.

Through reducing costs, investing in skills and innovation and providing practical support, we are ensuring small businesses have the tools to succeed. Together, we are building a stronger and more resilient Queensland where small businesses can thrive, seize opportunities from the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and help communities prosper. I am proud of our investments driving this vision.

In closing, it is truly a privilege to be the inaugural minister for this particular portfolio set. It has dawned on me just how much of a privilege it is for us all to partake in this estimates process. With that, I would be quite happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister, for you opening. We will go to non-government members first for questions.

Ms PEASE: I also would like to welcome and thank everyone for their hard work. I am sure everyone, particularly parliamentary staff, are breathing a sigh of relief today as this is the last day of estimates. You have the weekend ahead of you and you can have a couple of days off. I particularly

acknowledge the department. Most importantly, I acknowledge the 508,000 small businesses that build communities across our great state, that build our economy and do a fantastic job. I am very proud to be the shadow minister for this portfolio. I am very proud to be a former small business owner and operator and of having grown up in a small business family.

Just last week the *Courier-Mail* reported that Queensland retailer insolvency rates are skyrocketing, with a 72 per cent increase in just the last year. Acting Director-General, has your department conducted any modelling on why Queensland is experiencing retail insolvency rates five times higher than the national average?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I wonder whether it might be possible to have authentication of that?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, you referred to a *Courier-Mail* article from last week. Do you have a copy of that handy?

Mr de BRENNI: Deputy Speaker, for the purposes of authentication, I can furnish you with a *Courier-Mail* article that accurately reflects the statements made in the question. Could you pass that to the Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you tabling that or just giving it to me for authentication?

Mr de BRENNI: I am giving it to you for authentication at this stage, Deputy Speaker. The relevant figure is highlighted: the 72 per cent collapse in Queensland retailers and the figure of five times the national rate at the end of that paragraph.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Springwood and Manager of Opposition Business. I see that in the first line of the article. Thank you, member for Lytton. You heard the question, Acting Director-General. You have the call.

Mr Sinclair: Can I check the question was: does the department undertake any modelling of its own?

Ms PEASE: I am inquiring as to whether the department has conducted any modelling on why Queensland is experiencing retail insolvency rates five times higher than the national rate.

Mr BAILLIE: Point of order: the member is referencing five times the national rate. I am looking through the article. I see the 72 per cent but not the five times.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Townsville, that is not a point of order. It is in the first line there. Acting Director-General, could you continue, please?

Mr Sinclair: The department undertakes its own regular survey of small business sentiment and draws upon a number of other similar surveys undertaken by various chambers and other peak industry bodies to test sentiment in the sector. In direct answer to your question, any modelling about those impacts would probably be undertaken by Treasury rather than by this department.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, on the department's total budget for 2026-27, what percentage is allocated to administrative and corporate overheads?

Mr Sinclair: I will get some information on that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you have a brief handy that you could lay your hands on, take the time to grab it.

Mr Sinclair: We may need a moment to find that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If it is one that you think you can get in the short term, we can wait.

Mr Sinclair: Can I clarify: is that for the whole department or the administration of the small business function?

Ms PEASE: We are doing the small business section at the moment, but if you can provide both that would be great, thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Acting Director-General, if you have it just for the small business section then we will take that, but if you need time to break it down perhaps you could come back.

Mr Sinclair: With the minister's approval, we will come back.

Mr MINNIKIN: I am happy for that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will make a note of that.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: will that information come back before the end of this session, before 11 am?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes. Strictly speaking, the question in relation to the small business function can only be asked in this session. If you come back with corporate overhead costs in relation to the small business section, if that is possible, that would be appreciated, before the end of this session.

Mr de BRENNI: Deputy Speaker, in some other hearings information has been furnished earlier than that. We would be happy to receive it if it is available earlier, too.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take that point, member for Springwood. It is up to the minister and the acting director-general as to when they furnish it to the committee.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, can you please advise the total budgeted amount in the 2026-27 budget for direct support for small businesses that are potentially juggling several operating pressures including rising rents, energy bills, transport costs, stamp duty and insurance premiums?

Mr Sinclair: In the 2026-27 budget, the total allocation for small and family business is \$85.147 million.

Ms PEASE: For clarity, can you please indicate if that is direct support for small and family business, or does that include perhaps administrative and corporate overheads?

Mr Sinclair: The figure that I just gave is direct support to small and family business. Within that there may be some direct administrative costs, but it is exclusive of the costs of corporate services within the department.

Ms PEASE: Can you give an indication of what those direct supports would be?

Mr Sinclair: I think that probably refers to your previous question about those costs. It would be the typical administration and communication around different grants programs and making sure that the small and family businesses in the state are aware of the supports that are available to them. Then as we run those programs, not just the grants but other supports that are available, we administer those programs and it would be those costs.

Ms PEASE: To clarify, I was not asking what the administrative costs were; I was wanting to know could you tell me what the direct costs would be, and do any of those costs include advertising?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: there are two parts to that question. I submit that the member for Lytton ask two separate questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, that is a fair point and that is in accordance with the standing orders. They are two different matters. Can we just go one at a time? They are different issues. Member for Lytton, it was in relation to costs and then there was another one?

Ms PEASE: I did not hear that question, sorry, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was saying could we put both of those separately because there are two different issues—the costs issue you were asking about and then there was an advertising question as well.

Ms PEASE: Certainly. In advertising, how much expenditure has been made on advertising out of that figure?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: in relation to advertising, it has been well canvassed in relation to these estimates hearings that the processes under the government relate to whole-of-government processes via the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. There has been an extensive response provided during the estimates hearing session by the director-general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and subsequent to that a number of directors-general in relation to those matters with respect to advertising.

Ms PEASE: We might move on from there. Acting Director-General, I table a media release from the Business Chamber Queensland—their March quarter Pulse survey results which confirms, '... confidence has plummeted below levels recorded in 2008 during the height of the Global Financial Crisis.' Acting Director-General, has your department briefed the minister on the Business Chamber Queensland's March survey results?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I think the member is fishing for information that is not relevant. What the acting director-general says to the minister is not subject to our proceedings. The minister can answer that himself.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: the functions of the department precisely include the provision of advice of a technical nature to the minister responding to the concerns raised by the Business Chamber about confidence plummeting below levels is entirely the sort of advice that we would expect. We are seeking to identify whether the department has briefed the minister in relation to these revelations from the Business Chamber.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Southern Downs and Manager of Opposition Business. I think the question can be put to the acting director-general and I also note the acting director-general has just had a chance to review that quote. I call the acting director-general.

Mr Sinclair: We brief the minister on a regular basis on the operating environment facing small and family business. It would be no surprise that at the moment we absolutely acknowledge the tough operating conditions, not just from the Business Chamber, but a key part of my role is obviously to engage as widely as possible with a range of peak industry bodies, including the Business Chamber, and also directly with small and family businesses.

Ms PEASE: Can you perhaps provide a more fulsome answer to that given that Business Chamber Queensland is our peak stakeholder business. Have you briefed the minister with regard to that Pulse report?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: the acting director-general has answered the question and I think the follow-up question is argumentative and should be ruled out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Southern Downs. I hear your point of order. Member for Lytton, I think the acting director-general has probably answered that question. If you wish to state it again, I guess you can, but I suspect you might get the same answer. It is up to you. I am not going to rule the question out of order, but we will get further and quicker today without arguments and inferences in our questions, as I have stated to other members.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much for your guidance, Deputy Speaker. Acting Director-General, I table a further media release from Business Chamber Queensland titled 'State Budget 26-27 a missed opportunity' where they state business confidence is lower than levels seen during the GFC. Do Business Chamber Queensland's survey results on business confidence, taken from small businesses' own experience, align with the department's analysis of business confidence?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Acting Director-General, you may take a moment to review that if you wish.

Mr Sinclair: Would you mind repeating the question for me?

Ms PEASE: Given the media release titled the 'State Budget 26-27 a missed opportunity' states that business confidence is lower than levels seen in the GFC, do the Business Chamber Queensland's survey results on business confidence, taken directly from small businesses' own experiences, align with the department's analysis of business confidence in Queensland?

Mr Sinclair: As I said in my previous answer, the feedback from the Business Chamber Queensland aligns with the challenging conditions that we see in the sector and come to us from a variety of different sources. As well, in terms of the budget, I have mentioned before the \$85 million committed there for the current year, which includes \$40 million which we expect to provide to small and family businesses through a variety of grants programs and, in addition to that, a range of other supports, including through our Small Business Assistance officers and the Small Business Support Network, as well as a new training opportunities, and also increasing efforts to provide easier access to government procurement exercises.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, given the time elapsed, we will take some questions from government MPs.

Mr LISTER: Minister, can you update the committee on what the budget is doing to support small and family business regarding the impact of the fuel supply disruptions we have been seeing?

Mr MINNIKIN: I thank the member for the question. It was good to spend some time with you the last couple of weeks for a three-day tour of the Southern Downs, and I thank you very much for facilitating it. As I said in my introduction, Queensland small and family businesses have taken a triple hit within the first six months of 2026. They are: federal Labor's failure to control inflation, leading to three interest rate rises; federal Labor's budget built on broken promises; and thirdly, the ongoing fuel crisis which the member referred to. Remember, these impacts follow a decade of decline under state Labor.

As I also said earlier, business survey and consumers indexes have shown a decline in business confidence driven by these national and international issues and that is why Queensland's small and family businesses want certainty and, above all else, stability. They want certainty and stability to get on and make decisions, invest in their local communities, make money, grow and thrive.

Growing small and family businesses is at the heart of the Small and Family Business First approach and action statement. Certainty and stability are at the very heart of the 2026-27 Crisafulli government budget. We have put an end to rising energy usage costs, an end to the impact of rising victim numbers and an end to the uncertainty caused by rising state taxes, charges and red tape. In fact, under the Crisafulli government, small and family businesses will see energy costs fall, as I said earlier in my opening statement, by anywhere from eight to 14 per cent across Queensland, depending on their location and tariff. For Queensland manufacturers, retailers and hospitality operators, lower energy costs mean more money is available to employ staff, invest in equipment and absorb temporary increases in transport costs.

While we are delivering certainty, I acknowledge the uncertainty driven by the Albanese government's handling of the fuel crisis. In response, the Crisafulli government is progressing its Fuel Security Plan, including unlocking oil reserves, supporting more local fuel refining and increasing fuel storage capacity. This proactive approach by the Crisafulli government supports Queensland's small and family businesses by providing energy cost relief, manages the impacts of fuel supply disruption and strengthens Queensland's future fuel resilience, which will be of note to the member asking the question. We continue to advocate for a national fuel shipment dashboard to improve planning for supply pressures.

As part of my ongoing engagement with industry stakeholders, I met with small business owners and industry representatives to discuss how global economic conditions are impacting Queensland's small and family businesses and their customers. My department is also conducting targeted engagement with stakeholders, particularly in regional areas where supply challenges are most acute, and is linking Queensland's small businesses to available support services. The Crisafulli government will keep advocating for the interests of Queenslanders, including small and family businesses, and provide updated information as developments occur. I thank the member for the question.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, with reference to interest rate rises and the recent federal budget, can you update the committee on what this budget is doing to support small and family businesses?

Mr MINNIKIN: Member, you are a fierce advocate for small business, and I thank you for your efforts in this regard. As I just outlined, federal Labor's triple hit included a failure to control inflation, three interest rate rises and a federal Labor budget built on broken promises.

Let's look at what industry said about the federal Labor budget—and I have articles ready to be tabled, if required. Heidi Cooper from Business Chamber Queensland said—

... higher taxes on investment will only make it harder to grow, hire and compete.

...

What businesses need now is certainty, genuine consultation and a swift resolution to these issues ...

Skye Cappuccio, the CEO of the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia, known as COSBOA, said—

Small businesses are looking for certainty, simplicity and practical support to help them manage the cumulative pressures of fuel, energy, insurance, wages, rent, freight and compliance costs.

Finally, Robert Gottlieb, writing in the *Australian*, said—

... concealed in the detailed additional documentation was a devastating set of blows designed to hit successful family businesses.

As I said, the Crisafulli government's 2026-27 budget delivers the certainty and stability that small and family businesses need. Small and family businesses can make decisions with confidence, choose where to invest and get on with making money, growing and thriving.

I also said earlier that we are putting an end to rising energy usage costs, rising victim numbers and rising taxes, charges and red tape. I repeat: under the Crisafulli government, small and family businesses will see energy usage costs fall by eight to 14 per cent across Queensland, depending on their location and their tariff structure. We are strengthening the foundations for small and family businesses with no new or no increased taxes, ensuring businesses have access to information and support during periods of economic uncertainty. We are also delivering targeted programs, and I emphasise this point.

To the member's question, we are not the Albanese government. The Treasurer, David Janetzki, is not Jim Chalmers. The contrast with the federal Labor budget could not be clearer. While businesses are expressing concern about uncertainty at the national level, the Crisafulli government's budget places certainty and stability at the heart of our plan to support Queensland's small and family businesses. I am pleased to say that we are seeing results. Queensland business confidence continues to track higher than the national average. When it comes to choosing a place to invest, Queensland is winning the State of Origin battle in that regard. Businesses will go where they are treated best, and the numbers speak for themselves.

In closing, I would say to the member: you asked a good question. I will say as well: according to the *Daily Telegraph* in Sydney on 8 July, more than 8½ thousand businesses have moved to Queensland while 6,000 have left New South Wales. The chief executive officer of Business NSW, Daniel Hunter, said—

Businesses are packing up and heading north of the Tweed because Queensland is increasingly seen as the easier place to invest, employ and grow.

Mr LISTER: Minister, can you update the committee on the budget's support for the Secure Communities Partnership Program and outcomes for businesses that applied directly for this funding?

Mr MINNIKIN: I know that the member for Southern Downs is a great supporter of the Secure Communities Partnership Program. Together, we have seen firsthand the benefits to the small businesses in his electorate of Southern Downs. As I said earlier, a couple of weeks ago I had three days with him. As we announced to this committee last year, we are continuing to expand the Crisafulli government's Secure Communities Partnership Program, giving access to small and family businesses to invest directly in their business. We have delivered.

To recap: this is a program targeted at making Queensland safer and delivering support for thousands of small and family businesses after Labor's decade of decline, which saw victims of crime numbers soar. The Crisafulli government is turning the tide on Labor's victim numbers with measures such as stronger laws and more police on the ground, which are already delivering positive results. Early results show that there are green shoots in the fight against Labor's youth crime crisis. Since the election in October 2024, 1,805 new officers have been sworn in to the Queensland Police Service, far exceeding the Crisafulli government's election commitment to deliver 1,600 new recruits.

When it comes to the Secure Communities Partnership Program, we recently announced the outcomes of round 2. Eligible small businesses were able to apply directly for grant funding of between \$5,000 and \$20,000 to implement crime prevention measures specifically. Under this round, 174 small businesses were awarded grants, with direct funding that shared in almost \$2 million to support a wide range of crime prevention measures. Some are investing in surveillance and detection systems, while others are focusing on improving access control and entry management, implementing physical security measures, upgrading alarm systems or enhancing lighting and environmental security. The small businesses sharing in this round of funding represent a diverse range of industries including, but not limited to, retail, trade, accommodation, food services, health care and social assistance.

I was in Goondiwindi earlier this month with the member for Southern Downs, as I mentioned. He would recall that we visited O'Brien Plumbing, which received just over \$5,000 to upgrade their security systems. I also note that two-thirds of funding in this release has been awarded to small businesses based in regional Queensland, ensuring support reaches every corner of our state. I congratulated Harle and Stacey for taking proactive steps to protect their livelihood, employees and customers while contributing to safer communities across Queensland.

I also had the chance to visit some local businesses that received Secure Communities Partnership grants in Rockhampton with their great local member, Donna Kirkland. While I was paying close attention to the fishing tackle at local institution Barra Jacks, being an avid fisher myself, the manager, Steve, was secure in the knowledge that he had invested in monitoring technology.

An hour down the road I visited a local cafe and coffee shop called The Alley with the member for Keppel, Nigel Hutton. Ben and Leah, the small business cafe owners, had just received Secure Communities Partnership funding for security gates to protect their staff and customers. We know that when small businesses and their staff are safe they can focus on what they do best: serving their communities, creating jobs and driving Queensland's economy forward. Whether you own a tackle shop, a coffee shop, an accountancy firm or a marketing company, targeted funding for crime prevention measures is helping to build stronger, fairer and safer communities across the state.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister update the committee on the budget support for ongoing delivery of the Secure Communities Partnership Program where local councils applied for funding?

Mr MINNIKIN: Again, I thank the member for Townsville for the question. I know in the last 12 to 15 months there have been many initiatives launched in Townsville with the member, and I very much thank him for his advocacy. He was there when we launched the program back in May 2025 and he has been a fierce advocate for the program ever since. I congratulate him for his advocacy.

In addition to the 174 businesses who directly received their Secure Communities Partnership Program grant, we also opened round 2 to local government applications to enable them to install safety upgrades directly to benefit their constituents in their communities. Again, our efforts to end Labor's youth crime crisis were well supported, with 21 local councils receiving funding for crime prevention measures to protect small and family business. The investment will support small business owners in shopping strips and local shopping areas to operate with greater confidence, reduce the impact of crime and boost local economic activity.

As I said earlier, under round 2, 21 local councils received funding to deliver 24 crime prevention projects across Queensland. That, combined with the 174 direct-to-business grants awarded through the Secure Communities Partnership Program, means that thousands of Queensland small and family businesses will benefit from improved security and safer business precincts. These projects complement the Crisafulli government's broader commitment to restoring community safety through stronger laws and additional police officers. Together, these measures, along with the Secure Communities Partnership Program, are helping reduce the impact of crime on small businesses, their employees and customers while simultaneously supporting local economies.

I was pleased to recently join Toowoomba local member Trevor Watts; the Speaker, the Hon. Pat Weir; and Mayor Geoff McDonald to meet some of the small businesses that benefited from the work that they are doing as part of a joint \$390,000 security investment uplift in the Toowoomba CBD. For cafe owners like Lisa from Jilly's, who I met, and Stephen from La Pizzaiola, this means additional peace of mind when it comes to safety not just for their staff but also for their customers.

I am sure the member for Lytton would also be interested in some of the work that Brisbane City Council will deliver in her electorate to support small businesses in the Wynnum CBD. I do acknowledge that the shadow minister very much is an avid supporter of the small businesses in her electorate. It was a pleasure to work with the local council and Brisbane City Council to provide this grant recently.

Further afield, successful projects will be funded in the Boonah town centre, which will be of interest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Member for Townsville, the Secure Communities Partnership Program will deliver upgrades to CCTV for a safer Townsville CBD along Flinders Street, the home of Townsville's safe night precinct. This is in addition to the installation of CCTV for a safer Aitkenvale in the member for Mundingburra's electorate. I thank the Townsville City Council very much for their support for the small and family business community. Finally, member for Theodore, on the Gold Coast there are upgrades to the Kirra small business precinct—again, backed by the Gold Coast City council.

Our Secure Communities Partnership Program is continuing to deliver practical crime prevention measures that create a safer environment for small businesses, their staff and their customers. As we all know, when small and family businesses feel secure, they can invest, expand and create more local jobs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will move to non-government questions.

Ms PEASE: Thank you for your kind words there, Minister. I am a great supporter of small and family businesses, as you know. That is why I am particularly interested in hearing from the acting director-general. In your earlier answer you said that the total budget allocation for direct support to small and family businesses was \$85 million. Would you be able to break down that figure by individual programs, please?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Acting Director-General, if you need a moment to get a brief, that is okay.

Mr Sinclair: We are going to find that information. I might start by giving a breakdown of the grants programs and then we can come back to the rest of the information. In the 2026-27 budget, the Business Boost Grants Program includes estimated expenditure of \$2.8 million; the Business Growth Fund, \$2.8 million; the Secure Communities Partnership Program, \$10.1 million; the Regional Business Gateways Program, \$6.1 million; the Construction Business Advancement Grant, \$4.4 million; the Professional Care Business Advancement Grant, \$2 million; the Small Business Apprenticeship Pilot Program, \$6 million; and the AI adoption grant, \$5 million.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are there more details coming?

Mr Sinclair: We may need to come back with the details that will give the individual costs for the remaining support programs that build up to the \$85 million total.

Ms PEASE: Just for clarity, those figures that you mentioned do not add up to \$85 million. You are coming back with further details?

Mr Sinclair: Sorry, I should have clarified. Those figures I have given you are for the grants programs for the current year. Then we will come back with the additional detail around the distribution to the other support programs.

Ms PEASE: Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, are you agreeable to that?

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, you earlier referenced that you let small businesses know what was available. Is any of that \$85 million that you talked about budgeted for promoting the small business programs or grants?

Mr Sinclair: Yes, it is. I can give some details to that. For Queensland Small Business Month, in 2025-26 we spent \$21,012; for the small business disaster assistance grants, \$2,236; for the Small Business Apprenticeship Program, \$499; for the Cyber Wardens program, \$466; for crime prevention webinars, \$199; for the First Nations business expo, \$55; for the Digital graduate program, \$109; and for service centre operations, \$400.

Ms PEASE: Just to clarify that, I thought that you said it was for the 2025-26 budget or is that for the 2026-27 budget?

Mr Sinclair: Those figures are for 2025-26.

Ms PEASE: We are talking about the 2026-27 budget. If you can give any figures for that, that would be great.

Mr Sinclair: We do not have that broken out. It would be within the supplies and services line item.

Ms PEASE: Is any of the \$85 million budgeted for external administration of the programs or grants? Has there been an allocation for external administration?

Mr Sinclair: Could you possibly clarify 'external administration'?

Ms PEASE: Who is administering it? Is it going out to contractors or is it being held in-house? Who is performing the administrative tasks associated with the administration of the programs or grants?

Mr Sinclair: The vast majority of the grants program would be administered and assessed within the department. In some instances we have engaged other departments, including QRIDA, which sits within the department of natural resources, to assist—for example, with the disaster recovery grants. Other agencies that have supported us are, for example, the Department of Trade, Employment and Training around the small business apprenticeship pilot scheme.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, just going back to our conversation with regard to the document we tabled earlier from Business Chamber Queensland titled 'State Budget 26-27 a missed opportunity', has the department modelled the expected impact of the 2026-27 Queensland budget on worsening small business confidence?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before you proceed, Acting Director-General, it sounded like there was an argument in that question. Member, I am not sure if you intended for there to be an argument, but it sounded like there was in terms of 'worsening small business confidence'. If you could put that more clearly, it that would be appreciated.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I think the authentication for the remark in the question 'worsening small business confidence' is directly related to the document that we tabled. That is a direct quote from the Business Chamber's statement, so that is the authentication for that element of the question.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: whilst I accept the Manager of Opposition Business's point of order in relation to authentication, there have been a number of rulings with respect to questions being put without having to require other elements which could have either arguments, imputations or inferences contained within them. I submit to you the question could be put without the preamble.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do agree with the Leader of the House, and that is the point I was making. Member, the question is fine in the sense of 'has the department done modelling about the impacts of the state budget on business confidence?' You have already made a reference to Business Chamber Queensland's statements. I think you understand the question, Acting Director-General.

Mr Sinclair: I do. As I mentioned earlier, the department has not undertaken specific modelling around the economic impacts of the budget. As part of our roles we engage across the sector, including with the Business Chamber and others, to understand the conditions facing small and family business and also to make sure that the grants and other support programs that are available are tailored to respond to that. There is no specific modelling around the actual impacts.

Ms PEASE: Has your department or the Office of the Small Business Commissioner received any complaints or representations from small businesses regarding the administration of the regional payroll tax discount?

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: with regard to regional payroll tax, I am checking that the question has been directed at the right committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a fair point, Minister, in that the regional payroll tax discount is definitely within the remit of Treasury. It is a question about whether any complaints have been received by this department. I understand where the member is coming from. Was the question addressed to the acting director-general?

Ms PEASE: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Strictly speaking, that question is not related to this portfolio, but if the acting director-general has any knowledge about that issue I am sure he would be able to answer it in an appropriate manner. Member, I will allow the acting director-general to answer, but it is a tax question for Treasury.

Mr Sinclair: Obviously, I work closely with the Small Business Commissioner, but she reports to the minister, so I am not aware of any issues that have been raised with her. I cannot answer on her behalf. I am not aware of any that have been raised with the department.

Ms PEASE: I table a letter from the Mackay Region Chamber of Commerce which outlines increased audit activity on small businesses—so we are talking about small businesses in the Mackay region—by the Queensland Revenue Office. Is your department supporting Queensland Treasury or the Queensland Revenue Office in undertaking audit activity on small businesses accessing the regional payroll tax discount?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: whilst there was some latitude provided with the previous question, this question is well and truly related to a portfolio area under the auspices of the Treasurer. I understand the latitude that was given in the previous question and I accept that, but this further question is clearly within the remit of the Treasurer and Treasury.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the minister has answered several questions that went to federal issues, including in his opening statement—

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I have not answered a question yet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just let the Manager of Opposition Business finish his point of order, and if you have a further point of order, Minister, you are entitled to make it.

Mr de BRENNI: I have heard the minister answer plenty of questions and make plenty of statements throughout the course of this hearing. He felt free to traverse into federal fiscal policy. He felt free to traverse into a range of other agencies. I would also make it very clear that the question from the member for Lytton asked about the activities of this agency and whether they had expended any resources supporting another agency. The expenditure of this agency's resources is entirely a matter for this acting director-general in the expenditure of his budget. If it is in pursuit of another agency's objectives, that is immaterial. This is about whether or not this agency's resources have been expended in pursuit of whatever the government's objectives are.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a further point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it to that point of order?

Dr ROWAN: To that point of order, the question as put relates to a different portfolio area. With respect to the responses provided by the minister, they relate to other questions as asked. The standing orders clearly provide that questions asked in these portfolio sessions of relevant individuals, whether it is ministers or public servants, must comply with the relevant portfolio hearings and sessions. I would

submit to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the question as asked does not comply with those in relation to portfolio responsibilities. The responses provided by the minister relate separately to separate questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just one moment, members. In relation to the issue of the minister making statements and answering questions that may traverse a range of areas, there is a distinction between a question being asked by a member of the committee which needs to be related to this portfolio and comply with the rules related to the asking of questions. The minister's response, however, merely needs to be relevant to the question that is asked. If a question is allowed and the minister is relevant in responding, that is a different issue to the nature of questions being asked. It is the same with opening statements. That is the first issue. In relation to the second issue, I am just going to seek some advice.

Leader of the House and Manager of Opposition Business, the question as originally asked by the member for Lytton was slightly different to the one that was refined by her in relation to seeking details of any expenditure by the department in relation to OSR activities. I would have ruled the first question out of order. The second question is slightly different because it goes to expenditure of the department. I understand the acting director-general would be able to answer that question in terms of expenditure, so I call the acting director-general in relation to that question.

Mr Sinclair: Within the letter, it states about asking the minister responsible for revenue about this. This is not something that the department has contributed to or is involved in this work.

Ms PEASE: Thank you. Can I get some clarity around that, please—so you are confirming that there has been no expenditure from your department with regard to this matter?

Mr Sinclair: That is correct.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Given the time that has elapsed, we will go to government questions now.

Dr ROWAN: My question is to the minister. Could you please update the committee on how micro-credential courses funded in this state budget will be delivered, including the importance of procurement, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity information for small and family businesses?

Mr MINNIKIN: I thank the member for the question. I have seen firsthand how big a supporter the member for Moggill is when it comes to small and family business. It was a little over a couple of months ago that I joined the member to visit a range of local small businesses, including those in the Kenmore Village Shopping Centre, and I thank him for the privilege of doing that—and a shout-out to the cafe owners, jewellers and fashion shops who make up that wonderful part of Queensland. It was a delight to spend time with him in the electorate of Moggill.

The Crisafulli government is securing employment for more Queenslanders through free small business micro-credential courses focusing on procurement, AI and cybersecurity. When I say micro-credential courses, I am talking typically a couple of hours a week for about six weeks in procurement, AI and cybersecurity. This budget provides an \$11½ million investment to help small and family businesses grow and adapt through these courses, which will be of interest to the member for Moggill.

Why have we chosen to focus on these particular areas? We have taken a calm and methodical approach by travelling across the state and listening directly to the feedback of small and family businesses no matter where they are. These courses are being delivered by the University of the Sunshine Coast. This initiative forms part of the Crisafulli government's Small and Family Business First Action Statement. It has been listed; it is another one that we are ticking off. We are doing what we say we will do.

I was pleased to be at the Sunshine Coast University earlier this week with the local member for Buderim, Minister Brent Mickelberg, to meet Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Bartlett and her staff where they announced these new courses with me. While I was there, I met local Glass House small business owner Belinda from Wild Horse Turf company and we discussed the benefits of becoming more knowledgeable about AI and how it could improve productivity and her business's bottom line.

During consultation, many small and family businesses told us they wanted a better understanding of procurement and tendering processes. They see government procurement as an opportunity for growth but they want practical skills to help them compete effectively. That is why procurement is one of the key pillars of these micro-credential courses. Whether it is supplying goods and services to be a part of the \$35 billion annual procurement by the Crisafulli government or pursuing

more than \$2½ billion in procurement opportunities linked to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we want Queensland small and family businesses to have the knowledge and confidence to put their best foot forward.

Micro-credentials offer short, focused courses to develop skills and train staff in targeted topics that reflect the contemporary needs of the small business sector. These courses, and others to be introduced in the coming years, are designed to help Queensland small and family businesses win more work, improve productivity, strengthen cyber resilience and build the skills they need to remain competitive in a rapidly changing economy. The courses are part of a plan to end a decade of decline under the former Labor government where champagne cork popping celebrations during Queensland Small Business Month failed to deliver the tools small and family businesses needed to grow.

These micro-credential programs offer flexible delivery options, including face to face, online learning and a hybrid flexible format, which is a combination of the two, to ensure accessibility for businesses regardless of their location, schedule or learning preferences. From Coolangatta to Cape York these courses are available now for Queensland small businesses. By helping them, their owners and employees build skills in procurement, AI and cybersecurity. We are giving Queensland businesses, finally, the tools they need to innovate, compete and grow.

I will finish with a quote from Professor Bartlett, the vice-chancellor, when we launched the program with her. She said—

By designing courses that are targeted, contemporary and accessible, we can help ensure business owners and their staff have access to learning that is both relevant and immediately useful to their business operations

Member for Moggill, I thank you for the question. The next time you are visiting Kenmore Village please tell those small and family business owners looking at cybersecurity, AI or procurement to check out these free courses being offered by the Crisafulli government at business.qld.gov.au.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Can the minister update the committee on the outcomes of this year's Small Business Month and what the budget delivers for future years?

Mr MINNIKIN: I thank the member for the question. It was a pleasure to join the member for Theodore on the Gold Coast to open one of our small business expos during Queensland Small Business Month in May. It was great to see him there. What struck me most was the enthusiasm of those Gold Coast businesses and their willingness to have a crack and work hard to turn their ideas into something that would turn a profit.

Queensland's Small Business Month is continuing to go from strength to strength—this year delivering its strongest program yet. Our program strengthened capability and growth, reaching over 11,500 participants through the delivery of 215 unique events. Many of these were supported by our event delivery grants, providing funding towards events in regional Queensland that built resilience, embraced innovation and seized opportunities.

When we meet small and family businesses face to face, as all members of the Crisafulli government do regularly, we understand the challenges they currently face. We listened and delivered a program and opportunities designed to support Queensland small and family businesses. It is a stark contrast to the types of events that Queensland Labor once prioritised, such as soirees at Parliament House during Small Business Month. Instead, we are focusing with targeted programs. This year we also marked the launch of our inaugural Collaboration Partner Program, and we welcomed 52 organisations externally joining with the Crisafulli government to deliver events across Queensland. This significantly expanded the reach of Queensland Small Business Month.

I can let the committee know that for the first time we delivered three small business expos—in Cairns, the Gold Coast and Brisbane, where I did meet the shadow minister—which almost 1,000 small and family businesses attended. All three of these expos were an undoubted success. It was a pleasure to open each and every one of these expos and meet the small and family businesses seeking advice and information from a wide range of exhibitors.

During Small Business Month our Mentoring for Growth program—which is a fantastic program—delivered 183 tailored mentoring sessions to address the specific needs of small business owners. For those unable to attend events, we expanded our digital engagement through our new Breaking Barriers video series, allowing access to resources and critical content. Throughout Small Business Month I had the privilege of meeting entrepreneurs in Maroochydore, business owners in Morayfield and industry representatives across local chamber events in Townsville, Toowoomba and Cairns. I valued greatly the opportunity to hear firsthand about their challenges, successes and aspirations for growth.

Small and family businesses know they can count on the Crisafulli government to deliver support, whether it is a reduction in power prices or programs and events that support helping them grow and thrive. That is why Queensland's Small Business Month this year was such a significant event, recognising the resilience, passion and determination of small business owners. I would like to take this opportunity to again thank the staff within my department who facilitated the launch and range of these events across the state. They did an outstanding job. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate and recognise all the chambers of commerce and various business organisations that hosted events delivering important outcomes for small and family businesses. I look forward to small and family business month in May next year.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister update the committee on the budget's delivery of the apprenticeship pilot program and its importance ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games?

Mr MINNIKIN: I thank the member for the question. I know that, as he is a former sparky and small business owner, the member for Townsville would know more than most just how important apprentices are for small business when it comes to delivering Queensland's future infrastructure, and I acknowledge his past. I also recognise the Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training, Ms Bates, for her efforts in ending Labor's tradie drain and building the workforce that Queensland needs.

I can assure the member for Townsville that my department is also backing our construction industry, delivering a program that helps small and family businesses manage wage costs whilst apprentices attend training. Launched back in October last year, the Small Business Apprenticeship Pilot Program was open for eligible construction trade apprentices who commenced or recommenced training on 1 July 2025 and who passed their probation. We support small and family businesses with 50 per cent of an apprentice's wage during their eight weeks of training in years 1 and 2 and a subsidy for an additional 25 per cent support during years 3 and 4. The program helps small and family businesses manage one of the key barriers to taking on apprentices by offsetting wage costs while apprentices attend formal training.

The program was so popular that by 11 June all 2,000 available places were filled, meeting the registration target and demonstrating a strong demand from eligible small and family construction businesses. For the benefit of the committee, I can say that 68 per cent of those apprentices were aged under 21. I can inform the member for Townsville that 16 per cent of those apprentices were from North and Far North Queensland while, member for Theodore, 13 per cent were from the Gold Coast. Not to be forgotten, member for Southern Downs, 7.4 per cent of apprentices were from the Darling Downs and South-West Queensland.

Also for the benefit of the committee, I can say that the highest number of registrations were for carpentry apprentices, 28 per cent; followed by electrical apprentices, 27 per cent; plumbing apprentices, 14 per cent; air conditioning and refrigeration apprentices, six per cent; and engineering fabrication apprentices, six per cent. The delivery of this program over the four years is funded under the Crisafulli government budget. The pilot is no longer a pilot and so I was pleased to join Minister Bates and Construction Skills Queensland last week to announce another 2,000 spots to continue this initiative.

The delivery of support for small and family businesses to hire and train apprentices is in stark contrast to Labor's legacy, where a decade of decline saw a skills crisis worker shortage in key industries around the state. I recently attended the National Electrical and Communications Association Awards, the NECA Awards, and I met the Domestic Apprentice of the Year, Roisin, and the Communications Apprentice of the Year, Isaac. They are fantastic young Queenslanders. I can assure the committee that there are some quality apprentices being trained, and some of the best people to train them are our small and family businesses.

In relation to the question, the success of the program is particularly important as Queensland prepares for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, with the six-year countdown clock well and truly underway. Delivering the infrastructure and economic opportunities associated with the games will obviously require a skilled workforce, and small and family businesses will indeed be central to that effort. That is why the Crisafulli government will back programs like the Small Business Apprenticeship Pilot Program, to give small businesses the confidence and support they need to take on apprentices, create jobs and strengthen local communities across Queensland. By helping businesses take on and retain apprentices today, we are investing in the tradespeople Queensland will need in the future.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister update the committee on what the Queensland government is doing to support regional small and family businesses as part of the Regional Business Gateways Program?

Mr MINNIKIN: Again, I thank the member for the question and for his fierce advocacy and support for all things that help regional Queensland small businesses grow and thrive. I know that he is particularly passionate about this area of public policy, and he is to be commended for that.

Regional Queensland small and family businesses are absolutely vital to their communities, providing employment, goods and services. This is a budget that is delivering certainty and stability—and I will keep repeating this: giving them certainty and stability—for Queensland small and family businesses, particularly in regional Queensland. This is a budget that strengthens the foundations for a fresh start, with new initiatives to help small and family businesses across regional Queensland to grow, employ and succeed. It will fund new, innovative, community-led programs to support regional small businesses to grow and thrive. I will say it again: the budget has no new taxes, is tackling energy costs and has targeted programs to support small and family businesses.

Through the Regional Business Gateways Program, the Crisafulli government is investing between \$250,000 and \$600,000 per initiative to support locally-led projects that strengthen business capability to grow regional industries, create new economic opportunities and end a decade of decline under Labor, which ignored regional small and family businesses. To be very clear, the Regional Business Gateways Program is not a one-size-fits-all approach. As the member would know, what works in Townsville will be different to the Southern Downs, which is why it will not be a one-size-fits-all approach. It recognises that the needs of a tourism region are different to those of, say, an agricultural, resources or manufacturing community. That is the power of this particular program. By putting regional organisations in the driver's seat and supporting locally-led solutions, the Crisafulli government is helping small and family businesses to access opportunities, improve resilience and contribute to stronger regional economies across the state.

I was pleased to launch the program during Queensland Small Business Month back in May alongside the member for Townsville and his colleagues and mine the members for Thuringowa and Mundingburra. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank Maria James from Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Development Zone, or MITEZ as it is known, for joining us at the launch of this invaluable program. Later that day I outlined the program to members of the Townsville Chamber of Commerce—and the member was with me—and it was great to see the enthusiasm about what could be achieved for regional Queenslanders. Regional Queensland faces different opportunities and challenges in every community.

Let me re-emphasise: the Regional Business Gateways Program recognises that local organisations are often best placed to identify barriers to growth and deliver practical solutions for their local businesses. This is what innovation, I believe, truly looks like. We are calling on local business groups, chambers of commerce, councils and not-for-profits to partner with the Crisafulli government to deliver programs aimed at empowering local business communities to unlock regional opportunities. As I said, it was launched in May and expressions of interest closed recently. I can tell committee members that there was enormous support from organisations in regional Queensland.

Whether it is helping small businesses connect with major infrastructure projects or supply chain opportunities or bringing together councils, chambers of commerce and industry groups around a shared regional strategy, these projects will unlock opportunities that are unique to small and family businesses in each particular region. The Crisafulli government is putting regional communities in the driver's seat to shape the small and family business support and economic opportunities that matter most to them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is time to return to non-government questions.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, what role does your department play in the implementation of the government's on-time, every-time small business payment guarantee election commitment across government?

Mr Sinclair: Obviously the department recognises the importance of cash flow for all businesses but for small and family businesses in particular. The role of the department is really a dual role. The first component of that is in setting the framework across the whole of government to support agencies in the things that they can do to increase their performance around on-time payment. The second element of that role is to ensure the payments that we control within the department are provided in a timely manner. On-time Payment Policy outcomes have improved for small and family business with now across the whole of government 89.9 per cent of payments for the first three quarters of 2025-26 made on time, which was an increase from 87.9 per cent in the previous financial year. Within the department itself, 99.5 per cent of valid small business invoices were paid on time in quarter 2, increasing to 99.7 per cent in quarter 3.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, the Department of Transport and Main Roads has publicly outlined its implemented timeframes for the on-time, every-time payment guarantee. Which departments have begun implementation of the on-time, every-time payment guarantee? Can you advise that?

Mr BAILLIE: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order, member for Townsville?

Mr BAILLIE: It is on relevance. Wouldn't that be a question for other departments rather than—

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the Manager of Opposition Business?

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, the oversight of the on-time, every-time payment guarantee sits with this agency and I think it would be reasonable to expect that the acting director-general would have some oversight and awareness of which agencies are implementing the program he is responsible for.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your points of order, member for Townsville and Manager of Opposition Business. I am going to allow the question, primarily because I think in the answer just given by the acting director-general he referred to some oversight or responsibilities in that respect, so over to the acting director-general.

Mr Sinclair: While there is an election commitment around on time, every time, at the moment the relevant policy is the On-time Payment Policy, which is for these payments to be made within 20 calendar days. As I mentioned in the previous answer, while we provide advice and support to agencies that may come to us and seek our assistance around improving the delivery of their on-time payment outcomes, it is a matter for each director-general and their minister around their actual performance.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much, Acting Director-General. Minister, in light of the acting director-general's response and given that this area falls under your portfolio, will you implement a whole-of-government performance dashboard showing compliance with the on-time, every-time payment guarantee so that Queensland small businesses can see which agencies are meeting the government's election commitment?

Mr MINNIKIN: In relation to the whole essence of paying small businesses on time, that is something that is very important to the Crisafulli government because many members on our side of the chamber have come from a small business background. As we all know—

Ms PEASE: As have ours.

Mr MINNIKIN: I acknowledge that there are members on all sides of the chamber who have backgrounds in small business, but I also would note that, when listening to inaugural speeches, as I always do since becoming a member 14 years ago, particularly on the LNP side there are many members who come from a small and family business background. I will agree with the shadow minister on the importance of timely cash flow, because I think anyone who has come from a small business background would know that cash flow is absolutely critical when it comes to small and family business. I am very proud of what we have achieved so far in just on 21 months and I have already outlined in some of my answers to questions the different programs that we have implemented. I have rattled off many of them. Indeed, this is an election commitment to improve wherever we can the on-time payment in terms of small and family business payments directly to them.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Manager of Opposition Business?

Mr de BRENNI: I note that the acting director-general was unable to answer the question about which departments have been implementing the on-time, every-time payment guarantee and the member for Lytton then put it to the minister whether or not he would establish a dashboard so that the public could be—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr de BRENNI:—aware of that. My point of order is on relevance. I would ask that the minister respond to the question for clarity in relation to the revelation the acting director-general gave.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, your point of order, Leader of the House?

Dr ROWAN: My point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that under standing order 118 the minister is being relevant to the question as asked. He is providing substantial context. I would also submit to you that there was a lengthy statement by the Manager of Opposition Business before referencing his point of order and some characterisation with respect to comments provided by the acting director-general in relation to the previous question as answered which were not an accurate reflection of what was stated.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you; I understand. Members, I am going to allow the minister to continue being relevant. Maybe both the Leader of the Opposition and Manager of Opposition Business are sometimes providing context to their points of order. I am sure the minister is providing context around his answer, but I will remind the minister there was a second part to the question which you might want to come to.

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have outlined the fact that we all know that on-time payments are incredibly important, but the reality is that we have sequentially worked through a range of government election commitments and the on-time, every-time payment program is very much on our radar. We have absolutely begun work on this particular area of public policy, but I will say this in answering the question: I am very pleased with the fact that with the existing framework we still have to pay small businesses on time now. We are using the existing framework. We are absolutely improving our metrics on that. We are working across a whole-of-government approach and I want to re-emphasise that point: we are no longer working with a silo management structure; we are working across the whole of government. The on-time, every-time policy very much remains under consideration by the executive government and I look forward very much to providing an update to the House at the appropriate time. Given, keeping in mind, we are now 21 or 22 months into a four-year term, I made it very clear when I answered this initially that we are sequentially working through a range of government programs, and this is one of them.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, you said in your previous answer that the current policy is a 20-day guarantee. The government's election commitment is for a five-business-day guarantee. When will the five-business-day guarantee be implemented?

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order, Minister?

Mr MINNIKIN: I believe that question is one that only executive government can answer. I do not believe that the acting director-general is in a position to make that—

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thanks, Minister. What is your point of order, Manager of Opposition Business?

Mr de BRENNI: It is not a point of order for the minister to intervene and direct the acting director-general about how he should respond to the question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. That is—

Mr de BRENNI: Standing orders and the code of conduct for public servants set out how he should respond to that. He should be allowed to do that under his own steam.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: as I heard the question from the member for Lytton, as it relates to a policy question it is more appropriately directed to the minister as opposed to the acting director-general.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Springwood and Manager of Opposition Business, the minister is entitled to make a point of order. As I understood the minister's point of order, he was essentially making a point of order that this was a policy question. He is entitled to make that point of order as a member of parliament. I do not believe there was an attempt by the minister to do anything other than that. Manager of Opposition Business, in terms of your other point of order in relation to whether the acting director-general should be able to answer this, it is very near to being a policy question. I think that is the point of order the Leader of the House was making as well. I am going to allow the acting director-general to answer the question; however, it seems to me to be a policy question, which should be directed towards the minister.

Mr Sinclair: The department has 12 government election commitments. This is one of them. The timing of all of those commitments is a matter for executive government.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, can you advise where in the budget papers the funding appears for new grant programs for small and family businesses?

Mr Sinclair: This year's budget papers do not include new funding for the grants program. The grants programs I spoke to previously were part of the 2025-26 program. Those will be rolled out in the coming year.

Ms PEASE: To clarify that, there is no new dollar funding for new grants for small businesses in this year's budget?

Mr Sinclair: The \$40 million that I talked to previously is within the forward estimates. My answer previously was that they are within the budget papers of new measures. There are no new measures in the 2026-27 budget, but the funding committed to grant programs over the new year, including the new AI adoption grants, is within the budget papers.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, how many small business grant programs have continued that were already budgeted in the 2024-25 budget?

Mr Sinclair: Sorry, can I clarify?

Ms PEASE: With regard to the small business grant programs that have continued and that are in the process of being finalised, how many of those were budgeted in the 2024-25 budget?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the member's question clearly pertains to an appropriation bill other than the one we are dealing with now. I ask you to consider relevance, please.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Southern Downs. I heard the question. I think the question is relevant in the sense that there may be funding in this year's budget which is continuing programs from previous budgets, so there is a link to this year's budget in that sense. Acting Director-General, do you need any more time to grab a brief? Are you ready to go?

Mr Sinclair: We will just need a little time to find that information for 2024-25.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, are you okay if that is taken on notice for the end of the session?

Mr MINNIKIN: I am.

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Director-General, does the department have a specific percentage or numerical measure to quantify its key deliverable of red-tape reduction?

Mr Sinclair: The response to reducing red tape sits across a number of agencies. Within the department there are a number of programs in support of reducing red tape. This includes the work of the Small Business Commissioner, the rollout of the Queensland Procurement Policy and the ongoing ICT procurement pilot program, which is seeking to test ways to make procurement easier for small and family businesses. There are a variety of areas that are all pursuing this. In terms of a specific measure, no, we do not have one.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: At this juncture we will take some questions from government members.

Mr LISTER: Minister, can you update the committee on why the Queensland government has prioritised AI support for small and family businesses as part of this budget?

Mr MINNIKIN: Artificial intelligence will be—and is—a game changer for many businesses large and small across all industries. The Crisafulli government wants to ensure small and family businesses have the same opportunities afforded to larger businesses which are able to invest significant time and resources into exploring and utilising the benefits of AI. We want to make sure that we afford those same opportunities to small and family businesses. Unlike larger businesses, small and family businesses often do not have the time, resources or scale to take advantage of the benefits of AI but, with the right support being delivered by the Crisafulli government, AI can deliver enormous benefits for small and family businesses, just like we are seeing in large companies and corporations. For some small businesses this may mean automating repetitive tasks such as scheduling, rostering, invoicing and data entry. AI chatbots can answer basic customer questions instantly, even overnight or on weekends. AI can support your business to understand your customers' habits, help you to target your local marketing and even spot sales trends.

During Queensland Small Business Month in May, the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce successfully hosted AI: In Action for regional business. That was a breakfast panel supported by a Crisafulli government event delivery grant. That is the power of those event delivery grants in action.

This event brought together over 100 attendees from small and family businesses across the Darling Downs region and provided practical insights into leveraging AI for improved efficiency and competitiveness. Local business leaders showcased AI integration across marketing, administration and decision-making business functions. There was an interactive question and answer session which allowed attendees to explore their own businesses and to build confidence to adopt AI responsibly in their businesses.

AI is not about replacing people. Just like the introduction of the computer or the internet, it opens up a new world of opportunities. As a part of this budget, we have allocated \$10 million to support small and family businesses to uplift their AI capability for their business and their industry. I want to re-emphasise that point: AI is there to be used as a tool. The Crisafulli government is adamant that we want to adopt AI wherever practicable, but the greatest resource we will ever have is typified by the people beside me and behind me—people. People come first, but it would be foolish to shun AI. We know that it boosts productivity, not just for large businesses but, equally importantly, for the small and family businesses in my portfolio. I look forward to having more to announce in this space over the coming months, but Queenslanders should know that we are backing small and family businesses to embrace AI technology. It is indeed a new frontier.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister outline how the budget is delivering for small and family business across Townsville and North Queensland?

Mr MINNIKIN: I have had the chance, as I have said, to visit Townsville on numerous occasions since coming to government. I have the utmost respect for the North Queensland small and family business community, with over 12,000 small and family businesses across the region. That is quite an incredible number. The member for Townsville and his colleagues, the member for Thuringowa, Natalie Marr MP, the member for Mundingburra, Janelle Poole MP, and now the member for Hinchinbrook, Wayne Chiesa MP, are great advocates for the local area. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the way the four of you work in unison for good things for small and family business. All four of you are to be congratulated.

I have had the chance to join these members and many local small and family businesses on numerous occasions. At a local Olympic and Paralympic procurement event, we had more than 100 local businesses join us to hear how they can be part of delivering the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was an outstanding event. This is an important series of roadshows I have been conducting with the Minister for Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Hon. Tim Mander, with the support of local members, to ensure small and family businesses register their interest as part of the procurement process for \$2½ billion in contracts to deliver the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I have also had the opportunity to make some great announcements, including the launch of, as I said earlier, the Regional Business Gateways Program, with those expressions of interest recently closing. I also mentioned earlier that 16 per cent of small business apprentices under our apprenticeship pilot program were from North and Far North Queensland. With the recently announced extension of this program I look forward to seeing this figure grow.

In May, during Small Business Month, we joined more than 100 local small and family businesses at an event hosted by the Townsville Chamber of Commerce, which followed a smaller meeting with the actual chamber's executive. I have always enjoyed honest conversations with members of the Townsville small business community. Having run my own small business for many years, I am aware of the challenges of red tape and cash flow, but I never had to overcome Labor's youth crime crisis to the extent that small businesses face today and that is why I welcome the Townsville City Council's ongoing partnership with our Secure Communities Partnership Program.

Under the recent round of projects there will be upgrades for Townsville CBD and Flinders Street West that will benefit local small and family businesses in the member's own Townsville electorate. I am sure he welcomes that initiative. There are also upgrades of the Aitkenvale small business corridor in the electorate of Mundingburra. Further north there are upgrades for small businesses in Ingham, Halifax, Forrest Beach and Lucinda being delivered by the Hinchinbrook Shire Council in the electorate of the member for Hinchinbrook. I welcome the close working partnership with the Townsville and Hinchinbrook local governments to deliver safety upgrades for small and family businesses. In summary, this outcome is as a result of a strong local LNP influence across the region fighting for and ultimately delivering for their local communities. I again thank the member for the question and I again take this opportunity to thank the way he works with his colleagues delivering good things for small and family business in North Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will return to some non-government questions now.

Ms PEASE: I am wondering if we are any closer to getting the answer to that outstanding question at this point.

Mr Sinclair: I understand they are being prepared.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Acting Director-General, can you advise how many temporary or contract staff ended their employment with your department through 2025-26, please?

Mr Sinclair: Sorry, can I clarify that is throughout the year?

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Yes.

Mr Sinclair: Just a moment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a bit of detail in that question so they want to get it right.

Mr Sinclair: During the 2025-26 year, 109 employees in temporary roles concluded their employment with the department, comprising 15 who were transferred to another department, 38 where they came to the end of a contract and 56 resignations.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, I note on page 6 of the SDS that your agency's total budgeted expenses is \$601.7 million; is that correct?

Mr Sinclair: Yes, that's correct.

Ms PEASE: You earlier confirmed that \$85 million is allocated to direct support for small businesses?

Mr Sinclair: To support for small businesses, yes.

Ms PEASE: Can you confirm then that the direct support for small business represents just 14 per cent of your agency's total budget?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I think there is an inference in that question. You can put the question in another way to seek the information, but there is an inference in that question based on previous answers.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, can you advise what the percentage of your budget is for support for small businesses?

Mr Sinclair: We might just need a moment for some maths.

Mr LISTER: I would be happy to ask a question if there is time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Nice try, member for Southern Downs, but we are with the member for Lytton at the moment and the question has been asked. Acting Director-General, do you understand the question?

Mr Sinclair: Eighty-five million is 14 per cent of the department's budget, although I think for context we need to understand that the overall \$601 million includes a vast array of different types of unrelated expenditure, which includes whole-of-government ICT contracts, our customer service network, our online digital customer service delivery elements, our contact centres where people contact the government through 13QGOV—a whole variety of different things which obviously have a large impact on the percentage spend that is allocated to any one area of the department's budget.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Acting Director-General, of those 109 contracts that ended, and in relation to the 38 staff where the programs ended, what were the programs that came to an end?

Mr Sinclair: I do not have a list of all of the limited-life programs that have come to an end through the year. With the minister's agreement, it may be something that we can seek to find.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That was relating to your previous answer around 38—

Mr Sinclair: Yes. The other thing I should have said is that people on temporary contracts do not just leave at the end of limited-life programs. We use temporary contracts to provide surge capacity—for example, during a disaster season in our contact centres. We would use it to cover backfill where we need to bring people in while others go on extended periods of leave or secondment. It would be a complex piece of work to pull together every single program and the reason behind that.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Acting Director-General, could you clarify if that reduction represents a reduction in your department's overall FTE?

Mr Sinclair: I am sure members would be aware that the department was formed out of a number of machinery-of-government changes. You can appreciate that that has necessitated a whole series of staff movements in and out of the department, so it can be difficult to isolate those individual movements.

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Director-General, I refer you to prehearing question on notice No. 15. Could you advise the programs, initiatives and funds with limited-life funding to 30 June 2027?

Mr Sinclair: Can I clarify: you are seeking the limited-life programs that will end in 2026-27?

Mr de BRENNI: On 30 June 2027; that is correct.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: is that just related to small and family businesses, for clarity?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: By necessity, the question is restricted to the small and family business section of this estimates.

Mr Sinclair: We do not have the information to hand about which limited-life programs would finish in 2026-27.

Mr de BRENNI: Deputy Speaker, perhaps they can come back, if it is available?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a useful suggestion, I suppose, Manager of Opposition Business. It is up to the acting director-general and the minister.

Mr MINNIKIN: I am happy to, but I am conscious of time at the moment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Make a note of that, please.

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Director-General, can you advise the total funding provided in 2026-27 for direct support for First Nations small and family businesses?

Mr Sinclair: I mentioned previously the broad range of support for small and family business across the department's program. While that obviously is open to all First Nations small and family businesses across the state, questions about targeted programs for First Nations businesses are probably best directed to the relevant department.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, can you please advise if any funds budgeted for small business programs have been reallocated to other portfolio area programs?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: that is a very broad question, I would say, in relation to many aspects. I ask whether that is more appropriate for Treasury in the sense that there are many parts to the final part of the question. I submit to you, Deputy Speaker, to elicit that information it probably would have been best put in the Treasury portfolio section.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, I will not take another point of order, in the interests time, but can you restate the question so I can hear it again, please? I had a query in my own mind about it.

Ms PEASE: Can you advise if any funds budgeted for small business programs have been reallocated to other portfolio area programs?

Mr Sinclair: No funds have been reallocated from within the small and family business area of the department to other areas.

Ms PEASE: Further to that, can you advise if any other portfolio areas' budgeted funds have been reallocated to small and family business programs?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: again, on the nature of the question, I query whether the information that is attempting to be elicited by the member for Lytton is able to be covered within this portfolio estimates hearing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order. Member for Lytton, I am going to seek clarity from you about the question. Are you referring to transfers from other parts of the department or from other departments?

Ms PEASE: From within the department.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. That was not immediately clear on the question.

Mr Sinclair: No.

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Director-General, earlier you referred to the department being charged with 12 government election commitments. Can you advise the hearing, of those 12, which government election commitments are still outstanding?

Mr Sinclair: The first is to provide better ways for you to access help from government in person, over the phone and online. Encourage and support other agencies to provide clarity and ease of access to key performance metrics for government services. Make it easier for small businesses to tender for government work with simplified procurement processes, standardised contracts, smaller tenders and streamlined processes. The Secure Communities Partnership Program will fund critical safety measures to deter crime on small businesses, in partnership with local councils and chambers of commerce. The crime prevention grants are part of a two-year program with four \$10 million grant rounds to fund upgrades to security, CCTV, safety lighting or alarm systems in shopping precincts, commercial zones and community facilities. Establish a \$16 million Regional Business Gateways grant program to support local chambers of commerce, other trade organisations and local councils to build business hubs in Queensland regional centres, including \$1.6 million towards the Capricorn startup hub. \$11.5 million to extend the micro-credentials courses for four years to 2028, delivering six courses in priority areas of need, face to face and online for small business owners.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: we are going to run out of time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I understand. I was about to interrupt the acting director-general and ask the minister if he is able to come back to the committee with responses to questions he said he would come back on by the end of the session.

Mr MINNIKIN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and I am conscious of the time. The question was in relation to the grant funding continuing from the 2024-25 budget, and the answer to that specifically is that in the 2026-27 financial year there is \$12.4 million allocated for small and family business grants. I thank the department for scrambling to get that one.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are there any further ones before the end of session? Acting Director-General, do you have any information to bring back to the committee by the end of session?

Mr Sinclair: I do. The question was around the allocation of the \$85 million to small and family business. I mentioned the \$40 million for grants programs. In addition, there is \$20.4 million for disaster funding, \$13.4 million for other small business programs, \$3.4 million to support the Office of the Small Business Commissioner, and \$8.9 million operational budget, including employee expenses, accommodation costs and so on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for the information furnished to the committee. Minister, is there anything outstanding? No questions were taken on notice, I assume.

Ms PEASE: There was the limited-life programs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand. The minister has confirmed no questions have been taken on notice in this session. Members, the time for examination of this portfolio area has expired, so I declare the examination of that estimates to be complete. We will now take a short break for 15 minutes until 11.15 am and then resume the hearing.

Proceedings suspended from 11.01 am to 11.15 am.



Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Welcome back to the LCC, and welcome to customer services and open data viewers for the first time today. The committee will now review its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of customer services and open data. 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. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr MINNIKIN: I would, Deputy Speaker. Thank you, Deputy Speaker and again members of the committee and colleagues. Again I thank you for the opportunity to present on the achievements and priorities of the customer services and open data portfolio. The Crisafulli government is focusing on delivering secure, accessible and innovative services to Queenslanders, ensuring government is responsive to the needs of our communities, business and regions. Again, I would like to thank the dedicated staff within my department for delivering improved services and innovative solutions that benefit Queenslanders right across this state.

The Crisafulli government's approach to customer service delivery is to ensure Queenslanders have choice in how they interact with government. This government will invest and strengthen the three channels of customer service delivery, whether that be over the phone, through the Queensland government call centres, face-to-face customer service centres and a strong and secure digital channel to enhance service delivery for those Queenslanders who want to transact digitally. This budget invests

in this commitment, including \$24.9 million over the next two years to support the Queensland Digital Licence app and customer service portal, and to support development of key enhancements to the Queensland Digital Identity. We are a government which has invested in these digital services to help them grow, giving Queenslanders what they have been asking for—secure, convenient access to digital services whilst protecting personal information.

The Queensland Digital Licence app is now used by more than 1.4 million Queenslanders. I point out to the committee that that is double from where it was when we were elected back in October 2024. At the same time, this government has driven a 409 per cent user increase in the Queensland Digital Identity which now supports 3.6 million digital identities, with over 300,000 monthly users. Six months before we came into government, average wait times were almost 11 minutes. This is reduced with the average answer times now under three minutes, thanks to better use of resources and smarter technology.

We are adding to frontline services with an additional 13 driver examiners to increase our testing capacity. We have established the complaints clearing house to provide customers with a simplified and centralised way to submit complaints whilst also working across government to promote better complaint management practices, and fulfilling the recommendations of the Coaldrake review, something which was not implemented before we came to government.

As we are all aware, Queensland is no stranger to natural disasters and our contact centres play a critical role in disaster response. To ensure readiness, we have allocated \$4.3 million to sustain essential elements of the Queensland government contact centres' disaster readiness capability, ensuring reliable, timely information and support to communities when they need it most. In last year's budget, we established the \$1 billion Queensland Government Digital Fund to be delivered over four years. This fund is a Queensland-first, driving strategic investment in critical digital and IT systems to enable modern, efficient public services for all Queenslanders. To date, more than \$300 million has been allocated from the fund to modernise critical systems. These investments are focused on improving service delivery and ensuring Queenslanders receive reliable, secure and efficient services. The fund's success reflects the strengthened evaluation governance and planning led by my department.

We will continue to enhance the approval and governance framework around digital investments. To achieve this, we have established the Digital Queensland Investment Committee and the Digital Queensland Assurance Committee to oversee all digital and ICT projects over \$5 million to ensure projects are delivered efficiently, on time, on budget and with the maximum benefit to Queenslanders.

In an increasingly digital world, protecting the personal information of Queenslanders is paramount and a key focus area of the Crisafulli government. In November last year, I launched the Queensland Cyber Security Strategy 2025-2027. The strategy, the first in Queensland's history, is demonstration of this government's proactive approach to safeguarding government systems and data from cyber threats. The strategy is helping to identify emerging risks and strengthen defences across the public sector. It is expanding training programs and career pathways to build a skilled and capable cyber security workforce, and it is enhancing governance and assurance processes to improve risk management, ensure compliance and maintain public trust in government services. While we have achieved a great deal to date, I will say there is more to do. We are committed to putting our customers at the heart of government services and ensuring government meets Queenslanders' expectations for quality service delivery, whether that is online, over the phone or in person.

These initiatives demonstrate our unwavering commitment to delivering better services, embracing digital innovation and ensuring the security and trust of Queenslanders. By investing in governance, technology and customer service, we are building a government that is responsive, resilient and future-fit. Through you, I look forward to answering questions from the committee during this next session.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. For this session, I am going to take questions from government members first. I call the member for Southern Downs.

Mr LISTER: Minister, can you update the committee on the uptake of digital driver's licences and how this budget is assisting with that uptake?

Mr MINNIKIN: This is an important question. The use of digital licences stalled under Labor. It was used by only 16 per cent of Queenslanders. Under the Crisafulli government and in the time I have been the minister—21 months almost to the day—we have more than doubled that number. I am proud

to inform the committee that the uptake of the Queensland digital licence continues to grow strongly, with more than 1.4 million Queenslanders, or around one-third of all eligible licence holders, now using the app.

Since coming to office, the Crisafulli government has continued to invest in functionality and customer experience. The Crisafulli government is delivering \$24.9 million to continue to grow Queensland's digital service platform, including Queensland Digital Identity and the Queensland Digital Licence app. This is part of our plan to enhance the customer service offering for Queenslanders. We continue to invest in the Digital Licence app, with \$11.6 million committed for the 2026-27 financial year.

Under Labor, there were only two digital licences available and a photo identification card. Under the Crisafulli government, the Digital Licence app has grown to now provide access to 19 licences and accreditations, giving Queenslanders a single, secure and convenient way to store important government credentials on their mobile device. This includes traffic controller accreditations and dangerous goods driver licences, which were added during April this year. This builds on upgrades earlier in 2026 which introduced driver authorisations, pilot and escort licences and tow truck driver and tow truck assistant accreditations. In December last year, driver and rider trainer licences were also added to the app. Prior to this, we added nine Queensland Building and Construction Commission licences—what were referred to as the 'QBCC stack'—including plumbing and drainage, fire occupational, mechanical services occupational, building certifier, contractor and nominee supervisor licences.

The link between Queensland licences and organ donations has been re-established after more than two decades. We have included easier access to organ donation registration through the Digital Licence app, which generated more than 9,600 views and 1,128 registrations during May and June—a welcome step forward to organ and tissue donor registration. Direct links to the DonateLife portal are also now part of the driver's licence online application process and the face-to-face application process. There are more enhancements to come under our plan to make Queensland the most customer-friendly government in Australia.

As I said earlier, Queensland Digital Identity is the cornerstone of the state's digital customer service ecosystem, supporting over 3.6 million digital identities and approximately 260,000 unique monthly users. Queenslanders can now access almost 200 services across 19 agencies, ranging from digital licences and rental tenancy bond deposits and refunds to key services such as Daniel's Law and Seniors Card services.

We have always said that we will provide the services across multiple channels, including face to face, over the phone and online. For those who like to have all of their services available in digital form, the Crisafulli government is enhancing secure access to our online services by simplifying identity verification and providing a platform for government credentials to be stored in one convenient location: in the palm of your hand.

In closing, the Crisafulli government believes very much in choice. What works for one Queenslanders may not work for another. We want to ensure when it comes to the CX—the customer service experience—we give Queenslanders, regardless of where they live, choice.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Can the minister update the committee on what support is being provided to frontline services to deliver improved customer service outcomes for learner drivers?

Mr MINNIKIN: Member, you have been a very keen advocate in this area of public policy. There is always great excitement for any learner driver lining up to take their practical driving test. In my case, it is almost impossible for me to go back that far. For many, it is a huge day of excitement. Most of those lining up are young Queenslanders who have recently turned 17 and are supported by their parents or guardians, who assisted them through their learner hours. Between 1 July last year and 30 June this year, 196,779 driving tests were conducted, largely by government employees, with my department employing a workforce equivalent to approximately 125 full-time driving examiner positions dedicated to the delivery of this important service.

Over the past decade there have been growing pressures on booking times driven by population growth and, more recently, by changes to the federal government's recognised country scheme, which was acknowledged back in November 2025. This change in federal Labor government policy is estimated to result in more than 900 additional tests per month in Queensland, adding further pressure to the state's driver-testing network. Other states have noted similar issues and reported similar impacts to their driver-testing booking times.

The former Labor government failed to plan for the future. This is in stark contrast to the Crisafulli government that is planning for the future by delivering additional frontline services now. To support our mostly young learner drivers and their parents and guardians, we have added an additional 13 driving examiners to increase our testing capacity by more than 1,500 tests per month so Queenslanders can get their driver's licence sooner. These positions include three cross-trained customer service adviser/driving examiner positions to service the Bundaberg and Toowoomba regions. The additional examiners add to a range of initiatives that are also being rolled out to provide benefits for Queenslanders. These include rostering existing driver examiner trained staff to regions where demand is high, improving safety measures to improve service delivery and continuing to offer Saturday testing at select locations. These initiatives and the boost to frontline services will continue to meet growing demand for driving tests.

It is anticipated that the new frontline officers will complete onboarding and commence on-road testing from early September this year. Queenslanders expect the government to provide services that are easy to access, and the investment by this budget will ensure we continue to deliver on those expectations. By strengthening our driver-testing frontline services we are supporting better outcomes for Queensland learner drivers and ensuring our frontline services are backed by modern, dependable technology now and well into the future. I thank the member for the question.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister update the committee on how this budget will deliver improved whole-of-government governance for ongoing IT projects over the value of \$5 million?

Mr MINNIKIN: Again, I thank the member for the question because I know the member's interest in digital and new technologies is particularly strong. The Crisafulli government is delivering better services through a stronger economy with a new governance structure for digital projects. Through this budget, all new digital and ICT investments valued at more than \$5 million will be subject to strengthened oversight and assurance arrangements, ensuring projects are properly assessed, monitored and delivered.

This new digital investment and assurance process is ensuring we respect Queenslanders' money and is part of our plan to end a decade of Labor digital waste and overruns. The digital Queensland investment and assurance committees will review and monitor all digital and ICT investments over \$5 million, including all projects supported by the \$1 billion Queensland Government Digital Fund. Importantly, this means significant projects will be assessed against clear criteria including public value, risk management, deliverability and alignment with whole-of-government priorities. The new assurance process will put an end to a decade of IT cost blowouts and duplication under Labor.

The Crisafulli government is investing more than \$300 million in high-impact digital initiatives to modernise critical government systems, improve service delivery and ensure Queenslanders receive reliable, secure and efficient services. The funding, delivered through the \$1 billion Queensland Government Digital Fund, reflects the successful first year of strengthened evaluation, governance and planning led by my department. Initiatives have undergone a rigorous assessment process, focused on replacing at-risk systems, improving customer experience and supporting essential frontline services across areas such as health care, disaster response, natural resource management, and licensing and regulatory services.

The investment marks a significant milestone in the implementation of a new disciplined approach to digital funding. This strengthened governance framework is designed to identify risks earlier and improve accountability. Importantly, the whole-of-government approach ensures agencies are working together to deliver integrated solutions rather than duplicating systems or investments, ultimately delivering better value for Queenslanders and respecting their money. The investment demonstrates a careful, considered approach to digital transformation. It reflects a new level of rigour in how we assess and prioritise digital investments across government.

We are ensuring Queenslanders' money is spent responsibly by focusing on initiatives that deliver real benefits, address system risks and improve the way services are delivered. This whole-of-government approach means we are reducing duplication, strengthening oversight and making smarter investment decisions that support better outcomes for Queenslanders. Importantly, this work lays the foundation for a future-ready digital government with strong governance and clear accountability guiding every dollar we invest.

This budget delivers a disciplined and accountable approach to digital investment. By strengthening oversight of projects over \$5 million and reducing duplication, the Crisafulli government is delivering better services and better value for Queenslanders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will move to non-government questions.

Ms PEASE: My question is to the acting director-general. I understand six branches and their functions were transferred to CDSB from TMR in May 2025; is that correct?

Mr Sinclair: Can you clarify what you mean by 'branches'?

Ms PEASE: The *Government Gazette* outlines that six functions of TMR have moved over.

Mr Sinclair: Yes, that is correct. That would have been through the machinery-of-government changes that were made.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, what was the cost of those machinery-of-government changes in May 2025?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: in relation to this estimates portfolio, I would submit to you, Deputy Speaker, those matters do not relate to the portfolio that is currently under examination in this estimates hearing.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: if there are no costs to this particular agency, the acting director-general will be able to answer it in those terms. If there are costs to this agency then it would be relevant to this examination.

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I think the point of order from the member for Moggill stands. This is a question which clearly pertains to an earlier appropriation. The question before us is whether this appropriation be agreed to, so it is irrelevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order from the Leader of the House relates to whether this is relevant to this year's budget as opposed to last year's budget, if I am understanding that correctly, Leader of the House?

Dr ROWAN: That is correct.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not whether it is in another portfolio area or anything like that. Members, there has been a wide range of questions allowed in relation to appropriation bills over a long period of time including questions and issues that relate to previous budgets that may impact on this budget. In relation to the question, member for Lytton, could you tell me how it is relevant to this year's appropriation?

Ms PEASE: I am trying to get clarity around what the cost was and if the department had to invest any money into the machinery-of-government changes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Acting Director-General, I will give you the call to answer the question.

Mr Sinclair: The machinery-of-government changes did not involve any additional funding. Changes are implemented to be budget neutral, with existing funding transferring alongside functions and staff. No additional funding was provided to support the establishment of the department, with any costs including ICT systems and other transition activities managed within the department's existing funding envelope and resources.

Ms PEASE: For clarity, Acting Director-General, those changes included the transfer of the customer technology and strategy branch in TMR; is that correct?

Mr Sinclair: Yes, it did.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, on 1 May 2026 the customer technology group and their functions from within that branch were transferred back to TMR; is that correct?

Mr Sinclair: Yes, that is correct.

Ms PEASE: What was the cost of those machinery-of-government changes in May 2026?

Mr Sinclair: It would be the same as my previous answer. The machinery-of-government changes did not involve any additional funding. Changes are implemented to be budget neutral and within existing resourcing.

Ms PEASE: I also want to comment on the minister's comments that the original merge of these two functions was an opportunity to 'improve government services' to 'deliver a consistent customer service experience'. That was in a media statement that he made. Was it your department's advice that the merge was unsuccessful and that TMR services should return to TMR?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order.

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr BAILLIE: Point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have three points of order, I think. I will go to the Leader of the House first.

Dr ROWAN: Under standing order 112, it is seeking an opinion—

Ms PEASE: No, it's not.

Dr ROWAN: There was an inference—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Lytton, I heard you. I will hear the point of order in silence, please.

Ms PEASE: Sorry.

Dr ROWAN: Under standing order 112, Deputy Speaker, there was an opinion being sought and an inference in the question as well.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, did you have a point of order?

Mr LISTER: No. I have nothing to add to that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There was arguably an inference in the question. However, the opinion of the acting director-general was not being sought—rather, advice about any advice sought. Could you restate the question, member for Lytton, just so I am absolutely clear?

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, was it your department's advice that the merge was unsuccessful and TMR services should return to TMR?

Mr LISTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: this is seeking a policy answer from the acting director-general. That is a question more appropriately directed to the minister, I would have thought.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I would still submit to you there is an inference in the question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: In relation to the inference in the question about something being successful or unsuccessful, if we could have questions that are not drafted in that way it would really aid proceedings and we would get through more questions. The question is about advice provided. I am certain the director-general can answer that question.

Mr Sinclair: Obviously I was not in this position at that time, but, irrespective, that would be a matter for the minister.

Ms PEASE: I also note that, in the media release I spoke of, the minister's comment was that it was a 'transformational move'. Was it a transformational move to return the services back to TMR?

Mr LISTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the member is referring to statements made by the minister. She is asking the acting director-general to speak to what the minister said. It is out of order. It would be a question better for the minister himself.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, I am going to rule that question out of order because it is seeking an opinion from the acting director-general.

Ms PEASE: My question is to the acting director-general. Your department leads government policy and procedure in terms of cybersecurity and digital best practice; is that correct?

Mr Sinclair: Yes, that is correct.

Ms PEASE: I refer to Auditor-General's *Report 13: 2025-26—Managing third-party cybersecurity risks*, which found that three entities it had audited had not adequately identified or assessed their third-party cybersecurity risks. What initiatives had your department implemented in these entities prior to the audit?

Mr LISTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: that question goes to decisions and actions by those departments, not the department we are examining now. The department, as the member has said, is responsible for policy. Implementation and progress are a matter for those departments on the advice of the Auditor-General.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are saying the question should be aimed at a different portfolio area?

Mr LISTER: I am.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the question is around whether or not this agency performed a role with those entities. It is a matter for the acting director-general to clarify whether he did or not. If they did then it is clearly within this agency's portfolios. If they did not perform any function then he is at liberty to say that. Therefore, the question pertains to the examination of this appropriation.

Mr LISTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a further point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it on the same point?

Mr LISTER: It is on the same point, yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let's let that rest, if we can, please. They are all good points of order. Member for Lytton, could you restate your question, please, so I can listen in light of all of the points of order that have been raised before I give a ruling. I think the question is okay, but I just want to you state it again, please.

Ms PEASE: I refer to Auditor-General's *Report 13: 2025-26—Managing third-party cybersecurity risks*, which found that three entities it had audited had not adequately identified or assessed their third-party cybersecurity risks. What initiatives had your department implemented in these entities prior to the audit?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Acting Director-General, given your last answer in relation to cybersecurity, I will allow the question.

Mr Sinclair: Individual agencies are accountable for their information security resilience and managing associated risks. The type and severity of risks vary between agencies and are influenced by factors including industry sector, organisational size and regulatory environment. This department plays a key role in advising and supporting agencies to enhance their cybersecurity resilience and manage cyber-risks, so it is a whole-of-government cybersecurity function. This support is aligned with the priorities of the Queensland government's Cyber Security Strategy 2025-2027.

The department provides a range of core cybersecurity products and services to agencies including but not limited to: expert policy and technical cybersecurity advice training for executives, so that is cyber practitioners; cybersecurity exercise simulations; vulnerability management service; cyberthreat intelligence; external attack surface management; and incident management risk and response. The department also provides several funding programs which agencies can access. Agencies can also apply for funding through the Queensland Government Digital Fund, which drives a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to strategic and targeted investment in digital and information technology systems.

The Queensland Audit Office conducted an audit on managing third-party cybersecurity risks. That examined how public sector entities, including this department as the central agency for cybersecurity, managed those risks. The department supports the Queensland Audit Office's recommendations and is implementing a multiyear program to strengthen whole-of-government cybersecurity. The activities include: publishing a supply chain cybersecurity risk framework; updating the cyberskills framework to include third-party cybersecurity; enhancing visibility and understanding of third-party risks through new tools and services; expanding cybersecurity training, simulations and awareness activities; establishing processes to ensure agencies act on high-risk third-party cyberthreats and vulnerabilities; and analysing data insights to better understand supply chain risks and identify improvement areas.

Ms PEASE: Since the Auditor-General's cybersecurity report and recommendations were released, can you advise how many agencies have completed remediation plans?

Mr LISTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: again, that question ought to have been put to those agencies in those portfolios when they were before their respective committee. It is not the remit under this budget for this department to run that. It is irrelevant.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: in the last couple of questions the acting director-general, as you pointed out to the hearing, has explained the agency's role in supporting other agencies. If he has not supported other agencies with remediation, he is at liberty to say that. We are interested to see whether there is expenditure by this agency in addressing the Auditor-General's cybersecurity report and recommendations.

Mr LISTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the question has not been dealt with. It is still a question of whether this minister and this portfolio before us are responsible for that. I would suggest to you it is not; therefore, the question should be ruled out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, the point of order you made was not strictly relevant to the question that was asked; however, I did listen to the question that was asked. It was basically around the knowledge of the director-general and the department around other departments' activities. The acting director-general indicated a role in cybersecurity for the department from an oversight perspective. If he has that knowledge, I would ask him to answer the question.

Mr Sinclair: The department does have a whole-of-government oversight role and is responsible for the development of the IS18 information security standard. We work across the whole of government to provide a range of services. Given the nature of this topic and potential sensitivities around talking about the specifics of that cyber-response, these comments will necessarily be general in nature. The department works very closely with the Australian government and in particular the Australian Signals Directorate to ensure a properly integrated response. We work closely with all agencies. As I said before, their risk profiles and those responses vary based on the threat environment that each of them faces.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, are you able to advise how many third-party cybersecurity incidents have been reported within government since report 13 was conducted?

Mr Sinclair: Just a moment and I will see if we have that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: When was that, member for Lytton?

Ms PEASE: This report is dated 26 March 2026.

Mr Sinclair: Due to the sensitive nature of these incidents, as I mentioned, it is too high risk to disclose specific incidents. What I can say is that the department has observed a range of incidents, including phishing attempts and unauthorised access attempts. These incidents have been effectively managed through the department's incident response program. Lessons learned from recent incidents have been incorporated into updated policies and procedures to strengthen the department's information security maturity.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. We will have some government questions.

Mr LISTER: Minister, can you update the committee on how the transition of face-to-face services in remote communities is delivering outcomes for Queenslanders, and how does this compare to the previous government's support?

Mr MINNIKIN: The Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business is now responsible for the majority of government transactions for Queenslanders. I will let the member know that we are committed to being the most customer-centric government in Australia, delivering services, as I have said repeatedly, over the phone, in person and digitally. That means ensuring Queenslanders have a choice in how they interact with government. I cannot emphasise that enough: we want to maximise choice.

It means we will continue to invest and strengthen the three channels of customer service delivery. When it comes to face-to-face services, more than 90 customer service outlets were transferred to my customer service department just over a year ago. This includes being the lead agency—and this will be of keen interest for you, member for Southern Downs—for 33 Queensland Government Agent Program offices, colloquially known as QGAPs. For the benefit of the committee, QGAPs provide a range of services in rural and far remote Queensland communities. While 33 are delivered directly by my department, there are also other QGAP offices across the state that are delivered and supported by other agencies.

I have visited many QGAPs across the state over the past 21 months. I recently, as you know, had the chance to visit centres in your electorate, at Inglewood and Texas. They were amazing places to visit. Whether I am visiting QGAP centres on the Southern Downs or whether it is at Childers, Sarina, Landsborough, Biloela or Yeppoon, to mention a few of the others I have visited, I cannot help but admire the skills and knowledge of staff who have sometimes been serving regional Queenslanders for decades. Some of their length of service is truly remarkable. They have seen changes in technology and changes to their community, yet they still deliver a high level of customer service across a wide range of areas.

Member for Southern Downs, I am sure you will agree that we got a great insight into the services provided by those fine people and just how valuable these centres are for regional Queensland. That is why I felt it was so important that we ensure we are appropriately investing in our service delivery in rural and remote communities, with continued uplift funding of \$900,000 included in this year's budget for the QGAPs.

This is the second year of uplift funding under this government, after the former Labor government failed to properly invest in our regional, rural and remote communities because, I can only assume, they did not see a political benefit to it. It becomes obvious why regional Queensland possibly had a different intention when it came to their 2B lead pencils. Queenslanders in remote areas have every right to expect services that are easy to use, reliable and secure. The investment through this budget by the Crisafulli government ensures we continue to deliver on those expectations.

As I said at the outset, the Crisafulli government's commitment to face-to-face customer service options remains. As of June this year, over 3.4 million customers have been served face to face across 93 service centre locations, including the QGAPs. I repeat: as of 30 June over 3.4 million customers have been served face to face. This is a whole-of-government commitment to improving how people interact with government, focusing on practical improvements that make a real difference to the everyday customer experience.

In closing, I would like to thank the member for Southern Downs for the pleasure of meeting staff at Inglewood and Texas. They continue a long line of service excellence in the QGAPs. I am very proud of our QGAP operations.

Mr LISTER: Hear, hear!

Dr ROWAN: Minister, could you please provide a further update to the committee on how this state budget is supporting the delivery of Queensland's first Cyber Security Strategy?

Mr MINNIKIN: I am not in the practice of tabling documents, but I have with me here a copy of our first Cyber Security Strategy. The 2026-27 budget is supporting the implementation of Queensland's first Cyber Security Strategy through targeted investments in cyber resilience, capability uplift, incident response and whole-of-government security initiatives. The release of the ASIO Annual Threat Assessment for 2026 and the most recent incident statistics in the Australian Signals Directorate's *Annual cyber threat report 2024-25* reveal a stark truth: the global cyber threat landscape continues to deteriorate and worsen. The threats we face online continue to be influenced by technical step change, geopolitical tensions and conflict activity. The reach of malicious online activity is ever-present and our region, sadly, is not immune.

I can report that malicious actors continue to target Australian governments, including our own, critical infrastructure, businesses and individuals, including for the purposes of espionage, sabotage or possibly financial gain. These attackers are becoming increasingly adept at identifying and exploiting vulnerabilities in our supply networks, processes and infrastructure. The Crisafulli government continues to work closely with the Australian federal government, participating actively within national response coordination frameworks and committees to enhance cyber maturity but also assess and respond to incidents.

Despite being made aware of these cybersecurity challenges, year after year the former state Labor government failed to prepare government to suitably address them. For 10 years during the decade of decline, as the number of cyber incidents grew, Labor failed to implement a whole-of-government cybersecurity strategy. Under the Crisafulli government, we understand the threat and impact cyber incidents have on both Queenslanders and Queensland businesses, which is why within one year and one week of coming to office I launched the Queensland Cyber Security Strategy 2025-2027. It sets out a vision for a responsive and resilient Queensland government that delivers trusted services for Queenslanders. Importantly, this is the first whole-of-government cybersecurity strategy for Queensland, providing a coordinated framework to strengthen cyber resilience, improve preparedness and ensure Queenslanders can have confidence in the security of government services. In addition to leading the strategy, the Cyber Security Unit within my department provides cyber services across government, including incident management and response, threat intelligence, cyber uplift programs and working with agencies to increase cybersecurity maturity and compliance with policies.

Supporting the implementation of the Cyber Security Strategy, my department administers the Cyber Security Fund. This fund is delivering critical cybersecurity initiatives to improve capability across the state government. Last year under round 1, there were 16 initiatives totalling \$22½ million across 10 agencies endorsed. Round 2 prioritised enhancing maturity across the Australian Signals

Directorate's Essential Eight strategies, which provide a foundational, practical and scalable baseline for improving cyber resilience. Under round 2, \$8.1 million was allocated across 21 departmental initiatives.

We are not just focusing on support inside government; we are also providing support externally. The Australian Signals Directorate report reveals that the average cost to small and family businesses from cybercrime is now over \$50,000, with medium and large businesses facing average costs from cybercrime of approximately \$97,000 to \$200,000 respectively. To help small business with rising cybercrime, I was pleased to join my colleague the member for Buderim at the University of the Sunshine Coast on Tuesday to launch the Crisafulli government's small and family business micro-credential course, which will specialise in cybersecurity.

Let me be very clear here: cybersecurity is no longer simply an IT issue. The Queensland Cyber Security Strategy is empowering a secure, resilient and reliable digital foundation. I can inform the member that, working with our Commonwealth counterparts under the 2023 to 2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, we will continue to deliver a more cyber secure Queensland, but we will never take our eye off the ball.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to non-government questions.

Ms PEASE: My question is to the acting director-general. Has the department updated the Cyber Skills Framework to include third-party cybersecurity as per the Auditor-General's recommendation? For your information, that is recommendation 6 in that report.

Mr Sinclair: I am advised this work is underway and it is anticipated that updates will be completed by the end of the year.

Ms PEASE: Can you advise when the work started?

Mr Sinclair: With the minister's approval, we may need to see if we can find that date when the work started.

Mr MINNIKIN: I am happy with that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will make a note of that.

Ms PEASE: I have a question for the acting director-general. I note the release of the so-called first ever Cyber Security Strategy. For the last year, week and a day, were there no cybersecurity strategies being implemented by this agency?

Mr Sinclair: With the approval of the minister, we will need to see if we can find that information.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, I think there may have been some confusion about what you are asking. Are you referring to the Cyber Security Strategy that was just been released?

Ms PEASE: No, I was referring to the statements that the minister made with regard to his target of 'within one year and one day of implementing the first ever Cyber Security Strategy'. My question then was to the acting director-general: does that mean for that period of one year and one day there was no cybersecurity protection in place in Queensland?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: can I get verification that indeed that is what the minister said: 'one year and one day'? I am not sure that is what the minister said.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you asking for authentication of that factual element of the question?

Mr LISTER: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you have authentication of the minister's statement in relation to that?

Ms PEASE: The minister made the statement in response to one of the questions that was asked here. It might not have been those exact words. Maybe it was 'one year, one week and one day', but it was that sort of a statement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think we understand the thrust of that question. Acting Director-General, if you do not, I am sure you can seek more clarity—or if you need to seek more information, do that as well.

Mr Sinclair: We can try to find the details. I would say that, whether the strategy was in place or not, our Cyber Security Unit has obviously been in place and working throughout that period delivering on all of the core functions across government that I mentioned before: cybersecurity, leadership and direction, governance policy and standards through the Queensland Government Enterprise

Architecture, ISC team, the cyber fund. The delivery of the projects funded through that respond to incidents when they occur as well as uplifting capability and awareness across the sector and the delivery of cybersecurity products and services.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Acting Director-General, I refer to page 7 of the SDS and the reduction of 41 FTEs between '2025-26 actual' and '2026-27 budget'. How many of those were reassigned to other agencies due to machinery-of-government changes, please?

Mr Sinclair: Is that the movement between estimated actual or adjusted budget?

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: It is between the '2025-26 actual' and the '2026-27 budget'.

Mr Sinclair: Those changes reflect a combination of the planned conclusion of specific limited-life projects as well as machinery-of-government changes. Of those FTEs, 24 relate to the expiry of limited-life funding for the Queensland Digital Identity services, 14 relate to the expiry of limited-life funding for the disaster response within Smart Service Queensland, two relate to transfer to DPC to support the Future Leaders Graduate Program and there is one further adjustment as a result of our rounding adjustment.

Ms PEASE: Acting Director-General, Minister Minnikin is the responsible minister for the Queensland Government Digital Fund; is that correct?

Mr Sinclair: That is correct.

Ms PEASE: Minister Minnikin and your department are responsible for the administration of the QGDF fund; is that correct?

Mr Sinclair: For the administration of the fund, yes.

Ms PEASE: I refer to question on notice 605 of 2026, which states that the current project status and expected delivery dates should be directed by the member to the responsible minister. Am I correct in saying that CDSB and the minister are not responsible for any moneys provided to other departments once the funds have been allocated to the project?

Mr MINNIKIN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I seek your guidance here. I do believe that was seeking an opinion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, the minister's point of order may have some validity, but I will hear another point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr de BRENNI: The point of order is that the question was asking about the responsibility for funds. That is a matter of fact, so it is either the responsibility of CDSB and the minister or it is not. That is not a matter of opinion, I would submit to you. It is very clear it is not a matter of opinion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, I am sorry to do this to you, but I want you to restate the question in as simple terms as possible. When I heard the question I was not sure where it was going or exactly what you were asking.

Ms PEASE: In answer to question on notice 605 from 2 June 2026, the response from the minister on the day stated that the current project status and expected delivery dates should be directed by the member to the responsible minister. I ask the acting director-general: is it correct that CDSB and the minister are not responsible for any moneys provided to other departments once they have been allocated to the project? I can table the question if you need it. It came from the minister's department.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you like to see the question on notice, Acting Director-General?

Mr Sinclair: No.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. I call the acting director-general.

Mr Sinclair: The Queensland digital fund is administered under the auspices of the digital Queensland investment and assurance framework which sets out the operating parameters for the fund, including its objectives and principles, scope and funding eligibility, evaluation process and cycle-management, governance monitoring and reporting requirements, and contingency management processes, including eligibility requirements. The framework introduces updated digital investment government arrangements, including a strengthened role in overseeing delivery progress of key initiatives through the digital Queensland investment committee which provides strategic leadership for digital investments and oversees the fund. This committee replaces the former Queensland Government Digital Fund committee but retains the membership of the directors-general of CDSB, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Under Treasurer. The digital Queensland assurance

committee is responsible for overseeing delivery and performance of approved digital initiatives and membership will comprise the deputy directors-general of CDSB, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Deputy Under Treasurer and two external board members.

The digital Queensland investment and assurance committees will review and monitor all digital and ICT investments over \$5 million, including all projects which are supported by the \$1 billion fund. Funds are held centrally and their release is subject to the Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business bringing forward a submission to executive government. Our role is absolutely central and, as I said before, we are the administrators of this process, but within that structure the directors-general of each department remain the accountable officer for each of the funded projects.

Mr de BRENNI: Acting Director-General, how many applicable incident reports have been made by Queensland government departments and statutory bodies in line with IS18 reporting requirements in the 2025-26 financial year?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Acting Director-General, do you think you have that information to hand, or does it need to be sought, bearing in mind the time?

Mr Sinclair: I do not have that information to hand.

Mr de BRENNI: I think this is very important. We have heard a lot from the minister, Mr Deputy Speaker, about the importance of cybersecurity. We questioned whether or not—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, do not make a statement. Do you have another question?

Mr de BRENNI: What I am suggesting, Mr Deputy Speaker, is given the importance of this matter can the acting director-general obtain that information and provide it to us before the end of the session? It is a reasonable expectation that he would know.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a question for the acting director-general and also the minister.

Mr Sinclair: I will seek the advice of the minister.

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will just say: conscious of the time, it is now 12.13.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will also say that there is a latent vulnerability here in relation to disclosing too much by way of our security status, but I am particularly conscious of the fact that it is now 12.13.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take that as a yes that they will try and seek it in the next one minute and 40 seconds.

Mr MINNIKIN: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Springwood, I am just going to pause you there. There was one other matter that was taken on notice earlier and I just want to know if that is ready to come back yet? Not yet perhaps? If not, is there a further question from the opposition side?

Ms PEASE: Just before we do finish, I want to take a moment to say thank you very much to all of the department staff and the parliamentary staff and to also thank all of the hardworking small businesses across our state as well as all of the people who work in the customer service and cybersecurity space. It is a very important role that each and every one of you plays, so I thank you for that dedication, particularly to our small and family businesses.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, do you have one to come back with?

Mr MINNIKIN: I just simply want to say that I am gratified by that statement made by the shadow minister, because there are many issues on which we look for areas of division, but I actually support exactly what she said. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone very much given the fact that it is now 12.14. I again want to thank everyone for the mountain of work that has been done by the people behind me. I have spent many years on that side of the estimates desk and I know firsthand now exactly how much hard work they have done, and I want to commend the public servants for their great job.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am just going to ask you, Minister or Acting Director-General, once more: there was one issue that you were going to come back on. In fact, there was a second one a couple of minutes ago. Is there any information to be furnished to the committee?

Mr MINNIKIN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I can confirm one of them. There were no cybersecurity incidents before the current one. That is the information I have to hand.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The time for this estimates session has expired, so, members, I declare closed the time for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of customer services and open data. There were no questions taken on notice. I want to thank the minister, officials and departmental officers for your attendance. Before I close this session I would like to make a statement, if that is okay. This session is my last in the chair for estimates 2026. After about 32 hours of presiding, I consider the process to have evolved and developed in a positive way after last year's initial occasion with the Speaker and Deputy Speaker presiding. I thank all members for their cooperation and cooperative approach. It is an honour to sit in the Legislative Council chamber as a presiding officer and I look forward to seeing all members when parliament resumes.

Proceedings suspended from 12.16 pm to 1.00 pm.

**ESTIMATES—LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER
SERVICES COMMITTEE—LOCAL GOVERNMENT, WATER, FIRE, DISASTER
RECOVERY AND VOLUNTEERS****In Attendance**

Hon. A Leahy, Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers

Mr Angus McCaffrey, Chief of Staff

Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers

Ms Bronwyn Blagoev, Director-General

Ms Jae Lancaster, Deputy Director-General, Water Infrastructure Policy and Partnerships

Mr Joshua Hannan, Deputy Director-General, Local Government Division

Mr Jarrod Cowley-Grimmond, Deputy Director-General, Water Resource Management

Queensland Reconstruction Authority

Major General Jake Ellwood (Retd), Chief Executive Officer

Mr Andrew Nehill, Chief Financial Officer

Queensland Fire Department

Mr Stephen Smith AFSM, Commissioner

Ms Kaylene Jones, Chief Officer, Rural Fire Service Queensland

Mr Kevin Walsh AFSM, Deputy Commissioner

Dr Rebecca Denning, Chief Operating Officer

Sunwater

Mr David Hourigan, Interim Chief Executive Officer

SEQ Water

Ms Emma Thomas, Chief Executive Officer



Mr SPEAKER: Good afternoon. We will now resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, 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 this afternoon's hearing.

The members of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee are: Mr James Lister, the member for Southern Downs, who is the chair; Mrs Margie Nightingale, the member for Inala, who is the deputy chair; Mr Adam Baillie, the member for Townsville; Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; Ms Nikki Boyd, the member for Pine Rivers, who is substituting for Mr Michael Healy, the member for Cairns; and the Hon. Mick de Brenni, the member for Springwood, who is substituting for Ms Joan Pease, the member for Lytton. 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.

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

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2026 for the disaster recovery and volunteers portfolio area until 2 pm. We will then examine the portfolio area of fire until 3 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 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—

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

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, 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. 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 disaster recovery and volunteers 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 for the portfolio area currently under examination.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me begin by addressing disaster recovery, a year-round focus for our government. During the 2025-26 season we saw compounding severe weather events reach almost every corner of our state. By 30 June 2026, Lockyer Valley was the only local government area not activated for disaster support in the 12 months prior. For the first time in Queensland's history, every one of our 77 LGAs and our one town authority has an active disaster recovery program. Funding and support packages are reaching Queensland faster than ever before. Our resilience-building efforts are powering ahead. The Crisafulli government's flagship \$450 million Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Program is growing our collective strength to severe weather, with around \$140 million in QRRRP projects already rolling out. We are improving the Bruce; upgrading water treatment plants in Kuranda and Mapoon; duplicating Carpentaria's raw water main; reducing flood risk in the south-west; and more.

Disaster recovery and resilience in Queensland has never had more momentum than it does now. That is why the Albanese federal Labor government's proposed changes to federal disaster funding make no sense. With more frequent, intense and costly disaster events and a proven system in place, the Albanese federal Labor government now wants to send a financial wrecking ball through our state. The Disaster Recovery Funding Framework, recently put forward by the Albanese federal Labor government, will rip billions out of Queensland's heartland. It will see our most vulnerable communities struggling to keep their heads above water when the next big disaster arrives. Queensland would have lost \$713 million in federal disaster funding during the 2025-26 season, climbing to more than \$1.5 billion over the past three years.

Mayors from across Queensland have joined us in taking the fight to Canberra. Even the opposition leader, months after the changes were first announced, has spoken out against his Labor mates in Canberra, and I thank him for that. This is a dud deal for Queensland. When it comes to disaster recovery, we need every level of government doing the heavy lifting. What we are seeing right now is a federal government ready to walk away from its responsibility to our state and our councils. I make this promise to Queensland: our government will never turn its back on you in times of crisis. We will fight these changes, tooth and nail.

I will now turn to volunteers, which is fitting as they are part of the important fabric of our disaster recovery efforts. Volunteers give their time, their skills and their energy to support others, strengthen community connections and provide help where it is needed most. The Crisafulli government committed to giving Queensland volunteers and volunteering organisations a fresh start through establishing a parliamentary inquiry into volunteering in Queensland, and we are delivering. Our response to the inquiry report includes 18 initiatives designed to strengthen, support and empower Queensland's volunteer sector and to provide a clear framework for meaningful and sustainable change to help to address the barriers to participation. We have been working on delivering these initiatives. We have established the Ministerial Advisory Panel for Volunteering and the Queensland Government Volunteering Working Group. We have invested \$250,000 in the four regional volunteer resource centres, increasing their capacity to support local volunteers and volunteer organisations across

regional Queensland. We have reduced the red tape associated with insurance arrangements for spontaneous disaster recovery volunteers, helping volunteers get to disaster-affected communities more quickly when their support is needed most.

This budget builds on these achievements with a further \$1.2 million invested to support implementing all 18 initiatives, in partnership with the volunteer sector. This funding will support statewide volunteering priorities, including the development of a 10-year volunteering plan, strengthen sector partnerships, reduce barriers and cut unnecessary red tape that can discourage participation in volunteering. These measures will help create a stronger and more sustainable volunteer sector and support volunteer organisations to continue delivering for Queensland communities. Through what we have already delivered and what is still to come, we are strengthening the sector, supporting volunteer organisations and empowering more Queenslanders to make a difference in their communities. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. We will start with opposition questions. Member for Pine Rivers?

Ms BOYD: Good afternoon. Minister, in relation to the proposed Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, I table a social media post from you in which you link a webpage encouraging Queenslanders to sign a petition. The link goes to a webpage, listen2qld.com. Is the host of that webpage the Liberal National Party of Queensland?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I cannot see any link between the question and the portfolio administered by the minister or the appropriation question before us for this year.

Ms BOYD: If I may, Mr Speaker? Page 13 of the SDS sets out QRA's 2026-27 key deliverable regarding the Queensland government's negotiations with the federal government on proposed Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This question goes directly to the way that the minister is choosing to advocate for those arrangements on behalf of Queenslanders.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister is capable of answering the question.

Ms LEAHY: Disaster recovery and the proposed changes by the Albanese Labor government will send a wrecking ball through Queensland's disaster funding arrangements. We know that there will be billions of dollars that will not be available to councils and to Queenslanders and we know how important this safety net of disaster response and recovery is to Queenslanders, and also to our nation as well. I think that is particularly important. As I said in my opening statement, I do appreciate the support that we have had from the opposition leader, but what I have not seen is the same support on the record from the member for Pine Rivers. I think that Queenslanders are looking for that: to see that the entire Labor opposition is united in their support. Maybe they are not united in their support behind the opposition leader.

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker. The question was very direct: is the host of that webpage the Liberal National Party of Queensland.

Mr LISTER: May I make a point of order in response to that, Mr Speaker? I think it is fair to say that it was a question that was of dubious relevance to the appropriation before us and that therefore the minister ought to be given some latitude in answering. She has been asked specifically about her mechanism to communicate to Canberra the question of this reduced funding.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: as further context to the point of order of the member for Southern Downs, I believe the minister is being relevant under standing order 118 by providing the context. I would also like to seek clarity in relation to the webpage that we are referring to, whether this is under the operations of the minister in her ministerial portfolio capacities or whether it is as a local member of parliament with respect to her functions as the state member for Warrego. I think there is a distinction between that and as such whether that is relevant to the portfolio estimates hearings that are under examination at the moment.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you for your points of order. It says on the tabled document that the post is regarding disaster funding. That is why I have allowed the question. Minister, if you could finish responding to the question.

Ms LEAHY: I think probably what the opposition has not recognised is that disaster funding and these cuts from the Albanese Labor government not only impact Queensland but also impact other states. It is important that other residents who are impacted, and I can say that New South Wales is significantly impacted as well, are able to express their dissatisfaction with the Albanese Labor government and it is important that they too can campaign to stop the cuts. Queensland is the most

severely impacted state—Queensland will suffer the most. New South Wales is next. The only one who benefits from this is the Albanese Labor government. I think it is important that people across the nation have the opportunity to voice their concerns. That is quite reasonable.

Ms BOYD: Minister, given your social media advocacy is directing Queenslanders to ‘Back our regions. Sign the petition. Stop the cuts.’, where will the data of signatories go to?

Mr LISTER: May I make a point of order, please, Mr Speaker? I think this is even more nebulous and less linked to the ministerial responsibilities. It is completely irrelevant to the question before us regarding whether this expenditure be agreed to. I think this is way off track. We should be going to something more relevant. Thank you.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I am sure you are quite capable of answering the question.

Ms LEAHY: We know that in the 2025-26 season we saw many compounding severe weather events. I do not think I have seen before every corner of our state so severely impacted by disaster, with only one council, the Lockyer Valley, the only one that was not activated. We are in a situation whereby those funding and support packages are reaching out to Queenslanders faster than ever before. These cuts from the Albanese Labor government are severe. They will have—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I appreciate that the minister has already given some time and consideration to that line of commentary. The point of order is on relevance. The question was very specific: where will the data of signatories go to.

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker. I think it is disingenuous to talk about relevance when this question is hardly related at all to the expenditure before us. It is a question about a matter which is not within the minister's portfolio. It is not a government matter, it is not involved with the expenditure of government funds. I suggest to you that this question is irrelevant and we should move on.

Mr SPEAKER: It was very tenuous, I agree. It is up to the minister. The minister can respond to it as she will, but I am conscious that we do need to move on as well.

Ms LEAHY: I have plenty more to say in relation to the impacts that the Albanese federal government's proposed changes to disaster funding will have. I am quite happy to detail some of the projects that will not happen. There are some 772 betterment projects across the state, and with the changes that are proposed by the Albanese federal Labor government only 22 of those projects will actually be eligible for betterment funding. Things like the bridge at Ollera Creek in North Queensland will not be eligible for betterment funding. There is a huge amount of—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker. This response is not relevant to the question therefore I am happy to move on to a new question given the time allotted.

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the minister was in the middle of giving a response. I was happy to listen to that. I do not think it is appropriate a member should seek to curtail what they are saying. I think the minister should continue to have the call if she has more to say. Again I say that the question of relevance is hardly applicable here since there was such a tenuous link to the minister's portfolio anyway. If the member for Pine Rivers is insisting that she speaks, please allow her to do so.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Speaker: I think it is ironic that the member for Southern Downs has in the last couple of minutes both said that the question should not be asked and now is insisting the question should be answered. The member for Pine Rivers indicated that the response is irrelevant to the question that was standing; the argument as put by the member for Southern Downs. We do have other questions and I think we should get to those. I think the minister has provided enough context. There is no further relevance to the question.

Mr SPEAKER: I am happy to move on. We are studying the expenditure of this particular area so let us concentrate on that.

Ms BOYD: Minister, with regard to the Commonwealth's proposed changes to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, on how many occasions has the minister personally picked up the phone to federal minister McBain to specifically advocate for Queensland's fair share of funding?

Ms LEAHY: I am not about to reveal private conversations with other ministers. I might note a post that I have here from the shadow minister, the member for Pine Rivers, who said that they asked for increased disaster resilience funding. I am happy to table that information for the benefit of the committee.

Mr SPEAKER: You need to seek leave.

Ms LEAHY: I seek leave to table that.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Speaker: relevance. The question asked by the member for Pine Rivers was about interactions with federal Minister McBain and whether or not the minister had personally picked up the phone. She has indicated that she is not willing to answer that. I submit to you that to then traverse into some other topic would be irrelevant to the question. I ask you to call the minister to order, and that would include arresting this process that she has sought to initiate around tabling some document that she has indicated is not relevant to this question.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 118: the minister was being relevant. She was barely into her response. She clearly indicated in relation to discussions that she may have had with federal ministers that she was not going to disclose the nature of those conversations and she outlined her reasoning for that. I submit to you that the characterisation by the member for Springwood in relation to her response is not an accurate characterisation of the response. Also, she was being relevant to the question and so she should be able to round out her answer to the question.

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the minister indicated initially in her response that she did not intend to answer the question with how many times she had picked up the phone to Minister McBain. Therefore, I consider the question answered and I am happy to move on to more questions.

Mr BAILLIE: Point of order, Speaker: the question as asked went directly to the minister's advocacy in relation to disaster funding and the minister was in the very initial part of reflecting on her advocacy and that of others in the parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, the question was around advocacy regarding reduced funding. Concentrate on that; otherwise, we will move on. As for the document, is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Ms LEAHY: I will not divulge the content of private conversations, but I can indicate that there have been conversations. I would be quite interested in looking at the post from the member for Pine Rivers which clearly says 'What we asked for' is increased disaster resilience funding. I would like to know whether the member for Pine Rivers has picked up the phone to her colleagues and whether she will follow the lead of the opposition leader, because we have not seen anything on the record in relation to support from the member for Pine Rivers apart from this post. Has she picked up the phone to her colleagues in Canberra and made it abundantly clear? Has the opposition leader picked up the phone or just made a statement that will disappear into the ether?

If there is bipartisan support, we would like to hear that on the record today, if we could, in *Hansard*. I think that would be entirely appropriate from the member for Pine Rivers. Is there some division here? Does the shadow minister not agree with the opposition leader? I think the opposition have a little to answer for when we see this in a Facebook post. We know how important disaster recovery and resilience funding is for Queensland. I think there is considerable division here. On the one hand we have the member for Pine Rivers being silent, and on the other hand the opposition leader is saying things and then coming and asking us.

I think, really, the questions should be asked of the member for Pine Rivers. Has she picked up the phone? Has she got the opposition leader to pick up the phone? Have they written? Are they making submissions? I think there are more questions here for the opposition than the government.

Ms BOYD: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order but I am going to move on.

Ms BOYD: I table correspondence from the Charters Towers Mayor, Liz Schmidt, to me stating appreciation for and acknowledging bipartisan support on disaster recovery funding in Queensland. Minister, why are you not hosting a parliamentary petition for this cause rather than one in political colours?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, in relation to the inference or imputation contained within the question. I do note the previously tabled information in relation to authentication, but I cannot see any reference on the actual document that was tabled for authentication in relation to some elements of the question which has now been put. I would say there is an inference or imputation contained within the question as asked.

Mr SPEAKER: There was. I will ask you to rephrase that question, please, member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: Yes, Mr Speaker. Minister, why are you not hosting a parliamentary petition for this cause?

Ms LEAHY: Disaster recovery is a national program. As I said earlier, both Queensland and New South Wales are going to be severely impacted to the tune of billions and billions of dollars. As a member of parliament who actually has communities that straddle the border, I understand that it is very difficult for New South Wales people to sign Queensland parliamentary petitions. This petition is there because this is a national funding scheme and people from across the nation need to be able to sign that petition. Some feel particularly strongly including, I might mention, some in New South Wales. I know some New South Wales mayors who are particularly unhappy with the Albanese Labor government and their cuts to disaster recovery and resilience funding.

This will put a wrecking ball through Queensland and through Queensland communities. We are on the verge of going into the bushfire season. We will see massive cuts in future should these disaster recovery changes and proposals by the Albanese Labor government continue and come into place. It will mean that the system, which we know works well in Queensland, will not be the same. It will mean billions of dollars ripped out of Queensland. It will mean billions of dollars will not go to New South Wales. The only beneficiary out of these cuts is the Albanese Labor government. They are cuts affecting people in Queensland when they are suffering from disaster, be it from cyclone, flood or bushfire, and when they are most vulnerable. The thing that really upsets us the most is that this affects most vulnerable people.

The Commonwealth collect 80 per cent of the taxation revenue. They should do their fair share, not be clawing back funding from Queensland and New South Wales. Queensland is the most disaster-prone state. Like I said, for the first time in Queensland's history every one of our 77 local government areas and our one town authority have an active disaster recovery program. I cannot stress enough how important this funding is for Queensland and Queensland councils. I am fearful that it will break some Queensland councils.

I would really like to see the opposition spokesperson on the record supporting and saying that they are going to stand up for Queenslanders in relation to these Albanese Labor cuts. Is there some division here that we do not know about between the opposition leader and the shadow minister? I do not know because we have not heard her on the record supporting his call. I think that is a question that should be asked of the shadow minister.

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

Mr LISTER: My question is to the minister—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker: in relation to the minister's comments, I take personal offence and I ask that they are withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The member took personal offence. I ask that you withdraw.

Ms LEAHY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr LISTER: Can the minister please outline what the Crisafulli government is doing to ensure emergency communications during a disaster to keep Queenslanders safe?

Ms LEAHY: Getting emergency communications to people in a disaster can mean the difference between life and death. In rural and regional Queensland—and I know that the member for Southern Downs is very familiar with rural and regional Queensland—it can be significantly more complicated to reach people. I know you would have experienced the changes in your area since the 3G Telstra signal has been turned off, member. That is why we are working closely with the federal government to ensure we get the rollout of their AusAlert system right. We need them to include the critical communications features for rural and regional communities who do not have access to technology or mobile phone coverage.

I do not need to tell you, member for Southern Downs; I am sure you share the frustrations that many other rural and regional members of parliament and community members have with the lack of coverage across rural and regional areas. This is especially important as often communities with poor communication access are in some of those particularly disaster-prone areas. We think about the north-west of the state and communities like Paroo, out around Cunnamulla, further west to Thargomindah, the Torres and also the north-west. The system will not be available until later this year, well after the beginning of the fire season. We will seek to incorporate it into our disaster response capabilities as soon as we have confidence it will deliver safely for Queenslanders. That could potentially look like providing both systems in parallel so we are getting as much information to Queenslanders as possible. In the meantime, we will continue with the emergency alert system that has provided critical alerts via mobile and landline to Queenslanders for many years.

I will make mention that when we were recently at Doomadgee and talking to the rural fire volunteers up there, they expressed their concern that as soon as they go out of the town at Doomadgee, they are basically in an area where there is no mobile phone coverage. They were extremely appreciative of the Starlink which we have provided for their fire truck. They said that that is an absolute game changer for them, particularly when they are out on jobs; particularly when they have to go to road crash exercises or accidents, they said it is going to make a world of difference to their lives and to them as volunteers.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Can the minister outline how initiatives such as insurance round tables are putting downward pressure on insurance premiums for Queenslanders?

Ms LEAHY: I do not have to tell the member for Theodore anything in relation to insurance. We have been to properties in the member's electorate whereby we have had some very interesting things to deal with after disaster events and heavy rain events in that area. Queenslanders know all too well the devastating impacts natural disasters can have on their homes, their businesses, their livelihoods.

We know there are significant ongoing consequences for the rising cost of insurance. Insurance premiums have become a genuine cost-of-living issue, particularly in rural and regional Queensland, but also in other areas of Queensland, particularly where communities are taking steps to improve their disaster resilience. They are seeing continuing increases in premiums, and some of them are skyrocketing. I want to quote one in particular that I am aware of. I had a lady from Charleville contact me and her premium was quoted to her at \$43,000 per year. That is quite excessive.

The Crisafulli government has made cost-of-living relief a priority from day one. Even though it is federal legislation that regulates insurance companies, that does not mean much to Queenslanders who cannot afford to insure their homes. The Crisafulli government is doing what we can to put downward pressure on insurance premiums and deliver permanent relief that Queenslanders can rely on.

Earlier this year I brought together representatives from across the insurance industry—re-insurers, local governments, emergency management agencies, consumer advocates, engineering experts and the federal government—through the Queensland insurance round tables. The objective is very simple at these round tables: to identify practical actions that can improve insurance affordability for Queenslanders. The round tables have confirmed what Queenslanders have advocated for over many years: the most effective way to reduce insurance premiums over the long term is to reduce the disaster risk. That is why the Albanese Labor government's cuts are going to impact on our state so much because it will reduce the ability to invest in those things like levee banks and detention basins that will reduce the impact of disasters. It will hamper Queensland's ability to invest in mitigation infrastructure, to strengthen community resilience and rebuild those damaged assets better than before. I quoted the figure in relation to the 722 betterment projects, only 22 of which would be eligible under the Albanese disaster cuts. That is really disappointing for Queensland.

Importantly, at the round table, the discussions also focused on ensuring insurers have access to contemporary flood modelling, current mitigation information, and better data, so that premiums reflect the actual level of risk, rather than just historical assumptions.

Two serious wins for Queenslanders have come out of these round tables. We have identified updated flood modelling in regional Queensland that had not been factored into insurance companies' data set and reduced the overcharging from insurance companies. We have also been able to get confirmation from insurance companies that insurance companies will reduce their flood premiums from the commencement of construction of betterment works. This is a huge win for Queenslanders, and particularly those Queenslanders who have been impacted by flood events and where those flood events can be mitigated.

We may have to go further and investigate other solutions to ensure billions of dollars of taxpayers' money invested in betterment is flowing into reduced risk premiums. We cannot have a situation where taxpayers are being used to boost the bottom line of insurance companies. Also, we recognise that the investments we are making and using things like efficiencies to reinvest will drive down the cost of insurance for communities, and those efficiencies come from the disaster recovery programs, but unfortunately the Albanese Labor government has said that they do not wish to see any efficiencies in the future. That will make it incredibly difficult to do that investment.

Communities rightly expect those investments to be recognised by insurers when premiums are calculated. The round tables have really strengthened the collaboration between government, local government and industry, and have established an ongoing process to improve that data sharing. That

is a really big win for both communities and consumers because getting that data shared and having that data updated on a regular basis enables those insurance companies to do their pricing on the most up-to-date data. Our focus is very straightforward. It is about safer communities, better resilience, greater transparency and more affordable insurance for households, farmers and businesses across our state.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Is the minister satisfied with the progress of insurance companies in supporting Queenslanders with insurance affordability?

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Speaker: I draw your attention to the rules for questions under the standing orders and submit to you that this question contains a hypothetical matter in relation to potential future premiums and also asks the minister to provide an opinion.

Mr SPEAKER: Could you rephrase the question, member?

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, in relation to insurance companies supporting insurance affordability, is enough being done?

Ms LEAHY: I accept that there has been some progress since coming to government, but I do not believe that anyone would suggest the work is complete. There is more work to be done in this area.

Queenslanders rightly expect insurance premiums to reflect current levels of risk based on the best available information. They also expect that where governments and communities invest significantly to reduce disaster risk those improvements will be recognised in insurance pricing. Some of the mayors have been disappointed in that area. That expectation is entirely reasonable.

Queensland has invested heavily in flood mitigation, resilience infrastructure and betterment following major disaster events. Local governments have improved their flood mapping. Their engineering standards continue to evolve, and many communities are considerably more resilient now than when they went through those previous flood events. Through the insurance round tables, insurers acknowledged the importance of continually improving the data used to assess flood risk and have accepted that their data systems may not have always accurately reflected the flood risk in regional Queensland. That is not acceptable, and more needs to be done in this area. Queenslanders should not continue paying premiums based on outdated assumptions where the risk has demonstrably changed, which has occurred in many communities.

I am also deeply disappointed with the silence from insurance companies when it comes to the federal Albanese Labor government's multibillion dollar cuts to disaster recovery. Under the modelling conducted by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, 99 per cent of betterment projects built since 2013 would not have been eligible under the new criteria proposed by the Albanese Labor government. Hundreds of projects which have led to significant reductions in flood risk would never have existed. Here I will talk about Curzon Street Bridge in Brisbane. It is a bridge that leads into the markets. Having that bridge raised will mean that businesses who operate in the markets will not have to claim for loss of business because they will be able to exit and get back in sooner after a flood event. It is a betterment project that will help drive down the risk. In driving down the risk, there will not be as many insurance claims.

Insurance companies have long called for more betterment, not less, so I am surprised that they are not out there talking about the Albanese Labor government's cuts to disaster recovery and resilience. I will continue to advocate they take a stand on this issue which affects communities across Australia, not just in Queensland. It is particularly important. I am disappointed that they have not come forward to comment in relation to these proposed cuts which will ultimately impact Queensland consumers.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister please update the committee on matters relating to the Sooning Street Bridge on Magnetic Island?

Ms LEAHY: I know that you are a very frequent visitor to Magnetic Island, member, and what a beautiful place it is. The Sooning Street Bridge copped a lot of damage. The member has been relentless in his advocacy for Magnetic Island and, more broadly, for North Queensland. It was good to see the community celebrating the reopening of the Sooning Street Bridge on the weekend. I believe that you might have been at that particular opening.

It is important to know that it is a council road and is a brand new crossing over the Gustav Creek, which will be transformational for residents and visitors to the island. It is a key connection point, and I think it is the only bridge that makes that connection.

The reconstruction restores a critical link between Nelly Bay and Picnic Bay, a stretch relied on for employment, education and tourism. The new bridge offers vehicle and pedestrian access, and it has been designed to meet strict environmental requirements. Most importantly, it will better withstand future weather events. In the future, disasters will not leave the same scars as those that have passed.

The reconstruction of the Sooning Street Bridge is a demonstration of what can be achieved when all three levels of government work together. It was funded through the joint Commonwealth-state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This is the sort of community-defining project that is possible under the current DRFA model. Sadly, positive reconstruction outcomes like this will be put at risk by the Albanese federal Labor government's cuts to disaster funding. In fact, the Sooning Street Bridge will not be eligible under the proposed future model. I do not need to explain to you how devastating it would be for Magnetic Island if no funding was provided to the council to repair and replace that bridge.

The funding cuts will strip away vital funds from projects like this in places like Townsville, and I know how disaster-prone your area is. Those cuts will stifle the recovery process in the state. The framework will leave our councils picking up the additional annual bill of many hundreds of millions of dollars.

If we look at the localised effects of the Disaster Recovery Funding Framework on the Townsville council, it would have lost over \$19 million in recovery since 2008. For the reconstruction of the Sooning Street Bridge, there would have been a cost increase to Queensland and the Townsville City Council of some \$3.12 million. As a result, the council would have had to either not continue with that construction or seek the money from ratepayers. Without the DRFA, ratepayers would probably have had to pick up the tab for that particular bridge.

There have been 16 betterment infrastructure projects delivered in Townsville since 2013. None of them would have been fully funded through the Disaster Recovery Funding Framework, which is being proposed by the Commonwealth government. Commonwealth betterment funding would have been slashed from \$8.67 million to just \$381,000. Your communities would have borne the brunt of that under the Albanese Labor government's changes. It is particularly serious for your communities in Townsville. It would mean that the council would have to either pick up the bill or raise rates.

We are the nation's most disaster impacted state because of where we are, and we are at the greatest risk from changes to the existing Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. I congratulate the local member on the delivery of the Sooning Street Bridge on Magnetic Island, but I fear for what might happen in the future if the Albanese federal Labor government cuts the disaster recovery funding. It is a dud deal for people in North Queensland. It is a dud deal for Queenslanders. It will mean that the safety net, as they currently know it, will be gone. That is the really disappointing part about it. I think the Albanese federal Labor government should walk back their proposals.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to the opposition for some questions.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, with regard to the Bundaberg East Levee Project, was your department advised by either the department of public works or the Queensland Reconstruction Authority of the plan to stage the levee before the March 2026 Bundaberg floods?

Ms Blagoev: Through the chair, I may just take a moment to seek some advice on that question, if you please. Apologies, I will have to circle back by the end of the session if we can quickly obtain that information, member.

Mr SPEAKER: Is that okay, Minister?

Ms LEAHY: Just one minute, Mr Speaker. There was some information that was referred to in that question. I think we would like to see that authenticated first before we make a decision as to whether we come back at the end of the session. We would like to see that information.

Mr SPEAKER: Repeat the question, please, member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, with regard to the Bundaberg East Levee Project, was your department advised by either the department of public works or the Queensland Reconstruction Authority of the plan to stage the levee before the March 2026 Bundaberg floods?

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Speaker: I draw to your attention that the minister is not a member of the committee. No committee member has sought authentication of those facts, as far as I am aware. Notwithstanding that, they do not need to now. The member has clarified it.

Mr SPEAKER: It is up to the minister whether that question is taken on notice and whether they are going to come back with that information.

Mr de BRENNI: Indeed, but she is taking—

Mr SPEAKER: That is what I am waiting for. Minister, is it yes or no?

Ms LEAHY: Mr Speaker, I think what we will endeavour to do is to see what information we have available and we will endeavour to come back at the end of the session.

Ms BOYD: My question is to the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. Major General, what level of flood mitigation would flood gates provide compared to the state and federally funded Bundaberg East levee?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder whether that is a question seeking an opinion from Major General Ellwood other than in his technical sphere.

Mr SPEAKER: No. I think I will allow the question. Major General Ellwood, as you were.

Major Gen. Ellwood: I would not be able to give you an exact figure. In fact, I would not be able to give you a figure. I would have to defer to the department of public works and the engineers there who have done the assessment of the proposals.

Ms BOYD: My next question is to the Major General. I table documents released under RTI. One is of a draft media release from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority sent to the Premier's office for edits. I will wait until you have it, Major General. I draw your attention to the highlighted section on page 3. Major General, did you advise \$10 million would cover the design of the flood levee project in Thargomindah?

Major Gen. Ellwood: If I may just confirm, you are referring to '\$10 million to design a flood levee to protect Thargomindah'?

Ms BOYD: That is correct.

Major Gen. Ellwood: Yes. As part of the broader flood mitigation work that will be undertaken, \$10 million has been announced for the Bulloo Catchment and Lower Thomson River and Cooper Creek Catchment Flood Risk Management Program. This will fund the concept designs for a permanent Thargomindah levee including geotechnical investigations; alignment options and regulatory environments; a detailed flood study for Thargomindah that also assesses flood behaviour across the broader Bulloo catchment; a collection of critical data including LiDAR capture, flood level surveys and updated flood modelling and mapping; flood studies and surveys in priority communities like Quilpie, Adavale, Eromanga, Roma, Charleville and St George; and a review of other flood mitigation options for the future.

Ms BOYD: Major General, I have another question for you. I table this media release in which a change was made to include '\$10 million to design and early works' for a flood levee project in Thargomindah. Again, I draw your attention to the highlighted section on the final page, Major General. In this media release, the wording was changed to include '\$10 million to design and early works'. Was this change based on your advice or an edit from the Premier's office?

Mr LISTER: Mr Speaker, point of order: private discussions had by the CEO with the Premier's office or with the minister are not subject to disclosure here. Questions regarding policy and decisions made by politicians should be put to politicians. I suggest that that is an inappropriate question to put to Major General Ellwood.

Mr SPEAKER: I am sure the CEO will not be disclosing any conversations that he should not. I call the CEO.

Major Gen. Ellwood: I certainly would not be speaking for the Premier.

Ms BOYD: My question is to the director-general. Is it correct that a preliminary budget commitment to fund the volunteering hubs model was communicated to the volunteering stakeholders in the initial budget process only to be removed?

Ms Blagoev: I must say that I am unaware myself whether or not there were conversations between my team. I cannot speak to that. I can confirm that the budget delivered \$500,000 to Queensland's four regional volunteer centres located on the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast and in Townsville and Cairns. I am unaware of what the member referred to.

Ms BOYD: Minister, earlier this week you advised that QFD would continue to use the existing alert system this bushfire season rather than AusAlert. A previous Inspector-General of Emergency Management's report said—

Using multiple channels to deliver warnings builds redundancy against ... challenges such as how to reach a community with no mobile phone reception, internet, or power.

Can you advise why you will not be using both systems simultaneously to further test the new system in a real-world setting?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: under standing order 115, it is a lengthy preamble and question. I submit to you, Mr Speaker, it needs to be rephrased to comply with standing orders.

Mr SPEAKER: It was a very long question and in a number of parts. We are virtually out of time. We will pause that. We have one minute left. Let's get the response to that question on notice. If we can get a brief answer in to that question, we will try. Do we have the response to that question on notice?

Ms Blagoev: In relation to the matter of the Bundaberg levee, I can confirm the department was not aware regarding the staging of the levee. I do know that that project has for quite a period been led out of the Department of Housing and Public Works.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, if you can respond to the previous question in 30 seconds?

Ms LEAHY: With regard to further details on the AusAlert, I think they are best addressed to the police minister. Those questions perhaps should have been asked earlier in estimates, in the police minister's portfolio. I think it would be more appropriate to address it to the police minister.

Mr SPEAKER: We have reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the disaster recovery and volunteers portfolio area. Can I please ask for a prompt changeover of witnesses for the examination of estimates for the portfolio area of fire, which is about to commence.

Welcome back, Minister and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of fire open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes for the portfolio area currently under examination.

Ms LEAHY: I might just note that we are right at the end of Rural Fire Service Queensland Week, which celebrates our fires, particularly our rural fires. Let me begin my remarks by thanking our frontline firefighters, the operational staff and the thousands of dedicated volunteers within the Rural Fire Service and Queensland Fire and Rescue for everything they do for Queenslanders. They are out there 365 days a year keeping Queenslanders safe and protecting communities, which is why under Labor's decade of decline it was so galling that when we came to government Labor had left Queensland firefighters with noncompliant vehicles, unfunded commitments and a loss of over 7,000 rural fire volunteers. Our fires deserve better, and that is why in our last budget we set down a strong foundation to deliver for our amazing paid and volunteer firefighters.

In the last 12 months we have delivered a bumper 130 new fire trucks, including 27 for Queensland Fire and Rescue and 103 for the Rural Fire Service. That is five times the number of rural fire trucks Labor delivered in the final year of its decade of decline. These new trucks are strengthening our communities, including in places such as Forest Hill, Bli Bli, Mount Alford and Aratula. We delivered a new permanent fire and rescue station at Greater Springfield on time and on budget as well as the replacement permanent station at Gympie South. We have handed over the replacement Northern Peninsula Area emergency services facility at Bamaga. We have also handed over the new Whetstone Rural Fire Brigade station after years being stuck in a backlog. I know that the member for Southern Downs was pleased to join me at Whetstone. We have three rural fire brigade stations, at Biddaddaba, Mount Alford and Biggenden, having reached practical completion on 17 July. We have made it easier to volunteer for the Rural Fire Service by reducing volunteer onboarding times, launching a new recruitment toolkit and welcoming more than 1,600 new volunteers in 2025-26. We have also finalised a new certified agreement with our firefighting workforce.

This is what can be achieved when you focus on delivery for those who keep Queenslanders safe and not virtue signalling. This year's budget locks in this momentum with a record \$1.172 billion budget for the Queensland Fire Department. We are delivering a total capital program of \$101.9 million to fund modern facilities, fire trucks and essential operational equipment. We are investing \$43.4 million into the capital fleet program this financial year to deliver a further 120 new fire trucks to the front line. We are committing funds to the replacement of fire and rescue stations in Ayr, Boonah, Caloundra and Kingaroy. After strong advocacy from the members for Hervey Bay and Maryborough, we are also delivering a brand new replacement station for Hervey Bay. I was pleased to join those members for that announcement. We are delivering replacement or upgraded rural fire stations for Abbot Point, Bennett, Biarra, Bondoola, Delaneys Creek, Ilkley, Moore-Linville, Mount Binga, Mount Ossa, Swan and Emu creeks and Wartburg rural fire brigades. We are also investing \$5.1 million to complete the

new Maryborough area brigade headquarters. Our frontline paid workforce to defend Queensland communities has also grown, with 253 firefighters strengthening our emergency response over the last two years.

However, the Albanese Labor cuts are not just to disaster recovery; they will also impact our fire operations and department and they will put funding at risk for this department. These cuts to disaster recovery funding will place pressure on the Queensland Fire Department to deliver services that Queenslanders need in times of crisis—services that can mean the difference between life and death. Whilst the Albanese Labor government cuts, we are doing our part. This budget ensures that, whether responding to bushfires, structure fires, complex technical rescues or severe weather, our fire services personnel are given world-class support. This budget strengthens the strong foundations we set down last year and continues to deliver for those Queenslanders who risk everything to keep their communities safe.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to opposition members for questions. I call the member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. With your indulgence, I would like to thank our wonderful volunteers and the rural fire services for Rural Fire Service Queensland Week also.

My first question is of the commissioner. I table a leaked post-incident summary of a network issue on 8 and 9 July this year that was classified as a major incident. This summary details statewide impacts to services utilised by police, ambulance and the Fire Department. Commissioner, Queensland fire services lost statewide access to the emergency services computer-aided dispatch system for almost 18 hours, ambulance operations were impacted for five hours and police operations were impacted for only 53 minutes. Why was the impact to Queensland fire operations so much greater?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, point of order: whilst I accept it is an important question, under standing order 115 that was a very lengthy preamble. I submit to you that, whilst the question may be put, you might just provide some guidance to the member for Pine Rivers around the length of those questions.

Mr SPEAKER: I was just about to do that. There have been a couple of very lengthy questions, member for Pine Rivers. I would ask you to condense them a little bit going forward, but I will allow the question.

Commissioner Smith: I thank the member for the question. I am aware of the outage you speak of. The Queensland Fire Department is committed to maintaining robust, high-availability emergency dispatch systems to ensure continuous statewide triple 0 incident management capabilities. The emergency services computer aided dispatch system is used across our seven communication centres across Queensland to dispatch, manage and coordinate the QFD emergency response to incidents. The recent technical disruption you described to the ESCAD system was managed safely through business continuity plans, ensuring QFD's operational service delivery and response was maintained. There were no unanswered or lost calls. Two identified response times were explainable through operational factors that were outside of our KPIs.

QFD acknowledges that operating under manual arrangements increases the complexity for our fire communications staff and firefighters who work diligently in high-pressure situations. QFD worked with its public safety agency partners, including the Public Safety Network which provides critical shared communications and technology services for Queensland emergency services and expert vendors, to resolve the issue.

QFD implemented a system change freeze to enable remediation and testing to be completed and made immediate changes to strengthen the operation of the service. Over the next three weeks, we will be undertaking additional actions to further strengthen that network and reduce interruptions. These actions will address the root cause of the issue. However, no ITC system is 100 per cent reliable 100 per cent of the time. The department is progressing a program to modernise the CAD and its supporting infrastructure. QFD is applying a multiyear funding approach to support the replacement of key components of the ESCAD environment. That includes \$3 million allocated in the 2025-26 year for server infrastructure, operating system upgrades and data protection measures. The remediation of legacy infrastructure included migration from legacy infrastructure to new infrastructure, the upgrading of operating systems to vendor approved supported versions—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Speaker: respectfully, while I appreciate that the commissioner is being relevant, the question was: why was the impact to fire operations so much greater?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: under standing order 118, relevance, it was an extensive question which had many parts and elements to it. I did raise that originally, so I would submit to you, given the extensive nature of the question and the number of issues that were canvassed in the question as asked, that the commissioner is being responsive to the question as asked.

Mr SPEAKER: That is always the problem with a long question. It is a very important question and I think we all want to hear the response to it. I call the commissioner.

Commissioner Smith: As a result of this investment, the infrastructure and operating systems have been uplifted to a vendor supported standard. A further \$6.15 million has been allocated in 2026-27 to undertake further improvements, including: the replacement of PABX and triple 0 Genesys platform, which is the call routing infrastructure; upgrading the ESCAD application version from version 21 to 25; upgrading the Genesys call routing application; and in 2027-28 and 2028-29 CAD will be replatformed and the associated upgraded technologies will be operational. This means that by the end of the 2028-29 financial year QFD will have a modernised equipment operating system supporting technologies and CAD application. No further changes will then be made to the CAD prior to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Investment in the next generation of CAD capability will progress after the games. The QFD did experience the longest outage among the agencies due to a disrupted file path in the standard query language database. That disrupted path required additional time for the restoration and backup process and for server testing and operational testing to be conducted.

Ms BOYD: Commissioner, I table a leaked major incident notification for 17 July, which shows that an issue during a planned three-hour outage resulted in another statewide loss of dispatch services for almost six hours. Is it correct that during these outages backup mapping data through the iMACC system is relied upon to help identify station and crew availability for calls?

Mr SPEAKER: Do you have a copy of that, Commissioner?

Commissioner Smith: Yes. I am just having a read of it now. Member, just to clarify the question, this was an outage on 17 July that you are seeking an understanding of whether iMACC is relied upon in terms of—

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the commissioner but he has just raised the point that we are talking about July 2026. Forgive me; I got my dates wrong. Please go ahead.

Ms BOYD: The question was: is it correct that during these outages backup mapping data through the iMACC system is relied upon to help identify station and crew availability for calls?

Commissioner Smith: I thank the member for the question. The iMACC system you mention is a business continuity plan mapping system used within fire communications centres. Whilst it is an electronic system, it does not integrate with CAD so it is a separate system. iMACC does not have any automated response recommendations and relies on FCOs to provide those recommendations. It is a component of—

Ms BOYD: Is it what you use, Commissioner?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Just wait for the call. If you have a point of order, you raise a point of order but we are not having cross-table conversations. Do you have a point of order, member for Pine Rivers?

Ms BOYD: No.

Mr SPEAKER: Okay. I call the commissioner.

Commissioner Smith: During that second outage on 17 July, the fire communications centres immediately activated their BCP, which as you mentioned relies on iMACC. During that period, 59 incidents were responded to within this period.

Ms BOYD: Thank you.

Mr SPEAKER: Just before we go to your question, member for Pine Rivers, with respect to these two documents that you tabled, would you like the last page of both of those documents removed because they contain a lot of email addresses?

Ms LEAHY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I agree with you. There is a whole page there of email addresses.

Mr SPEAKER: We will not table the last page of both documents.

Ms BOYD: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your guidance. I appreciate it. Commissioner, I table a leaked email which reveals that, during the recent outages, the newly opened Greater Springfield Fire and Rescue Station was not included in the backup mapping data. Commissioner, is it correct that, as a result of this, a crew was dispatched to respond to a fire from an Ipswich station rather than the closer Springfield station?

Mr SPEAKER: We will get that document to the commissioner. Do you understand the question, Commissioner?

Commissioner Smith: Yes. I thank the member for the question. In terms of Springfield, I have described already what the iMACC system is. The iMACC spatial uploads is correct. It was not in the iMACC upload at that point in time. The iMACC spatial uploads occur every quarter and was subject to the timing of station opening and the next scheduled iMACC spatial upload. This may result in a delay in its inclusion in the actual iMACC map itself. Firecom staff were aware that Greater Springfield station was operational, as it opened on 4 June 2026. Human error is attributed to Greater Springfield not being the initial responder to a structure fire on 8 July.

During this period of manual operations a reliance on iMACC contributed to the error. It was identified as a result of this incident that Greater Springfield did not appear in iMACC as no upload had occurred since its opening. Between spatial uploads, Firecom centre managers and staff receive regular communications relating to new station builds and openings or any other events that may trigger a change in response. These are then incorporated into their BCP arrangements. Firecom centre managers have been re-engaged to ensure they understand the requirements in terms of the incorporation of new stations into BCPs. In this case, as per the email, Firecom Southport BCP has been amended to include instructions on capturing new stations as they become operational.

Ms BOYD: I refer to the same email, which details required updates to business continuity plans for Firecom centres by 6 August this year. Was the direction in the email for Southport's continuity plan to be updated by 10 am today intended to ensure this was corrected prior to this estimates hearing?

Commissioner Smith: I am not aware of the background to the email.

Ms BOYD: Minister, could I please clarify the sequence of events? Is it correct that during a major systems outage an error in how backup systems are maintained resulted in a fire call—where every minute counts—being answered by a crew further away and in the days following an attempt to sweep it under the rug was made before today's hearing?

Mr LISTER: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I know what your point of order is going to be.

Mr LISTER: There was a lengthy preamble, it was argumentative and it contained imputations.

Mr SPEAKER: I agree with all of that. Member for Pine Rivers, you can rephrase that question a number of ways or we are moving on.

Ms BOYD: I am happy to move on. My next question is to the commissioner. Commissioner, the 2023-24 budget allocated an additional \$85 million to deliver 285 new and replacement rural fire trucks over three years, bringing the pipeline of Rural Fire Service vehicles to 412. Can you please provide an update on the status of those 412 Rural Fire Service trucks? Specifically, how many have been handed over and how many are on order?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: it was lengthy again and there were a number of elements to the question.

Ms BOYD: There are details.

Dr ROWAN: I would submit to you, Mr Speaker, that there should be two parts to the question. In other words, there should be two separate questions.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Pine Rivers, the first thing is: I hear points of order in silence. You asked for a bit of detail in that question. Commissioner, did you understand the question?

Ms LEAHY: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it would be far better to have the question split into two parts and that will elicit far better answers.

Mr SPEAKER: Can you split that into two?

Ms BOYD: I can do that, Mr Speaker. Can you please provide an update, Commissioner, on the status of those 412 Rural Fire Service trucks? Specifically, how many have been handed over and when?

Commissioner Smith: QFD is finalising its RFSQ fleet program. Representing a total investment of \$85.35 million, it is forecast to deliver 240 trucks across three financial years from 2024-25 to 2026-27, with final numbers to be confirmed at the point of awarding those contracts. The procurement and tender process is underway and the following progress has been made. To date 62 of the 91 light attack trucks under a contract awarded in March 2025 have been delivered. That is as at 30 June. A contract to build 13 heavy attack fire trucks was awarded in April 2026. Two of these trucks are forecast to be delivered in the 2026-27 financial year. Due to a change in available cab chassis, the medium attack process was split into two procurement stages. Stage 1 has been awarded to two suppliers and

includes a build of 20 vehicles; 25 single cabs and 15 dual cabs are being built by Bell Environmental located at Narangba, with the first truck forecast for delivery in August 2026. Twenty-three vehicles are being built by another Queensland regional manufacturer, with the contract in the final stages of negotiation, with the first of these scheduled for delivery in Q1 2027. Stage 2 is scheduled to be released to the market in August this year, with final build numbers and delivery schedule to be confirmed at contract award. Tender evaluation to build seven heavy tankers for RFSQ is in the final stages and is expected to be awarded by September 2026.

Ms BOYD: I table leaked documents. After 10 months of consultation, the Ayr fire and rescue station design was signed off with a permanent crewing model. On 7 July, firefighters in Ayr were informed that station design would be smaller with no crew uplift, meaning Ayr would not have a 24-hour permanent fire and rescue station. These leaked documents state that this is because the funding from Treasury was not received. Can you confirm that is the case, Commissioner?

Mr SPEAKER: We will get the document to the commissioner.

Commissioner Smith: Delivering a replacement fire and rescue station to Ayr is a matter of priority and was a government election commitment. The land was acquired in August 2025 for the station. As per the document, an FS6 station was considered during the planning stages. However, following assessment of service requirements, an FS4 station was confirmed as appropriate for the service delivery model in place. Importantly, though, the approved design includes capacity for future expansion should operational needs change over time. Funding is available for the delivery of the station. Preparation of the tender documentation is progressing. The capital investment in the replacement station will provide permanent and auxiliary firefighters with modern facilities and a capacity to house response vehicles and technical rescue equipment. I might throw to the deputy commissioner to provide some information about the consultation on this FS6.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Pine Rivers, I am going to assume this was a typing error, but in that box on 19 January there is an unparliamentary term. I think we should probably get that redacted. It is in the second line.

Ms LEAHY: I would agree with that.

Ms BOYD: I believe that may be a spelling error.

Mr SPEAKER: I would say so. I would say it was supposed to be 'shift'.

Ms BOYD: I did not type the document, so I could not speak to its intent.

Mr SPEAKER: We will get that amended.

Ms BOYD: What a keen eye.

Mr SPEAKER: Next question.

Ms BOYD: Sorry, the commissioner had just thrown to the deputy commissioner.

Deputy Commissioner Walsh: The normal process for when we have considerations around stations is we obviously consult with the local crews. I can confirm, as the commissioner outlined, that during the process for the Ayr consultation there was consideration around the FS6 station, which is a station designed to accommodate 24/7 personnel. The Ayr fire station currently is a mixed station insofar as it has urban firefighters on day work seven days a week, supported by auxiliary firefighters. That model is not planning to change. We look at a whole range of factors such as change of the service delivery in terms of demographics, urban sprawl, frequency of responses, types of responses and response times. Through the process it was determined that an FS4 station matches the current service delivery. As the commissioner said, the design includes capacity for future expansion should the operational service change over time.

Ms BOYD: So it was a Fire decision—

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to government members for some questions.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, I recognise that this week is Rural Fire Service Week. Can you please inform the committee how the Queensland Fire Department is recognising the efforts of our rural fire volunteers?

Ms LEAHY: I do want to thank the member. I know that he is an active Rural Fire Service member and I want to thank him for his service, as I wish to thank the many thousands of volunteers who give their time, their skills and their experience to support communities right across this state. As the member mentioned, it is Rural Fire Service Queensland Week and we do acknowledge the Rural Fire Service volunteers for their commitment, their teamwork, their professionalism and the important role they play

in community safety. A range of events and activities have been held across the state this week to thank volunteers for their dedication and their service, including the presentation of the RFSQ Week awards. These awards recognise the outstanding contributions that our volunteers make, highlighting individuals and brigades that demonstrate leadership, commitment and service to their communities.

The State Volunteer of the Year award recognises an outstanding Rural Fire Service volunteer who has demonstrated exceptional commitment, leadership and impact at a state level. It celebrates individuals whose contribution extends beyond their brigade, influencing capability, culture or community safety across the regions. The 2026 State Volunteer of the Year is Max Pearce from the North Dallarnil Rural Fire Brigade. Max has 47 years of dedicated service to the North Dallarnil Rural Fire Brigade, encompassing a foundational role in its establishment and ongoing development by demonstrating consistent leadership in emergency response and an unwavering commitment to strengthening community resilience. The Regional Volunteer of the Year award winners are Patricia Rollason from Mount Blackwood Rural Fire Brigade for the northern region, Owen Kavanagh from the Stanwell Rural Fire Brigade for the central region, Paul Davey from the Blenheim District Rural Fire Brigade for the south-eastern region, and—someone who I know very well—Karen Richters from the Roma Rural Fire Brigade for the south-western region.

The State Young Volunteer of the Year award recognises an exceptional young volunteer who is making a meaningful contribution to the Rural Fire Service Queensland at a state level. It honours the emerging leaders aged between 16 and 30 years who demonstrate initiative, commitment and a strong future for the service. The 2026 State Young Volunteer of the Year is Keira Danziger from the Round Mountain Rural Fire Brigade. Keira exemplifies the highest standards in what is meant to be a volunteer firefighter, consistently upholding the Queensland Fire Department's core values of loyalty, trust, respect, integrity and courage with actions that exhibit these principles in every aspect of involvement with the brigade. The Regional Young Volunteer of the Year award winners are Tia Forsyth from the Cargoan Rural Fire Brigade for the northern region, Khan Donald from the McEuen Rural Fire Brigade for the central region, Filippo Cazzulino from the Gilston Advancetown Rural Fire Brigade for the south-eastern region, and Tyler Sullivan-Harding from the Wilkie Creek Rural Fire Brigade for the south-western region—another one in my electorate.

The State Brigade of the Year award celebrates the brigade that has demonstrated excellence across operations, community engagement, training and teamwork. It recognises brigades that work collaboratively, support their members and make a strong contribution to community safety. I am pleased to advise the committee that the 2026 State Brigade of the Year is the Stanwell Rural Fire Brigade. The Stanwell Rural Fire Brigade has demonstrated operational excellence and an unwavering commitment to Stanwell and the broader Rockhampton community, exemplifying the values and vision of the Queensland Fire Department. The brigade has a steadfast focus on operational excellence, proactive risk mitigation and community empowerment, establishing a benchmark for brigades across the region. The Regional Brigade of the Year award winners are the Killaloe Rural Primary Producer Brigade for the northern region, the Ilfracombe Rural Fire Brigade for the central region, the Gowrie Little Plain Rural Fire Brigade for the south-western region, Mr Speaker, which I believe is in your electorate, and the Allandale Rural Fire Brigade for the south-eastern region.

On behalf of the Crisafulli government, I want to extend our heartfelt thanks to our rural firefighting volunteers for their unwavering dedication, selfless service and extraordinary bravery in protecting lives, property and communities across the state, as well as our congratulations to each of these very deserving award winners.

Mr LISTER: Minister, with respect to the financial support provided to our rural fire volunteers, will the minister outline how the recent introduction of interest-bearing bank accounts for rural fire brigades is assisting them in managing their finances and supporting their needs?

Mr BOOTHMAN: That is a great question.

Ms LEAHY: I thank the member for the question, and it is a very valid question. The Crisafulli government is backing our Rural Fire Service volunteers, ensuring our volunteer brigades are financially sustainable and adequately resourced being a core priority for this government. Our brigades work incredibly hard to generate local funding and it is only fair and reasonable that they should keep the interest that is generated on that funding. Whether it is through local government rural fire levies, community sausage sizzles, family open days or generous local donations, these funds are essential for their ongoing operation. They allow brigades to purchase specific equipment tailored to their local risk profile and fund vital community engagement and education activities and cover critical logistical expenses.

I am very pleased to advise the committee that from 19 March 2026 all subaccounts held by RFSQ brigades have automatically earned interest, and that is a huge change from what we saw under Labor's decade of decline where that money was simply going back to Treasury. It was not going to the volunteers at the front line. This adjustment ensures the funds held by individual brigades are no longer sitting idle and they are no longer sitting in Treasury; they are actively accruing interest. This interest is calculated accurately and deposited directly into the respective brigade subaccounts on the first business day of every single month, and I do want to thank the Queensland Fire Department staff who ensure that that occurs. Most importantly, these generated funds remain exclusively quarantined for the use of each individual brigade.

Disappointingly, during Labor's decade of decline they stripped Rural Fire Service Queensland volunteers of their ability to earn interest on their subaccounts, taking away the funds that they had rightly generated. Restoring the interest to these subaccounts means that every dollar raised locally stays local rather than filling the coffers of consolidated revenue—and now it grows over time and provides a direct ongoing financial boost to our brigades, returning value directly to those communities that generously donated those funds in the first place. This will make it easier for brigades to plan for future equipment purchases, manage their resources effectively and maintain a state of high-operational readiness.

By allowing these accounts to earn interest, the Crisafulli government is taking another practical step to back our frontline volunteers and empower them into the future. It reduces the ongoing pressure on local fundraising efforts and allows our people to focus more of their valuable time on their core mission of protecting Queensland communities from the threat of bushfires. This initiative reflects the Crisafulli government's steadfast commitment to empowering our Rural Fire Service volunteers, ensuring our brigades remain equipped, supported and financially resilient well into the future.

Mr LISTER: Can the minister please provide an update as to the delivery of new and replacement stations for Queensland firefighters?

Ms LEAHY: I know that the member has great interest in Rural Fire Service stations, particularly one in his electorate at Whetstone. I was very pleased to join the member there for the opening of that particular rural fire shed. It is a very good facility and I am sure that it will encourage many more active volunteers to the Whetstone Rural Fire Brigade.

Communities across Queensland are evolving, growing and experiencing shifting risk profiles. To ensure the Queensland Fire Department's emergency response keeps pace with growth, the Crisafulli government is acting to ensure communities have the fire stations and rural fire sheds they need. As part of our record budget for the Queensland Fire Department, we are delivering more facilities for our paid and volunteer firefighters. This year's capital program allocates \$20.8 million for the replacement fire and rescue stations in Ayr, Boonah, Caloundra and Kingaroy. As noted in my opening remarks, it also delivers a brand new replacement station for Hervey Bay. The land for the station has been secured following an extensive search for a suitable site to replace the existing Torquay Fire and Rescue Station. I was pleased to attend the Torquay station with the local member for Hervey Bay, David Lee. It certainly demonstrated to me why they need a new facility. It will be strategically positioned to support the expanding Hervey Bay and Maryborough regions. It will be home to a modern, purpose-built facility designed to meet the needs of that growing community on the Fraser Coast. The new station will provide cutting-edge capabilities for the dedicated firefighters in the area. I want to acknowledge the tireless—sometimes more than tireless—advocacy of the members for Hervey Bay and Maryborough in fighting for this facility for their communities. This investment is just another example of how the Crisafulli government is restoring safety for Queenslanders through providing infrastructure that supports our frontline crews and keeps regional communities safe into the future, just like we promised.

This budget delivers even more to our regional communities, with \$9.2 million to deliver replacement or upgraded rural fire brigade sheds. Our rural fire volunteers do amazing work and they deserve facilities just like the one at Whetstone that match their invaluable commitment to their communities. I am happy to say that this budget includes sheds for Abbot Point, Bennett, Biarra, Bondoola, Delaneys Creek Ilkley, Moore-Linville, Mount Binga—the existing shed at Mount Binga is probably not exactly what you would call a shed so I am very pleased to see Mount Binga on the list—Mount Ossa, Swan and Emu creeks and the Wartburg rural fire brigades. We are also investing \$5.1 million to complete the new Maryborough area brigade headquarters. Giving these brigades the facilities they require not only ensures they are positioned to serve and protect their community but also guarantees the longevity of those vital community organisations for many years to come. We are backing our frontline fires—paid or volunteer—and this budget demonstrates that commitment. We will

continue working to use local suppliers as much as possible for building those rural fire sheds. I know it is particularly important in rural and regional communities for locals to have the opportunity to be involved.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to opposition members for a few questions and then we might come back before we finish.

Ms BOYD: Commissioner, in 2025 your Commissioner's Award for Excellence went to the 2024 Girls Firefighter Experience Camp. There is a waiting list for this award-winning program designed to improve the diversity of the service and it has been reportedly scrapped. What is the explanation for your award-winning program, that has a waiting list of participants, having no funding allocation under this budget?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I refer back to standing order 115(a), that questions should be brief and relate to one issue, which that offended. Secondly, there should not be lengthy or subjective preambles. There are quite a few complaints we have had to make about that.

Mr SPEAKER: There was a slight imputation but I will allow the question. The commissioner is ready to respond.

Commissioner Smith: The girls firefighting experience program was a pilot program. The department is committed to increasing female representation and diversity across the workforce, ensuring our services reflect the communities we protect. This commitment is embedded department-wide through our Everyday Respect Framework, which promotes respect as a foundation of leadership and culture, and is supported by our Everyday Respect Council, which has a number of communities of inclusion. This includes an Everyday Respect leadership program that is attached to support development.

The girls firefighting experience program was conducted as a pilot initiative in 2024 to explore the opportunities to engage the interest of young women and promote operational careers in emergency services. The purpose of the camp was to increase awareness of firefighting as a career choice for women by targeting young women in years 9 and 10 at a time when they are considering their future career pathways. It was a single-delivery two-day event. Thirty year 9 and year 10 students plus staff and internal resourcing were involved. It was conducted at the Whyte Island facility. Following the delivery of that pilot there was a formal review to assess its outcomes, sustainability and long-term impact on recruitment. Given the distance between the age of that cohort and our ability to recruit into the service, we noticed it was at least four years away from meeting the eligibility requirements. We have a series of partnerships with organisations such as UNIQ You where we reach out and engage with that cohort more directly by having a one-on-one conversation with girls who are interested. Our focus has shifted to more direct recruitment in the near term versus that longer term pipeline. That is where we stand at the moment, member.

Ms BOYD: Commissioner, noting that prehearing estimates question on notice No. 14 says that attrition for professional firefighters is at 4.98 per cent as at 30 June 2026, what is the head count and FTE of firefighter recruits that the Fire Department needs to address attrition and promotion in this financial year?

Commissioner Smith: Question on notice 14 related to our—

Ms BOYD: Attrition for professional firefighters. The response was 4.98 per cent as at 30 June 2026, Commissioner.

Commissioner Smith: So the numbers required to support attrition based on that recommendation. Our plan for firefighter recruitment in 2026-27 is to run seven courses with 112 recruits commencing those courses. That will restore a normal flow of firefighter recruitment to meet attrition outcomes. That is constantly monitored by our regions and divisions.

Ms BOYD: Commissioner, last year we learned in estimates that the station officer positions were sitting at a 38 per cent vacancy rate. Currently we have heard from question on notice No. 14 that there are 129 FTE station officers at 30 June this year. Last year that number was at 196. What is the reason for the difference of 37 station officers in only 41 days?

Commissioner Smith: There is a variety of reasons for how the specific language used in questions can be responded to in terms of comparing the same figures and statistics—whether it is paid FTE or otherwise, because the paid FTE is specifically members who are paid on a fortnightly basis at a particular point in time. Our station officers do a remarkable job across Queensland every day in responding and supporting Queenslanders—not only in terms of their response capability but also by

strengthening capability through community. They are often our first operational officers on scene, responsible for commanding complex emergencies across a wide range of hazard types, ensuring crew safety and managing station operations and community safety programs.

As at 30 June there were 205 station officer positions out of 747 positions without a substantive owner registered in the establishment. However, it should be noted that this does not mean that there is no-one performing the duties of the station officer. Operational station officer roles are filled through the department's operational rostering practices which are not integrated with our establishment data. To counter that and to support that approach, there is in fact just 202 extra firefighters over and above our establishment in the system who support the acting officer in those roles. Queensland fire and rescue implements acting arrangements by senior firefighters into these positions in both functional roles and operational positions where they are supported through a scaled operational model that includes operational support by substantive station officers and operational senior officers.

Targeted action is being taken to build a stronger and more sustainable station officer workforce. A survey was sent out in late 2025 to all senior firefighters to identify the barriers as to why they are not entering the station officer program. Some of the themes that emerged was a reluctance to move onto day work, the complexity of the application process and the additional support required from the regions for the candidates. Queensland fire and rescue has acted on this feedback. As at 24 July, 276 senior firefighters have registered or enrolled in a pathway to the station officer program—as of 1 August—which is a new program to support that pipeline demonstrating a significant increase in their interest in the course. In 2025-26 Queensland fire and rescue promoted 43 senior firefighters to station officer and a further 40 applicants are undertaking the station officer program with promotions scheduled between August and October this year. Additionally, Queensland fire and rescue is, in consultation with industry stakeholders, streamlining the application process, removing unnecessary steps, reducing timeframes and improving candidate support across the regions. Queensland fire and rescue is also assessing day work station officer positions with a view to returning more officers to frontline operational roles.

These steps are being supported by the modernised station officer program which strengthens command control and leadership capability while providing practical experience on shift through higher duties where rostering allows. From 2027 the station officer program will reduce from around six months to approximately 12 to 14 weeks—so a concentrated program—while still maintaining the operational capability required of the role. Early indications do suggest an increased interest following these recent changes, with applications for the 2027 cohort to open in late 2026 and the program capacity being increased to 80 position to support the leadership pipeline. We are also looking at further opportunities to increase it above 80 in terms of capacity. We expect those initiatives will all contribute to a stronger engagement with the station officer program.

Ms BOYD: Can I firstly correct something. I misspoke before. I said 37 was the number when, in fact, it was 67. I do have another question; it is to the commissioner. Commissioner, in May members of parliament received a letter regarding the Queensland Fire Department boundary review stating 'we value your ongoing collaboration in this important work'. The member for Sandgate replied to the acting commissioner requesting a briefing of the changes and instead received a letter back from the minister offering consultation with a political staffer. Why did your office directly write to members of parliament highlighting a process, seeking collaboration, only for members to receive a ministerial response in reply?

Mr BOOTHMAN: Point of order: that is clearly argumentative.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Speaker. The schedule in the standing orders around questions to public servants, in this case the commissioner, explicitly states that it is appropriate to ask for explanations of processes and procedures. I submit to you that that is what this question is seeking to elicit: information around the process and procedure. The supposition that there is some imputation there is simply in the minds of members representing the government on the committee. The question itself is quite plain on its face and seeks an answer in relation to process.

Mr SPEAKER: It was a long question and that was a very long point of order, let me say. The question is why was an email sent by the department, but responded to by the minister; is that the thrust of the question?

Ms BOYD: That is the thrust.

Mr SPEAKER: Commissioner, I will allow you to respond to that and then we will go to government members.

Commissioner Smith: I am not aware of that response or approach. Is there a document?

Ms BOYD: I can table it, absolutely.

Mr SPEAKER: We will have it handed to you.

Ms BOYD: The question was why did your office write directly to members of parliament highlighting this process, seeking collaboration, only to receive a ministerial response?

Commissioner Smith: I cannot comment on the reasoning behind receiving a response that way. I am aware of correspondence going out. I met with yourself, as an example of that. I cannot comment on the nature of this as I was not in the seat at the time unfortunately, member.

Mr SPEAKER: I will go to the member for Townsville for a question.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister please provide an update on fire truck builds that have been undertaken over the last 12 months and provide an overview of what is expected in the next 12 months?

Ms LEAHY: Before I move to the answer to that question, I just want to ensure that it is abundantly clear for Hansard that this budget locks in \$1.172 billion. I want to ensure that is correct for Hansard. I note that correction. I thank the member for the question in relation to fire truck builds. I see that he has been a bit busy this week in relation to fire trucks. I was very pleased to have a look at the truck that is actually heading to Palm Island, which is in your electorate. I know you will be really looking forward to receiving that truck. It is one of two. It will have satellite communications, the Starlink, on it as well. I saw that on the truck.

The Crisafulli government is making Queensland safer by strengthening frontline emergency response capabilities with a record number of new firefighting appliances delivered across Queensland over the past year. We have overhauled the Queensland Fire Department's approach to fleet production and the results of that speak for themselves. I am incredibly pleased to advise that in the 2025-26 year the department delivered a record 130 new fire trucks to operational service. This includes 27 new fire trucks for Queensland fire and rescue and 103 Rural Fire Service Queensland trucks, all featuring significantly enhanced firefighting safety systems, and that includes the one that is going to Palm Island in the member's electorate.

We are getting more yellow trucks into the hands of volunteers, delivering more than five times the number of RFSQ appliances than provided by the former Labor government which delivered just 20 during the 2023-24 financial year. There is a strong momentum and it continues in this budget. There has been \$43.4 million budgeted specifically for the capital fleet program, continuing our commitment to a modern fleet. This comprises \$22.91 million for the Queensland fire and rescue service and \$20.47 million for Rural Fire Service Queensland and will see a total of 120 new fire trucks hit the front line.

These new appliances will reach communities right across the state. They are part of our plan to ensure Queensland's emergency services remain among the best equipped in the nation. Labor unfortunately, in their decade of decline, failed to keep pace with the needs of our growing state, but we are getting on with the job of equipping our frontline volunteer firefighters and our firefighters in Queensland fire and rescue with the vehicles and the resources that they need to do their job safely and effectively. The QFD's landmark partnership with Volvo and Fraser Engineering Group is a further example of this work and we are looking forward to the first trucks that are coming from that arrangement.

Mr SPEAKER: We are just about to finish up. Did you want to say anything to conclude?

Ms LEAHY: To conclude, I would like to acknowledge that it is the last estimates for Kev Walsh. He is retiring. I would very much like to thank him for the incredible service that he has given the Queensland Fire Department. I would also like to acknowledge Mr John Oliver from the QPFU who I understand is also retiring. I would like to put on the record my thanks to him as well.

Mr SPEAKER: The committee will now adjourn for a short break. The hearing will resume at 3.15 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 3.00 pm to 3.15 pm.



Mr SPEAKER: I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of local government 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 for the portfolio area currently under examination.

Ms LEAHY: The Crisafulli government is continuing to deliver for Queensland by working with our partners in the local government sector. I have said it many times: councils are the closest level of government to their communities and are best placed to understand local priorities. That is why we are focusing on reducing red tape, strengthening that partnership between state and local government and ensuring our councils have the tools, the resources and the certainty they need to deliver for Queenslanders.

Earlier this year we passed the empowering councils bill, giving councils fit-for-purpose legislation that cuts unnecessary administrative burdens and supports more effective local decision-making. We have received the red tape reduction report and are working across government to implement practical solutions to reduce red tape for councils. We are progressing work to support councils' long-term financial sustainability through the depreciation taskforce. We have renewed the Rural and Remote Councils Compact, reinforcing our partnership with regional councils, some of which are very far and wide and very geographically disadvantaged. We have reinforced that partnership with regional councils to deliver for regional Queenslanders. We have also signed the Queensland Indigenous Council Leaders Accord, creating a stronger partnership between the state and Queensland's 16 Indigenous councils and providing a platform for those leaders to help shape decision-making and deliver outcomes for their communities which are, similarly to the rural and remote councils, extremely geographically disadvantaged councils.

Under Labor's decade of decline, councils drowned under unnecessary red tape. Councils were left to blow in the breeze while Labor failed to give them the support they needed to get vital projects off the ground and deliver services for their communities. That is why we are so focused on working hand in hand with the local government sector on repairing the relationship between councils and the state after a decade of trashing by Labor. It is also why we are eager to see the results of the parliamentary inquiry into the operation of the effectiveness of the councillor conduct framework so that we can continue to identify improvements and strengthen public confidence in local government whilst treating our councillors and mayors with the respect they deserve.

This year's budget delivers on the foundations we set down last year. It continues to invest in local infrastructure and community priorities across the state, supporting projects that improve local facilities, enhance public safety, strengthen community connections and build the infrastructure that communities need. These are programs such as Works for Queensland, which is now a permanently funded program. We are providing councils with the certainty to plan and deliver critical infrastructure that responds directly to local priorities. Our budget continues to support our 129 show societies, helping to deliver events that strengthen connections, celebrate regional industries and support local economies. It continues to back our Indigenous communities with an additional \$27 million for the Indigenous Councils Funding Program over the next year.

Together, our ongoing reforms and investment programs are ensuring councils are better equipped to meet the challenges of today while planning for the opportunities of tomorrow. The Crisafulli government is committed to empowering our councils, strengthening that partnership and delivering on the practical outcomes for communities across Queensland. Our last budget delivered on this and this budget delivers again, because we know that when we have strong and financially sound local councils it means that we have vibrant Queensland communities.

Our biggest threat to building those strong councils and vibrant communities in rural and regional Queensland—in fact, anywhere in Queensland—is the Albanese federal Labor government cuts to disaster recovery funding. Make no mistake: it will be councils that will feel the brunt of those cuts. That is why the LGAQ and so many local councils have spoken up and travelled thousands of kilometres to be heard. Some have travelled from places like Georgetown all the way to Melbourne to be heard. We are fighting alongside our councils to hold the Albanese federal Labor government to account for this disastrous, dangerous and dud cut for Queensland communities. I take this opportunity to once again call on the Albanese federal Labor government to walk back these cuts. It is a dud deal for Queensland and they should dump it.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to the opposition members for the first round of questions.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, ahead of this budget, the LGAQ publicly called for the reductions in the waste levy annual payments to be paused. Did the department make representations to the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation on behalf of impacted councils seeking a pause?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the waste levy and matters pertaining to the waste levy sit within the Minister for Environment and Tourism's portfolio, and I would submit to you that there was an opportunity to put that question to the Minister for Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation during that portfolio session.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the question was not about the nature of the policy itself; it was around representations made by this department and its director-general to the Department of Environment, and I think the question is consistent with what is contemplated by standing orders—

Mr SPEAKER: The director-general is more than capable of answering whatever is specific to the department that she is the director-general of.

Ms Blagoev: That is a matter for DETSI. As occurs across all of government, we have a lot of different agencies that impact upon councils, and we very much encourage those agencies to consult directly with councils and, importantly, through the LGAQ.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, did you make representations to DETSI?

Mr SPEAKER: I think the director-general just responded to that question. Do you have another question, member for Pine Rivers?

Ms BOYD: I certainly do. Director-General, the LGAQ has stated that millions of Queenslanders will 'continue wearing an increasing state government bin tax on their rates bills'. Has the department undertaken modelling on the impact of the reduction of the waste levy annual payments on impacted councils' financial sustainability or rates?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: as I hear the question as asked by the member for Pine Rivers, I would submit to you, Mr Speaker, that that work is under the direct responsibilities of the Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation, and any of those are matters with respect to the content as asked would be undertaken by the relevant minister within his portfolio area.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I would simply encourage you to apply your same ruling in relation to the other point of order which is that the director-general should be able to answer in accordance with the relevance to their agency.

Mr BAILLIE: Point of order, Speaker: can the member authenticate the comments from the LGAQ in the preamble?

Mr SPEAKER: I will allow the question in the same manner as I allowed the one before. The director-general is well aware of what comes under her department and what does not.

Ms Blagoev: That is a matter for DETSI. As indicated before, the role of my department was to continue to encourage DETSI to liaise directly with councils and the LGAQ.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, in reference to the Local Government Depreciation Taskforce, question on notice 455 noted the report had been with the minister since December. Director-General, can you advise of the timeline for its public release?

Ms Blagoev: The depreciation report is being considered by government. Importantly, recommendations have been discussed thoroughly with key stakeholders such as the LGAQ and the Queensland Audit Office. We need to ensure all perspectives have been included in the government's response to that report. This was always going to be a challenging piece of work, but an important one. The fact that this government has made it an election commitment shows the government's dedication to supporting councils, and my department has been asked to ensure this work is delivered. This is a complex matter and we want to get it right. What we are doing has the capacity to impact a council's bottom line. As a result of consultation with stakeholders, I am expecting that the department and stakeholders such as the LGAQ and the Local Government Finance Professionals network will ensure the result is a collaborative effort. To answer the member's specific question, the release of the report and timing around that is a matter to be considered by executive government.

Ms BOYD: Minister, when will you publish the Local Government Depreciation Taskforce report, delivery plan and the government's response?

Ms LEAHY: It is so interesting to listen to the opposition in relation to the depreciation taskforce. Depreciation was something that they ignored for 10 years over their decade of decline. It was something that simply was not on the previous government's radar at all, despite the fact that many councils raised the issue, despite the fact that a previous committee of, I think it was, the Bligh government at the time—I am just trying to remember which one it was—was never allowed to report in relation to a lot of the issues that were raised under the Labor government around depreciation. The

Labor government had 10 years—their decade of decline—to do something really positive around depreciation, particularly for councils, and it is something that councils raised a lot with me in opposition. It is just so disappointing that over their decade of decline they never actually did anything around depreciation, even though they had a decade—10 years—to deal with that. Instead, they continued to trash the relationship with councils, they ran over the top of councils, they provided legislation that changed the voting system on councils, and then they had to withdraw that in the parliament—there were all sorts of theatrics around that.

Depreciation was not considered by the previous Labor government; they did not see that as important, yet Queensland councils see that as important. That is the real contrast. Over Labor's decade of decline, they did nothing in relation to depreciation, whereas we have ensured we have put the taskforce in place and we have talked and listened to councils in relation to depreciation. None of that happened in the previous 10 years; in fact, absolutely the opposite. We saw things like the CCC going in there, and who can forget what happened at Logan and what came from that—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the question was about the delivery of the report and the government's response to the taskforce report. The minister has spoken an awful lot about Labor and not answered the question.

Mr SPEAKER: It is a relevant point of order, Minister. The question was around the plan and timeframes. I ask you to respond to that or we will move on.

Ms LEAHY: I think it is important that we set the scene of what happened in the last 10 years of the former Labor government. They did not make anything in relation to depreciation their priority, whereas this government has made depreciation with councils a priority. Under the previous Labor government we saw the fiasco—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker: we are back where we were a couple of moments ago. I ask you to consider whether the minister is being relevant.

Dr ROWAN: On a point of order: after the previous point of order and your direction to the minister, Mr Speaker, I believe that she is comparing and contrasting. She is talking about matters not only to do with this government—yes, she is referencing the previous government, but she is addressing both what is happening now and what has happened in the past in her response.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, do you have anything to add? Otherwise we will move on

Ms LEAHY: I have a lot more to talk about in relation to local government.

Mr SPEAKER: Do you have anything to add specifically about the delivery of the depreciation report?

Ms LEAHY: There is a real contrast here. Under Labor we saw things like the Logan City Council file. We saw the OIA. We have made depreciation a priority.

Mr SPEAKER: We have plenty of time to prosecute those sorts of issues. We will go to the next question.

Ms BOYD: Minister, why are the local government depreciation taskforce report, the delivery plan and the government's response still secret?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I suggest that may involve cabinet-in-confidence material and, therefore, does not have to be disclosed here.

Mr SPEAKER: That is up to the minister. She can decide that.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: there was certainly an inference made in that question.

Mr SPEAKER: I thought that was going to be raised as a point of order. You will have to rephrase that question, please, member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: Minister, why are the local government depreciation taskforce report, the delivery plan and the government's response still not public?

Ms LEAHY: It is quite interesting to have these questions from the opposition. They never did a single thing in relation to depreciation for councils. Their record shows that they had an absolute fiasco with the Office of the Independent Assessor. We are currently doing some review work with the parliamentary committee around the councillor conduct framework and the Office of the Independent Assessor. Let's get this right: they did not make depreciation for councils a priority in 10 years. It is a bit rich for them to come in here and say, 'Where is this and where is that?' when they had 10 years to do something about it.

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I submit to you that the minister is being argumentative.

Mr SPEAKER: I think we are moving on. Ask your next question, please.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, it has been 13 months since the Local Government Red Tape Reduction Taskforce report's recommendations were provided to government. Has the final report been provided to local governments?

Ms Blagoev: The release of the report is ultimately a matter for executive government. To answer your specific question, it has not yet been provided to councils. What I can say is that the department has already actioned multiple recommendations through legislative amendments. These include removing unnecessary red tape in regulation requiring councils to notify or seek ministerial approval about operational issues, increasing the contracting threshold for councils, introducing automatic annual indexation so the thresholds keep pace with inflation and cost of goods, and allowing councils to dispose of an interest in land without ministerial approval if the council considers that the disposal is in the public interest. We are getting on with removing red tape from local governments. To answer the member's specific question, the release of the report is a matter for executive government and I cannot provide further comment.

Ms BOYD: Minister, given the director-general has just said that the department is already implementing the recommendations of the Local Government Red Tape Reduction Taskforce, when will you make the report, the implementations and the recommendations public?

Ms LEAHY: I thank the member for the question, particularly in relation to red tape and the Local Government Red Tape Reduction Taskforce. I might just reflect on how much red tape has been applied in the last 10 years. It is not just a half-hitch; we are working our way through the reef knots that the Labor Party tied councils up in. We are working our way through the red tape that was piled on in the decade of decline.

We worked our way through and put some red-tape-reduction measures in our empowering councils legislation that was passed earlier this year. We also had some red-tape-reduction measures in our Local Government Legislation (Empowering Councils) Amendment Regulation 2025. Previous Labor governments piled so much red tape onto councils. It takes time to undo all of that red tape. It is not just a half-hitch; there are reef knots after reef knots of red tape from the past 10 years. We are working our way through them and we have made some amendments to legislation.

We have been working our way through the recommendations. The recommendations are not just in the local government portfolio area; they are across government. We are working with 18 different portfolios, and we are working very constructively to undo the red tape that was piled onto the local government sector. It is quite amazing what some of the councils come to me about and say, 'This has made such a difference to our operations in council.' They are really pleased to see that red tape is being dealt with. We work in partnership with our councils—something the previous Labor government did not do. Not only did they foist red tape onto the local government sector—

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker, on relevance: the question asked when the report would be made public, given that they are already implementing it. The minister has had a long time to provide context. Is she planning on answering the question?

Mr BAILLIE: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the question was around red-tape reduction and the minister has been speaking directly to that question, so she is being completely relevant.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is around red-tape reduction and the report, Minister.

Ms LEAHY: Our government has made it a priority to look at the last 10 years of red tape which has been foisted on to the local government sector by the previous Labor government's decade of decline. We are working our way through that red tape. We will have some information on a dashboard in due course so councils can actually see that information as we are working through the red tape that was placed on the local government sector during the decade of decline. Red tape was not a priority for the previous Labor government.

The Office of the Independent Assessor was causing all sorts of problems for local government under the previous Labor government. We had the fail at Logan council. More recently, we have seen what happened with the former mayor of Townsville too. The previous Labor government did nothing for 200 days and then within two weeks we were able to get a resolution to that situation. If the opposition want to ask questions about when is this and when is that—they had 10 years. I find that particularly disappointing questioning and I think we can probably move on.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Speaker: that is well beyond answering a question.

Mr SPEAKER: We will have one more question before we go to government members.

Ms BOYD: My question is to the director-general. How many meetings of the Queensland Indigenous Council Leaders Accord have there been since signing the accord on 19 October 2025?

Ms Blagoev: As the member indicated, the Indigenous mayors accord, which is between Queensland 17 discrete First Nations local governments and the Queensland government, was established in October 2025. The accord aims to improve the livability and opportunities for discrete Indigenous communities through the delivery of economic, social and cultural infrastructure and services, with a focus on progressing outcomes established in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The inaugural meeting of the accord committee was held on 30 April 2026 in Cairns, with both the Hon. Fiona Simpson MP and our minister present. At that accord three priorities were discussed. These were priorities that had been identified by the 17 mayors, being economic development, health and alcohol management plans. The accord brings together elected officials to work on practical outcomes to be delivered for Indigenous communities. We are working with the Local Government Association of Queensland to plan the next accord meeting. Arrangements are well underway for that.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to government questions.

Mr LISTER: My question is to the minister. I draw the minister's attention to page 1 of the SDS for this portfolio and one of the strategic objectives of the department being to see local governments empowered to lead their communities. Minister, can you provide an update for the committee as to the developments after passing the empowering councils act earlier this year?

Ms LEAHY: I thank the member for the question in relation to the first phase of the Crisafulli government's reforms for the local government sector that has been delivered, and they are empowering councils to deliver for their communities. As I noted in my opening remarks, local governments are best placed to understand the needs of their local communities, and our reforms help them do just that.

As noted in the response to a prehearing question on notice, our legislation included a significant number of reforms, but are not limited, to: providing the minister with the power to issue a general approval to local governments to make major policy decisions about disaster recovery funding arrangements assistance during local government election caretaker periods—that generated from ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper where there were significant issues in the Douglas shire; enabling local governments to make postal ballot applications directly to the Electoral Commissioner rather than to the minister—we have reduced that from a three-step process to a two-step process; streamlining the process of reviewing wards/divisions and councillors before quadrennial elections and align the deadline under the Local Government Act 2009 with the deadline under the City of Brisbane Act 2010—that will do significant streamlining and enable that to move in a much more organised manner.

Further reforms included: removing the requirement for the minister to grant an extension of time by which a local government must adopt its annual report; removing the requirement to include an annual performance plan for each commercial business unit of a local government; allowing local governments to not meet once in a month if impractical or unnecessary to do so without requiring a ministerial exemption. I recall that one day I received a phone call from the Doomadgee CEO, who said, 'I have the flu, so I really don't want to have a council meeting this month.' We became aware then that it was far better to take away that requirement in the legislation because it would not be smart to force a CEO to have a meeting, particularly with an Indigenous council, when they were unwell.

Further reforms included: enabling local governments to grant concessions to ratepayers having regard to the cost of living; and increasing the contracting thresholds for requiring tenders and quotes and providing for automatic annual indexation—just to name a few. I do know that contracting for tenders and quotes has not changed for years. We finally put that change in place. I know that councils have very much welcomed that particular change.

Since the legislation received assent on 11 March 2026, my department moved quickly to support councils in implementing the changes including the two director-general webinars for councils, CEOs and councillors. I recall that I joined one of those webinars with the director-general. All 77 councils were offered face-to-face information sessions, with the majority taking up these opportunities, and I am very pleased that they did take up that opportunity. They also included: updating the LG Central

portal with relevant templates and guidance material as the changes commence; refreshing the LG Leaders Program and the 'So you want to be a councillor' training modules; and keeping councils informed through direct correspondence, regional advisers and newsletters.

These changes are creating an environment where the local government sector is supported and is empowered so that councillors are trusted to get on with serving their communities without unnecessary red tape, regulatory burden and state intervention. We promised Queensland local governments that we would re-empower the sector and give them a fresh start, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, will you please outline how the Albanese Labor government's cuts to disaster funding will affect Queensland councils specifically?

Ms LEAHY: I thank the member for Theodore for the question. I am particularly interested in his interests. For instance, we saw what happened on the Gold Coast after ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred and how the sand needed to be replaced on those beaches because of the impact on the tourism industry if the sand was not replaced. Unfortunately, that sand would not be able to be replaced under the Albanese Labor government's proposed cuts.

As I mentioned before, Queensland is the most disaster prone state in the nation. In the 2025-26 disaster season alone, we saw the monsoonal flood and multiple cyclones affect more than 1.1 million square kilometres of our state. This required all levels of government to work closely to ensure communities got back on their feet as soon as possible, with there being no daylight between response and recovery. I think our approvals for some of those recovery packages were some of the fastest that Queensland councils have seen in recent times.

During the course of the disaster season, over 70 councils and one town authority were activated for the joint Commonwealth-state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, DRFA. Here we see the importance of DRFA to Queenslanders, to our councils and particularly to our small councils. Funding under the DRFA meant that those communities impacted by disaster were given the funds they needed to recover swiftly. We have made sure that we roll out that recovery as quickly as we can because we know that recovery has a very long tail. This included funds to support mental health, immediate clean-up, small business grants, fodder support and much more. It backs the work of councils who need support to get their communities back on the road to recovery. That is why the Albanese federal Labor government's changes and cuts are devastating for our Queensland councils.

It is nothing more than a cost shift like we have never seen before by the federal government onto local governments, which cannot bear that cost. It will impact important disaster readiness activities and it will create delays in recovery works. I have a great deal of concern in particular for the financial sustainability of our smaller councils in the north-west. They may not be able to recover not only financially but also in terms of their infrastructure. Simply put, these changes will put a wrecking ball through our councils and leave Queensland communities worse off.

The Albanese federal Labor government needs to walk back these changes. They will be devastating for Queensland councils. I cannot stress that enough in this hearing. It is not just us asking about this; it is the entire local government sector. It is Indigenous councils, it is New South Wales councils and it is Queensland councils. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane and the national general assembly of the Australian Local Government Association back calls for the Albanese Labor government to walk these reforms back. It is time the Albanese federal Labor government heeded the calls and needs of the communities they represent. I would very much like to see the opposition on the record here today asking the federal government to walk back these reforms.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, considering the scope and scale of the Albanese federal Labor government's cuts to disaster recovery funding, what feedback has there been from Queensland local governments?

Ms LEAHY: It is a very good question. There has been no shortage of condemnation from the local government sector about the Albanese federal Labor government's cuts to disaster recovery funding. It is important to put on the record the voices of our councils and the local government stakeholders. I intend to do so right now.

LGAQ president and mayor of the Gladstone Regional Council Matt Burnett said that coastal communities were regularly in the firing line of natural disasters including cyclones, storm surges and flooding rain. He said—

When the Federal Government receives 80 cents in every dollar paid in tax, it is only fair that they continue to support impacted communities with the biggest share of funding to get these communities back up on their feet.

LGAQ chief executive officer Alison Smith said that the federal government's new proposed Disaster Recovery Funding Framework stands to shift the cost of disaster recovery onto financially stretched communities. She said—

As the peak body for the State's 77 councils in Australia's most disaster-prone state, we urge the Government to boost rather than cut disaster recovery funding.

Queensland communities have benefitted from a strong partnership and funding arrangement between the Federal and State Governments in recent disasters, and councils just want to see the existing partnership continue.

The Lord Mayor of Brisbane City, Adrian Schrinner, said—

Following the 2022 floods the city was left with a \$300 million damage bill. It would take roughly an eight per cent rate hike to generate enough revenue to cover half of that.

The mayor of Quilpie Shire, Ben Hall, said—

Without the funding from DRFA I do not think our community would have recovered from our March 2025 event.

The mayor of the Isaac Regional Council, Kelly Veve, said—

The Isaac region sustained one of the biggest disasters at the start of this year and we're still trying to recover from it. We know it's going to take millions in funding. We know that changes to any of our disaster funding will leave councils like ours completely in the dark. When it comes to changes at the federal level, we need them to hold tight and continue to fund Queensland as they have been.

The mayor of the Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council, Bruce Gibson, said—

This reduction in disaster funding will impact our food security, the ability to get around our community in the wet season. It will diminish the economy that is starting to grow.

The mayor of the Cloncurry Shire Council, Greg Campbell, said—

These changes mean that the helicopter and medicine drop to isolated stations and communities could not be funded.

The mayor of the McKinlay Shire, Janene Fegan, said—

We already have a low rate base in the McKinlay Shire. Last year our flood damage was \$60 million. That might not be much for many communities, but for us it's a fair bit. This year we're expecting around \$80 million. Without the support from the government it will go back onto small councils.

The mayor of the Whitsunday Regional Council, Ry Collins, said that councils need reassurance the federal government was there to back communities when they were hit by natural disasters. He said—

Our region has been well-versed with disasters like Tropical Cyclone Debbie back in 2017, and we need to provide assurance to our key industries that they can recover.

Etheridge Shire Mayor Barry Hughes said—

We all pay our taxes. Communities expect that when they need help it should be provided. Yet when the federal government collects 80 per cent of all the national taxation revenue and councils collect just three per cent, the expectation is that Canberra should make the strongest contribution during natural disasters.

Douglas Shire Mayor Lisa Scmazzone said—

Instead, the Commonwealth has decided it wants to slash disaster funding and pocket more than \$600 million a year across Queensland, if the last disaster season is anything to go by.

Hinchinbrook Shire Mayor Ramon Jayo said—

No-one wants or deserves a natural disaster. No-one asks for their town to be cut off, their roads to be washed away, their main street to be flooded and covered in mud, or the food to run out and go off because the trucks can't get through. But disaster recovery funding is like an insurance policy—you want it to pay out when the community is on its knees.

Lockyer Valley Regional Council Mayor Tanya Milligan said—

These are all the reality of living in Queensland. Locals do what they can to survive and to help each other. All we are asking is that the Commonwealth continues to come good with the current levels of funding to help out.

Murweh Shire Mayor Shaun Radnedge said—

Councils and mayors are standing up for what is right, what is fair. If this deal goes ahead it is nothing less than kicking Queenslanders when they are down.

The Crisafulli government has always said that we will back our councils. We will not stay quiet. We are calling on the Albanese government to walk back this dud deal for Queensland. The Albanese Labor government should dump this proposed disaster funding cut.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to opposition members for a few questions and then we will come back here before we are finished. I call the member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, what measures supporting the Queensland Indigenous Council Leaders Accord does this budget fund?

Ms Blagoev: As outlined previously, it has been up to the 17 mayors to identify the priorities for the accord. Those mayors have identified economic development, health and alcohol management plans. With respect to health and alcohol management plans, they are matters handled by other agencies. However, all Indigenous councils—as many of our other councils—are being supported by the department through a range of funding measures and other supports. For instance, my department provides a tailored approach to supporting councils through supporting councillors and councils through the delivery of online, targeted training sessions. We are attending at least two client service visits per council per year to build relationships, to understand local issues—economic development is very much one of those issues—and to ensure councils receive the support and information they may need. We have a range of funding programs that we make available to all councils. I particularly wish to highlight an uplift of \$27 million that the department has provided to our Indigenous councils for 2026-27.

Ms BOYD: In relation to that \$27 million, Director-General, does that go specifically to economic development, health or alcohol management plans—the things that the committee of the accord have determined are priorities?

Ms Blagoev: I thank the member for the question. There are a range of funding programs. The government has also provided \$2 million towards our Indigenous councils for economic development opportunities, and we are in the midst of rolling out that funding program at the moment to those councils. We also provide Works for Queensland funding to each of those councils, along with our LGGSP and financial assistance programs.

In terms of specific support to those Indigenous councils, it is the Indigenous Councils Funding Program that applies to those councils. As indicated, the government has topped up that program this financial year, meaning that those councils will see funding of \$74.96 million going to them. To answer your specific question, member, that is across a range of operational and project needs for those councils—some of which can certainly be funding economic development opportunities.

Ms BOYD: My question is to the minister. Minister, noting the need for the Queensland Indigenous Council Leaders Accord Committee to meet with the Queensland cabinet, can you provide the date when that occurred?

Ms LEAHY: I thank the member for the question. I want to highlight that we are boosting some of the funding for the Indigenous councils through the Indigenous Councils Funding Program. The Indigenous Cape Communities Economic Development Fund is another \$2 million which is actually going to the Indigenous cape communities to support economic development for Indigenous communities. That program was launched on 30 April and those initiatives are rolling out across 2026-27.

I have to say that it is incredibly refreshing meeting with those Indigenous councils and spending time with those mayors. They do great work in their communities and that is commendable. I know the member for Townsville spends a lot of time with the Indigenous community in his electorate. Cabinet has also met in Cherbourg; the entire cabinet has been to the Indigenous community of Cherbourg. It was really good to talk with the mayor and the people in Cherbourg around that. I have also been to Doomadgee a couple of times to meet with the mayor up there.

Ms BOYD: Mr Speaker, point of order: the question was specifically around when the accord committee met with the full state cabinet.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the minister.

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There has been one meeting so far with the full state cabinet and there is another that is being planned. We are liaising with both the LGAQ and those councils in relation to that. There are obviously some logistics that we need to work through but we are working very closely with the LGAQ. It would certainly help the LGAQ if they did not have to go out and campaign against the Albanese Labor government's disaster cuts. It would give them the opportunity to spend a bit more time working with their Indigenous councils, which I am sure they would prefer to do, rather than what they have to currently do in relation to the disaster cuts that are proposed to send a wrecking ball from the federal government through Queensland councils. We will continue to work with the LGAQ and liaise with those mayors in relation to that face-to-face meeting.

Ms BOYD: My question is of the minister. The minister has just confirmed that the council accord committee has met with the full state cabinet. On what date did that meeting occur?

Ms LEAHY: Sorry, Mr Speaker, I will correct the record for a minute. The mayors have met face to face with the cabinet, so there have been meetings of mayors and cabinet, but the accord has not yet met with cabinet because the accord was not actually formed at that time. For clarification, for the record, the accord has not met but there have been face-to-face meetings between cabinet and the mayors. The cabinet has also been out to Cherbourg and spent a considerable amount of time there. We continue to work with the LGAQ, which, unfortunately, have their time at the moment taken up with campaigning against the Albanese Labor government disaster cuts and working with councils around that. Once it is finally decided, we will be able to pass that information to the public.

Ms BOYD: My question is of the minister. Minister, to clarify, the Queensland Indigenous Council Leaders Accord Committee has met once on 30 April with no meeting of the full state cabinet. Is that correct?

Ms LEAHY: Hang on, we are going to get some clarification. Can I get the member to repeat the question, please?

Ms BOYD: My question was to the minister. Minister, can I clarify that there has been a single meeting of the Queensland Indigenous Council Leaders Accord Committee on 30 April and no meeting of the accord committee with the full state cabinet?

Ms LEAHY: I can confirm that the accord—which is the First Nations Indigenous councils—has had its first meeting. There has been a face-to-face meeting between cabinet members and Indigenous mayors. I believe Minister Simpson was with me when we had the first meeting with the accord. I might provide some quotes. Matt Burnett said—

The Accord consolidates the partnership between Queensland's 17 discrete First Nations local governments and the Queensland Government as a practical way of working together.

It sets a clear foundation for how councils and government can turn shared priorities into real, on-the-ground outcomes.

The mayor of Palm Island, Alf Lacey, said—

It's encouraging to see the State Government recognising the importance of the Accord and the aspirations of First Nations communities.

If we get the economics in our communities right, everything else will fall into place—but it can't just be business as usual.

We can't just be focused on the tomorrow—we need plans for the next 20 to 50 years to ensure our communities can truly close the gap.

I hope that provides the clarification that is required.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to government members for questions.

Dr ROWAN: My question is to the minister. Could you please update the committee as to the work of the Crisafulli state government with respect to depreciation to ensure Queensland councils can deliver critical infrastructure and services?

Ms LEAHY: I note that depreciation was certainly something that many councils raised with the government at that time and it was ignored during Labor's decade of decline. I am very pleased to say that the review of local government depreciation schedules was an election commitment of the Crisafulli government and we are delivering this for Queensland councils and ratepayers.

As the member knows, depreciation is not some abstract accounting concept out of the never-never; it is a very real expense that councils regularly speak about, reflecting the gradual consumption of an asset's economic value over time. For councils this is particularly significant, because they own vast networks of infrastructure and community assets. We are talking about roads, bridges, water, sewerage infrastructure, treatment plants, sporting facilities, swimming pools and countless other public assets that communities use and rely on daily.

Every one of those assets has a finite and useful life and every year they age. Every year they have wear and tear. Every year a portion of their value is recognised as depreciation in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards. The scale of this should not be underestimated. Queensland councils manage billions of dollars worth of infrastructure and the depreciation associated with those assets has a direct impact on their operating results and their long-term financial sustainability. In fact, depreciation represents one of the largest expenses for many councils and it is one of the most difficult expenses for smaller councils to deal with.

There is another important point here, too. Many council assets are funded through capital grants. Where this occurs, the full cost of reconstructing or acquiring the asset does not appear in the council operating income. However, once the asset is in service, the ongoing depreciation of that asset is

recorded as an operating expense year after year. As such, council should receive grant funding to build an asset; it must still absorb the depreciation asset throughout the life of that asset. That is very challenging when you have some large assets, when you are dealing with road assets, water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants. That can be very challenging for some of our smaller councils, particularly those that might be experiencing decline in population. This places a considerable pressure on the operating results and financial metrics. Over time, these assets continue to age and decline in value. The importance of sound asset management continues to grow.

Councils must maintain accurate asset evaluations, develop robust asset management plans and make informed decisions about renewal and replacement. For many councils, particularly those managing extensive infrastructure networks with limited resources, these responsibilities remain significant and an ongoing challenge. It is still a challenge even for our larger councils—for instance, Brisbane City Council, the Gold Coast and Moreton Bay. It is still a challenge for them. The Crisafulli government is committed to working in a partnership with Queensland councils to deliver an empowered, strong and sustainable local government sector. That is why the Local Government Depreciation Taskforce has worked closely with councils and has listened to councils, other parts of the local government sector and stakeholders to review and consider what opportunities can enhance depreciation outcomes across the financial management and reporting, the asset management of grants funding and the capability and capacity building.

I thank the taskforce for the engagement they have had with lots of councils. I was very lucky to sit and listen to the councils and see that engagement with the taskforce. I think that was particularly valuable to the councils. It is quite daunting for new councillors as they come into council to then learn about their depreciation and what they have to do in balancing that depreciation with the pressures that are placed on them by their community members. At present, we are considering the recommendations and we will provide those recommendations in due course.

Mr SPEAKER: We have a little bit of time left—less than a minute. Do you want to say anything to conclude?

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will check if we have anything. We do not, but I would like to thank the departmental officers for their assistance with this estimates committee.

Mr SPEAKER: We have reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the local government portfolio area. I ask that there is a prompt changeover in witnesses and officials for the estimates for the portfolio area of water, which is about to commence.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of water 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 for the portfolio area currently under examination.

Ms LEAHY: The Crisafulli government is continuing to deliver the water infrastructure that Queensland needs. In last year's budget we set the foundations for restoring water availability and boosting water security across Queensland. We had to do so as Labor's decade of decline left Queenslanders with aging water infrastructure, a \$6.5 billion cost blowout in the water projects, botched dams, failing regional water security and the most expensive water bills in the nation.

The results of the last 12 months speak for themselves. We have significantly progressed the Barlil and Cooranga weirs, with the design contract for Cooranga now awarded. We are nearing completion of the Mount Morgan water supply pipeline, the Cairns Water Security Stage 1 Project and the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline, and the contractor for the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline has been appointed. I know that the member for Southern Downs will be very pleased to hear that.

We secured and matched Commonwealth funding of \$36 million for a water security project in Woorabinda and progressed urgent repair works to help bring the community off an 11-month boiled water alert. We are constructing critical drinking-water projects in Cherbourg, Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Northern Peninsula Area and Wujal Wujal, with planning and design projects for Aurukun and Kowanyama. We have enhanced water security for our regional communities with the Great Artesian Basin Rehabilitation Program, with 30 bores and 150 kilometres of bore drain having been replaced, and the Longreach Water Security for Growth project, by progressing a smart meter installation and water main upgrades and enabling approvals and planning for the five upgraded weirs that will provide a more resilient water supply for the Longreach community. I was very pleased to visit those weirs with the mayor while I was in Longreach.

We have committed \$54 million towards the Cressbrook Dam Safety Improvement Project. All of these investments from the Crisafulli government are securing the water supplies of today whilst planning for the opportunities of tomorrow. I am very happy to tell the committee that since coming to government the Crisafulli LNP government has released around 200,000 megalitres of water. That is equivalent of two Beardmore dams. In fact, it is more than two Beardmore dams, so that is the amount of water that we have released for agriculture, for industry and for local governments. Amongst this, we have continued to progress the statutory review of the water plans across Queensland, continued planning for South-East Queensland's long-term water future and worked to ensure water remains affordable for Queensland households, businesses and farmers.

This year's budget strengthens these foundations and it is building for Queensland's future. We have frozen the South-East Queensland bulk water prices for two years, helping reduce the cost-of-living pressures for South-East Queensland consumers. We are continuing water pricing subsidy measures for the residents in Cloncurry and have commenced a new one for the residents of Gladstone. We are building new weirs along the Thomson River in Longreach, on the Boyne River near Mundubbera and in Barambah Creek near Murgon. We are investing in capacity-restoring upgrades to existing dams to deliver additional water storage equivalent to a new dam, starting with Lake Macdonald and the North Pine Dam. We are progressing the Water for Warrill business case and the Lockyer Valley and Somerset Water Security Scheme, which I understand the member for Lockyer says is Australia's best water security scheme, and we are progressing—and I know that this one is very close to the member for Southern Downs's heart—the Emu Swamp Dam project in the Southern Downs.

Mr LISTER: Hear, hear!

Ms LEAHY: We are continuing in our commitment to rebuild Paradise Dam after Labor tore down their dodgy dam, and we are currently considering the detailed business case. The Crisafulli government is doing all of this and more, because we know that a successful and a vibrant Queensland needs water security. It needs water that is affordable and water that is sustainable. We are delivering the water that Queensland communities need and we are doing it in partnership with those communities.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Speaker: just in the interests of time, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes. Time is coming off government members. The clock is ticking on this side. The minister has gone over, so the time is coming off this side. You are finished, Minister?

Ms LEAHY: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Okay. We will start with opposition members. The first question will be from the member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: My first question is to the interim CEO of Sunwater. Mr Hourigan, is it correct that \$120 million was originally budgeted towards the Barlil and Cooranga Weir election commitments?

Mr Hourigan: I will just get those facts for you. For the Barlil Weir we have \$20.7 million in this year's budget and for Cooranga we have \$11.15 million in this year's budget.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, can you confirm that Sunwater's current project cost estimate put Cooranga Weir at \$259 million and Barlil Weir at \$113 million?

Mr Hourigan: No, there are no estimates currently for Barlil and Cooranga to that level of detail. We are a couple of weeks away from our project assessment reports, so we expect they will be finished in August and that is when we will have the final number for both of those weirs.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, I table leaked advice confirming the figure stated in the previous questions. Can you confirm these figures?

Mr SPEAKER: We will get that detail around to Mr Hourigan.

Mr Hourigan: I am not sure where this comes from. I have only been in the position for just under two months. They may have been earlier estimates, but, as I say, we are close to the actual costs. I am afraid I cannot really speak to these, but I can tell you that within a few weeks we will have the actual—

Mr BAILLIE: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: We have a point of order from the member for Townsville.

Mr BAILLIE: There is nothing here that indicates where this is from or where it is generated.

Mr SPEAKER: No, there is not and Mr Hourigan has no knowledge of this document.

Ms BOYD: Mr Speaker, I can verify for the committee that this is a genuine document leaked to the opposition. I am asking if the information in it is correct.

Mr SPEAKER: And he has responded to that question. You have another question, member for Pine Rivers?

Ms BOYD: I do. Mr Hourigan, is Sunwater still progressing the Barlil and Cooranga Weir government election commitment despite the leaked cost increases?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: there was an imputation in there and it is argumentative. It is relying on the veracity of this document, which I highly doubt.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to ask you to completely rephrase that question or I will rule it out of order, member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: Is Sunwater still progressing the Barlil and Cooranga Weir government election commitments, even if cost increases are higher than anticipated?

Mr Hourigan: Whether the Barlil and Cooranga weirs progress will be a decision for the Queensland government. The board will review the project assessment reports when we have them next August. They will have their commentary. We will do some more work and we will send it to the Queensland government, which no doubt will also have a look at it and have their questions and make a decision on whether they wish to progress.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, can you confirm if those costs will be recovered from water customers?

Mr Hourigan: Yes, that is the usual process and that is how we are obliged to operate as a government owned corporation.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, in a letter to the minister in April, Sunwater Chair, Jeff Seeney, stated that Sunwater would abandon the Paradise Dam improvement project. The letter proposed finalising the detailed business case at Sunwater's May board meeting. What date was the detailed business case completed?

Mr SPEAKER: Can we get a copy of that to Mr Hourigan please?

Mr Hourigan: I will just give a little bit of detail around the business case. After a year's long comprehensive analysis and stakeholder engagement exercise, Sunwater submitted a detailed business case for the Paradise Dam project on 10 July this year. For a little bit of context, chapters in the detailed business case total 483 pages and, with appendices, the total page count is 4,503 pages. As requested of Sunwater, that detailed business case contains a rigorous factual analysis of the two identified service needs for the proposed project, that being projected future water demand for water allocations and Sunwater's responsibility to effectively manage dam safety. It also addresses a range of issues related to the dam that will help the Queensland government with its decision-making. These include water utilisation and sales, concrete strengthened quality, new dam wall, dam rebuild, legal and regulatory considerations, sustainability, social impacts, environmental assessments, and economic analysis.

Ms BOYD: Mr Speaker—

Mr Hourigan: The detailed analysis and recommendations contained within the detailed business case are now with executive government.

Ms BOYD: My apologies.

Mr SPEAKER: Just hold on. You have a point of order?

Ms BOYD: My apologies, Mr Hourigan. Given we have established that the date is 10 July, I am happy to consider the question answered—

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Wait until I finish one point of order first.

Ms BOYD:—so we can move on, in the interests of time.

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: this is another instance of a member of the committee curtailing the answer of one of our witnesses. I think that is discourteous to them. I was happy to hear what the CEO was saying. I think it is a poor precedent to set that we should curtail answers that are relevant simply because it no longer suits the member who asked the question in the first place.

Mr SPEAKER: I find Mr Hourigan is being relevant so I would ask him to continue.

Mr Hourigan: The detailed analysis and recommendations contained within the detailed business case are now with executive government for their consideration. In line with the confidentiality of established cabinet processes, it would not be appropriate for me to discuss the contents of the business case with the committee. I will, however, answer other questions to the best of my ability, given the knowledge I have been able to acquire since taking on the short-term role of interim CEO since 8 June.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, the Paradise Dam new wall proposal was developed following extensive engineering investigations, testing and expert advice. What advice has Sunwater received that now contradicts GHD's detailed report?

Mr Hourigan: The GHD *Paradise Dam improvement project* report was prepared by the best people available at the time. The report represents the situation at a specific point in time—October 2023—and a lot of additional work has been undertaken over the last two to three years. We have continued to monitor and assess the dam to ensure it can safely store and deliver water. We have continued to receive expert advice, which includes a rigorous and factual analysis of a range of issues related to the dam. All of this important information has been fed into the detailed business case process. Like any business case, the Paradise Dam detailed business case addresses a range of issues and options related to the dam that will help the government with its decision-making. The key issues include: safety and risk management; concrete strength and quality; forecast water demand; a new dam wall; and a dam rebuild. As I mentioned, it is not appropriate for me to comment in any further detail until government has had an opportunity to complete a review and make a decision about a future direction for Paradise Dam.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, is Sunwater planning to publish that advice in the same way the advice surrounding the new wall was published under the former Labor government?

Mr Hourigan: That will be a decision for government once they finalise their consideration of the business case.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, is it correct that the cost for Paradise Dam will be recovered from new water customers?

Mr Hourigan: Cost recovery will depend on demand for the water. That water has been quarantined for the last four or five years so we are not entirely sure of the demand that will be available for that water. That is part of the business case and the issues for government to consider when they look at a rebuild or other options.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, is it correct that Sunwater is currently assessing a South East Queensland Water Grid pipeline connection to Paradise Dam?

Mr Hourigan: That is honestly the first I have heard of that. Certainly in my time there I have seen nothing to indicate that is the case.

Ms BOYD: Mr Hourigan, is it correct that the Paradise Dam detailed business case, the Paradise Dam SEQ water pipeline and both the Barlil and Cooranga weirs have gone to CBRC for consideration?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: that is a matter of executive government and it is a discourtesy to the CEO that she should ask it.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not think that is a question for Mr Hourigan. Do you have another question?

Ms BOYD: I do. Mr Hourigan, given the previous expert conclusions that the dam's concrete will continue to lose strength progressively over time, what new advice do you have that ensures no increased ongoing risk to downstream residents from the government's decision to abandon the new wall project?

Mr SPEAKER: Mr Hourigan, I think you have already answered that, but you have the call.

Mr Hourigan: I am happy to have another go. Dam safety is obviously a critical priority for Sunwater at Paradise Dam and at all of our dams. The essential works that finished in 2021 reduced the dam's estimated failure risk from being able to withstand a one-in-200-year event to being able to withstand a one-in-5,000-year event. To give you an idea, the 2013 flood was a one-in-75-year annual exceedance event, while the recent wet season flood in 2026 was a one-in-15- to 20-year event. The dam currently holds 170,000 megalitres. At the peak of the March 2026 flood, 910,000 megalitres a day was passing over the dam and it remained safe throughout that entire event. It did not sustain any serious damage.

Sunwater will continue to operate Paradise Dam under dam safety management arrangements, supported by further technical investigation and updated risk assessment activities. This includes: increasing the frequency of monitoring of dam safety instrumentation, completing a dam state-of-

knowledge assessment and undertaking updated hydraulic modelling, dam stability analysis and foundation stability assessment. As with all of our dams, we will continue to monitor, assess and maintain Paradise Dam to ensure it meets the guidelines set out by the Queensland dam safety regulator and relevant national guidelines.

Ms BOYD: My question is to the CEO of Seqwater. Ms Thomas, I understand you have a legislative requirement under the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 to undertake necessary dam maintenance on dam assets including North Pine Dam and Lake Macdonald dam. Can you confirm that your organisation has complied with its legal requirements at all times?

Ms Thomas: Seqwater owns and operates 25 referable dams. As you pointed out, dam safety is regulated by the Queensland government, which publishes dam safety management guidelines. Seqwater has an established dam safety management program in line with regulatory guidelines and industry good practice. In Queensland, dam owners are responsible for the safety of the dams under the act and Seqwater manages our dams. The dam safety conditions state minimum dam safety management obligations for dam owners. These may include keeping records in data books that must be provided to the dam safety regulator on request; and developing and implementing an operation maintenance manual for when engineering inspections of dams must occur, when safety reviews must occur and what to do if dams experience a deficiency incident and failure. The plan covers all of those aspects. I can confirm that Seqwater manages and maintains all of our dams in accordance with the requirements that we have before us.

Ms BOYD: Ms Thomas, I table a government media release which quotes you at the end. I refer you to the highlighted section that refers to the maintenance. Did you or Seqwater advise the government that there were—and I quote—‘years of missed maintenance’?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: that is a question of advice provided to government by the GOC. It is not subject to interrogation here. If there is a question of that nature it needs to go to the minister, I would suggest.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Speaker. The entire purpose of this hearing is to inquire into statutory and government owned corporations around their expenditure. Maintenance, I submit to you, is clearly one of those relevant topics. Therefore the question is in order and can be answered by the chief executive.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I cannot see from here it being a direct quote.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no direct quote.

Dr ROWAN: I thought in the question I heard it was a direct quote.

Ms BOYD: Point of order, Mr Speaker: that is not what the question was. I am happy to rephrase it if it is helpful.

Mr SPEAKER: That might help.

Ms BOYD: Ms Thomas, did you or Seqwater advise the government that there were ‘years of missed maintenance’?

Ms Thomas: Seqwater meets all of our maintenance requirements for all of our dams across our 25 referable dams.

Ms BOYD: Amazing. The government media release on 19 July states that budget funding will go towards doubling the capacity of North Pine and Lake Macdonald dams. Is this project new or a continuation of the dam safety project started prior to the change of government that restored the dams to their original operating capacity following safety works?

Ms Thomas: It might help to talk through North Pine Dam and the current scope of works that we are doing there. The North Pine Dam has a staged strengthening program which has been changed. It has been different since we received that funding in late June 2024 to do staged strengthening of the non-overflow monoliths of the dam. We received an additional investment of \$48.1 million, received in March of 2026, for spillway anchoring. Both of those works have been contracted with SRG and construction is underway. The detailed business case for the main dam improvement program upgrade is underway and we expect to submit that in 2027. We are looking at those works. They are currently underway for North Pine Dam, consisting of anchoring of all of those monoliths. We expect to have them anchored by the end of 2028 and works will continue. We have taken a more staged approach to the North Pine Dam to allow us to consider putting water back into that dam at each of those stages and we will have to do that review and assessment at each of those times.

I think, member, you also asked about Lake Macdonald Dam. The works have commenced this year for that dam. We have the cofferdam in place, which is a temporary dam. We expect works on Lake Macdonald Dam to be completed by the end of 2029 at which time we would be restoring the full amount of water to that dam at that time.

Mr SPEAKER: We might go to government members for some questions. We will go to the member for Townsville.

Mr BAILLIE: Can the minister please advise how the Crisafulli government is supporting regional communities through water affordability in this budget?

Ms LEAHY: I thank the member for the question. I know that in his community the Ross River Dam is of great interest to him. The Crisafulli government is committed to ensuring water prices are affordable for Queenslanders no matter where they reside. We are delivering exactly this for the people of regional Queensland. This budget commits \$22 million over four years to help keep the cost of water bills down for the Cloncurry community. This funding will continue to subsidise the cost of water supplied to council through the North-West Queensland water pipeline and the Cloncurry pipeline, with savings being passed on to the regional community through reduced supply charges. Cloncurry's remote location and reliance on extensive water infrastructure drives up supply costs. This funding will help minimise water supply costs for Cloncurry residents and deliver real financial relief to those households in the Cloncurry community.

The budget also provides \$10 million to subsidise the bulk water charges for Gladstone Regional Council residents to avoid bill shock prices as the Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline comes online. We have continued to deliver a 15 per cent irrigation price discount, providing simple, targeted, practical billing relief so farming families can manage costs, invest in their operations with confidence and continue driving productivity across Queensland's agricultural sector.

Compare this to Labor's decade of decline. They had no plan to drive down regional water costs, forcing communities like Cloncurry and Gladstone to shoulder rising costs and growing pressure on essential services. All up, Labor left Queenslanders with aging water infrastructure and a \$6.5 billion cost blowout in water projects, botched dams, failing regional water security and the most expensive water bills in the nation. We are turning this around. The work being done in Cloncurry and Gladstone is just some of the ways that the Crisafulli government is delivering for regional Queensland through delivering practical, cost-of-living relief and ensuring that regional communities have access to affordable and reliable water and those residents are not being penalised for the fact that Labor forgot about them and did not put any funding in the forwards to continue those subsidies. In particular in Cloncurry there was no money whatsoever in the forwards and those residents in Cloncurry would have experienced a 100 per cent increase in their residential water bills.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, could you please update the committee as to what the Crisafulli state government is doing in this budget to drive down the price of household water bills?

Ms LEAHY: I know the member, as a South-East Queensland resident himself, is very aware of the water costs on his water bills as they come through from the utility providers. I know the member is very aware of cost-of-living pressures on South-East Queenslanders given where his electorate is located. He has been a great advocate for delivering real measures to provide relief for families and small businesses across South-East Queensland.

This budget introduces a two-year freeze on the bulk water prices for South-East Queensland residents. That is probably one of the first freezes they have seen in a long, long time. This price freeze will save South-East Queensland families around \$130 and is part of the Crisafulli government's record \$9.3 billion cost-of-living package announced in the budget. This is a major win for households and small businesses. The state government is doing its bit to ease the cost-of-living pressures on Queenslanders. I want to thank Urban Utilities and Unitywater for passing on the bulk water price freeze to households and businesses in full whilst also freezing their own water charges to provide the necessary cost-of-living relief.

These decisions ensure that South-East Queensland residents can get cost-of-living relief that they can rely on. This is only the start. We have asked the Queensland Competition Authority, as the independent regulator, to review the short- and long-term operating investment decisions of Urban Utilities and Unitywater to ensure they are operating in the interests of Queenslanders. Their costs should be as low as possible and the savings passed on to hardworking mums and dads, families and small businesses across Queensland.

Mr LISTER: Minister, could you advise what steps are being taken to ensure the long-term water security for my communities in the Southern Downs region? I know you know how important that is to me.

Ms LEAHY: I know that the member for Southern Downs is very, very passionate in relation to water security. There is a very good reason as to why he is passionate. It was his community of Stanthorpe that did actually run out of water and had to have water carted to them. His passion is particularly well meaning and is a great representation of his advocacy for his community. I thank the member for his question and particularly for the work and the advocacy that he has done in attempting to achieve more water security for the people of Stanthorpe. I note that I believe Southern Downs is one of those shires that has been drought declared.

Across the state, the Crisafulli government continues to progress major water infrastructure projects that will strengthen water security for communities like the Southern Downs, for agriculture and for industry, for decades to come. This includes delivering \$3 million worth of funding to progress the critical water storage facility for the Southern Downs region. This will support a community that has had firsthand experience of the social and economic impacts of severe drought. Under Labor, this community was subjected to carting water to meet its basic requirements. The member for Southern Downs can certainly attest to how difficult that time was for that community.

Mr LISTER: It was a social and economic catastrophe.

Ms LEAHY: I take that interjection from the member for Southern Downs. The Crisafulli government will further advance Emu Swamp Dam and put it back on track to support the water security of the region. It will improve drought resilience across the Southern Downs to meet the needs of the community and the farmers. I was delighted to join the member at the tomato grower's property in Stanthorpe in the catchment where Emu Swamp Dam is located. We expect this work to be completed by January 2028.

We know that Labor ignored the region and does not support water infrastructure like dams or in droughtproofing communities like Stanthorpe. Previous Labor governments swept the funding from dams, leaving Queensland's water security to fall behind. The Crisafulli government, however, is taking practical steps and investing in water infrastructure that strengthens drought preparedness across regional Queensland. We are making water infrastructure a priority in the regions. We are focused on following through on our commitments to deliver generational water infrastructure across Queensland that will secure supply and foster economic growth. I thank the member for Southern Downs for that question because I know how passionate he is about the Emu Swamp Dam proposal. I am so pleased that our government can progress that.

Mr LISTER: Following on from your information about water storage for my community, Minister, can you advise the benefits of the water releases that you as minister have been doing for my community and Queensland communities generally?

Ms LEAHY: As someone who represents areas in the Murray-Darling basin, the member knows how important water is and releasing it in that community. I thank him for the question and also for the work he has done to advocate for making more water available to grow Queensland's economy.

The Crisafulli government is committed to backing regional communities and unlocking more water for farming and for other industries that underpin Queensland's prosperity and growth. That is so critically important to all communities across Queensland because water underpins everything that happens in agriculture. It underpins our local communities. It underpins our industries as well. I thank the member for Southern Downs for taking us to the Australian Vinegar factory in Stanthorpe. It is one of Stanthorpe's biggest water users. It is an amazing factory that supplies so much vinegar—and you have to have water to make vinegar—across Australia and internationally. It is quite incredible. It is an absolute credit to the Southern Downs to have that industry in Stanthorpe.

We committed to review all 23 water plans, which is exactly what we are doing. We have completed the first seven studies of water plans, which compare available water with known demands across each water plan area to support the release or greater uptake of water. We have unlocked around 200,000 megalitres of water since coming to government in just 21 months. That 200,000 megalitres includes: 55,000 megalitres in the Mitchell catchment, 8,250 megalitres in the Barron catchment, 2,360-plus megalitres in the Mary Basin, 660 megalitres in the Condamine-Balonne catchment, 387 megalitres in the Border Rivers and Moonie catchment, and a further 26,800 megalitres has been made available through the release of unallocated water in the Whitsundays. That just shows what can be done when you have a government that understands the value of water to communities and the value of water to industries across Queensland.

Water sat idle, locked up by Labor, unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy, and unavailable for economic development. I want to reflect on some of the stakeholders who came to see us when we came to government. They thought they would never be able to access some of the water sitting in their plans until there was a change of government. I can say to them that we have made sure they are able to access that unallocated water. In their last three years of government, Labor released a measly 3,087 megalitres. Their neglect of our regions, coupled with slow progress and inaction, has led to lost regional opportunities. We are on track to deliver the review of all 23 water plans, highlighting the opportunities to reduce red tape, support water trading and improve access to water. We know how important that is to regional communities, whether you are in a residential area, a farming business or an industry that is looking for water. It is through practical steps such as this that the Crisafulli government is able to ensure water is directed to where it delivers for the greatest long-term benefit and to support regional communities.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, can you please advise the initiatives the Crisafulli government is taking to enhance water security for agriculture in our regions?

Ms LEAHY: I am delighted to speak on how the Crisafulli government is delivering for the regions of the Lockyer Valley and the Scenic Rim. The Crisafulli government is delivering on its commitments to secure water supplies and deliver generational water infrastructure across Queensland. The projects being undertaken in these two regions are great examples of that work. The budget has committed over \$8 million to progress the Lockyer Valley and Somerset project, along with advancing the Water for Warrill Irrigation Project. I know that the member for Southern Downs drives home through the Warrill Valley and would be very familiar it.

Mr LISTER: There is lots of produce.

Ms LEAHY: There is lots of produce, including lots of carrots. We are delivering on an election commitment of the Crisafulli government when it comes to water for the Warrill. Both projects underpin economic growth and job creation in the regions. They are also very important to food security for South-East Queensland. Some of them do send to export as well, so this is very important for the economies of those communities.

The Lockyer Valley and the Somerset region produce over 30 per cent of Queensland's fresh produce and contribute five per cent to Australia's requirements. We are regularly reminded by the member for Lockyer that it is an amazing project in the Lockyer Valley and Somerset. The Warrill Valley is a key hub for high-value vegetables, dairy, poultry and processing industries, which I know you would see on your way home. During their decade of decline, the Labor government failed to progress long-term innovative water solutions for these key agricultural regions. These regions have been waiting for 10 years, through Labor's decade of decline, when they were very much ignored by Labor governments. This left the farmers without the certainty they need to plan for the future.

The Crisafulli government is turning this around by investing in practical water security solutions that support our farmers. We are working with our farmers. We are strengthening food production. We are driving those regional economies with what we are doing to make sure water is available. Funding in this budget for the Lockyer Valley means that this project can be brought to a financial investment decision, increasing water security by 50 per cent. That will do a lot for the community. It will enable more investment in the community. It will mean that when we get periods of drought they will have water available to them. We are delivering the water that Queensland communities need. We are doing that in partnership with the communities, with our councils and with our farming communities. This is in stark contrast to Labor, which left the farmers in those regions high and dry, without the investment security they were calling out for.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to opposition questions now.

Ms BOYD: My question is to the interim CEO of Sunwater. Welcome back, Mr Hourigan. I table a leaked document to the opposition. I refer to the highlighted section. Mr Hourigan, can you confirm if you are or are not working on a link from Paradise Dam to the northern South-East Queensland water grid via a pipeline?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: regarding this document, it resembles an earlier one that was tabled. It has no date, there is no assurance of its source and, under the circumstances, is in effect a hypothetical document. I ask you to rule that it is improper to ask the CEO of Sunwater to answer the question on the basis of what has been put forward.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the member for Pine Rivers has asked a question that meets the requirements of standing orders. She has anticipated that you may seek some authentication. The document serves to authenticate the basis on which we ask the question. Therefore, I submit to you that the interim chief executive officer should be allowed to answer it without delay.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: this question was put to the Sunwater CEO previously by the member for Pine Rivers, so in essence it is the same question which the CEO of Sunwater has already answered.

Mr SPEAKER: I think it is a slightly different question, Mr Hourigan. You can speak to the document or its authenticity.

Mr Hourigan: Thank you, Speaker. All I can say is I have never seen this document and in my two months in the position I have never been briefed about a project or a consideration to link Paradise Dam into SEQ water grid.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, is it correct—actually, Mr Hourigan, before you depart, can I request if you can check for advice from your department? Sorry, can I ask that you check to see if you have advised the department of this?

Mr SPEAKER: I am not clear on the question anymore. What is the question, member for Pine Rivers?

Ms BOYD: Mr Speaker, sorry, it is a bit of a word salad on my behalf. The question is: if Mr Hourigan is not clear on the answer, is it possible for him to seek some advice from his colleagues that are here with him today?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: in relation to the previous question that was asked of Mr Hourigan as the CEO of Sunwater, he was emphatic in his response to the question as asked.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to agree with that. Mr Hourigan has responded and answered the question. Next question, please.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, is it correct that you are developing a new dam safety risk framework to reduce the cost of the dam improvement program?

Ms LEAHY: Point of order, Mr Speaker, while we are waiting for the director-general to get to that question, we have not seen the last tabled document, so could we please have a copy of that?

Mr SPEAKER: They are on their way.

Ms Blagoev: The Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers regulates dam safety to minimise risk to the community and prevent potential impacts. As we have heard before, dam owners themselves are responsible for the safety of the dams; however, the department sets and enforces minimum safety standards, processes and requirements that all dam owners must follow. Queensland's dam safety standards reflect industry best practice for managing hazardous infrastructure. They are based on national standards developed by the Australian National Committee on Large Dams and align with recognised international approaches. These standards have remained broadly consistent for decades and reflect strong community expectations around safety and a low tolerance for risk.

Regulatory requirements include preventative measures such as land use controls, minimum design standards, dam safety conditions and regular inspections to reduce the likelihood of incidents. The department works closely with industry bodies and regulated organisations across Australia and internationally, regularly reviewing its approach and incorporating lessons for significant weather events. Policy work is underway to improve coordination and prioritisation of dam upgrades across Queensland through a strategic framework that supports staging and sequencing while maintaining safety. The department is also undertaking broader strategic water infrastructure planning to improve coordination, strengthen long-term planning and prioritise investment across the bulk water program.

Ms BOYD: Director-General, is it correct that Treasury asked you to go back and come up with a non-legislative approach?

Mr LISTER: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the information that question seeks to acquire appears to be of a policy nature. Legislation and its creation and modification is in the hands of the executive. I suggest, therefore, it is not a question for the director-general.

Mr SPEAKER: The director-general is experienced enough to know whether it comes under her jurisdiction or not.

Ms Blagoev: I am not aware of any such request from Queensland Treasury. That may have been a question for Treasury earlier in the session. What I will say is that my department is doing work to ensure that our dam repair program is coordinated and is done in a way that delivers value for money for Queenslanders whilst not compromising their safety.

Ms BOYD: Minister, before the election, the government committed to urgently reviewing future water sources for South-East Queensland. What tangible outcomes has that review delivered since November 2024?

Ms LEAHY: Can I get the member to repeat the question, please?

Ms BOYD: Minister, before the election, the government committed to urgently review future water sources for South-East Queensland. What tangible outcomes has the review delivered since November 2024?

Ms LEAHY: The department has been doing a considerable amount of work when it comes to reviewing numerous documents and working their way through information, but the important thing to note is that the needs of South-East Queensland were not a priority over the previous decade of decline of the Labor government. It is important to do work in relation to ensuring that we review very carefully information that is available to the department and information that the department holds. I will table for the information of the committee—

Mr SPEAKER: You will have to seek leave to table any documents.

Ms LEAHY: I seek leave to table the document.

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Speaker: before you put the question on tabling, could we see it? The minister can continue in the interim.

Mr SPEAKER: There have been a couple of documents that have needed a fresh set of eyes over them.

Ms LEAHY: I seek leave to table that.

Mr SPEAKER: Are you speaking to that document?

Ms LEAHY: I am going to speak to that document.

Mr SPEAKER: We have five minutes left. Is leave granted to table the document?

Ms BOYD: Mr Speaker, point of order on relevance: how is this document, which is dated 2014, relevant to the future water sources for South-East Queensland and the tangible outcomes that the review has delivered since November 2024?

Mr LISTER: May I make a point of order in response to that, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr LISTER: It is at least as relevant as those documents which have preceded it which have been undated.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister will explain more on this document. It is about groundwater, so I cannot see an issue with it. It is up to the committee. Is leave granted?

Mr de BRENNI: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the standing orders provide that should there be a question to be considered by the committee where there is no agreement, such as the tabling of an irrelevant document, those matters should be considered in private. We do not think this is a relevant document. If the government members want to continue to pursue the tabling of this, we think it should be discussed elsewhere—or perhaps the committee could continue without the document being tabled.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to get some advice. This is up to the committee. Are you requesting that you go into a private meeting with three minutes left on the clock?

Ms LEAHY: Mr Speaker, I can understand why the opposition do not want this tabled. How about I just read from it? I am happy to quote from the document.

Mr SPEAKER: So you will withdraw the request for tabling?

Ms LEAHY: I withdraw the request for tabling. This document shows that when you do not get the information right and you do not do the work in relation to dams you end up with a situation like the Traveston Dam. This document refers to that and says—

A Queensland farming community is succeeding in reclaiming its agriculture identity, following a failed dam proposal that forced hundreds of farmers off their land.

It is important to do the work, and we did not see that with the Traveston Dam. It continues—

The Mary Valley was decimated by the ill-thought-out dam project.

That is not me saying that; that is a mixed vegetable grower. That is why it is important—

Ms BOYD: Mr Speaker, point of order: my question was specifically about the urgent review of future water sources for South-East Queensland and what tangible outcomes have been delivered since November 2024. I do not believe this Traveston Dam issue was around in the last 12 months.

Mr SPEAKER: You are making a point of order on relevance. You do not need to make a speech with your point of order.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the minister is building context around the answer and I am very interested to hear what she has to say.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, you have one minute left. How do you want to spend it?

Ms LEAHY: What this document in relation to the Traveston Dam shows is that you need to do the work and the in-depth reviews; otherwise, it will end up crueing communities, like we have seen here.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I will stop you there. Do you want to say anything before we wrap up?

Ms LEAHY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have one thing that I want to confirm. It was 3,083 megalitres of water that were released by the former Labor government in their last year of government. I just want to make sure the *Hansard* record is correct in relation to the 3,083 megalitres, which is about the amount that a small farm would use.

I thank all of the officers who have attended here, the officers from Seqwater and Sunwater and also the opposition members for participating.

Mr SPEAKER: This concludes the hearing of estimates for the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee for 2026. Before I wrap up, there are two people sitting on either end of this table who have been here for the entire two weeks. They would both like to make a statement before we finish. I call the member for Springwood first.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Speaker, on your indulgence, we recognise that this estimates process is the most important publicly observed accountability function of this institution, which is why we will always set demanding expectations for the process itself and its participants. We acknowledge the thousands of public servants who prepare for the budget and prepare for estimates and the hundreds of thousands who implement it and deliver services to Queenslanders.

On behalf of the Labor opposition, we thank all parliamentary staff; you, Mr Speaker; the Deputy Speaker; and the committees. I acknowledge the perseverance of the Leader of the House. I acknowledge the staff of the opposition office and particularly note the keen and valuable work of the media gallery that takes estimates into the homes and phones of millions of Queenslanders. At the end of the day, estimates belongs to the parliament and parliament belongs to the people. We will see you all in 2027. Thank you, Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Springwood. Member for Moggill, do you have something you would like to say?

Dr ROWAN: On behalf of the Crisafulli state government, I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank you, Mr Speaker, together with the Deputy Speaker, for your assistance and professionalism in chairing the estimates committee hearings over the past two weeks. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the Clerk of the Parliament, the Deputy Clerk, the assistant clerks, the committee secretariats and all of the other parliamentary staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth operation of this important parliamentary process. I also acknowledge all committee chairs, committee members and visiting members for their participation throughout the hearings. To all ministers, assistant ministers, ministerial staff, directors-general, departmental officers, public servants and representatives of statutory bodies and government owned corporations: thank you for your preparation, professionalism and contribution to these hearings.

This is certainly one of the parliament's most important accountability mechanisms, as the Manager of Opposition Business has also mentioned. It certainly provides an opportunity for Queenslanders to see ministers and agencies being held to account for the delivery of government services and the expenditure of public funds. I thank everyone who has contributed to this process over the past fortnight.

As Leader of the House, a substantial amount of work is done beforehand reviewing budget papers, examining portfolio responsibilities, considering questions on notice and responses, and liaising with parliamentary colleagues, ministerial officers, departments and staff in preparation for the 70 hours

and 15 minutes of committee hearings over the course of the fortnight. I also acknowledge the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Springwood, and his colleagues who devote many hours to their own preparation and participation as well as the crossbench members.

I would also like to thank my own staff and those in the Premier's office for their dedication, professionalism and assistance throughout the 2026 Queensland parliament estimates hearings. Thank you, once again, to everyone involved for your dedication and hard work over the past two weeks. We will see you all again in 2027 for further estimates hearings.

Mr SPEAKER: I would like to thank the Deputy Speaker for assisting me throughout the two weeks of hearings. I thank the Clerk, the deputy clerks and all of the research directors from the various committees. It is a big workload for all of them. I thank all members who have appeared and all departmental officials who have put in so much work getting ready for questions that, in some cases, do not come. It is a lot of work, but it is very important.

Hansard is here, obviously, every day. They are here to record all of the statements. There is also the parliamentary staff. It is a busy time for all of them. It is a big demand on the parliament. I thank one and all. Obviously, I would like to thank the staff in my office, Coral-Leah and Jacklyn, for the work they have done for these estimates hearings. With that, I declare this hearing of the estimates for 2026 closed.

The committee adjourned at 5.20 pm.