

2012-13 Budget Estimates

Report No. 12

Health and Community Services Committee

October 2012

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

| | |
|------------------------|---|
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| Deputy Chair | Mrs Jo-Ann Miller MP, Member for Bundamba |
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Chair's Foreword

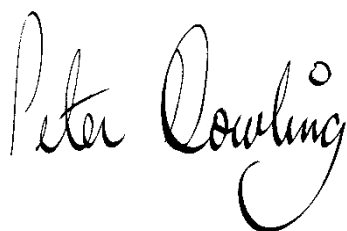
This report presents a summary of the committee's examination of the Budget Estimates for the 2012-13 financial year.

Consideration of the Budget Estimates allows for the public examination of both the responsible Ministers and Chief Executive Officers of agencies within the committee's portfolio area. This public examination was undertaken through questions on notice and a public hearing process.

The committee has made four recommendations.

On behalf of the committee, I wish to thank the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, their departmental officers and the officers of statutory bodies for their cooperation in providing information to the committee throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the other members of the committee for their hard work and valuable contribution.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Dowling". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'P' and 'D'.

Peter Dowling MP
Chair

29 October 2012

1. Introduction

1.1 Role of the Committee

The Health and Community Services Committee (the committee) is a portfolio committee of the Queensland Parliament established under the Standing Rules and Orders, as required by section 88 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*.

The committee's areas of responsibility are:

- National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs
- Health, and
- Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

The committee also has oversight functions in relation to the Family Responsibilities Commission, the Health Quality and Complaints Commission and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

On 14 September 2012, the Appropriation Bill 2012 and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.¹

On 17 October 2012, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and other witnesses. A copy of the transcript of the committee's hearing can be accessed at:

http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/hansard/2012/2012_10_17_Estimates.pdf

1.2 Aim of this report

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
- answers to questions taken on notice.

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

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services with questions on notice in relation to the estimates. Responses were received to all the questions.

Answers to the committee's pre-hearing questions on notice; documents tabled during the hearing; answers and additional information provided by Ministers after the hearing; and minutes of the committee's meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

¹ 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

1.3 Other Members' participation

Under Standing Order 202, the Leader of the Opposition appointed Mr Tim Mulherin MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Member for Mackay, to replace Mrs Jo-Ann Miller at the morning session of the Estimates hearing on 17 October 2012.

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

- Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Inala
- Mr William (Bill) Byrne MP, Member for Rockhampton.

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 Bill 2012 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

3. National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

The responsibilities of the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing cover protected area estate management including national parks, custody and management of State forests, marine parks management, fish habitat areas, racing, recreation and sport.² The portfolio includes Stadiums Queensland which manages and operates major sporting and entertainment facilities on behalf of the Queensland Government.

3.1 Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing and Stadiums Queensland

3.1.1 Funding overview

The Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing was created as a result of machinery of government changes announced on 3 April 2012.

The appropriation for the department for 2012-13 is as follows:

| Appropriation | 2012-13 \$'000 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Controlled Items</i> | |
| departmental services | 275 955 |
| equity adjustment | (41 670) |
| <i>Administered Items</i> | 21 481 |
| Vote | 255 766 |

Source: Appropriation Bill 2012, Schedule 2, p. 11. An appropriation for Budget 2011-12 is not available due to machinery of government changes.

Total expenses for the department are estimated to be \$377.8 million in 2012-2013, an increase of \$271.8 million from the 2011-12 Adjusted Budget. The increase is mainly due to the changes in functions and associated resourcing resulting from the machinery of government changes.³

Budgeted capital expenditure for the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing for 2012-13 includes capital purchases of \$26.9 million and \$69.3 million for capital grants.⁴ Budgeted capital purchases for Stadiums Australia are \$13.0 million.⁵

3.1.2 Key funding initiatives in 2012-13

Some of the key funding initiatives for national parks, recreation, sport and racing in 2012-2013 include:⁶

- implementation of joint management arrangements for the new national parks on North Stradbroke Island
- improvement of fire management programs
- better coordination of volunteering in Queensland's national parks
- greater active participation in sport and recreation through support for the 'Get in the Game' initiative

² State Budget 2012-13, Service Delivery Statements Department of national Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, p.1

³ *ibid*, p.19

⁴ State Budget 2012-13, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p.84

⁵ *ibid*, p.85

⁶ Service Delivery Statements, *op.cit.*, pp.3-4

- additional funding to rejuvenate racing in Queensland and for the Queensland Thoroughbred Investment Scheme.

3.1.3 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to national parks, recreation, sport and racing at the public hearing included:

- invitations to corporate boxes received by the Minister
- policies relating to government owned corporate boxes and complementary general tickets
- the effective development of racing infrastructure and the role of Racing Queensland Ltd
- the Racing Industry Capital Development Scheme
- Ministerial approval of appointments made by Racing Queensland Ltd
- the product and program agreement between the Queensland racing industry and TattsBet
- Budget funding for rejuvenating racing in Queensland
- front line services in national parks, temporary staff contracts and the number of rangers employed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife service
- the status of management plans for protected areas and national parks
- the 2012-13 capital budget for the National Parks and Wildlife Service
- the department's approach to fire management
- review of red tape and facilitation of greater access to national parks
- ongoing operating costs of the Mamu Rainforest Canopy walkway
- principles of national park management and their relation to decisions about national park use and accessibility
- departmental discussions about recreational shooting in national parks
- the location, visitor numbers and cost of Strangler Cairn on the Conondale Great Walk, and
- the acquisition cost of the Springbrook Rainforest Restoration Program.

4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

The responsibilities of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs are to provide whole-of-Government leadership to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.⁷ The portfolio includes the Family Responsibilities Commission which, as part of the wider Cape York Welfare Reform trial, has a lead role in restoring local authority and socially responsible standards of behaviour in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

4.1 Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

4.1.1 Funding overview

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs was created as a result of machinery of government changes announced on 3 April 2012.

The appropriation for the department for 2012-13 is as follows:

| Appropriation | 2012-13 \$'000 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Controlled Items</i> | |
| departmental services | 52 768 |
| equity adjustment | .. |
| <i>Administered Items</i> | 3 715 |
| Vote | 56 483 |

Source: Appropriation Bill 2012, Schedule 2, p. 8. An appropriation for Budget 2011-12 is not available due to machinery of government changes.

Total expenses for the department are estimated to be \$137 million in 2012-2013, an increase of \$120 million from the 2011-12 Adjusted Budget. The increase is mainly due to the changes in functions and associated resourcing resulting from the machinery of government changes.⁸

Budgeted capital expenditure for the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs for 2012-13 includes capital purchases of \$2.4 million and \$1.6 million for capital grants.⁹

4.1.2 Key funding initiatives in 2012-13

Some of the key funding initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural affairs in 2012-2013 include:¹⁰

- provision of funding to continue the Cape York Reform trial in four communities for a further 12 months until 31 December 2013
- funding in 2012-13 for the continuation of the Cape York Tenure Resolution Program in partnership with the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, and
- support for the continued development and growth of strong multicultural communities across Queensland through funding initiatives that promote multiculturalism.

⁷ State Budget 2012-13, Service Delivery Statements Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, p.1

⁸ *ibid*, p.15

⁹ Capital Statement, *op.cit.*, pp.20-21

¹⁰ Service Delivery Statements, *op.cit.*, pp.4-5

4.1.3 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural affairs at the public hearing included:

- the number of employees in the department identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and the impact of portfolio restructuring on these numbers
- the Government's commitment to continuing Project 2800
- the Learning Earning Active Places (LEAP) strategy and the possible impacts on achievement of its targets flowing from the discontinuation of funding for Skilling Queenslanders for Work
- anticipated benefits from the Cape York Welfare Reform for planning Indigenous service provision
- progress on the review of Indigenous community alcohol management plans
- the role of the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office in Far North Queensland
- the *deadly stories* campaign, highlighting the stories and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders
- levels of hospital admissions for assault related conditions and reported offences in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities and the effectiveness of alcohol management plans in reducing alcohol related violence
- the attendance of the Minister and Assistant Minister at multicultural events
- the department's multicultural affairs budget for 2012-13
- the Australian South Sea Islander action plan and the coordination of commemorative events for the sesquicentenary
- the format of the Multicultural Festival, and
- funding to support local multicultural events and projects.

4.2 Family Responsibilities Commission

4.2.1 Funding overview

The Family Responsibilities Commission was established by the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* and commenced operations on 1 July 2008.

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs administers payments to the commission under the Cape York Welfare Reform program.

Total expenses for the commission are estimated to be \$4.5 million in 2012-2013, an increase of \$0.35 million from the 2011-12 Budget.¹¹

¹¹ Service Delivery Statements, op.cit., p.28

4.2.2 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to the Family Responsibilities Commission at the public hearing included:

- the number of agency notifications received, in particular out-of-jurisdiction notifications, and
- the operation of the commission and how it works with other services in the four communities it covers.

5. Health

The Minister for Health has responsibility for Queensland Health, Hospital and Health Services and two other other statutory bodies: the Queensland Institute of Medical Research and the Health Quality and Complaints Commission.

5.1 Queensland Health and Hospital and Health Services

5.1.1 Funding overview

Queensland Health (previously the Department of Health) has oversight of the public health system as a whole in order to promote equitable access to services and to ensure health services across the State meet consistent clinical standards. Queensland Health also undertakes planning, funding and delivery of teaching, training, research and major capital works.¹²

The 17 Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) operate as independent statutory bodies overseen by the Hospital and Health Boards. Their role is to deliver hospital and health services in their particular area.¹³ Hospital and Health Boards commenced operation on 1 July 2012 in line with the Government's election commitment and Queensland Health's corporate office took the role of system manager.¹⁴ The system manager purchases health services from the HHSs under a Service Agreement. The *Hospital and Health Services Performance Framework 2012-13* allows for the review, assessment and reporting of performance.¹⁵

The appropriation for the department and HHSs for 2012-13 is as follows:

| Appropriation | 2011-2012 \$'000 | 2012-13 \$'000 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Controlled Items</i> | | |
| departmental services | 9 935 644 | 7 725 314 |
| equity adjustment | 1 203 991 | 1 354 981 |
| <i>Administered Items</i> | 25 309 | 26 921 |
| Vote | 11 164 944 | 9 107 216 |

Source: Appropriation Bill 2012, Schedule 2, p.14.

The Appropriation Bill 2012 also seeks Parliament's authorisation for a supplementary appropriation of \$177.79 million for unforeseen expenditure for the department for 2010-2011¹⁶ and \$58.28 million for unforeseen expenditure for 2011-2012.¹⁷

Total expenses for the department are estimated to be \$11.86 billion in 2012-2013, an increase of \$185.7 million from the 2011-12 Budget. The increase supports growing demand and critical service needs and provides growth funding for a number of initiatives.¹⁸

Budgeted capital expenditure for Queensland Health for 2012-13 includes capital purchases of \$1.83 billion and \$58.99 million for capital grants.¹⁹

¹² State Budget 2012-13, Service Delivery Statements Queensland Health, p.4

¹³ *ibid*, p.4

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.1

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.5

¹⁶ State Budget 2012-13, Appropriation Bill 2012, Schedule 3, p.16

¹⁷ *ibid*, Schedule 4, p.21

¹⁸ Service Delivery Statements, *op.cit*, p.28

¹⁹ Capital Statement, *op.cit*, p.70

5.1.2 Key funding initiatives in 2012-13

Some of the key funding initiatives for the Queensland Health and Hospital and Health Services in 2012-2013 include²⁰:

- funding of \$1.3 billion for the construction, expansion and redevelopment of Queensland hospitals and health facilities
- provision of funding to improve access to emergency and specialist care
- additional access for mothers and babies to home visits and community care during a baby's first year of life
- increased funding for the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme for rural and regional Queenslanders
- increased funding to improve access to specialist care
- additional funding to put the Cairns Base Hospital on the path to 'Tier One' status
- funding to improve access to children's health services for North Queensland through the establishment of a Paediatric Intensive Care Service at Townsville, and
- funding for the Saibai Island Health Clinic.

5.1.3 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to Queensland Health and Hospital and Health Services at the public hearing included:

- Queensland Health payroll implementation, forecast operating and maintenance expenditure and related contractual and advice issues, which are discussed further below
- tuberculosis (TB) rates of infection and multidrug resistance, the closure of the Queensland Tuberculosis Control Centre, the availability of TB vaccinations at Princess Alexandra (PA) Hospital and the existence of a state-wide strategy to control an outbreak of drug resistant TB
- forensic orders for mental health patients and confidentiality obligations under the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011*
- the overpayment recovery strategy and overpayment amounts
- consultancy expenditure
- enterprise agreement disputes and the cost of government legal representation
- the expansion of children's health services in south-east Queensland and the role of the Assistant Minister
- clinically recommended standards of time between birth and the discharge of a mother and baby in Queensland and pressures for early discharge in public hospitals
- new programs and initiatives designed to improve the targeting of BreastScreen services
- the public health benefits to be gained from funding human papilloma virus vaccinations for boys in grades 8 and 10
- the progress of the review of grants, the decision to engage former Queensland Auditor-General, Glenn Poole and the charter of the health renewal team

²⁰ Queensland Budget 2012-13 Highlights and State Budget 2012-13, Budget Measures Budget Paper No.4, pp.86-89

- measures taken to reduce HIV transmission rates in Queensland and funding for the HIV program
- clarification of state-wide emergency department estimates of service provision and outpatient total weighted activity units for both the Torres Strait – Northern Peninsula Hospital and Health Service and state-wide
- ambulance ramping and hospital emergency department bypass, including the number of in-patient beds at PA Hospital
- additional funding to align Queensland with the national partnership on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes by 2033-34
- the availability of consultant’s report on the number of beds projected to be needed into the future
- reasons for the increase in outpatient estimates for the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service
- adequacy of staffing levels at the John Tonge Centre and its services
- steps taken to deliver the Government’s election commitment to expand maternal and child health services
- the expansion of flying health services based in Roma and the Flying Obstetrics and Gynaecology Service
- the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme and other initiatives to support patients required to travel
- the importance of the role of nurses in the Queensland health system
- public reporting on improvements to access to specialist services
- action taken to put Cairns Base Hospital on the path to ‘Tier One’ status
- discontinuation of funding for the Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan community managed child and maternal health service
- Health and Hospital Services maintenance issues
- progress of the new Gold Coast University Hospital
- Government commitment to commence development of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital
- progress in establishing the Queensland Children’s Hospital
- progress in delivering the Townsville paediatric intensive care unit, and
- progress in establishing an independent Mental Health Commission.

5.1.3.1 *Queensland Health payroll implementation and costs*

The implementation of the Queensland Health payroll, forecasts of operating and maintenance costs and related issues were raised at the hearing. The committee notes that the full-year cost of the payroll system in 2012-13 is \$230 million, of which KPMG has identified an unfunded component of \$150.1 million.²¹ At the estimates hearing the Minister stated this would be offset by recovery of overpayments back to \$130 million,²² which equates to more than 1,300 FTEs.²³

²¹ Service Delivery Statements, op cit, p.1. The KPMG report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 6 June 2012

²² Hansard 17 October, p.38

²³ Hansard 17 October, p.39. FTEs are full time equivalent positions

The availability of all information relevant to the Queensland Health payroll, the unfunded costs and the potential for recovery from parties to contractual arrangements was raised during the hearing. The Minister tabled letters from the Queensland Council of Unions and IBM Australia Ltd,²⁴ both of which offered to meet the Minister to provide briefings. The Council of Unions letter stated that attempts were "... made by union members and officials to warn the then Government of the risks associated with the payroll system...". The IBM Australia letter stated that "IBM successfully delivered against milestones agreed with the Queensland Government and concluded the implementation of the project on agreed terms" and that it "...delivered beyond the scope of its contract to assist Queensland Health to identify and address concerns with its payroll process".

Information relevant to the payroll, including legal advice and minutes of cabinet deliberations was sought by the Legislative Assembly on 12 July 2012. The Legislative Assembly resolved to call "on the Leader of the Opposition to make available to the Minister for Health all legal advice presented to the cabinet of the former government that relates to the IBM contract, together with all associated cabinet minutes and decisions pertaining to that advice."²⁵

The Minister advised the committee that he did not have full access to documents which contain substantive advice which can guide a decision about potential action to recover funds under contractual arrangements for the Queensland Health payroll.²⁶

During the hearing the committee adjourned to deliberate on this matter however a quorum was not achieved.

The majority of the committee considers that it has not been able to sufficiently scrutinise proposed expenditure in the health portfolio due to the absence of information about the potential for recovery of funds under contractual arrangements. Further, the majority of the committee considers that the Legislative Assembly should further pursue obtaining legal advice presented to the cabinet of the former government that relates to the IBM contract, together with all associated cabinet minutes and decisions pertaining to that advice, and documents held by others.

Recommendation 2

The majority of the committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly note that the committee has been unable to properly scrutinise health expenditure due to the absence of information about the potential for recovery of funds under contractual arrangements.

Recommendation 3

The majority of the committee recommends that the Attorney-General consider taking steps to establish an independent inquiry with powers under the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950* to examine expenditures and assumptions about future costs resulting from the Queensland Health payroll.

Recommendation 4

The majority of the committee recommends that, if Recommendation 3 is not adopted, the House endorse the committee undertaking a public accounts inquiry into the Queensland Health payroll under section 94 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, using the committee's powers to obtain evidence from relevant people including former ministers, union officials, parties to contracts relevant to the Queensland Health payroll, former public servants, former consultants, and others.

²⁴ See the Volume of Additional Material tabled in conjunction with this report

²⁵ Hansard, 12 July 2012 p.1189

²⁶ Hansard, 17 October 2012, p. 44

5.2 Health Quality and Complaints Commission

5.2.1 Funding overview

The Health Quality and Complaints Commission is a statutory body established under the *Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act 2006*. The HQCC provides oversight and review of the quality of health services and independent review of health complaints

Total expenses for the commission are estimated to be \$10.43 million in 2012-2013, an increase of \$0.27 million from the 2011-12 Budget.²⁷

5.2.2 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to the HQCC at the public hearing included:

- the level of funding and staff establishment for the HQCC, the increase in consumer complaints and client satisfaction with regard to timeliness of responses
- support from the Minister for any reasonable budget initiative from the HQCC when he has a clear indication that maximum efficiencies in service delivery have been delivered
- the impact of the establishment of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care on the operations of the HQCC, and
- the impact of the national regulation of accreditation for medical practitioners on state oversight of the health system.

5.3 Queensland Institute of Medical Research

5.3.1 Funding overview

The Queensland Institute of Medical Research is a statutory body established under the *Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945*. The institute receives funding from government and non-government sources. The Queensland Government will provide a grant of \$14 million to the institute in 2012-13 (14% of the institute's estimated revenue).²⁸

In 2012-13, \$19.4 million in capital funding will be invested in the third and final stage of the institute's Medical Research Centre development.²⁹

5.3.2 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) at the public hearing included:

- research on experimental immunotherapy treatment and the use of tissue donations
- proposals for further investment to target research into emerging infectious diseases, particularly multidrug resistant tuberculosis
- the impact on QIMR research of the closure of the specialist clinical service for tuberculosis, and
- completion of the Health and Medical Research Centre at Herston and resulting support for improved health outcomes for Queenslanders.

²⁷ Service Delivery Statements, op.cit, p.183

²⁸ ibid, p.187

²⁹ Capital Statement, op.cit, p.63

6. Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

The Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has responsibility for the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. The portfolio includes the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian.

6.1 Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

6.1.1 Funding overview

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (formerly the Department of Communities) provides services to protect children and young people from harm or the risk of harm, provides adoption services, leads disability policy and programs and provides and funds disability and community care services. It also coordinates volunteering, carers, seniors, youth and women's policy and community recovery efforts across government and funds community services to support vulnerable individuals, families and communities.³⁰

The appropriation for the department for 2012-13 is as follows:

| Appropriation | 2011-2012 \$'000 | 2012-13 \$'000 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Controlled Items</i> | | |
| departmental services | 3 898 878 | 2 519 217 |
| equity adjustment | 170 705 | 11 252 |
| <i>Administered Items</i> | 314 690 | 249 041 |
| Vote | 4 384 273 | 2 779 510 |

Source: Appropriation Bill 2012, Schedule 2, p.8.

Total expenses for the department are estimated to be \$2.56 billion in 2012-2013, a decrease of \$1.56 billion from the 2011-12 Adjusted Budget. The decrease is mainly due to the changes in functions and associated resourcing resulting from the machinery of government changes and the department's contribution to fiscal repair.³¹

Budgeted capital expenditure for the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services for 2012-13 includes capital purchases of \$55.57 million and \$35.89 million for capital grants.³²

6.1.2 Key funding initiatives in 2012-13

Some of the key funding initiatives for communities, child safety and disability services in 2012-2013 include:³³

- additional funding for the ongoing cost of current usage of transitional placements for children with highly complex needs in out of home placements
- additional funding for extra respite for people with high needs disabilities aged between 16 and 25 and their carers and to establish Parent Connect to provide assistance to parents of newborns with a disability
- commencement of Fostering Families, a two year trial of an intensive family intervention program to target neglect

³⁰ State Budget 2012-13, Service Delivery Statements Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, p.1

³¹ *ibid*, p.23

³² Capital Statement, *op.cit*, p.27

³³ Budget measures, *op.cit*, p.29 and Service Delivery Statements, *op.cit.*, p.4

- funding for increased counselling services for victims of child abuse and sexual assault, and
- grant funding to community and volunteer groups for essential equipment such as computers, upgraded software and white goods.

6.1.3 Issues raised at public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to communities, child safety and disability services at the public hearing include:

- staffing assistance provided to the Queensland Child Protection inquiry
- discontinuation of the position of community based coordinator for child safety and government services at Aurukun
- results of the survey of children and young people in residential care and the application of the information in the department
- the register of child deaths and its use in identifying risks to the safety of children
- unfunded transitional placements in the child protection system
- achievement of savings without reducing services delivered to at-risk children and their families
- community based parenting programs as a component of departmental strategies to prevent the need for child protection orders
- the Fostering Families trial and First Response project
- capital works included in the Budget to meet the anticipated demand for out-of-home residential placements
- an increase in the rate of Indigenous children subject to protective orders compared to non-Indigenous children and the measures in the Budget to address this
- the benefits of increasing the age of young people leaving state care from 18 to 21 and current transitional arrangements
- departmental employee separations, the realignment of departmental operations and the provision of counselling and information services to staff
- support for specialist disability services
- the Your Life Your Choice initiative and the provision of Budget funding
- the progress of the autism centre in Mackay
- Ministerial discussions related to changes to the taxi subsidy scheme and representations received by the Minister
- initiatives to encourage people with a disability to participate in the community and to access employment
- innovative support housing
- the roll out of flexible respite and identification of clients
- the Parent Connect program and how it will assist families
- the number of residential care officers employed by the department, their work in caring for clients with high needs and outsourcing
- the elderly parent carer innovation trial
- support for people with disabilities for aids and equipment

- the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- the Caring for our Community grants scheme
- the Government's strategy to reduce the ongoing increase in the incidence of domestic and family violence and the prevalence of sexual assault
- grants funding efficiencies
- social services and welfare funding reductions and related program, services and staffing changes
- funding to address homelessness in Queensland, and
- the schoolies community safety response.

6.2 Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian

6.2.1 Funding overview

The Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian is a statutory body established under the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000* that promotes and protects the rights, interests and well being of children and young people in Queensland.

Total expenses for the commission are estimated to be \$46.65 million in 2012-2013, a decrease of \$1.07 million from the 2011-12 Budget.³⁴

6.2.2 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian at the public hearing included:

- cost efficiency initiatives to absorb the reduction in the funding provided for the commission in 2012-13
- staffing assistance provided to the Queensland Child Protection inquiry, and
- the activities and achievements of the Community Visitor Program and the decline in the performance target for young people's rating of the helpfulness of community visitors and its relationship to reduced funding for support services.

³⁴ Service Delivery Statements, op.cit, p.41

Statement of Reservation

A statement of reservation commences on the next page

**STATEMENT OF RESERVATION
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONSIDERATION OF THE 2012/2013 PORTFOLIO BUDGET ESTIMATES**

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, SPORT AND RACING

The Health and Community Services Committee's consideration of the 2012-13 budget estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing revealed the Minister as more concerned with scoring a cheap media point than administering programs in his department. The non-government members of the Committee do not believe the time allocated to the hearing was sufficient to properly examine the department's \$380 Million budget. The limited amount of time available was further squandered by the Minister's stunts. It is extremely disappointing that the Minister did not respect the intent of the Estimates process.

Sport and Recreation

The Minister sought to abuse the Estimates hearing by demanding the Opposition provide information to him.

The Minister then refused to furnish the Committee with details of what sporting events he and his Assistant Minister have attended in corporate boxes and who extended the invitation. In addition the Minister repeatedly refused to rule out the reintroduction of government corporate boxes despite the Premier's stated intention to not reintroduce government corporate boxes.

Racing

The non-government members of the Committee are disheartened that the Minister was unable or unwilling to shed any light on his plans for the racing industry. This was once again brought about partly by the limited amount of time allocated for questioning and partly by the Minister's approach of dodging questions. Unfortunately the non-government members of the Committee express reservations as to the expenditure in the racing portfolio given so little information has been provided.

Under questioning the Minister was unable to confirm during the hearing if Racing Queensland's appointment of Mr Allan Reardon to the position of Director of Steward Development had received Government approval. The non-government members of the committee find it concerning that neither the Minister, his chief-of-staff, nor departmental officers were able to answer this question during the hearing considering that the directive issued after the election that Racing Queensland must obtain Government approval before employing, engaging or terminating staff. The Minister elected to take the question on notice, when the answer was returned to the Opposition four days after the hearing it was revealed that the Government did provide approval.

National Parks

The non-government members of the Committee are concerned with the paucity of information provided in a number of questions on notice. Most notably the Minister failed to provide any relevant information at all for Questions on Notice 16 and 20. Question on notice 16 concerned new recreational and tourist activities likely to be introduced in Queensland national parks; the Minister failed to provide an answer,

instead using it as an opportunity to attack the previous government using out-dated figures. Question on Notice 20 revealed that apparently the Department does not hold any information on flora and fauna mapping for the National Park estate; this beggars belief. If true it is evidence the latest machinery of government changes have created unworkable and confusing divisions of labour between departments.

During the hearing it became evident the Minister ignored departmental advice that the abolition of a number of temporary positions would have detrimental effects on frontline service provision. This stands in direct contradiction to the Minister's earlier statements that "every frontline service under national parks will be looked after."

The non-government Committee Members were disturbed by the fact both the Minister and the Director-General refused to answer simple and direct questions on the percentage of protected areas covered by a management plan. The Minister deliberately misled the Committee on the previous government's legacy by stating that a 2010 figure for the percentage of protected areas covered by a management plan was current.

The Minister was unable to explain the meaning of the cardinal principle for national park management. It is troubling that the Minister could not articulate that national parks exist to provide to the fullest extent possible for the preservation of an area's natural condition. This is a clear indication that the cardinal principle is no longer a factor in the management of Queensland national park estate. In addition the Minister stated that the Newman Government is determined to opening up national parks to motorbikes, four-wheel drives and assorted other damaging activities with little to no scientific assessment and without applying the precautionary principle which has traditionally been considered.

Due to the insufficient amount of time allocated to the examination of the budget estimates for the portfolio of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing the non-government members of the Committee must express severe reservations. Moreover the conduct of the Minister raises legitimate questions as to his suitability to oversee the expenditure. Evasion is not a substitute for reasoned and diligent policy development and delivery.

DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Family Responsibilities Commission

There was 15 minutes allocated for questions to the family Responsibilities Commissioner. This means that Government and non-Government members got about 7.5 minutes each. This allowed the non-Government members to ask two questions. Whilst the Commissioner was informative and open in his responses, there were many other issues that it would have been helpful to have had some clarification about.

One such matter is the number of school enrolment notifications received. This is the number of children required by law to be enrolled at school and who aren't. There were no actual notifications received in 2011-12, even though there was a target of 10. The target for 2012-13 is nil.

Unless the Minister can say that every child in the four communities who is required by law to be enrolled in school is so enrolled, it is important to know why there is not even a target for this financial year. It is hoped that the Commission hasn't merely given up even trying to track the children not enrolled.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

It was disturbing to note that the Minister was unable to provide any information about the number of people who identify as Aboriginal or Islander who have lost their jobs across the Queensland Government as a result of the Government's mass sackings. In fact, the Minister's response related to the people in his department who jobs had been terminated, and then said 25% of the employees of the Department are indigenous. He was unable to even give a figure as to the number of indigenous people within his Department who have lost their jobs.

Similarly disturbing was the unwillingness of the Minister to commit to the previous Government's project 2800, and to the goal of 2.6 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public sector representation.

The evidence contained in the report entitled 'Incorporating the quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities—overview and general trends' shows a positive trend over time of hospital admissions for assault related conditions declining, and reported offences against the person declining. The Minister has given an assurance to the Committee that under the Government's proposed review of alcohol management plans, any community that wishes to have the bans lifted will need to be able to prove that they have plans in place that will continue to drive down any assaults or neglect of women and children, or their proposal will not be approved.

The non-Government members of the Committee will be keeping this matter under close scrutiny to ensure that the lifting of bans does not result in any more women and children being injured or abused, and that school attendance rates continue to improve.

The Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services was asked a question in relation to the termination of the position held by Mr Bruce Marshall by the Member for Woodridge. We understand that this position may have joint responsibilities to both the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs. Earlier in this Statement of Reservation the importance of this role was spelt out.

If the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs has any responsibility for funding this position, we call on him to also reconsider terminating this position. Mr Marshall's work is important to the whole community, not only professionally but also his volunteer work with the Volunteer Marine Rescue, and the training he provides, as well as the activities he supervises for the entire community, particularly the children. To continue funding his position would be a small investment in the community that would have long-term benefits, not only socially, but also financially. We accept the Director-General's advice that this position was only ever funded until December 2013. However, once the importance of that role became apparent, the decision can always be reviewed. The costs that could be saved in future years are well worth this relatively small expenditure now, and again this is an earnest plea to the Minister to please consider the continuation of this role.

Attendance at Multicultural events by the Minister

Comments have been made about the lack of attendance by the Minister at multicultural community events. We note the Minister holds to dual roles of Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs as well as the Minister Assisting the Premier.

The vast difference between the number of multicultural events the Minister attends compared to the Assistant Minister is surprising given the importance the multicultural community places on having the Minister responsible attend. The Minister as head of the department has a responsibility to attend these community events as the representative of the government. The multicultural community need a Minister they can rely on to assist with their dealings with the various layers and departments of government.

The Queensland government through the budget provides grants and funding to the multicultural community to build trust and a sense of belonging in the community. Many people who arrive in Australia come from countries where the government of that country has oppressed and victimised the people, causing fear of government. These grants should be viewed as an investment in community harmony and the Opposition has real concerns that these cuts combined with other cuts in the community sector, particularly to employment programs, may see some members of the multicultural community lose the support that assists them in the community.

The LNP when speaking of these events speak of corporate costs and poor attendance figures, rarely acknowledged is that these grants are investments in the future that promote safety and security by bringing the community together, allowing the multicultural community to interact with different government departments including the Minister.

It's disappointing that cuts of \$1.255 million to community grants and partnerships will undo many years of good work by community groups and the peak community bodies.

South Sea Islanders

The Member for Mackay spoke about the sesquicentenary year marking the arrival of South Sea Islanders in Queensland. The Minister mentioned in the hearing the sad history of Queensland's past relationship with the South Sea Islander communities. The Opposition is concerned that the cuts in the budget may mean that this important event in the history of Queensland is not appropriately funded. This milestone provides the opportunity to build new bonds and also this important relationship.

QUEENSLAND HEALTH

The following statement of reservation relates to the Health and Community Services Committee hearing examining the budget allocation to the organisation units under the portfolio of the Minister for Health.

The Non-Government Members of the Committee offer the following comments on the Committee procedures in the spirit of ensuring Estimates Committees are able to truly examine the Government's appropriations and ensure the Executive is held to account.

Estimates is an important part of the democratic process in Queensland, more so than in other jurisdiction as we have no separate house of review for government policy and for budget appropriations.

We bring attention to the ongoing issue that the Budget Papers lack detail, are generic in nature and do not outline the forward years of expenditure. With major structural change to government services, the lack of explicit statements of reduction in expenditure and curtailment of service provision is of concern.

The proper processes of the Committee were disrupted by LNP Committee Members stunts about the health payroll calling for witnesses; limiting the time available to non-government members for proper questioning and for the Minister and his staff to explain the budget. The Chair described this behaviour by indicating that the Committee process would "descend into farce" if it continued.

It should be noted that questions by LNP Members failed to hold the Newman Government accountable for mass sackings and cuts to public health services.

The Minister attempted to attribute his decisions to sack health workers and cut public health services to costs associated with the health payroll. On questioning the Minister failed to address the two basic questions of whether he intended to seek legal redress from IBM; and the true costs of operating the health payroll.

The Director General, Dr O'Connell, advised that he had in fact already paraphrased for the Minister previous legal advice on the legal position with IBM; that the Minister had so far declined to meet with the Cabinet Secretary and the Crown Solicitor to read the legal advice, and that the Minister had obtained documents related to the original contracts from the Department of Public Works. The Minister acknowledged that he and the Crown Solicitor did have access to this two year old legal advice and associated Cabinet documents but it remained clear that he had not made the effort to review these documents.

The Minister continually asserts that he did not have access to the documents in question although these were not the facts before the Committee.

The Minister sought to avoid clarification of the payroll operating costs as the major component of total cost associated with the health payroll and rostering system. The continual reference "to that \$1.25 billion bungle" misstates the cost estimates offered in the KPMG report. By trumpeting this figure, the Minister has obscured the eight-year-timeframe (2010-11 to 2017-18) for this expenditure and the fact that (as KPMG states) "\$1,008.0 million relates to operations".

The Minister made much of the unfunded component of the estimated health payroll costs in 2012-13 (\$150 million) when three quarters of this expenditure was for the normal operations of the payroll and not for any remedial action. Further stunts on the issues of the health payroll again reduced time for serious discussion about the major structural changes to Queensland Health, job cuts and service reduction imposed by the first LNP government on the Queensland health system. The Labor members of the Health and Community Services Committee identified errors and missing data about health service provision in the Budget papers. Services contracted to private providers for both emergency department and outpatient services are not provided. A clear error in the estimated 2012-13 Outpatient services for the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula has been referred as a Question on Notice.

The Budget offers no indication of where the promised 40,000 additional specialist outpatients appointment have been allocated and when they will be delivered. Nor did the Minister's responses to questions from his own colleagues provide transparency. While increased transparency with the publication of hospitals activity data is welcomed, the Budget papers and responses to Questions on Notice do not clearly state where service delivery will be increased to match population growth and changing patterns of service need.

The Minister appeared to be trying to distance himself from his public statements regarding his commitment to the ending of ambulance ramping as well as hospital bypass by ambulances by 1 January 2013. The Minister has committed to the recommendations of the Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative report including recommendation 12 that states: "That a Patient off Stretcher Time (POST) Policy directed at ensuring the time from arrival to clinical handover from QAS to the hospital is less than 30 minutes, be reviewed and implemented as a mandatory directive from Queensland Health by 1 January 2013."

From 1 July 2012 major structural change to the Queensland public health systems has been implemented. The most significant component of this change is the creation of 16 geographic Hospital and Health Services and a state wide Children's Hospital and Health Service. These HHSs are managed by a local board and CEO. The service agreement between a HHS and Queensland Health, as 'system manager', but the funding level for this agreement is, however, set by the Minister.

The LNP mantra of 'revitalising frontline services' in health appears to have been reduced to a narrow definition focussed almost entirely on core hospital inpatient services. HHSs are expected to find significant efficiency for the provision of these services, while also taking on a range of local primary and community care services and disease prevention and health promotion roles traditional developed and delivered on a state-wide basis and in conjunction with grant funded community organisations.

Budget cuts to regular grant-funded community services organisations, key partners in our health system, is dismissed in two lines in the Service Delivery Statement as not supporting core clinical activities. The limited time available to non-government members to raise these issues in Estimates permitted the Opposition to highlight only one of the worst decisions in this regard; the well regarded Mookai Rosie Bi-

Bayan community-managed child and maternal health service in Edmonton which won the 2011 Annual Excellence in Indigenous Health Award.

The Estimates process for the first LNP health budget clearly demonstrates that the government has now walked away from prevention and from primary care. At a time when we face an epidemic of largely preventable chronic disease across the extended life course of our growing population, the government has left us all with a legacy of increased hospital presentations, high health care expenditure and poorer life chances.

The Minister attempted during Estimates to deflect questions on chronic disease by denying state responsibility, despite the National Partnership Agreements. Statements such as “In the area of preventative medicine in primary care, that is very much a core responsibility of the Commonwealth Government under the auspices of the Medicare Locals” illustrate the Minister’s limited knowledge of population health and of the shared responsibilities between levels of government in our health system.

Devolution of state wide disease control and prevention and health promotion functions to local hospital boards was never part of the national health care reform agenda or the previous government restructuring of Queensland Health. The Estimates process permitted examination of only two examples of the short-sightedness of these decisions: the reduction of the state-wide coordination and promotion functions of BreastScreen Queensland; and the closure of the Queensland Tuberculosis Control Centre.

We will closely monitor reporting of the “thousands more breast screens conducted next year for Queensland women, which will be on top of an increase that we had already announced.” Further greater target population screening rates for bowel and cervical cancer will indicate whether reducing state-wide management function benefits at risk populations.

Both the Member for Bundamba and the Leader of the Opposition raised the closure of the Queensland Tuberculosis Control Centre at the Princess Alexandra Hospital with the Minister. The Minister’s response was to accuse the Leader of the Opposition of playing politics with the issue, and said, “It is not the catastrophe that the Leader of the Opposition is seeking to address.” The Minister also advised the Committee it was his decision to close the clinic, “based on information and advice from Queensland Health”.

This is in spite of the Director of Medicine at Mater Hospital, Dr Simon Bowler, one of the state's most senior respiratory physicians, and the Queensland president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Alex Markwell, saying the proposal would backfire badly. Dr Bowler thought the closure of the clinic would be an “absolute disaster”. The ALP members of the Committee are heartened by the decision by Queensland Health, reported on 23 October 2012, to reverse the decision to close the clinic. Dr Bowler has described the decision as a really good outcome, and says the initial decision was based on inadequate first-hand knowledge. In the Brisbane Times article entitled ‘Protests win reprieve for TB centre’ dated 23 October 2012, Dr Bowler has said, “I think there were factors that maybe they were not aware of, and

in their laudable goal to save money, they saw this as part of a larger cost-cutting exercise.” He applauded the concerted campaign by “everybody who knows anything about TB management”, who argued that the closure would not save money and it would have disastrous consequences.

Forensic Science Services

The Minister’s assertions that no positions engaged in processing scientific evidence for police prosecutions would be sacked at the John Tonge Centre for Forensic Science Services was contradicted by the CEO of the Health Services Support Agency, Ms Kathy Byrne. The Minister did not adequately respond to questions about the coronial counselling service.

The poor management of these “re-design processes” does not bode well for the Minister’s stated intention of outsourcing to private contractors a wide range of clinical support, hospitality and management functions.

A number of other matters that were not adequately address could have been taken on notice but were not. The most alarming of these is a possible breach of section 142(1) of part 7 of the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* with regards to patient confidentiality. The Director General, Dr Tony O’Connell, has undertaken to determine if “there is a matter which requires investigation” and if so to conduct an investigation into this matter.

Recommendations

Labor members of the Health and Community Services Committee reject the following recommendations as political stunts that will waste taxpayer’s money:

Recommendation 2

The majority of the Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly note that the Committee has been unable to properly scrutinise health expenditure due to the absence of information about the potential for recovery of funds under contractual arrangements.

Recommendation 3

The majority of the Committee recommends that the Attorney-General consider taking steps to establish an independent inquiry with powers under the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950 to examine expenditures and assumptions about future costs resulting from the Queensland Health payroll.

Recommendation 4

The majority of the Committee recommends that, if Recommendation 3 is not adopted, the House endorse the Committee undertaking a public works inquiry into the Queensland Health payroll under section 94 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, using the Committee’s powers to obtain evidence from relevant people including former ministers, union officials, parties to contracts relevant to the Queensland Health payroll, and others.

Labor members of the Health and Community Services Committee propose the following recommendations:

Recommendation

The non-government members of the Committee recommend that the Auditor-General undertakes his planned financial audit of Queensland Health payroll system and cost issues, including any potential for recovery of funds under

contractual arrangements, which the Committee notes will be presented to the Parliament before the end of 2012, using all of his powers to obtain all relevant documents, including those contained in Chapter 14 of the Queensland Cabinet Handbook.

Recommendation

The minority non-government members of the Committee recommend that the Attorney-General consider taking steps to establish an independent inquiry with powers under the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950* to examine whether a breach of section 142(1) of part 7 of the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* has occurred regarding the release of confidential patient records.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, CHILD SAFETY AND DISABILITY SERVICES

The Health and Community Services Committee hearing examining the budget allocation to the organisational units under the portfolio of the Minister for Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services exposed a Minister who was unprepared and out of her depth.

It was clear from the answers the Minister was providing, that the Minister was not across her portfolio. Questions were constantly followed by long pauses, whilst the Minister sought the answers from her advisors or her Director-General who also required lengthy pauses to find documents. Even Government questions were met with pauses and silence, whilst paper was ruffled and answers sought, with the Minister asking follow-up questions to her Government colleagues, whilst she compiled an answer for Opposition Members.

In answers to Questions on Notice the Minister provided minimal to no detail. For example, the Minister failed to provide important details in response to Question on Notice number 11, which related to the job titles, salary levels and locations of the positions that the Minister has axed since being sworn in. Her failure to answer was even more obvious when compared with the response of many of her other cabinet colleagues, who provided detailed answers to a similar question.

The new Committee system was introduced to provide an opportunity for the executive to be closely scrutinised, however the 2012 estimates proved to be the opposite. The Government purposely hid weak Ministers – such as the Minister for Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services – at the end of the day, when media and public scrutiny is reduced. Also, the Committee's decision to allocated certain amounts of time for certain parts of the portfolio allowed the Minister to avoid detailed scrutiny, as this structure limited the time for questions on those areas where the Government has made the most significant cuts.

The Committee allowed only 30 minutes at the end of the hearing for the Community Services section of the Minister's portfolio. This section is, without a doubt, the part of her portfolio which suffered the most under the dramatic cuts undertaken by the Newman Government. The arbitrary time constraints placed on the Committee meant that non-government questions on important topics related to Community Services were ruled out of order because they were outside the arbitrary timeframe. Overall, the Committee process did not allow adequate time for proper scrutiny to occur in relation to the Minister's budget allocation.

Child Safety

The Minister was asked a question in relation to the termination of the position held by Mr Bruce Marshall by the Member for Woodridge. The Member referred to an article in the *Australian* newspaper dated 12 October 2012 entitled '*Decision to cut child-protector role inexplicable*' and to an article in the *Cairns Post* dated 15 October 2012 entitled, '*Funding cut to crucial Aurukun indigenous services co-ordinator*'. Copies of those articles were tabled at the hearing.

Both the Minister and the Director-general indicated that the position held by Mr Marshall as a service development and integration officer will be ending, and the

Director-General indicated the finishing date is 31 December 2012. The Minister also indicated that similar positions at Hope Vale, Kowanyama and Yarrabah will suffer the same fate.

At the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry hearing held at Aurukun on 10 October 2012, Ms Katherine McMillan SC, Counsel Assisting the Inquiry, said this:

'The second witness you will hear from is Bruce Marshall who is the service development and integration officer employed by community services. Importantly, he appears to be the only state government employee apart from health, education and police who actually lives in the community. He appears to be, both from his statement and what we have gleaned otherwise to be the linchpin for coordination of services such as the Department of Child Safety and other government departments who fly in and out often each fortnight. It seems, inexplicably, his job will finish in just two months' time.'

Later in the hearing, Mr Marshall described his work on the ground in the following exchange with Ms McMillan:

'Is your role also to an extent an informal briefing of them; you know, like, "This is happening around at the moment"?---Yes.

So I take it that you might ring them more than just leading up to their visit. You might ring them if you think there's a particular issue arising that they should know about?---Definitely; it's just like any groups that are coming into the community.

I'm normally the first port of call that people will make before they come into the community and then they'll ask me what's going on and I'll tell them whatever I know. I may suggest that they talk to the mayor or the CEO of the council, but, yes, when they get here, I'm normally the first port of call.'

Later he advised that he had organised a significant increase in security for the women's shelter, and also that he set up the Volunteer Marine Rescue in Aurukun, and trains the crews for that. He is involved in the organisation of events for the community, such as discos, barbeques and family days. He holds a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, a Certificate IV in Occupational Health and Safety, a coxswain certification and a commercial pilot's licence.

Counsel assisting the Inquiry had some concerns about the termination of the role, particularly in relation to who would perform these vital tasks in the community once this role finished.

'So it would seem that a lot of the very day-to-day functions that the senior sergeant has indicated, if you're not continuing in your role, that role is not continued, that sort of stuff just wouldn't happen?---Wouldn't happen, no.

Because there's no-one else to fill the - - -?-- Well, it's not even just – it's not just my contract that's finishing, it's actually the position is finishing. So, yes, it's just not

going to be there anymore.’

The evidence given at the inquiry indicates that this is a lynchpin role, and the community will be far worse off when the role finishes. Whilst it is acknowledged that when the role was created, it was always intended to be time-limited to 31 December 2012, given how integral to the community this person has become, and given the pivotal role he performs in terms of both his professional role in coordinating services for the Department, and his social and leadership role in the community, the non-government members of the Committee would ask the Minister to reconsider the termination of this position on 31 December 2012.

All evidence indicates that the value Mr Marshall has provided to the community is far in excess of the parameters of the departmental role, and it would be a travesty for the community if his skills, expertise and knowledge were lost to the people of Aurukun. This is an earnest plea for the Minister to look at any possible way of extending the position held by Mr Marshall.

Disability Services

The Minister had problems answering some basic questions during the Estimates hearing, including questions from Government members – requiring her to take long pauses between each question while she sought advice from Departmental officers.

Government members of the Committee on numerous occasions interrupted questioning from non-government members with statements or comments irrelevant to the Estimates hearing, including one comment that contained an imputation against the Member for Inala:

“Govt-Member: It is like legal documentation and information that other ministers have been asking for. It is the hidden information.”

“Govt-Member: No, information that other ministers are asking for from the Leader of the Opposition.”

This was a gratuitous comment about matters outside the portfolio being discussed. It is difficult to see how this could pertain to the Budget Estimates of the Minister in relation to Disability Services, which was the area of the portfolio being scrutinised at that time.

The Premier made a number of statements at the Finance and Administration Committee’s consideration of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Estimates for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet held on 9 October that are of concern to the Disability Services portfolio. In that hearing, the Premier said:

“The Leader of the Opposition was part of a government that in the previous financial year, 2011-12, spent approximately, if I recall correctly, \$145 million on a division of the communities department called Accommodation Support and Respite Services, ASRS— \$145 million to look after people with significant disabilities, people with high needs...”

*We envisage partnerships with NGOs in the community sector in the future where they can do a whole lot of this work.... I believe that they ... **do a much better job and a personal job in the way that services are delivered to people with need in our community.**”*

The non-government members of the Committee hold concerns that the Premier is committed to outsourcing accommodation support and respite services on the mistaken premise that NGOs do a much better job and a personal job in the way those services are delivered. The Minister's response, when asked about the Premier's comments, seemed to indicate the Premier was referring only to the cost of delivering those services but any objective assessment of his comments would conclude that this is not the case.

In relation to the cap imposed on the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, the Minister was asked if she had *"any discussions with the Minister for Transport before he decided to put a cap on the taxi subsidy scheme?"*

Minister Davis was unable to confirm whether she had discussed the cap on the taxi subsidy scheme with the Minister for Transport and Main Roads before the decision was made. The non-government members of the Committee hold concerns that, where decisions have an impact across portfolios, there is no consultation with the appropriate Ministers. This became evident across the entire Estimates process, in a number of key portfolio areas.

In relation to the more than 600 staff who have been sacked in the Minister's Department, Minister Davis said:

"I reject that we have had 600 sackings."

When further questioned what happened to those people if they weren't sacked, the Minister said:

"I can tell you that there were no sackings, they were voluntary redundancies or they were temporary contracts that were not renewed."

The Minister did, however, confirm that there were phone calls made to people to advise them of their fate, and that all persons had been referred to the employee assistance program. This is not consistent, in the view of non-government members, with people who have happily left their employment voluntarily.

Of concern also was the refusal of the Minister to commit to a target or a goal for people with a disability in gaining employment. Unable to provide any target or any definitive goal, the Minister has merely pledged to "keep that on the policy radar."

This is disappointing, and non-government members are concerned that the government has failed to take a pro-active position on this important objective. The Minister also admitted to the Committee that the Your Life, Your Choice self-directed funding trial will come with no new money.

In relation to questioning regarding the Newman Government's refusal to fund a trial of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Queensland, the Minister deflected by saying:

"I did not see any money in the forward estimates from your government for any NDIS trial."

Which obviously was not possible as the announcement for a trial was made by the Commonwealth Government in April 2012 with funding of \$1 billion announced in the May Federal budget.

The lack of new State Government funding for the self-directed trial on top of the refusal to fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme is a blow for people with a disability, their carers and families.

Community Services

As previously stated, the Committee's arbitrary timeframes dramatically reduced the ability for proper scrutiny to occur across the portfolio, in particular the Community Services section. The Committee allocated only 30 minutes to this important section of the Minister's portfolio which received the greatest level of funding cuts from the Minister.

The Minister failed to answer in detail questions placed on notice for this area of her portfolio, by not outlining in full the \$259.7 million in cuts, outlined in Budget Paper 4. When asked to outline what non-government organisations would be affected by these cuts, the Minister stated: "I think we have answered the question", referring to Question on Notice 16. While Question on Notice 16 provided some of the non-government organisation cuts, it did not outline all of the cuts which add up to the \$259.7 million figure. The Minister's deliberate obfuscation in relation to this answer is regrettable.

The Minister was further questioned about cuts to her budget will be achieved, and she did not even have the decency to listen to a question being asked by the Leader of the Opposition, responding "I am sorry, I was not listening...". This is a prime example of how ill-prepared the Minister was.

The Minister failed to answer the question and had to refer the question to her Chief Financial Officer, Mr O'Brien, who stated"

"We have looked at how we could allocate those savings across the two years. At this point we have not looked at 2014-15".


This response highlighted that the Government is undertaking a cold-hearted approach to the budget, failing to identify the source of savings required after 2013-14. This ultimately means that the non-government-organisation sector should brace for further cuts to its frontline services in the future.

The Committee heard further evidence that the Minister and the Newman Government are interested only in the bottom line when the Minister responded to a question about whether any analysis or modelling had been undertaken on the impact of Government cuts on non-government organisations. Her response – "I do not know that ..." – is symptomatic of the government's lack of concern in relation to their series of funding cuts. This is a government that has stripped away funding for frontline support services, reducing neighbourhood centre funding by over 10 per cent and all other organisations by 3.75 per cent.

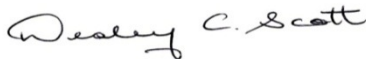
The actions of the Government in general, and the Minister in particular, are not ones of a compassionate Government that looks after the people of Queensland and serves for all. The Opposition agrees completely with the comments of the Minister when she was the Shadow Minister for Child Safety, Disability Services and Mental Health in her Statement of Reservation last year:

“Non-Government organisations continue to be left in the dark about the Department’s pressures for these organisations to find ‘efficiencies’. Many organisations are operating on very tight budgets, and with the loss of resources to compliance measures, are stretching their funds very efficiently. The Minister’s comments on the needs for efficiencies would leave little comfort particularly for the small to medium organisations. These organisations are the backbone of our communities across the state, relying on volunteers, and keeping our community spirit alive”

We call on the Minister to reflect on her previous comments and practice what she preaches.



Jo-Ann Miller MP
Deputy Chair
Member for Bundamba



Desley Scott MP
Member for Woodridge