

2023-24 Budget Estimates – Appropriation Bill 2023



Report No. 33, 57th Parliament
Community Support and Services Committee
August 2023

Community Support and Services Committee

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Acknowledgements

The committee thanks:

- Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts
- Minister for Housing, and
- Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services.

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 Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts; the Minister for Housing; and the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services, and their departmental officers for their co-operation in providing information to the committee throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the Chair Corrine McMillan MP and 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.



Kim Richards MP

Acting Chair

August 2023

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the committee

The Community Support and Services 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 areas of portfolio responsibility are:

- Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts
- Housing
- Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services.

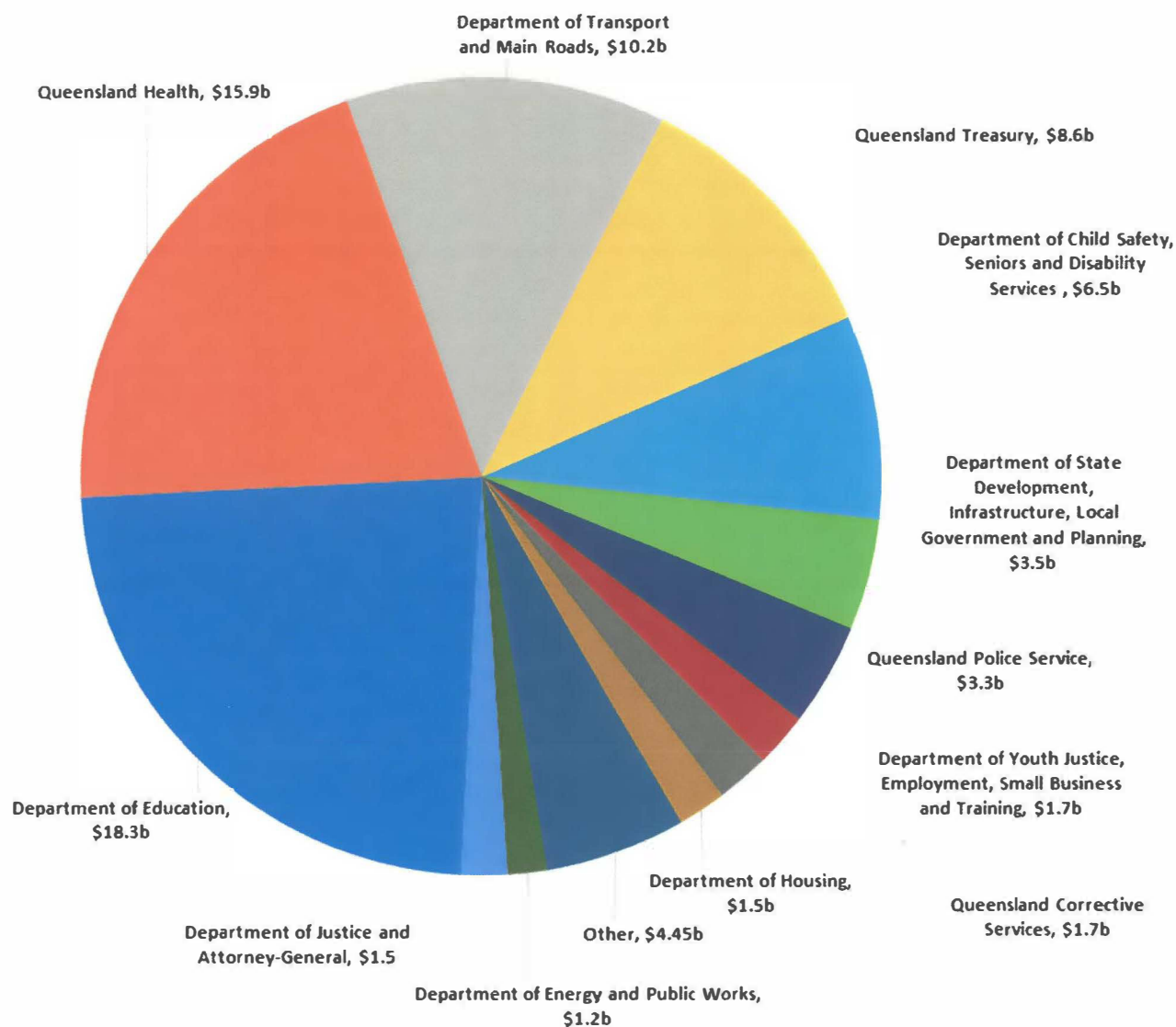
On 16 June 2023, the Appropriation Bill 2023 and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.²

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 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill the committee assists the Parliament in its scrutiny of the Government's proposed expenditure.

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.

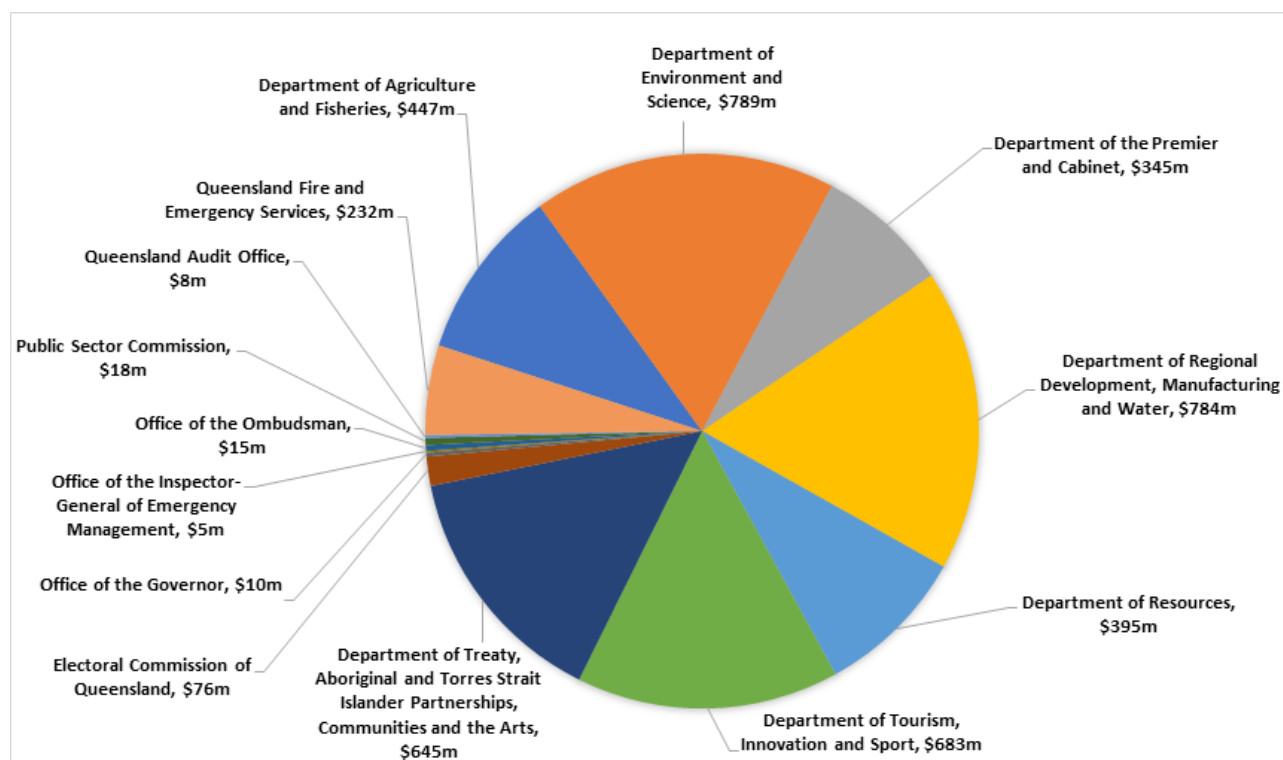
The Appropriation for 2023-24 is \$78,411,379,000.³ The proposed expenditure across Government by portfolio is:



Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 1⁴

³ Appropriation Bill 2023, section 2.

⁴ The figures used in the pie chart have been rounded.

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

Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 1⁵

The committee's examination of the Appropriation Bill 2023 is in relation to the:

- Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts
- Department of Housing
- Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services.

On 10 August 2023, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts, the Minister for Housing, and the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services. 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 of the issues the committee 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.

⁵ The figures used in the pie chart have been rounded.

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided the Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts, the Minister for Housing, and the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services with questions on notice in relation to the estimates. Responses to all the questions were received.

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

1.3 Participation by other Members

The committee gave leave for other (non-committee) Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in the hearing. The following Members participated in the public hearing sessions:

- Fiona Simpson MP, Member for Maroochydore
- Dr Christian Rowan MP, Member for Moggill
- John-Paul Langbroek MP, Member for Surfers Paradise
- Amanda Camm MP, Member for Whitsunday
- Tim Mander MP, Member for Everton
- Stephen Andrew MP, Member for Mirani
- 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.

3 Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts

The Minister has responsibility for the following agencies, services and statutory entities:⁶



The Minister's responsibilities also include:⁷



To assist the committee with its consideration of portfolio estimates, and in keeping with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders, the chief executives of the following organisations were present at the hearing on 10 August 2023:

- Family Responsibilities Commission
- Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art
- Queensland Museum
- Queensland Performing Arts Centre
- Queensland Theatre Company
- State Library of Queensland.⁸

⁶ Queensland Budget 2023-24, Service Delivery Statements (SDS), Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p (i).

⁷ Queensland Budget 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p (i).

⁸ Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders sets out a list of statutory entities to which direct questioning of chief executives at estimates applies.

3.1 Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts

The Honourable Leeanne Enoch MP, Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts, is the Minister responsible for the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts. The department has the following 4 service areas:

- Treaty and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Services
- Community Services
- Youth Engagement
- Arts Queensland.⁹

The objectives of these services areas are to:

- progress the Path to Treaty through truth-telling and healing, and to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to increase cultural, social and economic opportunities
- provide accessible, timely and responsive community services and support for Queenslanders
- elevate youth perspectives through the development of relevant Queensland Government, and policies, programs, and services, enabling them to shape social and economic outcomes
- enhance Queenslanders' access to arts and culture, through investment in the creation, development and presentation of arts products, cultural experiences and cultural infrastructure.¹⁰

3.1.1 Budget overview

The proposed budget comprises \$492.035 million in departmental expenditure and \$222.519 million in funding to be administered by the department on behalf of the state.¹¹

The proposed \$492.035 million in departmental expenses represents an increase of \$147.355 million on estimated actual departmental spending in 2022-23, however, the Service Delivery Statements state that the 2023-24 budget revenue and expenses are not directly comparable to the 2022-23 revenue and expenses as a consequence of recent machinery-of-government changes.¹²

The estimated \$222.519 million in administered expenses is a decrease on the department's estimated actual 2022-23 budgeted amount, however, the Service Delivery Statements state that the figures are not directly comparable to the 2022-23 revenue and expenses, again as a consequence of the recent machinery-of-government changes.¹³

The department administers funds for Arts statutory bodies including: the Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland Museum, Queensland Performing Arts Trust and State Library of Queensland. Financial statements for the Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland Museum, Queensland Performing Arts Trust and

⁹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 2.

¹⁰ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 2.

¹¹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 9.

¹² Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 11. Machinery-of-government changes occurred on 23 May 2023.

¹³ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 11.

State Library of Queensland are separately reported within the 2023–24 Service Delivery Statements. Administered funding provided for each entity in 2023–24 includes:¹⁴

- \$72.2 million for State Library of Queensland
- \$35.8 million for Queensland Art Gallery
- \$38.3 million for Queensland Museum
- \$11.1 million for Queensland Performing Arts Trust.

The department also administers payments for natural disasters on behalf of the Queensland Government and the Australian Government, for example, Emergency Hardship Assistance Grants, Essential Services Hardship Assistance Grants, Essential Household Contents Grants, Structural Assistance Grants and the Essential Services Safety and Reconnection Grants.¹⁵

To fund this budgeted expenditure, the Appropriation Bill 2023 proposes that Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts receive a departmental appropriation of \$460.298 million in 2023-24, with the remainder of the \$31.089 million in planned departmental spending to be financed through a combination of user charges and fees, royalties and land rents, grants and other contributions, and other revenue.¹⁶ The 2023-24 budget projects an operating deficit of \$648,000.

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 budgeted and actual cash appropriations for the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts in 2022-23.

Appropriations	Budget 2022-23 \$'000	Est. Actual 2022-23 \$'000	Vote 2023-24 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	308,504	297,790	461,865
equity adjustment	4,200	5,315	12,324
<i>Administered Items</i>	2,819,639	2,783,226	171,021
Vote	3,132,343	3,086,331	645,210

Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p. 13.

As highlighted in the table above, the total combined 2023-24 appropriation of just over \$645 million represents a decrease on last year's budgeted appropriations, however, the Service Delivery Statements state that the figures are not directly comparable as a consequence of the recent machinery-of-government changes.¹⁷

¹⁴ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 11.

¹⁵ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 11.

¹⁶ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 12.

¹⁷ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 11.

Trends in appropriation

As a consequence of the recent machinery-of-government changes, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2023-24.

Budget highlights – Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts

The 2023-24 budget highlights for the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts include: ¹⁸

Support engagement of First Nations economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1.4 million in new funding over 4 years
Expand the delivery of school breakfast programs delivered by non-government organisations in areas experiencing hardship across Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2.7 million over 2 years
Extend and expand food and emergency relief throughout Queensland in 2023-24 to continue the provision of emergency relief supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$4.3 million
Upgrade and expand the Mount Isa public intoxication diversionary centre, to enable tailored services for men and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$4 million capital over 2 years
Support the preservation of the state's significant collections, in addition to the maintenance and management of the heritage-listed Queensland Cultural Centre as home to the state's leading cultural institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$8.3 million over 2 years

3.1.2 Capital program

Capital purchases of \$112 million have been planned by the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts in 2023-24 for a range of projects, including:

- \$44.1 million to continue construction of the new performing arts venue at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, benefiting Queensland artists and audiences
- \$12.2 million to continue the upgrade and construction program for neighbourhood centres and other key social infrastructure
- \$11.4 million to address Stage 2 of urgent and unavoidable critical infrastructure renewal works at the Queensland Cultural Centre
- \$9.0 million to deliver priority infrastructure projects across state owned arts and cultural facilities
- \$8.0 million for capital asset renewal works, compliance and safety improvements and amenities upgrades across the Queensland Cultural Centre
- \$5.9 million towards the upgrade and acquisition of capital equipment within the Queensland Performing Arts Centre
- \$3.4 million towards the design and construction of a new neighbourhood centre in Rockhampton
- \$2.9 million towards the redevelopment of the Bribie Island neighbourhood centre. ¹⁹

¹⁸ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, p 4.

¹⁹ Queensland Budget 2023-24, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p 112.

The Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts' 2023–24 budget also provides for capital grants of \$2.2 million, which includes \$1.45 million towards the construction of the Thursday Island Splash Park, and \$763,000 towards the construction of the Atherton Neighbourhood Centre.²⁰

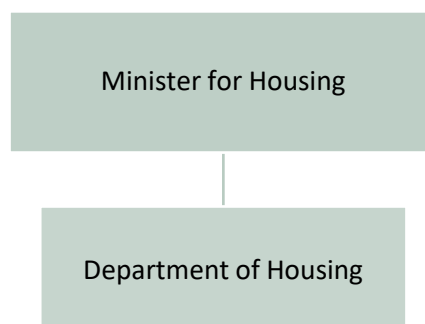
3.1.3 Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts included:	Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 10 August 2023, page no:
Staffing, meeting customs with Minister, cultural awareness	4, 5, 7
Staffing, including allocation to communities, diversity	6, 20, 24
Managing conflicts of interest	6
Path to Treaty, implementation and funding, other jurisdictions	7, 8, 9, 10, 12
Attendance and performance of students in remote schools	11,
Museums, repatriation of ancestral remains	12
Procurement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses	13, 15
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economic Strategy	14
Investment mapping	15
Queensland Art Gallery, travel expenses	17, 18
Queensland Maritime Museum, funding	19, 21
First Nations cultural centres, funding	15, 19
Cultural tourism, funding	21
Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan	15
Implementation of recommendations from <i>Public Records Act 2022</i> review	22
Emergency relief and food security, remote communities	23
Staffing, referrals for alleged corrupt conduct, trends	6, 23, 24
Grow 2022-26 Action Plan, implementation, benefits	25

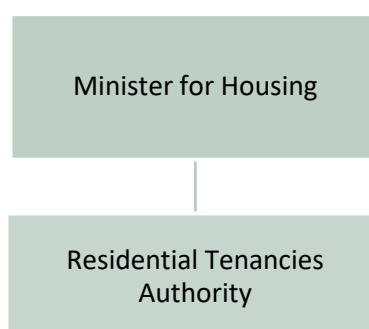
²⁰ Queensland Budget 2023-24, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p 113.

4 Minister for Housing

The Minister has responsibility for the following agencies, services and statutory entities:²¹



The Minister's responsibilities also include:²²



To assist the committee with its consideration of portfolio estimates, and in keeping with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders, the chief executive of the following organisation was present at the hearing on 10 August 2023:

- Residential Tenancies Authority.²³

4.1 Department of Housing

The Honourable Meaghan Scanlon MP, Minister for Housing, is the Minister responsible for the Department of Housing. The department has the following service area:

- Housing and Homelessness Services.²⁴

The objectives of this services area is to:

- benefit Queenslanders and their communities by providing housing and homelessness services that are responsive, integrated, and accessible, and enrich the lives of Queenslanders.²⁵

4.1.1 Budget overview

The proposed budget comprises over \$1.67 billion in departmental expenditure and almost \$90 million in funding to be administered by the Department of Housing on behalf of the state.²⁶

²¹ Queensland Budget 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p (i).

²² Queensland Budget 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p (i).

²³ Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders sets out a list of statutory entities to which direct questioning of chief executives at estimates applies.

²⁴ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p 1.

²⁵ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p 1.

²⁶ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p 5.

The Department of Housing's total expenses are estimated to be \$1.670 billion in 2023-24, however, the Department of Housing Service Delivery Statements states that the figures are not comparable to the 2022-23 Estimated Actual as a result of machinery-of-government changes.²⁷

The Department of Housing's total revenues are estimated to be slightly over \$1.514 billion in 2023-24, however, again, the Department of Housing Service Delivery Statements states that the figures are not comparable to the 2022-23 Estimated Actual as a result of machinery-of-government changes.²⁸

To fund the department's budgeted expenditure, the Appropriation Bill 2023 proposes that the Department of Housing receive a departmental appropriation of \$1.029 billion in 2023-24, with the remainder of the almost \$484.697 million in planned departmental spending to be financed through a combination of user charges and fees, royalties and land rents, grants and other contributions, interest and distributions from managed funds, and other revenue.²⁹

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

Appropriations	Budget 2022-23 \$'000	Est. Actual 2022-23 \$'000	Vote 2023-24 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	1,283,257	1,194,177	1,026,401
equity adjustment	279,044	350,926	457,265
<i>Administered Items</i>	200,889	253,562	35,496
Vote	1,763,190	1,798,665	1,519,162

Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p. 11.

As highlighted in the table above, the total combined 2023-24 appropriation of just over \$1.519 billion represents a decrease of \$244.028 million on last year's budgeted appropriations, and a decrease of \$279.5 million on the estimated actual total appropriations for the department in 2022-23.

Trends in appropriation

As a consequence of the recent machinery-of-government changes, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2023-24.

²⁷ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p 7. Machinery-of-government changes occurred on 23 May 2023.

²⁸ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p 7.

²⁹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, p 8.

Budget highlights – Department of Housing

The 2023-24 budget highlights for the Department of Housing include:³⁰

continue the delivery and supply of social housing as part of the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, including within remote and discrete First Nations communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> invest in a capital program of \$751 million
provide housing and support to vulnerable Queenslanders, including older women and those experiencing domestic and family violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> invest \$250.8 million
continue delivery of the Queensland Housing Summit outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide \$45.2 million over 2 years for critical housing supply, and housing support initiatives
continue the delivery of the Helping Seniors Secure Their Homes program being trialled in Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa local government areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide additional funding of \$15 million over 2 years commencing 2022–23

4.1.2 Capital program

The total capital program in 2023-24 for the Department of Housing is \$751 million, including capital works of \$501.9 million, capital grants of \$239.9 million and other property, plant and equipment of \$9.2 million.³¹ This funding includes:

- \$441.4 million to deliver social housing dwellings, commence and continue construction, and upgrade existing social housing dwellings
- \$60.5 million to deliver social housing dwellings in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, commence and continue construction of dwellings, and upgrade existing social housing dwellings.³²

4.1.3 Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Housing

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for the Department of Housing:	Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 10 August 2023, page no:
Investment in social and affordable housing	29
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, investment, transfer of ownership	29, 40, 42, 46
Social housing register, applications, allocations, waiting list, future directions	29, 30
Social housing, damage to properties, remediation costs	31
Partnerships with social and community housing providers	33

³⁰ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Housing, pp 1-2.

³¹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p 52.

³² Queensland Budget, 2023-24, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p 52.

Support to people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, young people	34, 35, 36
Support to renters, rent freeze considerations	34, 35, 38
Rates of housing insecurity and risks of homelessness	39
Social housing, number of dwellings, supply, acquisition, regional areas	39
Homelessness services, support to frontline staff	40
Progress on Closing the Gap, housing and overcrowding in First Nations' communities	40, 41
Support to people experiencing domestic and family violence, safe accommodation	41, 44
Help to Home program, outcomes, expenditure	43, 44
Purchase of existing homes by the state, impact on private rental market	45
State leasing of properties for social housing	45
Rental reforms, consultation, legislative process	45
Community housing, funding, trends in supply	46, 49
Outcomes of the recent Queensland Government Land Audit	48
Social housing stock, construction of new homes, purchase of new homes	47, 48, 49, 50
Supply of social housing, Pinkenba facility, the Housing Investment Fund	50, 51, 54
Support to people with disability, provision of accessible housing	53

5 Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services

The Minister has responsibility for the following agencies, services and statutory entities:³³

Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors
and Disability Services

Department of Child Safety,
Seniors and Disability Services

5.1 Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services

The Honourable Craig Crawford MP, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services, is the Minister responsible for the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services. The department has the following two service areas:

- Child and Family Services
- Seniors and Disability Services.³⁴

The objectives of these services areas are to:

- enable families to safely care for their children and young people, and provide services to support the safety, belonging and wellbeing of children and young people not able to be cared for by their parents
- deliver and fund high quality services and safeguards and promote the inclusion, rights and social and economic participation of seniors, carers and people with disability.³⁵

5.1.1 Budget overview

The proposed budget comprises \$2.381 billion in departmental expenditure and \$4.032 billion in funding to be administered by the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services on behalf of the state.³⁶

The proposed \$2.381 billion in departmental expenses represents an increase of \$17.288 million on estimated actual departmental spending in 2022-23, which the department's Service Delivery Statements states is mainly in supplies, services and grants and subsidies for the delivery of programs.³⁷

The total administered budget for 2023-24 for the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services is \$4.032 billion. In 2023-24, \$1.780 billion of this budgeted amount is allocated for energy, rates and water concessions and rebates administered by the department. This includes an allocation of \$1.435 billion for the Cost of Living Rebate, provided as an electricity rebate for households. A further \$2.243 billion is budgeted for Queensland estimated cash contribution to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This represents Queensland's estimated contribution net of services provided on an in-kind basis in accordance with bilateral agreements with the Australian Government.³⁸

³³ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services p (i).

³⁴ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 2.

³⁵ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 2.

³⁶ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 8.

³⁷ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 10.

³⁸ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 10.

The department also administers the Queensland Government's participation in the National Redress Scheme for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (the scheme), with the provision at 30 June 2023 estimated at \$318.6 million. The scheme provides eligible applicants support through monetary payment; access to counselling and psychological care; and the option to receive a direct personal response from the institution responsible.³⁹

To fund this budgeted expenditure, the Appropriation Bill 2023 proposes that the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services receive a departmental appropriation of \$2.343 billion in 2023-24, with the remainder of the almost \$38.737 million in planned departmental spending to be financed through a combination of user charges and fees, grants and other contributions and other revenue.⁴⁰

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2023 illustrates the combined total of the cash appropriations for the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services for 2023-24, compared with the budgeted and actual cash appropriations for the department in 2022-23.

Appropriations	Budget 2022-23 \$'000	Est. Actual 2022-23 \$'000	Vote 2023-24 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	2,282,057	2,342,674	2,345,650
equity adjustment	17,055	8,395	21,356
<i>Administered Items</i>	72,460	72,769	4,115,501
Vote	2,371,572	2,423,838	6,482,507

Source: Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p. 9.

As highlighted in the table above, the total combined 2023-24 appropriation of \$6.482 billion represents an increase of over \$4 billion on last year's budgeted appropriations for the department. According to the Service Delivery Statements, total expenditure in 2023-24 has increased when compared to 2022-23 Estimate Actual in line with revenue, with the increases mainly in supplies and services and grants and subsidies for the delivery of programs. The increase in total revenue from 2022-23 Estimated Actual to the 2023-24 Budget is mainly due to the recent machinery-of-government changes. Furthermore, there has been an increase in funding in the 2023-24 Budget for Child and Family Services for reforms aimed at eliminating the disproportionate overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.⁴¹

Trends in appropriation

As a consequence of the recent machinery-of-government changes, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2023-24.

³⁹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 10.

⁴⁰ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 11.

⁴¹ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, p 10. Machinery-of-government changes occurred on 23 May 2023.

Budget highlights – Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services

The 2023-24 budget highlights for the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services include: ⁴²

delivery of local, community-based Family and Child Connect services that help provide information, advice, and referrals for families in need of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$48.5 million over 3 years from 2024–25 and \$16.2 million ongoing from 2027–28 with a further \$17.1 million over 3 years from 2024–25 and \$5.8 million ongoing
to support targets to increase the number of children and young people living in kinship care arrangements and decrease the number of children and young people living in residential care, including regional dedicated kin teams to find, connect and assess kinship carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$25.2 million over 4 years and \$6.5 million ongoing from 2027–28
for activities and reforms aimed at eliminating the disproportionate overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system and represent a fundamental shift in how child protection, family support and other services work with, and for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$167.2 million over 4 years and \$20 million ongoing from 2027–28, with a further \$14 million over 4 years and \$1.5 million ongoing
to provide cost of living relief for Queensland households and small businesses through a Cost of Living Rebate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1.435 billion in 2023–24

5.1.2 Capital program

The budgeted capital program for the department in 2023-24 is \$49.6 million. These funds provide include:

- \$36 million in 2023–24 of a total of \$93.5 million for Unify (Integrated Client Management System (ICMS) Replacement program) to strengthen information sharing and collaboration across Queensland Government, social services, and justice sectors
- \$6 million for Child and Family Services facilities including the fit out and upgrade of Child Safety service centres, office accommodation and Residential Care properties
- \$2.8 million to enhance and develop information systems and programs to provide additional system functionality, information security and contemporary technology to improve service delivery
- \$1.7 million to advance the provision of infrastructure for clients transitioning from Forensic Disability Services to accommodation within the Wacol Disability Services Precinct
- \$1.7 million to upgrade Forensic Disability Services accommodation to support people with cognitive disability who require access to specialist forensic support and treatment. ⁴³

⁴² Queensland Budget, 2023-24, SDS, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, pp 3-4.

⁴³ Queensland Budget, 2023-24, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p 30.

5.1.3 Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services included:	Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 10 August 2023, page no:
Closure of the McIntyre Centre, Riding for the Disabled	57
Security of tenure at supported facilities	57
Disability accommodation, number of properties	58
Forensic Disability Services, client numbers	58
Staffing, separations, outcomes from corruption and misconduct investigations	59
Seniors and concession cards	59
Support to seniors, prevention of elder abuse	60
Seniors Expo	60
Seniors Month	61
Access to disability services and respite care, managing transition between state and federal provision	61
Children with disability in care, access to school transport entitlements	62
Access to reproductive health care	62
Transport subsidy scheme, future directions	62
Disability workforce, impact of student visa changes	63
Affordable accessible housing	63
NDIS, access, services, regional and remote areas, support for people not eligible	64, 66
Disability Royal Commission, response to recommendations	65
<i>Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009</i> , delivery, outcomes	65
Disability Action Week	66
Reform of restrictive practices	66
Advocacy services, equitable access in regional and remote areas	67
Children in out of home care and residential care, numbers	67

Child Safety staffing, case loads, vacancies, measures to address workforce shortages	68, 71
Review of residential care, funding, timing, staffing, terms of reference	69, 71
Expenditure on specialised individual support care	70
Service providers, licensed, unlicensed, funding allocation	70
National Redress Scheme	72
My Life in Care Survey, 2022	73
Support for young adults under 21 years of age leaving care	73
Policies regarding the use of illegal substances in residential care	74
Residential care standards and reported practices	74, 75
Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, government response	76
Support to foster and kinship carers	77
Family Caring for Family Program, development, trial outcomes	78
Support for children with disabilities living in out of home care	78

Statements of Reservation



COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES 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.

TREATY, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTNERSHIPS, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION

It was confirmed that the Minister has asked non-Indigenous staff to leave meetings whilst the Minister spoke with Indigenous staff separately. The Director General was asked if she supported segregated meetings along race lines and the response was that she supports the Minister who at times wishes to speak with First Nations staff and personally she doesn't have a problem with this.

The Minister was asked how she managed conflicts of interest, given a speech the Minister made in 2016 and the previous estimates questions. The Minister argued that it was not an issue, and any conflicts of interest would be addressed through advice from the Integrity Commissioner.

The Family Responsibility Commission Annual report referenced two communities, Aurukun and Doomadgee with declining school attendance rates. The attendance at Aurukun in 2017 was 56% and in 2022 it was 34%. The Minister was asked what meetings she had had with the education minister to discuss what is being done. The Minister stated she had broad conversations with the education minister regarding a number of issues but nothing specific regarding attendance.

The Family Responsibility Commission report also referenced sorry business as affecting school attendance in Doomadgee. When the Minister was asked what progress has been made on a protocol for sorry business, again the answer did not address the issue directly but rather spoke about cultural practices.

The Minister was asked to provide an update on the water contamination issue in Yarrabah. It was disappointing that the Minister was unable to provide an update, instead stated it was not her portfolio area.

ARTS, COMMUNITIES

Arts

Questions were asked around the procurement processes for the selection of a specific travel agency utilised by the Queensland Art Gallery. Since 2019, the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art has spent almost \$95,000 on a boutique travel agency rather than utilising the State Government's QTravel services. The Director of the Art Gallery did not have a specific answer as to why this travel agency has been repeatedly used, as opposed to the Queensland government travel agency but did say they have been using Travel Associates for around 10 years. The Director of the Art Gallery later confirmed that the use of such specific travel agencies does meet the gallery's procurement policy, and that the procurement policy was recently reviewed through an internal audit which found practices were consistent with government practice. However, no formal evidence of this review and approved practice was tabled as part of the Estimates Committee Hearing.

Estimates questions revealed that there is no specific funding and no forecast expenditure for the Queensland Maritime Museum to save historic tugboat the *Forceful*.

The Minister was also asked if the State Government would incorporate the Queensland Maritime Museum into the Queensland Museum Network, given the fact that the Maritime Museums of other state jurisdictions including South Australia and Western Australia, are state-funded. The Minister stated that the Queensland Maritime Museum was independent and has always been that way and gave no indication that any funding would be allocated to bring the Queensland Maritime Museum into the Queensland Museum Network.

Communities

Last year's estimates discussed corrupt conduct matters and it was revealed four allegations were under investigation with the integrity services unit. When asked for an update with regard to the outcome of those matters, the Director General was unable to provide this information due to the machinery of government changes.

An update was provided for 2022-2023 and it was revealed that the ethical standards unit received 26 new referrals regarding employee conduct; 3 of the matters related to alleged

corrupt conduct, 21 matters related to alleged misconduct and 2 matters remained in assessment as at 30 June 2023.

The Director General was asked for a breakdown of communities' staff including diversity. The information provided was that there are about 200 staff in communities and the breakdown is as follows. Culturally and linguistically diverse or born overseas, 13.46 per cent; employees who speak a language other than English at home, 7.31 per cent; employees who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, 5.38 per cent; employees identifying that they have a disability, 8.46 per cent; women, 75 per cent; and women in leadership, 71 per cent. These figures were drawn from the employee opinion survey that had a return of 85 per cent.

HOUSING

The fact that Queensland is in a Housing Crisis is now well-established in the public discourse. Yet despite the Government's rhetoric on the issue, the situation across Queensland is not improving. Many Queenslanders, even working Queenslanders, are living in cars, tents, or couch surfing. The situation remains dire. Yet the Palaszczuk Government continues to pedal false hope to those who are vulnerable in our communities.

The most startling revelations out of the examination of the Housing Portfolio was the fact that the number of people culled from the social housing register was greater than the number who were allocated a home. Some 7,000 applications for social housing were struck off the list. Given the Palaszczuk Government's record in actually building new social homes, it appears this is now the only way it will be able to reduce the number. There are still 41,000 Queenslanders waiting for a home.

With approximately 7,000 applications culled from the waiting list, approximately 6,000 added and approximately 5,000 Queenslanders allocated a home, there has effectively been a net increase of 1,000 applications to the Social Housing Register.

The Opposition has been critical of the Government's failure to add to housing supply, and the \$2b Housing Investment fund, which after two years has failed to build a single home, is testament to this. The Government has now resorted to buying existing properties from the private market on a broad scale, which the Opposition has genuine concerns about. Purchasing freehold properties out of an already stretched market will only shift the problem from one cohort to another. It doesn't do anything to address the key issue of the housing crisis – which is an acute under-supply of homes.

Damage caused to social housing properties also came under scrutiny. In the pre-hearing questions on notice, the Minister was asked to provide the value of damage caused wilfully or maliciously to social housing properties. Rather than providing a fulsome appraisal of the situation, the Minister chose to provide a figure for "excessive wear and tear", valued at approximately \$90,000. Under Opposition scrutiny, it became clear that the figure for damage sustained to social housing dwellings was much greater, with \$1.7m in remediation work required last financial year, and a total of \$325m for planned and unplanned maintenance set to occur in this financial year. The Minister's decision to provide an imprecise answer to a direct question is a window into the Palaszczuk Government's inner workings, and their obsession with how things look, rather than how they really are.

Analysis of the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services also identified that Indigenous Housing in Queensland had gone backwards, despite an enormous investment of \$1.6B. Only the Palaszczuk Government could spend \$1.6B but decrease the number of homes.

Failed Palaszczuk Government policy was also addressed in the hearing, with the disastrous \$40m “Help to Home” program now confirmed to be wound up, and capping rents to once a year also now accepted as an abject failure. The decision by the Government to release a discussion paper after ramming through the legislation earlier this year, without proper parliamentary and committee scrutiny, is but one example of the hubris which is now rife through the Palaszczuk Government.

Having a secure, stable and safe home is something that all Queenslanders need to thrive. Despite their rhetoric, the Palaszczuk Government have failed to deliver this.

SENIORS, DISABILITY SERVICES

Questions were raised regarding the closure of the McIntyre Centre Riding for the Disabled in Pinjarra Hills. The Minister was asked, given the State Government’s significant investment into this centre, what actions have been taken. The Minister explained there was nothing further for the State Government to do and there was no consideration to purchasing the land.

Examination of AS&RS (Accommodation Support and Respite Services) revealed that the state operates around 82 properties under the specialist disability accommodation program. Two of these properties are potentially going to be sold leaving the tenants, who are people with disabilities, living under extreme uncertainty. The Director General assured the committee the department was trying to resolve this issue quickly to provide the tenants with reassurance and that no other properties were affected.

Follow up questions were asked from last year’s estimates regarding suspected corrupt conduct and misconduct matters. Unfortunately, due to the Machinery of Government changes no outcomes were given.

It was disappointing to learn that the Minister had made no representation to the Federal Government regarding recent changes to the student visa subclass 500 work restrictions that has seen workable hours drop to 48 hours per fortnight if working in disability support, particularly given the workforce challenges in Queensland.

Concerns were raised around NDIS assessment services in rural and remote areas, given there is a thin market problem. The Minister supported the ongoing funding for this financial year of the ART (access and referral team) to continue these services in rural and remote areas including First Nations communities, however did acknowledge the lack of providers.

Questions around rural and remote areas receiving an equal share of the \$16.2 million for advocacy services were asked. The Minister acknowledged the need for all areas to have properly serviced advocacy and discussed continued funding across the state. No plans to address the difficulties of providing these services in remote areas were forthcoming.

CHILD SAFETY

The safety of vulnerable children must be a priority of any government, yet it is clear this is not the case for this Palaszczuk Labor Government. At the Estimates Hearing we heard the Minister and Director-General unashamedly talk about data-cleansing, resulting in data not being released for months on end. Further, the Minister himself is still relying on March quarter data and has not been briefed on the current numbers of children in care. To have a Minister who is not being briefed with up-to-date information is unacceptable.

Further, the Minister clearly stated the average caseload for Child Safety Officers is based on funded positions. Given the pre-Hearing QONs revealed vacancy rates of up to almost 30% for some regions it means the true caseload is much higher. The Carmody Inquiry was very clear caseloads for CSOs should not exceed an average of 15. The Government is attempting to make their numbers look better by including workers in the count that aren't even there. A vacant position will not be able to check on the safety and welfare of a child. We need a clear picture of the load on each Child Safety Officer immediately.

This Minister seems determined to operate in the dark and obfuscate responsibility to anyone else. He is content with an internal review into residential care, despite serious issues being raised about these facilities and a clear lack of oversight and management over a long period of time by the Government.

No one is under any misapprehension that the consultation paper released on the day of Estimates in relation to a reportable conduct scheme is both massively overdue and a clear sign this Government only acts after tragedies occur. The Minister is trying to make up for lost time; having had this recommendation given to the Government in 2018, it has taken over 5 years and one of the country's worst allegations of child abuse to get them to act.

We will not see children any safer in Queensland when this Government continues to value its own protection over that of children.

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.



Stephen Bennett



Mark Robinson



MICHAEL BERKMAN MP

Member for Maiwar ▲

17 August 2023

Statement of Reservation - Fixing Budget Estimates

This statement of reservation is reminiscent of my statements in previous years, because the 2023 estimates process was equally as busted and had all the same hallmarks of previous years' hearings - interruptions from government MPs and committee Chairs, baseless points of order to interrupt uncomfortable questions, time-wasting monologues from Ministers, and Ministers going to great lengths to avoid answering difficult or potentially embarrassing questions. In this vein, I'll quote the final paragraphs from the dissenting report I prepared last year:

"There remains a widespread consensus in Queensland, across civil society and the press gallery, that our system of Parliamentary oversight in general and estimates in particular are hopelessly ineffective. This perception is gaining traction in other quarters, as evidenced in the final report of Coaldrake Review and the recent comments of the Clerk of the Parliament, and is feeding directly into the numerous discrete concerns that have fed into a full-blown integrity crisis in the Queensland Government.

Good governments welcome scrutiny, and budget estimates has the potential to be a key part of a healthy democracy. Now is the time for the Government to do the right thing - open itself up to genuine scrutiny and offer Queenslanders the opportunity to regain faith in our processes of public governance and State institutions."

But nothing changed from last year. If anything, the Ministers at estimates hearings this year appeared to be even more defensive, risk averse, and largely disinterested in offering a clear view into the workings of their departments. And, sadly, I think this same defensiveness and risk aversion has become more apparent in the evidence provided by some other witnesses, whose impartiality and frankness is perhaps even more integral in these hearings.

The hearings, like recent polling, suggest that the government thinks it's on a hiding to nothing. It's staggering to me that, especially in the context of recent integrity issues, they continue to show no interest in reforming estimates so it does what it's supposed to - that is, provide an opportunity for genuine scrutiny of budget spending and the broader operation of the Government in Queensland.

It's well beyond time the Palaszczuk Government accepted and responded to the serious criticism levelled by such relevant and experienced voices as Professor Peter Coaldrake AO, the Clerk of the Parliament, and former Labor MPs, including former Minister and Speaker John Mickel.

The reform proposals are not complex, and they could be adopted immediately: Appoint a non-government chair to each committee for the estimates hearings; Abolish the pointless, and frankly embarrassing, practice of Dorothy Dixers from government MPs; Allow any Member the opportunity to ask questions on notice before the hearings; Increase and at least double the amount of time for questions for each minister or portfolio area.

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It's been a couple of years now since the Leader of the Opposition announced that he intends to adopt at least some of the Greens' reform proposals, and it's well past time the Government did the same. I'll believe the LNP's commitment to meaningful reform of estimates when I see it, although I genuinely hope it doesn't come to that.

I take no issue with the general thrust of the Committee's single recommendation - "that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to". But it's difficult to concede that the Government's 2023-24 budget should be agreed to "without amendment" while the process for scrutiny of government spending remains so fundamentally flawed.



Michael Berkman MP