

2023-24 Budget Estimates – Appropriation Bill 2023



**Report No. 36, 57th Parliament
Health and Environment Committee**

August 2023

Health and Environment Committee

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Acknowledgements

The committee thanks:

- The Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, and
- The Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science 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 2023-24 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 Bill 2023 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 Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science 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.



Aaron Harper MP

Chair

August 2023

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the committee

The Health and Environment Committee (committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 26 November 2020 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.¹

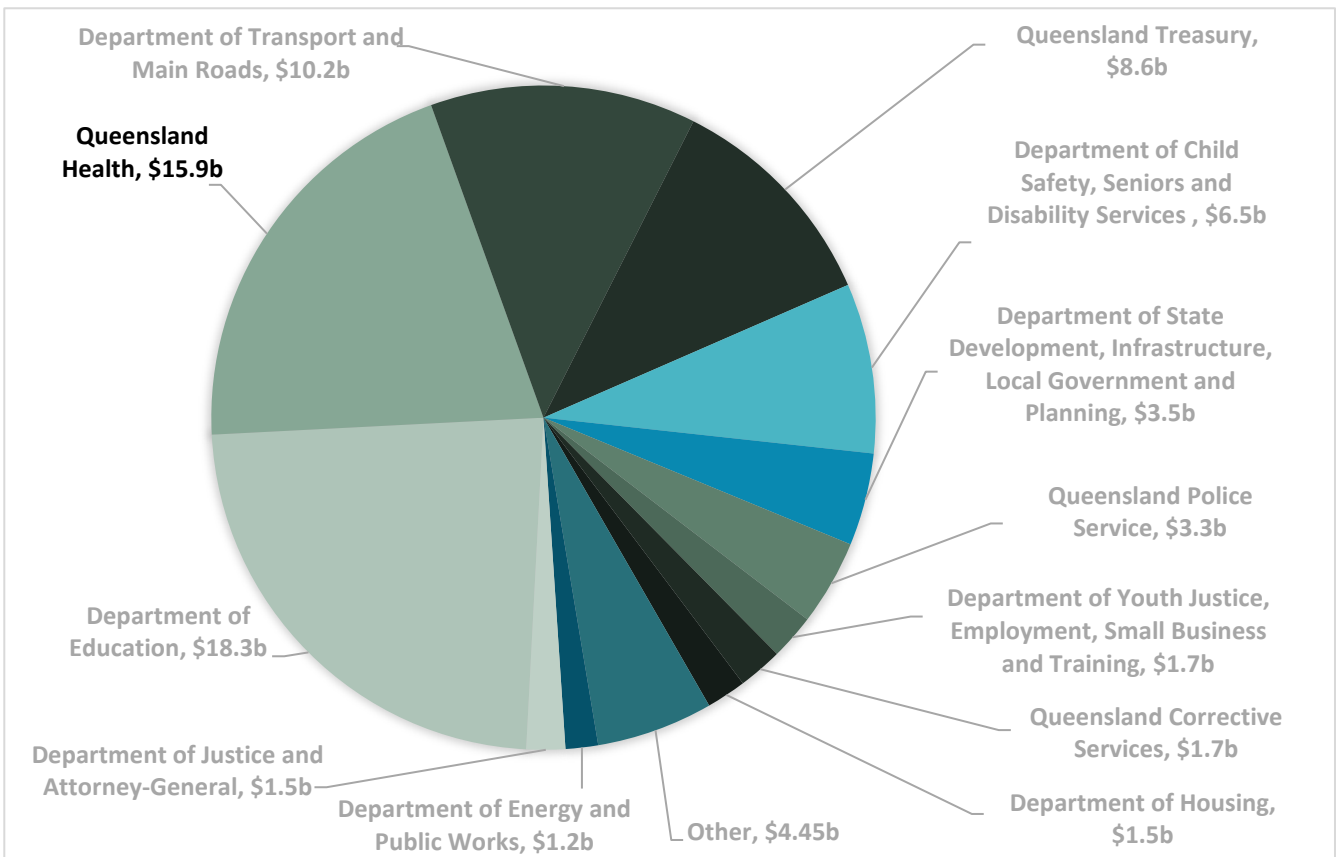
The committee's primary areas of responsibility are:

- Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Women
- Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Science and Multicultural Affairs.

On 13 June 2023, the Appropriation Bill 2023 (Appropriation Bill) and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.²

The estimates process is one of the key mechanisms to examine government expenditure, performance and effectiveness. By examining and reporting on the proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bill the committee assists the Parliament in its scrutiny of the Government's proposed expenditure.

The total 2023-24 Appropriation is \$78,411,379,000.³ The proposed expenditure across Government by portfolio is:



Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 1.⁴

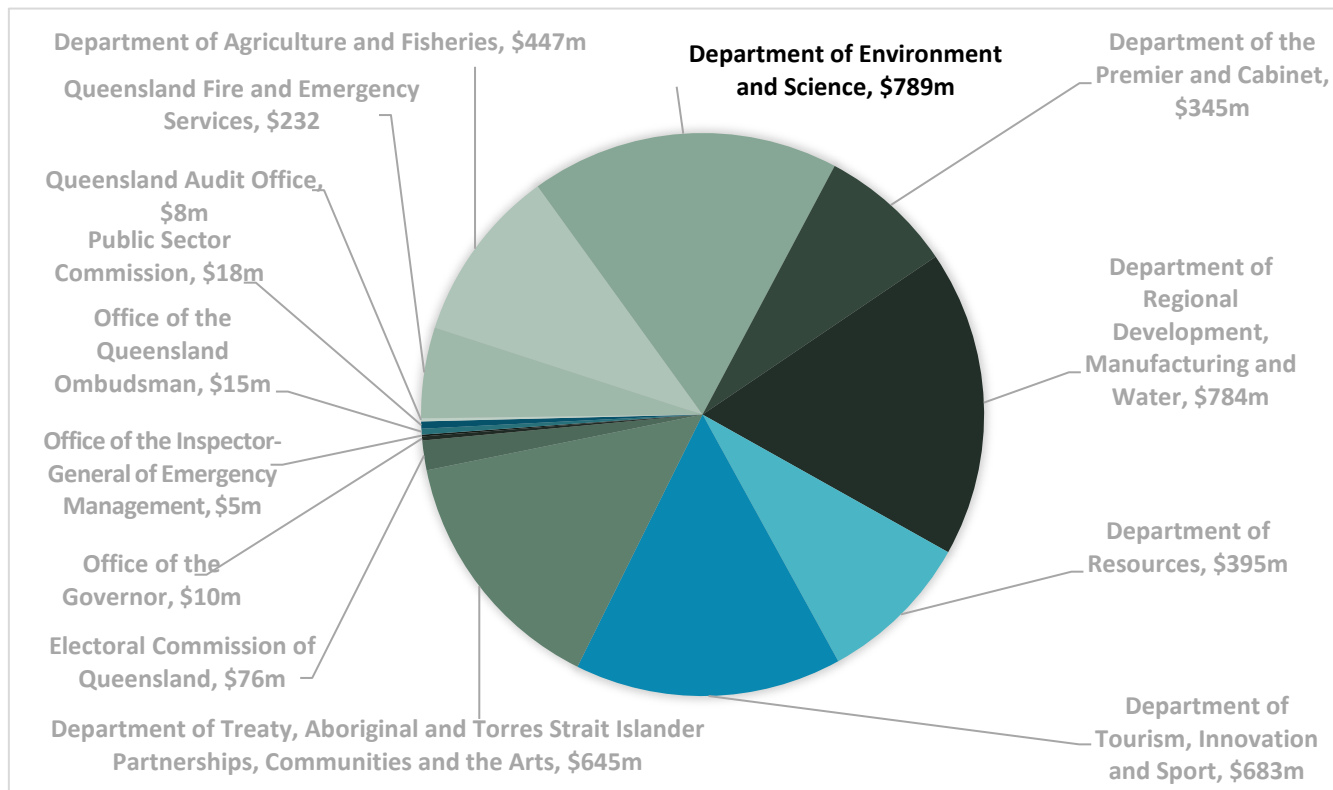
¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88 and Standing Order 194.

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 Appropriation Bill 2023, section 2.

⁴ Pie chart figures are rounded to the nearest million. Pie chart 1 accounts for \$73.96b; Pie chart 2 for \$4.45b.

Table: Expansion of 'Other, \$4.45b'



Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 1.

The committee’s examination of the Appropriation Bill 2023 was in relation to the:

- Department of Health
- Hospital and Health Services
- Health Ombudsman
- Queensland Institute of Medical Research
- Queensland Mental Health Commission
- Health and Wellbeing Queensland
- Office for Women
- Queensland Ambulance Services
- Department of Environment and Science
- The Great Barrier Reef
- Multicultural Affairs

On 4 August 2023, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, as well as other witnesses.

A copy of the transcript of the committee's hearing is available on the committee's webpage.

1.2 Aim of this report

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

The committee considered information contained in:

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

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

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

1.3 Participation by other Members

The following non-committee Members⁵ participated in the hearing with leave of the committee:

- Mr David Crisafulli MP, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Broadwater
- Ms Ros Bates MP RN, Member for Mudgeeraba
- Mr Sam O'Connor MP, Member for Bonney
- Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP, Member for Surfers Paradise
- Mr Michael Berkman MP, Member for Maiwar
- Dr Amy MacMahon MP, Member for South Brisbane

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 2023 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

⁵ The Members for Kawana, Maroochydore, Buderim and Scenic Rim were also granted leave to participate.

3 Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women

The Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women is responsible for Queensland Health and the Office for Women.⁶

Queensland Health is comprised of the Department of Health⁷, the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and 16 independent Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) across the state. The remainder of the Queensland Health portfolio includes the Office of the Health Ombudsman, Queensland Mental Health Commission, the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR Berghofer) and Health and Wellbeing Queensland.⁸

To assist the committee with its consideration of portfolio estimates, and in keeping with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders, the 16 Health Service Chief Executive Officers, the Queensland Ambulance Service Commissioner, the (Acting) Queensland Mental Health Commissioner, the Health Ombudsman, and the Chief Executive Officers of QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute and Health and Wellbeing Queensland were present at the hearing on 4 August 2023.⁹

3.1 Queensland Health

The Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, is the Minister responsible for Queensland Health.

As noted above, Queensland Health comprises the Department of Health, the QAS and 16 independent HHSs situated across the state, with the remainder of the Queensland Health portfolio being the Queensland Mental Health Commission, the Office of the Health Ombudsman, the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR Berghofer) and Health and Wellbeing Queensland.

Key objectives for Queensland Health are that:

- Queenslanders have access to quality and safe health care and equitable health outcomes
- Queenslanders have overall improved health, a good start to life, healthy ageing and a good end of life experience
- Queensland has an innovative, connected and sustainable health system, and
- The Queensland health workforce is valued, respected and empowered to lead the delivery of world-class health services each working at the top of their scope of practice.¹⁰

3.2 Department of Health

The Department of Health delivers health system governance, strategic leadership of the Queensland public health system, state-wide clinical health support services, information and communication technologies, health promotion and disease prevention strategy, urgent patient retrieval services, health infrastructure planning, and corporate support services for the employment of over 100,000 Queensland Health staff. In 2023-24 the Department plans to lead the capital program for infrastructure projects such as Satellite Hospitals; complete a business case for redevelopment of the PAH Spinal Injuries Unit; address essential

⁶ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 1.

⁷ The full organisational structure of the Department of Health and a full list of the 16 Hospital and Health Services are available in the Volume of Additional Information accompanying this report.

⁸ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 1.

⁹ Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders sets out a list of statutory entities to which direct questioning of chief executives at estimates applies.

¹⁰ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 1.

maternity services in key regional centres; implement recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland and improve transparency of health system performance reporting.¹¹

3.3 Queensland Ambulance Service

The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) is the principal provider of pre-hospital emergency medical care and ambulance transport services in Queensland. The QAS delivers ambulance services across Queensland from 304 response locations, with services coordinated through 8 operations centres responsible for emergency call taking, operational deployment and dispatch, and coordination of non-urgent patient transport services. QAS also incorporates Retrieval Services Queensland which coordinates all aeromedical retrieval and transport services, and the Health Contact Centre, which provides 24/7 health assessment and information services using phone and online delivery models.

Key deliverables for the QAS in 2023-24 include recruiting an additional 200 ambulance operatives, continued implementation of the QAS Clinical Hub, 144 new and replacement ambulances and progress the planning and construction of new and replacement ambulance stations and new or redeveloped Operations Centres.¹²

3.4 Hospital and Health Services

Information about each of the 16 HHS's key deliverables, performance (service standards and efficiency and effectiveness measures), staffing levels, income, expenses, assets, liabilities and cash flows, can be found in the 2023-24 Queensland State Budget - Service Delivery Statements - Queensland Health, at pages 36-144.

3.5 The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research

The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, known as QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute (QIMR Berghofer) is a world-leading medical research institute. In 2023-24, QIMR Berghofer will implement the QIMR Berghofer 2022-2025 Strategic Plan which has 4 key research priorities: cancer research, infection and inflammation, mental health and neuroscience, and population health.¹³

3.6 Queensland Mental Health Commission

The Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC) drives reform towards an integrated, evidence based, recovery orientated mental health, alcohol and other drugs and suicide prevention system in Queensland.

In 2023-24, the QMHC will progress implementation of *Shifting Minds: The Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Strategic Plan 2018-2023*; *Achieving Balance: The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2023-2028*; *Every Life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan*; and *Every Life – Phase two: suicide prevention Strategic Plan 2023-2028*.¹⁴

3.7 Office of the Health Ombudsman

The purpose of the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) is to protect and support the community through responsive complaints processes and regulatory action, to drive positive change and confidence in the health system. In 2023-24 the OHO will look at barriers that might inhibit some population groups and communities from raising health service complaints, as well as developing data analytic capabilities to identify and share information on systemic issues and trends identified in complaints about the delivery of health services and the regulation of health practitioners.¹⁵

¹¹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 21 and p 22.

¹² Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 31.

¹³ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 145.

¹⁴ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 150.

¹⁵ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 156.

3.8 Health and Wellbeing Queensland

Health and Wellbeing Queensland is the state's prevention agency, committed to improving the health and wellbeing of future generations and addressing the preventable burden of chronic disease. In 2023-24 it will lead implementation of Queensland's response to the *National Obesity Strategy 2022-2032* and lead development of a Clinical Prevention Strategy to integrate obesity and chronic disease prevention. It will also help address food insecurity in remote First Nations communities by developing the Gather + Grow Queensland Remote Food Security Strategy 2023-2032. Prevention programs will receive a \$20 million boost to provide free and low-cost health and wellbeing support to Queensland communities.¹⁶

3.9 Queensland Health budget overview

Queensland Health will receive the second largest budget appropriation from the 2023-24 Queensland Budget at \$15.9 billion.

According to the Service Delivery Statements an analysis of Queensland Health's budgeted financial statements, inclusive of the Department of Health, Queensland Ambulance Service and the Hospital and Health Services, shows 'Queensland Health's 2023-24 total expenses are estimated to be \$24.153 billion, representing an increase of \$2.109 billion or 9.6 per cent from the 2022-23 Budget'. 'Queensland Health's major assets are in property, plant and equipment (\$15.704 billion), whilst its main liabilities relate to employee benefits (\$1.426 billion) and payables of an operating nature (\$828 million)'.¹⁷

The following table from the Appropriation Bill 2023 illustrates the combined total of the cash appropriations for Queensland Health for 2023-24, compared with the 2022-23 budgeted and actual cash appropriations.

Appropriations	Budget 2022-23 \$'000	Est. Actual 2022-23 \$'000	Vote 2023-24 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	13,831,521	14,899,045	15,373,713
equity adjustment	350,776	372,428	502,175
<i>Administered Items</i>	71,129	71,535	57,055
Vote	14,253,426	15,343,008	15,932,943

Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p 17.

As highlighted in the table, the total combined 2023-24 appropriation of almost \$15.933 billion represents an increase of approx. \$1.68 billion on last year's budgeted appropriations.

Trends in the Vote

This table shows the amount sought in 2023-24 for the Vote against spending over the previous 3 years.

Table: Trends in the appropriation for Queensland Health

	2020/21 Estimated Actual \$million	2021/22 Estimated Actual \$million	2022/23 Estimated Actual \$million	2023/24 Estimates Sought \$million
	12,163,607	12,707,944	15,343,008	15,932,943

Source: Appropriation Bill 2021, Schedule 2, p 17; Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 16; Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p 17.

¹⁶ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 162.

¹⁷ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 17.

Budget highlights – Queensland Health

The 2023-24 budget highlights¹⁸ for Queensland Health include:

<p>Improve ambulance responsiveness and reduce wait times for emergency care, surgery and specialist clinics.</p> <p>Boosting women’s health care and mental health care.</p> <p>(Satellite hospitals, Logan and Caboolture Hospital expansions, domestic and family violence training for frontline health workers, increased support for maternity birthing services in rural and regional locations with strengthened outreach obstetrics and gynaecology services; additional 200 ambulance operatives)</p>	<p>additional funding of \$2.888 billion over 5 years</p>
<p>Increase to the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme</p>	<p>increased funding of \$70.3 million over 4 years</p>
<p>Support and expand forensic DNA service delivery</p> <p>Design and establish new Queensland forensic science agency (with a retrospective case and sample review function and support for retrospective DNA testing and analysis)</p>	<p>additional funding of \$81.2 million over 4 years</p>
<p>Replacement of Redland Hospital mental health facility</p>	<p>\$150 million for demolition/replacement of existing facility</p>

3.10 Queensland Health capital program

Queensland Health’s capital program delivers built infrastructure and digital technologies to enable delivery of safe and high-quality health services. The 2023-24 total capital investment is \$1.638 billion.

Hospital and Health facility project highlights for 2023-24 include:

- Around 2,200 additional beds funded under the Queensland Health Capacity Expansion Program (\$9.785 billion over 6 years), including:
 - new hospitals in Bundaberg, Toowoomba and Coomera
 - new Queensland Cancer Centre (based at Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital)
 - 11 hospital expansions (at Townsville University Hospital, QEII Hospital, Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH), The Prince Charles Hospital, and the Redcliffe, Cairns, Mackay, Robina, and Hervey Bay Hospitals; and Stage 2 Expansions at the Ipswich and Logan Hospitals).
- A further 289 beds across 7 projects in the Metro South, Gold Coast, West Moreton and Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Services under the Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery Program which is to receive \$269.3 million over 2 years to increase bed capacity.
- \$45.6 million for Phase 1 of the Building Rural and Remote Health Program to address ageing infrastructure at Camooweal, St George, Morven, Charleville and Blackwater.
- \$10.3 million for a new 5 year plan for Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services – Better Care Together
- \$346.5 million to replace health technology equipment/for minor capital projects

¹⁸ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 3.

- \$121.4 million for Building Better Hospitals program (includes Caboolture Hospital Redevelopment, Ipswich and Logan Hospitals' Expansions, and Logan Hospital Maternity Services Upgrade)
- \$78.9 million in 2023-24 as part of the \$376.9 million Satellite Hospitals Program to deliver satellite hospitals to Bribie Island, Caboolture, Eight Mile Plains, Kallangur, Tugun, Ripley and Redlands.
- ICT investment of \$84.9 million for 'safe and efficient provision of health services'.
- Queensland Ambulance Service are investing \$105.3 million in enabling critical infrastructure to support essential frontline services (pre-hospital emergency and non-emergency care), including:
 - \$48.3 million for planning and construction of new and replacement ambulance stations
 - \$28.3 million for 144 new and replacement ambulances, including the continued rollout of power assisted stretchers and \$1.5 million to fit out emergency response vehicles.¹⁹

3.11 Office for Women

The Office for Women promotes gender equality for women and girls, leads and facilitates projects to support, promote and protect women's rights, interests, leadership and wellbeing, with the aim of ensuring that women and girls across all cultures, backgrounds and age groups fully participate in the social, economic and broader community of Queensland.

There is an additional funding of \$2.1 million in 2023-24 for grants to support girls' and women's participation and pathways in male dominated industries and a partnership with Future Women to deliver Jobs Academy, and support for women re-entering the workforce following impacts of domestic and family violence.²⁰

3.12 Index of matters considered in relation to the estimates for Queensland Health²¹

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for Queensland Health:	Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 4 August 2023, page: [Question on Notice]
Ambulances [Queensland Ambulance Service]	
Ambulance ramping data/patient off-stretcher times [targets and calculation of time]	3,4,6,7,9,12,13,14,48,49
Ambulance lost hours/ambulance response	8,9,44
Off-load paramedic pilot/cost of staffing off-load paramedics	45-46
In-facility and inter-facility patient transfers; medically authorised transfers	46-47
Resourcing – ambulance stations, ambulance vehicles, ambulance officers	43, 48,50
Beds, hospital, number of, Queensland Health website data	7,34-35 [QoN 15]
Hospitals - Caboolture, Cairns, Toowoomba, Townsville	35
Birthing, maternity, obstetrics and gynaecology services, women's health	[QON 19]

¹⁹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 15.

²⁰ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Queensland Health, p 3.

²¹ This is not an exhaustive list. For all matters considered consult the 4 August 2023 hearing transcript and QoN.

Pregnancy termination services/access to reproductive health care/telehealth care	13
OBGYN services at Mackay HHS, investigation into, recommendations from Logan Hospital new birthing suites	23 [QoN 11]
Weipa, Chinchilla, Biloela, Cooktown - birthing and maternity services	23
Rockhampton and Gladstone – obstetrician staffing	36-38
Sexual Assault Investigation/Rape testing kits	35-36
Provision of sanitary items in women’s correctional centres	28 [QoN 12]
Capital program	29, 31
	11-13,19-22,26-27 [QoN 8]
Live capital programs, project delivery schedule, budget, costs, delays	26-27, [QoN 8]
Cardiac hybrid theatre & expansion of mental health ward – Rockhampton Hospital	12-13
Car park and buildings expansion – Mackay HHS	11
Redevelopment of Sarina HHS site/Sarina Hospital development	19-20
Kirwan health campus	21
Site redevelopment, former Wynnum hosp. (as First Nations health/aged-care facility)	21-22
Drug checking/pill testing	32-33
Eating disorders – support services	32
Elective surgery	4-5, 7-9
Elective surgery waiting list – data reporting	4-5,9
Emergency department	4,5,8,9,12 [QoN 6]
Wait times	4,9,12
Presentations, number of	8
Performance reporting	5,9
First Nations People	21-22, 31,33
Closing the gap – progress towards	33
Site redevelopment, former Wynnum hosp. (as First Nations health/aged-care facility)	21-22
Repatriation under Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme	31
Integrated electronic medical record (ieMR)	[QoN 4, 17]
Karingal Patient Transition Accommodation facility, Riverway Drive, Townsville	34
Meningococcal B vaccine (to combat invasive meningococcal disease)	10-11
Free meningococcal B vaccinations for children under 2 years or youth aged 15-19 years	10-11
Mental health care and treatment	10, 31-32, [QoN 20]

Sunshine Coast mental health co-responder service	10
Mental health support programs for males	31
MDMA and psilocybin, use in psychiatric treatment	31-32
Paediatric care	8,50 [QoN 13]
Review of paediatric care pathways, Caboolture Hospital	8,50
Part 9 investigations (health service investigations)	15-19, 24-26.
Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme	31
Satellite Hospitals	22, 47-48
Specialist outpatient waiting list	4-5, 8-10

4 Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

The Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Minister for Multicultural Affairs has responsibility for the Department of Environment and Science.

4.1 Department of Environment and Science

The Department of Environment and Science's (the department) vision is 'to ensure Queensland is celebrated as one of the world's most diverse natural environments, for our world-leading science and our welcoming and inclusive communities. Our purpose is to be effective leaders and partners in managing, protecting, restoring and promoting Queensland's natural environment, cultural heritage and cultural diversity.'²²

The department's objectives are to:

- Conserve and restore Queensland's unique biodiversity, heritage and protected areas
- Lead climate action in Queensland
- Grow the circular economy
- Protect World Heritage areas including the Great Barrier Reef
- Empower Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to fully contribute to the economy and the community
- Strengthen and harness Queensland's scientific excellence
- Deliver a world class environmental, heritage and biodiscovery regulatory system.

4.2 Department budget overview

The department will receive a budget appropriation from the 2023-24 Queensland Budget of \$789 million.

The department's controlled income statement shows total expenses for 2023-24 of \$913.7 million, an increase of \$38.1 million from 2022-23 Estimated Actuals. The increase is reported as being primarily due to planned expenditure for reef protection, Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger programs, managing Country with First Nations peoples, partnering with Quandamooka on Land and Sea Country, koala conservation, Land Restoration Fund programs and science programs and the effects of machinery-of-government transfers.

The department's controlled income statement shows total revenue for 2023-24 is \$913.9 million, an increase of \$49 million from 2022-23 Estimated Actuals. The increase is reported as being primarily due to additional funding for programs including reef protection, Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger programs, managing Country with First Nations peoples, partnering with Quandamooka on Land and Sea Country, koala conservation, Land Restoration Fund programs and Commonwealth funding for the Food Waste for Healthy Soils program and the effects of machinery-of-government transfers.

Administered income for 2023-24 is estimated to be \$432.3 million, an increase of \$32.9 million from the 2022-23 Estimated Actuals primarily due to a rise in revenue from regulated waste levy rate increases effective from 1 July 2023.

In 2023-24, departmental net assets are projected to be worth \$5.630 billion, with total assets of \$5.661 billion offset by liabilities of \$31.5 million.

The department's budgeted asset balances in 2023-24 are primarily comprised of heritage and cultural land held as national parks (\$1.69 billion), land (\$446.6 million), infrastructure (\$2.927 billion), buildings (\$270.9 million), plant and equipment including intangibles (\$109 million) and financial assets representing

²² Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Environment and Science, p 1.

investments (\$78.4 million). The 2023-24 asset balances include the 2023-24 capital acquisitions program of \$69.6 million, \$51.6 million for land, buildings and infrastructure, \$9.4 million for plant and equipment and \$8.6 million for systems development.²³

The following table from the Appropriation Bill 2023 illustrates the combined total of the cash appropriations for the department for 2023-24, compared with the 2022-23 budgeted and actual cash appropriations.

Appropriations (Department of Environment and Science)	Budget 2022-23 \$'000	Est. Actual 2022-23 \$'000	Vote 2023-24 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	597,184	658,729	735,848
equity adjustment	428	24,431	53,501
<i>Administered Items</i>			
Vote	597,612	683,160	789,349

Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p 10.

As highlighted in the table, the total combined 2023-24 appropriation of \$789 million represents an increase of approximately \$191 million on last year's budgeted appropriations.

Trends in the Vote

This table shows the amount sought in 2023-24 for the Vote against spending over the previous 3 years.

Table: Trends in the appropriation for the Department of Environment and Science

	2020/21 Estimated Actual \$million	2021/22 Estimated Actual \$million	2022/23 Estimated Actual \$million	2023/24 Estimates Sought \$million
	764,092	1,350,298	683,160	789,349

Source: Appropriation Bill 2021, Schedule 2, p 10; Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 10; Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p 10.

Budget highlights – Department of Environment and Science

The 2023-24 budget highlights²⁴ for the Department of Environment and Science include:

Continued delivery of 10-year \$2.1 billion Waste Package	\$234 million over 5 years
Continued delivery of the <i>Value's Based Management Framework</i> (support improved visitor experiences in Queensland's national parks, support revitalisation of visitor infrastructure, support growth of regional small businesses and First Nations people employment).	\$51.9 million over 4 years and \$3.8 million per annum ongoing from 2027-28
Continuation of the expanded Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program	\$49.9 million over 4 years and \$16.4 million per annum ongoing

²³ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Environment and Science, p 13.

²⁴ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Environment and Science, p 3.

Continued delivery of Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020-2030 and improving the management of Queensland's World Heritage Areas	\$38.6 million over 5 years and \$11.9 million per annum ongoing
Honour existing commitments with First Nations peoples	\$38.6 million over 4 years and \$10.4 million per annum ongoing
Protected area management including fire management on Moreton Island	\$31.9 million over 4 years and \$1.8 million per annum ongoing
Support public safety via devices to detect and deter crocodiles, enhanced Be Crocwise safety program, extend Flying-Fox Roost Management Grant Program	\$6 million over 4 years and \$300,000 per annum ongoing
Science engagement and promotion	\$5.2 million over 4 years and \$1.5 million per annum ongoing
Multicultural projects	\$4.7 million over 4 years and \$1.2 million per annum ongoing

4.3 Department capital program

The 2023-24 capital program includes programs of work to upgrade visitor infrastructure, invest in plant and equipment and develop systems including the Queensland Waste Data System replacement project.²⁵

Capital purchases for the department in 2023-24 total \$69.6 million. The focus of the capital program for 2023-24 is to expand and conserve protected areas, improve environmental outcomes and provide leading edge scientific services. The government also previously set aside \$250 million over 4 years (\$25 million for 2023-24), held centrally, for land acquisition and capital works in support of the *Protected Area Strategy 2020-2030*.

The capital program will include \$9.4 million towards plant and equipment and \$8.6 million towards system development, including \$4.6 million towards waste management systems. The capital program also includes capital grants of \$31.2 million including \$30.9 million for waste and recycling program capital grants.

The capital works program also includes critical infrastructure for the management, enjoyment and protection of Queensland parks and forests. The 2023-24 capital works investment of \$46.1 million includes funding to upgrade visitor infrastructure in Quandamooka Country parks and recreation areas, Whitsunday Islands National Park and on K'gari.

4.4 Index of matters considered in relation to the estimates for the Department of Environment and Science²⁶

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for Department of Environment and Science:	Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 4 August 2023, page: [Question on Notice]
Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance Program	73
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²⁵ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Environment and Science, p 13.

²⁶ This is not an exhaustive list. For all matters considered consult the 4 August 2023 hearing transcript and QoN.

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Statement of Reservation

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

2023/24 BUDGET ESTIMATES

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION

OPPOSITION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION

Opposition members of the Committee agree with the passing of the 2023/24 Budget.

The Estimates process gives the Parliament the opportunity to question the government on its financial stewardship and its proposals for the forthcoming year.

As has become apparent throughout this process, the government is becoming increasingly sclerotic. It has grown rigid and unresponsive, its management of the state's finances has become haphazard and there is a growing gap between its promises and its record of delivery.

The state's economy faces significant challenges and Queenslanders are facing increasing cost of living pressures. This Budget was an opportunity for the government to meet these challenges and provide effective cost of living relief.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence of either of these objectives being met.

Long term economic trends are not encouraging and the government has adopted a piecemeal approach to mitigate cost of living pressures without addressing the fundamental reasons behind spiralling increases.

As a consequence, and despite claims of record expenditure, the government has been unable to reassure Queenslanders that genuine steps are being taken to address critical challenges – the health crisis, the housing crisis, the youth crime crisis and the cost of living crisis.

Immersed in chaos, the government has failed to demonstrate, through the Estimates process, that it has solutions to the problems facing Queenslanders.

HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, WOMEN and AMBULANCE SERVICES

The fact that Queensland Health is in crisis is now well established in the public discourse. The Opposition has held a sharp focus over the failures of the Palaszczuk Government in managing Queensland's public health system throughout this term of Government, and the Committee's hearing was no different.

Queensland has world class doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals, but they are being horribly let down by a government who no longer listens to them. The committee's hearing brought that very fact to the fore.

Despite eight years, three terms, and four ministers, the deterioration of health services across the state shows no signs of stopping.

On the day of the Committee's hearing it was revealed that ambulance ramping had worsened to 45% across Queensland. It means that since coming to office in early 2015, ambulance ramping has tripled under the Palaszczuk Government. It had already doubled before the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are now nearly 60,000 Queenslanders waiting for elective surgery across the state, a number which has nearly doubled since the Palaszczuk Government took office. Behind these numbers are

real people, with real experiences, living in pain or living through an accident or urgent medical episode. That fact now seems to be totally lost on the Palaszczuk Government.

The Committee's examination of the Health Portfolio was underscored by the Health Minister's launch of a new performance website, which unravelled after a mere few hours. The number of hospital beds at each facility was initially omitted, only then to be included after questioning uncovered the oversight. Whether the decision to leave bed numbers off the new website was deliberate or not will never be known. Upon examination of the updated figures, it was apparent that the number of beds at each facility was markedly different from the previous iteration of the website – in each instance there were fewer beds. What the uploaded figures actually represented is unknown, but the oversight casts serious and legitimate doubt about the actual capacity of Queensland's hospitals given the discrepancies in the numbers published.

The embarrassing gaffe which played out across the day goes deeper than incorrect numbers online, it goes to the very heart of Ministerial oversight, and how that was totally lacking in the Minister's attempt to promote her new website. Clinicians across the state well know that it is attention to detail that ensures quality patient care, and a safe and effective health system. If a revamp of a website cannot be done properly, how can Queenslanders expect, and trust, the Minister to heal the crisis gripping Queensland Health?

Questions remain about the Palaszczuk Government's handling of issues at the Caboolture Hospital, with the outcome of a number of investigations still unknown. The terms of reference for a review at the hospital were due to be released in the week following the hearing, but despite that timeframe coming and going, at the time of writing, those terms of reference remain unknown.

The Minister's inability to provide a direct answer to how many 'Part 9' Health Service Investigations are occurring across Queensland was a deeply troubling revelation to come from the hearing. These investigations are the most serious internal reviews undertaken by Queensland Health – as was the case at the Mackay Hospital where shocking findings were uncovered in the delivery of Obstetric and Gynaecological care.

The fact that neither Queensland Health, nor the Minister herself, know how many of these investigations are currently underway (or have been previously undertaken) raises serious concerns about Ministerial oversight and clinical governance across the public health system. The Opposition see this as an egregious failure of accountability.

The Maternity Crisis gripping regional and rural areas of the state also shows no sign of ending, despite the Minister's \$42m investment. Weipa's maternity service appears to now be indefinitely shut after government commitments promised it would open in late 2021, then late 2022, and then again in early 2023. The bitter irony of that situation is the fact the Palaszczuk Government spent over \$2m revamping the birthing suite, only for it now to gather dust. That empty birthing suite is destined to be a monument to the Palaszczuk Government's failure to deliver maternity services to women across Queensland.

\$40m in capital works blowouts were also revealed in just one government program, with seven project 'Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery Program' now blowing the budget, despite work on some of the seven projects not even starting.

The Palaszczuk Government might have a new Health Minister and a new website, but the same deep-seated problems continue to plague the portfolio. The Opposition will continue its relentless pursuit in holding the government account on its failures managing the health system. Queensland's

hard-working clinicians and patients deserve better than what they're getting from a tired and broken government, mired in chaos and crisis.

ENVIRONMENT AND GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project is the largest project in our state's history and it underpins the Government's plan for a transition to renewable energy. Despite this project being so important, despite it being necessary to supply half of Queensland's entire energy needs, very few details have been provided. This is especially when it comes to the potential impacts to the neighbouring Eungella National Park and the surrounding environment of this beautiful, biodiverse region.

These hearings showed the Department of Environment has barely been engaged on the project. A feasibility study hasn't even been completed and an Environmental Impact Statement process has not started.

The Minister and her departmental staff were unable to answer very serious questions about this project and the potential impacts on the environment. Detailed information could not even be provided on what environmental considerations went into the selection of the site.

This is disappointing given that it was confirmed departmental staff were involved in providing input for the selection of the site.

When asked what assessments have been made about the impact of this project on threatened species within the Eungella National Park, the Department admitted that they have not undertaken any significant research.

Given we have seen subsidence from the Snowy Hydro project, and this project similarly includes multi-kilometre tunnels under a National Park, it would be reassuring to know the Government has done the work to ensure the protection of Eungella. Unfortunately, the Minister could provide no such assurance.

All assessments to date appear to be 'high-level', giving very little confidence to the local community and to Queenslanders who want to see genuine climate action.

The Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro environment fact sheet is just two pages long but it states "no project will proceed if impacts to the local environment cannot be adequately mitigated or offset".

The Minister responded to this line of questioning by confirming for the Committee that the program would "only proceed if appropriate approvals are given for the project".

However, this contradicts the certainty of the Treasurer following the Budget where he was asked if it was possible that a different site needed to be chosen, and said: "No, we are absolutely confident that this will go ahead."

Disappointingly, the Government also refused to provide an answer as to whether they have undertaken any assessments to project Queensland's emissions reduction if the project does not proceed as planned.

This lack of detail from Labor after nearly a decade in power is yet another example of them failing to follow through on their rhetoric.

Queensland is the worst state in the nation for recycling and it has further been revealed that the State Government is behind schedule on meeting their own waste management targets.

Currently, only two out of the nine targets are on track to be reached by 2025. The Government was unable to provide any update on whether any targets will be reached.

We still have no assurance the over-100 million poppers collected through the Containers for Change program and sent overseas have actually been recycled. It seems even the Minister has not seen the audit so we have no assurance they have appropriate oversight over this important program.

It's not good enough to just send these items overseas and hope for the best.

The State Government is responsible for monitoring bores surrounding the Linc Energy site.

Given the scandal that enveloped the previous Environment Minister last November, it would have seemed getting the data online from these bores would be a priority.

The day prior to the Estimates hearing, the Department's website listed the most recent data as being that from October 2022. The morning of the hearing, that changed and the most recent reported data was suddenly from February 2023.

Once again it appears this Government does not want to give Queenslanders the transparency they deserve.

SCIENCE AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Disappointingly it was revealed there has been a two-year delay to the Scientific Consensus Statement. This is the most important document to guide Reef policy and to provide the community with a peer-reviewed update on the state of our greatest natural asset.

Overall there was little assurance from the Government they are making genuine steps forward when it comes to protecting our environment. We have announcements with little detail or work behind them, targets off track and a continued lack of transparency.

Estimates questions examined Celebrating Multicultural Queensland grants. Specifically, information about events that were postponed due to COVID and how the department monitor delayed events to ensure they are held along with processes for reporting and acquittal. The questions were taken on notice and a detailed list of postponed events was provided after the hearing.

The Director General explained that the department required an acquittal report for these events within a reasonable timeframe. If one is not provided it is recorded and taken into account if the organisation applies for future funding.

Information was asked regarding the number of applications for the 2023-2024 Celebrating Multicultural Queensland grants. It was established that in 2022-2023 there were 194 applications and for the current round 2023-2024 which just closed there were 212 applications.

The Minister was asked what interaction and contribution she or the department had regarding the Community Action for a Multicultural Society Program for people from culturally diverse backgrounds (CALD) that was in the Women's Budget Paper – *to address local barriers to economic and social inclusion by supporting people from CALD backgrounds, including women*. It was disappointing the Minister did not answer this and instead spoke about the CAMS program in general.

CONCLUSION

These hearings have failed to provide the reassurance that Queenslanders seek that the government has solutions to the myriad of problems facing the state.

The Estimates process, despite its well-known and long-standing shortcomings, provided no significant evidence that the government has a sustainable and considered plan to restore and improve key services.

With health services under increasing pressure, housing demand outpacing supply, crime reaching into all corners of the state and infrastructure costs seeing record blowouts, the government has wasted the opportunity presented by the 2023/24 Budget to meet the reasonable expectations of Queenslanders.

A government consumed by crisis and chaos has failed in its basic responsibilities resulting in Queenslanders having to pay an unsustainable price.



Rob Molhoek MP
Deputy Chair
Member for Southport



Andrew Powell MP
Member for Glass House