



2020-21 Budget Estimates

Report No. 2, 57th Parliament
Health and Environment Committee
February 2021

Health and Environment Committee

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Acknowledgements

The committee thanks:

- Minister for Health and Ambulance Services
- Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs

The committee acknowledges the assistance provided by departmental officers during the estimates process.

Contents

Abbreviations	ii
Chair’s foreword	iii
Recommendations	iv
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Role of the committee	1
1.2 Inquiry process	1
1.3 Aim of this report	1
1.4 Participation by other Members	2
1.5 Recommendation	2
2 Minister for Health and Ambulance Services	3
2.1 Queensland Health	3
2.1.1 Budget highlights	3
2.1.2 Concessions	5
2.1.3 Hospital and Health Services	5
2.1.4 Queensland Ambulance Services	6
2.1.5 Key issues raised at the public hearing	6
2.2 Queensland Mental Health Commission	8
2.3 Office of the Health Ombudsman	8
2.3.1 Key issues raised at the public hearing	8
2.4 Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research	8
2.4.1 Key issues raised at the public hearing	9
2.5 Health and Wellbeing Queensland	9
3 Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs	10
3.1 Department of Environment and Science	10
3.1.1 Budget highlights	10
3.1.2 Capital program	12
3.1.3 Key issues raised at the public hearing	12
Statements of Reservation	15

Abbreviations

committee	Health and Environment Committee
DES/department	Department of Environment and Science
EA	Environmental Authorities
EIS	Environmental Impact Statements
HHS	Hospital and Health Service
ieMR	integrated electronic medical record system
OHO	Office of the Health Ombudsman
PPE	personal protective equipment
QAS	Queensland Ambulance Service
QIMR	Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, also known as QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute
QMHC	Queensland Mental Health Commission
QPS	Queensland Police Service
SLATS	Statewide Landcover and Trees Study

Chair's foreword

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

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

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

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth 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

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2

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

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 include:

- Health and Ambulance Services
- Environment, Great Barrier Reef, Science and Youth Affairs.

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

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

The committee also has oversight functions in relation to the Health Ombudsman and the health service complaints management system.

1.2 Inquiry process

On 4 December 2020, the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.²

On 10 December 2020, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs and other witnesses. A copy of the transcript of the committee's hearing is available on the committee's webpage.

1.3 Aim of this report

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

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

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

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth

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.

Affairs with questions on notice in relation to the estimates. Responses to all the questions were received.

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

1.4 Participation by other Members

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

- Ms Ros Bates MP, Member for Mudgeeraba
- Mr Michael Berkman MP, Member for Maiwar
- Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, Member for Kawana
- Mrs Deb Frecklington MP, Member for Nanango
- Dr Amy MacMahon MP, Member for South Brisbane
- Mr Sam O'Connor MP, Member for Bonney

1.5 Recommendation

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

Recommendation 1

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

2 Minister for Health and Ambulance Services

This section discusses issues raised during the committee's examination of the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 (Bill) in the portfolio areas of Health and Ambulance Services.

2.1 Queensland Health

The Hon Yvette D'Ath MP, Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, is the Minister responsible for Queensland Health. Queensland Health comprises the following service areas:

- the Department of Health
- 16 independent Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) situated across the state
- the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS).

In addition, the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services is responsible for:

- the Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC)
- the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO)
- the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR)
- Health and Wellbeing Queensland.³

The following table taken from the Bill compares the appropriations for Queensland Health for 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Table 1: Appropriations for Queensland Health for 2019-20 and 2020-21

Appropriations	Actual 2019-20 \$'000	Vote 2020-21 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	11,638,476	12,283,406
equity adjustment	(277,394)	(98,740)
<i>Administered Items</i>	34,473	69,296
Vote	11,395,555	12,253,962

Source: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2, p 18.

2.1.1 Budget highlights

The Queensland Health total budget for controlled items (including appropriation revenue and funding from other sources) is \$29.722 billion in 2020-21, which is an increase of \$8 billion from the 2019-20 financial year.⁴ Increases in expenses and revenue for controlled items reflect the change in prescribed employer arrangements as the Director-General Queensland Health became the employer of all non-executive (HHS) staff.⁵ These entries are eliminated in the Queensland Health and HHS consolidated entity which reported a budget for 2020-21 of \$20.199 billion with a capital investment and leasing program of \$1.625 billion.⁶

Queensland Health also administers funds on behalf of the state, including grants and subsidies which is budgeted at \$69.3 million for 2020-21.⁷

³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 3, p 3-60.

⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 3, p 3-78.

⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 3, p 3-78.

⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 3, pp 3-60 and 3-74.

⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 3, p 3-79.

Budget highlights for Queensland Health during 2020 included a \$1.2 billion health package allocated as part of Queensland's Economic Recovery Plan - *Safeguarding our health*.⁸ That funding package covered a range of equipment and services associated with managing and containing the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- funding for fever clinics, emergency department capacity, acute care services, and regional aeromedical services for remote communities
- the purchasing of additional ventilators and stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- \$250 million to address the surgery backlog arising from the pandemic
- a mental health and wellbeing community package
- the costs of hotel quarantine for those arriving into Queensland from overseas and declared COVID-19 hot spots
- Queensland Police Service (QPS) expenses related to border control and hotel security.⁹

In 2020-21, \$1.625 billion is allocated to the health capital program for capital purchases.¹⁰

According to the Capital Statement, the Building Better Hospitals commitment is a key priority for Queensland Health to help address growing demand by enhancing public hospital capacity and services in the South East Queensland growth corridor.¹¹ The program includes projects at three major South East Queensland hospitals with a combined value of \$979 million:

- redevelopment of the Caboolture Hospital to increase its capacity by 130 beds
- expansion of the Logan Hospital to deliver an additional 206 beds as well as expansion and refurbishment of the Logan maternity ward
- staged redevelopment of the Ipswich Hospital including new mental health facilities for adults and older persons, a Magnetic Resonance Imaging suite (delivered) to grow clinical capacity, and the delivery of a 26-bed interim demand management strategy.¹²

The Capital Statement also outlines \$265 million in funding to build seven satellite hospitals. This is to enable acute hospitals to continue safely managing patients via alternative models of care across South East Queensland.¹³ The program includes:

- Bribie Island Satellite Hospital
- Caboolture Satellite Hospital
- Redlands Satellite Hospital
- Pine Rivers Satellite Hospital
- Ipswich City Satellite Hospital
- QEII Satellite Hospital

⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 3, p 3-60.

⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 3, p 3-60.

¹⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement, Budget Paper No. 3, p 63.

¹¹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement, Budget Paper No. 3, p 10.

¹² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement, Budget Paper No. 3, p 10.

¹³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement, Budget Paper No. 3, pp 10-11.

- Southern Gold Coast Satellite Hospital.¹⁴

The Budget Highlights paper state that \$171 million is committed for a Queensland Health palliative care strategy funding package through to 2025-26.¹⁵

2.1.2 Concessions

The total cost of concessions provided via schemes administered by Queensland Health is estimated at \$311.2 million in 2020-21, an increase of \$20.1 million on the 2019-20 actual budget.¹⁶

A breakdown of concession by scheme for 2020-21 is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Concessions administered by Queensland Health

Concession Scheme	2019-20 Actual \$ million	2020-21 Estimated \$ million
Oral Health Scheme ¹	175.7	175.7
Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme	82.4	94.8
Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme ¹	22.6	29.0
Spectacle Supply Scheme	8.5	9.9
Hospital Car Parking Concession Scheme	1.8	1.8
Community Aids Equipment, Assistive Technologies Initiative and Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme ²	0.1	..
Total	291.1	311.2
Notes:		
1. The 2020-21 estimate is based on the 2019-20 actual.		
2. Lead times for selected assistive technology rolled over into the 2019-20 period, with payment for these items subsequently made and captured in the budget for that year.		

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Budget Strategy and Outlook, Budget Paper No. 2, p 209.

2.1.3 Hospital and Health Services

The estimated operating expenses for each HHS in 2020-21 is compared to the actual expenses incurred in 2019-20 in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Operating expenses for the Hospital and Health Services

Health Service	2019-20 Actual \$ '000	2020-21 Budget \$'000	Change from 2019-20 to 2020-21 (%)
Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (p 3-87)	1,056,712	1,051,311	-0.51
Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service (p 3-91)	666,284	661,333	-0.74
Central West Hospital and Health Service (p 3-95)	88,429	86,071	-2.67
Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service (p 3-100)	888,364	870,445	-2.02
Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (p 3-105)	892,281	901,354	1.02
Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service (p 3-109)	1,684,093	1,695,089	0.65
Mackay Hospital and Health Service (p 3-114)	502,373	493,038	-1.86
Metro North Hospital and Health Service (p 3-118)	3,204,816	3,217,509	0.40
Metro South Hospital and Health Service (p 3-124)	2,679,403	2,671,156	-0.31

¹⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement, Budget Paper No. 3, p 11. Also see https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/BP3_Capital_Statement_1_Approach_and_highlights.pdf.

¹⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Budget Highlights, p 4.

¹⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Budget Strategy and Outlook, Budget Paper No. 2, p 209.

North West Hospital and Health Service (p 3-128)	209,570	199,670	-4.72
South West Hospital and Health Service (p 3-132)	158,873	166,282	4.66
Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (p 3-137)	1,308,339	1,312,763	0.34
Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service (p 3-141)	252,445	240,154	-4.87
Townsville Hospital and Health Service (p 3-146)	1,080,873	1,097,027	1.49
West Moreton Hospital and Health Service (p 3-151)	703,956	691,042	-1.83
Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service (p 3-156)	691,199	692,347	0.17

Source: Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, page numbers are noted in the table.

2.1.4 Queensland Ambulance Services

QAS operates as a statewide service within Queensland Health, and is accountable for the delivery of pre-hospital ambulance response services, emergency and non-emergency pre-hospital patient care and transport services, inter-facility ambulance transport, casualty room services, and planning and coordination of multi-casualty incidents and disasters.¹⁷

The budget for controlled items for QAS in 2020-21 is estimated at \$933.8 million compared to actual expenses of \$900.7 million in 2019-20. This represents an increase of 3.67%.¹⁸

The Budget Highlights paper outlines an investment by QAS in 2020–21 of \$55.8 million in infrastructure projects designed to provide paramedics with improved operational facilities. This investment includes:

- completing new ambulance stations at Urraween, Yarrabilba and Munruben; a new ambulance station and Local Ambulance Service Network office at Drayton; and replacement stations at Kirwan and Mareeba
- commencing planning for new or replacement stations at Ormeau, Ripley and Caloundra South
- refurbishing the Rockhampton ambulance station and operations centre
- continuing planning for the redevelopment of the Southport ambulance station and Gold Coast operations centre and the Cairns ambulance station and operations centre
- commissioning 135 new and replacement ambulance vehicles and continuing the rollout of power assisted stretchers
- investing in software development projects to enhance patient care and integrated service delivery.¹⁹

2.1.5 Key issues raised at the public hearing

The committee considered a wide range of matters. Some of the matters considered in relation to Queensland Health included:

- the health service response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on other Queensland Health project delivery times and budgets
- expenses associated with the delivery of a COVID-19 vaccine to the Queensland community
- the administration of hotel quarantine

¹⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-81.

¹⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-83.

¹⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Budget Highlights, p 5.

- funding for mental health in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- current stocks of and production of PPE and medical products in Queensland
- the impact of the productivity dividend on the Queensland Health budget position
- capital works projects including investment in new and expanded hospitals
- the costs of anticipated hospital maintenance
- funding for the Kirwan Health Campus
- expenditure on supplies and services at the Children’s Health Queensland HHS
- funding received for essential vaccines under the Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement on Essential Vaccines
- management of outpatient waiting lists in the Gold Coast HHS
- funding for the surgery backlog and management of surgery waiting lists
- kidney dialysis services in regional Queensland
- services to assist people with drug and alcohol addiction
- hospital public performance reporting data
- the process of releasing annual reports for Queensland Health
- the financial results for the 16 HHSs
- fines relating to statutory electrical checks
- the discontinuation of Queensland Health Laboratory Information System project
- implementation of the recommendations of the Rural Maternity Taskforce
- the rollout of the integrated electronic medical record system (ieMR) and the budget allocation for stages 3 and 4 of the ieMR
- trialling the use of pharmacist prescribed antibiotics for urinary tract infections
- oversight of Cerner updates by Queensland Health
- the rollout and effectiveness of the S/4HANA (supply chain management) software
- current staffing numbers for each HHS and budgeting for additional staffing until 2024 for doctors, nurses and allied health staff
- the role of the Chief Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Officer
- measuring acts of aggression against Queensland Health staff
- tracking missing or stolen anaesthetic drugs
- checking the criminal histories of staff
- investigation into the media unit at Metro North HHS
- changes to accommodation entitlements for rural doctors
- expenditure on accommodation upgrades at 33 Charlotte Street
- the investigation into possible corrupt conduct.

Issues raised by the committee in relation to QAS included:

- the QAS response to COVID-19
- numbers of calls to 000 directed to QAS

- the role of the mental health liaison service
- support provided to QAS staff after dealing with tragic events
- the cost of WorkCover claims arising from serious injuries
- number of QAS officers who are medically retired
- numbers of acts of aggression against paramedics
- rates of ambulance ramping
- recruitment of qualified paramedics and graduates
- planning for new ambulance stations and the replacement of ambulance stations
- QAS investments in the Pumicestone electorate
- provision of rural maternity services and impact on QAS call outs.

2.2 Queensland Mental Health Commission

The Minister also has ministerial responsibility for the budget of the QMHC which is an independent statutory body working to improve Queenslanders' mental health and wellbeing.²⁰ The QMHC drives ongoing reform to create a more integrated, evidence-based, recovery-oriented mental health, alcohol and other drugs service system in Queensland.²¹

Operating expenses for the QMHC in 2020-21 are estimated at \$9.8 million. Actual operating expenses in 2019-20 were \$8.9 million.²²

2.3 Office of the Health Ombudsman

The Minister has ministerial responsibility for the budget of the OHO.

The OHO's purpose is to protect the health and safety of consumers, promote high standards in health service delivery and facilitate responsive complaint management.²³

Operating expenses for the OHO in 2020-21 are estimated at \$22.4 million. Actual operating expenses in 2019-20 were \$23.2 million.²⁴

2.3.1 Key issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to the OHO included:

- the funding level provided to the OHO
- the length of time taken to complete some Health Ombudsman investigations.

2.4 Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research

The Minister also has statutory responsibility for the budget of the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (known as QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute) a world-leading medical research institute.²⁵ QIMR's research focuses on four major areas: cancer, infectious diseases, mental

²⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-159.

²¹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-159.

²² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-160.

²³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, Queensland Health, p 3-161.

²⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, Queensland Health, p 3-163.

²⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, Queensland Health, p 3-157.

health and chronic disorders, and aims to improve health by developing prevention strategies, new diagnostics and better health treatments.²⁶

Operating expenses for the QIMR in 2020-21 are estimated at \$119.7 million. Actual operating expenses in 2019-20 were \$130.2 million.²⁷

2.4.1 Key issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the committee in relation to the QIMR related to funding provided to QIMR specifically for COVID-19 research.

2.5 Health and Wellbeing Queensland

The Minister has statutory responsibility for the budget of Health and Wellbeing Queensland which was established on 1 July 2019 under the *Health and Wellbeing Queensland Act 2019*. Health and Wellbeing Queensland is an independent statutory health promotion agency to reduce health inequity and tackle Queensland's high obesity and chronic disease rates.²⁸

Operating expenses for Health and Wellbeing Queensland in 2020-21 are estimated at \$37.9 million.²⁹

²⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-157.

²⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-158.

²⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-164.

²⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 3-165.

3 Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs

This section discusses issues raised during the committee's examination of the Bill in the portfolio areas of Science and Youth Affairs.

3.1 Department of Environment and Science

The Hon Meaghan Scanlon MP, Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, is the Minister responsible for the Department of Environment and Science (DES/department). The department comprises the following service areas:

- Environmental Policy, Programs and Regulation Services
- Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Services
- Science
- Heritage Protection Services
- Youth Affairs.

Table 4 below, taken from the Bill, compares the appropriations for DES for 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Table 4: Text Appropriations for the Department of Environment and Science for 2019-20 and 2020-21

Appropriations	Actual 2019-20 \$'000	Vote 2020-21 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	606,038	716,239
equity adjustment	4,084	11,734
<i>Administered Items</i>	161,199	78,819
Vote	771,321	806,792

Source: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2, p 11.

3.1.1 Budget highlights

The DES budget for controlled items is \$897.8 million in 2020-21, which is an increase of \$66.2 million from the 2019-20 financial year.³⁰ DES also administers funds on behalf of the state including the collection of the Queensland Waste Levy and a range of other regulatory fees.³¹ Total administered income and expenses in 2020-21 are budgeted to be \$391.3 million, a decrease of \$67.3 million.³² The decrease in the expenses and revenue for administered items in 2020-21 is mainly due to the effect of Machinery-of-Government transfers associated with Arts Queensland transferring to the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy on 1 December 2020.³³

The capital program for DES in 2020-21 is \$91.3 million.³⁴

2020-21 budget highlights for the department are listed for the following four service areas:

- Environmental Policy, Programs and Regulation Services
- Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Services

³⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 2, p 2-53.

³¹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 2, p 2-54.

³² Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 2, p 2-52.

³³ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 2, p 2-52.

³⁴ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements Volume 2, p 2-51.

- Science
- Heritage Protection Services.

3.1.1.1 Environmental Policy, Programs and Regulation Services

The Service Delivery Statement includes budget highlights in the Environmental Policy, Programs and Regulation Services area such as:

- increased funding of \$15.8 million for the continued implementation of the Queensland Waste Levy and associated strategies, including levy operation
- additional funding of \$10 million over four years for a Reef Credits Scheme to allow entities to purchase investments supporting reef protections similar to the carbon credits
- increased funding of \$27.1 million to support Queensland's action to improve reef water quality, support communities and industry to reduce threats to marine wildlife
- new funding of \$10 million for the Reef Assist Program to fund 11 projects in partnership with local government, natural resource management organisations and First Nations peoples to deliver on ground environmental outcomes and generate around 130 regional jobs
- additional funding of \$1.5 million (\$3 million over two years ending in 2021-22) for grants to local councils for climate change adaptation works.³⁵

3.1.1.2 Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Services

The Service Delivery Statement includes budget highlights in the Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Services area such as:

- \$7.6 million (\$28 million over four years ending in 2023-24) to expand the public protected area estate through the strategic acquisition and management of high conservation value land
- additional funding of \$2 million (\$6 million over four years ending in 2023-24) to the Great Barrier Reef Island Arks project. The project will see the acquisition, restoration, dedication and protection of the valuable reef islands as national park and support the ongoing conservation of island reef species and habitat
- increased funding of \$10.2 million over four years ending in 2023-24 for projects supporting ecotourism, including upgrades to National Parks and World Heritage Areas
- increased funding of \$14.2 million to continue the successful revitalisation of visitor infrastructure and implementation of a values-based management framework, developed in partnership with First Nations peoples
- increased funding of \$5 million to support implementation of the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy
- \$3 million (\$9 million over three years ending in 2021-22) to match the Australian Government contribution towards yellow crazy ant control activities in, and adjacent to, the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area
- increased funding of \$500,000 (\$2 million over four years ending 2023-24) to support a co-funded flying fox program for councils to establish and implement long-term flying fox roost management plans.³⁶

3.1.1.3 Science

The Service Delivery Statement includes budget highlights in the Science area such as:

³⁵ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 2-43.

³⁶ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 2-46.

- additional funding of \$1.4 million (\$5.5 million over four years and \$454,000 per year ongoing) to expand the air quality monitoring and management system to provide a source of information for government agencies, industry and the general public, especially during bushfire events.
- increased funding of \$1.5 million to enhance the existing Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) using advanced satellite monitoring and computer technologies to produce a detailed baseline woody vegetation extent map, develop regrowth monitoring approaches, transition to higher resolution satellite imagery and develop a vegetation condition mapping framework
- increased funding of \$6.5 million to support the delivery of the Accelerating Science Delivery Innovation Program Tranche 2 to increase the ability to solve complex environmental problems by upgrading and extending the department's high-performance computing facility and modernising critical scientific systems.³⁷

3.1.1.4 *Heritage Protection Services*

The Service Delivery Statement includes budget highlights in the Heritage Protection Services area such as:

- supporting the activities of the Queensland Heritage Council through high-level technical, strategic and administrative advice
- systematically reviewing and updating listings on the Queensland Heritage Register.³⁸

3.1.2 **Capital program**

In 2020-21, \$91.3 million is allocated to DES for capital purchases.³⁹ Key components include:

- \$15.8 million committed for the strategic acquisition of properties across the state for dedication as protected areas
- \$10.9 million to support the in-progress delivery of the Revitalising National Parks program to deliver high-quality visitor infrastructure to parks and forests including \$3.1 million to continue construction of the new multi-day Ngaro walking track in Whitsunday Islands National Park
- \$5.2 million to deliver remote area power supply upgrades in Boodjamulla National Park, renewable energy upgrades at Mon Repos Turtle Centre and infrastructure upgrades in multiple parks and forests across Queensland
- \$5.8 million towards the replacement of major vessels for Marine Park management
- \$5.1 million for the delivery of buildings and park infrastructure to support visitor recreation, management and access of the Quandamooka Country parks and recreation areas on North Stradbroke Island (Minjerribah) and Moreton Island (Mulgumpin)
- investment in systems development to modernise and enhance Queensland's environmental science capability including the Accelerating Science Delivery Innovation program.⁴⁰

3.1.3 **Key issues raised at the public hearing**

The committee considered a wide range of matters. Some of the matters considered relating to the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef included:

- fire management, planned burns and preparations
- resourcing for and the management of fires on Fraser Island

³⁷ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 2-49.

³⁸ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 2-50.

³⁹ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 2-51.

⁴⁰ Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 2-51.

- the measurement of Queensland's carbon emissions
- initiatives to combat climate change including the development of a climate action plan supporting councils to better understand and prepare for climate change impacts
- the Climate Action Strategy and the Climate Adaptation Strategy
- management of environmental offsets and carbon-farming projects
- investing in and managing Queensland's protected areas
- the Land Restoration Fund
- funding for National Parks, World Heritage Areas and other visitor areas
- protecting the Bribie Island natural environment
- the future management of Lake Eyre Basin
- the boundary of the Moreton Bay RAMSAR wetlands
- the status of the Pioneer Valley mountain bike track linking Finch Hatton Gorge National Park to Eungella National Park
- the Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS)
- reinvestment of waste levy revenue and the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy
- the impact of single use plastics on the environment
- the protection of koalas
- the management of crocodiles
- partnering with Traditional Owners in joint management arrangements in national parks
- funds dedicated to the Reef Assist program and the Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger programs
- the review of the Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan
- investment in the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program
- the impact of the reef credit system on farming
- investment in the Mon Repos Turtle centre
- the establishment of an Environmental Protection Agency
- Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and the processes of Environmental Authorities (EA) in coal mine approvals and associated timeframes
- the statutory review of the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- the impact on the capital budget of Arts Queensland moving to Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy and the Arts.

Issues raised by the committee in relation to Science and Youth Affairs included:

- the budget allocation for Youth Affairs
- the employment status of young Queenslanders
- youth engagement
- youth and substance abuse

- consideration of Australian South Sea Island youth
- providing First Nation peoples the means to benefit from and participate in biodiscovery
- funding for scientific research and development
- public engagement with science
- funding allocations for the Queensland-Chinese Academy of Sciences Collaborative Science Fund.

Issues raised by the committee in relation to the department generally included:

- expenditure relating to conferences, workshops, catering and other hospitality expenses
- expenditure on information technology
- recruitment of public servants
- investigations into fraud and misconduct by public servants
- expenses associated with contractors and labour hire staff in the department.

Statements of Reservation

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION – LIBERAL NATIONAL PARTY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

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

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

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

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

Committee operation

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

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

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

Finally, the structure of the whole budget process is fundamentally broken. With a vastly truncated estimates process, the Government had a responsibility to ensure it was completely transparent. Given the circumstances, it was more important than ever that a full and frank examination of Minister and their portfolios occurred. Instead, the Queensland public was served up a dysfunctional sideshow of deceit and protection aided and abetted by highly politicised administration of the Estimates hearings by Labor chairs.

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

HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES

On a number of occasions in recent years, there has been media reports about the misuse or missing drugs within Queensland hospitals. While no one is questioning the motives of our amazing health workers, for a number of reasons it is important to maintain strict inventory control protocols to protect taxpayer's investment. The Minister confirmed that despite receiving 338 notifications in 2019/20 through a Queensland Health portal about lost or stolen drugs, it was disappointing that the department does not hold information on the value of lost or stolen drugs.

In 2017, the Crime and Corruption Commission published a corruption audit report in relation to Queensland public health sector responses to incidents of theft.

The audit found there could be improvements in the way some agencies maintain their complaint files and identified opportunities to raise standards of integrity in public health agencies.

Integrity issues within Queensland Health was a topical issue once again. The ongoing investigation into the management of the Metro North HHS media unit has been publicly reported in the media on several occasions and it is of concern that there seems to be questions about whether Workplace Health and Safety Queensland are involved or not, with the CEO saying one thing but media reports suggesting otherwise.

Almost two years ago, the LNP raised serious concerns about allegations of misconduct about a bariatric surgeon provided to us by doctors and patients. Those matters were referred to the Health Ombudsman in early 2019 and are still under investigation – despite the guidelines in legislation for investigations being 12 months once there has been a decision made to carry them out.

Once again, questions were raised about the ongoing rollout of the Integrated electronic Medical Record. This is because of the substantial investment by taxpayers, the concerns raised by doctors including the AMAQ and the numerous issues and system errors to date. It should also be remembered that Queensland Health does not have a great track record of successfully delivering IT projects, with specific reference to the Queensland Health payroll debacle.

Speaking of IT projects, a damning Auditor-General report into the Government's rollout of the S/4 HANA IT project was released just prior to the election. It was a concern that the Minister could not provide a date for when the system will be fixed, despite the ongoing issues and the Auditor-General's report.

In the interests of transparency and accountability, the LNP encourages the government to resume public monthly reporting of hospital performance data via the Queensland Health website.

This is something that was instigated by the LNP and while we recognise the COVID interruption early last year, Queensland Health has admitted that the data is still collected.

The number of assaults against health workers remains high and is getting worse, not better. That is completely unacceptable as new data was tabled as part of the estimates process. Our health heroes are trying to save lives and help people when they need it most but their safety is constantly under threat. In that same context, physical and verbal attacks against paramedics was also an issue raised with Commissioner Bowles and is an issue that continue to get worse, not better.

In relation to the treatment of health workers and staffing, it was disappointing that the Minister didn't apologise to the Rockhampton nurse who was wrongly scapegoated for a COVID outbreak in Central Queensland last year by the Government.

On a more positive note, it was pleasing that there are no proposals to rename anymore hospitals, like the debacle we saw from the government in the last term relating to the Queensland (Lady Cilento) Children's Hospital.

ENVIRONMENT AND SCIENCE

The LNP will support measures to protect and enhance our environment but we still had some concerns about the action (or lack thereof) outlined in this Budget.

The Great Barrier Reef is now listed as critical and we will back any practical action to protect this unparalleled natural asset and help it adapt and become more resilient. It is of international importance to conserve this vital habitat and haven of biodiversity and the responsibility falls on the Queensland Government to lead the way.

The LNP welcomes the spending on projects for the Great Barrier Reef rejuvenation and water quality and will monitor the effectiveness of these initiatives in protecting this precious asset.

On the Government's flagship \$500 million Land Restoration Fund we again saw little progress. Less than one fifth of the announced funding for this carbon farming initiative has been allocated. This is despite this being an election commitment from way back in 2017.

The Minister also confirmed at estimates that the green bond intended to pay for this has not even been issued yet.

The only commitment of a timeframe we could get from the Minister to deliver this huge program was "over a period of time" – astoundingly vague for a 'flagship' initiative and such a large fund.

Concerns have been raised about how difficult the LRF is to access, particularly about the workshops run for landholders. Feedback from landholders was that the workshops were overly complex and all attendees walked away with was a stack of hard to understand Powerpoint slides.

We found out the cost of those was \$362,823 with around \$260,000 spent on consultants. Those issues need to be addressed or regional Queenslanders, the key stakeholders in making this work, won't be involved in the way they should be.

Service Delivery Statement 2-46 showed the Government did in fact reach and slightly exceed their target for planned burning to reduce fuel loads in Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service managed estate. This was a broad figure referred to regularly to seemingly make it appear as though adequate management is being undertaken.

With over half of Fraser Island burnt to a crisp, it raises questions about this specific area and how this precious UNESCO World Heritage site is overseen.

The Opposition continues to express concerns over the management of this tragic, largescale destruction of almost 90,000 hectares of land on the island.

The Director General said they have "worked hand in glove" with the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services since becoming aware of the fire on 14 October. However, we were also informed during the hearing that they didn't make the decision to transfer incident control leave to QFES until 27 November.

We were also told the committees set up to advise on the management of K'gari were disbanded in 2019 to be replaced by a single committee made up of five members from the Butchulla people, five scientific members, five members from the broader community run by an independent chair.

That process began in November 2019 but has not been completed with the Department blaming the impact of COVID-19 and the caretaker period.

The LNP will be following the inquiry into the fires and the management of this heritage listed icon to ensure everything possible is done to protect K'gari.

At the 2020 election Labor committed to deliver a 'Climate Action Plan 2020-2030' to sit in addition to the 'Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017 - 2030' and the 'Climate Transition Strategy'. Considering the former of those reports cost \$3 million to produce, it was surprising to hear the Minister commit to produce this new document internally within the Department.

There was also no clarity on the difference between this plan and the previous two. The Opposition questions whether this is again more virtue-signaling rather than tangible action from Labor.

The Budget allocated \$28 million towards protected areas over 4 years. This compares poorly to the LNP's election commitment of \$80 million to expand Queensland's protected areas estate.

Labor pledged to reach 17% as an election commitment in 2017. So far, they are sitting at 8.24%, an increase of not even half a percent since the 2015 Budget which had 7.8% of our state protected. In the next year, their target is to increase this by just 0.1% to 8.25%. At that rate, it is estimated Labor will reach their target in 127 years.

The lack of ambition and investment to protect more of Queensland is particularly disappointing given that the answer to Pre-Hearing Question on Notice No. 18 revealed over \$42 million is sitting in the Government's Environmental Offset account.

The LNP wants to see more done to improve scientific literacy and communication. There was very little to comment on in the Budget in this area. In the Service Delivery Statement, its aim for science would be to increase the value, participation, contribution and impact of science however there is nothing to show how this is going to be achieved.

Labor presides over the highest youth unemployment rate in the nation, at the time of the Budget it was 15.5%. Queensland needs positive action to bring this number down and the LNP will support programs to do that, should Labor put any forward.

It was noted during Estimates that days after criticising the Federal Youth Minister for not knowing the number of young Queenslanders underemployed, the Minister was asked the same question but unfortunately didn't know the figure either and had to take it on notice.

The lack of ambition and results across these portfolios continues to leave Queensland lagging behind other states. The LNP would like to see progress made and will support Government action that will achieve it, however there is little in this Budget to give us confidence they will.

Conclusion

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

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

The LNP will unleash economic growth by:

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

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



Mr Rob Molhoek
Deputy Chair
Member for Southport



Dr Mark Robinson
Member for Oodgeroo

Mr Stephen Andrew, MP
Member for Mirani

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION - ONE NATION PARTY COMMITTEE MEMBER

OUT OF CONTROL DEBT BURDEN

With this Budget, Queenslanders learned that Government borrowings would now reach \$130 billion by 2023 with annual deficits for the next four years at least.

All this at a time of plummeting State revenues and rock bottom levels of confidence in the business and wider community.

Queensland's fundamental economic indicators were all in bad shape going into Covid.

We had an ageing population and an economy riddled with pre-existing structural problems. In addition to that, Queensland had the highest rate of business foreclosures, a massively inflated property bubble, and the absolute lowest level of business confidence in the country.

So Covid was just the final tipping point and we won't know the true cost of that until all the Government stimulus and support programs end around March this year.

I was very concerned to see in the Budget that the majority of the Government's loan borrowings are being spent on day to day operations. That is, on simply paying the bills and keeping the lights on.

That is a very bad sign. It means we are no longer borrowing for growth, we are borrowing to survive.

It also means that the debt we are carrying is not just unsustainable, it is probably unpayable.

REEF CREDITS WILL HURT FARMERS

The Government's new Reef Credits system would act as an indirect cap on the number of cattle in reef catchment areas, and poses a serious threat to the productivity and profitability of the region's Beef Industry.

The 'Reef Credits' system will be set up by a 'public-private partnership' between government and the financial industry with the stated aim of 'incentivising' farmers into changing the way they farm.

Two of the three ways farmers can earn "Reef Credits" under the new scheme, are specific to the livestock industry, with 'reef credits' on offer for farmers who 'improve gullies and wetlands' that are "damaged by grazing activities".

Clearly the easiest way for cattle farmers to achieve what is being asked of them, is simply to reduce the number of livestock on their properties.

Similar schemes in New Zealand and Canada started off with farmers fencing off waterways and wetland zones and ended in them making huge reductions in their livestock numbers in order to achieve the scheme's targets. It's been a massive problem for the dairy industry in New Zealand.

MORE INVESTMENT IN THE QUEENSLAND REEF WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

In Central and Northern regions of Queensland, the Queensland Reef Water Quality program has led to enormous costs in stress, a mountain of red/green tape and probably billions in lost investment and job opportunities. The true cost is reflected in all the farms that foreclose or that are never started, jobs never created, and time lost complying with bureaucratic processes.

The adverse impacts of the Reef Water Quality Program are being felt across the economic spectrum in regional Queensland, from small-scale agricultural activities to regional residential developments, dam construction projects and mining permits.

Here in Queensland, our farmers are affected by almost 18,000 pages of regulations in more than 75 Acts of Parliament.

At a time of economic crisis, and many farmers doing it tough, now is not the time to tighten the screws just a little bit more.

The last thing our farmers need is more stress and more costs that yet another round of Reef Water Quality Program activities will inevitably entail.

If this keeps up, the Government will not only destroy the State's Agricultural Sector it will jeopardise the Food Security of Australia.

CONDUCT OF ESTIMATES

From the start it was clear that as a member of the cross-bench I would not be given the opportunity to fully interrogate officials and Government Ministers. This fear was borne out during hearings and in the calling of witnesses.

It is acknowledged that any public hearings will have some limitations on time and resources. But the Labor MPs' dominance of the Committees wasted valuable time during hearings, with repeated "Dorothy Dixier" questions allowing Ministers and officials to fill up the time with information that was irrelevant or already publicly available.

With Government members holding 50 per cent of the Committee's membership, 50 per cent of time during the Inquiry's hearings was lost to such questioning.

Clearly the importance and seriousness of this Bill, called for a more transparent and accountable approach. The limited time that non-government members had to question Witnesses in particular, was also curtailed.

On some occasions, legitimate questions within the terms of reference, were ruled out of order with no explanation or ability to put points of debate.



Stephen Andrew MP
State Member for Mirani
Member QLD Parliamentary Health & Environment Committee (HEC)
11 February 2021