

## WEDNESDAY, 18 JULY 2007

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### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F—TOURISM, FAIR TRADING, WINE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN

#### Estimates Committee F Members

Mrs DA Reilly (Chair)  
Mr RO Lee  
Mr MF McArdle  
Mrs RN Menkens  
Mr TJ Nicholls  
Mrs DC Scott  
Hon. DM Wells

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#### In Attendance

Hon. MM Keech, Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women  
Mr D Smith, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Minister  
**Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development**  
Mr G O'Farrell, Director-General  
Mr R Broadfoot, Director, Financial Management Unit (Acting)  
Mr B Date, Director, Business Development, Wine Industry Development and Tourism Strategy  
**Tourism Queensland**  
Mr A Hayes, Chief Executive Officer (Acting)  
Mrs H Moore, Executive Director, Corporate Services

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#### Committee met at 8.58 am

**CHAIR:** Good morning everyone. I declare this hearing of Estimates Committee F now open. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which this parliament is built. I would like to introduce the members of the committee. I am Di Reilly, the member for Mudgeeraba and chair of the committee. Mark McArdle, the member for Caloundra, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are the Hon. Dean Wells, the member for Murrumba; Mrs Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin; Mr Timothy Nicholls, the member for Clayfield; Mrs Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge; and Mr Ronan Lee, the member for Indooroopilly. The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2007 for the areas set out in the order of appointment dated 23 May 2007.

This morning the committee will examine the organisational units in the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women. Following lunch, the committee will examine units within the portfolios of Environment and Multiculturalism and the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland.

The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: morning tea from 10.30 am to 10.45 am; lunch from 12 noon to 1 pm; and afternoon tea from 3.15 pm to 3.30 pm. There will also be a short break to allow the changeover in department staff from 4.40 to 4.50 pm. I remind all those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the

public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard, I remind members of the public that under the standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

The committee has resolved that the proceedings of the committee be broadcast and that photography be allowed during the chair's opening statements and the introductory statements of each minister, as well as for a short period during each changeover in organisational units. I remind members of the committee and the minister that under the standing orders the time limit for questions is one minute. Answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the end of each of these time limits. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given. The standing orders require that at least half the time available for questions and answers be allocated to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members.

Government members and non-government members will take turns asking questions in blocks lasting approximately 20 minutes, commencing with non-government members. The committee has given leave for non-committee members to ask the minister questions. In this regard, Miss Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore, will be participating in this morning's hearing on that basis. I ask departmental officers to identify themselves when they first come forward to answer a question if the minister refers a question to them. Before we begin, I ask that any mobile phones or pagers be switched off or switched to silent mode. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women open for examination. The time allocated is three hours. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, I understand you wish to divide your opening statement and make one at the beginning of this session and another when the hearing resumes at 10.45. I remind you that there is a time limit of five minutes in total for your opening statement and let everyone know that the time keeper will use a stopwatch to time the minister's opening statement.

**Ms KEECH:** Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for an opportunity to inform you of the exciting initiatives that my portfolio has been conducting over the past year, particularly with respect to growing jobs in the Queensland tourism industry, protecting the rights of consumers, fostering a sustainable wine industry and addressing issues affecting Queensland women. Tourism is Queensland's second largest export earner. It generates \$8.4 billion in revenue, \$18 billion in visitor spending and provides employment for more than 136,000 people around Queensland's regions. My portfolio's MPS acknowledges the significant contribution tourism makes to our Queensland economy and economic prosperity. A record base budget of \$41.6 million, together with new and special purpose funding of \$8.4 million, provides a total budget of \$50 million for Tourism Queensland this year. On top of that, Tourism Queensland derives an additional estimated \$3 million from the Sunlover licensing agreement. The continued sustainable growth of tourism throughout the state will be driven by the \$48 million Queensland Tourism Strategy which, I am proud to say, was a Beattie government 2006 election commitment. The strategy will bring high-yielding tourists, boost regional economies and create new jobs across our state.

As Australia's first and only wine minister, I am proud that Queensland is doing more than any other state to get behind its wine industry. The support from the Beattie government continues in 2007-08 with an additional half a million dollars injected into supporting Queensland's maturing wine industry. This will help continue implementation of the Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy in developing the quality of our wines and building key partnerships between the tourism, wine and hospitality industries. I intend to elaborate more on my portfolio later in this session.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will commence with the department's organisational units of Tourism and Wine Industry Development. The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Good morning, Minister and departmental staff. Minister, I refer to the MPS at page 1-38 under 'Administered Items' including Tourism Queensland, and I ask: what is the cost to Queensland taxpayers of the ongoing shuffle of senior staff at Tourism Queensland, including the departure of chairman Peter Wade, CEO Ian Mitchell and Destination Management executive director James Corvan?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Can I first of all acknowledge the terrific work that Tourism Queensland has done throughout the year. In fact, Queensland taxpayers and the Queensland tourism industry can be very proud indeed of the tremendous acknowledgement of the work that Tourism Queensland has done and the leadership it has shown in tourism throughout Queensland.

With respect to the individuals whom you have mentioned, and in particular their positions as chairman of Tourism Queensland and the CEO of Tourism Queensland and one of the executive

directors, I can inform the honourable member that with regard to chairman Peter Wade, Mr Wade was a member of the Tourism Queensland board for many years—in fact, I believe for about six years. He was deputy chair and then promoted to the chair of Tourism Queensland when Mr Terry Jackman moved on to other business interests. Mr Wade informed me that due to his extensive business and commercial interests, as well as his very strong interest in charities in Africa, he would no longer have the time to devote to the position of chairman and so I regrettably accepted his resignation.

With respect to former CEO Mr Mitchell, Mr Mitchell was employed under a contract for a period of three years and during this period the board provided a mandate for significant change across this organisation. Mr Mitchell informed the board that given that his employment contract had come to an end after those three years he had decided to seek other opportunities in the tourism industry. In particular, can I say that during this period when Mr Mitchell was CEO there were a number of key achievements that he was involved with, including the alignment of the organisational structure of the Destination Management approach, the licensing of the commercial division to Sunlover Holidays, the development of the Queensland Tourism Strategy and the launch of the 'Where Else But Queensland?' brand and new domestic brands for various destinations. I can also assure the honourable member that despite the changes at the senior levels at the chair and at the CEO level it is business as usual. The Queensland tourism industry is absolutely focused on achieving the objectives of the Queensland Tourism Strategy. I can assure the honourable member that it is business as usual in Tourism Queensland.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Minister, referring to Sunlover and the MPS at page 2-3 and the licensing of Sunlover Holidays to Australian Outback Travel, can you give details of how AOT has met the key performance requirements and the indicators that were put in place as part of the agreement? Does the licensing agreement allow Sunlover to be sold by AOT?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. With regard to the licensing of AOT, this came about because Tourism Queensland through directions of the board was absolutely focused on ensuring that Queensland led the way when it came to providing services for not only the industry but also our consumers. In that respect, can I inform the honourable member that the commercial division has been licensed for a period of five years with an option to renew for a further five years. At the end of the five-year term the government and AOT will consider an option to extend the agreement for another five years. Achievement of key performance indicators will be considered before making any decision.

You have asked a question as to whether the government has received an offer to sell the Sunlover licence outright or whether we can do that. I can inform the honourable member that an approach has been made regarding the possible sale of Sunlover, so this is something that has been discussed and I am quite open about that. But at this stage the Beattie government has decided not to sell Sunlover to another party. I inform the honourable of this because there has been some considerable media comment, particularly in the travel media, and I wanted to put that out in front at today's estimates. So the Beattie government has decided not to sell Sunlover to another party. We believe that the benefits provided to the Queensland product under the current lease arrangements are satisfactory. We are satisfied with the leasing arrangements at the present time. They are providing particular outcomes for the Queensland tourism industry and for Tourism Queensland and particularly with regard to opportunities to expand our marketing in international markets.

In fact, the licensing agreement offers operators the following benefits: ongoing distribution of their products through the licensee; expanded opportunities for distribution, especially through AOT's group online network; greater access to domestic and international distribution opportunities; and key performance indicators embedded in the agreement encourage business growth. So these key performance indicators offer the licensee an incentive to grow the Sunlover brand, and that was part of the licensing agreement—that is, we wanted AOT to actually grow the brand and we wanted it to be encouraged to do that—and also licensee fees reduce as the brand and sales of Queensland product expand. The honourable member asked about the KPIs. Those KPIs included, as I said, growth of sales in Queensland and growth of the number of operators. I am advised that those KPIs are being met.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Thank you, Minister. Further to that I would ask if you would table what the KPIs or the performance indicators are and how they are meeting those targets. I would also ask if you could supply details of the revenue received from the licensing agreement for Sunlover for 2006-07 and what the budgeted revenue is for 2007-08.

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. This follows on from her previous question. As I said, there were significant KPIs put in place with the agreement. The absolute focus of myself as minister and of cabinet in agreeing to the licensing agreement was that it would be of benefit to the Queensland tourism industry. That is why we have ensured that the receipts and revenue from the licensing agreement were put into operational expenses for international marketing. As the honourable member, who comes from the Sunshine Coast, would realise, in focusing on the international market and international visitors coming to Queensland we ensure that there is a stronger and viable tourism industry for Queensland, because quite frankly we want more international visitors to come to Queensland because they stay longer than domestic visitors and very pleasingly they spend more

money. For your electorate and all of the electorates around Queensland that means more jobs—in fact, 136,000 jobs in the last financial year. I can advise the honourable member regarding the Sunlover licensing agreement that this was licensed on 1 July 2005 to the AOT and Tourism Queensland, as I said, invests the income generated under the licensing agreement into international marketing campaigns.

So in response to your question, this amount for the year has been around \$3 million. As indicated during last year's estimates hearing, moneys received from licensing agreement income is reported on pages 47 and 53 of the 2005-06 Tourism Queensland annual report. I am pleased the member is actually interested in this area, because generating income for marketing for international tourists is extremely important for Tourism Queensland and the industry.

I can advise the honourable member that, with regard to the Sunlover licensing agreement, licensing income for the 2006-07 budget was \$2.8 million. The estimated actual was \$3 million. We expect the estimate for 2007-08 to be \$3 million. Also, I advise the honourable member that there are specific projects that are utilising the income from the licence in 2006-07. They were in particular a joint marketing agreement between Tourism Queensland, Tourism Tropical North Queensland and Qantas of \$675,000 for a joint marketing agreement as well as \$150,000 for a joint marketing agreement with Singapore Airlines and many more.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Thank you. Could I clarify some of those points so that I understand. Did you say that, as the licensing agreement continues and they meet certain performance indicators, the licensing fee will actually reduce?

**Ms KEECH:** I can confirm that. I will pass that over to Anthony Hayes, who is the acting CEO, to give further clarification.

**Mr Hayes:** That is in fact correct. The deal is structured to encourage the further sale of Queensland product. The better performance that Sunlover does over time, it reduces the actual lease fee that they provide to us in return. So Queensland is protected either way. If the sales are not to the full extent of the KPIs, we receive the full extent of the lease. However, if they perform above expectations, then they are rewarded by the lease coming down as they sell more Queensland products. So the deal is pretty much structured to encourage the sale of additional Queensland product.

**Ms KEECH:** This is a normal type of commercial arrangement with the encouragement for the licensee to go out and do the very best they can to encourage more operators to get on board and to generate more income for Tourism Queensland. So to be encouraging them to expand and to meet the KPIs is a benefit. It is a win-win: it is a benefit for the operator, AOT, and also a benefit to Tourism Queensland.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Thank you. I note you say that they have been meeting their performance indicators, but as these are not tabled in a public forum for us to be able to judge how they are meeting those performance targets, I ask you: would you table what those performance indicators are and how they are meeting those targets?

**CHAIR:** The committee cannot actually order the minister to table a document. It is up to the minister if she wants to table those documents.

**Ms KEECH:** Can I confirm for the honourable member that in parliament the Premier made a ministerial statement with respect to the entire details of the licensing agreement. But I am happy to get further information for you during the estimates hearing if the chair approves of that.

**CHAIR:** So you are taking that on notice?

**Ms KEECH:** I will get some additional information back to you, although I am not really too sure if we can get any additional information other than what we have provided. But we will investigate and get back to you shortly.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Thank you. I ask a question with regard to page 2-10 of the MPS regarding employee expenses. Page 2-10 shows an allocation of \$13.6 million for employee expenses. Can you supply the actual and estimated figures for 2006-07 and 2007-08 of the number of full-time equivalent staff?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member. We are getting that information for you. Before responding regarding the full-time equivalent staff for Tourism Queensland, can I say that I am incredibly proud of the work that the staff of Tourism Queensland do. I am sure that any member of the committee who has had dealings with Tourism Queensland would share my pride. I know the member for Indooroopilly attended the Australian Tourism Exchange, as did the member for Clayfield. The Australian Tourism Exchange is the world's second largest travel show and was held recently at the Brisbane convention centre. It was acknowledged not only by Tourism Australia but by the majority of operators that it is the best that has ever been provided. So when it comes to the staff of Tourism Queensland, I am very, very proud of the great work they do. The entire Queensland tourism industry can have absolute confidence in their professionalism.

I can advise the honourable member that the full-time equivalents in Tourism Queensland is 152. In addition, in the Tourism Strategy Division there are five individuals, which means obviously a total of 157. In 2005-06, I am advised that the actual FTEs was 143. Tourism Queensland has budgeted for 2007-08 for 155 full-time equivalent staff.

In May 2006 a review of the resources for marketing and Destination Management was undertaken. This was regarding a stronger focus on Designation Management regions. Following the review and an adjustment of resource levels, a number of additional roles were added to the structure. I can advise the honourable member that for 2008 there is an expectation that Destination Management staff will involve 115 and executive and corporate services staff 40, giving that total of 155.

When it comes to staff salaries, Tourism Queensland total employee costs were \$13 million. This included superannuation, payroll tax and workers compensation. Given that tourism is Queensland's second largest export earner and given that we only have that number of people working in Tourism Queensland, I certainly believe that taxpayers are getting very good value for money.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Just clarifying, that figure includes the 10 regionally based Designation Management officers?

**Ms KEECH:** I am advised that this is in addition to the Destination Management officers.

**Mr Hayes:** The Destination Management officers are employed by the regional tourism organisations. So they are not actually official TQ employees.

**Miss SIMPSON:** So that will be under the grant allocation to the regional tourism authorities to employ?

**Ms KEECH:** The honourable member is correct. One of the first initiatives of the Queensland Tourism Strategy was to appoint Designation Management officers to the regions. As the honourable member would be aware, Queensland is unique in Australia when it comes to the government's focus on the regions as the growth of the tourism industry. That is why the Queensland Tourism Strategy has ensured the employment of those 10 additional officers for the regions.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Could I clarify also, of the employee expenses for full-time equivalent staff, how many of these are in the overseas offices? What is the allocation for employees in the overseas offices?

**Ms KEECH:** I will certainly get that information for you, but can I just go back to the 10 Designation Management officers. For those honourable members who are not aware, Queensland is divided into 14 regional tourism organisations. These extend from the Gold Coast, where we have Gold Coast tourism, all the way throughout the region to outback Queensland, up to the cape, Cairns, tropical north Queensland, and all areas in between. As well, Brisbane Marketing, for the member for Clayfield, does an excellent job as one of the regional tourism organisations.

Just following on from the previous question, I can confirm for the member that five officers have already been employed and there will be five for this financial year. Just regarding the member's question about international offices, I am advised that there are 21.6 staff members in the international offices. There are 13 international offices. They play a very, very important role in attracting more international visitors to Queensland. They have a very challenging job and they do it very well indeed. They also work with our partner Tourism Australia through the federal government. I will always give the federal government due recognition where it is doing a good job. The partnership with Tourism Australia and Tourism Queensland is a strong one.

There are 13 international offices and they are: London, Munich, Shanghai, Wanchai, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul, Los Angeles, Auckland, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo, Osaka and Mumbai. They work very hard in building up relations with the local tourism industry and the local trade industry as well as the local media to ensure that Queensland is really in front of the consumers, in front of the trade. When it comes to deciding on a holiday in Australia, we want these consumers to have Queensland at the top of their mind. Can I say again that those 21.6 individuals in Queensland's 13 international offices do an outstanding job. Recently I was able to acknowledge that when I visited India.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for questions by non-government members has expired.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, in the overview statement in your Ministerial Portfolio Statement on page 2-1 you focus strongly on the Queensland Tourism Strategy. Can you highlight the core of this strategy and what key outcomes have been achieved?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for Woodridge for her question and for her strong support of the tourism industry in a range of areas, particularly in hospitality and training. I am very pleased that the honourable member has asked a question regarding the Queensland Tourism Strategy—a 2006 Beattie government commitment. In fact, it involves a \$48 million package and Tourism Queensland is working with a range of government agencies as well as the Queensland tourism industry in delivering on that election commitment.

As the honourable member is aware, Queensland's tourism industry is our second largest export earner. Last year, visitors to Queensland spent \$18 billion and many of the jobs—those 136,000 jobs

that are provided—are filled by people in your electorate. Those jobs are good, real jobs in hospitality and in the tourism industry areas. So it is certainly a very important industry when it comes to jobs.

I developed and initiated the Queensland Tourism Strategy shortly after I became the minister because I was aware that, unlike other major exporting industries within Queensland, the government did not have a long-term plan or a long-term vision for the industry. That is why, in consultation with industry and the terrific work of Tourism Queensland, cabinet—and obviously the Premier now with the election commitment—has developed and initiated the Queensland Tourism Strategy. For the first time Queensland will have a 10-year plan for the sustainable development and growth of the tourism industry. We have set out very clear visions, goals and particular targets and actions to meet the challenges and opportunities facing the industry over the next 10 years.

In fact, having targets set is something unique not only for the Queensland industry but throughout all the other jurisdictions. Other jurisdiction look at the Queensland Tourism Strategy. They have recognised it as an outstanding document. In fact, recently I met with a senator from Hawaii who is strongly focused on the Hawaiian tourism industry. He was so impressed with the Queensland government's tourism strategy that he asked for a copy. We are having ongoing consultation with him on how to help Hawaii. I could talk forever about the Queensland Tourism Strategy. You might get the feeling that I am quite passionate about it and very proud of it.

**CHAIR:** Do you want an extension of time?

**Mrs SCOTT:** Yes.

**Ms KEECH:** I will not take long. Thank you for letting me indulge my passion.

The key strategic goals are to increase visitor expenditure in Queensland. We want visitors coming to Queensland to spend more money, but importantly we want them to spend it throughout all the regions. We do not want them simply arriving and staying in Brisbane, the Gold Coast or the Sunshine Coast. It is really important that visitors travel throughout all of Queensland and spend their money throughout all of the regions.

We are also increasing the overall value of tourism to Queensland by ensuring that we protect our environment. Yes, we want more tourists to come to Queensland but, more than that, we want higher yielding tourists. When tourists visit Queensland we also want to ensure that we protect our natural assets and that we do that in collaboration with our local communities and local industry.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, page 2-3 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement talks about the 'Where Else But Queensland' campaign. Can you inform the committee of the importance of this campaign and the results it has provided for the Queensland tourism industry?

**Ms KEECH:** I am happy to do so. Hopefully many of you may have seen the new 'Where Else But Queensland' ad on TV. If you have not, I am sure we can get you a CD or I can direct you to the web site. It certainly is a very cheeky campaign. It is focused at our domestic market, particularly Sydney and Melbourne. Again through the Queensland Tourism Strategy we have priorities on attracting more international visitors to Queensland. However, Tourism Queensland recognises that our bread and butter comes from our interstate and intrastate visitors. The new 'Where Else But Queensland' campaign has been developed to attract more visitors from our key markets of Sydney and Melbourne.

As I said, the ad shows sites in not only Sydney and Melbourne but also New York and London. It shows very bored bellhops. It is all black, grey and gloomy, just as it is in Sydney and Melbourne right now. Everyone is looking very bored. The hotels are empty. I have been told that there are a few hotels in Sydney and Melbourne that I will not be welcomed at any more, because on the ad it looks like they are completely empty. The tag line is, 'Where have all the people gone?' The next scene is bright sunshine and a flight over the Great Barrier Reef. Of course, there is only one place where the people have gone to: where else but Queensland!

It is a terrific ad. It was built on very strong research done by Tourism Queensland. This is something that sets TQ completely apart from other jurisdictions when it comes to advertising campaigns. Strong research showed that our consumers believe that Queensland is an exciting, fun place, a place for families, for holidays, for great food and wine, and a place that provides an opportunity to enjoy all our wonderful natural assets, particularly the Great Barrier Reef and our national parks.

In particular, I was very pleased to have an opportunity to get into a helicopter with Mark Toia. Mark Toia is the producer of the 'Where Else But Queensland' ad. He used a revolutionary, very new and exciting camera that was also used in movies such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Twister*. In fact, I was told that the camera cost more than the helicopter. So we have these terrific shots of Broadwater, Q1 and places all around Queensland.

The campaign is doing very well indeed. I have received advice that the awareness of the TV commercial in our key markets of Sydney and Melbourne was 48 per cent after the first month and built steadily to 60 per cent by May 2007.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, I refer to Ministerial Portfolio Statement page 2-2 and the reference to Queensland's aviation strategy. Can you outline the benefits that are flowing to Queensland from this strategy?

**Ms KEECH:** I am happy to do that. As we know, Queensland has the best tourism product in Australia and the equal of any in the world. We want more tourists to come here. We want them to stay longer and spend more money. However, we need to get them to Queensland. There are a couple of ways we can do that. Obviously, if they are interstate and intrastate, they can use the low-cost airlines. They can have a drive holiday. Obviously, if they are coming from overseas, we need a very strong aviation policy to ensure that we have as many direct flights as possible to attract more international visitors.

Members, if you have travelled overseas, whether it is for leisure and pleasure or for work, you know that time is of the essence. You want direct flights. You want to go from A to B as quickly as possible. You do not want to go from A to B, stopping off at three or four destinations along the way with all those extra chances of losing baggage, et cetera. That is why Tourism Queensland understands that direct flights are really important to our key markets.

In 2007 we have had some very good successes in attracting new and increased services to Queensland. For example, Korean Air has increased the number of Seoul to Brisbane flights from three to five per week. Also, on the Seoul to Cairns service, Korean Air operated nine charter flights in July and August 2007, providing over 3,500 inbound seats.

Charter flights are very, very important because often, for a new route, charter flights will lead the way. As those routes become very popular, there is good uptake from the charter flights. Working with Tourism Queensland, our aviation partners and the airports, we hope to continue the charter flights and then eventually produce them into regular routes. We have had much success with that.

I could talk to you about a range of new services that we have had to Queensland. We are working very strongly on attracting other areas as well, not only our traditional destinations but also some of our emerging markets like the Middle East. The honourable member may have lately read in the media that there will be a new service from Abu Dhabi to Brisbane. Etihad will operate three services per week from the Middle East via Singapore from September 2007.

In addition, I am very pleased that a Shanghai to Brisbane service will be operating soon. China Eastern will be operating a Shanghai-Brisbane service triangulated with Melbourne twice per week between November 2007 and February 2008. As well, of course, there is good news with Tiger Airways coming to the Gold Coast, Rockhampton and Mackay.

**Mr LEE:** Minister, can I start by thanking you for your presentation at the Australian Tourism Exchange. It was great to see that event being held in Queensland this year. Minister, I refer you to page 2-5 of the MPS for Tourism Queensland. Under the heading 'Future Developments', there is a reference to promoting a sustainable tourism industry. Could you please tell us what you are doing to address the potential impact of climate change on our tourism industry?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for his comments regarding the ATE. It was very pleasing to see him at the ATE. In fact, the Premier chose to hold a cabinet meeting at the ATE. I thank the member for coming along and for his positive comments.

I know the honourable member is an absolutely passionate greenie, so I am not surprised that he has asked me a question about climate change. Certainly, it is the next big challenge facing not only Queensland and Australia but also the entire world. When it comes to this issue facing Queensland's tourism industry, I am absolutely passionate and focused on ensuring that Queensland leads the way, together with our government agencies.

As the honourable member is aware, our industry has embraced ecotourism and is now proudly a renowned world leader. In fact, in many of the surveys that Tourism Queensland does, there is recognition that our European visitors in particular come to Queensland for an ecotourism experience. From that perspective alone, it is really important that we manage the challenges facing Queensland regarding climate change.

As well, this very important issue was addressed through the development of the Queensland Tourism Strategy. I want to pay due recognition to the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, QTIC as we call it. It played a lead role in the consultation that ensured that climate change was one of the major focuses in the Queensland Tourism Strategy.

Time and time again the Beattie government has proven its own green credentials, as I know government members would recognise, most recently with a \$2.5 million, 12-month statewide campaign to raise community awareness about climate change. The campaign builds on the government's commitment to tackling climate change, which includes establishing the Queensland Climate Change Centre for Excellence and our \$300 million commitment to clean coal technology.

I believe that the tourism industry in Queensland is extremely vulnerable to the impact of global warming due to the effect of our core natural tourism product and to changing consumer perceptions.

For example, a one degree or even an increase less than one degree in water temperatures would have severe consequences for the Great Barrier Reef, particularly regarding coral bleaching.

However, long before such natural products might be affected, I am concerned about consumer perceptions having a negative impact on tourism jobs and export earnings. For example, more consumers are aware of planes travelling around the world and the emissions that we burn up. Therefore, I am very keen indeed for Tourism Queensland to lead the way when it comes to facing those challenges.

**Mr LEE:** Thank you very much, Minister. For the record, the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence is in the wonderful electorate of Indooroopilly.

Could I now refer you to page 2-4 of the MPS. I understand that you have appointed a marketing manager in India. Could you explain why you have done this and how you see this market benefiting Queensland in the long term?

**Ms KEECH:** I am happy to do that. I know that the centre of excellence is in Indooroopilly, which is why I made that particular comment. I thank you for the question regarding our international offices. This follows on from the question that the member for Maroochydore asked recently.

In about February I had the great fortune of travelling to India for the very first time to lead a delegation of tourism operators, together with the CEO of Tourism Queensland and Rob Jason from Tropical North Queensland Tourism, to investigate the opportunities in India as an international market for Queensland. During that time I was very pleased to open our new office in Mumbai and to meet the new marketing manager who will be based in Mumbai. She is a very talented young lady who I know already is doing very good work in attracting additional tourists to Queensland from India.

The establishment of international Tourism Queensland offices like the new office in Mumbai confirms the Queensland government's commitment to driving more tourism investment into Queensland's \$18 billion tourism industry. As I said, recently I had the honour of leading a delegation of operators—who paid for themselves—to India. We had great representation from the Gold Coast and also from tropical north Queensland, around the Cairns region. Theme parks were represented, and large operators and small operators attended, some for the very first time. They travelled to Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and a few other destinations including Hyderabad. They were absolutely overwhelmed with the interest of Indians in travelling to Queensland.

In the year ended March 2007, there were 225,600 visitors from India to Queensland. I am advised that they spent \$30 million. We have had a lot of growth from a low base and the opportunities really are amazing. They are not spending a lot at the present time, but I am really keen for us to work very closely with our Indian marketing manager to attract more Indians.

In fact like all other regional offices—the 13 that I mentioned earlier—the India office works to forge stronger trade relationships. We have to work with trade. They also work on consumer marketing. They work very closely with media and public relations companies. They also do online and digital marketing. Importantly, they work hard to improve airline relationships because we really do need more airline access from India into Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for government questions has expired. I call the member for Maroochydore.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Thank you, Minister, I refer to page 2-2 of the MPS regarding the regional tourism infrastructure and investment plans. Can you give details on the public infrastructure requirements that have been identified so far outside of the Mackay-Whitsunday region, the progress and works to date on each, and which department has responsibility for developing infrastructure projects once your department has identified them?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and her interest in infrastructure projects. As she knows, when it comes to attracting more international and domestic visitors to Queensland and encouraging them to stay longer and spend more money, it means we need more infrastructure—whether that is hotels, roads et cetera. Through the Queensland Tourism Strategy, I identified the need for additional infrastructure. Initially, that was in the area of more hotels, both on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane, but we have developed that further into broad-ranging infrastructure plans.

I can advise the honourable member that so important is this area for delivery that I have appointed a director of infrastructure planning who will be based with Tourism Queensland to strategically manage Tourism Queensland's responsibilities for the sustainable growth of tourism infrastructure in Queensland's destinations. This will be in close partnership with Invest Queensland.

The honourable member asked about additional infrastructure outside of the Mackay-Whitsunday area. First of all, can I show you this booklet: the *Mackay Whitsunday Regional Tourism Investment and Infrastructure Plan*. This is the first one. I would like to hand a copy of this to you later, as well as to the member for Burdekin, who may be interested as well. It is an outstanding document which has been done through very close consultation with not only the tourism industry but basically anybody who is involved with infrastructure planning and tourism in this region.



This is the first one. The other plans will be rolling out, so therefore I cannot tell you at this stage what is happening in other regions but I look forward to informing you this time next year. I hope you will still be the shadow minister for tourism and I will still be the minister for tourism, God willing. So I look forward to sharing additional information regarding the other regions next year.

I can say with respect to the Mackay Whitsunday Regional Tourism Investment and Infrastructure Plan—the RTIIP we call them for short—that it has been received very, very well. The reason it has been received so well by the community and local members is the very strong partnerships and very strong input into the process from the council as well as industry and the local members.

I will share a few examples with you very quickly. For example, investigating and developing the Mackay Whitsunday plan was used to develop a template for preparing plans for Queensland's other tourism destinations. We will use this template for other RTIIPs as we roll them out, and I look forward to informing the honourable member of that success.

**CHAIR:** Does the minister wish to table the document?

**Ms KEECH:** I am more than happy to table the document.

Leave granted.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Further on the issue of regional tourism, can you give a breakdown of the funding for each of the regional tourism organisations that was provided in this financial year just closed and for 2007-08?

**Ms KEECH:** I am happy to do that and I will get this information for you. The regional tourism organisations do an absolutely outstanding job. They are led by a board, a chairman and a board of directors, and they have their general manager or CEO. I recently met with the chairs of the RTOs prior to ATE, and the reason I wished to meet with them was to do two things: firstly, to congratulate them on the outstanding job they do in growing tourism in their regions and, secondly, to inform them of progress of the Queensland Tourism Strategy.

Regarding funding for the 14 RTOs, I can advise the honourable member that they received \$3.1 million per annum in base funding from the Queensland government. As well, the RTOs' base grant funding is designed to support the administrative and marketing needs of the organisations. In addition, six RTOs with convention bureaus are supported through convention and incentive funding of \$1.875 million per year for four years from 2006-07.

**Miss SIMPSON:** So each RTO has \$3.1 million per annum?

**Ms KEECH:** No, the six RTOs with convention bureaus received \$1.875 million per year for four years from 2006-07. I can also give you the additional funding grants awarded for the RTOs for 2006-07—these were grants awarded through the Queensland Tourism Strategy—if the member would like some information on it.

**Miss SIMPSON:** I would appreciate some clarity. That \$3.1 million you mentioned before for the RTOs, is that per RTO?

**Ms KEECH:** No.

**Miss SIMPSON:** That is global.

**Ms KEECH:** That \$3.1 million per annum is for the 14 RTOs. The honourable member would be aware, I am sure, that funding for the RTOs comes from a range of areas. Obviously, one of those areas—and for many of them it is a very substantial area—is through the Queensland government through Tourism Queensland. Some of the larger RTOs—for example, Brisbane Marketing and Gold Coast Tourism—receive far greater funding through other arrangements. That might be through councils, particularly the Gold Coast City Council where there is \$50 million over five years, or it may be through membership because the RTOs are membership based organisations, or it may be through additional funding arrangements that they have. So I can clarify that—

**Miss SIMPSON:** Sorry to interrupt you, Minister, but it would be helpful to have a breakdown of the government contribution for each RTO.

**Ms KEECH:** Okay, I can do that. As I said, the funding comes from a range of revenue bases. For the regional tourist organisations and their funding through Tourism Queensland for 2006-07, I can confirm that Brisbane Marketing received \$300,714. The Brisbane regional tourism received \$200,714, Capricorn Tourism received \$200,714, likewise the Fraser Coast South Burnett Regional Tourism Board, Gladstone Area Promotion and Development, Gold Coast Tourism, Mackay Tourism Ltd and the Southern Downs Tourist Association. They all received \$200,714.

The Outback Queensland Tourism Authority, whose chairman Rob Levers does a great job, received \$300,714, likewise Tourism Tropical North Queensland. The others received \$200,714, and they were Toowoomba and Golden West, Tourism Sunshine Coast, Townsville Enterprise and Tourism Whitsundays. So the majority of the RTOs received around \$200,000 but some of the larger ones received \$300,000. In addition, I have been advised by the acting CEO of the convention and incentive

funding which is quite substantial. For example, Brisbane Marketing received more than \$450,000 and Gold Coast Tourism received \$653,000. There was further additional funding for those RTOs that have conventions.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Thanks, Minister. With reference to the Wine Industry Development Strategy and page 1-21 of the MPS, the strategy has two formal evaluation reports, the first of which was to be completed by 1 July 2006 and the second to be completed by 1 July 2009. Was the first evaluation report completed on time last year? If so, is it publicly available? Is the development strategy meeting industry objectives and expectations?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question regarding the Wine Industry Development Strategy, which is again something I am incredibly proud of. As you would be aware, in 2004 Premier Beattie appointed me as not only Queensland's first wine industry minister but also Australia's and I believe the world's. So the Queensland wine industry is very proud of this distinction and regularly recognises the contribution of the Beattie government. I am very pleased indeed to report to the honourable member that all progress reports have been completed and delivered on and they are available broadly. In fact I brought them along for you hoping you might ask me a question and I am happy to table these.

**CHAIR:** Does the minister wish to table those documents?

Leave granted.

**Ms KEECH:** I might just hold on to them for a minute. With respect to the completion, I have been advised by the director-general that the reports were completed in July 2006 and they were given to the industry.

The Queensland Tourism Strategy and the Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy share many things in common. One of those is that they were developed in complete consultation with and support of the industry. The other thing they have in common is that I was absolutely determined as minister that, after all the hard work had been put in by the department and industry to develop these strategies, they would simply not be beautiful, glossy documents that were part of a media release one day and then sat on the shelf the next day. I am absolutely determined that they be living, working documents where there is complete accountability and transparency for the industry. We have seen exactly that too often, particularly when it comes to federal government reports. There is a great media release and then the report and particularly the implementation of the report is never seen and there is no accountability to the stakeholders.

So what we have here with both the tourism and in particular the wine industry strategy, since that is the question the member asked, is that I have a strategy implementation committee which is made up of members of my department with representation from wine regions throughout Queensland. At that meeting which I hold regularly, often here in parliament, I meet with the representatives from the wine industry and I report on every single one of the 69 action items. They are able to ask questions on the delivery, and there have been only one or two occasions where there has not been perfect delivery in the time. They are able to ask in-depth questions to ensure those strategies are delivered on.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Minister, I refer again to the Wine Industry Development Strategy and in particular Strategy A No. 5, which requires the development of an emergency response protocol that addresses potential high-risk biological disease and/or environmental hazards. Is the protocol to be undertaken in conjunction with the department of primary industries? What is the progress of the protocol? When will it be ready for industry and public perusal?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the member for the question. As I said earlier, all strategies are completely open, accountable and transparent. Many of these strategies, in fact the great majority, are either joint delivery through the industry or through a range of government agencies.

Regarding Strategy A No. 5—and Strategy A is 'Develop viticulture' and No. 5 is comments on developing a Queensland wine industry emergency response protocol, as you said, that addresses high-risk biological disease potentials—I can report to the member progress to date. The strategy action is underway. The development of emergency response protocols for high-risk biological diseases and environmental hazards has been initiated in consultation with Biosecurity Queensland. It has also been initiated in consultation with Queensland wine industry stakeholders and department of primary industries wine industry development officers. I am advised by my director-general that the department of primary industries is in fact the lead agency on this issue, as the member would expect. There was also consultation with industry and I am advised that we are expecting completion by December of this year.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Thanks, Minister. As the Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the department of primary industries did not even mention this particular issue, there has been some concern about how many resources are actually being allocated to not only have a protocol but also to see it implemented. What will be your department's ongoing role in ensuring that the resources are allocated to implement that protocol?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a legitimate question. I can give the member and all committee members an absolute guarantee that the 69 strategy action items in the Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy will be delivered on, and they will be delivered on within time and with consultation with the implementation committee. As I said, the department of primary industries is the lead agency on the delivery of item No. 5 in developing viticulture, so it is responsible for ensuring that it has sufficient officers available to deliver on that item.

I am advised that the department of primary industries has two viticulturists employed by the wine strategy. They are working with officers of my department to ensure that this strategy action is underway and is delivered by 2007. I am advised that the DPI resource allocation, as I said, is a matter for Minister Mulherin. But I am also confident, given that the Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy is a cabinet endorsed document, that it will be delivered on. I have absolutely every confidence in Minister Mulherin's strong support of the Queensland wine industry.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Minister, on page 1-8 of the MPS under 'Staffing', as the staffing output-activity statement does not identify the number of staff employed in the wine industry section, I ask: how many officers either full-time or part-time are employed in the section? What is the staffing budget? And what is the overall budget for the wine industry section?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and particularly for her strong interest in the Queensland wine industry and in my department. When it comes to staff, can I say that I am very grateful and very proud of the tremendous work that the staff led by Bill Date are doing in the Wine Industry Development Division. They are recognised by the industry for their professionalism and their hard work. In particular, they are recognised for always being out and about in the regions talking to growers to ensure that they can be of the greatest support possible. In fact, I think the first official role the director-general of my department had was regarding a conference for the wine industry. He said how impressed he was at the very high regard that the departmental staff are held in. I do recognise their hard work and so does the director-general.

I can report to the honourable member that the total budget for the Wine Industry Development Division for 2007-08 is \$1.95 million. The budget comprises \$500,000 funding a year for four years commencing in 2004. With respect to staff, the department is not using its valuable wine industry dollars to fund a large bureaucracy. In fact, one of the commitments I gave the Premier when we developed the wine industry department was that it would be a department focused on industry, not a department focused on bureaucracy.

There is a team of six officers who have been appointed within my department to lead implementation, coordination and monitoring strategy actions. In fact, the Wine Industry Development Division was awarded a Premier's excellence award in November 2006 for its great work not only in delivering on the strategy but also in delivering on government commitments and also recognising their strong commitment to industry stakeholders. For 2007-08 there is an additional funding allocation of half a million dollars to provide for the ongoing appointment of three staff within WIDD to lead, implement, coordinate and monitor strategy actions.

**CHAIR:** Minister, you sought leave earlier to table some documents. Are you happy to table those?

**Ms KEECH:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for non-government questions has expired. I call the member for Indooroopilly.

**Mr LEE:** Minister, in Indooroopilly I represent a moderate number of students and I note that on page 2-3 of the MPS it states that you will be developing an International Study Tourism Plan. Can you highlight why this would be important for Queensland?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for Indooroopilly. I am very pleased indeed that he asks me questions about issues which I am passionate about. We are next door to QUT, and prior to becoming the member for Albert I was a lecturer at the Queensland University of Technology specialising in supporting students from international countries. So I am very passionate about developing an International Study Tourism Plan. I recognise Tourism Queensland's good work in following my lead and developing this strategy.

Visitors come to Queensland primarily to have a holiday, but as we know they also come to work and to study. In the past Queensland has lagged behind Victoria in particular when it comes to attracting international students, but we are absolutely determined that we will take it up to the Victorians. International study tourism has real potential for Queensland. One of the reasons students, whether they be primary, secondary or tertiary students, decide to study in a particular state is the calibre of the institutions. As we all know, we can be very proud indeed of the quality of the universities we have here in Queensland. I know the member for Indooroopilly in particular is very proud of the University of Queensland, an international award-winning university.

International students come to Queensland not only to study at universities but also to study at TAFEs, high schools and primary schools. In particular, the primary school market is becoming more and more important to Queensland. Recently I have been advised that the Japanese government has decided that it will be compulsory for its primary school students to study English as a second language. This means that all primary schools in Japan will be looking for a close, safe destination where students can learn to study more about English and more about the culture in a safe and welcome environment. That is why I really believe that the opportunities for study tourism for Queensland are incredible.

The Queensland education travel market has grown rapidly in recent years by nearly 20 per cent a year since 2003 and this is well above the national average, but we will be doing a lot more in years to come to attract more international students to Queensland, particularly those in their primary and secondary years.

**Mr WELLS:** Noting that Queensland hosted the Australian Tourism Exchange, referred to on page 2-3 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, I ask: what practical benefit did this event provide to Queensland?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. He is absolutely right: there were huge benefits to Queensland with the hosting of the Australian Tourism Exchange. For honourable members of the committee who may not have had an opportunity to attend the world's second largest travel show, the ATE is shared around every capital city—

**Mr Hayes:** Nearly.

**Ms KEECH:** Nearly every capital city. In 2007 it was Queensland's turn to put Queensland on show to the entire world. This year we had over 2,000 visitors from all over the world who came to Brisbane's convention centre to meet with delegates and to meet with buyers and sellers from all over Australia. Every state had its own display. Queensland of course had the biggest and the best. With the acting CEO, Anthony Hayes, sitting here at the table, I recognise Anthony's terrific work. He was the lead agent on the preparation for ATE. It took a massive amount of time, and he and his team did an outstanding job. I really want to thank Anthony on behalf of not only the Queensland government but also the Australian tourism industry for the good work that he did.

As well as ATE, we partner with Tourism Australia and the sponsorship through Qantas is certainly very successful as well. A total of 1,700 Australian delegates from 630 companies attended, along with 600 international buyers from around 40 countries. So we have the cream of the international travel agents and media who come to Queensland to look for new product.

In particular, Queensland was very proud to be selling all of our terrific products from the outback to the Great Barrier Reef at the expo as well as at a series of 50 familiarisation tours around the state. This was something new. In the past with ATEs in other states the buyers fly in and they do all their business, and it is a bit like speed dating, because they have about 10 minutes each to buy and sell each other's product, and then the bell goes and it is on to the next person. What Queensland initiated was 50 familiarisation trips either prior or post the ATE where small groups, in particular the international travel media, were able to go to the outback, the Great Barrier Reef and all over Queensland to have a real Queensland experience. The ATE brought an immediate economic benefit of \$10 million to the state and the majority of this was to Brisbane. I really believe, given the Beattie government's election commitment of \$2 million, that this is a very good return on our investment.

**Mr WELLS:** The Ministerial Portfolio Statement on pages 2-1, 2-2 and elsewhere asserts that the portfolio is committed to developing regional tourism including by identifying public and private infrastructure. What role does rail infrastructure, and specifically Traveltrain, play in developing tourism opportunities in our regions?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and for his strong interest in the role that infrastructure, in particular rail infrastructure, plays in developing tourism in our regions. As all government members know, it is really important to ensure that we have dispersion of our visitors. When they fly into our regional capitals, our three international airports or to our regional airports we want them to disperse throughout all of Queensland so that we can share the benefits of that \$18 billion spend to not only large towns but also small rural towns. That is why it is really important to ensure that the Queensland government supports the Traveltrain network. It is something which all government members support but unfortunately it is something for which the Queensland tourism industry and Queensland regions cannot have confidence in the opposition.

I draw the committee's attention to the comments made by the member for Clayfield regarding subsidies which the government puts into Traveltrain. Despite the Liberal Party's failure to support these subsidies, I say to madam chair and to the committee that the Queensland government is 100 per cent behind the Queensland Traveltrain network and also its subsidisation program.

In fact, it is forecast that for 2007-08, 433,500 people will use the Queensland government subsidised Traveltrain. Without this subsidy people simply would not be able to afford to travel, given that we now have competition with low-cost airlines. I am not too sure whether the National Party members support the Liberal Party on its lack of support for the continued subsidisation of Traveltrain,

but I certainly hope you do given that you are the party that is supposed to be looking after the people in the bush.

The state government subsidises fares to places like Barcaldine, Blackwater, Home Hill, Ayr and all places in between. It is all very well for those in Brisbane to claim that subsidies are ineffective and simply do not work, but try asking somebody in Blackwater, Barcaldine, Bluff or anywhere else whether the Spirit of the Outback, for example, which departs Brisbane twice a week to travel to Winton, should all of a sudden become 200 or 300 times more expensive and I think you would get a very clear answer. National Party members would certainly have their doors beaten down by very angry constituents.

I believe that Traveltrain provides a vital service to residents of regional towns not serviced by air or where air travel between regional cities is not discounted. These services are vital to a decentralised state like Queensland. I am very pleased that subsidies have the strong support of the Beattie government and myself as tourism minister.

**Mr WELLS:** Staying with the regional issue, page 2-2 of the MPS focuses on destination management officers and the development of regional tourism investment and infrastructure. What is the department undertaking to support regional communities to grow their local economies?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. We are continuing to support the subsidising of Traveltrain. As well as that, we are looking at investment and infrastructure plans, something which the member for Maroochydore asked about earlier. Also there has been a range of funding support for infrastructure projects in the regions. I can inform the committee and the honourable member of a few of those.

For example, there has been \$9.7 million allocated for visitor infrastructure across Queensland national parks. For my home town of Bundaberg, I am very pleased indeed to see that the government is putting \$1.5 million into the Bert Hinkler Hall of Aviation. My family has a very close affiliation with Bert Hinkler, with my mother having taught his nephew and my grandmother having known his mother. So that association goes a long way. That is not the reason we are putting \$1.5 million into the Bert Hinkler Hall of Aviation, but I am certainly looking forward to visiting it when it is built and I might even see a picture of my grandmother with Bert Hinkler's mother. Keeping with Bundaberg, the Turtle Interpretive Centre will be receiving \$3.2 million and the Cairns airport infrastructure will be receiving \$120 million.

As I indicated to the honourable member for Maroochydore, we are delivering on the Queensland Tourism Strategy's initiatives of a series of regional tourism investment and infrastructure plans. The very first of these plans was for the Mackay-Whitsunday region and it has already been launched. It suggests a range of very exciting investment opportunities for the region, such as developing a tourism precinct on the Mackay riverfront, developing a tourism node at Eungella, redeveloping Airlie Beach and Shute Harbour, developing the Bowen waterfront and enhancing the built environment on the Whitsunday islands. That was the first of the RTIIPs and I am certainly looking forward to rolling out more of those through the coming year.

Each regional plan will feed into a statewide investment and infrastructure plan that complements other Queensland planning processes. The reason that we are developing these plans is that we know that for sustainable tourism and development in Queensland and in the regions we need more infrastructure and that infrastructure must be planned in a very coordinated way. As I said earlier to the member for Maroochydore, I have been very pleased and grateful for the strong community input and the strong consultation from not only the tourism industry but also almost all government agencies when it comes to input into the RTIIPs.

**CHAIR:** Minister, as you know, the Japanese market is a very important part of the Queensland tourism economy, in particular for the Gold Coast and tropical north Queensland. I note that on page 2-7 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement you refer to marketing initiatives in relation to Japan. Could you please outline what your portfolio is doing to help sustain and grow the Japanese market into the future?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and thank her for her absolute passion for tourism on the Gold Coast. Like me, she knows that the Japanese market is very important to the Queensland tourism industry and to the Queensland economy, but more so for the Gold Coast and the tropical north, in particular the Cairns region, because these two regions attract more Japanese than any of our other regions in Queensland.

You are absolutely right, there has been a downturn in Japanese visitation but not only to Queensland. Some of our detractors might like to say it is simply focused on Queensland, but that is absolutely wrong. In fact, the federal government's Tourism Australia report showed that of all destinations Queensland is holding its own when it comes to the Japanese market and, in particular, the Cairns region has done a very good job in continuing to attract Japanese to that region. But there has been a downturn and I can confirm that the March 2007 international visitors survey showed that Japanese visitation to Queensland declined by nine per cent and this equates to a decrease in expenditure by 13 per cent. So it is significant and it is something that Tourism Queensland and the Beattie government is tackling very strongly.

We should be looking at the reasons why there is this downturn, not only in Queensland and in particular other regions of Australia but also throughout the world. In fact, when I spoke to the senator from Hawaii he said that they have had a massive downturn in visitation from Japan in the order of a one million decrease in visitors to Hawaii from Japan. The main reason is that basically the strength of the Australian dollar means that exports are more expensive. For the Japanese office worker in Tokyo who is looking for an affordable holiday, in the last three years a holiday to Queensland has become 45 per cent more expensive. Whether you are a 20-year-old on the Gold Coast or a 20-year-old in Tokyo or Osaka, you have your budget and you want the best value for your money. I believe that the best value for money is a Queensland holiday but there has been a lot of competition for the Japanese market, in particular from China. Many of the Japanese are travelling to China, in particular to Shanghai.

Other issues that have impacted on Japanese visitor numbers are the lack of new airline capacity with the withdrawal of Japan Airlines from the Osaka route as well as increasing travel costs due to fuel surcharges.

**CHAIR:** There are three minutes left for government questions so I might turn to the wine industry development sector on pages 1-20 and 1-21 of the MPS which the minister has referred to previously. Exactly how has the Beattie government's support for the Wine Industry Development Strategy contributed to achievements and growth in this vibrant sector?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and her strong support for the Queensland wine industry. The development and delivery of the Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy, which has now been tabled, is the key plank for delivering on our commitments to the wine industry. Initially, from time to time, there were many questions asked as to why the Premier would implement a whole wine industry development department. It basically comes down to one thing and that is jobs for our regions. Our Smart State is delivering on a whole range of new smart industries as well as promoting and supporting our traditional industries of primary industries, mining and tourism. It is very important that we support emergent industries like the wine industry and that is exactly what we are doing through our strategy.

The goals of the strategy are to improve the quality of Queensland wines, to increase efficiency and profitability for producers and to enhance the reputation of Queensland wines around the world. I believe I can say that I am confident that the members on the non-government side are more supportive of Queensland wine than the previous shadow minister for the wine industry who was not as supportive as we or the industry would have liked her to be. I know that government members are very strongly in support. I also am very pleased that more and more restaurants in your own electorates are stocking Queensland wines, because for wines to be available and accessible they must be stocked. Whether it is your RSLs, your bowling clubs or local taverns, I thank them for making a big effort in stocking Queensland wines.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. I have enjoyed some Queensland wines on occasion. I must say they are improving in quality and market reach as well. In the interests of being a most generous chair, the non-government members have asked if they can ask one more question before we break for morning tea.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Minister, I have a question with regard to tourism and page 2-6. The Cape York and Torres Strait Tourism Development Action Plan was first announced almost two years ago in 2005. Why has it taken two years to develop this plan and can you give a breakdown of the cost of implementing this plan and a commencement date?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and I am very pleased that she has a strong interest in Indigenous tourism in Cape York and the Torres Strait. There are a couple of things I would like to say about the potential for tourism in Cape York and the Torres Strait. Following on from a commitment to the Queensland Tourism Strategy is a commitment to community engagement. I make no apologies whatsoever for the length of time that has been taken in consultation. As you would be aware, we have to consult with Indigenous communities in the cape and Torres Strait as well as the regional tourism organisation and the tourism industry—those who are directly involved plus those operators who have broader interests. This takes time. We have had an excellent consultant working on it.

Regarding delivery of time frames, the best thing I can say to the honourable member is to watch this space. I am looking forward in the near future to being able to make some public comments about the action plan and strategy. It is expected to be finalised soon and after it is finalised there will be public announcements.

In 2005-06 the government allocated half a million dollars for the Cape York tourism development package and, in particular, part of this was investment in environmental protection via the installation of toilets at key public stopover points on the cape. This was one of the areas that we had received complaints in relation to through our Drive Tourism strategy where tourists, in particular fisherpeople, were wanting to travel and develop that region for fishing but there were not enough public facilities. I was pleased about the additional installation of toilets.

To the honourable member, this strategy and the action from the strategy is something I am very passionate about. We are working in collaboration with some very important Indigenous operators. In fact, I was absolutely thrilled at ATE to welcome a large number of Indigenous operators for the very first time. They had travelled from places like Mapoon and other areas in the cape to come to ATE to share their amazingly unique product with international operators and the media. It was very pleasing to welcome them to ATE.

**CHAIR:** It now being 10.30 am, the committee will break for morning tea and the hearing will resume at 10.45 am.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.30 am to 10.47 am**

**CHAIR:** The committee will now continue its examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development and Women. Minister, would you like to continue with your opening statement? I remind you that there is a time limit of five minutes in total for your opening statement. You have two minutes and 50 seconds left.

**Ms KEECH:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Consumer protection is a priority for the Beattie government and during 2007-08 my department will continue its excellent work in focusing on building our strong consumer protection record. Consumer and business confidence in our marketplace is absolutely essential to Queensland's economic growth and to attracting investments and boosting consumer activity, all of which underpin our state's booming economy. Funding of \$6.6 million over four years will help rollout reforms in the security industry, boosting standards and keeping rogues out of the industry. I am proud to say that Queensland now has the toughest legislation regarding this industry.

In the important area of dispute resolution the Office of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management continues to provide an effective, low-cost and highly professional alternative for consumers. In fact, over the past year 93.3 per cent of applications were resolved within the 60-day time frame and 0.6 per cent of adjudicators' orders were amended or overturned.

The Commercial and Consumer Tribunal's record in terms of case management and consistency in decision making is equally impressive. Its record is as good as any court or tribunal in Australia as evidenced by the extremely low rate of appealed decisions. Importantly, liquor licensing activities will continue to focus on harm minimisation through a number of statewide and community based initiatives to promote the responsible service and consumption of alcohol. When it comes to assisting Indigenous communities experiencing problems relating to alcohol consumption progress continues to be made through the Meeting Challenges, Making Choices program. I am very pleased to report to the committee that my department has delivered on all the issues in the Fitzgerald report relating to alcohol supply although more still needs to be done on the demand side of the equation.

The Beattie government is committed to improving the opportunities of women to achieve economic security by participating in the workforce. This is an important priority since changes to the IR system introduced by the Howard government under WorkChoices are already widening the gap between male and female take-home pay.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will examine the department's organisational units of the Office of Fair Trading, the Office for Women, the Liquor Licensing Division and Dispute Resolution. I call the member for Caloundra.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, I take you to the MPS at page 1-14 and the output statement. I refer to 'Timeliness' and the percentage of investigations completed within targets. The target for 2006-07 was 75 per cent and the result was 69 per cent. This particular target was introduced in 2004-05. The target then was 75 per cent and the actual was 60 per cent. In 2005-06 the target was 75 per cent and the actual was 64 per cent. This target has never been met since its inception. Could you explain why the department has never met the target from 2004-05 up to and including 2006-07?

**Ms KEECH:** I am happy to respond to the question, but before I do can I seek the committee's assistance in responding to a question that the member for Maroochydore asked in the previous session regarding the Sunlover licensing agreement and then have additional time, if the chair sees fit.

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms KEECH:** Thank you, Madam Chair and the member for Caloundra. The member for Maroochydore, who has since sought leave to depart, asked a question in relation to the key performance indicators detailed in the Beattie government's licensing agreement with AOT for Sunlover Holidays. As I have previously advised, the Premier gave an extensive overview of the reasons and benefits for the licensing of Sunlover to AOT, including the types of KPIs. He did that as a ministerial statement in parliament.

I am advised that other than the information that has been provided previously in the public domain the specific details of the agreement are subject to commercial-in-confidence provisions. I can advise the committee that the KPIs relate to the growth of sales and the growth in the number of products over the life of the agreement. Tourism Queensland established an oversight committee on 1 July 2005. The committee is responsible for administering the licensing agreement and ensuring the

KPIs are met. I am advised that the committee has met five times in 2006-07. Thank you Madam Chair and the member for Caloundra.

With respect to the question that the member for Caloundra asked about the percentage of investigations completed within targets on page 1-14 I point out that an increase in proactive compliance activity impacted on the estimated actual investigations completed within the target. While increased focus on proactive compliance can influence the ability to finalise investigations within target it does have longer term benefits with regard to industry compliance and a resulting decrease in consumer complaints.

I acknowledge that the estimated actual for 2006-07 is 69 per cent whilst the target was 75 per cent. It would be very easy for the department to do something quite simple—that is, reduce the targets. That is something that the department will not do. We set very high standards and we do want to have the investigations completed within the time frames. However, what we do focus on is proactive compliance.

**CHAIR:** Is an extension of time sought?

**Ms KEECH:** Yes.

**Mr McARDLE:** Yes, that is fine.

Leave granted.

**Ms KEECH:** Proactive compliance is very important. Instead of spot checks and activities following on from complaints the Office of Fair Trading has strategic compliance strategies. For example, they may be in the motor dealer industry or the real estate industry. This proactive compliance reminds traders of their responsibilities and ensures their businesses comply with the laws by enhancing their responsibilities. It raises the profile of the Office of Fair Trading in the marketplace.

I can also inform the honourable member that the percentage of investigations completed within the targets was lower than the estimate due to the increased proactive compliance activity done by the Office of Fair Trading. This result is an increase from both the 2005-06 actual of 64 per cent and the 2006-07 figure of 69 per cent. That should be acknowledged. Increased proactive compliance activity means that investigators and inspectors are out in the marketplace actively ensuring traders are complying with legislative requirements rather than simply responding to consumer complaints.

While finalising investigations is very important indeed what is even more important is being out in the marketplace and protecting consumers before there is a complaint. Before things go wrong it is important for the Office of Fair Trading to be out in the marketplace ensuring that traders are abiding by the legislation. This ensures that before a situation turns into a formal complaint the traders can be reminded of their responsibilities.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you for that. That certainly covers 2006-07. What I am concerned about is that there is a consistent history here of the targets not being met. Are you able to indicate studies that have been done by the department highlighting where the deficiencies are? Can you indicate whether more funding, more technology or more staff will be made available to try to arrest this situation? As you and I both understand, the Office of Fair Trading is very busy. There are many people moving to Queensland and opening businesses. There are many issues that need to be dealt with. The consistent noncompliance or nonattaining of that particular target is quite worrying. Can you give concrete statements as to what you will be doing in 2007-08 to ensure that this never happens again?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Finalising investigations is very important, as you and I agree, but it is only one part of the process. It is even more important to ensure that we do not have complaints in the first place. The way to not have complaints is to ensure that industry is educated and that industry and traders are aware of their responsibilities and that they are doing the right thing by the legislation. Certainly, finalising investigations is important but proactive compliance ensures consumers are protected before a situation turns into a formal complaint requiring remedial action.

In response to the question the member asked about what am I as minister doing, I can advise that a new complaint handling system was introduced on 1 July 2005 which improved the way investigations are categorised, allowing a more speedy resolution for simpler matters. The new categorisation of complaints has meant that for complaints that are of a very serious, technical and complex nature they will have additional resources focused on them. For complaints that are of a more simple nature—a more discreet nature—a speedy resolution for those simpler matters can be allowed. I can also inform the honourable member that the investigation targets will be reviewed for 2007-08 to ensure that they realistically reflect the time required to finalise investigations of differing levels of seriousness and complexity.

What we are finding is that with some of the investigations—the member is probably aware of some of those because there have been issues in the media—the Office of Fair Trading is receiving more and more serious and highly complex complaints to investigate which takes a large amount of resources. So the complaints handling system has to be flexible enough to administer those



complexities. I am advised that another factor is that low-level complaints are conciliated, which means the investigation figures only reflect more complex complaints which take more time. You asked a question about extra resources. I can confirm to the honourable member that there has been an allocation over four years of \$6.6 million. In particular, this will be for the Security Providers Act.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Minister. Minister, page 1-14 of the MPS under the heading of 'Quality' relates to the extent of complying businesses. The target was 85 per cent and the actual was 69 per cent and it has now been discontinued. Note 5 states—

As checks are targeted against high risk groups, this measure is not an accurate indication of the level of compliance across Queensland business.

In the 2006-07 document at page 1-13 the extent of complying businesses was an 85 per cent target and an 83 per cent actual and you make this comment—

Targeting higher risk is the most effective use of compliance resources to prevent and address consumer detriment.

There is a contradiction between those two statements. Earlier you said this was the best way to go about it and we achieved 83 per cent out of 85 per cent, so to speak. In 2006-07 there was a target of 85 per cent but we only achieved 69 per cent and you then say that this is not a real reflection. Could you just correct that contradiction.

**Ms KEECH:** Yes, I am happy to do that and I am particularly happy to focus on the MPS that the estimates committee is investigating here. As it notes in note 5 with respect to the extent of complying businesses, in fact we are going to discontinue this output measure because it does not give a good indication of those businesses that are complying. For example, as I indicated earlier with strategic compliance operations, if the Office of Fair Trading is aware that a particular industry in a particular region or town is not complying there will be a blitz on that industry—for example, motor traders in a regional town because perhaps there may have been a lot of complaints about allegations of unlicensed dealing. Then obviously that would be considered a high-risk industry. In order to measure the extent of complying businesses, of course the extent of complying businesses is going to be quite low because the industry is high risk. So that output measure for fair trading services relating to the extent of complying businesses does not actually measure accurately the measure of businesses that are complying. For that reason, it will be discontinued. High-risk businesses and high-risk industries are more likely to offend. These are the ones that we target, as the honourable member would expect Fair Trading officers to do, if they have come to our attention previously. So this output is not a good indicator of how to measure complying businesses. In fact, the Office of Fair Trading will be analysing and examining ways that we can measure this output more effectively for the committee.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, I understand what you are saying, but there is a clear contradiction between two years. Why suddenly has that no longer become the appropriate manner in which to gauge the compliance of high-risk businesses? It was all right last year but it is not this year. Last year it was all right to spend the money in that manner but it is not this year.

**Ms KEECH:** As I said, we are focusing on the 2007-08 MPS, so I will direct my comments regarding that MPS. With regard to proactive compliance, the reason that we are simply not relying only on complaints is because consumers are often unable to detect certain breaches—for example, short measurement or maybe complaints where they have problems with language or literacy et cetera. So we are relying not only on complaints but proactive compliance. I do not have the previous year's MPS before me so I cannot make a comparison. All I can say is that we are focusing on high-risk groups and that the output for fair trading services of the extent of complying businesses will be discontinued because I want to be able to ensure that there is a better way of measuring businesses in Queensland that are complying. As all honourable members would be aware, the great majority of traders in Queensland do the right thing. Unfortunately, some traders who choose not to give the rest of those traders a bad name. My comment to the honourable member about contradictions is that there actually is no contradiction. Proactive compliance is the best approach, but the measure does measure the output of the activity. The measure of percentage of a complying business is an outcome needs measure to be measured in a different way. It is not inconsistent to trumpet a strong result for high-risk industries while still acknowledging that the result does not reflect other businesses.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Good morning, Minister, and members of the department. May I refer to the Office for Women now and refer to the MPS at page 1-34. In 2006 the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that Indigenous females were 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assault than other Australian females. How active is the Office for Women in identifying the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and what actual assistance, if any, has been provided to those women which seriously addresses the domestic and family violence suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I can say a couple of things. I am very pleased indeed to have been recently appointed minister for women. This is my first estimates committee as minister for women, so this is the first question I have been asked and I thank the member

for Burdekin. She is absolutely right. I am not aware of the particular research document that she has mentioned, but certainly when it comes to the health of Indigenous women, particularly in their communities, the risk to these women is something of grave concern to the Beattie government. I represent Queensland at the annual ministerial conference on the status of women, and I am looking forward to be doing that in the next couple of months. Forming part of this conference is a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Woman's Gathering, a meeting where Indigenous women from across Australia meet to discuss issues identified under the national action plan for Indigenous women and reconciliation and make recommendations to women ministers. Further to that, as minister for women and also as minister responsible for liquor licensing, it is in that area with the introduction of alcohol management plans where we are making the largest difference in my portfolio to the health of Indigenous women.

As the member would be aware, Aboriginal and Indigenous women suffer dreadfully through alcohol related violence in their communities, and that is why the Beattie government has instigated the AMPs. They have been successful in reducing a range of hospitalisations of women due to alcohol induced assault et cetera, but certainly more needs to be done. We have worked very hard indeed on managing supply issues to Indigenous communities, and I recognise the strong support of the community justice groups and the communities themselves in working together to restrict alcohol going into their communities. A lot more needs to be done from the demand side to ensure that women can feel safe in their communities. Women want to choose to remain in Indigenous communities, but they have a right to feel safe. I am also aware that the Violence Against Women public education campaign, a social marketing campaign promoting the message that violence against women is not acceptable, has been conducted by the Office for Women.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you, Minister.

**CHAIR:** The time for non-government questions has expired.

**Mr WELLS:** My questions relate to compliance in the residential sector. With reference to page 1-10 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, could the minister provide details of compliance monitoring of operations of residential service providers undertaken by the department?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and for his really strong concern and interest in the residential services area, particularly looking after the vulnerable constituents in his electorate. The Beattie government takes very seriously its role in caring for Queenslanders, particularly those who are most vulnerable. That is why the government has recently introduced tough laws aimed at improving the living standards and quality of life for people who live in residential services accommodation. For the benefit of honourable members, I want to give a definition of what residential services are. This is accommodation provided in return for rent where the room or rooms are occupied by at least four people who share facilities. Residents have the right to occupy their own room and use shared facilities, but they do not have the right to occupy the whole of the premises. So many of us would have these sorts of services in our electorates. Self-contained accommodation where food or personal services are provided to residents is also defined as a residential service.

Operators of these services now have to be registered and accredited. They have to provide an acceptable standard of accommodation and care for residents. Since the laws were introduced by the Beattie government, I am pleased to say that sector standards have improved considerably. Those operators who have refused to improve their services have not been accredited and some have left the industry, as we had expected. My department will continue compliance activities to ensure operators do the right thing. Recently we had an absolutely terrible case—a very sickening case—which proved the worth of the legislation. We had a Birkdale couple who have been prevented by an injunction from offering residential services following a very lengthy and in-depth investigation by the Office of Fair Trading's residential services branch. I commend the officers who were responsible for that investigation. They worked very closely with other government agencies and had an excellent outcome.

In fact, the OFT refused a registration application in 2005 for a boarding house at Indooroopilly because it did not meet the minimum standards under the act. Rather than improving the premises, the people involved removed residents to various unknown locations, depriving them of the protection that they were entitled. The Office of Fair Trading tracked down these people and took them to court to stop the neglect of the residents. The neglect of the residents was absolutely atrocious. I am very pleased indeed that there is an injunction against them now so they will never be able to harm these vulnerable residents again.

**Mr WELLS:** As the minister knows, I have spoken to her and written to her in the past about the significant contribution offered by my constituent, David Paton, into the review of the Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act 2003. Referring to page 1-9 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, would the minister outline to the committee why the review is necessary and what initiatives the Beattie government is investigating in order to provide better protection to these valued Queenslanders who are residents in manufactured home parks?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the member for Murrumba for his question. In particular I thank him for the many in-depth conversations we have had about the review of the manufactured homes act. In

particular, I would like to thank his constituent, Mr Paton, for his contribution and his input into this very important review.

As the honourable member would be aware, there are more than 10,000 Queenslanders living in residential parks. Among them are some of the state's most vulnerable people. Many of them are elderly folk in particular. When I launched the manufactured homes act in 2004 I gave a commitment then that after three years the act would be reviewed. That is exactly what the Beattie government is doing now in following up on its commitment to review the act.

We have found that the act is doing what it was intended to do, which is to protect the rights of residents, in particular those who are retirees and pensioners living on fixed incomes. The response that I am receiving—and I thank the honourable member for his input—is that the act has been crucial in identifying the rights and clarifying the responsibilities of both the park owners and the park residents. The act introduced a written site agreement for the first time. It ensures that homeowners receive up-front information before they sign contracts. Most pleasingly, it has improved the processes to resolve disputes.

But there is more that can be done. With more and more Queenslanders moving into community living and the increasing population density of south-east Queensland I know that many more people will be entering residential parks not only because of affordability issues but also because of the wonderful lifestyle that these residential parks offer their residents.

Currently, a review of the legislation has been in the way of a survey. More than 500 people have already had a say on these important laws. I thank Mr Paton for his input. We distributed a survey seeking feedback on how the act is working in practice. We wanted to know how happy or otherwise people were with the act. The key issues relating to people's satisfactions were about park procedures, home sales and park rules. We are also seeking information and feedback on developments within the residential park industry and the availability and use of mechanisms for resolving disputes.

**Mrs SCOTT:** In relation to page 1-9 of the ministerial portfolio statement, could you explain how the Beattie Labor government's reform of the Security Providers Act 1993 will protect Queenslanders from thugs in the industry?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for her question. In Woodridge she has some terrific security providers who do very good work in protecting not only commercial premises but also when people are out enjoying themselves on licensed premises. The great majority of people in the industry always do the right thing and abide by the law.

However, like any industry, there are some rogues. In particular, when it comes to the security industry, the risk of operators doing the wrong thing, particularly if they are unlicensed, is very high indeed. That is why I am very pleased that, in the amendments to the Security Providers Act, Queensland now has the toughest penalties in Australia against unlicensed security providers. That is something that I make no apologies for, because we really want to get rid of any rogues, particularly those who are unlicensed. They can do incredible harm if they are not well trained or if they have personal issues and they are not able to manage a situation correctly.

With the introduction of the amendments, the new standards for the industry will include increased suitability checks for licensees, licensing previously unregulated sectors of the industry, an industry code of conduct and increased penalties for operating unlicensed. As well, for the first time the technical security industry will come under the legislation. When I had extensive consultation with the Security Industry Association it said to me that it was very important for the electronic security industry to be part of the act. So that is exactly what is happening with the new amendments. As well, the new laws have also responded to a call by COAG for the states and the territories to harmonise private security licensing regimes and to complement COAG's counterterrorism initiatives.

So with the new amendments the Beattie government is determined to rein in rogue operators. For the first time, unrecorded convictions will be allowed to be considered by the chief executive in assessing the suitability of new entrants into the industry. In the past, only recorded convictions could be assessed and taken into account. But now, in conjunction and in consultation with the police commissioner, unrecorded convictions as well will be able to be taken into account.

In particular, I am very keen to ensure that members of the outlaw motorcycle gangs and other thugs do not infiltrate the Queensland security industry. I am confident that, with these laws, that will happen.

**Mrs SCOTT:** I should also thank you for attending our Liquor Industry Action Group in Logan, which is very active. I now to page 1-11 of the ministerial portfolio statement. Could you advise how your department's work targeting rogue traders in the inbound tourism industry compares with that of your Australian government counterpart?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for her question and I thank her for her comments about the liquor accord. The Logan liquor accord is going along very well indeed. You can be very proud

of the great work that has been done by the industry and the department as well as the police who worked together cooperatively to ensure harm minimisation in the liquor industry.

I thank the member for the question regarding the inbound tourism rogues. The battle to win this is a national approach. Queensland is the only state to have specific legislation, the Tourism Services Act, that targets shonks in the tourism industry. Unfortunately, there has been little broad support from the federal agency. Despite the strong interest by the federal tourism minister, Fran Bailey—in fact, when she was appointed the minister it was an issue that we both discussed and we were both absolutely adamant that rogue inbound tourism operators give the industry not only in Queensland but throughout all of Australia a bad name and she was adamant that she wanted to stamp them out—unfortunately she has not been supported strongly by her other federal colleagues, which is a real disappointment for the industry.

We have had some complaints, particularly through the Gold Coast media, about the alleged activities of rogue inbound tourism operators. I can inform the member that it is illegal to force tourists to shop in a certain shop. It is illegal to charge for something that is free, for example, a walk on the beach. It is illegal to make threats in an attempt to steer tourists towards a certain shop, or towards a certain restaurant. But it is not illegal to pay commissions to tour guides, for example. It is not illegal to include something free, like a walk on the beach, in a package. For example, a visitor to Brisbane may buy a package which includes a day trip around Brisbane, maybe lunch somewhere, a CityCat tour and other tours and then a walk in the botanical gardens. Of course, that is just simply another part of the tour and it is not being charged for.

There have been reports in the media and allegations of so-called tourism rogues, but some of those media comments range from urban myths, to part-truths, to no truth, to actual fact. A media report earlier this year claimed that tourists were being charged \$110 a head by their own countrymen to walk on a Gold Coast beach. An investigation from the Office of Fair Trading found that that was actually not true at all; it was not happening. Certainly, the Tourism Services Act has continued to be enforced by the Office of Fair Trading to ensure that tourists in Queensland have an enjoyable time.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Referring to that same page, 1-11, could you advise of the specific work done by your department in relation to the Fair Go strategy?

**Ms KEECH:** Yes, I am happy to do that. The Fair Go strategy focuses on our Indigenous consumers, particularly those who live in remote communities. As you would be aware, we have had some unscrupulous traders in the past—we have had motor dealers, we have had funeral benefit schemes, we have had other scammers—who thought the remoteness of the communities meant that it was easy pickings to go up there and rip off our Indigenous consumers. The Office of Fair Trading has implemented a consumer awareness program called the Fair Go strategy. In fact, it has been formulated since 2003. It includes service delivery, compliance and communication activities.

The Office of Fair Trading does spot checks of motor dealers who service Indigenous communities in collaboration with Queensland Transport. I thank them for their support in ensuring that members of Indigenous communities are not being ripped off by unscrupulous motor dealers. As well, we have developed an excellent booklet called the *Fair Go Guide*, and this has been distributed throughout Queensland's Indigenous communities. The feedback that I have received is that it has been supported very well.

In 2007-08, the focus for the office's Fair Go strategy will be on improving local community capacity to deliver targeted, responsive and culturally sensitive information and advice services in high-need areas. In 2006-07, we received 83 complaints by Indigenous consumers compared to 87 complaints made in 2005-06. So the complaints are still there. Of course, the office takes every complaint very seriously indeed. That is why the Fair Go strategy is extremely important.

The committee may be interested to know the types of complaints that we received from Indigenous consumers. The majority of those are, as I indicated, about motor vehicle purchases and people being ripped off. The others are about the servicing of these motor vehicles. There were 11 complaints regarding real estate agents. Other complaints related to personal household goods, such as home electronics, furniture, mobile phones and clothing—basically, just the same sorts of complaints that the Office of Fair Trading receives from other people in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I note that in addition to regulations and compliance measures for business, there are significant incentives to be doing the right thing. Page 1-11 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement gives some information about the Queensland Consumer Protection Awards. Could you detail the private sector organisations that were awarded Queensland Consumer Protection Awards for their work fostering fairer business practices and awareness of consumer rights?

**Ms KEECH:** I am happy to do that. You are absolutely right: the Office of Fair Trading is out and about ensuring that the rights of consumers are protected, by conducting compliance and spot checks on traders. However, when I became minister I was very keen to encourage and recognise those traders who are doing the right thing. Unfortunately, it is only those who are being prosecuted or industries that have rogue individuals who get the notice and the media attention. However all of us know that in our

own electorates there are traders who constantly not only do the right thing but also go above and beyond the call of duty in assisting consumers. They also work really hard to ensure that they are up-to-date with the latest legislation so that they can abide by the regulations.

I was very pleased to implement and develop the Queensland Consumer Protection Awards to recognise the good work not only of traders but also individuals and the media who actively promote consumer rights throughout Queensland. The media never gets enough attention from the Beattie government when it comes to doing the right thing, so I am always very pleased to recognise, through these awards, media that join with us in partnership to protect the consumers of Queensland, particularly those who are vulnerable.

I can inform to the committee that the 2007 award winners were—

**CHAIR:** We have run out of time. Would you like to table the list of winners?

**Ms KEECH:** I can do that, yes.

Leave granted.

**CHAIR:** The time for government questions has expired. Although I cannot wait to read that list of award winners, we will move on to the non-government section of questions.

**Mr McARDLE:** I refer to Page 1-8 of the MPS. Liquor licensing is a critical element in regard to the control of people when consuming alcohol and using premises. You list key activities at the top. Can you indicate the number of complaints since 1998 to the current date? Has there been an increase in the number of complaints that the Liquor Licence Division has received and what has been that increase in the number of complaints from 1998 to 2006?

**Ms KEECH:** The information I have before me relates to this MPS, so I am happy to talk in general about the MPS. With respect to complaints, I will give you information that goes back as far as I have information for. Whilst we are waiting for some information about that, I can say that since I have become minister responsible for the liquor licensing act, I have ensured that applications for new licenses are brought to the attention of members of parliament in a timely manner, especially those new applications that involve high risk.

In the past, as members may know, particularly those who have been in this place for some time, on occasions members would not even be aware of a new application and may have been informed by our local councillor or perhaps by the police. I believe that that was not good enough. As local members, the community goes to you and expects that you are aware of complex high-risk applications. Therefore, I have insisted that members of parliament are advised of new applications through their electorate offices. I know that many of you take up the opportunity to give feedback to the Liquor Licensing Division regarding your approval or otherwise of those licence applications. I thank the Liquor Licensing Division for ensuring that that is adhered to.

With respect to complaints, as we are investigating the MPS for 2007-08 I confirm that in 2006-07 the estimated actual number of complaints was 3,000 and the actual number was slightly below 3,000. The number of complaints responded to has increased due to an increase in state-wide activity by the Queensland Police Service in checking and reporting on problems at licensed premises.

As the member would probably expect, noise complaints make up 30 per cent of all complaints. The majority of complaints—and they are often made at our own electorate offices—relate to noise. Other complaints that I certainly receive in my electorate office regard hooning outside of the licensed premises. That is something that I know the police follow up on rigorously.

**Mr McARDLE:** MPS 1-18 refers to maintaining an effective and contemporary regulatory framework. Are you able to advise of the ratio of officers by region to licensed premises across Queensland and how many of those regions are one-officer regions?

**Ms KEECH:** We will get some information for you with respect to that. In the 2005-06 budget, the Beattie government instigated a Liquor Licensing Flying Squad. It is a group of officers who at any time are able to respond very efficiently and quickly to issues of concern regarding liquor licensing in any part of the region. I can confirm that liquor licensing duties at regional offices include a range of issues.

The total number of officers for the state is 37. That includes the Indigenous program, as well as the compliance officers. For the member's information since he has asked for regional information, I can confirm that in Brisbane there are 15 officers, the Gold Coast has four, the Sunshine Coast has three, Cairns has eight and Toowoomba, Wide Bay, Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville have one officer each. For Mount Isa, there are two officers.

In addition, as I indicated earlier, the flying squad is available at very short notice to literally fly in to a region and assist the permanent officers in that region. I can confirm that that has worked very well indeed in supporting the regions.

The duties of the regional officers include permanent issuing, compliance and complaint-based investigations, liaison through community, business and licensing forums, and liaison with Indigenous

communities in implementing liquor restrictions. I am also advised that one new officer was added to the Gold Coast region in 2006-07.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you for that, Minister. MPS 1-3 refers to the Liquor Licensing Flying Squad and I will focus on certain activities of that squad. You mentioned that there were 15 officers in the Brisbane region. Is the flying squad, numbered four, part of the 15 or is it a distinct unit making the Brisbane region 19?

**Ms KEECH:** The flying squad is part of the 15, because the flying squad is based in Brisbane and it is able to be engaged in the regions as required. The flying squad is part of the 15. In particular, the role of the flying squad is to conduct specialist compliance operations state-wide, particularly looking at licensed premises trading after 1 am. It focuses particularly on high-risk activities. That is why it focuses on the late night traders. As well, it focuses on the sale and supply of liquor in and around Indigenous communities. It also focuses on the provision of adult entertainment, major public events where liquor is sold, the enhancement of patron community safety and the prosecution of irresponsible trading practices.

In addition, as I would expect the member would be aware, the 10,000 police across all of Queensland have the same licensing powers as liquor licensing officers. In that respect, you could actually add 10,000 to the number of designated licensing officers that we have in the Liquor Licensing Division.

I can confirm that during 2006-07 the flying squad has worked not only with police but also with fire and environmental health officers. It has achieved almost 800 compliance visits throughout Queensland. More than 700 infringement notices were issued with a total value of \$203,700. Four hundred and forty-one warnings were issued, 297 referrals were given to other agencies, 16 recommendations for prosecutions were made in the Magistrates Court, as well as eight recommendations for disciplinary action.

I am advised that for 2006-07 the operation cost of the flying squad was around \$300,000, which I believe is excellent value for money when we consider all of its activities, the nearly 800 compliance visits and the amount of infringement notices that were issued. That is good work to the flying squad. I am a very strong supporter of the compliance.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, you stated that of the 15 officers, four made up the flying squad. That would mean that there would be 11 officers in the Brisbane region, which would be the major region for liquor licensing by way of licence numbers, et cetera. That would then drain the resources in relation to manpower within that region. Are you concerned that there is a staffing shortage or a resourcing shortage in relation to the Brisbane region as a consequence of the flying squad not being in the Brisbane region but being across the state?

**Ms KEECH:** Resourcing is always an issue that we can expect to hear about at the estimates committee hearings and it is one that we should hear about. Firstly, like every other minister in the Beattie government and in every government in the entire world, if I was asked whether I as minister would like more resources, I would put my hand up. Indeed, I would put two hands up. We always like more resources. Obviously, it comes down to a balancing of the revenue with the expenditure. I believe that for this year the balance is a good balance.

I do not believe that there is a drain on resources. For example, if the flying squad moves from Brisbane where it is based to another region, as I said every police officer in Queensland has the same powers as a liquor licensing officer. Obviously in Brisbane we have additional numbers of compliance officers because of the Brisbane City Safety Action Plan. As you would be aware, that plan was launched by the Premier and very strongly supported by Campbell Newman to ensure that the safety of the Brisbane city, and particularly the Valley region, is improved. That is exactly what the Brisbane City Safety Action Plan is delivering.

I can also confirm that in recent years extra liquor licensing officers have been appointed. For example, in 2005-06 I am advised that four additional positions for Brisbane were commenced as part of the Brisbane City Safety Action Plan, in addition to the implementation of the flying squad, which has four members. Significant resources have been added to the Liquor Licensing Division since I have been the minister. That is something that I am very pleased about.

Can I also say, whilst we are talking about being pleased, that the people of Queensland and the tourism, hospitality and liquor industry in Queensland are well served by the excellent work of the Liquor Licensing Division. They work very closely not only with the police and other government agencies but also with the Queensland Hotels Association in ensuring that legislation is timely, dynamic and effective in focusing on harm minimisation.

**Mr McARDLE:** Madam Chair, I seek leave to table a memorandum dated 21 August 2006 signed by 13 officers of the Liquor Licensing Division addressed to Chris Waters, the executive director, outlining a series of concerns and complaints in regard to staffing, resourcing and also their workload. I seek leave to table that document.

**CHAIR:** Member for Caloundra, unlike sessions of the House, members of the committee are not in a position to table documents. You can refer to the document and read from it.

**Mr McARDLE:** I understood that we could seek leave to table a document and the committee would then determine the issue.

**Mr LEE:** Through you, Madam Chair, could I ask a question. I understood that the purpose of the estimates committee was to examine the estimates of the state budget. I am not certain that we should in fact be examining things that are outside matters directly relating to the MPS and the Queensland state budget. That is something that I think would be more appropriately raised in the House.

**Mr McARDLE:** If I may reply to that point. Page 1-18 of the MPS gives a series of key activities, and one of those is maintaining an effective and contemporary regulatory framework. I ask the minister whether or not there have been any issues in her mind in regard to staffing over the last 12 months that we are looking at. This memo deals directly with that particular issue. It is signed by 13 liquor licensing officers and raises very serious concerns—to the point that they signed their name—on staffing, resourcing and other matters.

**Mr LEE:** Through you, Madam Chair, sorry to interrupt—

**Mr McARDLE:** I do submit that this is an issue that goes to the very heart of what we are here today to talk about—that is, the safety and protection of patrons and the citizens of this area, Brisbane and throughout Queensland. If this does not impact upon them, nothing else does.

**CHAIR:** Member for Caloundra, now you are making statements instead of asking a question. You have already asked the minister a question regarding her consideration or position on whether staffing arrangements are adequate. It is my decision that she has already answered that question adequately and, no, you cannot table the document. You have referred to it. If you have a specific question that relates to a section of the MPS that examines the appropriation of this portfolio, you may ask that.

**Ms KEECH:** Through you, Madam Chair, I thank you for your ruling and for abiding by the standing orders and I thank government members for actually respecting the standing orders of the parliament that apply to the estimates committee. There is no provision for the tabling of documents without prior leave of the committee; the chair is absolutely correct.

The member has asked me a question about resourcing in liquor licensing and I have given a very detailed response with respect to how many liquor licensing officers are deployed in the regions. In addition, I have also said that, like every other minister in every government in the Western democracy, I would always like to see additional resources for my portfolio. I could certainly use them, but the other issue is ensuring that services throughout all of Queensland are provided and that is done through the budget. If the honourable member would like to give up police, teachers, new roads et cetera in his electorate so that my portfolio can have more resources, that is a question for him to decide.

**Mr McARDLE:** Is the minister aware of the document dated 21 August 2006 signed by 13 liquor licensing officers addressed to Mr Chris Waters?

**Ms KEECH:** Obviously, the member has a document in his hand, but I have not seen the document. I make no further comments with respect to the document, given that I have not seen it.

**CHAIR:** The time for non-government questions is almost expired. There is room for one more question if the members for Burdekin or Caloundra would like to ask one.

**Mrs MENKENS:** I refer again to the Office for Women and refer to page 1-34 of the MPS, where it states that the Office for Women will continue to identify and promote the needs of Queensland women into the future. Currently, Queensland Health is undertaking a review of the flying obstetrician and gynaecologist services provided to women in rural and remote areas. As a review by Queensland Health usually results in a service being shut down and lost forever, what pressure is the Office for Women applying to Queensland Health on behalf of rural women to ensure that this vital health service is not removed, reduced or lost?

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for her question and recognise her strong interest in the provision of health services for women in rural communities in particular. I direct you to the Minister for Health with respect to details on the provision of those services. When it comes to the Office for Women, we work with rural women on advocating for services and maintaining services for them. That is done through consultation with the Minister for Health's office and we will continue to do that.

**Mrs MENKENS:** I refer to page 1-34 of the MPS, domestic and family violence. In the first six months of 2007, there were 5,031 new clients who sought assistance from domestic and family violence support services. As 78 per cent of those new clients were female, did the Office for Women identify these alarming and escalating domestic and family violence trends? If so, how will the Office for Women assist in resolving this dreadful social failing?

**Ms KEECH:** Again, I thank the honourable member for the question. I would be happy to provide you with a brief at a later date on the role of the Office for Women. We are a small office with very good,

hardworking staff members, but obviously we cannot provide advice and services for women on all issues pertaining to their health and welfare. For that reason, we direct them to the relevant portfolios; in this case it would be the Department of Communities.

**CHAIR:** The time for non-government questions has expired. I will continue with the MPS in relation to the Office for Women. On page 1-33, I note that the Office for Women has delivered a range of practical seminars for Queensland women across the state which better explain exactly what the role of the Office for Women is. Minister, could you explain how these seminars assist Queensland women who are working under the Howard government's WorkChoices reforms? This is just one area in which the Office for Women may be able to assist the women of Queensland.

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the honourable member for her question and know her passion when it comes to working women and working mothers. I recognise her outstanding ability to juggle work and family, in particular babies. I think you are a real role model when it comes to young women who can manage to do that. You are doing an outstanding job as not only chair of the committee but also as a local member of parliament. Well done on your juggling, which is always a challenge.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Ms KEECH:** The member is absolutely right that the Beattie government is committed to improving the capacity of women to achieve full economic security. We consider the changes to the IR system introduced by the Howard government under WorkChoices to be a real threat to the rights and privileges Queensland women have earned throughout our industrial relations system. In particular, we are very concerned about the impact on women who work in casual and part-time jobs and how they will be affected under WorkChoices. For that reason, seminars have been delivered which have focused on giving women new skills and inspiring them to participate in leadership and decision-making frameworks. They also give them information about financial management, professional development and balancing their work and family roles. Perhaps you should come along as one of the presenters for those seminars, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am so good at juggling that I plan to join a circus in my next life.

**Ms KEECH:** The seminars have been delivered in Arana Hills, Logan, Ipswich, Robina, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Maroochydore, Mackay, Rockhampton, Townsville and the Brisbane CBD. I am advised that they have been very well attended and that the majority of attendees have completed feedback forms saying that the services and the advice they received were very appreciated and very informative.

The seminars are part of the Smart Women—Smart State strategy in the Queensland government's five-year plan for Queensland women. As we know, women in the workforce have been swimming against the tide for decades for equal rights and equitable working conditions. Now with WorkChoices the real concern is that women will be going backwards, so it is very important that women have some skills when it comes to negotiating their rights, particularly in relation to pay. I am concerned about stories I have heard from young women who have seen an ad in the paper and they have rung up and been told that the pay is \$17 an hour only to be told when they get there, 'No, it's not \$17; it's \$10 an hour. Take it or leave it.' They are the sorts of skills that these seminars are providing for women so they can negotiate in the workplace.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I do think this is very important. I have had a lot of stories come to my office as well, where young women or their parents have told me of their struggle to maintain their rights as workers in the workplace. Young women are particularly vulnerable to that kind of exploitation and often do not have the skills required to advocate for themselves. Will one of those seminars be held on the Gold Coast, or was that on your list?

**Ms KEECH:** There was one at Robina and one at Logan.

**Mrs SCOTT:** It was wonderful.

**CHAIR:** I heard you mention Logan but I missed Robina. The member for Burdekin referred earlier to issues in relation to women's safety in Indigenous communities, in particular in relation to alcohol management plans and that sort of thing. I am also deeply concerned about Indigenous communities and the safety of all members, particularly women and children in those communities. I refer to page 1-19 of the MPS and ask if the minister could provide details of the government's initiatives to address alcohol related harm in Indigenous communities. I note the Strong Community Life campaign.

**Ms KEECH:** I thank the member for the question and also for her positive comments regarding the Office for Women seminars on women knowing their rights in the workplace, in particular about negotiating for pay.

The member is right. My department is playing a key role in the government's Meeting Challenges, Making Choices strategy to reduce harm from the misuse of alcohol in Indigenous communities. We are doing this in a range of ways—through the implementation of alcohol



management plans, by declaring community alcohol restrictions and also by informing community members of responsible practices in the service and consumption of alcohol.

I am pleased to inform the committee that my department is sponsoring the Strong Community Life education campaign to promote safer and more positive drinking practices in Indigenous communities. I have had the opportunity to listen to some of this new campaign and it is absolutely terrific. We engaged an Indigenous communications agency, Redwave Productions, to do the research and then develop the campaign. The research involved face-to-face consultation with various community members as well as community justice groups, council members and in particular young people. We want this campaign to target young people, so it was really important that the young people in the Indigenous communities told us the best way to do an education campaign.

The research showed that they wanted to reinforce positive drinking behaviours and positive behaviours when it came to people choosing not to drink alcohol and to encourage residents to have healthier lifestyle choices. We were also asked to educate residents, particularly the younger generation, about the dangers of excessive drinking and in particular binge drinking.

We were also asked to educate residents on the ways to reduce and manage their alcohol consumption so that it did not disrupt their family and work life. We were told that they wanted it to be localised. They wanted to hear Indigenous youth talking to them using local voices, faces, skills and resources. In particular, they wanted to see prominent Indigenous sports stars and heroes in the campaign. I am very pleased that we have been able to get Preston Campbell from the Titans. He visited the communities and did a terrific job in engaging the youth. He was an absolute hero and he was mobbed by all the young people up there.

**CHAIR:** I can confirm for you that Preston Campbell is certainly a hero on the Gold Coast and across Queensland, too, I am sure. Alcohol and alcohol related harm issues are not unique to Aboriginal or Indigenous communities and affect different sectors of Queenslanders to varying levels, particularly young people. With reference to page 1-19 of the MPS, could you advise what the department has done to educate all Queenslanders on responsible drinking practices and harm minimisation?

**Ms KEECH:** You are absolutely right. The issue of harm by the misuse of alcohol is a focus of not only the Queensland government but also all governments throughout Australia. I am very keen to work with the Liquor Licensing ministers throughout Australia to look at ways that together we can as a nation start to change the culture of alcohol consumption and in particular binge drinking. Binge drinking is something to which the government has to say, 'Enough is enough.' It is like in the old days driving a car without a seatbelt, smoking cigarettes around your children, sunbaking with coconut oil for three hours at a time. Because we know more about these sorts of practices and the impact on our own bodies and on the community, we have to start focusing on ways to manage them and certainly to cut down on the harm that binge drinking, in particular, does to individuals in our community.

With this in mind, last year I identified a need for a public education campaign around responsible patron behaviour to reduce the incidence of crime and antisocial behaviour due to the misuse of alcohol. In the past the division has focused on the alcohol industry in ensuring that they abide by very strict conditions on the provision and serving of alcohol. This new campaign, in collaboration with the Queensland Hotels Association, is directed purely at individuals in ensuring that they take some responsibility for their own alcohol consumption, whether that is in private residences, in licensed premises or in the public.

My department has worked in collaboration with the Queensland Police Service to develop a pilot campaign which we launched earlier this year. This campaign ran in 28 licensed premises in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast from 1 January of this year to 31 March. It used provocative images to encourage responsible patron behaviour by highlighting the possible negative effects of irresponsible drinking. It piggybacked on a campaign that was very successful in the United Kingdom called 'Know Your Limits', which was implemented in 2003.

I am pleased to say that the majority of licensees in Queensland are doing the right thing and are complying with the act, but we are very keen to educate patrons about their responsibilities when it comes to alcohol consumption. The campaign is doing very well and has received 95 per cent recall by patrons surveyed and 100 per cent recall by staff and licensees surveyed.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Committee members, the minister and staff will note that we did start five minutes late coming back from morning tea and that is why I have allowed us to continue 5 minutes past 12 o'clock. It now being 12.05, the time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure for the portfolio of Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women has expired. I note that government members had a little bit less time to ask questions at the end, but I am sure we could indulge all day in getting the very informative answers that we have received from you, Minister. We do not want to eat into everyone's lunch hour, so on behalf of the committee I thank the minister and all the departmental officers for their attendance and assistance. The transcript of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's web site within approximately two hours. The committee will now break for lunch and the hearing will resume at 1 pm with the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism.

**Ms KEECH:** Can I thank you, Madam Chair, and all government and non-government members for their presence here for the examination of my portfolio. I also thank the director-general of my department, George O'Farrell, and my ministerial staff, in particular David Smith and Cameron Crowther, who have worked so hard.

Members would be aware that the department has worked very hard to provide responses in particular to questions on notice by non-government members. I want to pay tribute in particular to members of the department who have worked long hours and long nights on the weekend and very late nights in particular. Thank you to Kate Patton, Melinda Rabbit, Cydoni Ikin, Christian Lucas, Merinda Mahon, Christie Taylor and Paul Newman for their outstanding work.

I am privileged to be a minister who has a terrific team—the director-general, ministerial staff and outstanding departmental staff as well as Tourism Queensland. I thank all of them for their great work this year in delivering for the people of Queensland. In particular, I would like to thank those in the regional offices who may be out of sight right this minute but they certainly are not out of my mind when it comes to the excellent work they are delivering for our regions. Many thanks to them all and thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Minister, with regard to the document that you tabled of the 2007 Consumer Protection Award winners, it is a very short list and I was wondering if we could agree to incorporate their names so they get that recognition in *Hansard*.

**Mr LEE:** Why don't you just read them in?

**CHAIR:** I might just read them in. That is a great suggestion from the member for Indooroopilly.

The 2007 Consumer Protection Award winners were: the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network, or ICAN, which won the Consumer Advocacy Award; the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, which won the Tradesmart Award; Radio 4WK, which won the Public Awareness Media Award; and ICAN, which was also awarded the Minister's Award for Excellence and was chosen from all nominees across all award categories. Well done to all of the nominees.

**Ms KEECH:** Thank you very much indeed for your support of the Consumer Protection Award winners for 2007.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.08 pm to 1.01 pm**

## ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F—ENVIRONMENT AND MULTICULTURALISM

### In Attendance

Hon. LH Nelson-Carr, Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism

#### **Environmental Protection Agency**

Mr T Wall, Director-General

Mr A Feely, Executive Director, Parks

Mr N O'Sullivan, Director, Finance and Resource Management Branch

Ms C Kinnane, Principal Project Officer, Office of the Director-General

Mr M Williamson, Executive Director, Environmental Operations

Mr G Clare, Executive Director, Conservation Services

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**CHAIR:** Good afternoon, everyone. The hearings of Estimates Committee F are now resumed. The next item for consideration is the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism. On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing and acknowledge that we meet on the traditional lands of Aboriginal people.

I would like to introduce the members of the committee. I am Di Reilly, the member for Mudgeeraba and chair of the committee. Mark McArdle, the member for Caloundra, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are the Hon. Dean Wells, member for Murrumba; Mrs Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin; Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield; Mrs Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge; and Ronan Lee, the member for Indooroopilly.

I remind members of the committee and the minister that under the standing orders the time limit for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the end of each of these time limits. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given.

The standing orders require that at least half the time available for questions and answers is to be allocated to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members. Government members and non-government members will take turns asking questions in blocks lasting approximately 20 minutes commencing with non-government members. The committee has given leave for non-committee members to ask the minister questions. In this regard, Mr Glen Elmes, the member for Noosa, will be participating in this section of the hearing on that basis.

I ask departmental officers to identify themselves when they first come forward to answer a question if the minister has referred a question to them so that Hansard can record their name. Before we begin I remind everyone that mobile phones or pagers should be switched off or switched to silent mode.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the Department of Environment and Multiculturalism open for examination. The time allocated is two hours and 15 minutes. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement? I remind you that there is a time limit of five minutes for such a statement.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you, Madam Chair, yes, I would. I would like to take the opportunity to recognise all members of the committee and thank them all for their time today. It is a real privilege to be here as minister for two very important portfolios, Environment and Multiculturalism, both of which are so pertinent in today's society.

The mass movement for a cleaner, more environmentally friendly planet earth is on a roll and it is gathering momentum with each passing day. No government in the history of this state has put more into environmental issues than has the Beattie government. Through initiatives such as abolishing broadscale tree clearing we are doing more to reduce the effects of greenhouse gas emissions but, of course, we cannot do this alone. My department has in place a number of initiatives to help business, communities and individuals to take up this challenge.

The 2007-08 budget shows that we are committed to protecting the environment and making it harder for people in industries to cause harm. As regulators, monitors and protectors of some 12 million hectares of estate, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the EPA have a job of great

responsibility. To this end we have allocated an additional \$5 million to employ up to 60 new officers to monitor pollution and enforce strict environmental protection laws. This will ensure officers are proactive in their approach to monitoring industrial activity as well as helping business to adopt practices that are more sustainable. An additional \$500,000 has also been allocated to establish a chemical pollution advisory service to ensure that our experts are on hand to help reduce environmental damage.

The EPA has also been allocated a further \$20 million over four years in the budget to improve the water quality of south-east Queensland. This investment is the latest contribution by the Beattie government to the South-East Queensland Healthy Waterways Strategy and will ensure that our rapid population growth does not come at a high environmental cost to our waterways. With more than 16 million visitors taking advantage of the state's wonderful national parks and forests each year, this budget highlights the importance of keeping our facilities in tiptop condition. The amount of \$7 million has been allocated this year to maintain amenities, roads, tracks and other assets in Queensland's national parks and forests. An extra \$2 million will be allocated on an ongoing basis to Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's base funding to enhance pest and fire management in parks. This permanent funding builds on the successful projects undertaken over the past three years as a result of the \$6 million 2004 election commitment. I know this is of particular interest to members of the opposition and I can assure you that pest management continues to be a key focus of the QPWS.

The Beattie government has devoted \$6.5 million over the next four years for another four Great Walks in Cooloola, the Conondale Range, Carnarvon and Whitsunday islands. The walks already established have been a huge success and are attracting more and more people to explore our natural landscape. There is also more money this year to expand the hugely successful Nature Refuge Program which has now reached 561,000 hectares through more than 252 properties and we are hopeful that we will reach 650,000 hectares this financial year.

Our commitment to protecting the environment, its wildlife and ecosystems is also evident through the recent review of the Crocodile Management Plan, the Fraser Island Dingo Management Plan and our important Back on Track program for threatened species. No issue in my portfolio has attracted more interest in the media recently than that of crocodiles and despite recent EPA surveys of river systems in central and northern Queensland showing crocodile numbers have not increased dramatically, there are some irresponsible people who continue to put fear into the community by claiming there has been a population explosion.

I am also very proud of the Beattie government's commitment to multiculturalism. Through initiatives such as the 'Queensland Roar Against Racism' campaign and the recent Interfaith Forum we are showing that we value our cultural diversity and that racism in Queensland will not be tolerated. Hundreds of community groups have benefited from our MAQ funding rounds and this will continue throughout the coming year.

Finally, part of the success of any good government is having a positive working relationship with opposition counterparts. I believe that my department has a positive relationship with the shadow minister for environment and multiculturalism, Rosemary Menkens, and I thank her for her courtesy and professional approach. We both have the same goals and I encourage Mrs Menkens and other members of the opposition to continue to contact me or my office on portfolio matters, as I am sure that they will.

I would also like to introduce the EPA staff here at the table with me. With me is the Director-General, Terry Wall; Alan Feely, the Executive Director of Parks; Neil O'Sullivan, who is the director of our finance division; and Claire Kinnane, our estimates coordinating officer. Thank you to all of you and thank you for today.

**CHAIR:** The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members and I call the member for Burdekin.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, minister and members of the department. I refer to MPS 1-31. In an answer to question on notice 830 you said that since January 2005 the EPA's preference has been for the use of four-cylinder fleet vehicles as a standard. I fully understand the requirements for at least part of your fleet to consist of six-cylinder four-wheel drive vehicles but could you please explain why two-and-a-half years later over 50 per cent of the Environmental Protection Agency's fleet are still six-or eight-cylinder gas guzzlers and why only four per cent or 24 of your 530 vehicle fleet are environmental friendly hybrids?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank the member for Burdekin for her question. I know that she has real concerns about climate change, as do I. With the current concerns over global warming and the increasing fuel prices there is heightened awareness of the importance of ensuring that our motor vehicle fleets are as efficient and as adaptable as possible. The Whole-of-Government Fleet Management Review has mandated a ban on ordering eight-cylinder vehicles and replacing six-cylinder vehicles with four-cylinder vehicles where appropriate. I can assure you that the EPA is leading by example.

Over the past five years the agency has been modifying its vehicle fleet to ensure that the fleet is as economic and as green as possible. Since January 2005 the EPA's preference is for the use of four-cylinder fleet vehicles as a standard. Any request for a higher-cylinder vehicle is assessed on a case-by-case basis. In complying with whole-of-government policies, Q-Fleet has recognised that the EPA has an operational requirement for four-wheel drive vehicles, which I think you were talking about, that will have more than four cylinders as the most suitable vehicle for operational needs such as firefighting and the day-to-day operations in parks. Q-Fleet is about to commence a review of the agency's vehicle fleet to see how we can further streamline our fleet and best meet the requirements of government policy.

Not only does my department conscientiously review the vehicles that it purchases but also it questions the need to replace vehicles. I am happy to say that this ongoing review process has continued to deliver benefits to the EPA and the Queensland government. Not only have we been able to reduce the size of the vehicle fleet, but also we have been able to shift the fleet towards smaller and more fuel-efficient vehicles. I actually drive my own hybrid vehicle in Townsville which is a great car to zap in and out of the Townsville streets.

The current fleet mix of the EPA as of June this year, which includes SES vehicles, consists of: 25 hybrid four-cylinder vehicles; 206 four-cylinder vehicles, with 70 per cent of those four-wheel drives; seven five-cylinder vehicles, 100 per cent of which are four-wheel drive vehicles; and 293 six-cylinder vehicles, 84.3 per cent of which are four-wheel drive vehicles. As part of the agency's fuel purchasing strategy, the EPA has also increased its use of E10 fuel in line with its own plan and in support of the Queensland government's Ethanol Industry Action Plan. The EPA has proposed to purchase 60,000 litres of ethanol-blended fuel this financial year, but I am pleased to say that that target has been surpassed. E10 fuel now accounts for over 20 per cent of the EPA's total unleaded fuel purchases. As you can see, we are addressing that particular aspect of dealing with climate change very, very well. In accordance with government policy, you will be pleased to know that the eight-cylinder vehicles will be replaced by the expiration of the current lease. Between June 2003 and 2005 the fleet was reduced in size by 53 vehicles—that is, nine per cent.

**Mrs MENKENS:** I did note though, in that same answer to question on notice 830, that you are actually extending the leases on the executive vehicles by 12 months. My question to you is what is most important—executive comfort or reducing carbon dioxide emissions?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** That is actually a government decision and an operational decision on the part of Q-Fleet. Perhaps I could ask my director-general to further embellish that.

**Mr Wall:** As part of the restructure of the Q-Fleet fleet of vehicles, Q-Fleet took a decision some years ago to extend the leases on a number of larger vehicles, six- and eight-cylinder vehicles, to enable it to more effectively manage its fleet. That was a whole-of-government decision and something that we are bound to implement.

**Mrs MENKENS:** I refer to the MPS at page 1-29 and non-government question on notice No. 2. Minister, in question on notice No. 2 I asked for details of the 55 properties purchased in the Cape York, the Daintree, south-east Queensland and other regions in 2006-07. Minister, I can certainly understand the need to respect the privacy of the sellers but could you please supply details of the area of land actually purchased in each of these regions and the total area of land purchased by your department over the same period?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for the question. I do not need to tell you that Queensland has some of Australia's and the world's most spectacular places to visit. We also have a very diverse range of landscapes, including deserts, mountain forests, ancient rainforests, spectacular reefs and beautiful rivers and lakes. We are very lucky to live in a state that has all of that at its doorstep. We have to manage that for the future.

What we have done is allocate a total of \$67.5 million to national park acquisitions in the current term of government. That is made up of these programs which I will explain briefly. We have the Daintree buyback program totalling \$10 million, the Cape York Peninsula and Daintree acquisition program totalling \$7.5 million, the south-east Queensland rainforest protection program totalling \$20 million and the biodiversity enhancement program totalling \$30 million.

We have made significant progress with these programs. If you take the Daintree, for example, about 150 lots have been purchased to date. We have expended about \$6.8 million protecting over 200 hectares of land that will be added to the Daintree National Park. These additions will protect the diversity in this world renowned area as well as improve the management and connectivity of the park.

In relation to the actual specifics of your question, would you mind if I took that on notice? We will provide you with an answer before the end of the session.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you, Minister. I refer to the MPS at page 3-1. The estimates for the final cost of the site remediation after the Binary Industries fire continues to escalate with initial estimates exploding from around \$5 million to a current \$30 million. Do you have a final cost for the clean-up? Do you know how much of this final cost is likely to be recovered from the owners?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I am really pleased that you have asked me that question because Binary has been something not only of interest to you but also of interest to me, the EPA and the media. As a bit of background, the former Binary Industries site, located in the member for Murrumba's electorate, was destroyed by fire and resulted in extensive contamination of the site and the surrounding lands which are actually owned by the state government and the Caboolture Shire Council. What you are referring to is a site jointly owned by Hamcor Pty Ltd and a private individual.

A number of statutory orders were issued by the EPA to various parties concerning the clean-up of Binary during that period in 2005. In November Binary went into liquidation. In late November 2005 the EPA issued notices for remediation of the contaminated land to the landowners. However, these notices were not complied with. Orders were also issued over the site in March and July of last year. Some of the requirements of these orders were also not met. So it has been very difficult.

But I think you will be pleased to hear the outcomes of the actual expenditure to date. I would like to call on Mark Williamson, the Executive Director of Environmental Operations, to provide you with the exact details.

**Mr Williamson:** The proposed budget for the clean-up of the state and local government owned lands was \$10.1 million. At this stage we expect to underspend that by approximately \$1.4 million. We believe the clean-up will come in under budget. So far we have treated about 15 million litres of water. We expect by the end of the clean-up in about September this year that we would have treated around 19 million litres of water.

On the open market through private firms it would have cost between \$15 million and \$19 million to treat that water. My people designed and built their own water treatment plant. The water treatment has been carried out for just over \$1 million. There will be notional savings by the end of the project of about \$18 million due to designing our own water treatment plant.

At this stage the crown law advice is that none of the money that we have spent on the clean-up of state and government owned lands will be able to be recovered from the owners of the site. However, we have obtained court orders which require the owners to clean up their site. We estimate that that clean-up cost will be around \$5.6 million.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Minister, can you give any reason for the over 230 per cent blow-out in the budget for the integrated searches and licensing project on page 1-29 of the MPS?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank the member for the question and I will get further details for you. This is part of the capital expenditure to date. I will call Mark Williamson to give us all of the details.

**Mr Williamson:** As part of the integration of our business with the whole-of-government call centre through Smart Service Queensland a new business model is required. This is simply some additional funding that was provided by government to pay for the services that we have to buy through Smart Service Queensland. This is really an in and out amount for government. It is simply an amount of extra allocation we needed to buy the front-end services through Smart Service Queensland.

**Mrs MENKENS:** I refer to the MPS at page 1-9 and non-government question on notice No. 5 attachment 1. I refer to the establishment of the nature refuge program and the announcement of the five-year NatureAssist program in April 2006. Funding for the round was in the order of \$3 million with the latest update in April showing that 99 of the original 139 were assessed in early March 2007. Could you detail the results of the assessment, the number and value of successful tenders and indicate whether the entire \$3 million will be spent?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for the question. This nature refuge program is simply sensational. It is extremely successful. I hope that it continues well into the future. More than half a million hectares of Queensland's natural and cultural heritage treasures are now actually safeguarded through this program. It is all under voluntary conservation agreements between landowners and the Queensland government.

Since July 1998 the nature refuge program has grown from 29 nature refuges, which protects over 11,000 hectares, to 252 nature refuges. Well in excess of 561,000 hectares are being protected now. The first round of NatureAssist attracted 165 expressions of interest and of these 99 were invited to submit a full tender. This covered an area of 141,000 hectares.

An expert assessment panel used the environmental benefit index to assess the tenders. The panel included representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and Water, experts from the Australian government, from regional natural resource management groups, from AgForce as well as technical experts from the EPA. Of the 99 tenders 70 have been given the green light to begin negotiating a perpetual conservation agreement which is a condition of the funding. If negotiations are successful they will result in more than 68,000 hectares of new nature refuges at a cost of \$1.85 million.

The Environmental Partnership Scheme will fund the bulk of these tenders by contributing approximately \$1.4 million. That will be to secure 66,800 hectares. The EPA is currently making preparations to call for tenders under a second round of NatureAssist.

As clarification, the Environmental Partnership Scheme was actually launched on 1 June 2006. It is a key initiative of the Blueprint for the Bush that actually brings together a wide range of incentives for landowner and landholders to voluntarily protect and manage areas that are of special environmental value on their blocks.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Minister, it is over 12 months since the expressions of interest were first called for and there has been no public announcement of the successful tenders. When will the remaining six rounds of the five-year program be conducted and will they still be finalised by April 2010?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I am not sure that that is entirely accurate. We announce them regularly and indeed I meet with the landholders as well. I will ask Geoff Clare, the Executive Director of Conservation Services, to give you the full details.

**Mr Clare:** The next round of NatureAssist is due to be initiated in August. We are currently in negotiations with AgForce as part of preparing for that process. We are developing a partnership with AgForce to ensure that that program is received by landholders in rural Queensland. Hence we are spending some time building that relationship before we commence that next round.

The first round involved a degree of development because this NatureAssist process is a competitive tender process that is a very innovative and a new development in Australia. We have been developing the procedures. We intend to run a round commencing in August. We would expect subsequent rounds in the future would take around five to six months from beginning to end.

**Mrs MENKENS:** I refer to the MPS at page 1-8 and native species maintenance and enhancement. I refer to the endangered hairy-nosed wombat. I understand that there are fewer than 200 of these unique creatures left in Queensland. How much is your department doing to preserve these animals and to encourage a breeding program? How high a priority does your department rate the preservation of this species?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I am very pleased that you have a real appreciation of the northern hairy-nosed wombat. It is indeed a beautiful creature. It is part of our very rich and diverse wildlife. We have, as you have suggested, an abundance of species such as the eastern grey kangaroo. We also have the magnificent northern hairy-nosed wombat. We are attempting, as part of the Back on Track program, to rescue it from the brink of extinction.

**CHAIR:** Do you want extra time granted, member for Burdekin, to hear the rest of the answer?

**Mrs MENKENS:** Yes.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** What we are attempting to do is to halt the decline of the state's biodiversity and halt the impact of some of the threats that affect some of these animals. I would like to ask Geoff Clare, who has worked very significantly on trying to maintain the population of the northern hairy-nosed wombat, particularly in Epping National Park, to answer.

**Mr Clare:** The hairy-nosed wombat is the most threatened mammal we have in Queensland and one of the most threatened mammals in the world. It is a species that is second only to the bilby in terms of the investment of resources by the EPA in its recovery. It is restricted to one population. We believe the population at the moment is 115 and growing, which is very encouraging. Most of the investment of the EPA in recent years has been in managing and protecting that existing colony—for instance, providing artificial water, putting a fence around the colony to protect it from wild dogs and other measures on that site. But we are and have commenced thinking about establishing new colonies of that wombat and that is our goal—to have established new colonies of that species—because at the moment, because they are all in one place, they are at sufficient risk if there is climatic change or if there is a major problem for that population such as a disease, for instance. Our next priority is to establish additional colonies, and we are considering breeding as part of that.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The time for non-government questions has expired.

**Mr WELLS:** The minister would undoubtedly be disappointed if I did not start out by asking a question about the Narangba Industrial Estate, so I will do that. First of all, can I acknowledge the minister's initiative in inviting a couple of my constituents to go with departmental officers on a routine inspection of the monitoring devices around the Narangba Industrial Estate. That has added very significantly to the public confidence in the EPA processes in the area, and I thank the minister and the department for that. With respect to the clean-up—and I know that the member for Burdekin has asked a question along these lines—could I ask explicitly when will the clean-up be completed? Will the minister commit to the utmost vigilance in monitoring the environment around the Narangba Industrial Estate?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for your question. I know how involved you have been throughout this entire process and it has been really good to be able to work with your community residents as well. I do thank you for the question despite the fact that it is similar to one of the questions previously asked by the opposition, but I think it is worth outlining to the committee the bulk of your question—that is, what are we doing to address the problem and how long will it take?

I begin by assuring members of the committee and of course your community that the government is absolutely committed to ensuring the clean-up of the Binary fire site and the surrounding areas of the impacted land. I have actually been out to that clean-up site myself and have witnessed the absolutely fantastic work that is being done by EPA officers. Since 2005 the EPA has been the lead agency for the clean-up work that is being done on the state and local government owned land adjacent to the Binary factory site.

It is important to note here that the government's clean-up project does not include the cleaning up of contamination on the Binary factory site itself. The owners of this site are responsible for the containment, the clean-up and the remediation of any contamination on their land. The EPA has secured orders in the Planning and Environment Court requiring the owners of this site to clean up any residual contamination, and these orders require the owners to complete a series of works by certain times to progress those remediation activities. Earlier this month the owners of the Binary site applied to the Planning and Environment Court for an extension of the court ordered completion dates. Whilst it is their right under law to make this application, I can assure the committee that the EPA intends to strenuously challenge that application.

So I am pleased to announce that the remediation of the Caboolture shire and Queensland government land is approximately 80 per cent complete, and this has been a massive undertaking. To date, more than 15 million litres of contaminated water has been contained, treated and disposed of using a specially designed and constructed on-site treatment dam at an estimated cost of a little over \$1 million. It should be noted that to commercially dispose of the water alone it would have cost the government in excess of \$15 million, and I think we outlined that before. For the state contaminated land, I think we can look at September as being the date when that will be completed. We cannot actually put a time on the factory site, and of course that is as a result of the court procedures. But we would hope that that would be sooner rather than later.

**Mr LEE:** Minister, I refer you to page 1-8 of the MPS and ask: how is the government helping to manage feral pigs and other feral animals in national parks and state forests?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank you for your question. I know you are a keen bushwalker, so I know your interest in making sure that our national parks and state forests are well protected from these furry critters that affect our parks so badly.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is actually better resourced than ever before in order to tackle this serious problem and we have record spending that has been sustained over the last three years. We now have an additional \$2 million in base funding to continue to make a successful incursion into this problem. My agency is very well aware that pests, plants and animals can have really serious environmental implications and impacts. So protecting our land is a job not just for the EPA but for everyone—that is, landowners as well as government agencies. I know this is an issue that is of particular interest to members of the opposition, and on occasion QPWS officers have met with them directly to consider their concerns, particularly in north Queensland.

The QPWS contributes significant resources to combating pests, and these activities are given very high priority within our overall estate management programs. Officers are always very keen to work cooperatively with neighbouring landowners and local councils to manage these pests across the state. Major programs are in place, and many of these are conducted in partnership with rural communities, neighbours and other agencies. More than \$4.5 million was spent in the year 2006-07 for managing pests on the QPWS estate, and this level of funding will be maintained in 2007-08. Some \$1.5 million of this money will be spent on 90 specific projects, with \$730,000 for 32 pest animal management projects. These projects will focus on feral pigs, wild dogs, feral goats, foxes, feral cattle, feral horses, feral cats and camels.

Some \$400,000 of project funding will be spent on 19 major projects involving pig eradication and control, and these projects will of course build on the very successful work that is currently being undertaken to control feral pigs in the Wet Tropics, on Cape York, in the Whitsunday Ranges, at Carnarvon National Park—a bit closer to home—and on Curtis and Moreton islands. Some \$70,000 of project funding will cover four major projects involving wild dogs as a primary target. As we know, pests do not recognise property boundaries and action must often be coordinated across broad geographic areas for that to be effective. That is why it is important that we work in cooperation with landowners and with local governments.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, I note on page 1-18 of the MPS that the EPA will gain additional funding for an enhanced compliance program for industries that are regulated by the EPA. How will the EPA use the money to benefit industry and the community?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank the member for the question, and I know and understand your interest in ensuring that your constituents work and live in a safe environment. In essence, this investment will provide more operational staff for the EPA which will result in more inspections of licensed high-risk activities and industrial estates. The additional funding will significantly increase the numbers and quality of inspections and other audits that the EPA carries out yearly.



This injection of \$5 million per year into the EPA is aimed at ensuring that industry complies with its environmental obligations. Initially it will provide for more than 50 new staff in the EPA to handle the unprecedented growth in Queensland's industrial and mining industries. Recently the government announced a comprehensive two-year investigation into Gladstone's air quality, and this investigation is one of the first enhanced compliance projects and will ensure that local industry is managed sustainably and into the future.

It is important that the EPA can proactively condition new activities to prevent future environmental problems and respond to complaints about any environmental matters. The number of complaints has been rising in certain areas because of increased population. With that there has also been increased industrial activity, higher density residential developments and a greater community awareness these days of environmental issues, which is a good thing.

This combined effect has placed constraints on the resources available to the EPA for proactive compliance activities. So the Beattie government's \$5 million investment will allow the EPA to bring its compliance program into line with a number of industrial premises it needs to monitor and will ensure that industry is appropriately managing key environmental risks. It will also ensure that applications from industry are processed in a timely manner and the response to complaints is maintained.

Approximately one-third of the 16,800 environmentally relevant activities regulated by the EPA in 2005-06 were level 1 activities, and that is determined as a higher risk. The enhanced compliance program based on these new funds will focus on those level 1 activities and set a goal of inspecting each site at least once in alternate years. I want to stress that this is not just a 'we've got you approach'. It is not all about the big stick. The additional staff will be able to provide advice to industries about reducing their risk and adopting ways to better meet their environmental obligations. Most business operators want to comply, which is a good thing, and the additional resources will allow the EPA to provide better assistance to the industry. It is just another example of the Beattie government's commitment to the environment and our bid to help businesses to adapt to changing conditions.

**Mr WELLS:** Minister, the EPA has a very good reputation around the state for assisting and advising businesses as to how to reduce their energy emissions. Can you advise the committee what steps the department is taking to reduce its own carbon footprint?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for the question. I know how interested you are in this, as indeed I am. I think this is a great program that we have and terrific initiatives. We already have made very significant contributions to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions through the ban of broadscale tree clearing. I am very pleased to say that the EPA is also taking a lead role in working directly to reduce its own environmental footprint. The EPA has undertaken a range of practical activities that have seen real financial and environmental savings in areas such as fuel and energy usage, facilities management and of course air travel.

The EPA produces an estimated 10,468 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per annum through electricity, fuel consumption and air travel. Through various initiatives over the past few years my department alone has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by around 1,651 tonnes a year. Renewable energy generation through stand-alone power systems and solar hot-water systems has contributed 1,012 tonnes towards this saving. My Director-General, Terry Wall, has recently approved the formation of internal working groups to identify the issue around developing a carbon neutral EPA which will look at a range of initiatives. The EPA already has an internal policy position of ensuring that all future major retrofits of facilities or the leasing of new facilities will meet four stars under the nationally recognised Green Building Council of Australia's green star rating.

Recently, I personally handed over the last of the agency's 2,300 obsolete computers to Hewlett Packard, NetOptions and Sims E-Recycling who will recycle the parts. So that will save over 70 tonnes of material going into landfill. The agency's new computer monitors are energy efficient, using less than half the power of its previous computers while the flat screen monitors do not contain the same large quantities of lead that are found in those older style monitors.

Further greenhouse gas reductions have occurred by reducing the number, as we said before, of six- and eight-cylinder vehicles in the fleet. In fact, the EPA was one of the first departments to take its use of the Toyota Prius past the trial stage and incorporate it in the mainstream fleet. The Prius is the car that I drive in Townsville. Currently, the agency has 25 of these ultra low-emission vehicles, which are scattered throughout its fleet from Brisbane to Toowoomba to Cairns. They are, of course, a very integral part of the operations of this agency. Since January 2005, the EPA's preference is for the use of four-cylinder vehicles as standard. Any request for a higher-cylinder vehicle is assessed on a case-by-case basis. I would love to continue with that one.

**CHAIR:** You can have an extension of time.

**Mr WELLS:** I am certainly extremely interested in it.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you. It is just that I think it is really important for us to maintain our commitment to climate change, particularly with fuel efficiency. We have seen our fuel consumption

decrease by 190,000 litres compared to last year, which is a reduction of 15 per cent. I think this is a really good thing.

As part of the agency's fuel purchasing strategy, the EPA has also increased its use of E10 fuel in line with its own plan in support of the Queensland government's Ethanol Industry Action Plan. So E10 now accounts for over 20 per cent of the EPA's total unleaded fuel purchases. That will continue to increase as new E10 outlets are established throughout the state. Based on the total expected fuel savings from all actions, we expect to reduce our carbon dioxide impact by approximately 475,000 tonnes per annum.

The majority of the EPA's metered electricity is used for standard office operations. We focus on ensuring that these operations run as efficiently as possible. So I would like to take this opportunity to encourage members of the public and members of the committee to work out their own environmental footprint on the EPA's ClimateSmart Living web site.

**Mrs SCOTT:** It is good to see leadership in your department. I think many of us will remember an incident which occurred in December 2006 where a large fight took place at a popular camping spot. I refer also to page 9 of the MPS where it states that additional funding has been allocated for park management. What measures and funding has the department put in place in recent times to ensure that visitors to popular camping grounds are not overcrowded and have the safest and most pleasant experience possible?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for the question. As a person with a very large family, and now grandchildren, this is really important to me. The incident you referred to occurred at the popular camping area within the Inskip Peninsula Recreation Area, which is near Rainbow Beach. On that occasion growing antisocial behaviour and drunkenness escalated into a large-scale armed brawl between groups of visitors. Some of those people were badly injured.

Over the last several years during peak holiday periods serious violence, assaults on rangers, antisocial behaviour, drunkenness, dangerous driving, permit evasion and environmental damage have plagued overcrowded camping areas at Inskip Peninsula and Teewah Beach at Cooloola. Of course, that is just totally unacceptable. The 125-hectare Inskip Point camping ground, as you would know, is a reserve that was designated in 1996 for environmental purposes with a subpurpose for recreation. During peak holiday periods, the number of campers on this site has actually peaked at 3,000 people per night. At the QPWS managed Teewah Beach camping area, the number of campers at peak periods was estimated at around 5,000 per night. Similar problems here have been exacerbated by a dangerous mix of vehicles and pedestrians on the beach which has resulted in very serious injuries. There have also been health related complaints. I am sure that is just as a result of the extensive bush toileting in the area. I am pleased to say that measures have been put in place in recent times to ensure that visitors to these popular camping grounds are not overcrowded and have the safest and most pleasant experience possible.

In March 2006, an Inskip Point working group was convened to provide broad community based advice and recommendations for future management of the camping at Inskip Point. Their recommendations will help inform the Inskip Peninsula Recreation Area management plan that is currently being prepared by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Since Easter 2006, a strong ranger and police presence has focused on bad behaviour and noncompliance at Inskip and Teewah. Joint QPWS and police operations over peak holiday periods have been very successful, virtually eliminating the problems that were previously associated with camping in these areas at these times. As a result, campers have had a far safer and a much more enjoyable experience.

QPWS has also conducted an education and information campaign for visitors to the protected areas within Cooloola. Most visitors now know that they must have a permit before camping. Many use the Smart Service Queensland online booking system to obtain a camping spot and to avoid disappointment at Inskip Point and Teewah Beach.

**CHAIR:** There will not be any more time in this allocation of time for government questions. I will go back to non-government questions and call the member for Burdekin.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a follow-up question to my original question on Binary Industries. You said that the clean-up costs are not recoverable from the owners. How can Binary continue to operate when the owners—who we know are linked to your member, Ken Hayward—seem to have money to pay solicitors to argue in court for extensions?

**CHAIR:** I ask the member to be very careful in making personal reflections or any implications regarding members of parliament, particularly those who are not here to defend themselves—or any members of parliament.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Sorry, Chair.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** And also who were not involved. I am very surprised, actually, by that question. However, I am happy to give you further detail about Binary. Can I say at the outset that we

take enforcement extremely seriously. It is not something that we let go by the by, as you might be insinuating.

In fact, the EPA in Queensland has one of the best track records in Australia. We have actually secured nine custodial sentences and over \$5 million in fines and costs through environmental prosecutions. So we are certainly not soft on prosecutions. Can I say, too, that over the same five-year period the EPA has secured 13 orders in the Planning and Environment Court, requiring significant expenditure on environmental improvements and setting new benchmarks for the environmental protection of specific industries.

In what you are referring to with Binary, despite the fact that we have a very good track record, I would like to ask Mark Williamson to answer, as he has been the man on the ground throughout all of this. He has in-depth knowledge about the costs and the regulatory efforts of the EPA.

**Mr Williamson:** The operators of the Binary chemicals facility were two Binary companies. Those companies do not exist anymore. They went into liquidation; they do not exist. The directors of those two companies were a Mr Terry Armstrong and a Mr Don Hayward. They were the two directors. The companies that operated the facility do not exist. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service investigated the fire and they could not find any cause of the fire. Hence there were no charges that they or the police preferred in this matter.

Under the contaminated land provisions of the Environmental Protection Act, if a polluter cannot be identified then the default responsibility rests with the landowners. In this case, the landowners are a company called Hamcor Pty Ltd and Mr Terry Armstrong. So they are the joint owners of the site. The default responsibility for the clean-up of the site rests with the property owners.

On Crown law advice, the Binary companies do not exist and, even if they did exist, there is no lawful basis on which to recover the costs given that it was a fire for all intents and purposes that was an accident and the pollution that came off site resulted from that fire.

**CHAIR:** I remind members of the committee and witnesses that the Binary matter is a matter before the courts. So matters of sub judice may apply.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Just with your indulgence, I can give you further details of the costs so far, if you would like.

**CHAIR:** Does the member want extra time?

**Mrs MENKENS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Two minutes.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** The regulatory efforts from the EPA have resulted in the owners spending in excess of \$1 million in dealing with contamination on the site. The EPA estimates that the owners may need to spend in excess of \$5 million to fully comply with their court orders.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Also on that same matter, should the chemical factory reopen, what actions have you taken to ensure no repeat of the environmental disaster that occurred?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for the question. As I indicated to you before, we have a very good track record in the EPA—one of the best in Australia. This year's budget has allocated an extra \$5 million to step up its role in enforcement. As a result of that, we have allocated an extra 60 staff who will be employed to carry out inspections and to carry out enforcement operations to make sure that our industries are doing the right thing by community standards.

As you would know from Binary in particular, there is an increased interest by the community and governments in chemical and high-impact industrial operations. We established a project team to deliver the community's expectations. That is what the member for Murrumba was talking about before. He has been very involved indeed with his community and their expectations. They are very keen to monitor the environmental management of these types of industries in the Narangba Industrial Estate.

With respect to the Narangba Industrial Estate, the primary role of the EPA will be to ensure that businesses operate within their development approvals. Development approval conditions are placed on businesses to minimise impacts on the surrounding environment and the community. It is the function of the EPA to ensure that those conditions and operations are being complied with. Compliance inspections will be undertaken to assess the normal day-to-day operations of each EPA administered business site. Any planned management of incidents, such as spills, and the impacts that these may have on the surrounding natural environment and residential areas will be taken into consideration. Impacts considered include those that are related to air, such as odour and particulates, noise, land and water. That will include stormwater and groundwater.

Since June 2006, the EPA has systematically inspected the business activities that it administers at the Narangba Industrial Estate. These inspections have resulted in enforcement actions being taken against 13 businesses that are regulated by the agency. So we are not sitting on our hands; we are getting on with the job. The EPA has used its statutory tools that are available under the Environmental Protection Act to require businesses to undertake actions to bring them into compliance with their

development approvals and to address other potential environmental issues that may crop up on their site.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you. I will change to the Multiculturalism portfolio, if I may. I refer to page 1-23 of the MPs, which relates to the number of cross-cultural training programs that were delivered. It is noted that the number of programs delivered during 2006-07—that is 55—was well below the target of 150 programs set for the last financial year. The performance measure has been discontinued for the current year. Could you clarify why Multicultural Affairs Queensland failed to meet the training programs performance targets set for 2006-07 by such a significant extent and also why that performance measure has now been discontinued in 2007-08?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for the question, although it is a little misleading and I will do my best to clarify it for you. I am pleased that you, like me, enjoy what we have in Queensland, which is a cultural diversity pretty much second to none. We enjoy very positive community relations. As you know, racial, religious or any cultural discrimination is damaging and it is extremely costly to our society, both socially and economically. We are doing everything we can to stamp that out. Therefore, I am very happy to answer the question about cross-cultural training, which is very, very important.

In order for organisations to be effective in delivering services in that culturally diverse community, we need to have cultural competence. One important way to achieve that is by doing, as you suggested, training in cross-cultural communication skills. In the past, MAQ has provided direct delivery of cross-cultural training to Queensland government officers and to other key stakeholders. The original estimate in the Ministerial Portfolio Statement of 150 training programs was based on that old model, which was superseded with a more strategic approach in 2006. This was called the Smart State cultural competence training strategy. Under this strategy, MAQ is funding the development of a training unit in the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland to increase the supply of training.

They are also running free train-the-trainer courses in cross-cultural training for training providers. Of course, that is in departmental areas, private providers, TAFEs and, of course, universities. It is advising on the development of computer-based training, providing mentoring and support for cross-cultural training providers, providing advice to organisations on appropriate training providers by establishing a training providers database, and developing a training-specific web page on the MAQ web site. Also under this strategy, the MAQ is working with Queensland universities to offer postgraduate teaching degrees in cross-cultural training. An important part of the strategy, of course, is to work with the Queensland government agencies to incorporate cross-cultural training as part of the multicultural action plans. I am really pleased to report that that has been extremely successful.

One of the examples that has been really successful is the one that Queensland Health has announced to undertake a pilot cross-cultural training program for clinical service managers and their reception staff. It is working well.

**Mrs MENKENS:** It still must be disappointing, though, that the target has not actually been met yet.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I think that that is the misleading part. I do not think you actually understand what I am saying. Let me ask my director-general to clarify that further.

**Mr Wall:** Mrs Menkens, the notes attached to the table on page 1-23 note that the MAQ has not met that particular output because we have changed the way in which we are doing business. As the minister said, we are now doing business in terms of training the trainers. With limited resources we are finding the demand for cross-cultural training is quite significant and beyond our reach. By changing the strategy to actually training the trainers, we are ending up or will end up with significantly more people cross-culturally trained than under the old arrangement. Therefore, the performance measures in the table indicate that that measure is being discontinued, but we will be continuing to do the cross-cultural, train-the-trainer courses.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you. Crossing to heritage, Minister, and the MPS at page 1-9. Regarding the lead role that your department plays in preserving our cultural and historic heritage which, as we both agree, is very, very important, can you explain why significant sites such as the Cairns Yacht Club and public facilities such as Yungaba and the only remaining in situ buildings from Expo at South Bank are being lost? They are being developed or sold to private interests.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I have actually visited the site of the Cairns Yacht Club, so I know exactly what you are referring to.

**Mrs MENKENS:** So have I.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** That is good. It is our part of the world, is it not. That was first nominated to the Queensland Heritage Register in 1996. However, the Queensland Heritage Council has rejected this nomination because it just did not reach the significance that is required under the criteria that is set by the council. In 2002 it was again nominated and was previously entered on the register by the Queensland Heritage Council. The Queensland Heritage Council subsequently notified the public in March 2003 of that listing. This notification generated objections to the listing and an independent

assessor was then appointed to look into the objections and review the provisional entry as per requirements of the Queensland Heritage Act 1992.

In December 2003, after considering the assessor's report the Queensland Heritage Council decided not to proceed with a permanent entry on the basis that, whilst the Cairns Yacht Club was clearly of local heritage significance, it did not meet the requirements of state heritage significance. Once this decision was finalised, the Queensland Heritage Council received an application from the property's owners seeking a certificate of immunity. A certificate of immunity, as described in section 43 of the Queensland Heritage Act 1992, comes into force when an owner or the owner's representative applies to the Queensland Heritage Council for immunity from registration. The Queensland Heritage Council is then required to consider the application and, if the place to which the application relates does not satisfy the criteria for entry in the register, the Queensland Heritage Council must issue a certificate of immunity.

The Queensland Heritage Council is unable to refuse an application for certificate of immunity after previously deciding that the place does not satisfy criteria for entering the register unless the application appears to be frivolous or vexatious. This certificate prevents a place from being considered for listing for a five-year period. In this case, the Queensland Heritage Council has decided that the nomination has not satisfied the requirements of state heritage listing, so it was obliged to grant the certificate of immunity under the Queensland Heritage Act.

Nominations to the register are decided by the council, as I said. This is an independent statutory authority appointed by the government. We do not make decisions as a government about entry in or removal from the register and we cannot overturn the heritage council's nomination decisions. Entering an historic building or a site recognises the importance of those places to the people of Queensland.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Regarding the figures for capital works and land management for expanded estate in the capital acquisition statement on page 1-29 of the MPS, out of a budgeted figure for 2006-07 of over \$18 million, only \$13 million was actually spent. For the 2007-08 period, the allocation is again only \$18 million with no provision to make up the lost \$5 million. Minister, why bother allocating funds when you seem to have no intention of spending them or, perhaps, of managing them?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I do not think that is quite correct, but I thank you for the question. We do love spending it and we do intend to do exactly that. That is operational and very specific, so, if you do not mind, I will ask Alan to fill you in with the details.

**Mr Feely:** The carryover will be taken forward. It does not disappear. Any work that was not done in that year will be done in the next year. We have scheduling issues sometimes in terms of capital works, but I am actually pretty proud of our capital performance and I would not mind the opportunity to run through it.

In total our capital budget for 2006-07 was \$26.4 million. Our actual expenditure for the year was \$22.8 million against that total budget of \$26.4 million. There were two major projects that account for that difference in expenditure compared to budget. One was the Ma:Mu canopy walk, which is being built by the private sector. It is on schedule and is due to be completed on time, but we make contractual payments by progress payment. That money will carry forward into next year and we will pay that, but the walk will be completed next year which will be fantastic. The reason for the funds still unspent, as I say, is that it comes from progress payments for that part.

The second major part is a marine park boat which we are purchasing for \$700,000. The tendering process and design is taking a little longer. Those are the two major programs that are on hold—they are not on hold but are going through to next year.

When you exclude those two projects, the Parks and Wildlife Service actually spent 99 per cent of its capital works budget this year, which is fantastic from my point of view, particularly given the remote locations we are involved in and the sort of work we are doing. Over the years we have done some fantastic capital works projects around the state. Ma:Mu is one of them and sinking the HMAS *Brisbane* off Caloundra is another. There are also the first six Great Walks. We are currently doing another four Great Walks. All of those have been done on schedule and under budget, with the exception of the Gold Coast one which is taking a little longer, but we will get there.

As I say, I think that, given the remoteness and the major increase in capital works from what it used to be in years gone by, to deliver that scale of project at that proportion of completion is an outstanding achievement.

**CHAIR:** The time for non-government questions has expired or is about to in the next 10 seconds. We will go to government questions. I call the member for Indooroopilly.

**Mr LEE:** Minister, I start by thanking you for the work that you are doing to tackle climate change. I recently carbon offset my home. I know that the member for Sandgate has carbon offset the emissions associated with the life of her dog, including with the purchasing of dog food and everything that goes with it. There are some genuinely innovative things that people can do and are doing.

I note from the MPS that increased funding has been allocated to complete the review of the Moreton Bay Marine Park. I was wondering if you could advise the committee of the opportunity that the community will have to input their views into this review of the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for the question. I am pleased to see that you are doing your bit to preserve our beautiful environment in Queensland. Your question, of course, is an extremely important one. Moreton Bay is an incredible marine park and one that we need to protect today and for the future.

The review of the Moreton Bay Marine Park is an extremely important process and it is one that I am very much involved in. It is all about achieving sustainability for our marine environment, our lifestyles and our livelihoods. I would ask that everybody who is interested in the future of the Moreton Bay Marine Park gets involved in the process. It is a good one. I am very happy so far with the responses to our open consultation, with literally hundreds of people taking part in the EPA's online survey. They are attending our most recent information sessions.

Times have absolutely changed since the first zoning plan was developed and introduced in 1997. It does not seem that long ago when you say it that way, but times have changed. We all know that south-east Queensland is growing at an incredibly rapid rate, particularly in the last decade. Recreational and commercial use of the marine park has grown significantly and scientists have increased their knowledge about how coastal ecosystems respond to human and natural pressures.

Over the past few months of the zoning plan review, our priority has been to gather scientific, social and economic data to get a full picture of the activities and natural values of the park, because we need to understand what they are and how important they are to the marine park. Many people have their own personal views on how issues should be dealt with in the review and, of course, we are very keen to hear what those views are. I know that some people may think that decisions have already been made about the zoning plan so there is no point providing their input. That is not true. We absolutely do require genuine public input into the planning process. We need to ensure that all stakeholders' views are and will be considered in the planning process, which will continue until later this year.

Our 29-member stakeholder reference group—it is a pretty large group but it was difficult and we needed to include everybody who did have a stake in Moreton Bay—has turned out to be a very valuable forum for ensuring that their views are heard. Through this group, which has met four times since the review started, we have achieved a really positive and cooperative relationship with a huge range of stakeholders. We have members from commercial and recreational fishing groups, industry, conservation groups, tourism, traditional owners, local governments, recreational boating groups, aquaculture and research, to name a few.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, as a member who enjoys a wonderful multicultural mix of migrants and refugees in my electorate, I ask you to comment on initiatives and funding that the Beattie government has introduced to increase cultural harmony and understanding in Queensland.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for your question. I really appreciate this one because I know that your electorate is very, very—

**Mrs SCOTT:** Fantastic.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** It is a fantastic electorate but it is very diverse in all manner of speaking. I am really pleased to advise that the Beattie government has always taken proactive steps to ensure that the already excellent community relations continue to be fostered and strengthened. As you have suggested, multiculturalism is a real key component in nurturing a harmonious and more culturally inclusive community, and I know you are actively involved in yours.

The government's key initiatives include the Queensland Multicultural Festival and the Premier's Multicultural Photographic Awards, both of which are excellent. In 2006 the festival attracted over 45,000 people to what turned out to be a great program of music, dance, demonstrations, displays and foods—they were positive demonstrations as well. The photographic awards attracted 608 entries and they showcased the breadth of Queensland's absolute cultural diversity.

In addition to this, \$3.4 million in funding is distributed annually in support of positive community relations for multidimensional strategies, including cultural celebrations, community engagement, intergovernmental partnerships and of course community development. Work continues on the implementation of the Muslim Community Engagement Strategy to promote positive relations and engagement between the Muslim community and the wider Queensland community, and it has never been more important than now. The strategy has provided opportunities for interaction across communities, thereby increasing the understanding that we have between Muslims and non-Muslims and helping to maintain the high level of community harmony for which Queensland is rightly known. In fact we are pretty much a showcase state in comparison to the rest of Australia.

This year, I very happily launched a really important three-year partnership with the Queensland Roar Football Club. Queensland Roars Against Racism will send real positive messages in support of harmony and social cohesion and will make it absolutely clear that there is no room for racism in

Queensland. The first major event under the campaign was held on 1 July and a number of us were there, including our wonderful Madam Chair. It was an outstanding success. The Queensland Roar Football Club played SuperSport United at Suncorp Stadium under the Roars Against Racism banner to support the campaign. They played in front of a crowd of over 11,500 people, which was quite stunning considering it was not even one of the regular games.

**CHAIR:** It was a fantastic event, may I add. I very much enjoyed it. My son's whole soccer team attended—the under-8 Reds from Mudgeeraba—and they had a great day watching that game and the subsequent game. I particularly enjoyed watching some of our members of parliament play, including your good parliamentary secretary for multiculturalism, Michael Choi. It was very enjoyable and I encourage you to keep supporting it.

**Mr WELLS:** This question is one that is very close to my heart. Half a decade ago when I had been sitting in your chair for just a couple of weeks Clinton Gage was killed by dingoes on Fraser Island. I would really hate to see the same thing happen to a child as a result of the activities of crocodiles, so I refer to page 1-8 of the MPS where it says that your department recently completed a review of the estuarine crocodile conservation plan. How will the department use that plan to manage the population of crocodiles in central and north Queensland? Can you advise as to the population of crocodiles and whether that population is increasing?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for the question. I do remember when you were in this chair and I do remember that very tragic event. It is one that we are all very mindful of. Like you, I hope that nothing anywhere similar to that ever occurs again, but I do thank you for your question. I can say that the EPA has had a very difficult job of balancing the safety of humans with the management of crocodiles, which have been inhabiting our waters for millions of years. The No. 1 priority will always be human safety; I think that is the most important point to make.

The draft nature conservation plan and the associated management of the program provide a wide range of tools for the management of crocodiles in Queensland. The plan is aimed at conserving viable populations of estuarine crocodiles in the wild whilst at the same time working to preserve human safety. It provides for the removal of problem crocodiles from areas where they are deemed to pose a threat to humans based on location but more importantly on behavioural problems. The estuarine crocodile is currently listed as a threatened species under Queensland legislation, and this is of course after having been hunted extensively for their skin until they were fully protected by law in 1974. Since that time, Queensland's crocodile population has not recovered anywhere near as quickly as those, for instance, in the Northern Territory.

Data has been collected on Queensland's crocodile populations for almost 30 years, and it has consistently shown that the population is recovering very slowly. There are only marginal increases in population numbers, and that is particularly evident in populated areas. Recent surveys were undertaken, as you have suggested, by QPWS to test whether this has still held true and to see if Queensland is in the grip of a crocodile explosion, as some of our—and I must be gentle here—media representatives and members of parliament have been suggesting in north Queensland.

The surveys were extensive and covered a total area of 767 kilometres of waterways, and that included 47 rivers from Bundaberg to Cooktown. What the QPWS found was that overall there is no evidence of an increase in crocodile numbers in the region in recent years. In addition, there is also no evidence to suggest that the crocodile range has actually expanded, with none of them being found south of the Fitzroy River. These findings are consistent with the previous crocodile research, which proves that we are not seeing the population explosion that has been recently claimed.

**Mr McARDLE:** A point of clarification, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Can you save it until it is your turn?

**Mr McARDLE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** If it is a point of clarification from me, we can discuss that later. Minister, does the EPA have any initiatives to assist business and industry to reduce their water and energy consumption. I know we have many initiatives and much discussion about the private use of energy and water and I know there are some measures in place about business and industry, but I am wondering what those initiatives are and what level of funding they receive.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank you for your question. As you are a resident of south-east Queensland, I know that you have a very strong interest in how we can conserve this very precious commodity. As you have suggested, both industry and business have a really important role to play in leading the community to take action against climate change. Through the Beattie government's ecoBiz program, the EPA works in partnership with Queensland companies to foster innovative and sustainable environmental solutions for more effective and efficient business practices. The program was launched in 2004. Since then more than 300 companies from a variety of industry sectors have signed up for that program. To date, \$2.15 million in rebates has been awarded to ecoBiz companies to implement eco-efficiency measures that actually save water, waste and energy and cut solid and liquid wastes and

greenhouse gas emissions. Companies both large and small can actually adopt a more sustainable approach to business through this particular program.

Using a six-step process, the program enables companies to measure their resource usage and provides assistance to identify and implement innovative resource-saving solutions. Companies committed to the programs measure the rate of water, energy and material usage and waste water, solid wastes and greenhouse gas emissions. This provides a benchmark against which performance improvements can be measured. Companies then complete a survey to identify initiatives that may contribute to environmental and financial savings. I know they are very excited about this because I have met with many of these business partners and leaders. The partner companies that have completed the six steps of the program then gain financial and environmental benefits and they can use this achievement as part of their green marketing strategies, which makes sense.

I will give you an example. The ecoBiz rebate program assisted Brisbane printing company Colorscreen Print to update their screen-cleaning processes, which were extremely labour and water intensive. The new screen-cleaning machine, which is the first of its type installed in Australia, has cut water and solvent consumption by 75 per cent and it sets a benchmark for that industry.

Improvements to air-conditioning car park ventilation systems at the Reef Hotel Casino in Cairns is another example of ways to demonstrate that ecoBiz can assist in delivering those financial and environmental gains. It is estimated that the improvements undertaken at the casino will save over 900,000 kilowatt hours of electricity annually, and that will make greenhouse gas savings equivalent to taking 270 cars off the road.

**Mr LEE:** Minister, as you would know, the Brisbane River is a very proud feature of my electorate. Can you advise how the EPA is monitoring the water quality of south-east Queensland waterways, given the pressures of the increasing population and the drought? Could you provide some details of what funding is provided for this?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you. I appreciate that question. I know you live by the river. I was walking by the river very early this morning and was wondering whether it was the river itself that was making the place so cold or whether indeed it was just the drop in temperature. It is certainly a beautiful river.

As you have indicated, south-east Queensland is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia and we expect the population will increase to about four million people by 2026. That is pretty huge. This growth of course places huge pressures on our natural assets, such as Moreton Bay and inland waterways, and brings real increased demands on water supply, its infrastructure and services. So, as ever, the challenge is going to be to ensure that we meet the social and economic needs of this ever-increasing population. We have to make sure that the ecological integrity of the natural systems will be able to support people's lifestyles and not be compromised.

The EPA monitors 19 estuaries in south-east Queensland and Moreton Bay, collecting samples from 254 sites monthly and measuring a range of physical, chemical and biological indicators. The information that has been collected so far by the EPA is used by the Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program. This is a collaborative initiative of the Healthy Waterways Partnership established by the state and local governments of south-east Queensland. It is underpinned by an extensive network of collaborative arrangements throughout south-east Queensland. The operating philosophy for the partnerships is to involve all levels of government, research bodies, industry and community groups in tackling the issues facing the health of our waterways in south-east Queensland.

Since 2001, the partnership has implemented a strategic framework for action called the South East Queensland Regional Water Quality Management Strategy. This strategy contains 72 management actions which are agreed to by the Healthy Waterways partners. Of those, 22 are complete and 38 are underway. In the period 2001 to 2006, reducing point source pollution was a high priority for protecting and improving waterway health, particularly during dry weather—and we have seen so much dry weather—when point source contributes the majority of pollution that leads into our waterways.

Under the South East Queensland Regional Water Quality Management Strategy, many local governments have committed to upgrading their waste water treatment plants. During 2001-06, 37 upgrades occurred in south-east Queensland's regional waterways and 61 waste water treatment plants were investigated, planned, designed or commenced, representing a significant financial commitment in waste water infrastructure by both the councils and of course the state government.

**CHAIR:** There is time for one quick question, as there are only two minutes remaining.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, how is the EPA assisting owners of heritage listed properties with the upkeep and maintenance of these very important buildings?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank the member for the question. These historic places help to define us as Queenslanders. They take very many different forms and each one has a story to tell. In recognising the efforts of the owners of our heritage buildings and the benefits that the continued use of these buildings bring to the broader Queensland community, the Beattie government this year introduced the



\$5 million Living Buildings and Places heritage grants program. That program's goal is to help to protect and conserve Queensland's built heritage. The way to do that is by encouraging the continued use and appreciation of these buildings by the wider community.

Places eligible to apply for grants assistance include buildings entered in the Queensland heritage register, local heritage buildings, rural heritage places that are unable to meet state or local listing requirements, churches and community halls on state or local lists, and the National Trust of Queensland properties.

**CHAIR:** I am sorry, Minister, we have run out of time for a longer answer. The time for government questions has expired. I now call the member for Noosa.

**Mr ELMES:** Minister, I refer to page 1-17 of the MPS and particularly to colliers waiting off Hay Point. What assurances can you provide that foreign vessels lying off the central Queensland coast waiting to load coal abide by environmental guidelines for the reef and are not illegally dumping refuse, as has been highlighted in New South Wales with the fleet of colliers there and the total crews amounting to what would be the population of a small town, and with mounting complaints of plastics and other materials being dumped overboard and washing up on local and northern Sydney beaches?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for the question. I want to ask for your indulgence for a moment before I answer that. Are you happy for me to give you the information about acquisitions that we were talking about before?

**Mrs MENKENS:** Yes.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Are you happy with that?

**Mr ELMES:** Yes.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** The acquisitions for 2006-07 for Cape York is 80,959; for the Daintree, 76.8 hectares; and for south-east Queensland, 295 hectares. The total overall in the program is 100,000 hectares in Cape York, 204.3 hectares in the Daintree and 388 hectares for south-east Queensland.

As I said in a previous answer, we have some of the hardest rules and regulations that have to be abided by in Queensland. Because the Great Barrier Reef is the largest World Heritage site and undeniably one of our greatest assets, it really needs to be taken care of. The Commonwealth is really responsible for waters in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and indeed in the areas you talk about. Maritime Safety Queensland regulates the shipping requirements in those waters. As far as prosecutions occur, in Queensland we have a very good track record. We do take people to court and we do win.

**Mr ELMES:** Following on from that, Minister, could you advise what information that foreign flagged ships and crews are given on entering Queensland waters? Can you also advise of the local environmental laws? What measures are in place to ensure that the ships and their crews comply fully to avoid pollution and particularly contamination of the reef?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Once again, this is a maritime safety issue for Maritime Safety Queensland. That is the body which actually regulates shipping that is in state waters.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Minister, I refer again to 1-12. Thank you for those figures that you just supplied. It is good to see that we are buying up more national parks. That is very important because it is an important part of our Queensland heritage. It is quite a significant amount of land that has been bought up there—well over 100,000 hectares—yet I notice that funding for the eradication of pests and weeds in 2007-08 has remained static. Previously you were spending only 65c per hectare on eradicating these pests and weeds in more than seven million hectares of Queensland parks. Including this extra significant portion that you have bought, using the budgeted expense for pest and weed control how many cents per hectare will you be spending now?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for your question. I do know of your interest in these feral animals because we have discussed this over a number of months, or certainly in this term of government. Both you and I agree that feral animals and weeds are a serious problem for landowners and for government. They are a threat to the productivity of our primary industries and they are indeed a threat to our biodiversity. However, to suggest that we have spent less money is actually inaccurate. We manage, as you know, over 12.5 million hectares of parks and forests—that is more than 1,200 individual land parcels and about seven per cent of Queensland. As I have said several times today, these national parks are some of our most valuable assets. They do protect very important ecosystems and they generate a huge amount of revenue—I think over \$1.3 billion annually for our economy through ecotourism.

Regarding how much money is spent on our national parks in eradicating feral animals and weeds, for maintaining our national parks and for having the operating budget come up with effective measures, I think I need to draw to your attention today the fact that, although the simple dollar per hectare measure is used in some jurisdictions, Queensland Parks and Wildlife has not reported that way for a number of years. It is just not the most appropriate or accurate indicator of management

performance. If you cast your mind back to a recent Senate inquiry report, there are inconsistencies in reporting between state jurisdictions, for instance, and the dollar per hectare measure is a really good example of that. We do not have a consistent methodology for measuring in dollar for dollar terms the management of these feral pests and weeds. I do not think it is an accurate measure and it does not really serve much of a purpose. I think I will ask Alan Feely to give you the exact details.

**Mr Feely:** We have the normal standard weed and pest program we talked about and an extra \$2 million, but in addition to that we have received substantial enhancements over the last few years for general land management for new acquisitions. This year we have an extra \$4 million. A new program started two years ago with \$8 million the first year, \$14 million last year and then \$18 million this year to enable us to carry on managing those particular bits of land on a day-to-day basis. That obviously includes weeds, fire and pest, but in addition to that we go through the specific programs later. So we are well resourced to deal with those new lands. It was an additional \$70 million, I think, over four years. It was \$8 million, \$14 million, then \$18 million and \$18 million, and the \$18 million was to go on forever. That was to manage those new lands as we acquired them, so it is more than sufficient.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you for that, Minister. I hope that we will be reassured by not hearing of complaints about pests or weeds or feral animals, in particular, coming from the national parks, which is the issue that we have drilled down on several times. I do appreciate your point and I also appreciate your point on the analysis, but again how much will be spent on pest and weed management for this current 2007-08 financial year? I realise that there is a fire portion in there as well, but what about just for pests and weeds? Sometimes this figure gets added with fire and it is not the specific figure.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** What I can say is that QPWS will invest a total of around \$4.4 million in the 2007 financial year and that money is to be spent on the management of pests and weeds on its estate. So the good work that has been achieved as part of the enhanced pest management initiative will continue. On top of that, \$5.5 million will be spent on fire management. If you have a look at the track record of the Borbidge government, I think you will find the reality is that the Beattie government has spent probably seven times as much on our ranges, on the management of pests and weeds, and working in collaboration with Queensland fire and rescue in controlling fires.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Minister, I would like to question you about Springbrook now, page 1-28 of the MPS, and your government's allocation of funds to buy properties in the area, which is causing concern. In fact, it is causing a lot of fear amongst many locals. Why is this one small area, which many genuine environmentalists would argue is not in danger, getting so much money when many other areas in Queensland are still missing out?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** As you said, this is a small area and we have made a \$20 million allocation for what we call the south-east Queensland rainforest acquisition program, and that is to consolidate the existing national parks in the fastest growing region in Australia. Springbrook surrounds an area of very significant biodiversity and it is part of the World Heritage area. The existing national park is very fragmented and we need to consider that fragmentation and make it a priority, which is what we have done.

The purpose of that particular program is to purchase lands that contain areas of rainforest that are under threat from development and where rehabilitation efforts will restore those critical links to the landscape. We know that Springbrook National Park is one of the most beautiful parks in Queensland and it is visited by very many tourists each year. We have chosen Springbrook for its ecological and evolutionary significance—it is very spectacular—its ability to regenerate when any clearing has been done, and its landscape integrity and connectivity to the protected area estates.

In addition to those primary criteria, any properties being purchased must be available for sale and have a degree of threat to their conservation values. Like any standard private sale, negotiations with landholders are voluntary and the purchase price is determined by the independent valuations. Details of such purchases, as you suggested, are subject to commercial-in-confidence and privacy considerations, and we do not have any plans for any compulsory purchase of land under this program.

The EPA's role in the south-east Queensland rainforest acquisition program is to assist the Department of Infrastructure with contract preparation to transfer the funds and to look after the associated conveyancing actions. To date the Department of Infrastructure has facilitated the purchase of 15 properties through voluntary negotiations with landholders, and that is at a cost of \$15.4 million.

I believe that there are a further seven properties with a total of \$4.5 million under contract and two others are currently being negotiated. The Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves of Australia World Heritage area was originally listed in 1986 to cover rainforests in New South Wales but it was extended in 1994 to include the rainforests in Queensland on the Queensland side of the border.

**Mrs MENKENS:** This Springbrook land that is being bought up has been portrayed by the department as in pristine environmental condition when, in fact, it is former dairy farming land and some has substantial buildings and infrastructure on it—restaurants, motel units and so forth—worth millions of dollars.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** That in itself probably answers the question. You should be happy for those sorts of activities to occur. With respect to our obligations in maintaining World Heritage values, the purchase of this land is very timely, particularly as many of those properties are under threat from allowable urban development under local planning schemes, for instance. Three of the four natural criteria of the Springbrook National Park include a major stage of the earth's evolutionary history including relics of the globally significant Tweed shield volcano. It is an absolutely outstanding example of ongoing ecological biological processes and it contains the most important natural habitats for the conservation of biological diversity. I think perhaps Alan Feely could elaborate on that. In relation to some of the cleared land we will need to restore the wildlife corridors. There is no compulsory purchase, as I said, and only people who want to sell will have to sell. There is no threat to people who do not want to sell. I would like to hand over to Alan Feely.

**Mr Feely:** I guess one of the great things about Springbrook is its tourism potential and at the core of that is the national park estate. It is a little bit of a patchwork quilt at the moment with the properties running through it. We were able to purchase those; it is not compulsory, but if we are able to acquire them that is great.

It is seldom that you find a block of land these days that you can buy that is all of a suitable quality for a national park—some bits have been cleared and some have not. For example, we have just completed a major redevelopment of a settlement block at Springbrook, mainly for tourism but including some revegetation works. The works were done by our staff and contractors. They include a new campground and day-use area to attract people to that area to use and to use it in a controlled fashion so that we are dealing with the pollution issues and so on and so forth.

The redevelopment works incorporate a range of sustainable technology initiatives, including waste water treatment facilities, and we have used some timber alternatives such as recycled plastics up there, again as a bit more of a sustainable push. The member for Murrumba was very keen to pursue that when he was our minister. We have done substantial revegetation works there now as part of the works, particularly around the campground, and we will be carrying on planting which should be well advanced in the next five years. The settlement block is a great example of picking those sorts of areas up and rehabilitating the bits that need rehabilitation but trying to get a manageable area of park not with holdings running all through it.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Minister, do you really believe the focus of your spending on land acquisition is right given that more money has and is being spent at Springbrook than is being spent right across the rest of Queensland? How can this be so?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** The current priority is on rainforest biodiversity hot spots and, of course, Springbrook National Park is a complete focus. The park itself and its surrounds are areas of significant biodiversity and they are part of the World Heritage area which I explained to you before.

**Mrs MENKENS:** I am aware of that.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** The existing park is very fragmented and efforts to reduce this are a real priority. All I can say is that the purpose of the acquisition program is to purchase lands that contain areas of rainforest that are under threat from development or where rehabilitation efforts will restore those critical links that we are talking about to the landscape. The Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves of Australia World Heritage area does meet three of the four natural criteria for listing and maybe this will explain it a little bit further, but this particular one represents a major stage of the earth's evolutionary history, as I said before, and that is the Tweed shield volcano. I am sure that the member for Mudgeeraba must know that. It is a very outstanding example of what I was talking about before, the ecological and biological processes. The Commonwealth government's National Landscapes program is actually looking at declaring that area as a national landscape. There will be a meeting about that next week. Perhaps that will answer some of the questions that you are finding difficult to get answers for today.

**Mrs MENKENS:** Thank you, Minister. Springbrook was a prime example of ecotourism but the feeling in the community is that the business buyout is already harming the economic viability of the few remaining businesses. What exactly is your policy to tourism at Springbrook? Do you want any businesses to survive there or is it your intention to remove all human activity from the area?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I think we have made it very clear that we are very supportive of sustainable industry and sustainable tourism and the bottom line is that nobody is being forced to sell.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for non-government questions has expired. Before I call the member for Woodridge can I just be indulged to make a quick comment. I am very interested to see the interest that the member for Burdekin as shadow minister has in our most wonderful Springbrook World Heritage listed national park, which is the jewel in the crown of my most beautiful electorate. I invite her, as shadow minister for environment, to actually come down and meet with some of the environmental groups and supporters of the government's land acquisition scheme, which will see the World Heritage listed values of this very small park, which has an enormous perimeter making it very vulnerable to outside encroachment, supported and further maintained through this land acquisition, further

supporting the existing businesses who rely on tourism on that very mountain. I would very much like to see the member for Burdekin visit my part of the world. I call the member for Murrumba.

**Mr WELLS:** I refer to page 1-21 of the MPS and the Multicultural Assistance Program. Can the minister advise us as to the outcomes of that program?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for the question. The Multicultural Assistance Program is all about strengthening multiculturalism in Queensland. The way we do this is by celebrating diversity and promoting cohesion and harmony within Queensland's very multicultural and diverse society. The program provides opportunities for Queenslanders to participate in a broad range of cultural activities which encourage community development. In 2006-07 total funding of \$3.4 million was committed to the program. I am pleased to say that the same amount has been committed for the years 2007-08.

Two key initiatives, which are funded through the Multicultural Assistance Program, are the Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program and the Multicultural Community Worker Program. The Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program is funded for a total of \$1 million a year. This program is a partnership between the state and local government and the Local Government Association of Queensland that aims to improve service delivery to and increase the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in planning and decision making and encourage positive community relations. Through the efforts of workers employed under the program, councils are now actively engaged in creating positive community relations in their regions. This work is helping to promote inclusion of people from all backgrounds in community life in Queensland and to strengthen interaction and understanding between different cultural groups in our community.

The Multicultural Community Worker Program is funded for a total of \$1.055 million. The program assists multicultural community organisations to link people from ethnic communities to services, undertake advocacy and promote multiculturalism. The program has resulted in real improvements to service delivery and improved the knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse community members regarding their rights and responsibilities in relation to government services.

The Multicultural Assistance Program also provides funding for festivals, events and projects and in 2006-07 support was provided to a total of 83 festivals, projects and events throughout Queensland. Major multicultural festivals that were supported in 2006-07 were the Townsville Multicultural Festival, Paniyiri Greek Festival, Mount Isa Multicultural Festival, Australian-Italian Festival in Ingham, Central Queensland Multicultural Festival in Rockhampton and, of course, the Woodford Folklines Multicultural Program.

Some of the major projects supported by MAQ through the Multicultural Assistance Program aim to develop leadership in African communities, raise awareness of the needs of refugees, develop new training capabilities in the community and research the needs of skilled migrants and their families. The funding provided through the Multicultural Assistance Program has made a very significant contribution to Queensland.

**CHAIR:** As you know, I have a strong interest in issues affecting the Gold Coast in addition to the fabulous ecotourism opportunities available in the great hinterland. As we approach the 40th anniversary of the largest southern Gold Coast beach erosion event on record—I am very interested in our southern Gold Coast beaches even though they are not in my electorate—I wonder how well the Gold Coast will perform today to such a similar erosion event as occurred some 40 years ago.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I really appreciate the question, thank you. I am aware that this issue has had extensive media coverage on the Gold Coast and that some people are concerned about excessive sand build-up on Kirra Beach. It is important to remember that the southern Gold Coast beaches from Coolangatta to Surfers Paradise were severely eroded during a series of cyclones and storms back in 1967. Many Gold Coast beaches were unusable, the Gold Coast Highway was threatened by erosion and the recreational tourist industry suffered a temporary downturn.

Following the 1967 series of storms, most of the Gold Coast beaches recovered by the early 1970s, except for Coolangatta and Kirra. To remedy this problem a sand bypassing plant similar to the bypass operation at the Gold Coast seaway on the Nerang River was installed. Prior to the Tweed River entrance sand bypassing project, the natural northwards movement of sand from New South Wales to the southern Gold Coast beaches was blocked by the rock training walls at the entrance of the Tweed River. The walls had been extended in the 1960s and had the effect of trapping the sand and constraining its northward movement. This lack of natural sand supply contributed to the ongoing erosion of the southern Gold Coast beaches at Coolangatta and Kirra.

The bypassing project is a joint initiative of the Queensland and New South Wales governments, with the financial support of the Gold Coast City Council and in conjunction with the Tweed Shire Council. The benefit of the project to Queensland is that the southern Gold Coast beaches will return generally to the way they were before the Tweed River entrance training walls were extended in the 1960s.

At the beginning of the project there was a need to transport large quantities of sand greater than the natural supply rate to catch up and to rebuild the badly eroded southern Gold Coast beaches. It was expected that the large catch-up sand quantities would disperse and spread along the southern Gold Coast beaches fairly quickly under the influence of seasonal and severe weather conditions. However, there have been unusually calm weather conditions since the project started in 2000 and dispersal of the sand has not occurred as quickly as had been anticipated. The peak of the sand volume has moved along the coast from Rainbow Bay and is now at Kirra. However, there are also now usable beaches at Bilinga which did not exist in the 1960s.

Currently the beaches at Kirra are temporarily wider than their expected final shape but there is evidence that the sand mass at Kirra is beginning to disperse. Between July 2005 and August 2006, over 100,000 cubic metres of sand moved northwards from the near-shore and offshore underwater parts of the beach between the Kirra Point and Miles Street groynes. It is likely that the narrowing of the beach will continue at an accelerating rate depending on the weather, of course, and it will generally return to look as it did prior to 1960.

**Mr WELLS:** I refer to the \$30 million Statewide Acquisition Fund referred to on page 10 of the MPS. Can the minister advise how this acquisition fund is being used to conserve valuable areas of Queensland?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for the question. I can assure the committee that this government is committed to ensuring Queensland continues the effort to establish a world-class reserve system of national parks and other protected areas that meets comprehensive, adequate and representative design principles. This will ensure the full range of biological diversity across all regions is permanently protected.

The Beattie government has made an election commitment of \$30 million for new acquisitions—that includes wetlands and rainforests—in order to achieve improved representation of regional ecosystems in the protected area estate. At present we have approximately 75 per cent of regional ecosystems in the reserve system. This funding will ensure that we move closer to the 80 per cent representation target in the next few years.

The list of priority properties that will be targeted by this funding is continually being refined. Bioregions that are not adequately represented in the protected area estate will be a key focus of any additional funding. Queensland leads Australia in most aspects of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system, including having the largest area of national park and the highest level of representation of regional ecosystems in the protected area estate.

Queensland, as we have said several times today, is the most biologically diverse state in Australia with 22 per cent of Australia's land mass. It contains over 30 per cent of the biogeographic subregions. It is the only mainland state where it is still considered possible to protect a representation of virtually all regional ecosystems in the national park estate. An example of the incredible diversity in this state is the fact that more plant species have been identified in a one square kilometre section of the Daintree rainforest than exist in the entire continent of North America. That is pretty amazing. This gives an appreciation of why it is so important that the Beattie government take action to secure a truly comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system now and for the benefit of future generations.

In addition, my department continues to implement the current acquisition programs targeting the priority regions of Cape York Peninsula, the Daintree rainforest and the south-east Queensland rainforests. The Cape York Peninsula program has already acquired 100,000 hectares of new national parks. Negotiations are underway for several priority acquisitions that will increase the level of protection in this unique region.

Approximately \$4.8 million of the \$7.5 million existing budget allocation has been spent to date. This has been used to acquire high-priority conservation areas that will complement the existing national parks on the cape. The Daintree rainforest program will acquire land north of the Daintree River that will consolidate World Heritage listed national parks. That will resolve the inappropriate subdivisions that were approved in the 1980s.

**Mr WELLS:** Page 1-13 of the MPS refers to ensuring sustainability practices receive support and promotion. Can the minister advise the committee what the EPA is doing to ensure that transparent advice to support sustainable developments is provided to ensure that those developments are approved quickly?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for the question. In addition to the administration of a wide range of legislation and programs to protect, enhance and conserve Queensland's natural environment the EPA also provides advice on managing environmental impacts and enhancing the sustainability of all sorts of development projects. That is from small-scale applications to major development projects.

Launched in 2005, predesign conferencing provides prospective clients considering a new development a fast and free consultation service. This helps ensure that environmental considerations

are addressed during the early stages of any development proposal. As a result, the probability of a subsequent development application being approved is then dramatically increased.

Since its launch, the EPA has provided this helpful service to more than 400 new development clients with demand continuing to grow. In this calendar year there has been an almost 80 per cent increase in patronage over the previous year. A notable example of the success of the service has been the assistance the EPA provided to BMA Hay Point Services. Through predesign conferencing the EPA was able to assist in designing an assessment pathway for the expansion of BMA's Hay Point coal terminal. Advice from the EPA helped to reduce the assessment time frames whilst maintaining the high environmental standards that the community expects.

Predesign conferencing facilitates two-way communication at a time when both parties are most willing to work collaboratively. This allows the best environmental and community outcomes to be progressed in the spirit of partnership and cooperation. That is great news for business.

The EPA can help guide development proposals towards the option that will have the strongest prospects for successfully passing through the agency's assessment process while also building sustainability into the actual development. Predesign conferencing will help to identify any critical issues for the proposal in relation to the state's strategic planning framework and the relevant conventions and agreements for the conservation of biodiversity in Queensland. It can be used to highlight elements of the project that will need to be resolved before a final application can be lodged. This step ensures that proponents avoid lodging an invalid application, that way saving time and money.

Working together to outline the options and develop ideas at the conceptual stage will help businesses move forward with a more comprehensive application that can be processed much more readily and much more efficiently. That is just another example of the EPA and business working together in partnership which is a win-win for all.

**Mr LEE:** Minister, on page 1-8 of the MPS reference is made to ensuring the diversity and integrity of Queensland's natural ecosystems to make sure that they are preserved. Could you advise the committee what steps the government has taken to resolve native title issues with the Indigenous people in far north Queensland?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you for the question. As I live in that part of the world this is very important to me. The lead agency for native title issues in Queensland is the Indigenous Services Unit of the Department of Natural Resources and Water. However, in terms of the EPAs activities specifically, QPWS has negotiated a range of Indigenous land use agreements over national parks and other state lands in response to those native title claims that you talk about.

These Indigenous land use agreements have not only settled native title but they have also brought a greater level of meaningful involvement in management by traditional owners of those protected areas. The list of agreements completed and signed in Queensland is also complemented by a number of arrangements where agreement in principle has been achieved and the Indigenous land use agreements are awaiting execution by the parties.

More agreements are in the process of negotiation and the parties are close to achieving agreement in principle. Indigenous land use agreements and other arrangements are now in place in such diverse areas as Lakefield and Baron Gorge national parks in the Daintree area covering national parks and other lands. It provides a framework for working together with the traditional owners. These partnerships are also delivering substantive on-the-ground outcomes for traditional owners, settling native title claims and ensuring the cultural values of Queensland's outstanding biological and cultural diversity are protected.

Most of the Indigenous land use agreements negotiated to date not only involve recognition of native title over national parks but also provide a formal agreement about how traditional owners will be involved in the management. Many of the Indigenous land agreements also provide for the creation of Aboriginal freehold land to be held by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. All Indigenous land use agreements deal with how native title rights and interests are to be exercised. I am pleased to say that there is a range of on-the-ground outcomes that have been experienced so far.

I will give the committee a couple of examples. Some of the outcomes include: employment of traditional owners both as permanent officers and as casuals for specific purposes; extensive Indigenous involvement in the development of interpretative signage for brochures and visitor information sheets; joint development of cultural heritage management plans; weed and pest management plans on parks; and detailed involvement in the development of national park management plans. I really look forward to updating the community on any further initiatives of this type.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Media reports have suggested that there are high levels of lead in the soil around children's playgrounds in Mount Isa. On page 1-17 of the MPS it is stated that the EPA establishes minimum standards for air, land and water quality and monitors sources of contamination and levels of pollutants. How is your department monitoring the situation in Mount Isa?

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much for that question. This is a significant issue that is close to home. It has been given the highest priority. I have personally been monitoring that situation. I visited Mount Isa some months ago. I am very confident that the EPA and Queensland Health are doing everything they can to address any of the risks that need to be addressed.

It is important before I answer the question to remember that Mount Isa is a highly mineralised area, particularly in the immediate area of the mining operations. It does have natural deposits of lead, silver, zinc and copper. That needs to be considered. As a result, the chance of exposure to lead is going to be much higher in Mount Isa than it might be in other communities. It is important to minimise any potential adverse health effects from lead, particularly amongst our younger population.

The Queensland government, the Mount Isa community and, thankfully, Xstrata, the operator of Mount Isa Mines, are aware of these issues and they recognise the need to minimise the community's exposure to lead. The EPA, in consultation with Queensland Health, is currently reviewing lead management in Mount Isa. It is assessing the air emissions, discharges to water and land and, of course, the management of contaminated soil.

Queensland Health is testing the blood lead levels of children in Mount Isa. Detailed investigations are being conducted where children have blood lead levels which are possibly above the national target. We are seeking to identify potential sources of lead and ways to prevent any further exposure.

Recent media coverage claimed that the average lead level in residential Mount Isa was above the national guidelines based on soil tests provided by the researcher. The EPA has subsequently reviewed these soil tests and found that the majority of the residential areas tested had soil lead levels consistent with the national guidelines. The high levels of lead in the soil that were reported were in very restricted areas, generally in close proximity to the mine and predominantly in areas used by heavy industry, minimising potential human exposure.

Having said that, I reiterate that I do not want to diminish the importance of managing lead in Mount Isa, particularly amongst our young children. A major clean-up of known areas of lead contamination was carried out by the mining company in cooperation with Queensland Health and other government departments in 1990. Areas were affected by discharges from the mines and smelting operations during the earlier years of its operation when environmental controls were not as strong as they are today.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for government questions has expired. I note that the time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio of the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism has sadly expired. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you and your departmental officers for your attendance. A transcript of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's web site within two hours. The committee will break for 15 minutes and resume at 3.30 pm with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland. I thank everyone for their attendance.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. With your indulgence, could I thank the members of the committee for their time today. I really appreciate it. I would also like to take the time to congratulate all the members of staff of the EPA and MAQ, led by the Director-General Terry Wall, all of the executive directors who have so patiently sat through this and each and every staff member who does an absolutely wonderful job and plays a valuable role in our organisation. Last but not least, I thank and acknowledge the work of my parliamentary secretary, Michael Choi, and my staff—Ross MacLeod, Karla Steen, Wendy Bourne, Harry Landman, Lisa Gilby, Simon Munro, Peter Shooter, Alison Skau, David Shaw, Karen Fullerton, Nanette Kemp and Len Cooke. Thank you to my husband who has been putting up with me for the last few nights.

**Proceedings suspended from 3.15 pm to 3.32 pm**

## ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F—ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND JUSTICE

### In Attendance

Hon. KG Shine, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland

Mr P Bini, Senior Policy Advisor

**Department of Justice and Attorney-General**

Mr J McGowan, Director-General

Ms S Mackie, Director (Acting), Financial Services Branch

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**CHAIR:** The hearings of Estimates Committee F are now resumed. The next item for consideration is the proposed expenditure for the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing and acknowledge that we meet on the traditional lands of Aboriginal people.

I would like to introduce the members of the committee. I am Di Reilly, the member for Mudgeeraba and chair of the committee. The deputy chair of the committee is Mark McArdle, the member for Caloundra. The other committee members are the Hon. Dean Wells, the member for Murrumba; Mrs Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin; Mr Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield; Mrs Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge; and Mr Ronan Lee, the member for Indooroopilly. I remind members of the committee and the minister that under standing orders the time limit for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the end of each of these time limits. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner and a double chime will sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given.

The standing orders require that at least half the time available for questions and answers is to be allocated to non-government members. Any time expended when the committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between government and non-government members. Government members and non-government members will take turns asking questions in blocks lasting approximately 20 minutes, commencing with non-government members. I ask departmental officers to identify themselves when they first come forward to answer a question if the minister refers a question to them. Before we begin, I just remind everyone to ensure that phones or pagers are either switched off or switched to silent mode.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General open for examination. The time allocated is two hours and 30 minutes. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement? If so, I remind you that there is a time limit of five minutes for such a statement.

**Mr SHINE:** Thank you, Chair. Might I thank you for your welcome and the greetings that you have expressed. I would like to make an opening statement. The 2007-08 state budget is my first as the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. The budget is an important one for the department and the portfolio. The total investment in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is estimated to increase by \$63.2 million to \$481.1 million this financial year. This increased investment will improve access to justice for all Queenslanders by delivering modern justice facilities, addressing the causes of crime and supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Specifically, the government is investing in new and upgraded courthouses across the state. In addition, the budget allocates additional funding for the Office of the DPP and further funding through LPITAF is committed for Legal Aid Queensland and the community legal centres. The budget allocates an additional \$7 million over four years for the Guardianship and Administration Tribunal, the Office of the Adult Guardian, the Community Visitor Program and the Office of the Public Advocate. The budget also allocates funding for the judicial registrar pilot program.

We are providing for the appointment of additional judges for the Court of Appeal and the District Court and an additional magistrate located in far-north Queensland operating in the gulf, cape and Torres Strait regions. This morning I had the pleasure of attending the swearing-in ceremonies of new Court of Appeal Justice John Muir and Supreme Court Justice Martin Daubney. At the ceremony, the Chief Justice said of the appointments—

I respectfully commend the Attorney-General for his meaningful consultation in relation to these appointments.



District Court judges Terry Martin and David Searles were sworn in yesterday. Also yesterday the Queensland Law Reform Commission won the Human Rights and Justice category of the Disability Action Week Awards presented in Brisbane.

This hearing is my first parliamentary duty since the outcome of the trial of Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley. Under the Attorney-General Act 1999 section 7(1)(a), I have the power to present an indictment. Under the same legislation—that is, under section 11—I also have the responsibility to prepare a report outlining the circumstances and reasons for my decision to present an indictment and to table that report within three sitting days. I am tabling that report today. In this matter, I respected the independence of the DPP and the doctrine of the separation of powers.

Before concluding my opening remarks, I do want to refer to the defence of provocation in our criminal laws. As you would be aware, on 30 June a Brisbane Supreme Court jury acquitted Damian Karl Sebo of the charge of murder relating to the death of Taryn Hunt in September 2005. Sebo was convicted of manslaughter and he was sentenced to 10 years jail. I have sought legal advice about whether there are possible grounds for appeal. I am seeking further clarification on aspects of that advice. I cannot of course appeal the jury's unanimous verdict to acquit Sebo of the murder charge. This case has also highlighted the long-established provocation defence in Queensland's 108-year-old Criminal Code. Similarly, two jury acquittals earlier this year relating to the deaths of two young men—David Stevens and Nigel Lee—have highlighted the so-called 'accident defence' in the code. As Attorney-General, I commissioned an audit of cases where the accident defence in section 23 of the code has been pleaded. Today I am announcing that I have asked for that audit to be broadened to examine the provocation defence operating in Queensland murder trials. The audit will detail how often these defences have been pleaded, the nature of the use and for what outcome. I want the audit to be completed so I can consult stakeholders about the results and gauge their feedback. To fast-track this, I have asked the department to undertake the audit of cases over the last five years in the first instance.

I thank staff of my department led by Director-General, Mr Jim McGowan, and the respective heads of the statutory bodies and their staff for their great efforts to prepare for the budget estimates. It is important for the committee to be well informed as to the expenditure in this portfolio. The budget is important not just because the government's investment has increased but because we have many initiatives in place to deliver fair, equitable and accessible justice for all Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Did you say that you had a document you wanted to table?

**Mr SHINE:** That is being tabled other than in here.

**CHAIR:** All right. We will commence with the portfolio's independent bodies—the Crime and Misconduct Commission, the Electoral Commission of Queensland, Legal Aid Queensland, the Office of the Public Trustee, the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman, the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland and the Office of the Information Commissioner. The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members.

**Mr McARDLE:** Attorney, good afternoon to yourself and to your officers here today. Can I take you to the Office of the Information Commissioner and page 8-3 of the MPS relating to the number of reviews finalised or resolved. The target was 300; the actual was also 300. Can I take you then to page 7 of report No. 59 of LCARC's meeting with the Queensland Information Commissioner on 22 May 2007 where at paragraph 4.3 it reads—

In 2006-2007, a smaller number of applications was finalised (252 to 16 May 2007, compared to 336 in all of 2005-2006), and the performance target of 300 closures was not met.

I ask the Attorney-General or the Information Commissioner: there appears to be a disparity between the two figures—300 with regard to the MPS at page 8-3 but the statement to LCARC indicated that the figure would not be met.

**Mr SHINE:** Under Commissioner Taylor's leadership, the Office of the Information Commissioner provides high-quality timely resolution of external review applications lodged with her office. As the first stand-alone Information Commissioner for Queensland, upon her appointment in February 2005 Commissioner Taylor was faced with an inherited backlog of unresolved reviews stretching right back to 1993. After two years of concerted effort, this substantial backlog has been eradicated. In 2006 the office finalised 308 reviews, which exceeds the target in the 2006-07 Ministerial Portfolio Statement and is 20 per cent more than the number of reviews resolved in the year prior to Ms Taylor's appointment as the first stand-alone Information Commissioner in Queensland. Moreover, in 2005-06 and 2006-07 there were 72 and 90 external reviews finalised by decision respectively, representing a 160 per cent increase on the 31 and 32 external reviews finalised by decision in the previous two financial years. None of these external reviews decisions has been overturned via judicial review proceedings. During 2006-07 the office substantially redeveloped its web site to provide enhanced functionality and content of benefit to participants in external reviews. Empowering applicants and agency decision makers with information about many of the concepts found in the FOI Act and case references relevant to external reviews has contributed to the increased timeliness in the resolution of external reviews in 2006-07.

Having eradicated an inherited backlog of unresolved review applications stretching right back to 1993, the office is now in a sound position to further refine its systems, processes and educative material to incrementally enhance the quality and timeliness of external reviews conducted by the office. The office's strong record of achievement over the last two and a half years is due to the office's focus on ensuring high-quality, timely resolution of external reviews and the Information Commissioner's commitment and that of her staff to continuing professional development.

The focus on timeliness and on continuing professional development to ensure the currency and effectiveness of all team member skills were key recommendations in the 2005-06 strategic management review. The LCARC figures—

**CHAIR:** Do you wish to have an extension of time?

**Mr SHINE:** Just a short one, if I may.

**Mr McARDLE:** No.

**CHAIR:** The member for Caloundra does not request it. He can go on to his next question.

**Mr McARDLE:** It would appear now that we have three figures. We have 252 from LCARC, 300 in the MPS and I think 308 were finalised. Which is the right figure, because it says 300 in the MPS?

**Mr SHINE:** I am advised that the calculation of the LCARC figure was as at 17 May 2007. The end of the financial year figure for 2006-07 was 308—and 308, of course, exceeds the target of 300. The MPS, of course, is an estimate only.

**Mr McARDLE:** The MPS is the document that is tabled in parliament. Therefore, the MPS is wrong?

**Mr SHINE:** No, the MPS is an estimate predicting the result up to 30 June.

**Mr McARDLE:** Going back to page 8-3, again the Office of the Information Commissioner—

**Mr SHINE:** So what are we concerned about? A difference of eight?

**Mr McARDLE:** No, I have moved on. Page 8-3 of the MPS details the median number of days taken by the commissioner's office to finalise a review. In 2006-07 the target was 90 days. The estimated actual was 104 days. But when you go again to LCARC report No. 59, it states at appendix B, in answer to question 1 on page 2 of 6—

The median days to finalise a review in the period 1 July 2006 to 16 May 2007 was 112 days. By comparison, the median days to finalise a review in the period 1 July 2005 to 16 May 2006 was 113 days.

Again, can you clarify which is correct?

**CHAIR:** Can I just remind the minister and the members of the committee that the minister has three minutes in which to answer a question. He is quite at liberty to use that entire three minutes and to answer either this question or previous questions in any way that he deems fit.

**Mr SHINE:** Thank you, Chair. The median is the middle point in a list of numbers that have been organised from the biggest to the smallest number. In this case, we are talking about the number of calendar days to resolve informally, or finalise by decision, an external review. The median gives a reliable indication of the number of days it is most likely to take for an external review to be resolved or finalised.

The target median days to resolve or finalise an external review in 2006-07 was 90 days. That was the target median. This target was proposed by the independent consultant who conducted the five-yearly strategic management review of the Office of the Information Commissioner in 2005-06. The median days to resolve or finalise an external review in 2006-07 was more than 90 days because the 308 external reviews finalised in 2006-07 included a substantial number of external reviews that were part of an inherited backlog that had commenced many years prior to Commissioner Taylor's appointment in 2005. It is anticipated that now the backlog has been demolished, the office is well positioned to resolve all incoming external reviews in a timely manner and that the target of 90 days to resolve an external review will be met in 2007-08.

Improved timeliness in resolving external reviews supports the government's commitment to effective implementation of FOI legislation, which is a key plank in the government's accountability and transparency framework. Improving the timeliness in the resolution of external reviews of FOI decisions conducted by the Office of the Information Commissioner will benefit those seeking an independent review of FOI decisions. It will also benefit the community generally by ensuring robust implementation of the FOI Act.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you for that. As I said, the estimated actual is 104 days. It is a 90 days target for 2007-08. Can you elaborate as to what concrete steps are being taken in the commissioner's office to ensure that that target is met?

**Mr SHINE:** Timeliness in resolving external reviews is a priority for the Office of the Information Commissioner and, of course, for the parliamentary Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee on behalf of the Queensland community. The focus on timeliness was a key focus and the

subject of specific recommendations in the 2005-06 strategic management review of the Information Commissioner's performance of the functions over the previous five years.

As the first stand-alone Information Commissioner for Queensland on her appointment in February 2005, Commissioner Taylor was faced with an inherited backlog of unresolved reviews stretching right back to 1993. After two years of concerted effort, this substantial backlog has been eradicated. The Office of the Information Commissioner provides high-quality, timely resolution of external review applications lodged with her office. In 2006-07, the office finalised 308 reviews, which exceeded the target in the 2006-07 Ministerial Portfolio Statement and is 20 per cent more than the number of reviews resolved in the year prior to Ms Taylor's appointment as the first stand-alone Information Commissioner.

Moreover, in 2005-06 and 2006-07 there were 72 and 90 external reviews finalised by decision respectively, representing a 160 per cent increase on the 31 and 32 external reviews finalised by decision in the previous two financial years. Having eradicated an inherited backlog of unresolved review applications stretching right back to 1993, the office is now in a sound position to further refine its systems, processes and educative material to incrementally enhance the quality and timeliness of external reviews conducted by the office.

In 2006-07 the office resolved 72 per cent of external reviews through informal resolution. Informal resolution generally involves significantly reduced demands on the applicant and the agency and results in timely, mutually agreed outcomes of reviews. In 2007-08 the office will further explore informal resolution methodologies for potential adoption by the office in appropriate cases.

A vital factor in achieving the timely resolution of external reviews is the knowledge and skills of the office staff involved. Commissioner Taylor is committed to providing effective mentoring and training for office staff, such as in online legal research, informal dispute resolution and decision writing skills so that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to complete high-quality external reviews in a timely manner.

**Mr McARDLE:** At page 8-2 of the MPS it states that since 2005 no external review decision had been overturned by the Supreme Court by way of an application for review. Can you indicate how many applications for review have been commenced against the office since 2005 and how many of those occurred in each year since that date?

**Mr SHINE:** Since February 2005 only three per cent of the 164 decisions made to finalise an external review have been the subject of an application for judicial review. Two of these applications were withdrawn before any documentation other than the application was filed with the court. No external review decision has been overturned through judicial review proceedings.

In the three judicial review proceedings since 2005 that have not been withdrawn, the agency that made the FOI decision that was the subject of an external review decision is the lead respondent and, in each case, they have engaged Crown law to act for the agency. In two other instances an applicant has sought judicial review of a procedural matter at an early stage within an external review. In these two instances the Office of the Information Commissioner has briefed counsel from the private bar to act for the office. The office seeks to recover costs where costs orders are made in favour of the Information Commissioner delegate.

The Office of the Information Commissioner is an independent statutory authority whose core business is the timely resolution of independent reviews of FOI decisions. While a number of staff are legally qualified, these staff are fully committed to the timely resolution of external reviews. The Information Commissioner will continue to obtain independent legal advice on matters she determines to be outside the core business of reviewing FOI decisions. This approach has enabled a concerted focus on resolving reviews in a timely manner and, in particular, resolving very old cases that had been in the office for many years prior to Commissioner Taylor's appointment.

Since her appointment in February 2005, Commissioner Taylor and her team have achieved significant success in providing value for the Queensland community. As the first stand-alone commissioner for Queensland, she inherited that backlog that I have referred to before going back right to 1993. It really has taken that two years of concerted effort for this substantial backlog of unresolved reviews to be eradicated. I just repeat that in 2005-06 and in 2006-07, there were 72 and 90 external reviews finalised by decision respectively, representing a 160 per cent increase on the 31 and 32 external reviews that were finalised by decision in the previous two financial years.

**Mr McARDLE:** Page 8-3 of the MPS refers to the number of matters or reviews that are older than 12 months and states that there are 10. Can you give any indication as to how old each of those are and the reason for such lengthy delays in resolving these matters?

**Mr SHINE:** Whereabouts on page 8-3?

**Mr McARDLE:** At page 8-3, the number of open reviews at the end of the reporting period that are more than 12 months old.

**Mr SHINE:** I see, down towards the bottom there.

**Mr McARDLE:** There are 10 there.

**Mr SHINE:** I will take that on notice and provide a detailed answer to you with respect to those 10 matters.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you indeed. Staying with that particular point, how do you reconcile the figure of 10 reported in that document that is in the MPS with that figure given by the Information Commissioner, again to LCARC, which appears in appendix B of the report in answer to question 1 on page 2 of 6, that there were 20 applications outstanding as at 16 May 2007. There seems to be a significant drop between then and now. Can you indicate how that was achieved?

**Mr SHINE:** Again, I will take that on notice. I do not have the LCARC document. I am not familiar with it. I will also take that on notice and provide you with an answer.

**Mr McARDLE:** In that same LCARC document there appeared this phrase regarding the 20 applications—

Although they were requested by way of Questions on Notice, the committee was not provided with an explanation for the delay in resolving the applications in the timeframe prescribed or respective target completion dates.

Can you indicate why the commissioner failed to answer the question put to her by LCARC in regard to the time line?

**CHAIR:** Member for Caloundra, this committee has met today to examine the appropriation bill in relation to the portfolios of this minister, the Attorney-General and Minister For Justice. If you could direct your question to the MPS and this expenditure that would be helpful, rather than to an external document.

**Mr McARDLE:** Madam Chair, they certainly are because there is an inconsistency between the MPS document and that contained in a question on notice to a parliamentary committee, that is, LCARC. They are directly relevant to each other. As a consequence, if the MPS is wrong we need to understand why and have that document corrected. If the LCARC documentation is wrong, which is a document tabled in the parliament, that has to be corrected and explained. The inconsistency simply can't—

**CHAIR:** That can be dealt with separately, but you can ask about the MPS document—

**Mr McARDLE:** I just have.

**CHAIR:** You have not formulated a specific question in relation to the disparity that you see in the MPS.

**Mr McARDLE:** With due respect, Madam Chair, I started very clearly identifying the MPS at page 8-3 and the point that I raised.

**CHAIR:** You have not asked the question.

**Mr McARDLE:** I have asked the question to the Attorney: can he explain the reasoning behind the answer to the question not being given to LCARC.

**CHAIR:** That does not relate to the MPS.

**Mr McARDLE:** It is consistent with the role of the MPS and this committee.

**CHAIR:** It is not your position to argue with the Chair. I rule the question out of order. You have about a minute left. You can ask another question.

**Mr McARDLE:** I certainly will. Attorney, during 2006-07, again with the Office of the Information Commissioner, how many external contractors were engaged by the office of the commissioner to assist it in undertaking and finalising reviews?

**Mr SHINE:** During the period in question, the Office of the Information Commissioner did engage consultants during the 2006-07 financial year. The Office of the Information Commissioner engaged two types of contractors at an approximate cost of \$176,000. Those contractors provided a range of corporate services, including information technology, human resource management, staff development, financial management services and services required in the relocation of the office to independent and secure premises.

The Office of the Information Commissioner is independent, of course, of the executive government. The 2005-06 strategic review recommended the relocation of the office to secure self-contained premises that are not shared with any agency that is subject to the FOI Act. In fact, I am advised that no contractors were engaged to conduct reviews during that period.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. The time allocated for non-government questions has expired. I call the member for Murrumba.

**Mr WELLS:** Mr Attorney, you have just had the cushy examination-in-chief. This is where you get the robust cross-examination.

**Mr SHINE:** I am relieved to hear it.

**Mr WELLS:** I refer you to the confiscation of profits of crime, page 6-4 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement. Attorney, could you advise how the Crime and Misconduct Commission is assisting the fight against crime with the confiscation of those proceeds?

**Mr SHINE:** The Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act 2002 provides a powerful weapon in the fight against crime in Queensland. The act strikes at the heart of the criminal asset base because it deprives criminal elements of their illegally acquired assets, even when it is not possible to directly link the asset with the illegal activity. The Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act operates not only to decrease the financial gain associated with major crime but also to decrease the financial capacity of criminals to continue with the illegal enterprise.

In Queensland there are two ways to recover the proceeds of crime. One is through criminal confiscation after a person is convicted of a criminal offence administered by the Director of Public Prosecutions and, secondly, civil confiscations which do not require a conviction. The CMC has the responsibility for civil confiscation. This means that the state is able to restrain property if an authorised CMC officer has a reasonable suspicion of serious crime-related activity.

In the 2006-07 financial year, 50 proceeds of crime restraining orders have been obtained, restraining assets valued at \$11.74 million. Since the civil confiscation scheme began on 1 January 2003, the figure now stands at \$48.38 million. In 2006-07 approximately \$4.24 million has been permanently forfeited under the civil confiscation scheme. This is in addition to the \$1.65 million forfeited to the state this financial year as the result of action taken against convicted criminals by the Office of the DPP.

As you can see, Queensland authorities are continuing to work hard to ensure that crime does not pay, literally. We believe that fewer people will be involved in crime, particularly drug crime, if they see their profits disappearing.

I am pleased to advise that the CMC has received additional funding in the state budget of \$576,000 in 2007-08 to enhance its capacity to confiscate the proceeds of crime. This is evidence of our determination to provide a strong deterrent to crime.

I am also pleased to advise that the operation of the Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act stands to be improved as the result of a review of the legislation that is currently being undertaken by the Department of Attorney-General and Justice. A report will be provided to cabinet on the outcomes of the review, which is a requirement under the act, and I intend to introduce any necessary legislative amendments by the end of 2008.

**Mr WELLS:** I take the Attorney to page 7-6 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement and the increased demand for grants of aid for criminal law and child protection services. I ask: how does the Legal Aid Commission anticipate meeting that demand?

**Mr SHINE:** Legal Aid Queensland has seen demand for its services grow over the past five years, particularly in the area of child protection and criminal law. The organisation is now the single largest service in the state representing the interests of children and young people in the legal system. During 2006-07 an additional 411 applications for aid in child protection matters were approved to 30 June, an increase of more than 25 per cent on the corresponding figures from the previous year. This is largely due to a surge in demand from parents, children and young people seeking representation at all stages of the child protection process. There has also been an increasing number of orders from the Children's Court and the Children's Services Tribunal appointing separate representatives to act for children in proceedings.

Demand for a criminal law service has increased by around eight per cent in 2006-07 and the organisation also funded a large number of complex matters. There has also been growth in mental health matters and requests to represent prisoners who are subject to applications under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003.

In March this year we provided Legal Aid Queensland with an additional \$2 million in recurring funding from the legal practitioners interest on trust accounts fund, or LPITAF, to support its criminal law and child employee protection programs. A sum of \$2.5 million will be used to employ additional legal practitioners to work on criminal law matters and \$0.4 million will be used to boost Legal Aid Queensland's child protection services. A sum of \$4.4 million will be used to increase the fees paid to private practitioners who do criminal law work for legally aided clients, which will help attract more lawyers to do this work around the state.

Funding has also been provided to help deliver timelier justice to Indigenous Queenslanders in remote areas of the state. A sum of \$0.5 million will be used by Legal Aid Queensland to provide support to defendants appearing before additional court sittings in the gulf, Cape York and Torres Strait. In addition, the government has provided more than \$200,000 to employ an additional legal officer and part-time administrative officer in the mental health unit, as well as an additional barrister for in-house counsel.

Legal Aid Queensland's funding will be further reviewed as part of the 2008-09 budget. I will continue working closely with the organisation to ensure its financial framework reflects its ongoing circumstances.

**Mr WELLS:** Turning now to page 6-4 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, would the Attorney describe how the CMC investigates and combats the activities of paedophiles?

**Mr SHINE:** The government is committed to combating paedophilia and this is reflected in the priorities of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. The CMC works closely with officers from regional child protection investigation units and the Queensland Police Service, most notably Task Force Argus, to identify child sex offenders and gather evidence against them. Those joint investigations are enhanced by the CMC's special powers and the expertise provided by its intelligence analysts, legal officers, forensic computer examiners and operational support staff such as surveillance and technical officers.

The CMC conducts paedophilia investigations on the basis of referrals from the Crime Reference Committee. There are two standing umbrella referrals: the Artemis referral, which relates to networked and repeat offending outside the family unit, and the Atrax referral, which relates to the use of the Internet. If an investigation does not fall within those areas, a specific referral is sought.

The CMC is recognised as a national leader in the detection and investigation of paedophile networks and Internet based offences. As at 30 June, CMC Internet investigations had resulted in 16 people being charged with a total of 37 offences, including using the Internet to procure a child under 16 to commit a sexual act, using the Internet to expose a child under 16 to indecent material, and possessing and distributing child exploitation material. Those results are achieved through approved, controlled operations in which CMC police officers pose as children and adults in various Internet chat rooms and forums. This enables them to identify individual offenders and obtain the evidence needed for arrests and prosecution. Those investigations often result in the seizure of computers that can then assist in the detection of paedophile networks.

Very importantly, the CMC is continuing to develop its capacity to combat paedophilia by ensuring its investigators receive ongoing specialised training, maintaining state-of-the-art technology and software packages, and working with other law enforcement agencies, both nationally and internationally, to explore innovative ways of pursuing child sex offenders and networks. The CMC's effectiveness in detecting suspected child sex offenders and sex offender networks is vital to preventing crime against one of the most vulnerable sections of our community, our children.

**Mr WELLS:** I refer the Attorney to page 6-1 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, where it refers to the Crime and Misconduct Commission. I note that it is the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Fitzgerald inquiry, which led to the establishment of the Criminal Justice Commission which became the CMC. I ask the Attorney: how has the commission helped to improve the strategies and procedures for the prevention of crime and misconduct in Queensland?

**Mr SHINE:** 2007 does mark the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the ground-breaking Fitzgerald inquiry. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the inquiry and the implementation of its recommendations, perhaps most notably the establishment of the Criminal Justice Commission, the CJC, which later became, as you say, the Crime and Misconduct Commission, the CMC.

Pre-Fitzgerald, there was no independent CJC or CMC. Quite simply, there was no independent avenue for complaint of official misconduct or corruption. The level of systemic corruption that existed before the Fitzgerald inquiry does not exist today.

However, Queensland's public sector and Police Service cannot afford to become complacent. Constant vigilance is the only answer in the fight against corruption. The CMC assessed 3,566 complaints of misconduct in the 2006-07 financial year, compared with the full year estimate of 4,100. Timeliness has been one of the CMC's strengths. The fact that 93 per cent of complaints have been assessed within four weeks of them being received speaks volumes for how it has changed the landscape of how crime and misconduct investigations are handled in this state.

One of the CMC's other major roles is to combat and reduce major crime, including organised crime and criminal paedophilia. As at 30 June, the CMC completed a total of 18 organised crime and criminal paedophilia investigations in the 2006-07 financial year. Of these investigations, 17 resulted in arrests, charges or the seizure or restraint of property. This represents a level of effectiveness of more than 94 per cent.

The CMC also offers Queensland's only witness protection service. The Witness Protection Unit has operated since the days of the Fitzgerald inquiry and has been 100 per cent effective in keeping witnesses safe. Since witness protection became a function of the CJC and later the CMC, 1,470 people have been successfully protected. Of these, 428 have been protected since the CMC's establishment in 2002.

The CMC is a major player in the maintenance of an accountable public sector and Police Service operating with integrity. I commend it for its vigilance in fighting major crime and for the part it continues to play in creating a stronger, more accountable Police Service and Public Service for Queenslanders.

**Mr LEE:** I refer the Attorney-General to page 1-6 of the MPS which refers to additional funds for Legal Aid Queensland and community legal centres. Attorney, how will this additional funding improve access to justice in Queensland?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I am delighted that we have been able to provide additional funding for community legal centres from the Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund, which is administered by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. This additional funding of \$1.7 million will benefit some of the most disadvantaged members of our society, including children, victims of assault, the mentally ill and Indigenous men and women. It will provide a significant boost to community legal centres by funding additional staff and program initiatives, including the coordination of pro bono services across the state. There are many disadvantaged people and families experiencing tough times, and these grants will help them access the professional legal advice and representation they need.

Approximately \$696,000 will be used for additional staffing at 12 community legal centres across Queensland. More specifically, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Advocacy Service will receive an extra \$19,914 and the Bayside Community Legal Service will receive \$51,764. A further \$57,146 each will go to the Logan Legal Advice Centre, Care Goondiwindi Inc. and the Nundah Community Legal Centre, while \$11,144 will go to the North Queensland Women's Legal Service and \$51,765 to the Peninsula Community Legal Service. The Petrie Community Legal Service will receive an extra \$114,335, the Roma Community Legal Service will receive \$65,837, the Suncoast Community Legal Service will receive \$101,899, the Taylor Street Community Legal Service will receive \$65,281 and the Tenants Union of Queensland will receive \$42,241.

A further \$404,000 has been allocated for seven initiatives under the community legal centres program. The Gold Coast Family Law Clinic will receive \$24,000 for the Citizens Advice Bureau and Highway Legal Service, and the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House will receive \$155,000 for the coordination of pro bono legal services across the state. The Refugee and Immigration Legal Service will receive a total of \$64,000, with \$40,800 for regional migrant and refugee immigration legal support, \$14,700 for refugee family reunion legal support and \$9,000 for migrant domestic violence victims support, and the list goes on.

**Mr LEE:** I refer the Attorney-General to page 2-6 of the MPS and specifically the dot point that refers to conducting the redistribution of the state electoral boundaries. What is the process for the commission to undertake the redistribution? Also, what progress has been made on the Brisbane City Council boundary redistribution?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Might I just add to the list that I read out before that an amount of \$134,000 will be advanced to the Toowoomba Advocacy and Support Centre.

**Mr LEE:** That is very important.

**CHAIR:** You could not forget that one, Minister.

**Mr SHINE:** The conduct of a state electoral event such as the redistribution is a key component of the commission's corporate goals and the provision of a free, honest and fair electoral system. In accordance with division 2 of the Electoral Act 1992, a redistribution of state electoral boundaries is now due to commence. It is anticipated that the redistribution will commence early in 2007-08. The Governor has appointed a state Redistribution Commission from 17 May 2007 to 30 June 2008. The members of the commission are the Hon. Alan Demack AO, chairperson; Ms Rachel Hunter, Director-General of the Department of Education, Training and the Arts; and Mr David Kerslake, Electoral Commissioner.

As outlined in division 3 of the Electoral Act 1992, the commission will follow a process that involves a high level of community consultation. The first stage is to invite suggestions from the public and then follow this up with inviting comments on these suggestions. The commission will then prepare a proposed electoral redistribution and publish this proposal so the public can have their chance to object. These objections are then open to comment, with the commission then considering all objections and comments. The process allows public input throughout its different stages, and this community input then forms the basis of the commission's final redistribution. This redistribution is finalised and then advertised to the public. The final stage of the process is for the commission to table all relevant documentation. The redistribution is expected to be finalised in June 2008.

In addition to the state redistribution, an independent commission is currently responsible for the redistribution of the electoral wards in the city of Brisbane. The Local Government Electoral and Boundaries Review Commission consists of the Hon. Alan Demack, chairperson; Ms Fiona McKersie, Director-General of Emergency Services; and Mr David Kerslake, Electoral Commissioner.

**CHAIR:** Unfortunately we are out of time for questions and answers from government members. I call the member for Caloundra.

**Mr McARDLE:** Attorney, I take you to page 6-3 of the MPS which deals with the CMC. It states that the CMC forwarded a submission to the Australian Crime Commission in relation to the future trends in serious and organised crime in Australia. Could you outline the major submissions by the CMC to the Crime Commission in relation to Queensland?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Before answering, might I just return to the question I took on notice about the Office of the Information Commissioner.

**CHAIR:** Do you want him to do that?

**Mr McARDLE:** I would prefer not. I would rather the minister answer this question, thanks.

**CHAIR:** You can come back to it later, Minister. I am sure the member for Caloundra is still interested in the answer.

**Mr McARDLE:** I am dying to know, I can assure you of that.

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for that question. The CMC's Crime Reference Committee may refer major crime, which includes serious crime, organised crime and criminal paedophilia, to the CMC for investigation at the request of the Commissioner of Police where the QPS has carried out an investigation that has not been effective or further investigation is unlikely to be effective using powers ordinarily available to police officers and it is in the public interest to do so.

The major crime that may be referred at the request of the QPS is of several different kinds and can include organised crime, criminal paedophilia, terrorism or serious crime. However, most QPS requests for assistance relate to serious crime which relates to criminal activity that involves an indictable offence punishable on conviction by a term of imprisonment of not less than 14 years. Typical examples of serious crime referrals are unresolved murders, arsons, extortions or rape. The purpose of the referral of these matters to the CMC is so that the CMC may use its coercive hearings power to require witnesses to attend closed hearings and be examined on oath as to their knowledge of the matter under investigation. Legal mechanisms are available to enable the CMC to require a witness to answer questions even if the answers would tend to incriminate the witness, albeit with the consequence that the self-incriminating answers are not admissible against the witness himself or herself.

The use of the CMC's hearings powers can be effective in overcoming walls of silence set up by uncooperative witnesses. It can be particularly useful in obtaining evidence from witnesses who have themselves been involved in criminal activity and are accordingly reluctant to disclose information relevant to the offence under investigation because to do so would expose them to the risk of prosecution for their own criminal conduct.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, I do appreciate that. I ask you, however, in relation to the submission by the CMC to the Australian Crime Commission on future trends in serious and organised crime in Australia what the submissions were by the CMC in relation to Queensland?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I am advised that the CMC's submission is available under the Commonwealth public committee web site. I do not have that with me.

**Mr McARDLE:** Mr Needham is here, Minister. Could he elaborate?

**Mr SHINE:** I am saying to you that if you want to find that out you can look up the web site.

**Mr McARDLE:** Okay. Let us go back to the Information Commissioner. MPS 8-2 states that, consistent with recommendation No. 7 of the 2005-06 Strategic Management Review Report, the office invested money in developing staff skills in regard to alternative dispute resolution, resulting in 75 per cent of external reviews finalised in 2006-07 being resolved informally. Can you elaborate on what training was given to the staff, who provided that training and what was the total cost of providing this training?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable gentleman for the question. A key priority for the Office of the Information Commissioner is to maintain an environment of continued professional development and learning. The focus of the office's professional development program is on skill development, career enhancement and supporting a culture of ongoing learning through participation in university courses, on-the-job training and mentoring by experienced officers.

During 2006-07, the office committed \$40,767 on staff professional development, training, workshops and university studies. This amount equates to approximately \$3,000 per staff member to develop new skills, enhance professional qualifications and implement new policies and improved business processes within the office. Providing effective mentoring and training for office staff—such as in online legal research, informal dispute resolution and decision-writing skills—ensures that office staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to complete high-quality, external reviews in a timely manner.



Upon her appointment in February 2005 as the first stand-alone Information Commissioner for Queensland, Commissioner Taylor was faced with an inherited backlog of unresolved reviews stretching right back to 1993. After two years of a great deal of effort, this substantial backlog has been eradicated. In 2006-07 the office finalised 308 reviews.

In line with the 2005-06 strategic management review recommendations, the office will continue to invest at least two per cent of employee related expenses on staff training and development. The priority areas for professional development continue to be online legal research skills, alternative dispute resolution skills and decision-writing skills to ensure high-quality and timely resolution of external reviews.

By providing staff with high-quality, targeted professional development and training, the office effectively fulfils its mandate to provide high-quality, timely resolution of external reviews. In this way, the office ensures that it provides value for money for the Queensland community, which funds this vital plank in our democracy.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, thank you for you that. If I can take you to page 6-12 of the MPS and the reference to the CMC, it states that one of the future developments will be to continue to develop new and improved ways of protecting witnesses both generally and in specific cases. Can you indicate exactly how that will occur? And generally in what types of cases has the current program not been adequate that warrants the review and the upgrade?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank you for the question. It is appropriate to express at the outset one's admiration for the work done by the CMC in pursuing its goals—goals including fighting and preventing major crime, reducing serious misconduct, promoting high standards of integrity in the public sector and protecting witnesses. So far as that is concerned—that is, witness protection—this means protecting someone whose life is in danger because they have helped a law enforcement body to do its job. A witness does not have to be a witness in a court of law to qualify for protection.

Witness protection can involve relocating the person and relatives or associates, and may include the creation of a new identity. The CMC offers Queensland's only witness protection service. It gets its responsibility for this activity from the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 and operates under the provisions of the Witness Protection Act 2000.

The CMC's Witness Protection Unit has operated since the days of the Fitzgerald inquiry. The CMC has been 100 per cent effective in keeping witnesses safe. Since witness protection became a function of the CJC, the CMC has successfully protected 1,470 people as at 30 June, and 428 of these people have been protected since the formation of the CMC on 1 January 2002. While the number of applications for witness protection during 2006-07 is less than the estimate, the CMC has little control over that. This is because (a) it relies upon referrals received from law enforcement agencies, principally the Queensland Police Service, and (b) participation in the witness protection program is voluntary.

During 2006-07 approximately 50 applicants were not placed on the program due to numerous reasons—for example, some applicants decided not to accept an offer of witness protection. Other applications were withdrawn at the request of the referring officer. On occasions no offer was made due to the applicants not meeting the criteria for inclusion in the program.

The CMC will continue to deliver education and awareness marketing sessions to client agencies throughout Queensland to promote the existence of the Witness Protection Unit and the services it provides. In 2007-08 the CMC expects to offer interim witness protection to 95 per cent of eligible people within two days, assess 120 applications for witness protection and admit 55 people to the witness protection program. The CMC will continue building relationships with government departments to assist in the application of the Witness Protection Act.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Minister. Minister, if I can take you to 5-5 of the MPS, the Anti-Discrimination Commission, the number of publications distributed went from a target of 25,000 to 39,300 actual on the basis, at note 3, that it was a rebranding project. Can you elaborate as to exactly what that project entailed and the cost of the project including the cost of the mail-out?

**Mr SHINE:** Thank you for your question. An important government community outcome is, of course, the attainment of a fair, socially cohesive and culturally vibrant society. One way of achieving this is through the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland, which has as its core function the promotion of human rights through complaint resolution and community education. As to the detail of that question, I will take it on notice.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Minister. Minister, staying at 5-5 with the commission again, I note that the number of complaints enquiry advices provided were 4,800 and the target was 6,000. The note at No. 1 refers to the decrease being because of the use of a web site. Can you indicate whether the 4,800 is the number of complaints incorporating the web site, or is that a larger figure?

**Mr SHINE:** Sorry, can you repeat that last part?

**Mr McARDLE:** Certainly. Note No. 1 on page 5-6 indicates a decrease in the number of inquiries as a consequence of the use of the web site. Does the figure of 4,800 reflect the web site figures and

perhaps other applications, or are the web site applications a distinct figure and should be added to that?

**Mr SHINE:** I am advised the percentage of accepted complaints resolved by conciliation increased to its highest level yet, resolving 62 per cent of all accepted complaints. The percentage of accepted complaints finalised also increased to 82 per cent of all accepted complaints. The number of accepted complaints referred to the tribunal has decreased to 18 per cent—90 referrals—due to the increase in cases being resolved by conciliation within the commission. Client satisfaction with the commission's complaint management services as measured by client survey meets the performance target of 85 per cent. The number of accepted complaints referred to the tribunal that were resolved prior to public hearing exceeded the performance target of 80 per cent to reach 86 per cent. Of the 151 cases where conciliations were held, 130 were resolved during 2006-07.

All complaints are assessed in a timely manner, with 60 per cent of complaints closed within three months of acceptance by the commission and four per cent of complaints closed within six months. Fifty-seven per cent of complaints received were assessed within the legislatively required time frame of 28 days. Seventy-three per cent of conciliation conferences were conducted within 42 days of acceptance. Eighty-six per cent of tribunal decisions were released within eight months of the hearing.

The number of complaint enquiry advices provided decreased by approximately 20 per cent against the estimated target. This is due to the increase in the use of web based information, to which your question relates. I am advised that a hit on a web site is equivalent to an inquiry to that web site.

**Mr McARDLE:** During 2006-07 were any complaints received by the Anti-Discrimination Commission in regard to the introduction of the Queensland prep year? If there were, what is the current status of those complaints?

**Mr SHINE:** What page are you referring to?

**Mr McARDLE:** I am referring to the number of complaint enquiry advices provided of 6,000 under 'Quantity' on page 5-5. Of those complaints, were any in relation to the Queensland prep year? If there were, what was the number? And what is the current status of those complaints?

**Mr SHINE:** That is a question I will take on notice.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you. I refer to page 6-6 of the MPS dealing again with the Crime and Misconduct Commission. With reference to the 'Quality' measure, the target for the percentage of stakeholders satisfied with the intelligence survey was 90 per cent, which was met. Of the 10 per cent that was not satisfied, can you give any reasons as to why they were not satisfied and how the various stakeholders were surveyed?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Might I say at the outset how impressed one has to be and is with the work of the CMC. For example, it will identify, investigate, disrupt and deter major crime including—

**Mr McARDLE:** Attorney, I agree with you. It is an enormously powerful and wonderful body of men and women who do a fantastic job. So we agree on that point.

**CHAIR:** If you interject and interrupt, then the minister can have another three minutes to answer your question.

**Mr McARDLE:** If we get to the answer.

**CHAIR:** Is that another question?

**Mr SHINE:** Not only does it do that; it achieves results by working in partnership with other law enforcement agencies. It uses its specialist statutory powers proportionally and strategically. It builds public confidence that there is diligence in overseeing the public sector, and it performs a most valuable service with respect to its responsibility for witness protection in Queensland. As to the specifics of that question, I will take it on notice.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Attorney. Following on from that, can you also take on notice what improvements, if any, were suggested by surveyed stakeholders? Was any feedback received as to how the CMC could generally improve its functions? If so, what was that feedback? Finally, what measures have been taken to implement all feedback received?

**CHAIR:** I do not know if within 40 seconds the minister will have time to answer all aspects of that question, but I will leave it to you, Minister.

**Mr SHINE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The question relates to detail which for the purposes of accuracy I will take on notice.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Minister.

**CHAIR:** That completes the time allocated to non-government members' questions in this session. I am going to ask the next question of the Attorney-General. I refer the Attorney to page 2-4 and the Electoral Commission of Queensland's community awareness program. I have an enormous interest in this particular field. How does the commission actively encourage Queenslanders, particularly

young Queenslanders, to register as voters and to keep their enrolment details current, particularly in the face of the changes made by the federal government to the Australian Electoral Act?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. 2006-07 was the final year in a three-year electoral cycle. Preparations for the 2006 state general election included the development of an information and awareness campaign to maximise enrolment and turnout at the election. The information and awareness campaign was focused on improving people's general awareness of the election, the importance of enrolment and specific details relating to voting options and the location of polling booths.

More than \$1.9 million was provided for this campaign in 2006-07. As a result of this campaign, approximately 10,000 Queenslanders were added to the rolls in the period between the election announcement and the close of the roll.

The total enrolment for the 2006 state election was 2,484,479 people which was an increase of 84,502 from the 2004 state election. Following on from the success of this campaign, the commission is planning an awareness campaign that will be used for the Brisbane City Council elections on 15 March 2008 and for other local government areas if necessary. The campaign informed Queenslanders of election arrangements, specific election milestones and voting options. In addition to this campaign, the commission has initiated a project aimed at increasing the number of young people who are enrolled to vote. This campaign also aims to increase young people's knowledge of the electoral system. If I might at this stage answer the first of the questions that were taken on notice.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister, I was going to suggest that.

**Mr SHINE:** I return to the question I took on notice about the Office of the Information Commissioner. I can advise that the target number of open reviews at the end of the reporting period that are older than 12 months old is less than 10. As at 1 July 2007 the office had only seven open reviews that were older than 12 months old and these were all well advanced. I note that the estimated actual figure for 2006-07 is an estimate only. It would be inappropriate for the Attorney-General to discuss the specifics of any external review due to section 93 of the Freedom of Information Act, a secrecy provision. This section of the act means that the Information Commissioner cannot reveal details of any unresolved review to the Attorney-General or to the parliamentary Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee.

**CHAIR:** In the interests of fairness I will take us through to 5 o'clock before we change over departmental staff if that is okay. I am sorry to add a bit more time onto everyone's day.

**Mrs SCOTT:** May I direct the Attorney-General to the community service obligations provided by the office of the Public Trustee and referred to on page 4-4 of the MPS. What is the value of the services provided by the office of the Public Trustee and how is the office performing generally?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for her question. The major work of the Public Trustee Office involves administering deceased estates, providing financial administration for adults with impaired capacity and acting as a trustee. The key to providing these services is to ensure that they are also delivered to disadvantaged members of our community regardless of whether the client is able to pay for these services. Disadvantaged people receive these services at no cost or at greatly reduced cost through a government-approved scheme of rebates known as community service obligations. These matters are managed at no cost to the government and are paid for by revenue raised through the office's activities. The office meets these obligations and is self-funding.

During the 2006-07 financial year there were more than 7,800 protective management and trust matters managed as community service obligations at a cost of \$12.6 million. Other community service obligation services were also provided ranging from free will making to the funding of civil law legal aid assistance at a cost of \$4.5 million.

The Public Trust Office anticipates demand for these services will increase during 2007-08 but the office will be able to continue to fund their provision. As Queensland's population ages and age related disabilities increase, there is growing demand for the office's services, particularly financial administration services. During 2006-07 the office made approximately 21,750 wills and 3,600 enduring powers of attorney documents. The office has also identified an increasing trend of financial abuse of the elderly and has been active in helping address this issue. Public Trustee Office personnel have actively participated in forums on elder abuse prevention and regularly give presentations to a range of community groups and non-government agencies.

The office, with other key stakeholders, is developing a community education information package to identify, prevent and resolve issues relating to financial abuse of the elderly. I commend the Public Trustee Office for its continued commitment to helping meet its clients' needs, in particular the needs of the disadvantaged and elderly members of our society.

**Mrs SCOTT:** I now refer to pages 3-1 and 3-6 of the MPS where it refers to the Good Decisions Training Program. The Ombudsman has projected that more than 2,500 state and local government

officers will participate in the program in 2007-08, almost 1,000 more than last financial year, 2005-06. What is involved with this training and what other training programs are proposed?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The Ombudsman developed the Good Decisions Training Program in 2005 after he identified the need for practical decision-making training for public sector employees. This training forms part of the office's key initiative for improving the accountability and quality of decision making and administrative practice in government agencies. The training takes participants through the basic elements of decision making using practical and relevant examples while building a checklist for future reference.

Since 1 July 2006, 75 training sessions have been held across the state. Approximately 1,335 Queensland state and local government employees have attended the training this financial year. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive with 97 per cent of respondents considering that the course information will assist them to make sound decisions in their daily work. Due to the positive feedback received from participants, the office has developed a new training program. This new training program, which begins this month, July 2007, will be offered to officers involved in handling or reviewing complaints in their own agencies. It will complement the current Good Decisions Training Program. It is expected that with the positive feedback from the current Good Decision Training Program, the number of participants will increase in the next financial year.

All government agencies are required to have a complaints management system in place by 10 November 2007. Workshops have been held on best practice complaints management systems. To complement this activity, a training program has been developed to assist officers understand the principles of effective complaints management and how to apply those principles. This training program will assist front-line and internal review officers of agencies to manage complaints more effectively. The two-module program was specifically designed for these types of officers who conduct internal reviews of complaints.

The training aims to assist officers in understanding the principles of effective complaints management and how to apply these in order to fairly and efficiently manage and investigate complaints. This training is being rolled out this month. I am pleased to provide the committee with this information demonstrating the Ombudsman's commitment to improving decision making and administrative practices in the public sector.

**Mrs SCOTT:** I now direct you to page 6-4 and the CMC's role in the Australian Crime Commission's national task force on outlaw motorcycle gangs. What role does the CMC play in combating outlaw motorcycle gangs and other organised crime groups?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member again for her question. In recent years the threat associated with the activities of outlaw motorcycle gangs in Queensland has risen significantly in the estimation of law enforcement agencies. This trend has also been observed elsewhere in Australia attracting greater attention at both state and national levels as reflected in the establishment of a national task force on outlaw motorcycle gangs by the Australian Crime Commission.

The recent tragic shooting in Melbourne has again brought the public's attention to the activities of these gangs. In Queensland the most significant law enforcement initiatives have been the establishment of Task Force Hydra by the Queensland Police Service and the commencement of CMC investigations under the Hydra referral. The Hydra referral complements Task Force Hydra and covers the members of outlaw motorcycle gangs engaged in serious criminal activity with other gang members as well as members who operate in crime networks independent of their formal gang structures.

In July 2006 the Australian Crime Commission invited the CMC to participate in a joint national intelligence project examining outlaw motorcycle gangs. In December 2006 the CMC provided the commission with a comprehensive response to its request for information on outlaw motorcycle gang activities in Queensland. Using the responses from the CMC and other law enforcement agencies throughout the country, the commission has released two protected assessments identifying and ranking outlaw motorcycle gang networks in terms of risk.

Earlier this year the CMC, in partnership with the commission and Queensland and New South Wales police, conducted a series of raids targeting gang members alleged to be part of a sophisticated drug-trafficking syndicate. These raids significantly disrupted two complex criminal networks and reduced the flow of dangerous drugs between Queensland and New South Wales. The CMC, Queensland Police Service and Australian Crime Commission are currently pursuing a joint investigation into drug-trafficking activity involving members of an outlaw motorcycle gang in south-east Queensland. Again this activity involves interstate links. The CMC and Queensland police are also investigating the arson of the Rebels' clubhouse at Albion. The CMC will continue to participate in joint intelligence and investigative initiatives at state and national levels to expose the activities of these outlaw motorcycle gangs to reduce the level of risk posed by them.

**CHAIR:** I think now is an opportune time to take the break. The committee will take a short break for 10 minutes to allow for a changeover in departmental staff and a stretch of the legs. The committee will resume at 5.10 pm.

**Proceedings suspended from 4.56 pm to 5.10 pm**

**CHAIR:** The committee will continue its examination of the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland. I call the member for Caloundra.

**Mr McARDLE:** Attorney, I take you to the MPS at page 1-7. Under the heading of 'Law and Justice Reform' it states that the output is primarily focused on providing leadership in the development of policy and socially responsive law reform. I now refer to section 62 of the Civil Liability Act and the capping of general damages in 2002. Queensland has not had an increase in the general damages figure since 2002 yet New South Wales, Victoria, the Northern Territory and South Australia have increased their figure by CPI. We are now majorly, if I can use that word, behind those states. Is there any reason Queensland has not increased the section 62 general damages figure by CPI?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable gentleman for the question. The honourable gentleman will realise that the awards in Queensland have been historically well below other states well before the introduction of the legislation, hence the imperative for making increases is not the same as if they had been like the other states. In 2002-03 governments implemented reforms in response to the insurance crisis. There was a dramatic rise in insurance policy premiums following massive drops in insurance company profits from investments. Concern was expressed at the level of insurance claims and the amounts ordered to be paid as well as the nature and content of advertisements of lawyers, especially those seen and heard on the electronic media. Other factors were at play including the collapse of HIH and the terrorist attacks in 2001.

The Queensland government implemented important reforms in response to that via the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002 and the Civil Liability Act 2003 and regulation. It would seem these laws have served to put downward pressure on insurance premiums by limiting the number of claims and extent of damages in personal injuries claims as well as imposing severe restrictions on advertising. The regulation sets out a table of injury scale values, ISV, which are attributed to a wide range of injuries.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has been conducting a review of the regulation. This work is ongoing. There is a diverse range of views amongst stakeholders, as you would imagine. The government will consider all views in finalising the review of the regulation and, in particular, the injury scale values.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you for that. The 2004 New South Wales cap of \$365,000 in 2006 went to \$427,000. In Victoria, the Northern Territory and South Australia there have also been significant increases but none in Queensland. It would appear as though the downward pressure on claims has not been a concern to those states. Is there any reason we have not moved to increase, at least by CPI, the \$250,000 cap of 2002 when other states in Australia have done so without a concern as to the downward pressure on claims?

**Mr SHINE:** As I stated at the commencement of my answer to the previous question, the historical background in Queensland is significantly different to that which applied in the southern states, particularly in New South Wales. The imperative to raise the cap, for example, for pain and suffering from \$250,000 just has not been there. New South Wales put a threshold in place as result of its Civil Liability Act. No threshold has been implemented in Queensland. Our scheme is far more generous than those that operate in other states in terms of access to compensation for injuries received.

**Mr McARDLE:** If we had used the CPI figure, our section 62 figure would have gone from \$250,000 to \$293,404. Is it not the case that the government's charges increase automatically each year by the CPI figure? If that is the case, why would it not be appropriate for the citizens of Queensland to receive a similar increase over that period?

**Mr SHINE:** At the outset, I repeat what I said before in relation to what the government is doing with respect to a review of the ISV. That will encompass increases, obviously, in the normal course. But I repeat what I said before: the major cap to which you refer is the one for pain and suffering of \$250,000. In Queensland, awards of that nature for pain and suffering have not in the past been given and are not being given. There is no demand for increasing that at this time. If that changes or is likely to change, then that will be a matter for government consideration at that time. It is not relevant to the current circumstances.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, I move to page 1-2 of the MPS, 'Building modern and accessible courthouses'. In particular, I refer you to the capital output statement with regard to the courthouses at Ipswich, Pine Rivers and Sandgate. In 2005-06 and 2006-07 there were significant shortfalls in money spent on those courthouses except Pine Rivers, which had an overspend of \$350,000. In 2006-07 alone the shortfall was something like \$15 million. If we are building a justice system for the future we have to have courthouses. My question is: why can't the department plan properly and adequately for major infrastructure needs to deliver the services?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The answer is that we are not only planning for the future needs but are providing for the current needs as well. Only last week I was in the honourable member's electorate for the inauguration of the Caloundra Youth Murri Court that is a

splendid new courthouse. I had not been to Caloundra for many years. I must apologise to you for that omission.

**Mr McARDLE:** It is a magnificent area of the world, Minister, I can assure you of that.

**Mr SHINE:** And a magnificent courthouse servicing that magnificent area.

**Mr McARDLE:** And a magnificent member as well.

**Mr SHINE:** We could talk about that for some time, if you wish.

**Mr McARDLE:** We may debate that issue, I agree.

**Mr SHINE:** In relation more specifically to the question that you asked, I point out that in line with the government's commitment to community infrastructure, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has a very active capital works program. This program is dedicated to providing the most cost-effective, contemporary and appropriate courthouses with the aim of ensuring a safe and respectful environment in which clients may conduct their business.

In 2006-07 and carrying into 2007-08 the capital works program includes construction of a new courthouse at Sandgate with a budget of \$4.4 million, an estimated actual of \$2.5 million and an estimated budget for 2007-08 of \$1.84 million; construction of a new courthouse at Pine Rivers with a budget, not including the watch-house, of \$8.56 million, an estimated actual of \$2.5 million and an estimated budget in 2007-08 of \$7.625 million; design of new courthouses or extensions at: Ipswich with a budget in 2006-07 of \$9.1 million, an estimated actual of \$2 million and an estimated budget 2007-08 of \$40.4 million; Mareeba, not including the watch-house, with a 2006-07 budget of \$1.5 million, equal to the estimated actual of \$1.5 million and an estimated budget in 2007-08 of \$3.8 million; and Maryborough with a 2006-07 budget and estimated actual of \$0.5 million and an estimated budget in 2007-08 of \$1.5 million.

The design of the new Brisbane Supreme Court and District Court in the 2006-07 budget is \$6.25 million with an estimated actual of \$2.25 million and is estimated in the 2007-08 budget to be \$11 million. This was the result of the negotiations to finalise the new site and extensive consultation, including consultation with the judiciary related to the design competition. Renovations or additions at courthouses at St George total \$1 million; Sarina, \$800,000; and Bowen, \$3.8 million. There have also been significant internal works at many courthouses including new vulnerable witness programs, upgraded prisoner docks, new air-conditioning systems and security upgrades.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, thank you for that. Just getting back to the question with regard to Ipswich, Pine Rivers and Sandgate courthouses, the shortfall totals something like \$15 million, and Ipswich and Sandgate had shortfalls the year before—2005-06. Can you explain why if we are producing the most modern system in Australia and if we can build a pipeline in record time we cannot build a courthouse on time and on budget?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The general market in building and construction is tight which continues to have an impact on the schedule of capital works. In 2006-07, \$22.5 million has been spent on capital works and courts and other departmental accommodation against a budget of \$39.04 million. However, the situation in my department in relation to underexpenditure for major projects is that they have not so much been caused by difficulties in obtaining builders or delays in construction but by extended time taken on design or pre-tender negotiations and approvals.

In complicated buildings such as courthouses, it is essential that design issues be understood. It is also essential that issues be resolved prior to going to tender. It is more cost effective to delay building commencement rather than make changes once the building has started. On a number of projects—notably Bowen, St George, Pine Rivers and Sandgate—once design has been completed there has been a good response to tenders and building has proceeded on time. Design has progressed well on the new courthouse at Mareeba and prisoner facilities at Maryborough, and these projects are on schedule. Ipswich has been delayed by extended price negotiations with the managing contractor and extended council negotiations on the development application.

Pine Rivers has been delayed by the difficulty in obtaining suitable land and resolution of engineering issues on the site eventually chosen. Sandgate was slightly delayed by a longer than expected design process but will be completed in September 2007. The Brisbane Supreme Court and District Court design has been delayed because of the extended time needed for the design competition. Delays have been caused in a small number of jobs by the high level of activity and constraints in the building industry. For example, some smaller projects at Townsville Court House were delayed by the difficulty in obtaining suitable tenderers, and new prisoner docks at Toowoomba and Bundaberg were delayed by problems in the supply of specialist toughened glass.

In 2006-07, refurbishments have been completed at Bowen, St George and Sarina and construction has commenced at Sandgate and Pine Rivers. Design has been completed for Ipswich and progressed satisfactorily for Mareeba and Maryborough. Construction will be completed on Sandgate in September 2007 and Pine Rivers in early 2008 and is expected to start on Ipswich in the second half of

2007 and Mareeba in early 2008. In recognition of the importance of the major capital programs with the Supreme Court and District Court in Ipswich, the department has established a major capital works project team which will be dedicated to these projects and not be distracted.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Minister. If we could stay with the MPS at page 1-38 relating to the Integrated Justice Information Strategy. This first appeared in the MPS back in 2003-04. In 2004-05 there was a shortfall of \$4.7 million. In 2005-06 there was a shortfall of \$1.4 million. In 2006-07 there was a shortfall of \$14.6 million. We now have in note 9 that there has been a revised program put in place. This project has been on the go in one way or another since the CJC's 2001 crime and justice report. This project appears to be nowhere near closer concluding than it was when it started. Is there any reason why over the past four or five years there has been a significant shortfall in moneys being spent on this project? More importantly, when do you think we can get this system up and running?

**Mr SHINE:** I do thank the honourable member for the question. The Integrated Justice Information Strategy, or IJIS, is a cross-agency initiative to enable the electronic transfer of information across the Justice agencies of the Police Service, Justice, Corrections, Communities and Child Safety. IJIS is not a quick technology fix to the criminal justice system. The IJIS program represents the opportunity to consider the needs of the criminal justice sector as a whole and undertake an intensive review and improvement of current practices, people, processes and technology, to improve effectiveness and remove complexity and inefficiency. The IJIS approach is aimed at ensuring the business practices are designed and changed for the long-term benefit of the criminal justice sector rather short-term expenditure on bandaid technology solutions.

On a year-to-year basis, IJIS has deferred project expenditure into out years as the rate of progress was less than originally anticipated. This is due mainly to the competing priorities for skilled agency resources between IJIS and major agency initiatives underway such as QPRIME in police and ICMS in Communities and Child Safety. The rate of IJIS expenditure was estimated based on the most accurate information available at the time and assumed that resources would be brought in externally where sufficient internal capacity did not exist. To date, IJIS has successfully completed three projects that have resulted in significant improvements across the criminal justice system. These three projects account for \$4.623 million of the total IJIS expenditure to date of \$12.5 million. The total expenditure includes eight projects that are in progress.

This government is already making a significant investment in technology systems within the criminal justice agencies—IOMS in Corrections, QPRIME in the Police Service, ICMS in Communities and Child Safety and the ODPP case management system in Justice. The IJIS program is progressively leveraging those investments to create an environment where information is seen as a resource to be captured once and shared electronically. At the same time, IJIS is ensuring that the technology solution is flexible and cost effective enough to support changes to organisational structures, agency systems, policy practice and legislation across the criminal justice sector.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, Minister. I think you mentioned that \$12.5 million is what had been spent to date on IJIS. Last year's shortfall itself was \$14.6 million. You would have to agree that the time taken with regard to this project is abysmal and the results, given the money to be put into it, are simply not reflective of good use of funds. Again, can you please tell me when we can expect this project to be completed.

**Mr SHINE:** As I said before, IJIS of course is not a quick technology fix to the criminal justice system. It does represent an opportunity to consider the needs of the whole criminal justice sector as a whole and undertake an intensive review improvement of current practices. IJIS proposed a new funding schedule to relocate the existing funding provided from 2004 to 2008 over a longer period of time. The existing program of work is now scheduled to continue until 2010. There is no overall increase in the cost of IJIS.

**CHAIR:** If you have another question, member for Caloundra, there is two minutes.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you very much. Attorney, we can look at the last four financial years of your department under the capital acquisition statements and we find in going through that that in both property, plant and equipment and other capital acquisitions the department has never met budget once in those four years. Can you explain why when we are building the best justice system in Queensland moneys cannot be spent as allocated to put in place the technology, the resources, the manpower and the courthouses et cetera to provide that at a time when the population in this state is booming?

**Mr SHINE:** In answer to the honourable member's question, I would refer him basically to my answer to the earlier question that he asked in relation to delays in capital works expenditure. Let me say that during 2006-07 the department undertook a comprehensive program of work relating to information and communication technology projects for example. That program represents the department's commitment to improving productivity and service delivery and enthusiasm for using technology effectively. The program has benefited from the development of an ICT investment plan which looks forward for a period of up to 10 years. This assists the department to be more strategic in its ICT investment and to obtain funding in a timely manner. As to other capital works in relation to courthouses et cetera, I rely on the answer that I provided to you earlier.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. That concludes the time allocated to non-government members for questions. I call the member for Indooroopilly.

**Mr LEE:** I refer the Attorney-General to pages 1-2 and 1-3 of the MPS, and I ask: how will these new courthouses assist the administration of justice in Queensland?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for his question, but before coming to it might I just clear up a few of the questions that I took on notice that were asked by the member for Caloundra earlier today. The first is in relation to the question taken on notice concerning the Anti-Discrimination Commission and the prep year. The member for Caloundra asked about complaints to the Anti-Discrimination Commission regarding the introduction of the prep year. The introduction of the prep year was a major advance for the education in Queensland. It involved many Queenslanders. More than 29,000 students started prep in 2007. I am advised that there were only three complaints to the commission in relation to the prep year out of that 29,000. It would be inappropriate for me to discuss the specifics of those complaints, even if I knew what they contained.

With respect to the question taken on notice concerning the CMC client satisfaction rates, could I also return to that? On page 6-6 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement it states that the percentage of stakeholders who are satisfied with the intelligence service was 90 per cent estimated actual in 2006-07. I am advised that that 90 per cent refers to the response rate to the stakeholder survey circulated by the CMC. The other 10 per cent did not respond to the survey. This does not mean that they are not satisfied with the services of the CMC; it just means that they did not respond.

To recap, almost all respondents to the survey were satisfied. Therefore, how we deal with the 10 per cent is redundant. Perhaps the CMC can urge them to respond in future surveys. This answer really is in answer to both questions that I have taken with respect to the CMC.

The outstanding question was with respect to the ADCQ—the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland—in relation to the rebranding program, which is referred to on page 5-5 of the MPS. It involved the development of a new look for the commission's publications, many of which have not changed in appearance for approximately 15 years. A total of \$20,194 was allocated towards the design of the publications, including the web design, as well as posters, brochures and flyers, and training materials. A total of \$27,000 was allocated towards printing the new materials. The new publications were distributed to community and training organisations, government departments, businesses and members of the community.

In relation to the question asked by the honourable member for Indooroopilly, I thank him for the question. This government has maintained a very active program of building new courthouses and updating existing facilities over the past 10 years and that work is continuing.

**Mr LEE:** I refer you to page 1-9 of the MPS where it refers to additional judicial officer positions. What is the performance of Queensland's courts? How will additional judicial positions assist in the administration of justice in Queensland?

**Mr SHINE:** Yes, thank you very much for that question. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is committed to delivering an effective, efficient and accessible justice system that maintains a high level of community confidence. There are a number of measures for assessing the performance of our courts. The most important of these is clearance rate, which shows whether they are keeping up with their workload.

A figure above 100 per cent indicates that more matters were finalised than lodged and that consequently the court is reducing its workload. Our target clearance rates for 2006-07 range from 90 to 100 per cent, depending on the court and the jurisdiction. In considering those targets and the actual outcomes, it is important to remember that the courts have no control over the number of matters lodged each year. Consequently, I am pleased to report that across all courts and jurisdictions last year those targets were exceeded.

In 2006-07, the Court of Appeal finalised 333 criminal matters and 254 civil matters, achieving clearance rates of 119 per cent and 106 per cent respectively—well above its 90 per cent target. The trial division of the Supreme Court finalised 1,224 criminal matters and 4,500 civil matters, achieving clearance rates of 106 and 92 per cent respectively—again above the 90 per cent targets. The District Court finalised 6,235 criminal matters and 6,353 civil matters, achieving clearance rates of 101 per cent and 147 per cent respectively compared with the target rates of 90 per cent. The Magistrates Court finalised 171,189 criminal matters and 85,546 civil matters, achieving clearance rates of 97 per cent and 110 per cent respectively—again exceeding the prescribed target rates of 95 per cent and 100 per cent.

The various courts and their staff are to be congratulated on these outstanding results. But neither they nor the government are resting on their laurels. In fact, clearance rate targets for 2007-08 have now been set at 100 per cent across-the-board.

The additional judicial officer positions, to which the honourable member referred, will assist in achieving those ambitious targets. The recent budget provides funding for an additional judge in the Court of Appeal and another in the District Court. It also provides funding for the appointment of an



additional magistrate based in Cairns to conduct more frequent circuit courts on Cape York, in the gulf region and in the Torres Strait. These are on top of the additional District Court judge who was appointed in July last year and the extra magistrate who was appointed in Southport in March this year. The additional positions will ensure that the community can continue to have confidence in the Queensland justice system.

**Mr WELLS:** I refer the Attorney-General to page 1-2 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, which refers to public confidence in the justice system. I invite the Attorney-General to address the committee in respect of his role in the maintenance of the public's confidence in our justice system. In particular, is the Attorney-General aware of any recent comments or actions that may diminish the public's confidence in our justice system?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. All Queenslanders should have confidence in the justice system. Queensland's judiciary performs a fine service for the people of the state. Public confidence in our justice system can be assured only if our judiciary operates independently.

I am aware that there are cases where members of the community will express concern about a specific outcome or sentence. As Attorney-General, I can—I have—initiated appeals against sentences based on legal advice. Sentencing is a complex task. The court must attempt to construct a sentence that balances society's and the victim's interests in punishment and deterrence with society's and the offender's interests in rehabilitation.

Confidence in the justice system is broader than sentencing. Confidence is undermined by unwarranted attacks on members of the judiciary and the profession. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Seeney, made one of those unwarranted attacks when he publicly savaged the reputation of former New South Wales Chief Justice, Sir Laurence Street. Sir Lawrence was commissioned to provide an independent opinion of the material collated by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions relating to the death of Mulrunji at Palm Island in November 2004.

Following the outcome of the trial of Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley, Mr Seeney told a media conference that Sir Laurence was a gun for hire and produced the opinion he was paid to produce. Those comments were outrageous and defamatory. I note the strong objection by the Queensland Law Society of Mr Seeney's attack on Sir Laurence. The Law Society letter to Mr Seeney, Sir Laurence, the member for Caloundra and me states—

If these attributed quotes are correct, they constitute the most shameful and appalling attack on one of Australia's most distinguished and respected jurists whose decency, probity and intellect have been hailed by the legal profession, all sides of politics and the wider community.

The Law Society letter then asked Mr Seeney—

If, after considering Sir Laurence's contribution to public life you have pause to reflect upon your reported intemperate remarks, you would do yourself and the Opposition a considerable favour by issuing an unqualified and abject apology to him.

Mr Seeney and no other member of the opposition has publicly apologised for the attack on Sir Laurence Street. It was a public attack and a public apology is warranted. I issued a statement denouncing Mr Seeney's public attack. I urge the member for Caloundra, as the opposition's justice spokesman, to do the same. I believe that if the opposition leader's comments are not withdrawn and a public apology issued, confidence in our justice system and in practitioners will be diminished.

**Mr WELLS:** I refer to page 1-17 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement. One of the reforms of the early 1990s which has stood the test of time was the establishment of the Justice of the Peace (Qualified) and the Justice of the Peace (Magistrates Court). The idea was to appoint people to these positions as a result of them passing examinations so that we would have an army of volunteer justices who saw themselves as members of the judiciary and not as rubber stamps for the executive arm of government in order to protect the liberties of the citizens of Queensland. I was pleased to note in the portfolio statement that JPs of the Magistrates Court were being appointed at Yam Island and St Paul's Island. I ask the Attorney-General: how have the JPs of the Magistrates Court already established in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, referred to in the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, performed?

**Mr SHINE:** I thank the honourable member for his question. The government is committed to improving services to Indigenous communities, including those in the remote areas of our state. The JPs of the Magistrates Court support this commitment by providing training throughout remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to enable the holding of Magistrates Court constituted by two or more Justices of the Peace (Magistrates Court).

As at 30 June 2007, a total of 1,292 people from remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have now been appointed Justices of the Peace (Magistrates Court). There were 40 new registrations in 2006-07. Communities are conducting courts on a regular basis at Kowanyama, Badu island, Aurukun, Cherbourg, Yarrabah, Woorabinda, Old Mapoon, Napranum, Mornington Island, Thursday Island, Pormpuraaw and Doomadgee. The courts are dealing with a variety of matters, including simple offences, bail applications, domestic violence applications, traffic matters and breaches

of by-laws. Offences of truancy and alcohol related matters are being dealt with in most communities. Other communities involved in the program include Bamaga, Murray—or Mer—Island, Palm Island, Lockhart River, Wujul Wujul and Hope Vale.

Training officers from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's Justices of the Peace Branch have continued providing refresher training courses for participating communities and have started training new members in the communities of Hope Vale, Cherbourg and Doomadgee to support existing justices of the peace in those communities. Feedback from training participants reflects a positive response to the program, course content and delivery by training providers.

The JPs (Magistrates Court) support my department's Indigenous justice strategy by allowing community members to have a greater voice in court and sentencing processes—

**Mr WELLS:** Hear, hear!

**Mr SHINE:**—increasing knowledge of the criminal law justice system, and enabling law and order issues to be determined at a community level, thereby increasing local ownership of justice issues in these remote Indigenous communities. Acceptance by local communities of their responsibility is a central plank of the Indigenous partnership agreement, which the Premier has taken a leadership role in negotiating with Indigenous leaders.

I thank the participating JPs and their respective communities around Queensland for their support and contribution to this program, which will continue to be supported by the department.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Attorney, I refer to page 1-31 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, which refers to the work of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in providing timely and accurate registration of all births, deaths and marriages. How has the registry's work been affected by the increasing birthrate?

**Mr SHINE:** The Queensland Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages records births that occur in Queensland. Once the registration of a birth is completed, the registry uses those details to compile a birth certificate. An application to register the birth of a child must be on the registry's birth registration application form. The application form must be given to the registry within 60 days after the birth.

In the 2005-06 financial year, 53,655 births were registered in Queensland. According to the registry, last year my home town of Toowoomba again topped the state when it comes to new babies with 1,362 births in 2006, none of which were attributed to me.

Another interesting report the registry produces each year is the top 100 baby names for boys and girls. Jack and Ella have been the most popular in recent years. Jack has been the most popular boys' name for the last four years, while Ella has been the most popular girls' name in Queensland since 2004. I must note that the name Kerry did not feature in the top 100 last year.

Recently, I welcomed the christening of Princess Isabella, the daughter of Princess Mary of Denmark. Isabella is a popular name for baby girls in Queensland. Last year it was the ninth in the top 100 list, with 201 newborns named Isabella.

My attention has been drawn to the boys' name Harry. The seventh and final book in the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, will be released on Saturday. It is interesting to track the revival of Harry as a popular name for boys in Queensland. Some may say it is magical.

In 1996, there were just 70 newborns named Harry, but in 1997, with the release of the first book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, that skyrocketed to 103. By the time the fourth novel had been released in 2000, the number of new babies named Harry had jumped to 177. In 2005-06 in Queensland it reached mystical proportions with 158 and 195 respectively. This may have had something to do with the release in 2005 of the film *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. So far this year in Queensland 75 boys have been named Harry. One can only assume that there will be plenty more with the release of the new book and film.

**Mr WELLS:** It is actually a plot by the Slytherins.

**Mr SHINE:** I take that interjection. In total, in Queensland there have been 1,409 newborns named Harry since the release of the first Harry Potter novel.

**CHAIR:** Were there any named Voldemort?

**Mr SHINE:** No, but Hermione does feature.

**CHAIR:** That is good to hear. I like Hermione.

**Mrs SCOTT:** That was most enlightening. Attorney, could I now ask you to turn to pages 1-33, 1-34 and 1-36 of the MPS, referring to the State Penalties Enforcement Registry. How have the recent amendments passed by state parliament assisted SPER to recover unpaid fines?

**Mr SHINE:** The State Penalties Enforcement and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007 was passed by parliament in April 2007 and amended the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Justices Act 1886 and the Bail Act 1980. The amendments provided for the early registration of court fines to a State Penalties and Enforcement Registry, SPER,

allowing debtors to access a full range of flexible payment options that were not available when payments were to be made directly to the court. This enables offenders who have received a fine when they attend court to immediately arrange a payment plan to pay the fine while they are at court. This makes paying off a fine easier and faster for debtors.

SPER provides a range of payment options. Instalment plans are available for regular weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments. It will also free up court staff who can then be more involved with meeting the needs of court users, particularly vulnerable people who interact with the criminal justice system. SPER can arrange for those instalments to be deducted from a debtor's bank account.

A communication campaign was conducted during April and May this year, and resulted in posters and fact sheets being distributed to all magistrates courts throughout Queensland to highlight the simplified fine payment process. The amendments also give the SPER registrar greater flexibility to issue good behaviour orders to homeless, disadvantaged and vulnerable debtors who are unable to pay their fines. SPER has now set up a dedicated 1300 number so that homeless, disadvantaged or vulnerable debtors can call direct to discuss their individual circumstances.

The amendments also deal with the lack of flexibility that existed previously to write off fines in particular circumstances. Those circumstances include when an individual has died, in circumstances where a company has been deregistered or where there is insufficient information to establish the identity of the offender. The amendments ensure effective fine collection processes within the criminal justice system and improve access to justice by allowing greater flexibility in the requirements for the making of good behaviour orders to disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The amendments are the first comprehensive changes to the legislation since its enactment in 1999 and will result in a more efficient and flexible fine collection system.

**CHAIR:** The time for government questions has expired. I allocate 10 minutes for the non-government members to ask further questions.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, I said earlier that the last four financial years had seen the department fail to meet its capital acquisition budget. The consequence of that is the backlog of matters now in the Magistrates Court. In the civil jurisdiction there are now some 37,898 matters backlogged in the court as at 30 June 2006, by way of the Productivity Commission. Of those, 45.2 per cent are now taking in excess of six months to clear. In the criminal jurisdiction, there are 34,626 matters backlogged in the court and the cases taking in excess of six months to clear are 30.9 per cent. Attorney, those figures are fairly telling and the criminal matters have increased from 26,000 in 2003-04.

If we do not plan, this is what happens: we get a backlog in the court. If you do not put in place a requirement, you get a backlog in matters being dealt with by the court and people not being completely satisfied with the court system.

**Mr SHINE:** Thank you for your statement.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a question to go with that statement, member for Caloundra?

**Mr McARDLE:** Absolutely. I am right, am I not?

**Mr SHINE:** Is that your question?

**Mr McARDLE:** Correct.

**Mr SHINE:** The answer is: no, you are not right. I take it your figures related to the Magistrates Court?

**Mr McARDLE:** Correct.

**Mr SHINE:** You might recall that I indicated that in the budget we are making provision for an extra magistrate. An extra magistrate was appointed to Southport last year. Of course the magistrates courts play a vital role in the delivery of justice services. It is the jurisdiction where the majority of Queenslanders first come into contact with the judicial system. It is the face of justice, as Sir Gerry Brennan has said.

This jurisdiction is at the forefront of the justice system and plays a critical role in providing services to vulnerable people in our society such as children, victims of domestic violence, victims of crimes, witnesses, Indigenous people, people with disabilities and families in coronial matters. The magistrates courts aim to process matters in an expeditious, efficient and timely manner according to law.

Over recent years, additional magistrates have been appointed as follows: one position in June 2000, one position in November 2002, three additional positions in 2005, and a 1.4 full-time equivalent positions through the Murri Court initiative, as well as those other positions that I mentioned at the commencement of the answer to the question.

The Ministerial Portfolio Statement 2007-08 details the performance of the Queensland Magistrates Court for the 2006-07 period and is an important indicator in judging the effectiveness of the courts. Measures used to gauge the performance of the magistrates courts include timeliness and the

clearance rate. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that the courts have no control over the number of matters lodged. In the criminal jurisdiction, the number of finalised matters was 171,189 compared to the target estimate of 160,000. That is well above.

In addition to highlighting the efficient disposal of matters by the courts, extra training has been provided. Might I also indicate that, as has been referred to in the budget, the soon-to-be-commenced judicial registrar scheme will come online from 1 January 2008. As experienced practitioners you would know as well as I do that that pilot scheme, operating as it will in Brisbane, Beenleigh and Southport and enabling judicial registrars to do a lot of the minor painstaking work that is currently done by magistrates, is likely to have an enormous effect in cutting down the workloads of the courts and the delays that have occurred in the past.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, I take you to MPS 1-36 and the court recording and transcription services. I see under 'Proceedings not recorded by the State Reporting Bureau—transcripts available within 12 working days', the target is 90 per cent and the actual is 67 per cent. That is a fairly abysmal result. In point 4 you state that they were transcribed within a matter of a few days. Can you tell me how many matters were not transcribed within the time line and how long after the 12 days were they transcribed? Is this part of the DaletPlus ActiveLog system installed by the state government?

**Mr SHINE:** The State Reporting Bureau provides recording and transcription services for the Supreme, District and Magistrates Courts, the Industrial Court and the Industrial Relations Commission. They do a fantastic job in the administration of the justice system that we have in Queensland.

The bureau also provides reporting services for the Medical Assessment Tribunal, the Mental Health Court and the Land Appeal Court. Services are provided in Brisbane and for the 35 regional and circuit centres in Queensland. Transcripts of proceedings are produced by audio recording and computer assisted transcription, or CAT.

The bureau recently implemented a state-of-the-art digital recording and transcription system for all Queensland courts and tribunals. The digital recording system replaces the analogue recording system, which has become obsolete and extremely difficult to support as a result of changes in technology. Digital technology is cutting-edge technology of the type used in the television and radio industries. It is computer based and provides a significant improvement in the quality of the recording.

**Mr McARDLE:** Attorney, I am sorry but are you able to answer the question: how many and how long?

**CHAIR:** Is that a new question? Do you want three minutes?

**Mr McARDLE:** It may as well be, Madam Chair. How many and how long? Will that be part of the answer?

**Mr SHINE:** If I am allowed to finish, I think you will get the answer that you are entitled to. Of those matters not recorded by the bureau, which is what you are referring to, 68.2 per cent were transcribed within 12 working days compared to the target of 90 per cent. This result is attributable to a settling-in period as users transitioned to and became familiar with the new digital technology, as would happen with you and I. The digital system technology will result in improved delivery standards in this financial year, 2007-08. In 2007-08, the bureau will further improve its service to internal and external clients—

**Mr McARDLE:** Attorney, will you give the two figures that I asked for in the answer? How many and how long did they take past 12 days? Can you give me those two figures, please? Or anywhere close to them?

**CHAIR:** I think the minister might be getting to them.

**Mr SHINE:** Not necessarily!

**CHAIR:** If he has them at his disposal.

**Mr McARDLE:** Would you care to take them on notice?

**Mr SHINE:** I am sure that the honourable gentleman would not expect me to have in my head those types of figures. I am happy to take them on notice.

**Mr McARDLE:** Thank you, indeed. My last question, I think, Minister: the new DaletPlus ActiveLog, which is the new digital system you referred to, I understand is a French hardware and software system from Israel. Is that right?

**Mr SHINE:** I am told that is right.

**Mr McARDLE:** Neither of those companies are Australian or Queensland based. Is there any reason why we did not choose a home-grown product, for example, the service used by the Federal Court which has been an excellent service for many years?

**Mr SHINE:** I am happy to pass that question on to my director-general.

**Mr McGowan:** The selection of the new contractor for the implementation of the digital transcription service was done by competitive tender. In fact, no other Australian companies were able to offer the level of services that were available through Dalet and through the software development that occurs. Indeed, Queensland will be the first of many Australian and international areas that actually moves to that platform for digital technology. It was the cheapest and the best of the competitive tenders that were provided.

**Mr McARDLE:** Minister, is it correct that the software or hardware corporation, and I cannot recall which, had to travel to Australia recently to correct problems with the system? Is it correct that during this financial year or at the end of the last financial year, there were so many concerns that they actually brought them out from Israel or France—and I cannot recall which one—to deal with the issues because they were that complicated?

**Mr SHINE:** Whereabouts in the Ministerial Portfolio Statement are you referring?

**Mr McARDLE:** We are looking at why the system failed to produce the percentage under the MPS. I am just querying whether the costs involved included bringing these people out from France or Israel to look at the system because it had been so complicated and it had failed so abysmally.

**Mr SHINE:** I certainly do not agree with you that it failed abysmally.

**Mr McARDLE:** I will say it failed then.

**Mr SHINE:** During March 2007, increasing usage of the digital system led to the identification of instances where a loss of recording was experienced. Investigation identified two reasons for the loss of recording: technical system issues and human error. Five instances were identified as being due to technical system issues, with six instances being identified as a result of human error. The technical system issues were rectified by the implementation of a patch to the Dalet software. Since the instalment of the patch, there have been no further losses of recording as a result of system failures.

The loss of recording through human error has been addressed through follow-up and refresher training by the court's technology group. Over the course of the project, measures have been put in place to identify and resolve potential recording issues as they occur. Losses of recording were experienced with the previous analog system due to equipment failure, faulty tapes or human error.

The full implementation of this state-of-the-art digital recording system into our state's courts will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our justice system by improving the efficiency and integrity of the recording and transcription of court proceedings. The State Reporting Bureau's provision of an accurate and timely recording and transcript of proceedings is critical to the court's capacity to work efficiently in the administration of justice. Digital recording provides the opportunity for recording of proceedings to be created anywhere within the state and transferred to any regional centre which increases the opportunity for work to be performed in regional centres, supports the government's policy of supporting Queensland's regions, improves access to justice particularly for residents of remote or rural areas, and provides convenience for all clients. The State Reporting Bureau will continue to review its operations with a view to better defining client expectations and will work cooperatively towards achieving efficient outcomes that meet the expectations of its stakeholders and clients.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The time agreed for the allocation of questions to non-government members has expired, and the time allocated for the consideration of the estimates for the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland has also expired. I would like to particularly thank the members of the committee and the non-government members of the committee for agreeing to finish as close as possible to the allotted time in the interests of allowing staff and departmental officers to get home as planned. On behalf of the committee, I also want to thank you, Minister, and your departmental officers for their attendance. The transcript of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's web site within approximately two hours.

**Mr SHINE:** I would like to thank you, Madam Chair, and all members of the committee. I would also like to acknowledge the staff of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the independent statutory authorities. The preparation for budget estimates is very time consuming and particularly intensive, as I have found out for the first time. However, at the end of the day, it is a very important process to examine the expenditure of the government in an important portfolio like Justice and Attorney-General.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. That completes the committee's hearings into the matters referred to it by the parliament on 23 May 2007. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the Hansard staff, the timekeepers and all the attendants for their assistance. I declare this public hearing closed.

**Committee adjourned at 6.05 pm**