



2020 – 21 Budget Estimates

Report No. 2, 57th Parliament
Community Support and Services Committee
February 2021

Community Support and Services Committee

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Acknowledgements

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- the Honourable Leeanne Enoch MP, Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts
- the Honourable Craig Crawford MP, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and
- the Honourable Leanne Linard MP, Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by the departmental officers who contributed to the work of the committee during the estimates process.

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Chair's foreword

This report presents a summary of the committee's examination of the budget estimates for the 2020-21 financial year.

Consideration of the budget estimates allows for the public examination of the responsible Ministers and the chief executive officers of agencies within the committee's portfolio areas. This was undertaken through the questions on notice and public hearing process.

The committee has recommended that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts; the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships; and the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and their departmental officers for their co-operation in providing information to the committee throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the members of the committee for their hard work and valuable contribution to the estimates process, and other members whose participation in the hearing provided additional scrutiny of the estimates.

Finally, I thank the committee's secretariat and other Parliamentary Service staff for their assistance throughout the estimates process.



Corrine McMillan MP

Chair

February 2021

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the committee

The Community Support and Services Committee (committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly, established on 26 November 2020 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.¹

The committee's areas of portfolio responsibility are:

- Communities, Housing, Digital Economy and the Arts
- Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and
- Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.

Section 93(1) of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* provides that a portfolio committee is responsible for examining each Bill and item of subordinate legislation in its portfolio areas to consider:

- the policy to be given effect by the legislation
- the application of fundamental legislative principles
- matters arising under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, and
- for subordinate legislation – its lawfulness.

The committee also has oversight functions in relation to the Family Responsibilities Commission.

On 26 November 2020, the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.²

On 15 December 2020, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence on the proposed expenditure from: the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts; the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships; the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs (relevant Ministers) and other witnesses. A copy of the transcript of the committee's hearing is available on the committee's webpage.³

1.2 Aim of this report

This report summarises the estimates referred to the committee and highlights some of the issues the committee examined.

The committee considered the estimates referred to it by using information contained in:

- budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
- evidence taken at the hearing, and
- additional information given in relation to answers.

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88 and Standing Order 194.

² Standing Order 177 provides for the automatic referral of the Annual Appropriation Bills to portfolio committees once the Bills have been read a second time.

³ <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/CSSC/inquiries/past-inquiries/estimates2020>, current as at 12 February 2021.

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided the relevant Ministers with questions on notice in relation to the estimates. Responses to all the questions were received.

Answers to the committee’s pre-hearing questions on notice, documents tabled during the hearing, answers to questions taken on notice at the hearing and additional information provided by Ministers after the hearing are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report. These documents are also available on the committee’s website.

1.3 Participation by other Members

The committee gave leave for other Members to participate in the hearing. The following Members participated in the hearing:

- Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, Member for Kawana and Shadow Minister for Finance
- Ms Amanda Camm MP, Member for Whitsunday, Shadow Minister for Child Protection and Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
- Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP, Member for Surfers Paradise, Shadow Minister for Seniors, Communities and Disability Services and Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Dr Amy MacMahon MP, Member for South Brisbane
- Mr Tim Mander MP, Member for Everton, Shadow Minister for Housing and Public Works and Shadow Minister for Sport and Racing, and
- Dr Christian Rowan MP, Member for Moggill, Shadow Minister for Education and Shadow Minister for the Arts.

2 Recommendation

Pursuant to Standing Order 187(1), the committee must state whether the proposed expenditures referred to it are agreed to.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the committee’s areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

3 Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts

The Honourable Leeanne Enoch MP, Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts, is responsible for the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy. The Minister is also responsible for the following statutory bodies:

- Library Board of Queensland
- Queensland Art Gallery
- Queensland Museum
- Queensland Performing Arts Trust, and
- Residential Tenancies Authority.

In addition, the Minister is responsible for the following commercialised business units: CITEC; Queensland Shared Services and the Corporate Administration Agency.⁴

3.1 Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy

Machinery of government changes effective from 12 November 2020 renamed the former Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) to the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE). Arts Queensland, and associated statutory bodies, the Corporate Administration Agency and community services were added to the portfolio. Building Policy and Asset Management, Queensland Government Procurement and Sport and Recreation were removed from the portfolio.⁵

DCHDE provides or funds services through four service areas:

- Arts Queensland
- Community Services
- Customer and Digital Services, and
- Housing and Homelessness Services.⁶

The following table taken from the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 compares the appropriations for the former DHPW for 2019-20 and DCHDE for 2020-21.

Appropriations	2019-20 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	1,135,129	1,137,169
equity adjustment	326,220	248,475
<i>Administered Items</i>	88,495	126,760
Vote	1,549,844	1,512,404

Source: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2, p 10.

⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-107.

⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-107.

⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-107.

3.1.1 Budget highlights

The total estimated expenditure (Controlled and Administered budget expenses) is approximately \$2.315 billion.⁷

DCHDE derives its income from appropriation revenue, user charges and fees, grants and other contributions and other revenue, amounting to approximately \$2.177 billion.⁸

The total investment in capital purchases in 2020-2021 for the DCHDE will be \$510.4 million.⁹

3.1.2 Arts Queensland

This service area supports greater access to the arts and culture and the growth of the arts sector. The service area also showcases the state's stories and artistic talent.¹⁰ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- delivery of *Creative Together 2020-2030: A 10 Year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland*, which aims to renew, transform and contribute to the state's social, cultural and economic future through arts, culture and creativity
- \$14.6 million (\$22.5 million over two years ending in 2021-22) through the Arts and Cultural Recovery Package of the Queensland Government's Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs to support actions in Sustain 2020-2022, the first action plan of Creative Together 2020-2030
- engagement with Queensland's arts and cultural sector to redesign funding programs to ensure funding opportunities support the sector to respond to COVID-19 impacts
- \$9.9 million (\$15.4 million over three years ending in 2020-21) to complete the renewal of the Critical Infrastructure assets at the Queensland Cultural Centre, and
- \$21.2 million towards the building of the New Performing Arts Venue at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre.¹¹

3.1.3 Community Services

The objective of this service area is to support communities through investing in community services that are connected and support social and economic inclusion and wellbeing.¹² Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- partnering with community organisations to fund food rescue, school breakfast programs, goods donation services, emergency relief for food and essential household costs and supporting communities in drought

⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, pp 1-119 – 1-120.

⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, pp 1-119 – 1-120.

⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-117.

¹⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-107.

¹¹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-108.

¹² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-107.

- developing individuals’ capacity to improve their lives and reach their full potential through services such as Financial Literacy and Resilience, the Queensland Community Support Scheme, Generalist Counselling, and Public Intoxication Support Services, and
- helping communities embed cohesiveness, build strength and thrive through:
 - funding over five years from 2019-20, matching Australian Government funding, for Logan Together (\$3.8 million) and establishing place-based approaches in Gladstone and Rockhampton (\$3.9 million)
 - funding of \$1.5 million to 12 organisations for Community Connect Workers and \$1.7 million for 15 Neighbourhood and Care Army Connect workers through the network of 125 Neighbourhood and Community Centres
 - administering grants programs to support community projects and initiatives, such as communities impacted by drought and providing relief to individuals and families in crisis, and
 - implementing the second social cohesion action plan – Thriving Cohesive Communities: Action Plan for Queensland 2019-2021 (Stage 2) – with an emphasis on young people (12-25 years) and on addressing economic exclusion.¹³

3.1.4 Customer and Digital Services

The objective of this service area is to put Queenslanders and their businesses at the heart of government service delivery and oversee investments to enable successful delivery of a digitally enabled government.¹⁴ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- oversight of the Government Wireless Network, which provides critical radio communications to police, ambulance, and fire services to support public safety
- maximising the proactive release of open (unlicensed and unclassified) government data to the public and other stakeholders to promote the creation of new products, services, and insights through unlocking government information
- contributing to the government’s response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by working with the Department of Education to expand recordkeeping requirements to non-state schools
- supporting agencies in their strategic and operational decision making through the better use of data by using whole-of-government data sharing and analytics services, and
- redeveloping the state’s digital and ICT governance to ensure the government is investing in the right digital information, systems and capabilities and that those investments deliver on their promise in digital transformation to an effective and responsive government.¹⁵

¹³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-110.

¹⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-107.

¹⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-112.

3.1.5 Housing and Homelessness Services

This service area's objective is to provide housing and homelessness services that are responsive, integrated and accessible.¹⁶ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- responding to the COVID-19 pandemic to assist vulnerable Queenslanders and contribute to Queensland's economic recovery
- delivering improved housing outcomes for Queenslanders through continued implementation of the *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-27* and its Action Plans
- reform of Queensland's rental laws to provide better protections for tenants and rental property owners, and improve housing stability in the rental market
- supporting vulnerable people, including young people, families and adults, to access and sustain safe and secure housing through investing in specialist homelessness services
- delivering *Partnering for Impact* to reduce homelessness in Queensland, broadening partnerships with the homelessness sector to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable Queenslanders, and
- reforms to regulatory frameworks for retirement villages and manufactured homes and increasing consumer protections and providing certainty for industry.¹⁷

3.2 Library Board of Queensland

The Library Board of Queensland is the governing body of the State Library of Queensland, established under the *Libraries Act 1988*. The State Library of Queensland is responsible for collecting and preserving Queensland's cultural and documentary heritage, providing free access to information and the advancement of public libraries across the state.¹⁸

The budget comparison for the Library Board of Queensland for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is shown below.

Library Board of Queensland	2019-20 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Budget \$'000
Total income	81,283	79,849
Total expenses	82,250	79,849
Operating surplus/(Deficit)	(967)	..

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-125.

Budget highlights for 2020-2021 include:

- strengthening the digital collection and preservation and providing fit for purpose digital services

¹⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-107.

¹⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, pp 1-114 – 1-115.

¹⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-123.

- delivering the First 5 Forever program in partnership with local government to provide strong early literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years
- continuing to strengthen and increase the Indigenous Knowledge Centres in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and
- reviewing and recommending the Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever funding methodologies that represent an investment of \$30.4 million.¹⁹

3.3 Queensland Art Gallery

The Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) are both administered under the *Queensland Art Gallery Act 1987*. The galleries are governed by the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees.²⁰

The budget comparison for the Queensland Art Gallery for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is shown below.

Queensland Art Gallery	2019-20 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Budget \$'000
Total income	66,522	64,013
Total expenses	60,640	63,362
Operating surplus/(Deficit)	5,882	651

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-128.

Budget highlights for 2020-2021 include:

- \$10 million over two years from 2019-20 to delivering exclusive-to-Queensland blockbuster exhibitions
- the Digital Transformation Initiative, including working with the QAGOMA Foundation
- the 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art and third annual Brisbane International Film Festival at the Gallery, and
- additional initiatives to reduce the Gallery's environmental impact and improve sustainability practices.²¹

3.4 Queensland Museum

The Queensland Museum was established under the *Queensland Museum Act 1970* and is governed by the Board of the Queensland Museum.²²

¹⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-123.

²⁰ 'Board of Trustees', *Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art*, www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/about/our-team.

²¹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-126.

²² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-129.

The Queensland Museum is part of the Queensland Museum Network, which also includes the: Cobb and Co. Museum; Museum of Tropical Queensland; Workshop Rail Museum; QM Collections, Research and Loans Centre; Museum of Lands, Mapping and Surveying; and Earth Science Museum.²³

The budget comparison for the Queensland Museum for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is shown below.

Queensland Museum	2019-20 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Budget \$'000
Total income	55,842	46,766
Total expenses	54,774	52,859
Operating surplus/(Deficit)	1,068	(6,093)

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-131.

Budget highlights for 2020-2021 include:

- \$11.8 million to deliver a new research and biodiversity collection centre (\$16.1 million over four years ending in 2022-23)
- developing and implementing new experiences and lifelong learning opportunities through exhibitions, events, programs publications and digital media across all campuses of the Queensland Museum Network
- \$680,000 to support community museums in regional Queensland through the Museum Development Officer program, and
- \$2.1 million towards digital infrastructure growth to enhance the Queensland Museum's research, education and outreach.²⁴

3.5 Queensland Performing Arts Trust

The Queensland Performing Arts Trust is constituted under the *Queensland Performing Arts Trust Act 1977* and operates the Queensland Performance Arts Centre (QPAC).

The budget comparison for the Queensland Performing Arts Trust for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is shown below.

Queensland Performing Arts Trust	2019-20 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Budget \$'000
Total income	65,533	33,131
Total expenses	60,989	43,080
Operating surplus/(Deficit)	4,544	(9,949)

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-134.

²³ Board of the Queensland Museum, Annual Report 2019-20, October 2020, pp 4-5.

²⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-129.

The Queensland Performing Arts Trust budget reflects an operating deficit of \$9.9 million for 2020-21. However, its insurance policy through the Queensland Government Insurance Fund will cover any commercial losses incurred due to COVID.²⁵

Budget highlights for 2020-2021 include:

- an on-site live program in theatre venues under the QPAC Site Specific COVID Safe Plan
- extending the reach of programming by engaging audiences through digital presentations and streaming
- Phase 2 of QPAC'S LED lighting upgrade, funded by Arts Queensland, which will transition the theatre lighting in the Playhouse Theatre
- professional and technical input into the design and construction of the new theatre venue at QPAC, and
- assisting in the co-ordination of on-site infrastructure works including the stage door amenity and security upgrade and a replacement people with disability entry ramp for the Cremorne Theatre.²⁶

3.6 Residential Tenancies Authority

The Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) is a statutory body established under the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (RTRA Act) to administer the RTRA Act which regulates the Queensland residential rental sector.²⁷

The budget comparison for the RTA for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is shown below.

Residential Tenancies Authority	2019-20 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Budget \$'000
Total income	(7,175)	25,075
Total expenses	36,076	34,643
Operating surplus/(Deficit)	(43,251)	(9,568)

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-136.

Budget highlights for 2020-2021 include:

- delivery of digital products to the RTA's customers to promote a seamless service, be more responsive to customers and increase the number of services to be provided online
- updating business processes, compliance activities and service offerings to ensure that they meet the highest standards to support and administer the RTRA Act, and
- supporting and educating the rental sector on requirements under the RTRA Act.²⁸

²⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-132.

²⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-132.

²⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-135.

²⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, p 1-135.

3.7 Key issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee and participating Members at the public hearing included:

- support and funding for neighbourhood community centres
- social housing tenancy, including the social housing register, eligibility criteria and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic
- safeguarding of the Queensland Government’s digital network and data against hackers
- improving housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in remote communities
- support for people escaping domestic and family violence
- the Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan
- support for and participation in the Care Army
- construction of a new theatre at QPAC and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on QPAC
- First Nations broadcasting services
- Creative Together 2020-2030: A 10-year roadmap for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland
- the Queensland Government’s Arts and Cultural Recovery package
- the National Framework for Governments’ Support of the Major Performing Arts Sector
- the collections of the State Library of Queensland and the Indigenous Knowledge Centres, and
- funding of live music venues and support for the independent arts sector.²⁹

²⁹ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 15 December 2020.

4 Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

The Honourable Craig Crawford MP, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, is responsible for the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

4.1 Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

Machinery of government changes effective from 12 November 2020 renamed the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS) to the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DSDSATSIP). The functions of the former Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships were transferred to the new portfolio. Community services was removed from the portfolio.³⁰

DSDSATSIP has four service areas:

- Seniors Services
- Disability Services
- Economic Participation of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and
- Community Participation of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The following table taken from the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 compares the appropriations for the former DCDSS for 2019-20 and DSDSATSIP for 2020-21.³¹

Appropriations	2019-20 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	361,571	328,408
equity adjustment	3,259	9,470
<i>Administered Items</i>	1,527,222	2,423,678
Vote	1,892,052	2,761,556

Source: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2, p 13.

4.1.1 Budget highlights

The total estimated expenditure (Controlled and Administered budget expenses) is approximately \$2.820 billion.³²

³⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-117.

³¹ The Appropriation (2020-21) Bill 2020 provides that the former Department for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (which ceased on 12 November 2020) had a Budget for 2019-20 of \$91,219,000 and the Appropriation for 2020-21 is \$25,540,000. See Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 1, p 6.

³² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, pp 2-128 – 2-129.

DSDSATSIP derives its income from appropriation revenue, user charges and fees, grants and other contributions and other revenue, amounting to \$2.816 billion.³³

The total budgeted capital purchases for DSDSATSIP is approximately \$18.3 million in 2020-21.³⁴ Capital purchase highlights include:

- \$1.2 million to continue upgrading, improving and modifying accommodation for people with an intellectual or cognitive disability who exhibit extremely challenging behaviours
- \$4.3 million to deliver specialist accommodation for complex clients under Forensic Disability Orders, and
- \$0.6 million for office accommodation and systems requirements to support the *Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020*.³⁵

4.1.2 Seniors Services

The objective of this service area is to develop programs and services for seniors to reduce the cost of living, enhance wellbeing, support community participation, and prevent and address elder abuse.³⁶ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- \$5 million in 2020-21 to fund services and programs that raise awareness of elder abuse and assist victims of elder abuse or help those at risk
- funding 43 services to reduce seniors' isolation and providing access to information through the Seniors Enquiry Line, including a consumer protection and scams advice service
- supporting eligible Queenslanders to manage the cost of living through access to the Seniors Card, Carers Cards and the Seniors Business Discount Card, and concessions, such as electricity, rates, water and gas with an estimated budget of \$449.7 million³⁷, and
- supporting seniors through the Care Army to help those impacted by COVID-19 who do not have access to family and friends.³⁸

4.1.3 Disability Services

The service area's objective is to enable people to access disability services that assist them with the core activities of daily living and achieving their goals, as part of inclusive communities, and contribute to systems that safeguard and protect the rights of people with disability.³⁹ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- enhancing capital investment to deliver new and upgraded specialist accommodation as part of the Forensic Disability Service System Reforms

³³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, pp 2-128 and 129.

³⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-126.

³⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-126.

³⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-117.

³⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-118.

³⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-118.

³⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-117.

- \$2.6 million for services to support people with disabilities, including support for All Abilities Queensland, management of complaints and investigations, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) performance monitoring and approval for guide, hearing and assistance dogs
- \$8.9 million over two years to support the implementation of a nationally consistent NDIS worker screening system to enhance safeguards
- \$7 million for community transport services
- \$3.4 million to support people with disability through preparation of positive behaviour support plans and consideration of applications for short-term use of restrictive practices
- \$20 million over three years to 2022 negotiated with the Commonwealth, through the Disability Connect and Outreach Program, to assist vulnerable and hard to reach Queenslanders with disability to gain access to the NDIS, and
- leading the whole of government response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.⁴⁰

4.1.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships – Economic Participation

The objective of the service area is to increase the economic participation of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.⁴¹ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- implementing the Queensland Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Procurement Policy to increase the level of government spend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to 3 per cent of the value of the government’s addressable spend by 2022
- working with Queensland Government agencies to increase the proportion of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples working in the Queensland public sector to 3 per cent by 2022
- delivering the Youth Employment Program to assist and support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 graduates and other job ready candidates, in post-school transitions to work, study or training
- working with councils and Traditional Owners on negotiating Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) to support economic development and home ownership
- maximising employment and business opportunities in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through the negotiation of Indigenous Economic Opportunities Plans on civil and building construction projects
- undertaking land administration activities, tenure projects and ILUA implementation support for local Councils, Trustees and Traditional Owners, and
- supporting discrete communities with town planning processes in compliance with councils’ town planning schemes.⁴²

⁴⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-119.

⁴¹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-117.

⁴² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-121.

4.1.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships – Community Participation

The objective of the service area is to increase the community participation of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.⁴³ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- reframing the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the Queensland Government through the Path to Treaty
- implementing the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap and facilitating building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector
- the Queensland Government’s response to the Queensland Productivity Commission’s Final Report of the Inquiry into service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, known as Local Thriving Communities
- operationalising the *Meriba Omaker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020*, including the appointment of the Commissioner
- contributing to the development of the national Strategic Plan to inform the expenditure of Queensland’s \$9.3 million contribution to support the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap and co-designing the Queensland Closing the Gap Action Plan
- working with Queensland’s five Welfare Reform communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale, and Mossman Gorge to build on community achievements and successes to date and build local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority and governance to support communities
- supporting initiatives under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-23* and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Body* that are part of the *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027*, and
- building cultural capability across government under the Queensland Government *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework*.⁴⁴

4.2 Concessions

The total cost of concessions to be provided via schemes administered in the communities, disability services and seniors service delivery area in 2020-21 is estimated at \$449.7 million. A breakdown of concessions by scheme is provided in the table on page 15 of this report.

⁴³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, p 2-117.

⁴⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, pp 2-123 – 2-124.

Concession scheme	2019-20 Actual \$ million	2020-21 Estimate \$ million
Electricity Rebate Scheme ^{1,2}	189.9	210.2
Electricity Asset Ownership Dividend ³	2.9	106.9
Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme	53.3	56.3
Utility Rebate – COVID-19 – Residential Household Utility Assistance Package and Small/Medium Business Power Bill Relief Package ^{4,5}	490.2	40.0
South East Queensland Pensioner Water Subsidy Scheme	17.7	19.3
Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme	8.7	10.0
Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate Scheme	2.4	2.6
Electricity Life Support Concession Scheme ²	2.1	2.3
Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity Concession Scheme ²	1.6	2.1
Total	768.8	449.7
<p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The variance is due to the estimated growth in recipients, particularly Health Care Card holders. 2. Electricity price rebates are adjusted annually according to the Queensland Competition Authority's (QCA) price determination for general household electricity tariff (Tariff 11). For 2020-21, the QCA determined Tariff 11 will decrease by 5.9%. However, the government has determined that existing rebate values will not be decreased and will continue to apply in 2020-21. 3. The \$2.9 million reported in 2019-20 relates to the 2018-19 allocation. The 2019-20 Electricity Asset Ownership Dividend was incorporated into the 2019-20 COVID Electricity Rebate. 4. 2019-20 Actual consists of \$404.2 million under the Residential Household Relief Package and \$85.9 million under the Small/Medium Business Rebate Package. 5. This item is part of the Queensland Government's response to COVID-19. 		

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Budget Strategy and Outlook, Budget Paper No. 2, p 185.

4.3 Key issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee and participating Members at the public hearing included:

- operational issues relating to the Forensic Disability Service and the Queensland Ombudsman's Forensic Disability Service Report
- support for Queensland seniors, including the One Stop Shop initiative, prevention of elder abuse and tackling social isolation and loneliness
- the NDIS and All Abilities Queensland initiative
- funding for seniors and disability services
- implementation of recommendations from the Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse Steering Committee Report

- the Youth Empowered Towards Independence project
- the Queensland Community Support Scheme
- indigenous deaths in custody and the implementation of recommendations of the 1991 Royal Commission into Indigenous deaths in custody
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority and governance in remote welfare reform communities
- the Queensland Government’s response to Path to Treaty and implementation of targets from Closing the Gap
- effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous communities
- jobs and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, and
- the *Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020*.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 15 December 2020.

5 Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

The Honourable Leanne Linard MP, Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, is the Minister responsible for the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.

5.1 Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

Machinery of government changes effective from 12 November 2020, renamed the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW) to the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA). Youth Justice was added and Women, Violence Prevention and Youth were removed from the portfolio.⁴⁶

DCYJMA has three service areas as follows:

- Child and Family Services
- Youth Justice Services, and
- Multicultural Affairs.⁴⁷

The following table taken from the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 compares the appropriations for the former DCSYW for 2019-20 and DCYJMA for 2020-21.⁴⁸

Appropriations	2019-20 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	1,474,727	1,719,769
equity adjustment	14,782	4,828
<i>Administered Items</i>	57,600	72,296
Vote	1,547,109	1,796,893

Source: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2, p 9.

5.1.1 Budget highlights

The total estimated expenditure (Controlled and Administered budget expenses) is approximately \$1.740 billion.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-93.

⁴⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-93.

⁴⁸ The Appropriation (2020-21) Bill 2020 provides that the former Department for Youth Justice (which ceased on 12 November 2020) had a Budget for 2019-20 of \$262,055,000 and the appropriation for 2020-21 is \$156,277,000. See Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 1, p 7.

⁴⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, pp 1-102 – 1-103.

The DCYJMA derives its income from appropriation revenue, user charges and fees, grants and other contributions and other revenue, amounting to approximately \$1.740 billion.⁵⁰

The capital works program for the DCYJMA in 2020-21 is \$119.3 million.⁵¹ A key capital project outlined in the 2020-21 budget is capacity increase for youth detention facilities. This includes increasing capacity in youth detention facilities by an additional 48 beds, by investing \$178 million over three years (commencing from 2019-20).⁵²

The DCYJMA also administers the Queensland Government's participation in the *National Redress Scheme for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse*, with \$512.344 million provisioned as at 30 June 2020. This scheme provides eligible applicants support through monetary payment, access to counselling and psychological care, and the option to receive a direct personal response from the institution responsible.⁵³

5.1.2 Child and Family Services

The service area's objective is to enable families to safely care for their children and young people, and provide services to support the safety, belonging and wellbeing of children and young people not able to be cared for by their families.⁵⁴

Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- \$166.6 million to implement the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reforms
- \$5.1 million (as part of the total of \$166.6 million total investment to implement *Supporting Families Changing Futures* in 2020-21) to continue the child protection litigation model
- \$760,000 over two years to develop and analyse options for regulating compliance with the Child Safe Standards, options for a Reportable Conduct Scheme, and to undertake whole-of-government annual reporting on implementation in response to the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* recommendations
- managing the increasing number of children and young people coming into care and staying longer in care relating to increased parental risk factors including use of Crystal methamphetamine (ice) and the impact of COVID-19
- continuing Family and Child Connect services to develop parenting skills and better manage child behaviour, build better relationships between family members, manage alcohol, drug or gambling problems and access housing, healthcare or other community or government services
- continuing the Unify Program to replace the Integrated Client Management System, and
- completing initial improvements to the child safety intake system, including an information technology solution for a single triage point being delivered under the Unify Program.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, pp 1-102 – 1-103.

⁵¹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-100.

⁵² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p 9.

⁵³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-101.

⁵⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-93.

⁵⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-94.

5.1.3 Youth Justice Services

The objective of this service area is to keep the community safe by working together to prevent offending and reduce reoffending by children and young people and by enabling young people to reconnect to community.⁵⁶ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- \$86.5 million over five years (\$21.1 million per annum ongoing) to staff and operationalise the new 32 bed West Moreton Youth Detention Centre at Wacol
- \$5.7 million over four years for On Country programs in Mount Isa, Townsville and Cairns, designed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to meet the specific needs of young people
- continuing the trial of Family Led Decision Making which empowers and supports families to identify and address their child's needs and seek appropriate resources within their family and community to stop re-offending
- extending services for a Mount Isa Youth Transitional Hub
- extending the Conditional Bail Program which provides an intensive program of support as part of a young person's release on bail, and
- extending the Intensive Case Management program, which delivers intervention strategies to reduce and prevent offending.⁵⁷

5.1.4 Multicultural Affairs

The service area's objective is to promote Queensland as a unified, harmonious and inclusive community.⁵⁸ Budget highlights for 2020-21 include:

- the Multicultural Queensland Charter and initiatives such as the Multicultural Action Plan 2019-20 to 2021-22, Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program and Multicultural Queensland Ambassador program
- supporting Community Action for Multicultural Society providers and other community-based organisations to support local communities, particularly in local disaster and crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and
- strategic projects that focus on economic and social recovery, including migrant and refugee skills utilisation in industries with skills shortages; attracting and welcoming migrants and refugees to regional areas; increasing representative government boards; and equitable access to government and services.⁵⁹

5.2 Key issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee and participating Members at the public hearing included:

- the operation and evaluation of the Supervised Community Accommodation Service

⁵⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-93.

⁵⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-97.

⁵⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-93.

⁵⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 1, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, p 1-99.

- the Queensland Deputy State Coroner’s report on the findings of Inquest into the death of Mason Jet Lee
- isolation practices in police watch houses and operation of youth detention centres
- care placements for young people
- outcomes of the Navigate Your Health program
- the operation of the NDIS within the child safety system
- youth justice and young people with language difficulties
- information sharing with the Queensland Police Service
- the child safety workforce
- foster and kinship carers
- the Restorative Justice Conferencing program
- the National Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse
- the prevention of suicides of children known to the DCYJMA
- early intervention with young offenders
- effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students in Queensland and support for multicultural communities in Queensland
- Queensland Language Services Policy, and
- funding for culturally and linguistically diverse communities during COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 15 December 2020.

6 Statements of Reservation

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

As Queenslanders deal with the impacts of COVID-19, the 2020/21 Budget was the time for the Palaszczuk Government to respond.

Instead, the third-term Labor Government claimed businesses are back on their feet and all jobs lost because of COVID-19 have been regained – claims woefully out of touch with reality.

The more than 200,000 Queenslanders who are currently out of work were relying on the Labor Government to get this Budget right. But for them it's simply pages of broken promises and dreams.

All Labor has delivered Queensland in this budget is \$28 billion in new debt to simply keep the lights on, and an infrastructure spend that is both billions less than southern states and but is also being delivered years into the never never.

In its third term, all the Labor Government can manage as an economic plan is a 41-page glossy brochure and an unemployment rate 13 percent higher than Victoria and nearly 25 percent higher than New South Wales.

Committee operation

As is prudent, the Opposition agrees with passing the budget. However, there are some reservations that should be noted.

As mentioned above, this budget outlines unemployment figures into the forwards, confirming Queensland will have the worst unemployment figures in the country. Despite this, the government has not communicated any plans to fast-track projects to stimulate the economy and create jobs for Queenslanders.

By holding off the budget until after the election, the Government had a responsibility to be completely transparent about debt levels. Instead, they outlined \$4 billion worth of debt before the election only to reveal the actual increase in debt would be seven times that amount at \$28 billion. While the Opposition understands the need to borrow funds to build the roads, dams and other job creating projects, we are extremely concerned about the revelations in the budget which show the massive increase in debt has yielded only a tiny increase in the State's net worth. This is in stark contrast to results in other states who have used increased borrowings to fund large infrastructure building programs.

Finally, the structure of the whole budget process is fundamentally broken. With a vastly truncated estimates process, the Government had a responsibility to ensure it was completely transparent. Given the circumstances, it was more important than ever that a full and frank examination of Ministers and their portfolios occurred.

The LNP proposes a complete reimagination of the Estimates process, starting with the appointment of non-Government Chairs during estimates – an initiative that we will implement in Government.

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING, DIGITAL ECONOMY

The committee received a glowing opening statement from the Minister advising of a list of prepared achievements across the portfolio areas of responsibility including;

“Building social housing to accommodate those in need is an important part of our work”

“under the Queensland Housing Strategy we are delivering more than 5,500 social and affordable homes through the \$1.6 billion Housing Construction Jobs Program”.

The Opposition is disturbed about the reporting on the success of Labor’s social and affordable housing strategies in Queensland. During examination of the number of persons on the waiting lists in Queensland that has increased since 2015 by 10,000 or 55 per cent, we noted that the Minister and Department now refer to a housing register instead of the previous performance indicator of wait lists.

Further examination reveals the Palaszczuk Government has spent less per capita on social housing and have only increased housing stock available by 73. While the Minister continued to chastise the Opposition members during questioning in estimates, the reality is that Queensland’s waiting list has blown out to an incredible 21,000 people needing assistance up from 16,000 a year earlier.

A lot has been reported by the Queensland Government on the record spend on those most marginalised during the coronavirus pandemic. However Labor never factored in population growth; this resulted in per head spend down to \$132, down from \$135 in 2018-2019, also being the second lowest spend rate in the Nation.

In reflection on what can only be described as misleading estimate responses, we note that other States did not experience increased demands for housing including locked-down Victoria. The massive increase in demand was not mentioned by the Minister during estimates, however it did occur following the announcements of the Palaszczuk Government’s Housing Construction Jobs Program which was reported by the Minister to deliver 5,500 new social and affordable housing dwellings in the first five years as part of the \$1.8 billion 2017-2027 Queensland Housing Strategy. The reality from the latest reports show Queensland’s social housing stock has grown by just 627 dwellings since 2017, something the Opposition would have expected the Minister to acknowledge during questioning.

The Opposition has real concern for the more than 18,000 people waiting for homes in 2020 that were classed as “greatest need applicants” under Labor’s “one size fits all” approach to solutions. With another 3000 people waiting for a transfer within the state’s network of 51,890 social housing dwellings, we see glaring omissions in Government responses in the critical nature of housing demand in Queensland.

The Opposition through the entire estimate process had lines of examination into the inappropriate use of e-mails deflected and questions not being addressed. The legitimate questioning around emails from mangocube6@yahoo.co.uk to stacia1@bigpond.com regarding Paul Simshauser and the Department’s responsibilities under the Public Records Act, continued with the Director General avoiding providing any comments to Opposition questioning.

The Opposition believe the people of Queensland deserve more from the estimates process in holding the Government to account. It was extraordinary to witness the lengths Queensland Labor will go in avoiding their obligations and dealing with any consequence of their arrogant behaviour.

The estimates hearing revealed that there are over 28,000 Queenslanders who registered to become part of the Care Army. A total of \$417,000 was provided to Volunteering Queensland to administer this program.

ARTS

When questioned on the impact on funding arising from COVID 19 on the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC), the Minister indicated that financial support would be in the form of the bringing forward of \$5.2 million of the recurrent base grant and the waiving of some of the facility and utility costs.

The Minister affirmed that QPAC will have to absorb additional costs from within its own budget without additional support from the government.

In relation to the construction of a new theatre at QPAC, the Minister advised that construction “is definitely on time” though additional funds will be directed to the project as a result of lessons learned in response to COVID 19 challenges. This is clearly more than was originally allocated in the budget for the project.

SENIORS, DISABILITY SERVICES

Seniors

The Minister for Seniors pointed out how the Palaszczuk Labor Government continues to raise awareness of elder abuse and made reference to how the COVID-19 pandemic saw the number of seniors reporting elder abuse or seeking assistance rise. However, it was brought to the attention of the Minister that the same number is given for the seniors’ helpline and the elder abuse helpline on the Care Army website.

The Government’s mistake of providing the same number for the Seniors Helpline and the elder abuse helpline undermines the appropriate referral, advice and protection that should be offered to people reporting elder abuse. It also undermines the Government’s statements that phone calls regarding elder abuse have increased when the phone number that has been widely promoted is the same as the seniors’ helpline number.

It should be noted that the website has since been updated to reflect the accurate telephone number for elder abuse helpline.

Disability Services

The Minister acknowledged that there is still much more work to do around identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who would be eligible for the NDIS, including increasing the number of providers in areas outside of south-east Queensland.

Currently, as of September 2020, there are almost 90,000 Queenslanders who are either in or seeking access to the NDIS. Approximately 8,000 identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, which accounts for 9.2%.

The Minister conceded that there was an incident involving a client absconding during a Limited Community Treatment excursion during 2019-20. The specific incident occurred in Townsville when the client was accessing escorted overnight leave. At 4am, the client was identified as missing but was later located. The Minister acknowledged there are some opportunities to improve practice.

In the Minister's prepared opening statement of achievements and applauding the Government on numerous areas of delivery, we heard the Statement "the *Palaszczuk Government's priority is and always will be the safety and wellbeing of Queenslanders.*"

The committee heard from the Minister in a line of questioning from the Opposition in relation to funding of an overhaul of lockout and ID scanners for small venues as a result of the impacts of COVID19, a dismissive response that the question was not related to the portfolio and should have been directed to another Minister; an all too familiar tactic used during estimates.

The Opposition is concerned about the response, as shortly after the Minister deflected the question the Director General then proceeded to advise of funding through the "\$22.5 million The Arts and Cultural Recovery Package", "\$458,000 to offset operational costs through the Live Music Venue Support Fund", "\$429,000 Play Local Fund", "\$200,000 for pilot COVID safe programming", "\$60 million worth of relief measures for the arts sector", "\$592,000 to deliver live performances and engagement activities in regional venues".

The issues of the Minister attempting to avoid scrutiny on the issues in relation to the safety of Queenslanders, particularly relating to public intoxication and alcohol fuelled violence was unfortunately predictable and highlights the contempt this Government has for the estimates process.

Having the Director General expose the Minister's attempts to avoid questioning, the Opposition reflected on Estimates Questions on Notice No1, "*will the Minister advise how the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy is supporting communities to address public intoxication and Alcohol fuelled violence?*"

The prepared response details the Palaszczuk Government's commitments to creating a safer night time environment, with initiatives that reduce alcohol related violence and harm and drive change around drinking behaviours.

Queenslanders have the right to know how much of the Government's \$3.4 million in Safe Night Precinct Support Services funding was used for first aid and calming down patrons in distress after the Member for Mundingburra's public nightclub brawl.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTNERSHIPS

It was disappointing that many of the issues raised throughout the estimates hearing which related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships could not be answered by the Minister or the Director-General. For instance, when the Minister was asked how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were made aware of the Queensland Community Support Scheme, the Minister referred the Member for Surfers Paradise to the Minister for Communities. The continual deferral of questions to other Ministers undermined the decision-making of the department.

The committee heard from Minister Crawford, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships in the opening statement of the Minister, when he expressed his privilege as the Minister to share the vision and achievements of the newly formed Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. What was highlighted was that the Palaszczuk government has signed a new national closing the gap agreement, committing to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards 16 new targets aimed at improving life outcomes.

With the record of the Palaszczuk Labor Government over many years in failing to meet previous closing the gap targets in indigenous communities, the LNP Opposition remains concerned that these new targets will be lacking in any substantive and meaningful outcomes.

We saw in the 2018 Report Card that only **two** of the **seven** COAG Closing the Gap targets outlined were on track: early childhood education and year 12 attainment or equivalent.

Again in the 2019 Report Card only **two** of the **seven** COAG Closing the Gap targets outlined were on track: early childhood education and year 12 attainment or equivalent.

Sadly in the 2020 Report Card only **one** of the **seven** COAG Closing the Gap targets specified was on track: early childhood education (2025).

The Opposition remains concerned that appointments for critical positions to the Treaty Advancement Committee have not been finalised to date, considering the eminent panel treaty report was tabled in Parliament in August last year. The committee was informed that recruitment for a commissioner and the establishment of the commissioner's office with the passing of the Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa Act in September 2020 had only just begun with a view to be finalised by July 2021. This means that nearly a whole year will pass before protections for vulnerable children in the Torres Strait Islander Communities can be enacted.

The Opposition were left confused and disturbed about the responses provided to questioning regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships portfolio areas of responsibility.

Many examples of an under-prepared Department and Minister and Director General became apparent with inadequate, dismissive responses to areas of direct responsibilities when asked simple but important questions.

A consistent theme of estimates was the failure to answer questions and referring to the recent machinery changes within government as an excuse to avoid scrutiny.

The Minister has direct responsibility for the *Forensic Disability Act 2011*. Serious concerns commenced when neither the Minister or the Director General could offer a response to recommendations from the Ombudsman regarding Forensic Disability Service and Indigenous people.

CHILDREN YOUTH JUSTICE

Child safety

The Inquest into Mason Jet Lee revealed that employees responsible for complex cases such as Mason Jett Lee were not even aware of their basic statutory duties in relation to protecting children from harm. During estimates, when asked whether all employees are now aware of their basic statutory obligations, the Director-General failed to provide any guarantee.

In light of the Coronial Inquest into the death of Mason Jet Lee, the Coroner identified that the department would send redacted information to police containing critical information. As such, the Coroner recommended that procedures and policies for the provision of information to QPS be reviewed to ensure that information held by the department is provided to the Queensland Police Service, upon request, in a timely manner and without redactions.

Interestingly, the Director-General told the Committee that “it is a very unusual thing that the police execute warrants on child safety”. The Director-General also did not confirm whether it was still common practice to send redacted information to the police.

These comments fly in the face of a Detective Inspector of the Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group of State Crime Command of the QPS, who said “it is not uncommon for the department to request police obtain and execute a search warrant before the department will release information”.

The LNP has firm expectations of the Department to ensure information sharing from the Department to the Queensland Police is free flowing, transparent and above all, in the best interests of the child.

It is imperative that the Department upholds the paramount principle of the *Child Protection Act 1999* by making decisions in the best interests of the child.

Youth justice

Youth crime continues to soar under the Palaszczuk Labor Government. Youth reoffending is a serious problem and it has been since Labor took office in 2015. Since 2015, youth crime has skyrocketed.

For instance, an estimates pre-hearing Question on Notice No. 17 revealed that 179 children committed more than 30 new offences while out on bail pending court appearance between 2018 and 2020. Additionally, 944 distinct children committed between 10 to 30 new offences while on bail pending court appearance. These staggering reoffending rates speak volumes of the youth crime epidemic in Queensland.

Labor cannot solve the problem when they are the problem. Labor's youth bail houses, which cost taxpayers \$30.8 million, were merely a breeding ground for crime. Estimates pre-hearing Question on Notice No. 15 revealed that one child committed 255 offences post-placement in a bail house. 83% of youths who resided in bail houses reoffended. It is no wonder these bail houses were scrapped.

The budget further revealed the scrapping of the Palaszczuk Labor Government's newly established and stand-alone Youth Justice Department. This is yet another Labor Government initiative which didn't stand the test of time.

While the Palaszczuk Labor Government boasts of its record spend of \$550 million in Queensland's youth justice system, the same cannot be said for the reoffending rates. The LNP questions whether Labor's approach of throwing money at issues is having a positive impact, or is it simply draining Queensland's already deprived economy.

Conclusion

Queensland needs a new approach to get the economy going and Queenslanders back to work.

The LNP calls for infrastructure spending to be brought forward and rolled out now to help those 200,000 Queenslanders re-enter the workforce.

The LNP will unleash economic growth by:

- Encouraging those with entrepreneurial spirit to invest their own money in job creating ventures;
- Valuing the Public Service by empowering them to make decisions which drop barriers to growth;
- Unshackling the mining industry and tourism industries through world's best practice environmental protections which both preserve our natural environment and utilise it to create jobs;
- Placing significant investment in agriculture research and development with output increased through world's best practice education, training and support for our producers; and
- Building the water infrastructure Queensland needs.

The LNP's approach will return Queensland to the rightful position as the nation's economic powerhouse and create a better Queensland for us, our children, and generations to come.



Stephen Bennett MP

Member for Burnett

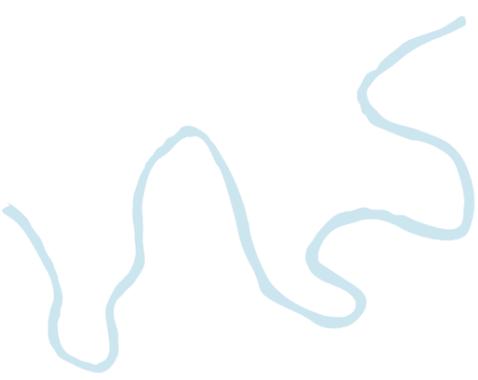
Shadow Assistant Minister for Tourism Development

Deputy Chair



Jon Krause MP

Member for Scenic Rim



Michael Berkman MP
For Maiwar ▲

10 February 2021

Statement of Reservation - Fixing Budget Estimates

I agree with the Committee's report on 2020-21 Budget Estimates and its recommendation that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the legislative assembly without amendment.

As I have in previous years, putting aside the substance of the recommended appropriations, I take this opportunity to again put on the record my concerns about the process of budget estimates, the many ways it falls short as an effective accountability mechanism, and some simple suggestions to improve the process.

Last year's estimates hearings were once again characterised by constant interruptions from government MPs, time-wasting monologues from Ministers, and Ministers going to quite extraordinary lengths to avoid answering difficult or potentially embarrassing questions. A vanishingly small amount of time is made available for cross-bench MPs, while government MPs waste hours on Dorothy Dixers.

The process of estimates, as it is currently being run, provides almost no meaningful opportunity to hold the executive to account. My view remains that estimates is fundamentally broken and needs urgent reform.

I have previously written to the Premier a number of times with suggestions to fix the estimates process in Queensland after widespread calls for reform, including from former Labor Speaker of the Legislative Assembly John Mickel who described estimates as a "protection racket".

The need for reform is clear, and this should begin with **an all-party review of the estimates process**, that could be undertaken by a committee chaired by a non-government MP with representation from all parties in Parliament.

In the meantime the Parliament could adopt some **interim measures to strengthen estimates** including:

1. Abolish or severely restrict Dorothy Dixers from government MPs. Those MPs have ample opportunity outside estimates to seek information directly from their government colleagues.
2. Double the amount of time available for questions by having two committees sit simultaneously for the full seven day estimates period. This is standard practice in other jurisdictions and would not involve much if any extra cost.
3. Make sure all hearings are chaired by non-government MPs to prevent Government Chairs shamelessly using their position to protect the Ministers' and the Government's interests.

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4. Expand the Questions on Notice process to give all MPs a chance to ask written questions ahead of the hearings. Right now, this privilege is restricted to the six members of each Committee.
5. Publicise the hearings widely and encourage ordinary people to attend. It is to be hoped that this might force everyone to behave a little better.

These interim measures could be implemented immediately by a simple resolution of the Legislative Assembly and easily take effect before this year's Budget Estimates hearings, which are only months away.

There is a widespread consensus in Queensland, across civil society and the press gallery, that our system of Parliamentary oversight in general and estimates in particular are hopelessly ineffective. I know this view is shared by a number of my Parliamentary colleagues, and I welcome that the LNP has now followed the Greens' lead in proposing reforms to increase the amount of time available for questioning, provide for a non-government chair to oversee estimates, and limit the use of Dorothy Dixers.

Labor is alone in maintaining that estimates serves the purpose it purports to. As I've said previously, no one who watches these hearings is fooled by the Government's spin. It is clear to everyone paying attention that this particular system of accountability is broken.

Good governments welcome scrutiny, and estimates has the potential to be a key part of a healthy democracy. But without far-reaching reform, this potential will not be realised.



Michael Berkman MP