

TUESDAY, 20 JULY 2010

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E—JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Estimates Committee E Members

Mrs JF Miller (Chair)
Mr DF Gibson
Mr RG Hopper
Ms LH Nelson-Carr
Mrs DC Scott
Mr LJ Springborg
Mr MP Watt

In Attendance

Hon. CR Dick, Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations
Mr D Moss, Principal Adviser
Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Mr P Clarke, Director-General (Acting)
Mr T Ryan, Deputy Director-General (Acting), Justice Services
Ms J Lang, Assistant Director-General (Acting), Strategic Policy, Legal and Executive Services
Mr B Walker, Assistant Director-General (Acting), Corporate Services
Mr P Cook, Executive Director (Acting), Financial Services
Mr B Leahy, Associate Director-General, Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland

Committee met at 9.00 am

CHAIR: I declare this meeting of Estimates Committee E now open. I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which this hearing is taking place today. I am Jo-Ann Miller, the member for Bundamba and chair of Estimates Committee E. Joining me on the committee are David Gibson, the member for Gympie; Ray Hopper, the member for Condamine; Lindy Nelson-Carr, the member for Mundingburra; Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge; Lawrence Springborg, the member for Southern Downs and deputy chair of the committee; and Murray Watt, the member for Everton.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2010 for the Legislative Assembly and in the Appropriation Bill 2010 for the portfolios of the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland, and the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. We will examine the estimates in that order.

The proceedings today are lawful proceedings subject to the standing rulings and orders of the parliament. As such, I remind all visitors that any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded in accordance with standing order 206. In relation to the media coverage of this hearing, the committee has resolved to allow television film coverage and photography during my introduction and opening statements by the Attorney-General and the ministers. The committee has also agreed to the live broadcast of the hearing via the Parliamentary Service's website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct. Before we begin, can I please ask that any mobile phones be switched off now.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2010 for the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations. On behalf of the committee, can I please welcome the Attorney-General of Queensland, the Hon. Cameron Dick, and all of the advisers here today.

The committee will examine the portfolio until 12.15 pm, with a 15-minute break at 11 am. The time limit for questions is one minute and three minutes for all answers. A warning bell will chime 15 seconds before the time runs out. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. For the benefit of Hansard, can I ask all advisers if you are called to give an answer to please state your name before speaking.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations open for examination. The question now before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Attorney, would you care to make an opening statement?

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. I am very pleased this morning to have the opportunity to speak to parliamentary Estimates Committee E about the 2010-11 budget allocation for the justice portfolio. That is because this year's budget once again highlights the importance of this portfolio to the Queensland community and the Bligh government's commitment to making this state a fairer, safer and more just place to live.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has been allocated a record \$1.046 billion in the 2010-11 budget. This funding not only provides more front-line services and better services for vulnerable Queenslanders but also supports thousands of jobs through our massive court building program.

A key component of this year's Justice budget is the \$330 million capital works program which includes \$290 million for the new Supreme and District Courts complex in Brisbane. This project, with a total project cost of \$600 million, will create nearly 5,000 jobs during the construction phase and is part of the Bligh government's \$17.1 billion building program this financial year.

When the Bligh government was re-elected last year we promised to create jobs and support Queensland workers, and that is exactly what we are doing. The portfolio's job creation aspects go well beyond its capital works program. This year's budget also provides an extra \$20.3 million over four years to expand the services provided by the Office of the Adult Guardian. This funding will deliver an extra 41 guardians and front-line staff to help the growing number of Queenslanders who are unable to make their own decisions because of accidents, dementia, mental health and other disabilities.

Funding is also being provided for the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which started in December last year and represented the biggest reform to the state's civil justice system for 50 years. QCAT has received a funding boost of \$1.5 million a year for extra adjudicators, case managers and support staff, primarily to deal with minor civil disputes and guardianship matters.

An additional \$460,000 a year has also been provided to create five new positions in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This will be used to employ an extra crown prosecutor and legal officer in Ipswich—which I am sure will be of interest to you, Chair—and legal officers in Brisbane, Beenleigh and Cairns. No doubt the member for Woodridge would also be interested in the appointment of further prosecutors and legal officers in the Beenleigh office.

The budget provides a further \$6.7 million over four years to establish the new Sentencing Advisory Council for Queensland. This represents a significant addition to the state's justice system as it will help give the community a greater say in how criminals are punished in Queensland.

There is an extra \$4 million over four years for the Crime and Misconduct Commission. This funding will allow the CMC to target proceeds of crime as well as support other activities such as misconduct complaints and policy research.

Some \$61 million will be provided over four years from the Consolidated Fund to Legal Aid Queensland, including \$10.5 million in 2010-11. This provides a more secure funding source for Legal Aid Queensland and reduces its reliance on the Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund. The government has also allocated \$8 million over four years to fund a new program to improve the workplace health and safety practices at businesses with high accident and injury rates.

I am very pleased to be able to report to the committee that the government's crackdown on fine defaulters in the past year has been successful. At last year's estimates committee hearing I announced the government's intention to implement significant new enforcement and compliance strategies such as wheel clamping and property seizure to force long-term fine defaulters to pay up. Those laws took effect on 1 January this year. I can report that the government's crackdown has paid off. In 2009-10 the State Penalties Enforcement Registry collected a record total of \$166.4 million—an increase of more than \$22 million on the previous year's total. Fine defaulters are getting the message that they either pay up or risk losing their wheels or their property.

The Bligh government also intends making it easier for the public to get access to justice related services this financial year through a new mobile shopfront called Justice Connect. The pilot program will be set up in major suburban shopping centres over the next few months and will make it easy for people to access services such as registering the birth of a new child, lodging an application to become a justice of the peace or finding out whether they have any unpaid fines.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the Bligh government's commitment to making Queensland a safer place to live and work. This government is in the midst of implementing a comprehensive reform program within Queensland's justice portfolio, and this year's budget allocation supports our broad-ranging reform program.

CHAIR: We will begin with questions from non-government members. I call the member for Southern Downs.

Mr SPRINGBORG: My first question relates to the operations of the CMC and particularly its main objectives in the SDS at page 1-196, which relates to the particular objective of improving public sector integrity. Attorney, when did the CMC furnish you with the draft report into the Queensland Police Service's handling of the Doomadgee death?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for the question and thank him for his interest in the Crime and Misconduct Commission. The Crime and Misconduct Act sets out in clear terms the basis upon which reports are prepared by the Crime and Misconduct Commission and are provided to not only the responsible minister but also the Speaker of the Parliament and also to the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee.

It is important to note, I think, for the benefit of all committee members—particularly for the purposes of this hearing—that the Crime and Misconduct Commission reports to the parliament. It is a very important body in the Fitzgerald architecture that was established after the Fitzgerald report. It is a successor organisation to the Criminal Justice Commission and is one that is fully and wholly supported by the Queensland government.

That commission reports through the committee to the parliament, and the committee has very wide-ranging powers to oversight the work and conduct of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Obviously there has been a range of reports that have been prepared by the Crime and Misconduct Commission over a period of time. There has been a number that have been prepared recently, including the report into Palm Island and deaths in custody.

We fully support the CMC. We have done so on the public record in the parliament. There have been notices of motion moved in the parliament which have supported the Crime and Misconduct Commission and they have received the full support of the government. I would put on the record that on 5 August 2009 a motion was put before the parliament expressing the parliament's full support of and confidence in the CMC to investigate any matters concerning public administration in Queensland that the CMC sees fit. That motion was opposed by the Liberal National Party. On 25 November last year the Queensland parliament passed a resolution noting the independence of the CMC and its capacity to initiate its own inquiries and also reaffirming its support for and confidence in the important role undertaken by the CMC. Very regrettably, on that occasion also that motion was opposed by the Liberal National Party.

Further, on 19 August 2009 there was an amendment to a motion moved in the parliament where the parliament sought to affirm its respect for the independence of the Crime and Misconduct Commission and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Again, that amendment was opposed by the Liberal National Party. I wish to reiterate for the benefit of the committee and also the Queensland community our full support for the Crime and Misconduct Commission, including the additional funding provided to the commission this financial year.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I notice that the Attorney did not go anywhere near the question. In relation to those motions, to clarify the public record, we did not support them because the government had politically manipulated the original motion. We did not support its politicisation of our motion. There is no doubt that we support the role of the CMC. I simply ask the AG when he was furnished with or became aware of the draft report of the CMC investigation into the Police Service's investigation into death of Cameron Doomadgee and the issues contained therein?

CHAIR: It seems to me that you are repeating the same question. I will ask the Attorney whether he would like to answer that.

Mr SPRINGBORG: He did not answer it, Madam Chair.

Mr DICK: I expect repetition endlessly today and I have prepared accordingly.

Mr SPRINGBORG: If you are ever going to be Premier then you had better start answering some questions.

CHAIR: I am not going to cop any interjections like that today. Attorney, if you would like to answer the question in any way that you see fit, please do so.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection as a further question and ask that the clock be reset to three minutes please.

CHAIR: It is on three minutes, Attorney.

Mr DICK: I will go through the chronology in relation to the Palm Island report and deaths in police custody. On 19 November 2004, Cameron Mulrunji died in police custody on Palm Island. On the same day, the Queensland Police Service commenced an investigation into the circumstances of his death. The Crime and Misconduct Commission took over the police investigation on 24 November 2004. The Acting State Coroner in the second inquest into the death of Mulrunji was critical of the Queensland Police Service's investigation.

In response to the Coroner's comments, the Commissioner of Police formed an investigation review team in December 2006 to examine and detail the criticisms of the QPS and the Acting State Coroner's finding relevant to the police investigation. The CMC subsequently received complaints about the conduct of the police investigation which were based on the evidence before the second inquest and the finding of the Acting State Coroner. On 24 November 2008 the Queensland Police Service forwarded to the CMC a three-volume report titled *Palm Island review* for the CMC's response. Of course, all of these events occurred prior to my appointment as the Attorney-General.

In reviewing the report, the CMC considered the investigation review team's compliance with the QPS's policies and procedures and standards or guidelines relevant to their inquiries into the police investigation into the death, the integrity with which the matter was dealt with by the QPS, the sufficiency of the Palm Island review report and any systemic and prevention issues for the QPS. The consideration of these reviews necessitated the CMC forming a view not only about the investigation review team in the Palm Island review but also about the initial QPS investigation and the conduct of the officers involved in that investigation.

In light of the recommendations, there has been further work done between the Office of the State Coroner and the CMC and the Police Service to move forward on the issue of deaths in custody. That is a matter for government consideration at the moment. We will work through that because these are very critical and important matters to Queenslanders, to ensure there is integrity of process in relation to deaths in custody. It has been a longstanding commitment of this government since the report of the royal commission, and we will continue to give it high priority.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Mr Attorney, did you actually receive a copy of the draft report of the CMC's investigation into the Police Service's handling of the Cameron Doomadgee death?

CHAIR: Can I have a reference, please, to the SDS?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Certainly, Madam Chair. I refer to the SDS at page 1-196, which deals with the CMC's main objectives, in particular improving public sector integrity.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr DICK: What I would say to the honourable member of course is, as I indicated in my first answer, that there is a process through which the CMC can properly be examined in relation to its conduct concerning any matter that falls within its jurisdictional statutory authority. I am happy to answer questions, but I would put on the record early that these questions have little or nothing to do with the budget appropriation for my portfolio. But in an endeavour to assist the committee, I will answer the question.

In relation to those sorts of chronologies, the honourable member could of course pursue the matter through the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, which I referred to earlier, upon which members of the Liberal National Party sit. So I am not sure about the communication issues within the parliamentary Liberal National Party. We know that it is an organisation under considerable strain and pressure at the moment, and perhaps there are some problems there in proper engagement and the proper workings of that parliamentary organisation.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr DICK: The *CMC review of the Queensland Police Service's 'Palm Island Review'*—I thank the honourable member for his interjection—was tabled in parliament. That report required the Police Commissioner to report in writing to the CMC within 14 days as to the outcomes of his consideration of the CMC's recommendation, and that matter is the subject of ongoing progress through the Police Service. Also, certain matters of it are now the subject of litigation in the Supreme Court.

Mr SPRINGBORG: In the absence of an answer, maybe the chair of the CMC would be able to answer the question. I note that there is significant precedent for that in this place dating back to 1998 and, in actual fact, 2002, I think, when the chair sat up at the front table. Could I, with the indulgence of the Attorney, ask the chair of the CMC when he actually furnished the Attorney-General with a copy of the draft report into the death of Cameron Doomadgee and the Police Service's handling of it?

CHAIR: Before I call the Attorney, I think this committee should note that the Attorney is entitled to answer all questions because he is the minister responsible. Attorney, if you would like to answer that question or if you wish to call up any advisers, I would ask you particularly to answer that question.

Mr DICK: Thanks, Madam Chair. I know that you have taken the time to read the standing orders and understand them fully. I believe that the Acting Leader of the Opposition—I understand that he is the acting leader for the time being, but further work is being done on that by the acting leader to make it permanent—fully understands the rules of an estimates committee. The rules require me as the—

CHAIR: Attorney, I think it would be nice if you answered the question.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. The rules, as you have quite properly indicated, require me as the responsible minister to answer questions. According to standing order 177, if I require assistance from an adviser I can seek that assistance if I feel that I need to do so, and I will. I must say that I do not feel challenged by any of the honourable member's questions to this point, requiring me to rely on the assistance or advice of anybody else, and I wait for an appropriate question that might in fact challenge me.

What I would say is that these committees stand at the apex of ministerial accountability. There is much discussion within this parliament, as all members of the committee would know, and in the community about ministers being held accountable for conduct, including appropriations in the budget. That is the importance of this process. The importance of this process is that ministers are asked questions and are required effectively under the standing orders to answer them. That is why I take this process extremely seriously and will, to the best of my ability, endeavour to answer any question fully and properly. So should I need the assistance of an adviser I will ask for it.

But, as I have said earlier, the act is clear. It requires reports to be provided to the minister, to the committee and to the Speaker, and that is the way that reports are delivered. In fact, it is not possible or proper to release reports until they have been tabled in the parliament through the Speaker, because the Crime and Misconduct Commission is a creature of the parliament and appropriately needs to report to the parliament. So in terms of my role as the minister, there are a number of responsibilities I have under the act, but it is principally to ensure effective parliamentary accountability and by answering questions falling within my statutory responsibilities under the act in relation to the CMC and also accounting to the parliament for appropriations for the CMC which is why I appear before the committee today.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That was an interesting three minutes. Given that the Attorney has indicated that he has established a telepathic connection with the chairman of the CMC, does the chairman of the CMC actually believe that Bob Atkinson is the best person for the job of Police Commissioner?

CHAIR: Can I please ask the member for Southern Downs to refer to a page in the SDS?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Certainly, Madam Chair. I refer to the SDS at page 1-196 relating to the CMC's main objectives, in particular improving public sector integrity. We already know that as a part of that the CMC is responsible under the Police Service Administration Act for being consulted with in the appointment of the Police Commissioner and also the conditions of the contract.

Mr DICK: Yes. The Police Commissioner has my full confidence and that of the government, which is why we are proceeding with his reappointment in accordance with the provisions of the Police Service Administration Act.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I acknowledge that the Attorney-General is head over heels with the appointment of the Police Commissioner. As I indicated, what does the chairman of the CMC think about the appointment of the Police Commissioner? Does the chairperson of the CMC believe that this position should have been advertised? Does he believe that there should have been a consideration of other candidates for this job?

CHAIR: Member for Southern Downs, can I remind you that all questions have to be referred to the minister in this estimates committee. You cannot ask questions of opinion to any office holder apart from the Attorney-General, so can you please refer your question to the Attorney-General.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Given that we seem to have some sort of protection racket being run here by the Attorney-General—he seems to be protecting the chair of the CMC—from the Attorney's discussion with the chair of the CMC, is he comfortable that the chairperson of the CMC believes that Bob Atkinson is the best person for the job and would the chairperson of the CMC have liked the position to be advertised and other candidates considered for the job?

CHAIR: Once again you are asking opinion. I will leave it up to the Attorney to answer as he sees fit.

Mr DICK: I am happy to answer the question. Perhaps to assist the honourable member I can read onto the parliamentary record material that is available on the website of the parliament in relation to the role of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee. These are questions that can be pursued in many ways by the honourable member through the committee directly to the CMC chair. That website—if you had taken the time to read it you would know—indicates that the role of the PCMC is to monitor and review the CMC. The website says that a number of procedures are carried out—very

obviously an easy way to access the information—by the PCMC to facilitate its effective monitoring of the CMC's activity. It says that the committee receives and considers complaints against the CMC; reviews CMC guidelines and makes suggestions for improvement of CMC practices; reviews CMC reports, including its annual report and research reports; requests reports from the CMC on matters which have come to the committee's attention through the media or by other means; and deals with ad hoc issues concerning the CMC as they arise. In addition, the committee holds regular meetings with the CMC.

So I am waiting in vain for a question, Madam Chair, on the CMC relating to its budget. But perhaps I can put on the record what this government has done to support the CMC. As part of the midyear review this year, the government allocated \$14 million over five years for telecommunication interception capacities. We will allocate a further \$4 million this year to support the CMC in the current budget to assist in the operations of the organisation. That will include \$4 million over four years. That will provide funds to support the CMC and its public policy research activities, work relating to improving its work in the forensic computing unit, complaints, training and development, and to address the increased activity in proceeds of crime. I have gone down and seen the CMC's Electronic Collections Unit. It is a very impressive body the CMC has to ensure that telecommunication interceptions are used as an effective means to attack criminal activity in Queensland, of course with the overlay—the protection—that this government argued for for many years to include the involvement of the Public Interest Monitor in relation to those applications.

Proceeds of crime have increased significantly. We have now cracked \$100 million in what the CMC and its predecessor organisations have recovered from criminals in Queensland, to recover their ill-gotten gains. We want to strengthen that. We want to ensure that that acts as a block and a very strong message to those engaged in criminal activity in Queensland that we will seize their assets. We will ensure that they cannot benefit from crime, just as we have sought to crack down on criminal organisations through our Criminal Organisation Act.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Again referring to the SDS—

CHAIR: Just hold on, member for Southern Downs. I understand that your time period—the 20 minutes—

Mr SPRINGBORG: I have 52 seconds.

CHAIR: You have 52 seconds? Okay. Member for Southern Downs, you may continue for 52 seconds.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Well, no longer is it 52; it is 31. I refer the Attorney again to the role of the CMC in improving public sector integrity. Is the Attorney gagging the chair of the CMC and protecting him from giving these answers because they are potentially embarrassing to the government?

CHAIR: Again, can I ask the SDS reference there, please?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, page 1-196.

CHAIR: Okay. Attorney, would you care to answer that in three seconds, or would you like the three minutes?

Mr DICK: I am happy to answer the question.

CHAIR: Okay. No worries.

Mr DICK: Of course, as everyone knows, the chair of the CMC is a man of great integrity and ability. The chair of the CMC—or any other statutory office holder—is not gagged by the government in respect of any comment they can make about any matter falling within their statutory responsibilities. Queensland is well served by the leaders of its statutory organisations—well served by the Ombudsman, well served by the Public Trustee, well served by the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland, well served by the chair of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. These people are not slow in coming forward. They are very happy to put the matters—any matter—on record if they are asked questions about it, quite appropriately.

I would, of course, indicate that the only political organisation in Queensland that has sought to gag, nobble, disrupt and destroy a political statutory authority was, of course, the then Liberal-National Party coalition, led by the National Party, when they set up the Connolly/Ryan royal commission to nobble and fetter forever the Criminal Justice Commission as it then was. That is their record of gagging, of setting up a protection racket—in the words of the honourable member—to protect their friends, cronies and operatives in the Liberal National Party.

We stand completely opposed to that sort of conduct and behaviour. We support these organisations fully. We support the Crime and Misconduct Commission fully notwithstanding any consequences for government, because this is part of good public administration in Queensland. This is the way Queensland is now governed. This is the Labor commitment to open and transparent governance, which has its roots in the Fitzgerald inquiry and the election of the Goss government 20 years ago. We stand for those sorts of measures to improve public sector accountability, to improve governance of our state and we always will.

CHAIR: The time for opposition questions has expired. We are now going to move to government questions. My question relates to page 1-167 of the Service Delivery Statements, which refers to new laws passed last year to enhance the recovery of unpaid fines by the State Penalties Enforcement Registry. Minister, could you provide details on how successful these new laws have been in getting fine defaulters to repay their debts and also the financial benefits to the government?

Mr DICK: I thank the chair for her question. Since 1 January this year, the State Penalties Enforcement Registry has been trialling new enforcement tools, as I indicated in my opening statement, such as wheel clamping and property seizure. This latest raft of enforcement initiatives may have been in place for only six months but they have already prompted fine dodgers to pay up in regard numbers.

In 2009-10, the State Penalties Enforcement Registry collected more than \$166.4 million, an increase of \$22.6 million on the previous financial year's total of \$143.8 million. The 2009-10 total consisted of \$161.4 million in unpaid fines and fees and \$5 million in lodgement fees. Approximately \$139.1 million was returned to government and \$1.23 million to other agencies, such as local councils, hospitals and universities, which refer their unpaid infringements to SPER. A further \$15 million was provided to the beneficiaries of court orders, primarily victims of crime.

Collections grew by 15.7 per cent in 2009-10. That is an increase of almost 16 per cent compared to 9.4 per cent the previous year. So we are increasing year on year what we can recover for the people of Queensland. The comparative six-monthly figures for January to June in recent years are even more telling. The first-half revenues increased by 6.5 per cent between 2008-9 but nearly three times that, 18.4 per cent, between 2009-10. Individual months were even higher, with February this year recording a 22.3 per cent increase on last year's result and March recording a 28.2 per cent increase. The actual number of payments jumped by more than half a million—from about 2.7 million in 2008-09 to 3.2 million in 2009-10. These figures show that our new mechanisms are working, in particular, focusing on long-term defaulters who have otherwise ignored or not met their obligations and asking them and requiring them to meet their obligations and pay their debt to the community. These funds benefit all Queenslanders. An additional \$2.1 million was allocated to SPER during the financial year to assist with the increasing number of fine referrals and to carry out its new enforcement activities.

Despite these outstanding results, the government will not rest on its laurels. The Bligh government will continue to consider new enforcement and compliance options to ensure that those who refuse to pay do the right thing. Queenslanders expect people who have broken the law and received a fine to pay it and to pay it in full. We want to ensure that everyone takes their responsibilities seriously, particularly when there has been a court ordered sanction, including a fine, ordered against them.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer to pages 1-164 to 1-166 in the SDS, with particular reference to the \$1.6 million in grant funding provided for services to victims of crime. I ask the minister to outline how assistance to victims of crime has been enhanced since the establishment of Victim Assist Queensland?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question and note her long history of supporting vulnerable Queenslanders and Queenslanders at risk. I know that she has great interest in supporting victims of crime and I thank her for the question.

Since the commencement of Victim Assist Queensland on 1 December 2009, victims of crime can start receiving assistance as soon as they make contact with Victim Assist Queensland. There is no doubt that being a victim of crime is one of the most terrible experiences a person can endure. It can impact on every aspect of their life as well as the lives of their families, friends and loved ones. The government is committed to helping support victims of crime and the new Victim Assist scheme now focuses on the service, assistance and support needed to help victims and their families recover as soon as possible. It makes the process easier and a lot less daunting for victims and helps them begin to deal with the stress and trauma of crime as soon as possible.

As at 30 June 2010, Victim Assist received 571 applications for financial assistance for victims of crime and made payments totalling \$1.18 million. Reaching over 500 grants of assistance for victims of crime, of course, is an important milestone and a great testament to the hard work and skill of all Victim Assist Queensland staff, who are dedicated to helping victims of crime in their recovery. I want to put on record my thanks to the staff. They can often deal with people who are in a very difficult place in their lives and deal with harrowing circumstances for some individuals. I want to thank the team for their work, led by Nicola Doumany.

Victim Assist is closely monitoring demand and its policies and procedures to ensure that a quality service is provided to victims of crime in Queensland. In March 2010, Victim Assist commenced its court support and regional coordination programs. The regional coordination program works alongside existing service providers to improve access to support services. Under the court support program, officers provide face-to-face court support for victims of crime in Townsville, Cairns, Rockhampton, Ipswich and Toowoomba. This program complements existing court support already being provided by non-government agencies.

In addition, on 1 July 2010 the Department of Justice and Attorney-General took over responsibility for \$1.6 million in annual funding for the delivery of non-government support services for victims of crime. A further \$100,000 per annum has been committed for one-off grants to reduce gaps in service delivery in Queensland. The department is also commencing an offender recovery program under the new legislation to initiate recovery of financial assistance from convicted offenders. In 2009-10, the department awarded a one-off grant of \$100,000 in building capacity funding to Protect All Children Today, known as PACT, to help expand their volunteer court support program for children across Queensland, particularly in rural and remote locations. They do terrific work in supporting vulnerable children in the justice process and support them particularly in criminal justice and I thank them for their work also.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to pages 1-164 and 1-166 of the Service Delivery Statements and ask the minister to provide details of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's courthouse construction and upgrade program and how it is helping to build a stronger justice system for Queensland.

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question and her very dedicated commitment to the government's massive Capital Works Program, including in the Justice portfolio. In the 2010-11 state budget, that includes a capital funding allocation for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General of \$330 million for the continued modernisation of Queensland's justice infrastructure. The department's capital program has already delivered new courthouses at Sandgate, Pine Rivers, Mareeba, and Ipswich in recent times as well as major upgrades at other courthouses throughout Queensland.

The \$92 million Ipswich courthouse was officially opened just a few months ago. It features 12 new courtrooms supported by digital recording and audiovisual technology, high-level security and modern justice facilities for vulnerable witnesses, such as children, victims of domestic violence, jurors and many other court users. This program not only helped build a stronger justice system but delivered more than 1,000 jobs throughout the construction of that courthouse and pumped \$92 million into the economy, much of it at the height of the global financial crisis. I know that construction of that courthouse is well received by Queenslanders in that part of the state, including constituents and residents in the electorate of the chair, the member for Bundamba.

The \$10 million refurbishment of the Toowoomba courthouse is also nearing completion. This refurbishment includes four renovated courtrooms, a new and larger area for family violence support groups, renovated offices for local prosecution staff, a new registry, more secure entry and an improved forecourt. There is a new jury assembly area, a conference room that can be also used for marriage ceremonies, which is often in place in courthouses, renovated judicial and magistrates chambers, refurbished public waiting areas and enhanced facilities for the secure movement of prisoners, staff and the judiciary. The final stage of the project is on track for completion within the next three months.

The \$4 million upgrade of the Southport courthouse is also expected to be completed this year. Tenders closed in March and construction is scheduled to start in mid September. The Gold Coast has experienced significant population growth and the upgrade will help alleviate courthouse congestion at peak times. The project includes the addition of three new courts and chambers, which will increase the total number of courtrooms at Southport to 13. The arrest court and public waiting areas will also be extended.

Of course, our flagship justice building project is the new Supreme and District Courts complex now taking shape at the centre of the new legal precinct in Brisbane. This will pump \$600 million into the economy, including \$290 million in 2010-11, and will create nearly 5,000 jobs during its construction. It will continue to form the backbone of our courthouse modernisation program for another 18 months. These are just a number of practical examples of the Blich government's strong commitment to justice, jobs and infrastructure renewal throughout Queensland.

Mr WATT: I refer to page 1-165 of the Service Delivery Statements and I ask: can the minister outline how increased government funding will help strengthen the guardianship system and address increasing demand for services?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Everton for his question and also for his commitment to supporting vulnerable Queenslanders and for the very important work that the office of Adult Guardian does. The office of Adult Guardian and the role of the Adult Guardian in particular is to protect and promote the rights of Queenslanders with impaired decision-making capacity. That role in a growing and ageing population will, of course, continue to grow. Our population continues to age in Queensland, with increasing numbers of adults suffering from dementia, mental illness, acquired brain injuries and other similar disabilities.

As at 30 June 2010, there were 1,624 appointments for the Adult Guardian. This represented an increase of 430 appointments, or 36 per cent over the previous 12 months. The 2010-11 state budget provides an extra \$20.3 million over four years to support and strengthen guardianship services in Queensland. When appointed by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal the Adult Guardian may act as a substitute decision maker for health care, accommodation, personal contacts, legal issues,

general services and many other matters involving an individual. The guardian also investigates allegations that an adult with impaired capacity may not be being cared for appropriately—allegations that they may be being neglected, exploited or abused. Many of these cases are highly complex, involving contentious issues and sensitive personal matters.

The additional funding will be used to employ an additional 41 guardians and front-line staff working in the office of Adult Guardian, establish a new regional office at Ipswich, upgrade the office in Townsville and relocate the Brisbane office to larger premises. Very importantly, it will also fund the new guardianship information service, which started this month. This service has been established to support private guardians appointed by QCAT as substitute decision makers for adults with impaired capacity. It will provide private guardians, many of them family members, with information on the role, responsibilities and authority of a guardian, legislative provisions and good decision-making practices. This service was developed in response to feedback from government and non-government organisations about the need to provide support for private guardians entrusted with making decisions in the best interests of an adult. It will enable a greater number of family members and friends to become guardians, because QCAT will have greater confidence in their capacity to perform this role with the support of the new service. It is often less intrusive for an adult client when appropriate family and friends are appointed as guardians. This is especially so when there is already an established caring relationship.

The new information service will play an increasingly important role into the future with an ageing population and increased prevalence of disabilities such as dementia. The additional support for guardians will result in stronger substitute decision making that is more personalised and appropriate for vulnerable people within the Queensland community.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer to page 1-163 of the SDS where the Department of Justice and Attorney-General illustrates how it provides a diverse range of services to urban, rural and remote areas. Could the minister outline how his department is helping Queenslanders throughout the state to better access justice services?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is very conscious of the need to make justice more accessible to all Queenslanders, including those in regional areas of the state such as Townsville. Justice Connect is the department's newest initiative to help improve delivery of and access to justice in Queensland. It is a new mobile shopfront that will take justice related services directly to where people live and work. The Justice Connect initiative will provide Queenslanders with direct and real-time access to key services and information provided by the department. Justice Connect will focus on delivering key information, assistance and services such as applying for a birth certificate, assistance available for victims of crime, paying an outstanding fine, applying to become a justice of the peace or signing up for training courses and accessing dispute resolution services.

A pool of staff trained in community justice services will work from clearly identifiable Justice Connect booths, using secure wireless technology to provide services to people where and when they are needed. Justice Connect will also be available at major urban events such as multicultural festivals, Queensland's Ekka and Law Week, which is held each year. A six-month pilot program will be launched in September at the Garden City Shopping Centre at Upper Mount Gravatt in Brisbane. The department is working with the Westfield group to roll out the Justice Connect pilot in Westfield shopping centres across South-East Queensland initially. We are going to see how the pilot goes and then we will look at rolling it out state-wide after that.

During the pilot Justice Connect services, I can advise honourable members, will be provided on a rotational basis at Chermside, Carindale, Helensvale, Strathpine, Garden City and North Lakes shopping centres for a week at a time including Thursday nights. We will assess the response to the pilot and then investigate the feasibility of taking Justice Connect around the state, including to Indigenous communities and regional events.

While services are currently provided through 78 courthouses and government offices around the state, we are always looking for opportunities to improve the accessibility of justice for Queenslanders. Depending on the response to the project over the next six months, the department will take Justice Connect to various locations around the state including regional events and Indigenous communities. I am excited about this. It is a way to take the justice system and government to the people. I think it will be a great initiative for Queensland. We are going to try to use smart and green technologies as well as we roll it out. Pilot details, such as times and locations, will be made available on both the department's website and Westfield websites during the coming weeks. We might also do some advertising in local newspapers. We want to ensure quick, easy personal access for Queenslanders to justice services and to Justice staff, and that is why we are going to roll out Justice Connect. Thank you for your question.

CHAIR: I refer the Attorney-General to page 1-163 of the SDS and in particular its reference to Queensland's ageing population. As we are all getting older and we all have an interest in this, can you please explain how older Australians are being made more aware of the need to plan for decisions about their personal and also their health care?

Mr DICK: Thank you for your question. The government is committed to helping Queenslanders take control of their futures and make decisions in case they are ever unable to make their own decisions through age, illness or injury. With an ageing population, it follows that more Queenslanders need to ensure they have wills, enduring powers of attorney, advanced health directives and other arrangements in place to guide their families and loved ones in future. That is why I have initiated a series of Planning for Life forums, to provide people with the information and advice they need to do this. The next Planning for Life forum will be held in Roma next Monday, 26 July with further forums planned for 2010-11, including on Brisbane's north and south sides.

These free community forums about future life decisions expand on the highly successful guardianship events held in various locations across regional Queensland in 2008-09. This is something I was very committed to when I became the Attorney-General. I tasked the department with setting up these programs. Again it is about taking government to the people. I want to ensure that Queenslanders have the tools they need to make decisions about their own lives when they have the capacity to do so. The best decisions are decisions made by individuals when they can do that. That provides significant comfort to them but, more particularly, comfort to families and loved ones who might care for them should they lose capacity. The best way for family and loved ones to be able to care for someone who may lose the capacity to make decisions for themselves is, of course, for that person to have made their wishes clearly known when they had capacity. I am very keen to take that out to the community through these programs.

Every Queenslander should have a will. As soon as you are in a relationship or have property, you should have a will to ensure your property is transferred on your death in accordance with your wishes. I am very keen for these forums to be rolled out. So far we have held three forums—one in Townsville, one in Rockhampton and one in Toowoomba. We had one in Rockhampton quite recently. It was a very successful event. Over 120 people attended that forum. We were very pleased to hold it there. The feedback from all of these forums has been very positive, but we are always looking to tweak them and change them to match community interest and community needs.

We are collaborating with other entities in relation to the Planning for Life forums. We are working with the Adult Guardian, the Public Trustee, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal and community legal centres throughout Queensland, particularly legal centres that provide services to senior Queenslanders. But it is not just seniors; it is any Queenslanders. All Queenslanders should be making these decisions because you never know when an accident might befall you; you never know when something traumatic might happen in your life and you lose that capacity to make decisions.

I am very pleased by the feedback we have had so far. We encourage all Queenslanders to have a will and to at least think about having an advanced health directive and an enduring power of attorney and to think about mechanisms that will be put in place should something happen to them.

CHAIR: We will now move to non-government questions. I call the member for Southern Downs.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I come back to SDS page 1-196, the role of the CMC in ensuring and improving public sector integrity, particularly in relation to its role in recommending the appointment of the Police Commissioner. Did the chairman of the CMC at any time contact you or your office to express his concerns or reservations regarding the processes used to reappoint Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson and/or the nature of any proposed contract?

Mr DICK: No. Can I also add that I have ensured a search has been done of my office and the search has indicated that there is no record of a draft report, going back to what the honourable member asked earlier, being provided to my office. The final report referred to by the honourable member was delivered to my office on 17 June, the same day it was tabled in parliament, which, as I indicated, was required under the act.

I am very pleased, of course, for the issue of the CMC to be raised again by the honourable member. I am very pleased to be able to put on record some of the significant achievements of the Crime and Misconduct Commission and to talk about the very positive work it does for Queensland. In relation to crime tactical operations undertaken, in the past financial year the CMC had an annual target of commencing 20 tactical operations including serious crime, criminal paedophilia and organised crime operations. As at 4 June 2010 this annual target had already been exceeded, with 37 tactical operations being commenced so far this financial year. Eight of the 37 operations commenced were organised crime tactical operations. That is very important to the government.

Tackling organised crime is one of the hardest things in the criminal justice system in our state. The Crime and Misconduct Commission works closely with the Queensland Police Service. Many criminal organisations are closed, secretive organisations. They are not amenable to normal processes of criminal law enforcement. That is why the government took the step to bring to the parliament the Criminal Organisation Act that was passed by the parliament last year. It was supported by the government and opposed by the Liberal National Party—the only political party in Australia to oppose that sort of mechanism. In every other jurisdiction where strong measures have been put in place to attack organised crime it has received bipartisan support. It received bipartisan support in South

Australia; it received bipartisan support in New South Wales. Very regrettably, it did not receive strong support from the Liberal National Party which puts to shame, with respect, its ongoing claim that it is strong on issues of law and law enforcement.

In relation to proceeds of crime restrained, a very important role that the CMC carries out, I am pleased to report to the committee that the net value of criminal proceeds restrained exceeded the estimate that we had projected last year due to an unexpected increase in the number of referrals received from external law enforcement agencies operating within Queensland, including Commonwealth agencies. We are attacking the proceeds of crime. In the year to 4 June 2010 the CMC obtained 92 orders to restrain assets valued at approximately \$18.3 million. This was an achievement in excess of its estimated \$15 million target. There is more that I can say, and I hope I will be able to do that as the proceedings continue.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I come back to SDS page 1-196 regarding the appointment of the Police Commissioner. Given that the chair of the CMC is on public record expressing serious concern about the way the process of appointment had been gone about by the government, without serious consultation with the chair, and given that there are unresolved issues of integrity surrounding the Police Commissioner, does the Attorney feel comfortable in being part of a government that has reappointed a police commissioner in such circumstances, given the unresolved nature of the issues that have been pointed out by the CMC?

CHAIR: Member for Southern Downs, you are asking another question in relation to opinion. However, I will ask the Attorney if he sees fit to answer that question.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. The answer is yes. Can I also say, seeing that the issue of the CMC has been raised further by the honourable member, that I wish to continue to put on record some of the important work the CMC does, including the funding that we allocate to the CMC to do its important work in Queensland. The honourable member has ample opportunity, as I have indicated earlier, to test these questions through the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee if there are issues in relation to the appointment. I am not the minister responsible for the appointment of the Police Commissioner. I am not the minister responsible for the Police Service Administration Act. They are not my responsibilities and I am not responsible for that process.

Can I also put on the record—questions have been asked of me about the research reports prepared by the Crime and Misconduct Commission in relation to research, intelligence, capacity building, prevention and monitoring projects that the CMC undertakes—that the CMC undertook 12 crime related projects in the year to 11 June 2010 as against the target of 15. Publications include the release of the final report of the CMC's *Illicit drug markets in Queensland: a strategic assessment*, and the public versions of strategic assessments relating to property crime, money laundering and fraud were also released in 2009-10. These are very important research activities that will inform the better conduct of law enforcement in Queensland.

The Crime and Misconduct Commission continues to make assessments in relation to the Witness Protection Program and provide protection to witnesses—not that I will name any witness subject to witness protection before the committee, as other members of the committee have done on previous occasions. Misconduct investigations continue—this is a very important role of the Crime and Misconduct Commission—and they include investigating 58 matters for the period ending 31 May 2010. That is central to ensuring we have an open and accountable public sector in Queensland. The role of the CMC has been expanded by the government by enlarging the powers of the CMC to investigate government owned corporations as well.

In relation to the budget for this year, which I suppose is what we are all here to look at, the CMC has been provided with funding totalling \$14 million over the next five years, including \$605,000 in 2009-10 and onwards to fully implement interception capacity. That sort of substantial funding will enable the CMC to finalise the required staffing and resources and to expand its very important work in intercepting telecommunications.

Mr SPRINGBORG: SDS page 1-196 states very clearly that the CMC is an independent specialist agency that is under the purview of the Attorney, of course, that strives for, among other things, enhanced public sector integrity. I ask the Attorney to detail the number of complaints made by CMC staff against other CMC staff. How many involved bullying or harassment? How many of these allegations are unresolved?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. Of course, as I indicated earlier, the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee is responsible for ensuring the Crime and Misconduct Commission operates effectively under its legislation. So, as I put on the record earlier, the committee can deal with ad hoc issues concerning the CMC. There is a range of misconduct activities that the Crime and Misconduct Commission pursues, but ultimately it is an organisation that has to manage its own operations and affairs. So just as every CEO of every government department is expected to run their department in accordance with appropriate legislative and regulatory guidelines, including standards set by the Public Service Commission, so too is the CMC required to monitor and manage its

own affairs. If the honourable member was genuinely interested in such matters, he could of course initiate inquiries through the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee to ensure that the organisation is running effectively.

I am not aware of any matters that have been brought to my attention in relation to any significant number of complaints within the organisation. Of course there will be complaints within an organisation. There are some on the public record. There will be matters of complaint involving staffing and allegations by one staff member against another. That happens in every organisation—not just in the public sector, but the private sector as well. The key thing of course is that those complaints are investigated thoroughly and fully and that justice is done not only for the complainant in making the complaint and the aggrieved person but also in relation to the individual against whom the complaint is made.

So I am confident in the ability of the CMC to manage its own affairs in that regard. I am not aware of any significant number of complaints that would be out of the ordinary. It has refined, I am advised, its complaints handling, assessment, policies and procedures, work instructions, guidelines and business processes to support not only the management of complaints within its own organisation but in what is known as 'early adopter' agencies seeking to improve complaints management integrity systems within the public sector in Queensland.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Again, under the same SDS, given that almost one-third of the senior directors of the CMC have been stood aside on full pay and are having their legal bills paid to actually challenge the agency that has stood them aside, is the Attorney concerned that there are difficulties in the CMC functioning at the highest level, given that such a significant number of senior directors are currently stood aside for one reason or another?

CHAIR: Before I ask the Attorney to answer that question, again, this is a matter of opinion. So, Attorney, you may wish to answer that as you see fit.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. No, I am confident in the capacity of the CMC to manage its own affairs and I am confident in the ability of the CMC to deliver on its statutory charter and purposes. As I put on record previously, certainly in the 2009-10 financial year, the CMC is delivering on what it is required to do under law but it is also delivering, more importantly, for the people of Queensland. In some areas they are under target, but that is not surprising given the complexity of some of the matters that the CMC has to deal with. But we know we are attacking proceeds of crime well. We know that, in relation to integrity services assessments—for example, in the financial year to 31 May 2010, the CMC had assessed 4,255 matters compared to its estimate for that year of 3,800. So that is some 450 more than was anticipated. For the same reporting period for integrity services assessments and timeliness, the CMC surpassed its timeliness target for assessing complaints matters: 96 per cent of matters were assessed within four weeks against a target of 85 per cent. I am advised that this was due to a stable number of staff within Integrity Services, together with the realisation of long-term benefits arising from enhanced business processes allowing for the more timely consideration of matters.

The organisation, frankly, is getting on with the task. Queenslanders and honourable members can have confidence that it is getting on with the task. I also indicate that under the act, the chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission is the commission's chief executive. This is provided by the act, section 251. The chairperson is the chief executive and is responsible for the administration of the commission and the proper performance of the commission's functioning. The staff are subject to the direction and control of the chairperson under section 254 of the act and that is as it should be. CEOs have to be given power to deal with organisational matters. As issues arise they will be dealt with. As I say, it is the process of dealing with them that is important, that fairness is done in all the circumstances. I am not going to comment on any individual matter relating to any senior staff member or director within the CMC. I do not want to prejudge any of those matters. As I have said, the focus is on an appropriate and effective, timely process and fairness being done to individuals. Complaints should be taken seriously and they should be treated seriously and people should be given a fair hearing.

In relation to the matters raised, when they were actioned they were actioned fairly and it demonstrates, in my view, the willingness of the chair to ensure the highest integrity and public confidence in the organisation of the CMC is maintained, and that would be expected by the community.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Again on SDS page 1-196 with regard to the CMC's main objectives, in particular, improving public sector integrity—and the Attorney previously mentioned and waxed lyrical about Tony Fitzgerald and his recommendations. In his report, Tony Fitzgerald recommended that the position of Police Commissioner should be advertised before an appointment is made and, based on recent correspondence, which we have received from the chair of the CMC, so does he. What will the minister be doing to ensure that in the future, given the CMC's support for this particular view and this very important plank of the Fitzgerald recommendations, the position of Police Commissioner will be properly advertised to ensure that we have as broad a range of possible candidates as we can for that position?

CHAIR: The Attorney has already pointed out that this is really within the province of another ministerial portfolio and that is the minister for police services. I will ask the Attorney if he would like to comment on the question asked of you.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. You quite rightly indicated that I am not the minister responsible for the appointment of the Police Commissioner. I am not the minister responsible for the appointment—

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr DICK:—as I say, of the chair or for the Police Service Administration Act. I note that the member's leader, the member for Surfers Paradise, selectively quoted from a letter during his estimates hearing. Of course, that attempt to embarrass the Premier and the government was a spectacular failure because he selectively quoted from the letter. I have always been interested in the space program, a great period in world history. It reminded me of the early days of the space program, the days of the Mercury and Atlas rockets. When the engines would start rumbling, the ignition would be reached, the rocket would inch slowly up and then collapse back onto the launch pad. I often thought that about the approach that the opposition takes to many issues it seeks to pursue. It is something that does not inspire me. At least it is an allegory for some of their conduct.

In relation to the letter that he is referring to, the Crime and Misconduct Commission said in that letter—

There is no legal requirement to advertise the position and the government has announced the reappointment of the present commissioner in circumstances that are on the public record. My focus is the conditions on which the appointment is made. I do not intend to undertake this process lightly.

The honourable member has ample opportunity to pursue the issue of the appointment of the Police Commissioner in other forums, including the examination of the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. My focus, of course, is on delivering an effective, modern justice system for Queenslanders. We will continue to do that and continue, of course, to support the Crime and Misconduct Commission into the future.

As I have said in relation to ongoing funding, we will continue to fund the important work that the CMC does in the next financial year. That includes the \$14 million over the next five years to support telecommunications interception. That will allow the CMC to do the important work it does to investigate serious offences involving corruption, illegal activities such as illegal drugs, extortion, paedophilia, violent crime and fraud. That is what we are on about, frankly: cracking down on crime in Queensland and making sure as the principal responsibility of government that the Queensland community remains protected and safe.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I have 35 seconds, Madam Chair—

CHAIR: I think we will let you go another couple of minutes.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My next question also relates to the role of the CMC and public sector integrity. Given that there is now a review into the way that the Police Service conducts investigations into matters and given that Queensland Health has probably got a worse reputation when it comes to cover-up and concealment, is there any intention to ensure that there is an investigation by the CMC into the way that they conduct their internal investigations? I remind the Attorney of his ministerial charter of goals from the Premier, which actually indicate that he has a very, very supreme obligation to ensure the oversight of reports and processes of the Crime and Misconduct Commission.

CHAIR: Before I ask the Attorney to answer that, member for Southern Downs, can you just give me the relevance of that particular question to the Appropriation Bill and the budget documents before us?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, certainly I can. Under SDS page 1-196, it states that the responsibility of the CMC is to ensure the integrity of public institutions and that then extends to the way that they conduct particular investigations into complaints which have been referred to them. The same goes for the Queensland Police Service or Queensland Health or any other organisation which is auspiced under the CMC insofar as their official misconduct internal complaints investigation process is concerned.

CHAIR: Okay.

Mr DICK: As you have implied, Chair, it is a very, very long bow indeed. It reminds me of those crossbows. You know the ones—when they sit down and they have to use their feet and their arms to crank the bow back as far as they can. The bow is almost about to break. It is a long bow to draw some sort of link between this question and the whole purpose of the estimates process.

I answer all questions. I try to answer all questions put to me. I will come back to the honourable member's question. I suppose I will address it head on. If there are any complaints about how matters have been investigated or carried out or whether there has been any improper conduct, any misconduct, then those should properly be put to the CMC. That is the body that is charged with investigating complaints of official misconduct and impropriety in the public sector. That is the body to go to, not to ask me questions about it. It is not a matter for trying to get a headline. It is a matter for getting on with

the job. If people have complaints, if they have specific allegations—not generic complaints made about the government, which of course generally are unsubstantiated—they should put those specific matters to the CMC so that they can be properly investigated. The CMC has all the powers to investigate those things.

In relation to the earlier question about the advertising of the position of commissioner, I would say in relation to the Police Commissioner that he has overseen a 25 per cent drop in crime rates in Queensland since he has been the commissioner. It is an outstanding achievement, well supported by the government by significant funding investment in the Police Service, including appointing a little under 4,000 new police officers since Labor came to power in 1998.

In relation to advertising positions, the last time the National Party was in power, I am advised that they had no problem at all with making senior appointments without national advertising, including the reappoint of the then Deputy Commissioner Bill Aldrich in 1996, at a time when the honourable member had been in the parliament for a number of years and, ultimately, was a cabinet minister in the Borbidge government. That is their position on advertising.

In relation to public sector accountability, in 2009-10, as I indicated earlier, four early adopter agencies instituted improved complaints management integrity systems. Those agencies included the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Brisbane City Council as a local government authority and Queensland Health. To improve the management of complaints and integrity matters, all four agencies have developed models and pathways, improved pilot units, developed policies, procedures and processes, and conducted extensive information awareness and training sessions. That is what the CMC does. It works with public sector organisations and entities to improve the management of complaint and misconduct in Queensland.

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

Mrs SCOTT: Page 1-164 of the SDS refers to the ongoing construction of the new Supreme Court and District Court in Brisbane. Given the substantial government funding involved, could the Attorney-General provide the committee with further details on this major infrastructure project?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for Woodridge for her question. As I have indicated earlier in the examination of the budget this year, the government has allocated \$290 million to the state's flagship courthouse project in 2010-11. That is a \$600 million project over five years and will employ 5,000 people during the course of construction. The design of the courthouse sets a new benchmark in courthouse security, justice technology and environmental efficiency. It will deliver unprecedented facilities for victims of crime, vulnerable witnesses, jurors and members of the public. It will be the largest and, can I say, one of the best court buildings in Australia, if not the Southern Hemisphere. It will also create a legal precinct unique in Australia. With 19 floors covering 60,000 square metres, it will be twice the size of the Brisbane Magistrates Court.

Having the Supreme Court and District Court in one building, with full sharing of courtrooms, will be another first in Australia that delivers valuable efficiencies. Security has been paramount, with totally separate paths of travel inside the courthouse for members of the public, vulnerable witnesses, jurors, prisoners and judges. I thank the judges of the Supreme Court and District Court for the collaborative and cooperative way they have worked with government in the development and design of the new courthouse. I thank particularly the Chief Justice, Paul de Jersey, for his leadership within the judiciary on this important project. There will be a large jury assembly area and a separate vulnerable witness suite, with secure lounge areas and private rooms for giving video evidence. All courtrooms will be able to present evidence electronically and 16 will have external video links, allowing testimony from other locations.

The design will also deliver a five-star energy rating. Under-floor displacement air conditioning will operate only when needed. Low-energy lighting, controlled by motion sensors, will further reduce energy consumption. The design also maximises natural light through the building, including the use of light shafts into the basement holding cells. Roof mounted panels will collect solar energy for selected lighting and water heating, while a computerised external blind system will reduce the summer heat load by shading the building according to sun angles. Rainwater will be harvested in a 1.2 million litre underground storage tank, which will reduce energy load on air conditioning chiller units as well as providing for landscape irrigation and toilet flushing. This practical green technology will be coordinated by a sophisticated building control system to monitor and manage energy use.

The design will also include a large public square with grassed areas, shady trees and a public cafe. There will be significant public art installations in and around the new court complex. This courthouse will be a magnificent contribution to the future of justice in Queensland. I want to thank all departmental staff who have worked on the project, including Garry Robinson who has been instrumental in the development of the project.

Mr WATT: Attorney-General, page 1-166 of the Service Delivery Statements states that the establishment of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal represents the most significant structural reform to Queensland's justice system in the last 50 years. Can you update the committee on the government's financial investment in QCAT and its performance since its establishment in December last year?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. I know the member for Everton is very interested in justice matters, having been a practising lawyer prior to his entry into parliament. I know of his great commitment to access to justice efficiency in the justice system and also alternative dispute resolution, which is one of the central things that QCAT does. The establishment of QCAT, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, has constituted a major overhaul of the way Queenslanders access civil and administrative justice in Queensland. It amalgamated 18 separate tribunals and 23 different jurisdictions in one new organisation, which has given Queenslanders a single gateway, a one-stop shop, through which civil and administrative justice is delivered.

The government's \$6.5 million investment over the past two years to establish QCAT has eliminated duplication and streamlined service delivery. The long-term economic benefits of a single organisation are significant, but more important is the improved access to justice that it provides. This is a guiding principle in my portfolio and contributes to the Towards Q2 ambition of a fair Queensland, supporting safe and caring communities. QCAT gives the community an efficient, cost-effective and independent way to resolve a wide range of matters that affect people's personal and business lives. Queenslanders can apply to QCAT to resolve issues ranging from guardianship issues to retail leasing disputes.

The new tribunal has received more than 16,500 applications for matters requiring decision as at 30 June 2010. This was an increase of 37 per cent on the combined total of matters from the separate jurisdictions for the same seven months in the previous financial year. People are going to QCAT because they know they can get quick and efficient justice. I thank all of the QCAT staff for their important work in supporting that body. The largest volume of matters QCAT handles falls within the minor and civil disputes jurisdiction, which combines the minor debt jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court and the former Small Claims Tribunal. On 1 December 2009 the jurisdiction for these matters increased from \$7,500 to \$25,000. Other large jurisdictions include guardianship and administration matters, building matters, children's matters, anti-discrimination matters and other human rights matters, and retail shop lease disputes.

QCAT had held almost 16,800 hearings in the period since it commenced on 1 December last year to 30 June 2010. The use of mediation or compulsory conferences for around 17 per cent of hearings demonstrates QCAT's intention to employ alternative dispute resolution methods where possible. I anticipate that will continue to grow. The tribunal members who decide the matters regularly circuit throughout the state for hearings, ensuring their legal expertise is delivered locally when needed. Queensland's Magistrates Court network and courthouse registrars and staff are providing valuable support in that regard. Bringing together such disparate jurisdictions has presented many and varied challenges, but QCAT's more than 100 registry and administrative staff have risen to that challenge. They brought with them invaluable experience and knowledge from their former tribunals. QCAT is also well positioned to absorb new areas of responsibility as the needs of Queenslanders continue to change.

CHAIR: I would like to ask a question again in relation to the State Penalties Enforcement Register. I refer to pages 1-165 and 1-167 and the trial of tough new measures such as vehicle immobilisation, and property seizure and sale. I would like to ask you to provide an update on these trials and also their success in recovering outstanding fines.

Mr DICK: The trials of the mechanisms that you have mentioned were initiated because the government wanted to ensure that we could effectively recover fines owed to not only the State Penalties Enforcement Registry but also, through SPER, to the Queensland community. They were authorised under legislation passed by parliament last November and took effect from 1 January 2010. A specialist team has been created to manage these two trials. The 12-month vehicle immobilisation trial is targeting corporate and individual debtors who owe more than \$5,000. As at 30 June 2010, preliminary investigations had resulted in 856 fine defaulters, with debts totalling \$7.5 million, coming into compliance. The enforcement trial team had also issued 79 notices warning debtors their wheels would be clamped unless they did the right thing and paid up. Most got the message but some perhaps thought they could avoid it, so SPER immobilised the vehicles of 17 debtors, nine of whom then entered into compliance. The remaining eight debtors have been referred to considerations of seizure and sale warrants or arrest and imprisonment as necessary. It is something we do not do lightly. We do not wish to arrest and imprison people, but that is the end of the line. That is the very last place SPER can go, particularly for very large fines in excess of \$5,000. It is particularly important that we can recover the large debts from individuals who, for many years generally, have avoided payment.

The two-year seizure and sale trial uses the same pool of debtors being targeted in the vehicle immobilisation trial. During the first six months to 30 June, SPER issued 23 property seizure notices. Further investigations revealed that six cases were unsuitable for seizure and sale, so they were

referred for consideration for other action. Two of those debtors came into compliance after being made aware of all possible courses of action, including arrest and imprisonment. I am pleased to say that seven of the remaining 17 debtors entered into compliance and 10 were referred to the Brisbane Bailiffs Office for seizure and sale. Of those 10, one paid her debt of \$6,151 just two days before the scheduled auction of her home and another made an upfront payment of \$5,000 and is now repaying the balance in instalments.

I can indicate to individuals who owe debts in Queensland that if you have the capacity to pay we expect you to pay the debt in full, but if you do not we expect you to enter into a repayment arrangement. SPER will always talk positively and engage positively with individuals who owe debts, to set up the best possible payment mechanism. Of course, if people fall on hard times, we will take that into account and not pursue people if they lose their job or otherwise are placed in difficult or strained financial circumstances. However, we expect there to be a commitment made in some way to bring the debt into compliance and for it to be repaid over time.

Mrs SCOTT: Page 1-163 of the SDS outlines the strategic objectives of the department in support of ensuring the Bligh government continues to foster a fair and just Queensland. Can the Attorney please provide the committee with an overview of the extensive reform program that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has already delivered for Queensland in this parliamentary term, and also what is proposed for the next financial year?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Woodridge for her question and her interest in justice matters. The Bligh government has introduced extensive reforms to the Queensland justice system, reflecting contemporary demands and community expectations. In December 2009 Victim Assist Queensland was established to provide better support for victims of crime. Last December the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal was established with a focus on resolving disputes, making guardianship and administration orders, reviewing decisions of government agencies and statutory bodies, and conducting disciplinary proceedings for various professions and occupations.

From January this year the State Penalties Enforcement Registry was given new powers to clamp wheels, suspend drivers' licences and seize the property of fine defaulters who refuse to pay their fines. In February this year a new partial offence of killing in an abusive relationship was inserted into the Criminal Code for victims of serious domestic violence, which is the first stand-alone partial defence of this kind in Australia. In April 2010 the anti-bikie and organised crime legislation, the Criminal Organisation Act 2009 commenced. It seeks to disrupt and restrict the activities of rogue organisations, their members and associates involved in serious criminal activity. In 2010 a very important achievement of the government, the Surrogacy Act 2010, commenced. The act finally decriminalised altruistic surrogacy in Queensland. I am pleased to say that reforms were also made to the civil liability regime to recognise Sullivan v Gordon damages for seriously injured Queenslanders and to increase the cap on general damages for personal injury actions.

The Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is currently before the house to strengthen the government's resolve to deal with recidivist dangerous sexual offenders. It will provide increased flexibility in managing offenders and enhance the ability of the court to make indefinite sentencing orders and supervision orders in the community. The Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Reform and Modernisation Amendment Bill is also before the house. It implements the first stage of the government's response to the review of Queensland's justice system. The reforms will expand the civil jurisdiction of the District Court and Magistrates Court, and will streamline committals. Consultation on the second stage of reform, simplifying and modernising criminal justice procedure, closed last month and submissions are now being considered. Submissions on the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Bill also closed recently and are currently being analysed. I expect to introduce a bill later this year. The Sentencing Advisory Council will be established this year to promote consistency in sentencing, incorporate informed public opinion into the process and enhance public confidence in the criminal justice system.

We also need to build a more respectful community, and I intend introducing regulations later this year creating more severe penalties for wilful damage and vandalism of cemeteries, gravestones, war memorials and places of worships. Other priorities on the Bligh government's reform agenda include Indigenous justice matters, responding to the Queensland Law Reform Commission on jury directions, reviewing the defence of accident and partial defence of provocation, and development of certain other things. This list is by no means complete but gives some insight to the breadth of what we are doing, and I thank government members for their support.

Mr WATT: I refer the Attorney-General to page 1-196 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can the minister provide an update on the government's achievements in confiscating the proceeds of serious crime, including the financial benefit to the state?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. As I said earlier in the estimates examination today, the Queensland government is determined to stop criminals from profiting from serious criminal activity in our state. The Crime and Misconduct Commission's power to seize assets

gained through criminal activity is a powerful weapon in that fight against crime. Seizing the proceeds of crime not only strips criminals of their ill-gotten gains but also takes away the power that wealth gives them and hinders their capacity to reoffend.

The CMC administers the successful civil confiscation scheme, which allows property to be restrained if there is reasonable suspicion of criminal activity. Seizure of assets does not depend upon a person's conviction on criminal charges. Restraining orders arise from CMC investigations or result from matters being referred to the commission by the Queensland Police Service and other law enforcement agencies operating within Queensland, including Commonwealth agencies.

The property seized is liable to be forfeited unless a person proves on the balance of probabilities that it was acquired lawfully. The CMC has seized assets worth more than \$110 million through civil confiscation since the scheme's introduction in January 2003. Those restrained assets as at 12 July 2010 included \$57 million in real estate, \$32 million in cash and bank accounts, almost \$12.8 million in vehicles and boats, \$2.7 million in loans, \$2 million in shares, \$640,000 in jewellery and more than \$440,000 in livestock. Action by the commission has resulted in the forfeiture of \$22.2 million to the state since the scheme began. The recovered money benefits all Queenslanders as it is used by the government to supplement funding for such purposes as law enforcement, crime prevention and addressing the impact on victims of crime.

Last financial year the CMC obtained 97 orders to restrain assets valued at approximately \$19.5 million, far exceeding the commission's estimated target of \$15 million. CMC action during this period also resulted in the forfeiture of \$5.5 million to the state in 42 separate matters. The government has allocated an extra \$1 million a year in the state budget to help the commission target the proceeds of crime and support its other core activities such as, as I indicated earlier, forensic computing, misconduct complaints and public policy research. The CMC is determined to root out and dismantle criminal networks and will leave no stone unturned, as is the government in the search for criminal proceeds funds which would otherwise remain in the hands of criminals.

CHAIR: Before I call the member for Mundingburra, I would like to remind all committee members that this particular portfolio is a very large portfolio. It has quite a number of areas such as the courts, legal aid and many others. So if we can get across the entire portfolio in this final half an hour that would be very good. I call the member for Mundingburra.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I would like to ask a question about Legal Aid Queensland. I note on page 1-205 the government's commitment to significant funding to Legal Aid Queensland to ensure the provision of legal aid services to vulnerable Queenslanders. I ask the minister for an update on the changes in funding arrangements to secure a sustainable basis for legal aid services going into the future.

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question, which goes to a very important body in our state's justice system. Legal Aid Queensland plays a vital role in our state's justice system, providing quality legal representation in criminal, civil and family law matters. Along with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the courts, Legal Aid Queensland is one of the cornerstones of our legal system in Queensland, ensuring that financially vulnerable people have access to legal advice and assistance when they need it most.

The Queensland government understands the critical role that Legal Aid Queensland plays in our justice system, and we have taken steps in this year's budget to ensure the organisation has secure and sustainable funding into the future. The government has committed \$61 million from consolidated revenue over the next four years to reduce Legal Aid's reliance on the Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund, otherwise known as LPITAF, providing the organisation with greater certainty and stability for its funding base. In recent years, LPITAF was a significant and growing source of income for Legal Aid but the fund, which relies on a strong economy to drive investment returns, was hit hard by the global financial crisis.

As activity slowed in the economy at large, there was an inevitable decline in the income flowing into the fund. The fund's substantial decline in revenue during the global financial crisis reduced its capacity to continue to fund Legal Aid effectively. I am very pleased to say that the government has stepped in to rectify the situation, allocating funds from state reserves in the state budget to put Legal Aid's budget on a more secure footing. This move provides Legal Aid with certainty about its funding position into the future, allowing it to plan ahead with confidence. This additional appropriation will support Legal Aid Queensland to continue its important contribution towards a fair Queensland, one of the government's Q2 goals.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will continue to work closely with Legal Aid to ensure it is delivering efficient and effective legal services to Queensland's most financially disadvantaged and vulnerable people. I thank the staff of Legal Aid. I have met many of them throughout Queensland during my travels throughout the state. They do very difficult work sometimes. They do very good work, and I thank them for their contribution to supporting and providing legal assistance to Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Attorney, I have a question of you in relation to Queensland's new right to information and information privacy laws, which is something close to my heart. Can you please outline how the \$5.9 million allocated in this year's budget will boost the Office of the Information Commissioner's ability to perform its new roles including information and assistance, issuing guidelines, training and also performing monitoring and reporting?

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair, and I thank you for your interest in the government's right to information reforms—a very significant achievement of the Bligh government, led by the Premier herself, that goes to the heart of effective public administration in Queensland and that in fact leads the nation in having some of the best right to information laws in the country. Those reforms were sweeping, and they aim to give Queenslanders access to more information across all sectors of the community balanced with appropriate protections for individuals' privacy.

The Office of the Information Commissioner plays an integral role in the right to information framework and took on new functions with the commencement of the new legislation. This budget has allocated \$5.9 million in funding to allow the office to continue to improve its many initiatives through 2010-11. The government provided additional funding in 2008-09 and 2009-10 to enable the office to adequately prepare itself and those agencies affected by the commencement of the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act 2009. The allocated funding allowed the office to create guidelines to assist agencies apply the provisions of the new legislative framework; implement an extensive training strategy, communications strategy and budget strategy; design and establish a new organisation, including undertaking significant recruitment and selection of staff; prepare operational procedures to enable the office to carry out its new advice, assistance and complaint handling functions; develop and implement an advice and assistance service for agencies in the community—a very important way for the office to communicate its work and also how the new laws work to the community; develop its own website; and develop and implement an effective case management system.

During the last financial year, the allocated funding also allowed the office to develop an intranet site for management of online research resources. Legislation will form the centrepiece of the new site and will enable staff to quickly access the relevant precedent cases and other resource material. Co-locating the office's research resources in one place and developing annotated legislation that is reliable and current will help improve the timeliness and quality of reviews. This will ensure allocated funding will be efficiently allocated and effectively spent. It will also decrease the amount of legal research required within the office and enable staff to efficiently access and reference recent relevant cases and contribute to faster, easier, legally accurate and consistent decision making.

The allocated funding will also assist the office to generate a greater understanding of the office's information requirements and encourage information sharing by: identifying existing information sourced and maintained by individual staff; capturing existing organisational knowledge in a central location; managing the currency of the information where appropriate; identifying how staff access and use the information and which resources are used more frequently; and accommodating the evolving knowledge requirements of user groups within the office. This greater understanding will drive further efficiencies by helping the office to target the most relevant resource materials and training products for its staff. So it is about capturing information.

Information capture, storage and access of course is key in the 21st century for all sorts of agencies and for the public. The Office of the Information Commissioner is doing important work in that regard so it can work better and more efficiently and deliver on the statutory requirements, obligations and duties that it has to deliver for the people of our state.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. The time for government questions has expired. I call the member for Southern Downs.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer to page 1-202 of the SDS regarding the CMC and outflows for employee costs. Attorney, is it true that the chairman of the CMC has just completed the appointment of an executive officer to assist him? Was it a \$110,000 position? Was it advertised and, if not, why not?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I understand that there has been a recruitment process put in place for the appointment of an executive officer to the chair of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. That would not be surprising. As I indicated earlier, the chair of the Crime and Misconduct Commission is the chief executive officer of the Crime and Misconduct Commission and is responsible for the effective administration of the organisation.

The Crime and Misconduct Commission employs a very large number of people across a broad range of areas. Many of them have very significant professional qualifications in law enforcement and telecommunications matters, in policing matters and in the conduct of the public sector and public administration. This is a big organisation that carries out very important tasks. I respectfully suggest to you that it would not be surprising that the chair of the Crime and Misconduct Commission would need an executive officer to assist him in his task. That person of course would need to work very closely with the chair of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. They would need to have a very close and effective working relationship. The executive officer would need to back up and support the chair in a very critical and close fashion.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition has had some difficulty since his appointment, regrettably, in retaining staff in his office, including his chief of staff, which I understand has changed again just recently. I am not aware of what process was put in place to advertise that very important position that supports the Leader of the Opposition and, frankly, I would not necessarily expect that it would be advertised. These are senior positions in the opposition, just as they are in government, where individuals need to have a close and collaborative working relationship with the senior individual involved, be it a minister, be it the Leader of the Opposition, be it the chair of the CMC, be it the head of another statutory organisation or entity, be it the director-general or the chief executive officer of a department. These appointments are made and they support those individuals in the very high-level, high-pressure, important work that they do. I do not have details about the individual, but I know that that was the intention of the chair, and I have no objection to that sort of appointment and process being put in place so he can get on with the important work that he has to do.

Mr SPRINGBORG: My next question relates to page 1-207 of the SDS, in particular in relation to Legal Aid Queensland's operation. I note that, despite the significant increase in the state's contribution to funding, it is expected in estimated actual that there will be 3,600 fewer approved applications for criminal law, there will be 500 fewer approved applications for civil law, and, with regard to legal advice in civil law matters, there will be 4,000 fewer matters dealt with. That is a significant reduction in access to legal aid. Minister, will this affect access to justice for vulnerable Queenslanders, particularly in the light of the recent changes to jurisdiction in Queensland and the truncating of the process of committals, with matters being handed up to the higher courts?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I would note that there are a number of footnotes to those matters that are referred to by the honourable member. Footnote 2 on page 1-207 indicates the decrease in civil law matters as a result of the introduction of the Victims Financial Assistance and Services Scheme replacing criminal injuries compensation legal processes. That is the reason for the decrease in the matter. Obviously, people do not have to go to court anymore.

We have stopped them having to go through the often traumatic process of having to go to court to give evidence in proceedings—the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions can now secure a conviction. Then they had to bring a further application for criminal injuries compensation against the perpetrator of the crime, then get an order from the court, then bring an ex gratia application and then pursue the individual. If that is unsuccessful then they had to bring a further application to the state for an ex gratia application. We have put all of that aside now. That is all gone. That was often traumatic for individuals and time consuming. It often took years for individuals to receive some compensation and support as a consequence of a criminal act perpetrated against them. That was not in the best interests of victims of crime. So the government in what I think is a very significant reform—one that I am very proud of; I am very proud to be part of a government that has been part of that sort of reform process—has put all that to the side.

Now we have an administrative process where people can go to Victim Assist Queensland, make an application and get support straight away and at the time when it is most critical to them to receive support and assistance. As I indicated earlier, there is ongoing financial support from the government—\$61 million over four years. This is out of the Consolidated Fund. This is to provide financial support and stability and security to Legal Aid in the future. It is a very significant commitment by the government.

Obviously, there will be changes in how Legal Aid operates following the reforms that are currently before the parliament. They will have a significant impact on how the courts operate in our state, including the streamlining of committals. Committals are not being abolished in Queensland but there will need to be a good reason or a demonstrated reason for committals to occur. That will result in more efficiency in the criminal justice system. A larger number of matters will be dealt with in a summary basis in the Magistrate's Court. That will increase the workload in the magistracy in dealing with those summary trials. But, at the same time, there will be fewer committals being dealt with.

We are going to continue to monitor that process, as we have said all along. The reform process does not stop. We will be looking very carefully at how these reforms are implemented. If further funding is required for the judiciary we will provide that. As further funding is required for Legal Aid we will provide that as well.

Mr SPRINGBORG: A follow-up question to that. So far as the criminal law approved applications are concerned, can the Attorney give a breakdown of the number of committal or trial matters reported as a whole which have been dealt with in the last year and where there has been approval for legal aid? What is your department actually projecting in this area in the forthcoming 12 months?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Southern Downs for his question. At the end of the day, we will monitor the implementation of the jurisdictional reform process very closely. Can I say, if resources are required they will be provided. We are confident that having principally dealt with the heads of the jurisdiction—the Chief Justice, the Chief Judge of District Court and the Chief Magistrate—that these reforms are manageable, workable and, most importantly, sensible and efficient measures for the administration of justice in Queensland.

Can I say in relation to Legal Aid's workload that that varies from year to year in any event, depending on the number of applications received and the number of applications approved. The number of applications received depends on the range of factors that are beyond the control of Legal Aid Queensland, such as police activity, court activity and the broader economic circumstances that affect the number of people who are financially eligible for aid. Just as the legislative reform process will have an impact so will other mechanisms that cannot be anticipated in a sense. But we monitor it closely, of course.

During the 2008-09 financial year, Legal Aid Queensland experienced an increase in the number of applications received compared to 2007-08 from 40,743 to 44,062. We will continue to monitor that as it continues through this financial year and beyond. We continue to monitor those things. The administration of the justice system is not a perfect science. It cannot be properly identified to the last dollar and cent or the last number of applications or the last case.

I would hope that there is no-one who goes through criminal courts in Queensland. That is the aim of any justice system—that is, that people do not commit criminal acts. We are striving to reduce crime. We have done that. There has been a 25 per cent reduction in crime since Labor came to power. Our clearance rates are up. Imprisonment rates for serious offending are the third highest in the nation behind New South Wales and the Northern Territory. There are a million more people who live in Victoria than Queensland and we have more people in jails.

People should not be convinced by some of the rhetoric that is put about in the public that the Queensland government is soft on crime and that Queensland courts are soft on crime—far from it. We need to ensure that ultimately we have fewer people coming through the court system and fewer people going to jail because ultimately we want a safe community. We want people functioning and productive in our community. We want them contributing. We do not want them living a life of crime. Our primary aim is to protect the community and to ensure the community is safe. We want to ensure that people get out of the criminal justice system. Some end up in the cycle of the criminal justice system. We need to break that cycle for those individuals so they can become productive Queenslanders.

Mr SPRINGBORG: My next question is a supplementary to non-government question on notice No. 1. We asked specifically for a budget breakdown of each of the programs delivered through the Courts Innovation Programs. Instead the minister has provided the committee with a combined budget which gives no indication of where the funding to each of the specific programs has been cut? I ask the minister to give this committee an assurance that this has not been a deliberate attempt to hide any cuts to any of those programs? Will he now provide the committee with a specific breakdown of the budgets and for previous years budget versus actual with regard to the programs developed and delivered through the Courts Innovation Programs.

CHAIR: Before I call the Attorney, member for Southern Downs that is a very detailed question. I ask the minister whether he would like to answer that or whether he would like to take it on notice?

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. I am happy to take the question. The answer on notice is a detailed one. The reason I am happy to answer it further is that I want to ensure that the answer is properly understood. Regrettably, sometimes ministers give answers to questions on notice honestly and in a genuine attempt to answer questions but the good intent behind those answers is misrepresented in the community. That has been the case previously in relation to some of our special circumstance programs—our therapeutic justice program—particularly in relation to Indigenous Queenslanders. I have answered questions on notice which have then been misrepresented to the community. So I want to avoid that.

In relation to those projects, as the honourable member will see, there has been an underspend in some years of up to half a million dollars. There has been an underspend in some of the Indigenous programs, I am advised, such as the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program and Drug Court. The reason for that is that they are difficult programs for individuals to sign up to and often to complete. Often it is difficult to get people to commit to those programs and to go the distance. I know from the advice I have received previously and from some of the independent reviews that have been done that people sometimes elect not to continue through the Drug Court, for example—they elect not to continue the program to try to get themselves off drugs—and prefer to go back to the court to be sentenced as they otherwise would be for the criminal offending. It is just too hard for some people. Getting people to sign up to the program is a challenge for the government.

We are very committed to these diversion programs. They assist Indigenous Queenslanders. They assist people with substance abuse. We know that our courts and our prisons are populated in disproportionate numbers by Indigenous Queenslanders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people who have substance abuse problems and also people who have a disability, including intellectual disabilities. Our courts and prisons are populated by those people.

We need those programs to try to address the reasons those individuals come in. It does not excuse offending. Criminal offending cannot be excused but we need to provide mechanisms for people to, in a sense, not only atone for their actions but also to address the reasons for their offending if they have a substance abuse problem, for example. So in some programs there has been an underspend by

\$100,000 or so. But we will continue to ensure that those programs are effectively delivered and we do the best we can to change them, including following up on the recent reviews that we have released publicly both in relation to the Murri court and the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program. Those reports are available on the department's website.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Attorney, I refer you to SDS 1-163 and the delivery of criminal and civil justice in a timely and accessible way and, in particular, the operation of QCAT. Can you give an indication if there are areas under the administration of QCAT where there has been a significant blowout in resolution time frames? I talk particularly here about residential tenancy disputes where I understand in some areas there has been a significant blowout in time frames in dealing with those matters and having those matters heard.

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. QCAT has been a success—there is no doubt about that—because of the number of matters that continue to be filed and lodged in QCAT for determination. I monitor that closely. But, more importantly, it is not for me to direct the tribunal to the management of its own affairs. Those matters are properly administered by the president of the tribunal, Justice Alan Wilson, the deputy president, Judge Fleur Kingham, and also by the court registrar.

There is no doubt that there has been an increase in certain areas. As I have said earlier, they include minor civil dispute matters and guardianship matters. They are the two growth areas for QCAT since its establishment last year. We continue to monitor that closely. That is why we have provided resources to QCAT for the outyears of the budget—for the current financial year and future years. We continue to fund QCAT \$1.5 million this financial year and in the outyears to continue its important work. There will be \$6.1 million over four years to provide more accessible, convenient and efficient tribunal services to the community—that is \$1.525 million a year.

I am not aware of any significant problems in relation to residential tenancy matters. There were some issues to begin with. I understand they have been addressed. They were significant issues but they were issues that needed to be addressed. As you can imagine, with a large body being created and coming into operation there are always teething problems. But this has been a significant reform, a massive reform, bringing 18 bodies and 23 jurisdictions together. This is a very great credit to those officers who were involved in establishing the organisation, which was an enormous law reform project, and also now with how the tribunal runs. I pay credit to the officers involved in the establishment of QCAT and to those who now run it.

We have had a 37 per cent increase in applications year to year from 2008-09 to 2009-10. The major increase has been in minor civil disputes and in guardianship matters. The number of hearings were 16,762. Some 17 per cent involved mediation or alternative dispute resolution. There was 12 per cent mediation and five per cent compulsory conferences. I know the president of the tribunal, Justice Wilson, has a particular interest in alternative dispute resolution. He drove that process in the Planning and Environment Court when he was a judge of the District Court. He is looking to new ways to deliver that. We are going to continue to monitor it—I can give that assurance to the member for Southern Downs—to ensure the effective delivery of services and the effective administration of justice by the tribunal.

CHAIR: We are now going to have a break for 15 minutes.

Proceedings suspended from 11.00 am to 11.18 am

CHAIR: The hearing will now resume. I call the member for Southern Downs.

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question relates to the SDS at page 1-163, particularly the dot point which relates to continuing to balance the implementation of public sector wages policy and enterprise bargaining agreements. I relate this to the audits which are conducted by the industrial inspectorate into unpaid wages. Given that the Attorney indicated in his opening statement that he was about a safer and fairer Queensland and given that it is about three months now that Queensland Health workers have been subjected to nonpayment of wage entitlements, how much time is his department prepared to give the health department before it will step in and sort out this debacle?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. Can I reinforce everything that has been said by the Premier, the Deputy Premier and other ministers in the government as well as other members of the government, including backbench members, that the government is doing everything it can in various places and at various times to ensure employees of Queensland Health get their correct pay and entitlements.

CHAIR: Minister, please stop. There is a camera in here that should not be in here. I will have to ask you to leave. Sorry, Attorney, but I did not see the cameraman come in there.

Mr DICK: No.

CHAIR: Please continue.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Madam Chair. My colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health has informed parliament on a number of occasions now about what is being done and has updated the House on regular occasions. It is not appropriate to consider legal action where Queensland Health is

doing everything it can to remedy the situation. I do not believe legal action would serve any useful purpose at this time because the systems are being fixed. Resolution is the key and steps are being taken in that regard. Allowing employers to voluntarily resolve wage issues is no different to what applies regarding wage complaint investigations against employers in the private sector. In all wage complaint investigations attempts are made to resolve the issue before any legal action is undertaken, unless employers wilfully underpay employees or refuse to take action to remedy mistakes, and that is the way it should be. Obviously if there is a problem and an employer then identifies action and steps that are being taken, they should be encouraged to do that and should do it as quickly as they can, whether it be in the public sector or the private sector.

Employees of Queensland Health are entitled to make wage complaints where they believe they have not been correctly paid. Employees who lodge wage complaints with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General under the Industrial Relations Act will have their matter investigated in the first instance, which happens in all workplaces. Attempts will be made to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the parties and matters can subsequently be pursued, but in this case the government is doing everything it can to ensure people are paid the right sums. I know the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health has said that in relation to overpayments, I think, of up to \$200 Queensland Health will not be seeking to recover that money. That is a very effective process that is being put into place.

So the government will always do as much as it can to ensure the very valuable staff of Queensland Health get paid what they are entitled to be paid. Where there are overpayments, as we have now said, they are not going to be recovered, up to a certain level. We will continue that process until the system is up and running without any further problems for staff members. In such a large organisation there will always be, I presume, a percentage—a very small percentage—where people will receive an error in their pay, but that is the nature of any organisation and we seek to minimise that ultimately as much as possible, if not eliminate it altogether.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Attorney, has your department received any contacts or complaints from Queensland Health employees regarding the Health payroll debacle and, if so, how many of them?

Mr DICK: I am advised that we have received two wage complaints against Queensland Health—not a very significant number given the very large number of employees employed by Queensland Health. In relation to one of those matters, I am advised that the matter has been resolved but the inspectorate is continuing to work with the relevant employee concerned. In relation to the other complaint, the matter has now been resolved. So in relation to both of those complaints they have effectively been resolved to the satisfaction of one employee and in relation to the other one the department is continuing to work with them to confirm that that is to his or her satisfaction. So we will continue to do that and other wage complaints will be dealt with appropriately.

In relation to the public sector more generally—and I think I have said this in the parliament—in the past 10 years there have been less than 10 wage complaints that have needed to be referred by the department to the relevant director-general of the department or agency concerned within the Queensland public sector, and all those matters were resolved without the need for legal action. The principal position taken by the state is of course to ensure that workers receive their entitlements. Where there is a mistake, error or oversight of any nature, then the government works to rectify that, and that is illustrated by effectively one complaint a year over the past 10 years. It does not mean mistakes are not made. It does not mean errors are not made. It does not mean problems do not occur, but when they do the commitment of the government is to do whatever it can to fix those problems and address the complaints and concerns as quickly as possible. We will continue to do that, as we have always done it and will do it in the future, including with, as I say, the very valuable staff and employees of Queensland Health.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Attorney, of the complaints which have been received by your department with regard to the nonpayment or wrong payment of wages and entitlements, how many of those particular complaints have related to the rollout of new payroll software in companies? Is there a benchmark which your department uses to actually give those companies a chance to be able to pick up their act to fix that problem before you actually start to take more interventionist action? Is it several months? Is it a year? Do you have an ongoing monitoring where you say that you expect it to be done within a certain period of time?

CHAIR: Attorney, I am not sure that this is within your particular portfolio, but you may wish to answer that question.

Mr DICK: I thank the chair for her intervention. You are quite right; the state is no longer responsible for regulating employment conditions in the private sector. For the balance of the private sector, the Commonwealth of course assumed power to regulate all private sector employees employed by trading and financial corporations under the Constitution which is about 75 per cent or 80 per cent of employees when it passed the original Work Choices legislation. That was upheld by the High Court. The balance was referred to the Commonwealth last year. So we now have a national, seamless industrial relations system. So we do not regulate the private sector anymore in Queensland; we only regulate the public sector—and, as I have said, we have had 10 complaints over 10 years—and that is something we will continue to do.

Of course it is interesting that the honourable member would raise issues about regulating the private sector and how complaints are made and investigated there, because we know that the Liberal National Party and the federal leader of the Liberal Party are in all sorts of difficulties about how he will deal with workplace relations in the future. Again, we had another rocket exploding on the launch pad yesterday—one of the most stupendous disasters one would have ever seen in a federal election campaign in recent history. This is a man who clearly went into the federal election—Tony Abbott, the federal leader of the coalition, the alternative Prime Minister—without any policy to announce to the public other than his desperate attempts to hide his long-felt and long-held desire to reanimate Work Choices—to reanimate the zombie policy of Work Choices that he claimed was dead and buried in the morning but then said later in the day he would probably tweak and that there needed to be individual flexibility in the workplace, a view which he has long held.

I note that the federal Minister for Workplace Relations, Simon Crean, has indicated what I regard as the false commitment that Work Choices would not come back. First of all it was not coming back at all, then it was not coming back for three years, then it was not coming back at all, then it was only coming back for three years and then he said, 'Well, I've got an election to win', so we know his commitment to opposing Work Choices is as transparent and as false as it is obvious to the rest of Australia. But the federal minister today said that the coalition's commitment to retaining the Fair Work Act left it room to make significant changes to the industrial relations system via regulations and ministerial directions. There are a very significant amount of matters that are covered by regulation. The changes that could be done by regulation include removing entitlements, extending individual contracts or limiting unfair dismissal rights. So not only is the time frame a ruse; the whole idea of removing or not amending the act is a ruse as well, because there are significant ways that workers and their entitlements can be attacked through regulation and ministerial direction. The minister said that the code in terms of unfair dismissal is not legislation. He could do it through the code—that is, the code under the act—and he can do it through a two-year review. So we know where the Labor Party stands. The rest of Australia is waiting to see what the federal opposition might ultimately do.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I note the Workplace Rights Ombudsman in Queensland has been active in recent times conducting a review of the taxi industry, which I understand is actually a private sector industry. Why is it that this particular Ombudsman that was set up so the state could be interventionist in the whole Work Choices thing has not been involved as voraciously or in such a committed way with regard to assisting Queensland Health employees given that that should be one of the few things left for that person to do?

CHAIR: Member for Southern Downs, can you refer to the budget document, please?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I understand that it is in 1-176.

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question and I am pleased to speak to the role of the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman. Of course, that office was created prior to the final transfer of power to the Commonwealth for the regulation of the entire private sector in Queensland and we are continuing to look at the role of the Workplace Rights Ombudsman. It was an important role, of course, to protect Queensland workers from the egregious antiworker legislation that was Work Choices under the former Howard government and it was a way for workers to be protected in Queensland.

I think that office could, of course, continue to be a very important one if the federal coalition were to win the current federal election and Tony Abbott was to become the Prime Minister. As he said in his book *Battlelines* last year at page 87, Work Choices was not all that bad. In his book released less than a year ago, he said that Work Choices might have been a political mistake but it was not an economic mistake and we know that that is the truth from Tony Abbott. Why? Because he wrote it down. We know that Tony Abbott can only be trusted when he writes things down. He said that publicly himself and, secondly, he wrote it at a time when he never anticipated being the leader of the federal Liberal Party. So we know that is what he believes and believes to his core, as many of the members of the federal coalition believe also.

They call it flexibility but one person's flexibility is another person's attack on the rights and entitlements of workers. They should not be denying what is in their DNA, what makes them up. That will come back, I have no doubt, if they were to win power. This ruse about the three-year limit—why you would need to put a limit on your opposition to it anyway is questionable. Those of us in the Labor Party oppose whether it be three years, 13 years or 33 years. We oppose that sort of regulation, or lack of regulation, of the workforce. We oppose workers being put in the position of fending for themselves, often with employers who are in a much stronger bargaining position.

We believe in collective bargaining and we always will. We do not have to put a time limit on our opposition to those things; we have always stood against it. To say that he would oppose it for three years cannot be believed. It would really just be a matter of counting down before he could start attacking the act. He would, in my view, attempt to undermine the fair work system in Australia, anyway, by attacking it through regulatory changes and ministerial directions. So he cannot be believed on that and he will ultimately be judged by the Australian people on his position on 21 August.

Mr SPRINGBORG: With regard to page 1-168 of the SDS, departmental services and particularly workplace health and safety, why is it that in the SDS there is no client satisfaction figures given with regard to employers' satisfaction with the operation of occupational health and safety officers? Has the Attorney-General any indication that employers at large are very dissatisfied with the very autocratic way in which the officers in question conduct their job, being far more of a policeman than somebody who provides practical advice for those workplaces as they wish to address potential health and safety issues?

Mr DICK: I find it difficult to know, chair, where, in fact, the shadow spokesperson is coming from. He has publicly criticised me, he has publicly criticised the government for death and injury in Queensland workplaces. It is a regrettable thing that he now seems to suggest that the proactive steps that we take, generally in partnership with employers to try to deal with workplace health and safety issues, should become a matter of political controversy. On the one hand he criticises the government on the rate of death and injury in the workplace and on the other hand he comes to this estimates committee asking am I aware of dissatisfaction in the private sector in relation to the very good work that Workplace Health and Safety Queensland carries out. You cannot have it both ways. You simply cannot have it both ways. You cannot be condemning the rate of injury and death in the Queensland workplaces and then criticising the work that it does by implying, as the honourable member does in his question, that we are somehow attacking employers, attacking business, to somehow put them at some unfair disadvantage in the economy. At the end of the day, we need to work together on a bipartisan basis to reduce death and injury in the workplace.

Can I make one reference to a very important report that committee members should look at. This is a report that the Australian Industry Group released in May 210 titled *Easing the regulatory burden for Queensland*. I was pleased to note in the report that the businesses interviewed as part of this project consider workplace health and safety to be an integral part of running a business and that most had a reasonable understanding of legislative obligations. This is a review that was carried out by the Australian Industry Group, one of the peak employer bodies in Queensland.

I also note in the report that the relationship between business and the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectorate was rated the most positive of all regulated researched. That is not to say, of course, that there cannot be improvements through better communication, improved understanding and stopping duplication to reduce compliance costs on business. But generally, that is a pretty good sign that the Australian Industry Group, from a survey of its own members, sees the work of the inspectorate and holds it up as a positive thing.

We will continue to work with industry and business in Queensland. We want to have a cooperative relationship. Where there needs to be strict compliance with the law and enforcement and prosecution, we will do that. But in many other ways, what we do is we work with business to improve their behaviour, to improve their performance, because a safe workplace for workers is a productive workplace for business, it is a profitable workplace that benefits everyone in the economy in Queensland and we will continue to go down that path. We will use the carrot and the stick as necessary. There is no perfect mix there, but where there is egregious breaches of the law, we will attack those breaches and prosecute but, in other ways, we will work positively with the industry to change culture and behaviour.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I have a supplementary question. The Attorney-General talked about the carrot and stick. Given that you have indicated that you have programs that educate, assist and advise workplaces in Queensland, can you give an indication of how many such visits there have been to workplaces in Queensland over the past 12 months where you actively seek to engage, encourage and educate those employers in a proactive way?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. It puts a spotlight on some of the proactive work that Workplace Health and Safety Queensland does to work with business to assist them in changing behaviours. Can I say that one of the important things we do is the medium-sized business initiative. It is an example of how we work and go into workplaces. The initiative involves Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectors working with all 8,000 medium-sized businesses in Queensland, that is, businesses with declared wages between \$1 million and \$10 million, to assess the effectiveness of their safety management systems to prevent workplace incidents and injury. That was not my time up, was it?

CHAIR: We will extend your time to answer that question.

Mr DICK: The initiative aims to help medium-sized businesses better understand and manage occupational health and safety risks by providing information, advice and encouragement before a targeted inspector visit. The information, advice and encouragement involves a whole range of things—providing business with information to help improve safety practices, inviting businesses to participate in free voluntary advisory services, rewarding businesses that elect to participate in an advisory program and by giving them time to review and improve their safety systems. Can I say that workplace visits are an integral part of Workplace Health and Safety. There were 30,077 workplace visits conducted in the 2009-10 to undertake proactive compliance assessments and to investigate complaints and incident notifications.

CHAIR: The time for non-government questions has expired. I refer to page 1-163 of the SDS, which states that the department delivers services to urban, rural and remote communities throughout the state aimed at improving productivity and equity and safety in Queensland workplaces. Could you outline how Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is assisting medium-sized businesses to improve their workplace health and safety together with the government's financial investment in this program?

Mr DICK: Thank you. That is a question which really follows up on the matter that I was addressing the committee on. Before I turn to that, can I address the committee on one point in relation to a response that I provided to the honourable member for Southern Downs earlier regarding the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's Courts Innovation Programs. I indicated that both the Murri Court and the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program had been independently evaluated and both of those reports have been released to stakeholders for consultation. The Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program evaluation report has been posted on the departmental website in its final form while the Murri Court evaluation report is currently in draft form pending minor matters relating to its finalisation. It was a report that was prepared by the Australian Institute of Criminology. They provided us, as I understand it, with consent to release to stakeholders until a final report could be prepared. Once that has been finalised it will be made publicly available. I just wanted to clarify that point.

CHAIR: Thank you for that clarification. I am sure the member for Southern Downs appreciates that.

Mr DICK: Thank you. In relation to your question, as I said, we intend to work through all 8,000 medium-sized businesses as part of the largest safety education and audit campaign ever conducted in this particular industry sector in Queensland. In March 2010, inspectors began visiting all of those—it is about 8,000; 7,759, I am advised—medium-sized businesses to assess effectiveness. The government has provided \$24.9 million to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland from the budget, along with a further \$43.2 million from the workers compensation scheme, to fund a wide range of education compliance and enforcement programs, including the medium-sized business initiative.

The initiative was piloted with approximately 200 medium-sized businesses in the Brisbane north and Caboolture region from June to November 2009 and it will run until mid 2011, after which it will be formally evaluated. Half of the businesses being targeted received notice in early March and the rest will be notified in August this year.

I have talked previously about the range of activities that Workplace Health and Safety Queensland staff will be involved in. Those programs involve free voluntary advisory sessions, information from inspectorate staff directly, on-site visits and so on. Each inspection will focus on assessing the effectiveness of a business's existing health and safety practices and identifying opportunities for improvement. I am advised that during April and May 2010, representatives from over 2,000 medium-sized business attended 71 voluntary advisory sessions across the state. Feedback has been positive, with over 80 per cent of respondents indicating that they could use the material presented at the information sessions to improve business health and safety. A further 242 businesses are participating in one-on-one workplace consultancies with a Workplace Health and Safety Queensland officer directly receiving information and guidance on safety matters specific to their businesses.

Mrs SCOTT: I wish to return to page 1-165 of the Service Delivery Statements, in particular the reference to the initiative focusing on high-risk businesses in Queensland. Can the minister outline in further detail how the Queensland government will reduce work related deaths and injuries by reducing workers compensation claims on high-risk Queensland businesses and the financial commitment made by the government in that regard?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Woodridge for her question. I can advise the honourable member that a joint Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and WorkCover Queensland initiative is now underway to improve the injury prevention, rehabilitation and return-to-work practices of high-risk businesses. Currently in Queensland there are 1,187 businesses of all sizes and types whose WorkCover premium rates are capped at twice the industry premium rate. They account for less than two per cent of all businesses within the Queensland Workers Compensation Scheme, but unfortunately represent almost 12 per cent of all claims lodged, on our analysis, in the 2008-09 financial year.

The government has allocated \$2 million to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland in 2010-11 to ensure the availability of specialist advisers to help these businesses review their claims history and boost their health and safety performance. The businesses will be approached by a health and safety adviser who will work with them in conjunction with a WorkCover claims manager. The focus will be on awareness and education to lift their skills and understanding of both injury prevention and industry management practices to drive sustainable long-term change.

We hope that the initiative will help to achieve a reduction in the number of work related fatalities, injuries and diseases occurring in Queensland workplaces and their associated human and financial costs by increasing awareness of injury prevention and claims management issues of capped

businesses, decreasing the overall number of capped businesses, decreasing the number of injuries in capped businesses, reducing WorkCover compensation claim costs due to capped businesses and improving outcomes for injured workers.

Recent amendments introduced by the government to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 allow WorkCover Queensland to impose an additional premium on the insurance policy of a business with a sustained poor claims experience. Therefore, businesses that continue to have their premium capped at twice the industry rate could face an additional premium, such as a higher premium rate, but that would be predicated on them not taking effective action to deal with the high incidence of injury and the high claims rate in their workplace.

This initiative that I have advised the committee about is part of the government's reforms to the Queensland Workers Compensation Scheme following a number of years commissioned by WorkCover of its business practices. That reform process goes on. We have not reached the finish line in relation to workers' compensation. Given the changing nature of the Queensland economy, the growing nature of our state and the growing nature of our economy we will never reach a finish line, we will always continue to keep this under review to ensure that we have a sustainable and secure workers' compensation scheme, particularly on a financial basis, going forward into the future.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer to page 1-163 of the SDS which states that the department delivers services throughout the state aimed at improving productivity, equity and safety in Queensland workplaces. Can the minister please inform the committee of the education and compliance activities undertaken by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's inspectorate in the past year and the financial commitment made by the government to such important activities?

Mr DICK: As I said earlier, we allocated \$24.9 million to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland in the 2010-11 budget with a further \$43.2 million for the workers compensation scheme to fund its wide range of compliance, enforcement and education programs. As I indicated to the committee earlier, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland maintains a strong emphasis on the provision of information, advice, support and engagement to help businesses strengthen their health and safety performance. Where this is not effective, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has a strong record of taking appropriate action through the use of a range of enforcement options including requiring remedial action to be taken, issuing notices, penalties, prosecution and enforceable undertakings.

In 2009-10 inspectors made, as I said earlier, more than 30,000 visits to Queensland workplaces to conduct proactive compliance assessments and to investigate complaints and incidents. They issued 12,371 enforcement notices in 2009-10 where noncompliance was detected. In 2009-10 there were 1,052 investigations conducted, of which 948 related to incidents that caused death, grievous bodily harm or bodily harm. The most common incidents involved being hit by moving objects, slips, trips and falls, hitting objects with parts of the body and body stressing. Both the private and public sectors are included in these figures. As the Queensland government is also one of the state's largest employers, departments are held to the same health and safety standards as the private sector. Prosecutions continue to be used as an effective measure of sanction and deterrence with 117 prosecutions finalised resulting in fines totalling more than \$3.9 million—almost \$4 million—in 2009-10.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland aims to ensure prosecutions are strategically targeted for maximum impact, supported by evidence based research to help target identified areas of concern. Summaries of the results of successful prosecutions are published on the department's website to help deter others from committing similar offences. Enforceable undertakings have also become a strong enforcement option: 14 were accepted in 2009-10 contributing over \$2 million in value towards improving health and safety in Queensland workplaces. The inspectorate also undertook a range of safety campaigns in 2009-10, including scaffolding, manual tasks in the road freight forwarding and transport industries, amusement devices, concrete pumping equipment, the maintenance of cooling towers, the pilot of a medium sized business audit program and regional compliance campaigns. These campaigns use a multifaceted approach comprising education, industry partnership and engagement and compliance monitoring. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland had 1.3 field active inspectors per 10,000 employees in 2008-09. This compares favourably, I am advised, to the number of field active inspectors in other high-population states—only 1.1 per 10,000 in New South Wales and .9 per 10,000 in Victoria.

Mr WATT: Attorney, I also refer to page 1-163 of the Service Delivery Statement which states the department delivers services throughout the state which are aimed at improving productivity, equity and safety in Queensland workplaces. Can the minister please outline how Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is assisting high-risk industries to improve their workplace health and safety?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Everton for his question. I can inform the committee that in 2008 action plans were launched for the construction, manufacturing, transport and storage, health and community services sectors—one that will be of interest to the member in his capacity as parliamentary

secretary—rural, retail and wholesale and hospitality, recreation and other service industries. The plan outlines Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's key areas of focus for working cooperatively with industry to reduce work related injuries and fatalities.

Each plan comprises initiatives that focus on reducing injury and fatality rates in specific areas of greatest risk. A common element of all the plans is a greater focus on education and awareness for industry. That is the balance that we take between enforcement and also education and awareness and working proactively with industry. More than 30 targeted safety campaigns and special projects directly associated with the seven plans are currently underway. They are expected to be completed by the end of December 2010 with evaluation and reporting to be undertaken by June 2011. These include the Zero Harm at Work Leadership Program, a very important program, the medium sized business initiative that I advised the committee about earlier, the Sustainable Farm Families project—we know that rural workplaces are dangerous workplaces and often involve a high incidence of death and injury given the small number of people who work in those workplaces, which can have a very devastating effect on small communities and families in particular as often many of those businesses are built around family enterprises—the Construction WorkHealth Initiative and the Transport Strategy Group program.

In 2009-10 Workplace Health and Safety Queensland delivered on many of the initiatives under the plans, including 19 workshops on managing manual task risks attended by 290 individuals from 121 businesses in the transport and storage sector; a focus group on manual tasks and musculoskeletal risks for representatives from the metal manufacturing, meat processing, machinery and equipment manufacturing and cleaning industries; a ceiling hoist workshop for 80 health and community services sector representatives at which Queensland Health's Guidelines for Managing Manual Tasks in Hospitals was launched; last year's School Safety Conference which attracted 200 representatives from the state, independent and Catholic education sectors; the Zero Harm at Work leadership forums for the construction and transport industries which were attended by over 120 of Queensland's industry leaders; 50 rural on-property workshops for fruit, beef and sugar producers; and constructing better business seminars which were delivered across the state to educate the construction industry about managing risks associated with occupational stress and manual tasks risks.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and Farmsafe Australia are also on track to complete projects by September 2010 that will address four areas of concern to the rural industry. They include finding solutions to the application of confined space regulations in the cane and cotton industries, developing a rural machinery design standard, developing a rural specific add-on to the workplace health and safety officers course and amending the rural chemicals code of practice to assist the rural industry to comply with regulations on hazardous substances.

CHAIR: I have a follow-up question in relation to page 1-163 of the Service Delivery Statement. I would like to ask you to outline Queensland's workplace health and safety performance in 2008-09 and, if you could, provide some details, please?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question. I am pleased to report a 20 per cent reduction in the work related fatality rate and a three per cent decline in the incidence of serious injuries in Queensland between 2007-08 and 2008-09. Thankfully that means fewer Queensland families, workplaces and communities have suffered the loss and grief associated with such traumatic events.

The 20 per cent decrease represents 14 fewer fatalities. This substantial decrease in the fatalities rate for 2008-09, the latest full year of data that is available, was a result of decreases in the number of fatalities in the transport and storage, hospitality and recreation and construction and manufacturing sectors. The three per cent decrease in the incidence of non-fatal work related incidents in 2008-09 represents a decrease of almost 400 injuries. This decrease varied between industry sectors, with significant declines in manufacturing, down 10 per cent; transport and storage, down six per cent; and retail and wholesale, down three per cent. There were still 64 work related fatalities and more than 30,500 serious injuries in Queensland in 2008-09—most unfortunately.

These statistics represent real people, unfortunately many of whom regrettably do not come home safely from work. They are a sobering reminder to all of us that there is still more to be done for workers, for unions, for employers, for the government all together if we are to slash the state's workplace fatalities and injuries toll.

While acknowledging that some sectors, such as the construction and rural industries, still need to make significant improvements to their safety performance, there are encouraging signs that we are making some inroads in other key areas in the Queensland economy. For example, in the past 12 months compensable claims for traumatic injuries have decreased by three per cent. Overall, since the Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Strategy began in 2004 there has been a 12 per cent decrease in the incidence of traumatic injuries and a four per cent decline in the incidence of serious work related injuries. Further, between 2004-05 and 2008-09 there has been a 38 per cent decline in the incidence of permanent impairment claims and an eight per cent decline in the incidence of long-term injuries—that is, an injury that injures a worker for more than six months.

Partnerships with industry are critical to delivering safer and healthier workplaces. Besides its ongoing enforcement and compliance monitoring activities, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is also focusing heavily on educating, informing and engaging industry. Over 30 targeted safety campaigns and special projects are currently underway including, as I have said, a number of programs such as the Zero Harm at Work Leadership Program, the medium sized business program and the Sustainable Farm Families health and wellbeing project.

Mr WATT: I refer to page 1-163 of the Service Delivery Statement which refers to the department contributing to supporting safe and caring communities through services that increase community and workplace safety. Can the minister please outline how Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is contributing to addressing continuing community concerns over the removal and management of asbestos materials in homes and workplaces?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. It is an important issue for the Queensland community and I am pleased to announce today that a new asbestos workplace safety initiative is set to get underway this week in Mackay.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectors and asbestos technical experts will present free information sessions tomorrow and on Thursday for builders, contractors and other building trade services. The 'Is that asbestos? Be aware and prepare' initiative is about education and compliance to ensure workers and the public are kept safe. Contractors are often called in to domestic premises to clean or paint an old roof, carry out renovations or demolish old structures. It is vitally important, in my view, that they know what to do if they come across asbestos or suspect it is contained in the material with which they are working. There are significant obligations on those in the building trades industry to appropriately manage asbestos. Regrettably, recently there have been some instances where those businesses in the building trades industry have perhaps not taken the precaution and the care that they need to ensure that the local community is protected against asbestos.

Working with asbestos comes with a range of risks but it can be handled safely, I can assure the community, if people know what they are doing. The information sessions will cut through the myths and misinformation that can sometimes surround asbestos in the community and provide practical advice on what to do and, perhaps more importantly, what not to do when working with asbestos or asbestos related materials. In planning these sessions, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has worked closely, I am pleased to say, with the Queensland Master Builders Association, the Building Services Authority, the Queensland Asbestos Related Disease Support Society and the Queensland Council of Unions. There is a lot of work we are doing. We will be looking at rolling out the information sessions to other parts of the state after gauging demand and evaluating feedback from the Mackay sessions. I am looking forward to that feedback to see how effective it is in that community before we take it to other parts of Queensland.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Attorney, I refer you to SDS 1-174 regarding the administration of the Industrial Court and commissions system and particularly the much publicised and ongoing spat between Commissioner Brown, who is also the workplace ombudsman, and the vice-president of the commission, Dianne Linnane, and the banning of Don Brown from his offices and the tea room. Will the Attorney give an indication of what this personality dispute is actually costing the state as well as the cost of providing appropriate accommodation at an alternative venue for Mr Brown?

Mr DICK: I will speak briefly to that issue. I thank the member for that question. The article that he refers to—there was an article published in the press on the weekend—does relate to a series of memos that were exchanged between the relevant parties three years ago, so quite some time ago now. Commissioner Brown has been reported publicly as saying that there have been no problems since then. It is regrettable that two senior members of the independent Industrial Relations Commission have behaved in such a manner. I believe the public would expect a better level of conduct from them, and so do I. They are charged with important work in dealing with industrial disputes in our community and their primary focus should be serving the community. What has happened in the past of course cannot be changed, but it appears that relationships have improved, which is a very positive thing. I hope that continues in the future.

I say in relation to the Industrial Relations Commission that the commission continues to provide solutions to employees and others who have suffered wrongs in employment and industrial matters. It provides a low-cost, independent forum that assists parties to resolve industrial disputes, set benchmark wages and conditions, and provides a forum to test the validity of dismissal decisions. During the recent financial year ended 2009-10, 1,776 matters were filed in the Industrial Registry.

The commission has very broad functions under the Industrial Relations Act 1999. During the financial year, the commission dealt with and awarded an increase to low-paid award wage earners of \$16.20 per week, which increased the minimum wage for all full-time employees to \$568.20 per week through a state wage increase effective from 1 September last year. There was an award review in this current year. In light of the enactment of the Commonwealth Fair Work Act and the Fair Work (Commonwealth Powers) and Other Provisions Act, the QIRC has decided to review all Queensland state awards—a very significant project. The commission also has a range of powers under a number of

important acts, including the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act; the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990, which deals with trading hours in Queensland communities; the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act; the Child Employment Act; the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act; the Whistleblowers Protection Act; the Magistrates Courts Act; and the Local Government Act. I am advised that, contrary to the matter contended by the member for Southern Downs and the matter set out in the *Sunday Mail* article, the accommodation relocation undertaken by the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman was unrelated to any alleged disputes between the Ombudsman and the vice-president. It was an accommodation matter going to where his office should be located.

CHAIR: Thank you for clarifying that, Attorney. I ask the member for Southern Downs to ask the final question today.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I come back to the issue of the Workplace Rights Ombudsman in Queensland and the fact that he seems to be sitting there waiting for what might happen in Canberra rather than what happens in Queensland. Can the Attorney clarify for us whether he foresees any particular role for the Workplace Rights Ombudsman in overseeing the residual matters which are now with the state industrial relations system, whether it be with councils or with state government agencies? Is there any plan this year for the Workplace Rights Ombudsman to undertake particular projects or investigations into matters relating to public sector workplaces in Queensland?

Mr DICK: Thanks, Chair, and I thank the honourable member for his question which gives me the opportunity to put on record the work that the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman does, to clarify matters for the honourable member. It is an independent office, I can assure the honourable member, which provides impartial advice and information to Queensland employees and employers in both the state and federal jurisdictions and it operates across the divide between jurisdictions. The Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman monitors and highlights cases of unlawful or unfair work practices, promotes informed decision making and makes recommendations on strategies that might be implemented to improve workplace practices in Queensland. I do not direct or control the Workplace Ombudsman. Of course, he is a commissioner of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

The Workplace Rights hotline commenced operations on 2 July and that has continued to work and to work well. It continues to receive a high number of calls. In the two years of operation to 30 June 2009 it received 41,887 calls. Approximately 20 per cent of those were from employers. So it assists employers and employees. Up to 24 May this year—in the current financial year and also the financial year just passed—the hotline received 16,055 calls. Of these, nearly 17 per cent were from employers. So it assists both employers and employees.

We are looking at ways to consider how the office can continue to function within the industrial relations framework within Queensland. I am, in fact, considering a review regarding the future work of the Ombudsman as we move forward. I suppose some of that will be dependent on whether the rights of workers are attacked by a federal government should there be a change to a conservative, reactionary coalition government in Canberra. That remains to be seen.

The Ombudsman does good work. He has already conducted investigations into five industries: the contract security industry, recreational diving in the Cairns region, the fruit and vegetable harvesting industry in the Bundaberg-Childers region, the contract traffic control industry and the taxi industry. Last year I received a report in relation to the contract traffic control industry and I have just tabled the Ombudsman's report about the taxi industry. That will be progressed now by the government, principally under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Transport, Rachel Nolan, who has already done a significant amount of work in improving standards in the taxi industry. We will give detailed consideration to those recommendations. It was an eight-month review. We need to look at what has been recommended and consider how those recommendations can be progressed.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. The time for non-government questions has expired. I now call the member for Mundingburra.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer to page 1-167 of the SDS and I ask: could the minister outline the purpose and outcome of the electrical safety pilot program, which targets apprentices?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question and can inform her and the committee that the Electrical Safety Office regularly investigates the circumstances of electrical incidents to develop strategies to improve electrical safety in Queensland. It is a very important office in the range of mechanisms we have to ensure Queensland workplaces and Queenslanders are safe, and they do very important work.

These investigations carried out by the Electrical Safety Office have identified that a significant number of incidents occur soon after electrical workers complete their apprenticeships. To counter this trend, the Electrical Safety Office has introduced safety seminars for apprentices and has developed a host employer program in cooperation with the Electro Group, a group training organisation for

electrotechnology apprentices. The program also aids in the placement of apprentices at times of slowing economic activity when the electrical industry has fewer work placement opportunities for apprentices.

A pilot program was established in August 2009 with the Electrical Safety Office in Brisbane hosting three fourth-year apprentices for 12 weeks. I was very pleased to meet them when they commenced that program and to not only encourage the Electrical Safety Office on this important initiative but also to encourage these apprentices in being part of this and in their future careers in the electrical trades industry. The work experience gained was credited towards the completion of their training program with the group training association. During the placement, the apprentices received electrical training, spent time with policy, equipment and licensing staff and were assigned to work with electrical safety inspectors, observing in-field audits and investigations.

I recall meeting those apprentices in this parliament, appropriately in the generator room, when they came in to see how we keep the lights on in Parliament House. They were very impressive young men and hopefully we can identify some young female apprentices in the future as well, who are now making up a larger number of employees in the building trades and associated industries. The participants reported greater awareness of electrical safety and safe work practices and a willingness to promote the Electrical Safety Office as a possible future employer of choice, which has offered secure work placements during what has been difficult economic times.

An integral part of the program involves each apprentice employed by the Electrical Safety Office providing a brief presentation to their peers regarding their placement and what they have learned about electrical safety—so taking it out to fellow workers in the electrical trades industry. As a result, peer support and discussion of safety issues complemented the training and heightened electrical safety knowledge and standards throughout the workplace.

An expanded program has been developed with opportunities for participation by greater numbers of apprentices in 2010 and beyond. The first host program for 2010 has just been completed with extremely positive outcomes. The second program for 2010 is planned for September with a further three programs to be held next year, one in a regional centre I am pleased to say.

CHAIR: For the final question of this session I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, I refer to page 1-163 of the SDS, which refers to workplace health and safety services aimed at improving productivity, equity and safety in Queensland workplaces. Can the minister outline how the recently enacted Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2010 provides for increased assistance to workers who wish to return to work after an injury?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question. Getting injured workers back to work as soon as they are capable is critical to ensuring the wellbeing of workers and reducing the costs of the workers compensation scheme not only to employers, but the overall cost to WorkCover Queensland, which means reducing costs for Queenslanders across-the-board. It is also important in order to maximise a productive workforce and, therefore, a productive economy.

The Queensland government is committed to positive return-to-work outcomes for Queensland workers. According to the Campbell's National Return to Work Monitor, Queensland had a return-to-work rate of 84 per cent in 2008-09, which is above the national rate of 83 per cent—not much above, but above. We want to continue to improve that return-to-work rate and that is why we have initiated a number of programs to achieve an increase.

Following an independent review of the Queensland workers compensation scheme and concerns raised by the WorkCover board regarding the sustainability of the scheme, the government responded immediately with a process of consultation on the scheme's future. This included release of the ensuring sustainability and fairness discussion paper in February 2010. At the end of April, I announced a package of reforms to ensure the ongoing viability of the scheme. In May this year I introduced, as honourable members would know, a bill into parliament to make the necessary legislative amendments, which has now been passed and enacted.

A consultation on the discussion paper highlighted that, despite Queensland's relatively high return-to-work rate, the scheme stakeholders believe that more can be done. In response, I have requested the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in consultation with Q-COMP, which is the workers compensation regulator, and WorkCover Queensland to hold a stakeholder forum aimed at further improving rehabilitation and return-to-work outcomes. WorkCover and Q-COMP are presently mapping the complete rehabilitation and return-to-work process. So the complete process is being mapped out. The forum will consider any barriers and gaps in the current process. Once this stage has been completed, consultation will then occur with employer and union representatives, self-insurers and health and allied professionals. The stakeholder forum will help ensure that a range of innovative and well targeted solutions are identified to further improve the rehabilitation and return-to-work outcomes of injured workers in Queensland.

In addition to the legislative measures and the rehabilitation and return-to-work stakeholder forum, the government is constructing a structural review of the workers compensation scheme. The review is examining strategies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme in areas such as claims management and common law settlements. It is anticipated that the structural review will report back to government by the end of September. So there is more work being done. We are keeping a close eye on the reform package that has passed through the parliament. We are looking at those things that came out of the stakeholder round table that we set up and we will continue the reform process to ensure stability and financial security, in particular, in our state's workers compensation scheme in the future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations has expired. Attorney, I would like to thank you, your advisers and all of the officers of the departments, as well as the statutory authorities, for all the work that goes into the preparation for this examination. On behalf of the committee, I ask you to pass on that thanks to your officers. The committee will now break for lunch and resume at 1.15 pm to examine the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland.

Proceedings suspended from 12.16 pm to 1.15 pm

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E—PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, FISHERIES AND RURAL AND REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

In Attendance

Hon. TS Mulherin, Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland
Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

Mr I Fletcher, Director-General

Mr B Turner, Group Executive, Agriculture, Food and Tourism

Mr M Bermingham, Associate Director-General, Employment and Economic Development

Dr R Glanville, Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland

Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority

Mr C Holden, Chief Executive Officer

CHAIR: It being 1.15 pm, I declare this meeting of Estimates Committee E now open. I am Jo-Ann Miller, the member for Bundamba and chair of this committee. Joining me on the committee are Ray Hopper, the member for Condamine; Lindy Nelson-Carr, the member for Mundingburra; David Gibson, the member for Gympie, who will be joining us soon; Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge; Lawrence Springborg, the member for Southern Downs and deputy chair of this committee; and Murray Watt, the member for Everton.

This afternoon the committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2010 for the portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland. On behalf of the committee, may I welcome Minister Mulherin and advisers and officers of departments and statutory bodies. The committee will examine estimates for the portfolio until 3.45 pm.

The proceedings today are lawful proceedings subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. As such, I would like to remind all visitors that any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded in accordance with standing order 206. In relation to media coverage of the hearing, the committee has resolved to allow television film coverage and photography during my introduction and the minister's opening statement. The committee has also agreed to the live broadcast of the hearing via the Parliamentary Service's website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct. Before we begin, I ask that all mobile phones be now switched off. Can you please check your phones.

The time limit for questions is one minute and three minutes for answers. A warning bell will chime 15 seconds before the time runs out. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask all advisers who are called to give an answer to please state their name before speaking.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland open for examination. The question before our committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister Mulherin, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr MULHERIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank my parliamentary colleagues who form Estimates Committee E for the opportunity to address them this afternoon and answer questions regarding the Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland portfolio. The portfolio budget is \$367.3 million for agriculture, food industries and regional economies. With one in eight jobs in Queensland supported by the agricultural supply chain, the Bligh government has committed to building stronger agribusinesses and delivering more jobs for the sector. The 2010-11 state budget delivers on this undertaking.

This year's budget is an important acknowledgement of the success and progress DEEDI has made in the past 12 months. We have seen clear benefits of the integration of the primary industries and fisheries portfolio into DEEDI, particularly delivering increasingly integrated systems to efficiently service our clients across Queensland. The positioning of this portfolio into the one government economic department will also be beneficial in helping the government's commitment to drive economic growth in the agricultural and food industries to reach the potential of \$34 billion by 2020. I believe in the potential of the sector and I continue to focus on improving the services that this government delivers to rural and regional Queensland. I want to make it quite clear that I do not hang onto history as a reason for doing nothing about outdated, costly infrastructure.

I would like to take this opportunity to outline some of the portfolio achievements in the past 12 months. We are building world-class facilities across Queensland that will help to attract and retain the skills this state and this sector will need into the future. An example of this is a major investment by the Bligh government of \$290 million into the new Health and Food Sciences Precinct at Cooper Plains and the Ecosciences Precinct at Boggo Road. We will reinvest \$20 million into the Australian Agricultural College Corporation to increase delivery sites from five to 14, which will deliver relevant agricultural training into the future for young Queenslanders. This model was strongly endorsed by industry.

We have also proactively developed beef and sugar strategies under the national research, development and extension framework to improve the coordination of RD&E nationally. We have committed to a new \$6.9 million dairy research facility with the University of Queensland. We have established the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation with the University of Queensland. We have implemented the \$33 million Beef 2020 strategy, including planning the purchase of a dry tropics beef research property. We have commenced the review of management arrangements for three major fisheries—the Gulf of Carpentaria commercial net fishery, the rocky reef fishery and the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery—and progressed the implementation of Queensland's first Biosecurity Strategy, with a further \$3.5 million secured to finalise the development of comprehensive new biosecurity legislation. The 2010-11 state budget builds on these achievements and provides a strong platform for the future economic growth of the sector.

The expenditure in the portfolio delivers \$28.2 million for agriculture and food, \$108.34 million for Agri-Science Queensland, \$76.3 million for Biosecurity Queensland, \$48.904 million for Fisheries Queensland, \$103.1 million for regional services and \$2.4 million for regional economic development.

Investment in biosecurity is an important part of this year's budget. There is increased interest from the community in biosecurity issues such as the impact of fire ants and Hendra virus. Funding for continued research and awareness campaigns are a vital part of the budget. In addition to the \$76.3 million allocated for Biosecurity Queensland, in the budget the Bligh government has allocated new funding of \$1.5 million for the Queensland Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases and \$300,000 for continued research into a Hendra virus vaccine. An additional \$3 million has been allocated to maintain expenditure on the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. In the next 12 months I look forward to building on these achievements and delivering further progress across the sector.

I believe in change, not just for change's sake but for economic, social and cultural benefits to the sector. We have made tough decisions in tough times to deliver the services and reforms needed to benefit stakeholders and the community, as we promised we would. I am pleased to take questions from my parliamentary colleagues in relation to the portfolio of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will start with non-government questions. I call the member for Condamine.

Mr HOPPER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, Minister and staff. Minister, I refer to SDS pages 2-10 and 2-11 and the contents related to DEEDI. It is quite a document. Minister, do you honestly understand that document and what it actually means for primary industries and fisheries, your budget and staff and, importantly, the front-line services?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. Following the machinery-of-government changes, the government decided that the three key economic drivers of Queensland—that is, primary industries and fisheries, mining and tourism, which have been the cornerstone of our economic success since European settlement—should be brought together under one single economic agency that includes liquor, gaming, racing and fair trading. This machinery-of-government change has enabled us to focus services right across Queensland.

Over 5,000 people are employed by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation. We should consider the breakdown across the regions and particularly the issues around mining and the conflicts with agriculture. There are 625 staff located in the southern region and a further 357 staff located in the central region. By taking this approach, we are really looking at growing the economic prosperity of those regions by providing an integrated service. I believe that the role of government is to focus on where we can make a point of difference to improve the economic prosperity of our regions.

The department is also involved in cross-government work with a number of other agencies to achieve the objectives of the government. The government has embarked on a major capital works program that will ensure we have the infrastructure in place to seize the opportunities and address the challenges as we grow the sectors of the economy, particularly in the area of primary industries.

As I said in my opening statement, agriculture and agribusiness account for one in eight jobs in rural and regional Queensland. It is our intention to grow that business to reach at farm gate \$34 billion by 2020. In addition to that, through our investment in new research facilities and our partnerships with industry and the university sector, I believe that we will be able to value-add to those sectors so that we continue to grow employment opportunities. As I said, in regional Queensland one in eight people relies on agriculture or agribusinesses for a source of income.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, referring to SDS page 2-10, what is the actual dollar-value cut to your budget—that is, the budget for your department of primary industries and fisheries? What does this mean to service delivery across the department?

Mr MULHERIN: As I indicated in my opening remarks, my portfolio of agriculture and food, regional and rural services and fisheries has been allocated \$367-odd million. The breakdown of the budget is \$28.2 million for agriculture and food, \$108.344 million for Agri-Science Queensland, \$76.3 million for Biosecurity Queensland, \$48.904 million for Fisheries Queensland, \$103.1 million for regional services and \$2.4 million for regional economic development. I believe that this investment is the right investment.

The Bligh government has a steady plan to grow the economy of Queensland and we are sticking to that plan. As I said in my previous response to you, this department will be able to provide a whole range of services that were delivered through a number of silos. I believe that by bringing together the key economic agencies of government we will be able to grow the regions, particularly with the Premier's announcement of the Regionalisation Strategy to grow the regions. My department and I will play a role, along with other departments such as DIP and DERM, in developing the policy to grow the regions. One of the other things the department will focus on in the next 12 months—and we have already started preliminary discussions with the sector—is to create a food policy that will focus along the value chain from farm gate to plate. In other words, this will be a first for Queensland.

Mr HOPPER: Thank you very much, Minister, but you did not actually answer the question. I refer to SDS page 2-10. I ask another question: was it a cut or an increase in the budget—that is, your budget for the primary industries and fisheries department, which you are in charge of?

Mr MULHERIN: The budget has seen an increase over last year's budget of \$31.8 million. This is largely as a result of the integration of services for the food, wine and timber industries and regional services following the creation of DEEDI. As I said, in the past the department's economic agencies would work in silos. I believe that this enormous change will deliver results for Queensland. I think the budget that we have provided will assist industries to grow in those regions.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, I refer to page 2-10 of the SDS. How many fewer staff will you have this year compared to last year in your department, the department of primary industries and fisheries?

Mr MULHERIN: Can I just make it quite clear to the member for Condamine that the department of primary industries and fisheries no longer exists. What we have is a new department called the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation. The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation has well over 5,000-odd employees who cover most regional and major inland centres.

Mr HOPPER: Once again you are avoiding the question, Minister. Minister, I refer to your answer to estimates question on notice No. 2 on page 55 regarding the \$3 million allocated for a new cropping research centre. Minister, why on earth are you doing this when you already have a perfectly good facility at Dalby at the agricultural college, which you are about to flog off?

CHAIR: I think the term 'flog off' is unparliamentary. Can you rephrase that?

Mr HOPPER: It describes it pretty well, because that is exactly what it is happening. I will use the word 'sell'.

CHAIR: 'Sell' is much better.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Fire sale.

Mr HOPPER: 'Fire sale' is a better term.

CHAIR: No, 'sell' will be fine.

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is really a two-part question. Let me draw to the attention of the member for Condamine the Liberal National Party draft economic policy, which has adopted a similar policy position to the Bligh government. It states—

The LNP is not philosophically opposed to the sale of non strategic or redundant assets. It does recognise that strategic common user infrastructure is essential to sustain economic performance.

It goes on to say—

The LNP has determined that the proceeds of any future non-strategic or redundant assets would be vested in a "Queensland Fund" ...

That is probably code for a fund that will be overseen by the president of the LNP, Bruce McIver. I would like to know whether he has a secret list of where this money is going to be spent.

What I would like to restate to the member for Condamine is that our policy is to 'deinvest to reinvest' in new facilities. This has been done in consultation with industry. The member for Condamine recently attended a dialogue that I had about the reforms to the Australian Agricultural College Corporation when I visited Dalby. I outlined a strategy around the reforms to the agricultural college which saw the deinvestment of some assets from the college, but that money is being reinvested into

that. We made a statement at the time that the agricultural college would also fund, along with our asset sales of grains properties, a new centre for research on the Darling Downs, closer to Toowoomba. This facility would be in the vicinity of 200 hectares of land with a reliable water supply of 150 megalitres. We will continue to work with the grains industry under the national RD&E platform in developing the Grains 2020 strategic direction. Unlike the member for Condamine, who said at a meeting in Dalby that he was a lone voice in his opposition to any of these changes—

Mr HOPPER: I was and still am.

Mr MULHERIN: Whereas the member for Gregory came out and publicly supported our policy position.

Mr HOPPER: I refer to page 55 once again, Minister. I live just west of Toowoomba in that exact area.

Mr MULHERIN: Bell, I think.

Mr HOPPER: No, it is not—Wyreema, Biddeston.

Mr MULHERIN: You have changed residence.

Mr HOPPER: I changed address about 18 months ago now. How many 200-hectare properties with 150 megalitres of water are available in that area?

Mr MULHERIN: My departmental officers will be going out into that region looking for this property. I do not oversee the actual program of identifying properties. That is best left up to departmental officers who have the brief around what is required. It is a market. We believe that we will secure such a property like with 2020 Beef, where we are pretty close to finalising a purchase of a property in the Charters Towers area for research. I do not think that, at the end of the day, we will have difficulty in securing a property that meets the specifications that we believe and industry believes are required for future research into grains. But it is not just about the property on the Darling Downs but also about ensuring that we have first-class facilities so that we can attract the best and brightest scientists to work with industry and the university sector in improving productivity through RD&E. In addition to that property, we would also be, through our 'deinvest to reinvest' strategy, investing in upgrading the Hermitage Research Station.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, I refer to page 55 again. You say that the infrastructure requirements on the property will be adequately budgeted for and you will not know what will be required until the property is purchased. Are you going to build a whole new educational facility, because I take it from your previous answer that this facility will be built in conjunction with the Australian Agricultural College Corporation?

Mr MULHERIN: That is right. We have made no bones about that. When we announced the reforms to the agricultural college we indicated that the agricultural college would be part of a partnership with DEEDI in relation to the purchase of a new grains research facility on the Downs. I believe that linking training with research and extension will have great outcomes for the sector. You seem to be caught in a time warp where you believe that all assets should be retained and never sold off. It is just like any business, be it public or private. We want to become relevant to our client base. It is really about investing in the future to ensure that we can attract the best and brightest into DEEDI to do the applied research in conjunction with our university and industry partners.

Mr HOPPER: Same reference and same line of questioning. Minister, I would strongly suggest that \$3 million will not go very far. We were at Dalby at that meeting and you yourself saw the facilities there. Even just to rebuild one conference room would cost nearly that when we have those facilities in place at Dalby. Minister, you would not build a decent lecture hall or conference room for \$3 million, let alone pay for any new machinery such as a reasonable tractor. Do you plan to get contractors in? What is the deal? It is going to cost a phenomenal amount of money to set up what you are talking about.

Mr MULHERIN: As part of the formation of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, one of the things we want to do is create the one DEEDI, which is about ensuring that we look at all of our locations. In the Toowoomba region, for example, we are across eight different locations. As far as the property is concerned, that is to carry out research on the ground. But we will also be looking at our facilities and at how we can best locate our science staff and our extension staff and regional services staff so that we can better support the economy of not only the Darling Downs but also the south-west of Queensland.

The grains property is not a training site. It is really about the future in relation to training. When you look at the agricultural college sector, it is about on-the-job training which includes point in time and place. It is about ensuring that workers who are engaged on these properties have the appropriate skill sets to help build the productivity of the enterprise.

In addition to the agricultural college reform, we will have two residential colleges—one at Emerald and one at Longreach. The Dalby facility, in partnership with Education Queensland, is proposing to—and it will start next year—have a secondary boarding school which will have a focus on agribusiness and mining in its secondary syllabus. My understanding is that there has been a great deal

of interest from people wanting to do that. The Agricultural College Corporation will also deliver services from that site. So the future of agricultural training is really around partnerships with Education Queensland, the university sector and industry. What we are trying to create is a seamless pathway from secondary education through the VET sector and on to the tertiary sector. The property that we are acquiring will be around grains R&D, and training with R&D will be integrated.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, I refer to page 2-5 of the SDS and biosecurity. I refer to your answer to estimates question on notice No. 6 regarding the underspending in your department. The amount of \$260,000 was underspent in relation to the relocation of the tick herd, apparently due to a weather event. Can you explain in simple terms what this means? What happened, what was the weather event and what do you mean by that?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question about the relocation of the tick herd. It is my understanding, and the advice from the department was, that it related to drought conditions. As the member would be aware, most of Queensland went through a five-year period of probably one of the worst droughts in 100 years. That has been followed up by flood events in the south-west, the best in 120 years. So these types of events do impact on the ability to re-establish the herd. We will re-establish the herd in this financial year.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We now turn to government questions. I call the member for Mundingburra.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Minister, I refer to the second last measure on page 2-20 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can the minister please provide details of the new equipment being trialled as part of the Shark Control Program to reduce entanglement of non-target species?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. Remote control cameras are the latest equipment to be trialled in our ongoing efforts to rescue whales from entanglements in shark nets. Five cameras will be trialled at eight beaches on the Gold Coast to help identify entangled whales and assist in their swift release. The Coastalwatch surfcam system streams footage online of popular swimming and surfing beaches and is used by people wanting to check out surf conditions before heading to the beach. The system is also used by surf-lifesavers to monitor swimming locations.

Our release team officers will now also use the cameras to help confirm potential whale entanglements. If an entanglement is reported, Fisheries officers will be able to remotely access the cameras and zoom in on the shark net to confirm if a whale is entangled. Being able to identify an entanglement immediately means that we can have our response team on the water faster, giving us the best possible chance of successfully releasing the whale unharmed. The approach also means that we are not responding to false alarms, which can be costly and time consuming.

The beaches that are included are Main Beach, Surfers Paradise, Miami, Mermaid Beach, Burleigh, Currumbin, Kirra and Coolangatta. They were chosen to be included in the trial due to the large number of whales passing their shores. The cameras are just one of a number of Bligh government initiatives in place to reduce and respond to whale entanglements as part of \$2.3 million allocated in the 2010-11 budget for the Shark Control Program.

We have about 13,000 whales that migrate up the Queensland coastline. We need to continually review our practices in reducing the number of whales caught and how we respond. In addition to the cameras, this migration season we are also seeing the trial of new whale alarms, or pingers as they are commonly known. They have a longer and louder sound specifically aimed at whales to alert them to the location of shark nets. These new initiatives support our Marine Animal Release Team and complement our Whale Observer Program already in place.

Since 2000, 29 whales have been caught in shark nets and 26 of those have been successfully released. The Queensland Shark Control Program was introduced in 1962 and has been highly effective for 48 years, with only one fatal shark attack recorded. The program protects 85 beaches at 10 centres along the Queensland coast from the Gold Coast to Cairns, utilising a mixture of 348 drum lines and 55 nets. The Shark Control Program continually looks at ways of improving our shark control equipment.

CHAIR: I refer to the third last dot point on page 2-5 of the Service Delivery Statements. I understand that as part of the fire ant program the government is working on the development of remote-sensing technology. Can you explain how this technology will assist in addressing the fire ant threat in our community?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the member for the question. Fire ant remote-sensing technology being trialled by Biosecurity Queensland is showing excellent results in identifying fire ant infestations from the air. Initial trials on fire ant nests over the past year in South-East Queensland show that imagery can be captured quickly and cost effectively. The trials at Marburg earlier this year detected 80 per cent of mounds that were greater than 60 centimetres, 65 per cent of mounds that were greater than 30 centimetres and 19 per cent of mounds that were less than 30 centimetres.

The remote-sensing technology uses multispectral infrared thermal cameras mounted on an aircraft which detects the fire ant mounds as the core temperature of the ant is greater than the surrounding earth. The technology is used in combination with all three-image capture types in what is a world first for fire ant detection.

As the fire ant restricted area approaches about 100,000 hectares, the remote-sensing technology will provide a vital new tool to survey large areas of land quickly and accurately. The technology will allow us to detect fire ant infestations at significantly lower costs than the current field surveillance. Current trials are aimed at improving the image resolution and data alignment. Biosecurity Queensland will continue to work with scientists at the University of Sydney through the upcoming phases of the trial to automate detection software. The final stage of the research will be to start using the technology to detect any unknown fire ant infestations outside known areas of infestation.

Current results are extremely positive. We expect that we will be using remote-sensing technology for large areas, rather than the current targeted surveillance, by mid-2011. Queensland continues to work with its national cost-sharing partners to ensure fire ants do not become part of Australia's natural landscape. An additional \$3 million was allocated by the Queensland government in the 2010-11 state budget to maintain the expenditure on the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. The focus of the program remains firmly on the goal of eradication.

An independent review of the eradication program was presented to the national management group in April 2010. The review examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the eradication program with a focus on the long-term outlook for the program. The review noted the difficulties associated with treating and fully delineating the spread of fire ants and suggested that more work be done in the area of research.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to page 2-5, dot point 8 of the Service Delivery Statements. The Ecosciences Precinct and the Health and Food Sciences Precinct are clearly major investments and headline projects for the government. Could the minister please provide more detail about how they will benefit Queensland's primary industries and what other existing work they will support?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. Some \$377.9 million has been invested in establishing the Health and Food Sciences Precinct at Coopers Plains and the Ecosciences Precinct at Boggo Road, with a major investment of \$290 million by the Bligh government. These precincts will enhance the sustainability and the international competitiveness of the agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining and tourism industries in Queensland.

The \$100 million Health and Food Sciences Precinct at Coopers Plains will maintain Queensland's international reputation for clean, safe and high-quality food and animal products. The precinct will focus on the creation of superfoods to combat disorders like diabetes and degenerative eye disease and enhance animal health, biosecurity and food integrity by expanding the range of new methods to protect against emerging and exotic diseases contained in food.

Work in the Ecosciences Precinct will tackle climate change and ensure the protection of our natural resources and environment whilst ensuring sustainable growth in our primary industries and tourism industry. The integrated research effort comprising around 1,000 scientists will position Queensland as a global leader in finding the balance between developing strong industries, lowering the impact on the environment and enhancing our quality of life. The Ecosciences Precinct will include world-class facilities for research into plant and animal production as well as disease and pest control.

The Health and Food Sciences Precinct was completed and operational as of May 2010. DEEDI, Queensland Health and CSIRO scientists have created a vibrant knowledge centre for health and food. This is the first of its type in the world. Canada is following in our footsteps. The precinct is located on the Queensland Health campus near Griffith University. There are about 700 scientists and support staff. The campus has become a centre of excellence, focusing on improving quality of life through advances in health care, medicine, food security and nutrition. To support these new precincts, DEEDI has collaborated with the universities and CSIRO to develop a new science centre at Gatton, plant production at Redlands and aquaculture and sustainable fisheries at Bribie Island.

In 2007 DEEDI partnered with UQ to develop the \$33 million Centre for Advanced Animal Science at Gatton. This centre researches livestock productivity and animal disease and is probably the best centre in the Southern Hemisphere when it comes to production animal research.

Mr WATT: I refer to page 2-4, dot point 3 of the Service Delivery Statements. Research clearly forms a key part of DEEDI's business in assisting our primary industries. Could the minister please detail any significant expenditure on science and research in the biosecurity space?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the member for the question. The Queensland government is investing \$5.1 million over the next three years to establish the Queensland Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases at the Health and Food Sciences Precinct at Coopers Plains. The centre will initially focus on the continuation of the groundbreaking Hendra virus research conducted over the past few years. This work will be led by the internationally renowned scientist Dr Hume Field. Hume is a great person who is committed to public service through his research.

The research aims to reduce the risk of infection from Hendra virus for both humans and horses. As part of the initial work program, the centre will also work with the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, which is a division of CSIRO in Geelong, to develop a horse vaccine for Hendra virus. The Queensland government has contributed a further \$300,000 for this work. The federal government has agreed to match that funding.

The frequency of emerging infectious diseases is increasing globally and nationally. Diseases such as Nipah virus, avian influenza and Hendra virus have the potential to cause significant economic loss and social impacts. The Queensland Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases is the first institution of its kind in Australia and will continue the important work on Hendra virus that was initially funded through the recently closed Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to page 2-5, dot point 2 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can the minister please inform the committee how the government's discussion paper *Strategic directions for development of the Queensland biobased industrial products sector* will help develop policies to facilitate biobased industrial enterprises in Queensland?

Mr MULHERIN: Last week I released a discussion paper for public comment that examines Queensland's potential to be recognised as a leading producer of biobased industrial products and technology in the Asia-Pacific region. I wanted to make a comment about this discussion paper because it really brings home why we created DEEDI as a single economic agency. Prior to the machinery-of-government changes my department and the former department of tourism, regional development and innovation were working on this project but from different perspectives. By creating DEEDI, we have been able to bring together the expertise across the whole of DEEDI in developing this discussion paper. We are the first jurisdiction in Australia to actually put this out. The US government is the only other government in the world that has a national strategy around biobased industry.

Biobased industries make up about 15 per cent of the global petrochemical based industries. We believe that in the next 10 years biobased industries will be competitive with chemical industries that are derived from carbon or petrochemicals.

Developing the biobased products sector is really about addressing the diminishing oil reserves and reducing the effects of greenhouse gases and climate change. It is really about developing an industry which is much cleaner and greener and has renewable alternatives. Biobased products fit that description. In future, plants such as sorghum, algae, sugarcane, short rotation woody weeds, crops and forest waste will be transformed into plastics, chemicals and aviation fuel.

Queensland is well placed to become a leader in this new industry. We have established a world-class network of research facilities such as the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology, the Queensland Brain Institute and the Health and Food Sciences Precinct. We believe that by positioning Queensland we could become the national leader. There will be great potential to grow regional jobs. We have a highly skilled workforce and great scientists. It is really about growing another industry for Queensland.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Minister, on page 2-2 of the SDS the paragraph outlining the department's strategic issues discusses developing our regional communities. Could the minister please outline the government's new initiative to empower regional communities to achieve their economic, social and environmental goals?

Mr MULHERIN: Last week I was pleased to announce \$2 million in funding over two years available for projects that improve our regions. The funding is part of Tomorrow's Regions, which brings together the Blueprint for the Bush initiative and Regional Development Australia committees to provide a stronger voice for rural Queensland. Rural communities within the Blueprint for the Bush footprint will be eligible to apply for funding to implement projects that will improve the economic, social and cultural capacity of the regions. Under the planned funding, up to \$10,000 will be made available for up to 100 recipients a year for projects in rural communities. The funding will be for plans like developing local sporting facilities or strategies to develop local shows of volunteer organisations.

I will give members some examples of previous funding under the former Strengthening Rural Communities strategy. There was \$10,440 to the Copper City Tennis Club in Mount Isa to develop a five-year strategic business plan. I have been advised that, following on from the development of that plan, the Copper City Tennis Club at Mount Isa was successful in obtaining funding from Sport and Recreation to develop new tennis facilities. There was also \$10,700-odd given to the Gympie District Show Society to develop a model to generate community engagement and resource sharing within the Gympie region. The Texas Hospital Auxiliary received \$10,000 to develop a framework for a volunteer program. They are just some examples of what can be done. Communities will be able to register their interest in the new funding program by emailing the department through Blueprint for the Bush at DEEDI.

Another addition to Tomorrow's Regions will assign specific ministers to regions across the state to act as a direct pathway for regions into government. The community has been vocal in wanting more effective and direct interaction with ministers, and I think this is a better way of rural engagement. The

ministers will also use the RDA committees as a form of community engagement on a twice-yearly basis. I look forward to the outcomes we will achieve through this innovative partnership between RDA committees and local, federal and state governments.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now turn to non-government questions. I call the member for Condamine.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 2-5. With reference to your fishing strategy, responsible for the economic development and sustainability of Queensland's \$459 million fishing industry, can you explain Peter Garrett's latest plan to ban offshore fishing from Fingal to Brunswick Heads? Is this going to be like the fuel tax and asset sales—as soon as the election is over, in come the fishing bans, the big job losses and more fishing pressure on Gold Coast waters?

Mr MULHERIN: Amazing!

CHAIR: Member for Condamine, isn't Fingal down to Brunswick Heads in New South Wales?

Mr HOPPER: It is northern New South Wales.

CHAIR: Okay. I just wanted to clarify that because we are doing the Queensland estimates here. Minister, would you like to respond?

Mr MULHERIN: I will respond. It is really a Commonwealth government initiative and it really highlights how short is the memory of the member for Condamine, because the Commonwealth government is building on an initiative of the coalition government under John Howard where Howard—I take it that you were supportive of Howard—established around the coastline of Australia a series of bioregional planning processes. My understanding is that the Commonwealth government has extended the consultation period with all sectors—

Mr HOPPER: And Bob Brown.

Mr MULHERIN: Following this further consultation, the federal government will release a draft plan on these bioregions for a further 90 days of public consultation with all of the stakeholders. Fisheries Queensland has been asked to provide information around the commercial and recreational fishing efforts in this region to inform the working group that was established by the federal government around fishing effort. But this is a Commonwealth government program, not a state government program. As I said at the beginning, you have a very short memory. This program was established under the Howard government. I would have thought you would be aware of the establishment of these bioregion policies at a national level.

Mr HOPPER: As short as my memory is, I certainly remember the deal with the Greens for the wild rivers at the last election. So I am not too bad with my memory, Minister. Minister, the SDS at page 2-5—

Mr MULHERIN: Don't political parties negotiate preference deals?

Mr HOPPER: With regard to Moreton Bay green zones—

Mr MULHERIN: I think you all got caught up in One Nation preference deals at one stage, to your disadvantage.

Mr HOPPER: Just so rude. He does not even want to hear the question.

CHAIR: Minister and member for Condamine, can we get back to a bit of decorum here, please? Member for Condamine, can you please ask your question.

Mr HOPPER: Thank you. I am trying to make you feel uncomfortable, Minister.

Mr MULHERIN: I am not uncomfortable.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, staying with your Fisheries Strategy 2009-14, with reference to page 2-5 of the SDS, your media statement on 17 July on the health of Queensland's fisheries states strong results from 61 of the 62 stocks, with only snapper classed as overfished. Minister, in light of these scientific facts, where is the demonstrated need to continue to exclude commercial and recreational fishers from green zones in Moreton Bay?

Mr MULHERIN: Once again, the green zones are covered under legislation that is the responsibility of the Minister for Climate Change and not the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries.

Mr HOPPER: What about the fish that are in them?

Mr MULHERIN: In the development of the Moreton Bay Marine Park, Fisheries Queensland provided data to the Department of Environment and Resource Management in developing the Moreton Bay Marine Park. The Moreton Bay Marine Park went from two per cent to 16 per cent. Fisheries Queensland will continue to work with the fishing sector to improve the social and economic benefits of the sector through our Fisheries Strategy 2009-14. The focus there is about protecting the habitat, maximising the harvest and growing the value of the fishery. We have gone out and engaged with our stakeholders. Our Fisheries Strategy is the first time that a strategy has been developed for the sector.

Already as a result of that strategy, Fisheries Queensland is currently working with industry about trying to reduce the complexities of the rules that govern fisheries so that we have a more responsive management. It is also working on the finalisation of the Great Sandy regional marine aquaculture plan, which, through this process, I would hope becomes the model to further develop aquaculture in this state.

I think we have great potential to grow aquaculture to add value to our fisheries sector. We have some of the best scientists in the world, particularly in tropical fisheries, and I would invite you when you are next in Cairns to look at the wonderful work they are doing up there in breeding coral trout in captivity and proper and some of the works that are happening at Bribie Island, which is closer to home, around self-contained aquaculture which minimises the discharge.

At the end of the day, getting back to your question around green zones, it is really about biodiversity, not fisheries management. This was reflected in the fact that the bioregions were something that was established under the Howard government. All we are doing is protecting the biodiversity of the region, but we will continue to work with fisheries to ensure that all sections of the fishery sector profit from this wonderful resource.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, being in charge of fish management, will your department recommend that your government introduce more green zones in other parts of Queensland in the future, for example the Fraser Coast region?

Mr MULHERIN: Once again the member is completely off the track. The Department of Environment and Resource Management is the agency responsible for biodiversity. My agency of Fisheries Queensland is responsible for the management of fisheries, and that is why we have released that strategy to take the industry forward from 2009 through to 2014.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 2-5. Can we take it that your Fisheries Strategy 2009-14 is a dynamic program that looks at other aspects apart from the green zones? If so, as part of the Queensland Catch program or otherwise, would you consider introducing mandatory labelling of all fish imported from outside Queensland waters so that Queensland consumers can readily identify non-local catch in markets, supermarkets, restaurants and other places where fish is sold?

CHAIR: Minister, just before you answer that, member for Condamine, I understand that the labelling of food is part of FSANZ, which is a Commonwealth and New Zealand organisation. Minister, if you care to answer that, that is fine.

Mr MULHERIN: I welcome the input from the chair. It just shows his lack of knowledge around the processes. When it comes to food labelling, Queensland Health has carriage around that. Queensland Health along with other health portfolios across Australia and New Zealand make up the membership of FSANZ and agencies such as DEEDI, through our agricultural and food group, provide input to the health minister in relation to policies.

My understanding is that FSANZ is looking at that issue around labelling. From a ministerial council level at Primary Industries, we recently agreed to coming up with standard names for fish species across Australia, because one of the issues with fish is that it is an occasional food for some and people will only eat the catch that they know, which is mainly local. By developing a national consistency around names, I believe this will further enable the industry to grow, particularly when you go into a restaurant. Some restaurants are already using labelling. If you go to some of the restaurants in Brisbane you will see that they have scallops from Hervey Bay and snapper from Swains Reef.

This is one of the other great things about having this one economic agency of DEEDI in that we can link agriculture, food and tourism. When people visit regions, they want to know about local produce. They want to consume local produce. I have had discussions with the health minister around this whole issue of labelling. He is supportive of going down that path, but we do not want to pre-empt the outcome of FSANZ. We will be guided by that, but we are looking at that issue of labelling in restaurants. In the meantime, I would encourage restaurants to promote Queensland produce. It is great produce and I think they are doing themselves a disservice by not promoting Queensland produce such as our beef, seafood and great horticultural lines along with our wine industry.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 2-12. I had a lot of questions on our forestry plantations, but since they have been flogged off already—they are already gone—in this government's fire sale of assets—

Mr MULHERIN: Haven't you read your policy yet?

Mr HOPPER: Given this government's fire sale of assets, I only have one question on this. In terms of the contractual obligation on the buyer to continue to establish 20,000 hectares of hardwood plantations by 2025, when the logging of native forests will cease, how will you ensure that Hancock Timber does this?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. Forestry Plantations Queensland was sold to Hancock Queensland Plantations, I think they trade as. As part of that sale there were a number of conditions placed on the sale of the former Forestry Plantations Queensland.

One of those conditions was to carry out the policy of the government, which FPQ prior to its sale was implementing, and that is to create 20,000 hectares of hardwood plantations. From memory, I think we have acquired about 15,000 hectares of land under the former government owned corporation Forestry Plantations Queensland and about 12½ hectares of that 15,000 hectares had already been planted with hardwood species. As a condition, Hancocks will have to acquire the remaining 5,000 hectares of forestry to implement that policy of the government. It is due for completion I think in 2025.

Mr HOPPER: Under page 2-9 of the SDS, programs driving food and fibre production, you are the minister for primary industries and I know that coal seam comes under the mining act but are you totally comfortable with the developments in coal seam gas and particularly the underground coal gasification industry and the impacts on the underground water and agriculture and the aquifers of the Great Artesian Basin?

CHAIR: Minister, just before you answer that, you have just asked a question in relation to the minister's opinion. Minister, you may wish to take the standing orders into account when answering that.

Mr HOPPER: It is involving agriculture.

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I suppose he is focusing on two different types of mining activity—one around the underground gasification method, where coal is burnt underground and a synthetic gas is given off. The Queensland government has allowed three companies to undertake trials. Cougar recently was ordered to stop work because of benzene and toluene emissions. I want to assure you that the water supply for the town of Kingaroy has not been impacted. My agency, the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, through its different arms of mining and also through Biosecurity Queensland, is working with Queensland Health around the issues. The government has made it quite clear that if Cougar is in breach of its licensing arrangements around this trial it could face fines.

The other part of what you are referring to is the coal seam gas, which is where, as part of the process of extracting the gas, water is discharged. The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation is working across government on a series of policy initiatives covering such things as the land access framework, strategic cropping land—and I note that you put out a policy, which is very similar to ours—after we put one out for discussion—

Mr HOPPER: We had it out long before yours was.

Mr MULHERIN: A groundwater policy, a coal seam gas water policy, cumulative growth management networks and also the work that we are doing around the Surat Basin—future direction statement. I would, with remaining time, ask the director-general of DEEDI to comment on these issues.

Mr Fletcher: We have been doing a great deal of consultation with landowners to ensure that their concerns about groundwater management are taken fully into account. That is reflected in both the Water Act and consideration that we are giving to the future framework under the petroleum and gas act, which is the relevant legislative framework.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. Member for Condamine, do you wish—

Mr HOPPER: One more question. I can make it a short one.

CHAIR: One more question. Okay.

Mr HOPPER: I refer to page 2-11 of the SDS, revenue and user charges. Your licence fee for the collection of freshwater fishing has created quite a good restocking program, which has been very beneficial. These fees have been collected and quite a lot of money has been raised. Can you tell the committee what percentage of these fees has gone back into restocking? If not 100 per cent of the fees have been used for restocks, what has been done with the rest of the money?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. The stocked impoundment permit system is a great initiative. Not only does it provide fishing resources in freshwater dams but also it creates opportunities for employment and tourism. The advice given to me by the department is that 75 per cent of it goes back into stocked impoundment, the restocking of freshwater dams, and 25 per cent is used in administration. So the total fees that are collected around this scheme are used and put back into the program.

I just want to make that link between the opportunities that it provides not only for people pursuing their recreational interests but also the links it has to tourism and jobs. That wily old Mayor of Richmond, John Wharton, had an issue around trying to attract a skilled workforce into Richmond to support agribusinesses in his region. So he dug a hole, created a dam, filled it with water, signed up for a stocked impoundment permit and placed a caravan park adjacent to the water reserve that he created. Of course, that attracted the grey nomads who stayed, spent money in the town and explored the regions but, more importantly, those grey nomads were a source of labour in a time of a tight labour market and they were able to provide support to agribusinesses in that area. I think that is a good example of what DEEDI should be doing—working across government across the economic area. The purpose of that was to put fish in freshwater dams so that people could recreate but it is those flow-on benefits that, to me, are real tangible outcomes of that program. I would like to commend John Wharton for his vision in relation to that development he did at Richmond.

CHAIR: We now turn to government questions. I call the member for Everton.

Mr WATT: Minister, I refer to page 2-58, paragraph 1 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can the minister update the committee on the Reconnecting Agricultural Education plan? How will this new strategy for the agricultural colleges provider greater benefits for industry?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. In April 2010, I announced the \$20 million Reconnecting Agricultural Education plan as a key part of my Fresh Approach initiative to help primary industries to achieve its economic potential of \$34 billion by 2020. The plan contains the most significant reforms in the AACC's history, including the expansion of training locations from five to 14 locations, the revitalisation of training products and services, the introduction of new flexible service delivery methods, the formation of partnerships with government, secondary education—both public and private—the university sector and industry. The reforms identified for the AACC are designed to reinvigorate the corporation's business and re-establish its standing as a key vocational training and skilling partner for rural and related industries. The plan's vision is to create a training organisation that can respond to the industry's training needs by ensuring that training is delivered to the industry in a way and in a time that meets its requirements. This includes traditional on-farm training delivery and more flexible options for existing workers, such as formal recognition of existing knowledge and skills.

In terms of the expansion of the AACC, it will have an increased delivery presence in South Johnstone, near Innisfail, Ingham, Ayr, Bowen, Charters Towers, Mackay, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Gatton and Cunnamulla. The AACC engaged regional agricultural industry and key stakeholders to seek advice on whether its training and assessment strategies and training content was industry relevant. The traditional full-time residential training product will be revitalised to reflect modern industry trends in operational skills requirement and industry management practices. The AACC will develop an online training delivery capability in order to enhance its delivery modes to better service the needs of a modern student.

The mapping of DEEDI's extension services to the AACC training competencies will value-add to both organisations in their ability to service the industry's needs. Our argument is that, if DEEDI is providing an extension service to a farmer to adapt to new methods, that should be recognised as a skill set or a qualification. So we will work through those issues, which will give that recognition of prior learning.

CHAIR: I refer to the last dot on page 2-7 of the Service Delivery Statements. What is the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation and how will our primary industries benefit from its establishment?

Mr MULHERIN: It is a great name—the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation, affectionately known as QAAFI. As part of the 2010-11 state budget, the Bligh government will invest \$6.5 million to strengthen food and fibre research and development in partnership with the University of Queensland through the establishment of QAAFI. During the 2009 state election I committed to establishing a Queensland centre for advanced agriculture as part of the Fresh Approach initiative, which was launched in 2008. The establishment of QAAFI fulfils this commitment. Professor Robert Henry was appointed as the first director of QAAFI in April this year. The appointment was in recognition of the Bligh government's longstanding relationship with the University of Queensland, resulting in the joint funding of the position.

Through this appointment and the subsequent shaping of QAAFI—and we also engaged with our industry partners, such as AgForce and Growcom in the establishment of this—the Bligh government, I believe, will be initiating world-class research into agricultural innovation. The alliance creates a new research and development institute to support the food and agribusiness sector. Through this partnership with the University of Queensland QAAFI provides a more robust model for research and development that will build a critical mass of scientists and infrastructure. It will deliver an increased level of high-impact or discovery-orientated science—in other words, blue sky science—that is linked to applied R&D science that is currently undertaken by DEEDI.

Initially, it will focus on increased efficiency and sustainability improvements that address climate change preparedness, water use efficiency, adapted farm management systems and enhanced ecological sustainability. Planning is currently underway to transition approximately 40 DEEDI scientists to the alliance. When we talk about transition, they will be part of the alliance but they may not physically relocate from DEEDI facilities. It is anticipated that a similar number of staff from UQ will transition to join the alliance. The benefits to staff include enhanced career opportunities in science, while close association with UQ will allow greater depth of research potential to be realised. The alliance is about retaining and enhancing Queensland researching and teaching capabilities to support the food and agribusiness sector.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to paragraph 4 on page 2-12 of the Service Delivery Statement. With the growing hardwood plantation estate and new private investment in the timber plantation industry in Queensland, will the minister please outline in greater detail what the future vision is for our timber plantation industry?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. Today I am pleased to table a new strategy aimed at supporting the future expansion of the state's \$4 billion forest and timber industry and increasing the employment in that sector. I seek leave of the committee to table the document.

CHAIR: Leave granted.

Mr MULHERIN: The new strategy will see the state government step up its support for increasing investment in Queensland's timber plantation sector. The Queensland Timber Plantation Strategy 2020 signals a new direction for the government. It identifies a fundamental change in the role of government from direct ownership of timber plantations to one of leadership and strategic direction setting.

The recent sale of the Queensland government's plantation estate to the private sector has opened the way for a more commercially focused approach to the state's timber plantations. The aim of the strategy is to provide an investor-ready environment for a competitive, sustainable timber plantation sector. I released the draft Queensland Timber Plantation Strategy for consultation in late 2009. I also wrote to a wide range of industry participants and other stakeholders requesting their feedback and comments about the draft strategy, particularly in relation to its implementation phase.

The strategy is the first of its kind in Queensland. The strategy outlines five focus areas where the Queensland government will concentrate its industry development efforts over the next decade. These include land use planning frameworks for timber plantations, legislative and policy projects, investment initiatives, targeted industry development support and community education about timber plantations. In relation to the land use planning framework, the Queensland government will recognise timber plantations as a legitimate form of agricultural cropping for general land use planning purposes. The Queensland government also intends to develop a timber plantation assessment code within the Queensland planning provisions to help ensure that the development assessment process for timber plantations is more in line with long-term agricultural cropping activities. We will also deliver a range of targeted industry development actions.

The electorate strategy identifies the need to work with the timber plantation companies to help improve community understanding and acceptance of the timber plantation sector. You only have to go to Maryborough to see the importance of the timber plantation industry and the value adding that occurs there at Hynes. There are a number of other processes that are also involved in value adding of the timber product.

Mr WATT: Minister, I refer to the fourth last dot point on page 2-5 of the Service Delivery Statement. Can the minister please outline how important the Biosecurity Strategy and the biosecurity bill will be to the future security of both our community and the primary industries sector?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. Biosecurity is a critical issue for both our agricultural sector and the broader Queensland community. The Bligh government recognises that we must take significant steps to prepare for and respond to the biosecurity risks faced each and every day. This was the reason for the establishment of Biosecurity Queensland back in 2007, paving the way for other states to follow our lead, and it is integral to the work that we are conducting today. That is why \$3.5 million has been committed in this year's budget to support the effective development of the bill and to implement the key features of the Biosecurity Strategy.

The strategy released in 2008 signalled a major repositioning of Queensland's biosecurity system and was developed in consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders. Based on the principle that biosecurity is the responsibility of all Queenslanders, the strategy provides a framework for the development of a modern biosecurity system. It is agreed that the ongoing effectiveness of Queensland's biosecurity risk mitigation is dependant on prevention, preparedness, surveillance, response, recovery and ongoing management. Since the release of the Biosecurity Strategy, a significant achievement in its own right, BQ has embarked on what is quite possibly the most significant legislative review conducted in the primary industries sector for over 40 years. The development of the new biosecurity bill is a substantial drafting exercise which repeals seven acts, part of another act, 10 regulations, eight notices and one declaration. In this year's budget, \$3.5 million has been committed to support the effective development of the bill and to implement the key features of the Biosecurity Strategy.

The new legislation will ensure that Queensland has the statutory basis to respond to a vast array of biosecurity risks. The bill will also significantly reduce the regulatory burden for both government and industry. The state will have the capacity to apply the precautionary principle to take timely action to respond to the vast array of known and unknown biosecurity risks. We have already conducted significant consultation with stakeholder groups and the feedback has been very positive. Given the significance of this work and the overwhelming industry support for the exercise, this government has committed the additional funding to maximise the value of the process.

That said, we have already made some great progress in the release of this strategy. This includes moving Biosecurity Queensland's science staff and laboratories to the new \$100 million food and health science precinct, the investment of \$1.5 million over three years for the Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases and also the establishment of an emergency management unit to enhance our response training systems. This unit has an \$810,000 a year budget.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer to page 2-8, dot point 13 of the SDS. Will the minister please outline what plans are in place to preserve the sustainability of fisheries in Queensland under the Fisheries Strategy?

Mr MULHERIN: The majority of the world's fish stocks are intensely exploited, with approximately 25 per cent either overfished or depleted. By contrast, Queensland fish stocks are in a relatively healthy position. This is reflected in the fish stock report released last week outlining that only one of Queensland's 64 assessed stocks is classified as overfished—that is snapper. This healthy position is the result of a strong history of monitoring Queensland fish stocks and fishery management reforms.

The Queensland government has a responsibility to ensure that fisheries in Queensland are managed sustainably and are there for future generations. Fisheries Queensland is continuing to review and improve existing methods used to measure the performance of management arrangements and to evaluate the status of Queensland fish stocks. This knowledge is critical to demonstrate that our fisheries are being managed sustainably and that economic returns and recreational opportunities are maximised over the longer term.

Monitoring Queensland fisheries is conducted through compulsory daily commercial fishery logbooks and voluntary recreational fish diaries to provide information about fishing catch, commercial and recreational fishing effort and the value of the commercial fisheries harvest. DEEDI has invested half a million dollars in a state-wide survey of the Queensland recreational fishing sector in 2010-11. The survey will collect vital information on participation rates and estimate recreational catch, including regional estimates for major target fish species. Other monitoring being undertaken by DEEDI provides information on size and distribution of major fish and crustacean stocks critical to world-class stock assessments. Our Fisheries Observer Program has recently been expanded with the cooperation of fishers to provide additional information on the aspects of the commercial fishery not obtainable through logbooks.

DEEDI also monitors the progress towards catch quotas and the location of certain fishing activities using satellite technology. This ensures that the commercial fishers do not exceed the catch and effort quota levels and are complying with closed waters and marine park regulations. DEEDI reports publicly on the status of Queensland fisheries and recent management changes on an annual basis through its website.

CHAIR: I refer to the fourth measure on page 2-18 of the Service Delivery Statement which relates to consultation and engagement. Minister, you are aware that I have the Dinmore meatworks in my particular electorate and I would be very grateful if you could outline the significance of the department's high level of industry engagement and how that will benefit industries such as our meat processing sectors?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I seek leave to table the 2009-10 Engagement Report for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland portfolios.

CHAIR: Leave granted.

Mr MULHERIN: In 2009-10 the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation delivered 19 external engagement dialogues within my portfolio. I participated directly in 17 of these forums. These forums were used to strengthen the relationship to resolve policy issues, influence and shape the forward agenda and identify opportunities for improving service delivery.

In 2009-10 the forums supported DEEDI to engage with more than 455 stakeholders about critical policy issues in over 50 hours of direct conversation. They covered key issues in my portfolio, including Hendra virus, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, the Albatross Bay declared fish habitat area, reforms to the AACC, the development of food policy and our partnership in science. They also dealt with specific issues in sheep, beef, poultry and the aquaculture and wine industries. The proactive nature provides government with information and perspectives from stakeholders on DEEDI's activities, priority services and emerging issues. Outcomes of the forums are action based with officers dedicated to working with stakeholders on each issue.

I want to emphasise to the committee that these forums give stakeholders with opposing commercial views a rare opportunity to understand all issues up and down the value of the chain. I am pleased to advise the committee that my next dialogue will focus on meat processing and beef production and will occur in Brisbane on 20 August 2010. Producers to processors will have an opportunity to discuss critical issues on the further development of an efficient and profitable meat processing and beef production industry. Approximately 30 participants will be invited to participate, including Safe Food Production Queensland, Queensland Rail, AQIS, industry representatives and major players in both the meat processing and beef production industries.

I commend the report to the committee and I look forward to proactively working with all my stakeholders over the next 12 months, as I have done over the last five years. In my first four years I think I did something like 50 dialogues for action and had over 700 meetings with industry.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for this latest initiative. The member for Mundingburra and myself are very grateful.

Mr MULHERIN: It is a good process. Ask the member for Condamine, even though he did not agree with the outcome. No-one could ever accuse us of trying to rush things through. On the ag college reform I think we engaged, with the associate director-general, in something like 50 hours of consultation across Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Can I now please go to non-government questions? I would like to call the member for Condamine.

Mr HOPPER: If the minister wants to ask me a question he should wait till after the next election!

CHAIR: I think that is getting a little bit pre-emptive, member for Condamine.

Mr HOPPER: I refer to SDS page 2-5, once again on the Queensland Fisheries Strategy 2009-2014. As the minister responsible for the Fisheries Act, which is supposed to protect important fish habitats such as mangroves, Minister, how is it that you signed off on the destruction of one of the last remaining sections of mangroves along the Brisbane River in the CBD, across the river at South Bank?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I just want to let you know that I do not sign off on the permits. It is delegated to Fisheries Queensland under the act. It is not up to the minister to sign permits in relation to the management of the mangrove habitat.

In relation to mangroves, residents or developers planning fisheries development on state land require state government approval prior to submitting a development application. A resource allocation authority from Fisheries Queensland is required for the following use of state resources such as marine plant disturbances. This includes trimming, pruning, burning, removing or damaging marine plants for any purpose and on any tenure. Marine plants include mangroves, seagrass, salt marsh and marine algae. Each case is assessed on its own merits and takes into account such things as the public benefit, environmental impacts and the rights of the personal group making the application. The hierarchy of avoid, minimise, mitigate and offset impact is implied.

Negotiations are held with developers to avoid impacts, to minimise or to mitigate any unavoidable offsets. Then if the development approval is granted, any remaining impacts must be offset. In relation to the South Bank proposal, the South Bank Corporation put forward a proposal as part of the South Bank boardwalk redevelopment. Approximately 585 square metres of mangrove has been removed as part of the project and a further 506 square metres will be trimmed. As far as the offsets are concerned, a condition of the development approval was that loss of habitat was to be offset by restoration in the Hays Inlet fish habitat area. More than 200 hours will be spent by the Bunya Community Environmental Association on planting trees and shrubs to revegetate 24 hectares of fish habitat. There will be public education on fish habitat through funding the Osprey House Environmental Centre to develop a fish habitat education package for over 3,000 school-age students in the greater Brisbane area and, of course, there will be habitat research as part of the urban fish habitat management research group.

It is worth noting that none of these mangroves were there prior to the World Expo in 1988. I think that area had wharves and housing. At the end of the day the process was followed. South Bank Corporation made its application. It was assessed. There were offsets provided, which I think will have great benefits to the fish habitat with 24 hectares of it being revegetated.

Mr HOPPER: I refer to SDS page 2-5, once again, the Fisheries Strategy 2009-2014. Can you give some simple examples of how your review will reduce complexity and allow for more responsive management?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I alluded to that earlier in that we are sitting down and looking at the complexities of the rules that govern fisheries and we want to move more towards a co-management model. I think Fisheries is one of the largest—by page—pieces of legislation or regulations or management plans on the Queensland statutes. We want to have more responsive management, things like the Great Sandy Marine Park. Great Sandy Marine Aquaculture Regional Planning is another example of working with industry. In addition to that, we have done work around how we can add value to both the commercial and recreational sector, particularly the commercial sector. Some time ago we commissioned the Ruello report, which looks at the supply chain from the wild catch through to the plate and working with industries on ways we can promote and maximise the profit from this resource. The key parts of the Fisheries Strategy are really about protecting the habitat, maximising the harvest and then growing the social and economic benefits to both the commercial sector and the recreational sector.

It is quite interesting. I was at an AgForce conference a couple of years ago up at the Whitsundays, and it shows you a lot about marketing. They had coral trout on a smorgasbord along with some smoked Atlantic salmon, which is farmed salmon from Tasmania. Graziers who lived in the Great Barrier Reef coastal region went for the like, the coral trout, but people inland went for the Tasmanian Atlantic salmon. Why? Because that industry has done the promotions with the restaurant sector, the

retail outlets and supermarkets. They have worked with cooks to develop that so that the consumer has confidence in that product. So a lot of the work that we will be doing with the fisheries sector is really about how do we add value in that chain, how we can grow that for demand, particularly for the wild catch and also for aquaculture. It was just a great observation of how people are shaped by marketing. Coral trout is a great fish to eat and so is Tasmanian Atlantic salmon, but we need to capitalise on the strengths of our tropical fisheries.

Mr HOPPER: I refer to SDS page 2-5, on the Biosecurity Strategy and also on the estimates question on notice that you answered. Minister, we know that you are fond of quoting that more people die from snake bites than Hendra virus. However, do you honestly believe that \$1.5 million in funding for the research centre is sufficient to address the Hendra virus, a disease that might not kill more people than snakes do, but a disease that has truly disrupted the equine industries?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. There are a number of things that we are doing in relation to Hendra virus. We have already spent about \$2.8 million in research. As I said, we announced the \$1.5 million over three years for the establishment of a Queensland Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases. In addition to that \$1.5 million, there is Hume Field's ongoing research into Hendra virus, which is a further million dollars of funding allocated over the next three years. We have formed international collaborative efforts with organisations such as the Animal Health Laboratory in the development of a vaccine. You have Queensland Health of course, which has partnered with other research institutes now looking at a human vaccine, which the Deputy Premier and health minister recently announced.

What the member for Condamine is seeing is this global alliance around research into a whole range of things. As I said earlier, Nipah virus is interrelated and we are very fortunate to have a fellow like Dr Hume Field, who is internationally renowned and much sought after by the World Health Organisation. He has been able to develop these extensive global networks. All research must be shared globally. Research knows no sovereign boundaries; it is about collaboration. I think that the funding that we have committed and other ongoing commitments that we have made in Hendra will provide benefits.

In addition to that, we have also worked closely with the Australian Veterinary Association and equine veterinary association. I note your interest in this because your oldest daughter is an undergraduate at JCU in the area of veterinary science. I hope she goes into the production area of vet science. We are working with them to provide the most up-to-date knowledge in the way that they should deal with potential outbreaks of Hendra.

There are a number of projects that we are researching. What we do know about Hendra virus is that flying foxes are the natural host of Hendra virus. We have a fair understanding of the mechanisms by which Hendra virus is persistently spread throughout the flying fox population. We know the transfer paths. One of the things that Hume is actually doing—and I would invite you to sit down and meet with Hume—is getting a better understanding of interaction using infrared time lapse technology to capture the night-time interactions of the flying fox with nocturnal wildlife species. There is a wonderful amount of work that is happening in Queensland and also internationally in collaborative efforts.

Mr HOPPER: Same reference, SDS page 2-5 under biosecurity again. Minister, why did it take so long to put the additional \$300,000 on the table for the vaccine trials for horses being conducted by the Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong? Why did you wait until there was another serious threat to human life near Noosa before your department was embarrassed into acting? I know a number of vets had met with you on this issue, trying to get this put into place, and it was not until another outbreak at Noosa that this funding came forward.

Mr MULHERIN: Tewanin, I think—

Mr HOPPER: Yes.

Mr MULHERIN: As I said, with Hendra virus research, it is a collaborative effort. There was an understanding of the areas of research that we would be involved in, which was not related to the development of the vaccine. That was with the Australian Animal Health Laboratory. The government did respond to the need by providing \$300,000 towards the Animal Health Laboratory. It has had a funding submission in with the federal government. The other point, of course, was that the Animal Health Laboratory had not even asked us to kick in. It was our approach to them of offering the \$300,000—and they had some money in kind—that enabled this to happen.

As I said, in relation to Hendra virus research and Nipah virus research, there is a shared understanding of the areas that we would research and collaborate on. It was our understanding that Animal Health Laboratory Australia would be pursuing the vaccine. I am pleased the government was able to assist in bringing closure to that and bringing about, hopefully, a great outcome. It will take probably five years before it is commercial. Let us not forget that it is no silver bullet. It is really up to horse owners to exercise good workplace health and safety hygiene around dealing with sick horses. I think there have been 12 incidents since the death of the late, great horse trainer Vic Rail and that good horse Strawberry Road.

Mr HOPPER: They will all certainly use it once it is out.

Mr MULHERIN: I wonder. It will be interesting to see the take-up. It is a bit like with canine and feline flu vaccinations that are available; people do not necessarily vaccinate their animals. As dog owners, we do. I just want to make a correction. There were 14 cases, not 12, since the outbreak.

Mr HOPPER: Minister, I refer you to SDS page 2-50 and to your review of the recent achievements under QRAA and the new programs being administered. Can you explain the big variance in the budget for the vegetation management framework assistance package for 2009-10 of \$12.09 million and the actual of \$8.282 million?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority plays an important role in assisting agribusiness in this state. With issues in relation to its cash flows and budget, it all depends on when the allocations are made, or when a program is established and when applications are made. They vary from financial year to financial year. An example would be the EC declarations. When the EC declarations were revoked in areas, graziers had 30 days to respond. Last year I think we had over 2,500 applications for EC assistance and one-quarter of them came in in the last 30 days. I will call on Colin Holden, the Chief Executive Officer of QRAA, to explain the variances around programs. It depends on when the program was established and they go across financial years. That has an impact on the cash flow of QRAA.

Mr Holden: The minister is correct in saying that as funds are received by the organisation they are treated as revenues at that point in time and subsequently come through as expenditure when they were expended. With respect to the vegetation management program, final payments were anticipated to have been finalised by, from memory, around May of this year. There was a subsequent request that that be extended to December of this year due to the fact that a number of people had not been able to actually undertake the necessary work due to flooding and droughts, et cetera. As a consequence of that, the expenditure anticipated in the original budget did not come to the fore. Those funds will carry over into this current financial year to finalise those payments.

Mr HOPPER: SDS 2-5, again on biosecurity, and Minister I refer to your estimates answer to my question No. 1 regarding fire ants and the engagement of 191 staff, as you say, to continue to expand the treatment. Despite repeated skiting by former Premier Beattie and various primary industries ministers, including yourself, that at times fire ants were contained and were beaten, is it not true that you really have lost the fight and that the ants are spreading west at an alarming rate and will soon be widespread into the Lockyer Valley and beyond?

Mr MULHERIN: I do not think I have ever been on the record as saying that we have won the fight. We have a long way to go. This is a national program. It has been reviewed by an expert scientific panel. The current situation is that the ministerial council met in Darwin. The ministerial council has agreed that it is a fight that we have to take up. We do not want to see it become part of the Australian landscape. Currently, we are at the position whereby Biosecurity Queensland has put forward a program for funding for the next 12 months. This program has been going for a number of years. I think we have spent \$210 million nationally to date. Every year we put forward a program and it is really up to our partners, that is, other state jurisdictions and the national government, to agree to the program. Currently, we are negotiating with the other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth. That will be delayed a bit because of the federal election.

With the formation of any budget, you do not put in money so that you are unsure of the final amount. If you go to our budget statements, it is pretty easy to get a better understanding of how to read it. I will turn to an appropriate page. What page are you on?

Mr HOPPER: I am on page 2-5 under biosecurity.

Mr MULHERIN: When you read the budget documents, you will see the 2010 budget, then you will see the estimated actual budget and then the estimated budget for 2010-11. For example, the budget for 2009-10 at the beginning is different to the budget at the end because programs such as the National Red Imported Fire Ant Program are not reflected when you do the budget estimate for 2010-11 until the money comes in. Our final figure will then be referred to at the next budget estimates hearing. When it comes to staffing numbers, whilst we have put on additional staff to deal with the fire ant program, we cannot finalise them in the budget until we finalise the payments under the national scheme.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We now turn to government questions. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to the second paragraph under the heading 'Recent Achievements' on page 2-6 of the SDS. Will the minister please explain what work DEEDI is undertaking to grow our primary industries export market?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for the question. The global market initiative has completed two years of a three-year program. This started in 2008-09. The global market initiative has identified export development projects across several horticultural industries in Queensland, including

mangoes, avocados, macadamias, citrus, cut flowers and low chill stonefruit. Our mango projects have led to some excellent export growth. Total mango exports have grown by about 25 per cent to 4,000 tonnes, valued at \$15 million. The key highlight is the growth in the targeted market of China, where we have seen exceptional growth of 958 per cent, New Zealand at 207 per cent and Hong Kong at 33 per cent. When we talk about base growth of 958 per cent, I acknowledge we are coming from a low base, but it has huge potential to grow. We have assisted two companies in establishing two new vapour heat treatment plants this year. These facilities have provided a 100 per cent increase in export processing capacity to supply China and Japan.

When you look at processing, this is one of the good things about the creation of DEEDI. Back in the old days of tourism, regional development and innovation, they had this wonderful organisation called QMI, which provided services to manufacturing. We hope that we can expand that back into primary production so they can actually do the processing on farms, particularly in the horticulture sector where there is big investments in processing facilities. That is another thing that I think will be of benefit to primary producers as a result of the establishment of DEEDI.

During the last season the project activities really successfully demonstrated for the first time that we can sea freight mangoes to both China and Japan with significant benefits to lowering costs. This will provide a significant cost saving advantage for exporters next season. We have understood the transportation logistics; it is about the constant temperature, it is about ensuring that the product has a shelf life when it arrives there. We are able to do a lot of great work by bringing together a range of services from across DEEDI. I also think the new food and health precinct will provide additional support to that industry in extending the shelf life of food products. One of the issues around food security is the shelf life of the product.

Mr WATT: Minister, I refer to the measures under 'Protecting Queensland's economy, environment and way of life from harmful pests and diseases', referred to on page 2-20 of the Service Delivery Statements. Will the minister please outline what investment the government has made to better understand the Hendra virus and inform future responses should they occur?

Mr MULHERIN: We have canvassed this a bit today. Biosecurity Queensland is recognised as a world leader in the research and understanding of Hendra and related viruses, and the behaviour in the flying fox host. Biosecurity Queensland scientists are actively involved in cutting-edge research into the virus, its host and its behaviour. This information is invaluable in implementing simple protective measures to minimise the risk of infection in humans and other animals. As I have said previously, we have spent \$2.8 million on Hendra related research, with additional funding of \$1 million allocated over three years. BQ is currently researching how the virus spreads from flying foxes to horses. As part of this research, infrared cameras have been acquired to undertake work to gauge the interaction between the flying foxes, horses and other nocturnal creatures at night. Current research projects also include a study of the bat virus interaction to better understand the virus and the disease it causes by using infrared time-lapse photography to capture that night-time interaction. There is also a project proposal to identify Hendra virus strains diversity in Australian flying foxes. We are looking at the whole flying fox population across Australia. As I have previously said, we have provided \$300,000 to the Australian Animal Health Laboratory for trials of a vaccine for Hendra virus in horses. There has been an investment in communication and education with the general horse community. We have a specialist educational officer who is also a veterinarian, Dr Fiona Thompson, who has engaged with the veterinarian profession. We have released a lot of information so that people have a better understanding of what they can do to mitigate it. As I said previously, we now know that flying foxes are the natural host of the Hendra virus. We have a fair understanding of the mechanisms by which the virus has persisted and spread throughout the flying fox population and we know what transfer paths exist for the virus.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Minister, I refer to page 2-8, paragraph 1, and the subsequent dot points of the Service Delivery Statements. While the budget document refers to a few significant projects, as the minister for rural and regional Queensland could you please outline what other work is being done to support and encourage growth and development in our regions?

Mr MULHERIN: The 2010-11 state budget saw the expansion of the Queensland Regional Development Initiative to include all regions outside South-East Queensland. Funding for projects has been increased by \$1.26 million over the four-year life of the program from the previous arrangement. The government will now provide a total of \$7.52 million over the next four years to support regional economic development projects through the Queensland regional development initiative. The increased funding is another example of the Bligh government's commitment to grow regional and rural Queensland and to make our regions attractive for Queenslanders to live, work and raise families. The Queensland Regional Development Initiative provides funds for regional development organisations to deliver key regional economic development projects, such as developing skilled labour, creating job opportunities and promoting a region as an attractive place for both residents and new workers. Recent recipients of the QRDI funding include the newly formed Capricorn Tourism and Economic Development organisation, which received \$100,000 to commence its operation. I congratulate them on merging two

entities. The Townsville Enterprise Limited received \$230,000 to be split between two projects, the smart regions and sustainable regions initiatives, and another to grow North Queensland's heavy industry service sector.

The Mount Isa-Townsville enterprise zone, or the remote area board, received \$60,000 to create a marketing strategy to develop tourism appeal of the Overlander's Way between Townsville and Tennant Creek. The Tablelands Futures Corporation received \$75,000 to help establish a world-class mountain biking destination on the Tablelands, \$117,000 has been allocated for the creation of a mining and training services virtual hub, along with \$38,000 for a project fostering business development for export readiness in the field of tropical expertise. These are both initiatives of Advance Cairns. Of course you have the Cape York Sustainable Futures Inc. and the Gulf Savannah Development Inc. received \$100,000 for its overland telegraph line drive tourism experience project and a regional investment and migration project to attract investment and skilled workforce to the gulf and the Gilbert River infrastructure investment profile.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to page 2-3, dot point 2 of the SDS. Will the minister please outline what programs or initiatives DEEDI has to respond to and support the Queensland Regionalisation Strategy?

Mr MULHERIN: The Queensland Regionalisation Strategy is a key component of the government's growth management agenda. The strategy responds directly to the challenges and opportunities that we face from sustained and continuing population and economic growth. In the past 20 years, 70 per cent of our population growth has occurred in the south-east corner. Looking ahead, we need to create and promote employment and investment in lifestyle opportunities to attract a greater proportion of growth to the regions.

When the Premier hosted the Queensland Growth Management Summit in March 2010, 85 per cent of the participants said they believed it was very important to encourage population growth in regional Queensland. Market research of 580 households conducted in the lead-up to the summit indicated that employment opportunities as well as lifestyle and family reasons were the key drivers for people moving to regional Queensland. This sends an important message that people follow jobs. However, it also indicates that services and infrastructure to accommodate workers and their families need to be in place to encourage people to relocate to the regions and build a long-term future for their families.

We have already started on this path with the introduction of a \$4,000 regional first home builders grant boost on top of the \$7,000 first home buyers scheme for new homes. This is how the government is taking decisive action and showing its commitment to the regionalisation agenda. But this is not a totally new direction for the government. The purpose of the Regionalisation Strategy is to build on the existing growth management mechanisms such as statutory regional plans, the government's Capital Works Program, and economic plans and investment strategies to harness the opportunities and address barriers to growth in our region.

We have long recognised the important role that our regional economies play in contributing to our prosperity. Indeed, it was the strength of our regional industries, such as mining and agriculture, that pulled Queensland and the nation through the recent global recession. Regionalisation strategies will be developed over the next 18 months in partnership with DEEDI and Growth Management Queensland, a new agency within the Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

Mr WATT: Minister, I refer to page 2-58, paragraph 2 of the Service Delivery Statement. Will the minister please explain what new training products will be delivered as a result of the agricultural college's reform package?

Mr MULHERIN: As I have previously said, in April 2010 I announced a \$20 million Reconnecting Agricultural Education plan, as part of my Fresh Approach initiative to help primary industries reach its economic potential of \$34 billion by 2020. This plan contains, as I said earlier, the most historic reforms in the AACC's history, including the expansion of training locations from five to 14 across Queensland, the revitalisation of training products and services, the introduction of new flexible delivery methods, and the formation of partnerships with government and the school and university sectors and industry.

The revitalisation process will be achieved by a number of new initiatives, including incorporating additional industry relevant skills into the total experience of full-time residential students; increasing the use of industry placement opportunities to better prepare students for the workplace; developing a cadetship program to enable year 12 entrants to achieve a diploma in two years; offering existing work training in skill sets over one to three-week blocks—so that is that point in time and place training; introducing an induction training program for young people wanting to apply for employment with pastoral companies; partnering with the University of Queensland at Gatton to improve options for students to achieve an advanced diploma and articulate into a degree program—once again, recognition of prior learning and accelerating; and developing and better supporting a growing external diploma program.

The revitalisation of the AACC traditional full-time residential training product represents a significant reform to the corporation's operation. While I acknowledge that this is a challenge for the corporation, I know that the challenge has been embraced and will be a reform that will reconnect the corporation with the needs of industry, and once again it will take its place as a leader in providing agricultural training throughout Queensland.

CHAIR: Minister, I refer to the Fisheries Strategy noted in dot point 13 on page 2-8 of the Service Delivery Statement. What is being done to support and promote sustainable development in Queensland's commercial fisheries industry?

Mr MULHERIN: Given the importance of the commercial fishing industry to Queensland's economy, Fisheries Queensland has a role to ensure the sustainability of our fisheries resources while, in accordance with our strategy, maximising the value of the seafood sector in Queensland. In the past six months, the department has engaged with the commercial fishing industry to formulate an industry development plan for the East Coast Trawl Fishery and reef line and Spanish mackerel fisheries. The implementation of these plans will commence in 2010-11 and will be the shared responsibility of key stakeholder organisations, with the support of Fisheries Queensland.

In addition, the seafood industry reference group has been established to encourage improved communication between the seafood sector and Fisheries Queensland. This reference group includes memberships from all sectors of the seafood industry. So that is from the trawlers and fishing boats through to the processors, marketers and retailers. Fisheries Queensland recently partnered with industry to develop a seafood cooperative research centre to investigate and improve the value chain. So that is really building on the work we commissioned with Ruello, particularly the East Coast Trawl Fishery. It is hoped that the funds for this work will be available later this financial year which, if successful, will also increase our budget actual at the end of the financial year.

Additionally, we have developed these interactive economic models around the East Coast Trawl Fishery, the Reef Line Fishery and the East Coast Spanish Mackerel Fishery to be developed in partnership with industry to assist industry to analyse their existing businesses, enabling them to estimate the potential return on investment. In partnership with the seafood sector, Fisheries Queensland has facilitated a number of promotional activities for seafood and supported the development of marketing initiatives such as Queensland Catch and Queensland Prawn.

Additional activities undertaken to assist the commercial sector include working with the Queensland Seafood Industry Association to develop a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation project to review port infrastructure servicing the commercial sector. We are also providing secretariat support to the Queensland fisheries research advisory board and investigating opportunities to improve communications between all sectors of the supply chain and my agency, Fisheries Queensland.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer to page 2-3, dot point 5 and subpoint 4 of the SDS. Can the minister please explain how the development of an innovative food policy will benefit our agricultural and food processing sectors?

Mr MULHERIN: In 2009 I committed to developing a food policy for Queensland. I took the first step in recognition of the fact that the Queensland food sector forms a critical part of our state's economy. The primary industries, fisheries and processed food businesses that comprise the sector have made, and will continue to make, a significant contribution to the state economy, particularly in rural and regional parts of the state.

When considering the sector in its entirety—from inputs, logistics, manufacturing, food wholesaling, retailing and related food services, as well as primary production—the food sector provides approximately 12 per cent of the Queensland gross state product. This equates to over 272,000 jobs that are partially or entirely supported by food and agriculture, representing one in eight Queensland jobs. Importantly, almost 80 per cent of agricultural production jobs and 40 per cent of food manufacturing jobs are regionally based, which demonstrates the value of this sector in building regional prosperity in Australia's most decentralised state.

Government and industry recognise the significant contribution that the sector makes to Queensland. However, these businesses, which embrace the true essence of Queensland's competitive spirit, realise that more needs to be done. In March this year I held a forum with a range of stakeholders from across the food value chain in Queensland—that is, on farm, behind the farm gate, right through the value chain. It was a large forum. We had a very fruitful discussion around what was a food policy and what it meant to different people. It means all things to different people. As you develop your policy, you will find that out.

The department is currently developing a policy that will cover the entire food sector and will facilitate the ongoing development of a profitable and productive food sector. We will release a discussion paper in the near future—towards the end of the year—asking people to comment on the policy statement which will refine and become part of the policy direction for DEEDI.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Condamine.

Mr HOPPER: My policy is developed. If I put it out there, you would steal it.

Mr MULHERIN: Is that a question?

Mr HOPPER: I refer to page 2-5 of the SDS. Once again, it is about fire ants. We had a whistleblower who said that the fight was lost. We had a whistleblower who said that government claims that 99.5 per cent of fire ants had been destroyed is rubbish. Minister, could you tell the committee what impact fire ants would have if they do get into the Lockyer Valley?

Mr MULHERIN: There are a couple of things. In relation to the whistleblower, those issues were fully investigated by the corporate integrity unit of the former department of primary industries. I think the matter was also referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission. From memory, it might have even been referred to the Ombudsman. I would need to check that. The accusations and allegations were unsubstantiated.

What I do know about the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program is that when the incursion occurred back in 2000 we had 65,000 colonies. We had incursions in three places. Following the incursion at the Port of Brisbane there were discoveries in the south-western suburbs of Brisbane and beyond. We also had an outbreak near Gladstone. We have proof that we have eradicated the red imported fire ant around the Gladstone port. That in itself is a fantastic achievement. But we cannot rest on our laurels.

At the last ministerial council meeting in Darwin my ministerial colleagues, including Minister Redman from the National Party in Western Australia, committed to the ongoing work around the national fire ant program. They see the importance of this program. If we do not address it they will spread interstate and this will impact on lifestyles and primary production. It costs the state of Texas \$1.26 billion annually in control costs.

I explained to you earlier some of the great work that we are doing around infrared technology and thermal sensing. That is a world first. The US have been dealing with this since 1934 and there have been 86 deaths as a result. We have a commitment from the federal government and from state jurisdictions that we must get on with this. Our approach while we develop further technology will be around aggressive containment. This new technology will assist us. This is probably the most reviewed program of any of the national programs. When you think about the amount of money that has been invested by the taxpayers of this country we have achieved a considerable amount of progress compared to the United States.

Mr HOPPER: I refer to the SDS at page 2-11 and particularly agricultural colleges. Minister, I have questioned you about the asset sales and I must admit that I am none the wiser. I would like a clear answer—and I stress a clear answer—on what is going to happen to fees for agricultural training? The budget papers show a big drop in the budgeted income of Queensland Agricultural Colleges of \$2.5 million from 2009-10 to 2010-11. There is less income from the agricultural colleges because their land is being sold. The finer detail suggests that the fees for service training are going to soar. Can you confirm that the fees for many training courses will rise?

Mr MULHERIN: Let us talk about the agricultural colleges.

CHAIR: What page were you referring to there, member for Condamine?

Mr HOPPER: SDS 2-5. It relates to a question on notice to the minister.

CHAIR: That is fine. We need to know that the minister is working off the same page as you.

Mr MULHERIN: You raised the issue of asset sales first so let us talk about that. If you have a look at the mix in our agricultural colleges you will find that 60 per cent of our staff was involved in production—that is, running state run farms. I thought that that form of agrarian socialism disappeared many years ago but I discovered that it had come across to agricultural colleges. Thirty per cent of our staff, who have worked well over the years, was involved in teaching and 10 per cent in training. I will check those figures. Of the 30 per cent of staff involved in training 50 per cent had up to certificate 2 qualifications. They had certificate 4 in train the trainer but otherwise certificate 2 qualifications.

As part of our reinvestment back into the agricultural colleges we will be looking at developing the skills of our staff to impart knowledge on potential students. We have some protection from User Choice so one of the things we will be able to achieve in partnership with Education Queensland over the next two years is to continue to provide training. The real challenge for agricultural colleges is to actually grow the business. Revenue will increase if you grow the business. It makes sense. We have to undertake these reforms because we are seeing growth in User Choice. We were losing market share to the private sector because they offered the flexibility that industry was seeking. That is why we have embarked on this major reform.

I do not see any great link to what you are saying in relation to the production side of the colleges because we are retaining sufficient land at the residential colleges at Emerald and Longreach for that type of training to occur. I think this is a significant reform. I think that this is the best shot for the college corporation.

We operate under a national training regime. It was industry that said people do not need 1,200 hours of training to get a certificate in agriculture. That is why you have a User Choice component. What we have been able to achieve is quarantining to a point so that we can undertake the reforms that are necessary.

Mr HOPPER: I have more on the agricultural colleges at SDS 2-11. Is it not a fact that an area of increased spending is on voluntary early retirements for all the teaching and other staff at our agricultural colleges who have been told to walk. Can you advise how many VERs have been applied for by agricultural college staff? What percentage is this of total staff before you embarked on the fire sale of the agricultural colleges?

Mr MULHERIN: Obviously the member for Condamine is stuck in a bit of a time warp. What we are doing within the agricultural food and regional services area is making sure we have an agency that will respond to the needs of industry. Industry does not want an agency frozen in time. What we have done is worked with industry in identifying—

Mr HOPPER: My question was about VERs.

Mr MULHERIN: Yes, let me get on to that. We have identified the priorities and where we need to invest to help industry. We have a voluntary early retirement program and a number of staff have taken up the offer. We will use the proceeds of that to target our priorities and move forward as an organisation. I will give an example of that. How do you think we committed additional funding to programs such as Biosecurity Queensland?

In cooperation with industry we have looked at where we need to invest in the organisation. No-one in our organisation will be sacked. There are no forced redundancies. It is entirely up to individuals. If people do not want to move then we will get them retrained so that they can provide the services we see as necessary to take industry forward.

You were once a farmer. No doubt you made those decisions every day of your life. Every year when you drew up your budget you would have decided where the investment should be. There would have been things that you pulled back on and that you did not see as necessary at the time. There would have been other areas that you would have thought were necessary. Running a government and running a department is no different to running a business in the private sector. You make these decisions all the time. No-one in our agency will be sacked and there will be no forced redundancies.

People will have a choice. We will reprioritise. Once we have been through this process we will work out where the investment should be. We have some ideas but they have not been finalised yet. Once the department finalises them they will inform me and no doubt that is when the world will know.

Mr HOPPER: Back to biosecurity in the SDS at page 2-5. Minister, I asked about your success or otherwise in seeking additional funding from the Commonwealth for stepped up surveillance for Asian honey bees. Surely the minister would be aware that crop pollination and honey production worth billions of dollars a year is being risked due to the failure of the state and federal governments to agree on funding to eradicate Asian honey bees in Far North Queensland? Can you outline what steps your department has recently taken to secure a properly resourced eradication program?

Mr MULHERIN: Asian honey bees were first detected in the Portsmith area of Cairns in 2007 after unusual bees were reported by a beekeeper. Biosecurity Queensland is undertaking a major response with the aim of eradicating this significant pest bee species. We have already spent \$2 million dealing with this pest. Biosecurity Queensland's response recently gained approval as part of a national cost-sharing arrangement for the remainder of 2010. This cost-sharing arrangement was discussed at the ministerial council meeting. We are aware of the importance of bees particularly to horticulture and also to the primary industries portfolio.

Prior to the national cost-sharing arrangements, the response was fully funded by the state. Support under this national cost-sharing arrangement has allowed for an increase in field surveillance officers to 36 and the training of bee detector dogs resulting in a significantly enhanced surveillance effort.

The majority of nests and swarms that have been detected and destroyed to date have been in the Cairns business district and in the agricultural area immediately south of Cairns. There have been two detections of bees in Mareeba on the Atherton Tablelands and a single detection of bees in Innisfail. We have also embarked on a major community engagement exercise to bring the public along on the journey. As I said earlier, when it comes to biosecurity it is everyone's responsibility. We have had a good response through public engagement. Public vigilance and 40 call-ins about suspect bees has led to about a 40 per cent increase in detections. We are funded for the remainder of 2010. The ministerial council, through its standing committee, will review whether it will continue to have national funding in future.

Mr HOPPER: I refer to biosecurity again at SDS 2-5. I refer to the block of dirt on the left of the Warrego Highway about 15 kilometres out of Dalby that the college used to own. I think I have heard you say that you are going to retain that block for research or something to do with cattle?

Mr MULHERIN: At Glengarry.

Mr HOPPER: We are not selling that block are we?

Mr MULHERIN: No.

Mr HOPPER: Is that for tick research?

Mr MULHERIN: Yes.

Mr HOPPER: How can we have tick research in a clean area?

Mr MULHERIN: This is the herd that will be relocated from Wacol. I will call on Ron Glanville, the chief veterinary officer, to explain. It is the herd that we are relocating to Glengarry.

Dr Glanville: The purpose of Glengarry is to maintain our breeding herd that supports the tick fever vaccine production at Wacol. We need a secure property to maintain that herd. The land at Wacol was no longer available, so we have relocated the herd up to Glengarry and the purpose of that herd is to produce disease-free offspring for production of tick fever vaccine.

Mr HOPPER: Thanks for that. Thank you, Minister.

Mr MULHERIN: Just on that whistleblower, it was investigated, as I said, by the CMC, not the Ombudsman. PricewaterhouseCoopers also undertook an investigation, but the CMC found no case to answer for.

CHAIR: Thank you for your clarification, Minister.

Mr MULHERIN: Just one other matter in terms of the ag college, I got the figures around the wrong way. It is 40 per cent in production and 60 per cent in training and 84 per cent could train up to a certificate II level of qualification.

CHAIR: Thank you for your clarification, Minister. The time allotted for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland has now expired. On behalf of the committee I thank you, Minister Mulherin, your advisers and all of the public servants in your agencies and government bodies for being here today to provide advice. The committee will now break for afternoon tea and resume at 4 pm to examine the estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning.

Mr MULHERIN: Madam Chair, can I thank you and your committee for the way you have conducted the examination of my portfolio of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland. I know a lot of effort goes into this. I want to thank the parliamentary attendants, Hansard, opposition staff and my own staff for the work that has been undertaken for the annual estimates process by the department. In particular I thank our Director-General, Mr Ian Fletcher; associate directors-general Mark Bermingham and Rob Setter; Group Executive of Agriculture, Food and Tourism, Bruce Turner; and also our Acting Chief Financial Officer, Sue Ryan, for their efforts but more importantly the work that the department does in providing information so that we can respond to the examination of our budget. Thanks very much to everyone who was involved.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 3.47 pm to 4.01 pm

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E—INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING

In Attendance

Hon. SJ Hinchliffe, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning

Mr S Fyfe, Principal Adviser

Department of Infrastructure and Planning

Mr C Jensen, Coordinator-General and Director-General

Ms A Hall, Director, Office of the Director-General

Growth Management Queensland

Mr P Low, Chief Executive Officer

CHAIR: I declare this meeting of Estimates Committee E now open. I am Jo-Ann Miller, the member for Bundamba and chair of the committee. Joining me on the committee are David Gibson, the member for Gympie; Ray Hopper, the member for Condamine; Lindy Nelson-Carr, the member for Mundingburra; Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge; Lawrence Springborg, the member for Southern Downs and deputy chair of the committee; and Murray Watt, the member for Everton. I would like you all to please note that the member for Coomera has been granted leave to ask a couple of questions in the final part of the session.

This afternoon the committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2010 for the portfolio of the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. I would like to welcome Minister Hinchliffe and his advisers here this afternoon. The committee will examine estimates for the portfolio until 6.30 pm. The proceedings today are lawful proceedings subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. As such, I would like to remind all visitors that any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded in accordance with standing order No. 206.

In relation to media coverage of the hearing, the committee has resolved to allow television film coverage and photography during my introduction and also the minister's opening statement. The committee has also agreed to the live broadcast of the hearing via the Parliamentary Service's website and to receivers throughout this parliamentary precinct. Before we begin, I would like to ask everybody to turn your mobile phones off please. Please check that they are in fact switched off. The time limit for questions is one minute and three minutes for answers. A warning bell will chime 15 seconds before the time runs out. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask all advisers if you are called to give an answer to please state your name before speaking. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister Hinchliffe, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: If I could, Madam Chair. I would like to thank you and the committee members for your commitment to the estimates process and I again welcome this opportunity to consider the budget for the coming year. This budget will support a renewed approach to the Bligh government's nationally respected growth management capabilities. It will also progress the delivery of vital infrastructure, reform building regulations through increased green initiatives, and generate more jobs. The Bligh government's commitment to jobs is renowned. I am proud to say that we are more than halfway to meeting the Premier's 100,000-strong jobs target—a milestone achieved during a sovereign debt crisis in Europe, a national tax debate and uncertain global financial markets.

The Infrastructure and Planning portfolio has supported this achievement by coordinating the state's largest per capita infrastructure program, by assessing and facilitating major public and private sector investment, and by delivering innovative initiatives arising from the Bligh government's Growth Management Summit. Since its formation three years ago, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning has coordinated the delivery of an infrastructure program 72 per cent larger than the Australian average. Last year alone the Bligh government allocated \$18.2 billion to a Capital Works Program that supported 124,000 Queensland jobs. The 2010-11 state budget allocated a nation-leading \$17.1 billion for capital works. That is 7.7 per cent more than any other state or territory. The \$17.1 billion building program honours our promise to support 106,000 Queensland jobs while preparing the state for a sustained global recovery. It also supports the Bligh government's growth management response. As part of this response, the state government will continue to support regional growth, with 57 per cent of this year's capital works investment to occur outside of South-East Queensland.

In 2011 I will replace the \$135 billion South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program that I released today with a state-wide Queensland Infrastructure Plan—another innovative state government measure to address infrastructure and ongoing population growth that arose from the Growth Management Summit in March. The summit was held to ask Queenslanders what they thought, and they told us. Residents said they wanted us to step up growth management. They also requested a better balance on state-wide growth and the continued protection of Queensland's unique lifestyle and landscape. The Bligh government listened, and the Bligh government has acted. In response we have established Growth Management Queensland to oversee growth throughout the state. We are developing a regionalisation strategy to protect and support growth in fast growing regions. We are launching a state-wide Queensland infrastructure program. We are encouraging transit-oriented development, regionalisation and decentralisation. We are protecting and expanding community green space throughout the state. We are creating three new South-East Queensland communities that will house 250,000 people in approximately 100,000 dwellings.

Our ongoing commitment to job development through major project facilitation has not wavered either. For example, the independent Coordinator-General is currently assessing more than \$35 billion worth of LNG projects that could generate more than 8,300 jobs. As I say, one key commitment is to the LNG industry and the recently released budget will help fund a \$5 billion corridor for an underground coal seam gas superhighway between the Surat and Bowen basins and the port of Gladstone. We said we would deliver on jobs, infrastructure and growth, and that is what we are doing. For the 10th year running the Bligh government has delivered the nation's biggest building program. This financial year that is a total, as I say, of \$17.1 billion to prepare for the future and to protect 106,000 Queensland jobs through projects like the congestion-busting Airport Link project, which alone will deliver more than 10,000 jobs over the project and in fact at the moment has a 3,400 strong army working hard at addressing Brisbane's peak-hour crawl.

At the Growth Management Summit in March the state government listened to Queenslanders and we delivered. Guided by suggestions at the forum, we have in the last four months held eight forums to discuss growth in regional Queensland, dedicated 57 per cent of the state's financial year capital works budget to the regions, declared four urban development areas to boost affordable housing, announced those three new communities to relieve pressure in South-East Queensland, and progressed transit-oriented developments to allow residents to live, work and play closer to the Brisbane CBD with a reduced reliance on cars. The Bligh government promised to address growth, infrastructure and jobs, and that is what we have done. That is what we will continue to do.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister, for your opening statement. We are going to begin this afternoon with questions from the opposition. I ask the member for Gympie to begin the questions.

Mr GIBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Last year the minister's inability to provide answers during estimates highlighted how poorly prepared this minister was. I am hoping that this year we will see an improvement and I am aware that a crisis room has been set up back at the department to help the minister answer questions, and I welcome any assistance for the minister to improve his performance.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, you cannot—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will be happy to take that as a question.

CHAIR: No, I am not allowing that as a question. You can ask questions; you cannot make statements, member for Gympie. So will you please ask your question.

Mr GIBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In reference to the minister's answer to a question on notice in preparation for this estimates committee, it appears his ability to answer questions has not improved from last year. With reference to the SDS at pages 2-74 to 2-79, can the minister explain why he thinks answering questions on notice is a waste of taxpayers' dollars?

CHAIR: Can you just tell me the relevance of that please when we are trying to examine the budget statements in relation to this particular portfolio?

Mr GIBSON: Sure. The relevance, Madam Chair, is that we have asked a question on notice in preparation for this so we can have detail. The minister's response is—

Rather than expecting taxpayers' dollars to be spent collating information ...

So I am asking the minister why he believes answering questions on notice is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

CHAIR: Minister, you might want to refer to your answer already provided.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that Mr Gibson's question is directed to the manner in which I have answered a question on notice that the committee provided. I was drawing to Mr Gibson's attention that the material he was seeking was contained in publicly available documents and was able to be collated by him. He has in fact put out a press release today making references to lazy ministers. I think the fact that we have one of the best resourced but clearly one of the laziest oppositions in this state—it is clear that Mr Springborg has heard that phrase before—

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, but it is not original. You did not think of it.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I was not claiming originality, Mr Springborg.

Mr WATT: Nothing's changed!

CHAIR: Okay. Let the minister answer.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: But that is where I would encourage Mr Gibson to do the work that is required of an opposition in being able to respond to those sorts of issues. I would encourage him to put the effort in and to not necessarily rely upon volunteers as he has sought to do during the estimates process when he put out a request to people in his electorate to come in and help him read the budget. I would suggest that it would be appropriate for him to put the effort in and to do the work that is required. The question he was referring to canvassed issues around our capital program, and it is absolutely fundamental that we continue to see a commitment to a capital program—a capital program that has saved Queensland from some of the worst effects of the global financial crisis. The fact that again this year we have the record infrastructure program—\$17.1 billion protecting some 106,000 jobs—is evidence of the commitment we have to delivering a program that will continue to make sure Queensland is strong, and does so in a way that sees nearly \$2 million being invested each and every hour of the financial year of 2010-11. What we have identified in this—I have had to reiterate to Mr Gibson in the past in relation to questions on notice—is that if you look at the LNP website it does not even have a planning policy.

Mr GIBSON: Minister, with reference to the SDS at page 2-73 under 'Strategic Issues', last year in an answer to a question on notice the minister provided over 11 pages of detail that was not publicly available. This year in response to the same question on notice you have referred us to websites that have no detail. Can the minister identify to the committee where on either the departmental or budget websites are the costs undertaken by the department for the Port of Gladstone Western Basin Master Plan, the draft Wide Bay-Burnett regional plan or the draft South East Queensland Climate Change Management Plan, because clearly he has directed us to those websites for that information?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I do not have a laptop here in front of me, so I am happy to seek that information and provide it to Mr Gibson.

CHAIR: Okay.

Mr GIBSON: Thank you. Minister, earlier this year a question on notice was asked about your performance against the published ministerial charter of goals. The arrogant answer was clearly nothing more than an attempt to cover up your incompetence and laziness as a minister. One of the listed goals under the heading '2009 priority election commitments' was the 'green door' policy to designate sustainable development case managers to be in place by December 2009. Nearly 16 months have passed since that announcement and seven months since December 2009 with nothing done. Can the minister provide the name of just one project that has been given a dedicated sustainable case manager, or is this just another example of a lazy and inept Labor minister?

CHAIR: Before you answer that, Minister, can I just remind the member for Gympie that under standing order 234 a member shall not use unbecoming or offensive words in relation to another member of the parliament. I personally believe that some of the language that you are using is unbecoming, but I will pass that on to the minister to answer the question.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair. I thank Mr Gibson for raising these points. It is important that this process be committed to well and that we provide appropriate answers in this analysis of the budget. Indeed, during the last election the government committed to creating a 'green door' to help facilitate sustainable developments throughout the development process. The government has made significant progress in delivering its election commitment in a number of ways, through accelerating sustainable developments through our 'green door' process using dedicated case managers and, most significantly, the expanded ministerial powers to speed up development decisions. The commitment also set about to define sustainability as a state interest and for the Department of Infrastructure and Planning to designate new sustainable case managers to provide a single point of entry to government for all major sustainable developments.

In 2009 we saw the passing of the Sustainable Planning Act, which commenced operation on 18 December 2009. This was the most significant reform of Queensland's planning, development and building system in the last decade, and it delivered more than 200 legislative changes to streamline, simplify and deliver better planning outcomes. The act specifically expands the powers of the planning minister to issue ministerial directions where a development exhibits exemplary sustainability features. State interests are defined in the act to include a specific reference to sustainability. Powers were expanded so that the minister can give directions to state agencies and local assessment managers at any time where they relate to sustainable developments.

In a situation where we have some 2,000 people or more moving to Queensland each and every week, it is vital that we all do what we can to help manage that growth that we are experiencing. That is why we had the work that we did—and I spoke about it earlier in my opening statement—around the

Growth Management Summit and the actions arising out of that. One of those actions is to develop a process to accelerate development decisions for proposals that demonstrate exemplary sustainability features. We recommitted to that initiative.

The Queensland government does not control those levers of power around population increase, but having sustainability measures around it such as the 'green door' project is one of the key ways to go. To put the pictures around that, we do have case managers in place in each of our regions who can play the role of accepting applications that come through that 'green door'. What we have not seen is things come specifically through that process, because we have not set the criteria and the arrangements around that. There is a discussion paper coming out very soon that I am sure Mr Gibson and other members of the community will take a great deal of interest in, and I encourage them and others to make contributions to that.

Mr GIBSON: So if I am to understand it, then—the goal that you had for it to be implemented by December 2009—you are not able to nominate just one project that has a sustainable case development manager. Perhaps this question will be a little bit easier for you and you may be able to answer this one. Nearly 16 months have passed since the announcement of the 'green door' policy with the establishment of a Green Door Advisory Committee. I am aware that in the past few days you have been scrambling to get names, asking people to accept a position on the committee. Can you advise when the first meeting of the Green Door Advisory Committee will be held?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for the question. As I was just outlining, there is a key piece of work to engage with the wider community and, indeed, with industry that will be occurring very soon. Clearly, that needs to have some support and advice around it. Mr Gibson might want to talk about scrambles and things like that. This is a measured process that needs to happen in a way that allows for that advice to be provided to government to inform the discussion paper that clearly needs to be out there in the community and provide a range of measures around that.

There is a whole range of key industry stakeholders that we want to have engaged in this process and we have been having discussions with them. Obviously some of those people have been having discussions with Mr Gibson as well. There is a whole range of industry stakeholders, such as the HIA, the LGAQ, the Planning Institute, the UDIA and the Property Council of Australia, whom we need to engage with to work up those elements so that we can have the right framework for the 'green door' policy. We had the legislative things in place in December 2009, as committed to. Now it is around the criteria and supporting mechanisms to help inform ministerial decisions around those outcomes.

Mr GIBSON: Minister, I will reword the question, because you clearly did not even get close to it. Do you intend on having the Green Door Advisory Committee meet this year?

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, can you relate that question to a page of the SDS?

Mr GIBSON: SDS page 2-73.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes.

Mr GIBSON: Thank you. Minister, last year you blamed the delay of the release of SEQIPP by saying that it needed to be held back to be informed by the content of the South East Queensland Regional Plan as that was close to finalisation. What excuse do you have for us this year?

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, can you please relate that again—

Mr GIBSON: SDS page 2-74, 'Highlights', 'Coordinating the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program'.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, just to make this a bit easier on the committee, can you please relate all of your questions—

Mr GIBSON: Yes, I will do that at the beginning.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I would appreciate that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for his question. The South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program is a really significant element of the work that we do to support the South East Queensland Regional Plan. It describes a 26-year investment in capital infrastructure projects in South-East Queensland that support that planning regime.

The reality is that this year's SEQIPP, which was released today in line with the way in which it was released last year, remains relatively unchanged. The key thing to talk about in the context of the role of SEQIPP, as I made mention of in my opening statement—the thing that the committee should spend time understanding and considering—is the key transition role that is happening now of transitioning to a Queensland infrastructure plan, a QIP. Certainly, some of the improvements that we have made in the layout and nature of SEQIPP are about transitioning to a QIP in 2011. It remains today, though, that the 2010 edition released today—and I understand that members of the committee have been provided with copies—

CHAIR: Yes, we all have copies of it. Thank you, Minister.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It remains the largest infrastructure plan and program for a region—the biggest one in the country. It comprises some 399 identifiable projects this year worth an estimated \$134 billion, covering that time from 2005 to 2031, and it reiterates the level of investment that is expected will support some 930,000 jobs over that 26-year period. It is made up of a whole range of different sectors, and this year we have reformatted it so that, as I say, it sets itself up to be a good transition to a Queensland infrastructure plan, a Queensland-wide document. It has things broken down into appropriate regions of the south-east so that there is a greater Brisbane area, there is a western corridor, which I am sure the chair would be interested in and has taken particular note of—

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: There is also a section for the Gold Coast and for the Sunshine Coast. So those commitments are made pretty clear. As I say, the most significant thing about this document this year is its role as a transition document to the Queensland infrastructure plan that will come out as a result of our commitments from the Growth Management Summit for 2011.

CHAIR: Just before I call the member for Gympie, Minister, you have referred to this plan. Would you like to table that, please? That will form part of the—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is why I have provided copies to the committee, but I am happy to formally table them.

CHAIR: Yes. So you seek leave?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes.

Leave granted.

Mr GIBSON: Minister, with regard to the Queensland government's growth summit, I am aware of what is listed in SEQIPP at page 4, but can you advise what outcomes from the summit were considered in the SEQIPP 2010 program of projects and which of those projects were given an immediate priority in that action should be completed in the short term—typically in one to three years?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for his question. Clearly, one of the key outcomes of the Growth Management Summit was reiterating the importance of regional development, but Mr Gibson's question quite appropriately focuses on South-East Queensland. That is vitally important because, even in the face of our initiatives around supporting regional growth and regionalisation, we will see very strong focus on South-East Queensland as the area where we need to manage the growth that we are experiencing.

The key example that I would draw Mr Gibson's attention to, which has been delivered not only in the budget papers more broadly but is highlighted again in SEQIPP 2010, which was released today, is the bringing forward of the Springfield rail which, again, the chair would be very aware of and would take great understanding in—

CHAIR: I am delighted, Minister, let me tell you.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I was not fishing for—

CHAIR: A compliment for the minister.

Mr HINCHLIFFE:—a compliment, but I think the government can take it nonetheless.

CHAIR: That is right.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: So in that context you see a number of projects that have been brought forward, and that has in part certainly been informed by the Growth Management Summit—particularly ones that were about delivering public transport outcomes earlier, such as the Springfield rail project, and the ways in which that can provide a greater enhancement to that overarching goal of the South East Queensland Regional Plan to support the growth of the western corridor.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, would you like to ask one final question?

Mr GIBSON: Certainly, and perhaps just a supplementary to what you have indicated. I appreciate that I am asking for detail that you may not have available, so you may wish to take it on notice. The Springfield rail is being brought forward. Are there any other projects? If it is something that you need to come back to the committee with that would be fine, because I imagine that that is not the only one that has been identified and given a higher priority. So if the minister wants to answer it, fine, or he can take it on notice and come back—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: What I will highlight is that we have a number of projects that have been affected and changed as a result of the consideration arising out of the Growth Management Summit, which did have a particular focus on South-East Queensland. What I have identified here are some of the new projects, but I will detail the ones that have been brought forward for you in a moment.

CHAIR: The time for non-government questions has expired. I will now return to government questions. Minister, SDS 2-73 mentions the sustainability of buildings. I note the reforms that increase the sustainability and the safety of temporary accommodation buildings which came into place on 1 July this year. Will you please provide further information to our committee on this reform and its impacts?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair, for the question. The temporary accommodation code addresses concerns raised by stakeholders about inconsistent and sometimes low standards of temporary accommodation buildings. This has been brought to my attention particularly in relation to some concerns in mining areas such as the Surat and Bowen basins. The new code will benefit all Queenslanders who need to occupy temporary accommodation buildings by requiring new buildings to meet acceptable safety and amenity standards and by ensuring that temporary buildings only remain on site for an appropriate time.

The proposed new code will require all temporary buildings to meet a range of minimum standards, including structural wind loading requirements that apply to permanent buildings, adequate fire safety standards such as smoke alarms and emergency exits, defined amenity standards such as a minimum space per bed, power points, communication facilities and storage lockers, as well as minimum numbers of facilities such as toilets, bathrooms, kitchens, laundries and refrigerators. Also the bar was raised on pest, dust and noise mitigation features. Energy and water efficiency fittings, as well as appropriate insulation, were added into the code. A temporary accommodation building will be permitted to remain on site for an initial period of 24 months before it is either removed or reassessed for compliance. Local governments will have the authority to extend that period if it can be shown that the temporary accommodation buildings can continue to comply with the standards detailed in the new code.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with all key stakeholders during the development of the code including with organisations responsible for providing temporary accommodation camps. The new code reflects many of the operational needs identified by these stakeholders. For example, stakeholders advise that some temporary accommodation buildings are only there for very short periods of time, between six and 16 weeks, to enable operations such as exploration drilling, roadworks in remote areas and site surveys to be undertaken. The new code acknowledges that it would be unreasonable to expect these really short-term temporary accommodation buildings to comply with all the requirements of the new code given that they are dismantled and then moved on to a new location on a regular basis. The new code addresses this issue by only requiring specific parts of the code to apply to short-term accommodation of six to 16 weeks without reducing the overall structural, fire safety, sustainability and health and amenity standards expected by the occupants of the buildings.

For existing temporary accommodation buildings, local governments have reported that many of them still remain on sites, even though they were originally approved for short-term use or, in fact, have been illegally placed on a site. A number of unions have also raised this issue of concern with me. This new code therefore will assist local governments importantly to intervene and take enforcement steps where unapproved buildings or buildings where approval times have expired remain on site. I think it is a great step forward in that regard.

Ms NELSON-CARR: SDS 2-73 refers to the government's commitment to develop and implement regional plans. Minister, could you please provide an update on progress made in the area of regional planning over the past financial year?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Ms Nelson-Carr for the question. The Queensland government is currently undertaking a program of regional planning across the state to manage growth and change in the regions. Regionalisation is clearly, as I have already identified, very important to our program and this supports that. The department is overseeing the implementation of 25 priority actions, for instance, in the South East Queensland Regional Plan and I am pleased to say that all these priority actions are well underway. A five-year action plan identifying priority projects, actions and funding commitments is also in place for the Far North Queensland Regional Plan. A number of these priority projects are also well advanced.

The Central West Regional Plan was released in September 2009. A draft implementation plan has been developed following input from the original planning committee. A land demand and availability study and a tourism management study have been drafted in line with the implementation plan. Implementation of the South West Regional Plan and the Maranoa-Balonne Regional Plan have commenced with a focus on education, health and transport matters. Indeed, the Department of Transport and Main Roads has provided funding for a transport needs study for the south-west region.

The draft North West Regional Plan, which was released as a draft document, as I say, in June 2009, has been reviewed following public consultation and I anticipate the final plan being released in the coming weeks. In December 2009 the department released draft state planning regulatory provisions for the Wide Bay-Burnett region in preparation for the delivery of a draft regional plan later this year. My colleague, the honourable Andrew Fraser, the Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development and the regional planning minister for the Wide Bay-Burnett region advises me that the draft plan is due for release in the second half of 2010 and that the final plan is due for release in mid 2011.

Preparation of a statutory regional plan for the Whitsunday, Hinterland and Mackay region is also underway with the plan scheduled for release in the second half of 2011. This program has recently also been extended to the Surat Basin where the government is committed to working with community and

industry to achieve a long-term, prosperous and sustainable future for the Surat Basin through the development of a regional framework and regional settlement pattern as part of the Surat Basin Future Directions strategy. DIP has also—Ms Nelson-Carr will be interested in this—commenced the Townsville Futures Plan in response to the outcomes of the Growth Management Summit earlier this year. The Townsville Futures Plan will be developed in partnership with Townsville City Council and other local stakeholders.

Mr WATT: Minister, page 2-73 of your SDS cites the sustainability of buildings. The government has implemented large reforms in this area. What benefit to Queensland have these reforms delivered?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Watt for his question. Over a number of years the Queensland government has made an ongoing commitment to improving the sustainability of Queensland buildings through a wide range of innovative and indeed historic measures. As well as making homes more energy and water efficient, these measures have made homes more comfortable to live in and will help reduce Queensland's carbon footprint.

For example, in 2009 the Premier announced the Cleaner Greener Buildings election commitment. This commitment complements Toward Q2 green targets, one of which is to reduce by one-third Queensland's household greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 through reduced car and electricity usage. Through decisive action to improve the sustainability of the built environment, the government has rolled out a range of measures to achieve this goal. For example, the 'ban the banners' initiative now provides greater freedom for home owners to make their homes more sustainable. Also during 2010 the government increased the minimum energy equivalence rating for new houses and townhouses from five stars to six stars, the first state in Australia to do so, and increased the minimum energy rating for units to five stars. The move from five-star to six-star housing alone has the potential to save between \$150 and \$500 per household per year in energy bills, depending on the type of climate where the home is built. Based on the number of houses and townhouses built in 2008-09 as a measure, this could result in a saving for Queenslanders of between approximately \$3.4 million and \$11.5 million per year. Reducing the need for artificial heating and cooling, as well as recently mandated improvements in the energy efficiency of air conditioners, household lighting and hot water systems, will reduce the demand on Queensland's electricity grid. This in turn will help reduce the need for costly grid upgrades which are often passed on to home owners in terms of increased electricity prices.

Extending the phase-out of hot-water systems, one of the largest household energy guzzlers, commenced from January this year. Replacement of electric hot-water systems in homes in areas with reticulated natural gas to a solar, gas or heat pump system will save an estimated \$1.9 million tonnes of greenhouse gases by 2020. That is the equivalent of taking 446,000 cars off the road. You can see the great level of commitment we have as a government to the importance of improving the sustainability of our homes and of our housing stock. That is where the built environment can play a huge role in addressing those issues, not only addressing those issues around greenhouse gas and the sustainability of our community in relation to environmental issues but also addressing the cost of living impacts and how that improves sustainability from an economic point of view.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, the Service Delivery Statement page 2-77 cites the continued roll out of the Smart eDA initiative. Could the minister please advise of the benefits of this new electronic development assessment system?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mrs Scott for the question. The state government and councils have worked in partnership in developing an integrated electronic development assessment system over the past five years that has the capacity to cut processing times by some 20 per cent. Smart eDA is an electronic integrated development assessment system based on the national electronic development assessment interoperable standard as agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments. Smart eDA is the only electronic development assessment interoperable standard-compliant development assessment system in the country that is currently fully operational.

As of June this year Smart eDA has successfully signed up 31 councils to start using the Smart eDA service with 16 actively using it now. There are currently some 3,354 registered users. A total of 3,327 applications have been processed to date using the online service and 771 of those have been lodged electronically with the councils. Total fees paid to councils and referral agencies via the Smart eDA have exceeded \$2.45 million. All referral agencies have also agreed to use the Smart eDA system. So the whole of the system is engaged. Connectivity between the systems allows for seamless transfer and provides efficiencies to councils and state agencies by reducing data entry and improving time frames. The annual value of land development in Queensland is estimated at some \$15 million so efficient development assessment is key to delivering outcomes such as housing affordability and planning reform. Historically, development assessment systems have been really paper based systems where applications have been sent to many different parts of council and backwards and forwards to state referral agencies for assessment. Smart eDA supports electronic lodgement and processing and allows people to access those documents and view them online. This allows instantaneous delivery of applications and communications between applicants and assessing agencies and will support faster turnaround and cost savings to all the parties involved.

Smart eDA is delivering EDA services as originally planned. These services do not duplicate council EDA services but are complementary. Participation in Smart eDA will make it easier for applicants to prepare better quality applications as well as lodge and track those applications online, improving the transparency of the service not just the efficiency of it.

CHAIR: As you are aware, housing affordability is a major issue in my area, so important, in fact, that I put a question on notice to you: No. 9. I would like to ask you if you could further explain what are some of the contributing issues to housing affordability in Queensland and what role does the Urban Land Development Authority play in addressing these issues? I refer to SDS 2-104.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair. Your keen interest in housing affordability issues is understood by many people in the parliament. It is very important to understand that housing affordability in its broader sense is multifactorial. It is a result of many different inputs, including interest rates, availability and cost of finance for home mortgages and investment in housing, taxation policies on housing investment, construction costs and property developer decisions in relation to profit margins obviously in individual development sites and the type of development. Many of these issues are outside the direct control of state government.

The Queensland government has also responded to the supply side challenges through a range of measures. We have acted to ensure appropriate and available land is available within the urban footprint of South-East Queensland, for instance, or Far North Queensland, where we have those plans in place, and make sure that it is able to be brought to market in a timely, cost-effective and efficient manner.

There are 42 greenfield areas, ranging in size from some 100 to 5,000 hectares, that were identified by the SEQ greenfield land review as either committed or potentially available for residential development. When we saw the passing of the Sustainable Planning Act—as I mentioned earlier, one of the most significant reforms in the planning, development and building system in the last decade—that provided legislative changes to streamline, simplify and deliver better planning outcomes to allow approval times to get housing to market sooner. All of those things had an impact.

You made specific mention of the ULDA. The government is demonstrating how to fast-track development and to achieve affordable housing in areas of high growth. Through the work of the Urban Land Development Authority, seven urban development areas across the state have been formally declared. Four major residential developments in Fitzgibbon, Townsville, Mackay and Gladstone will produce approximately 2,000 lots which will be complemented by the high-density mixed developments in three other urban development areas in Brisbane. At least 15 per cent of dwellings in these areas will be affordable to householders on low to moderate incomes in the range of \$40,000 to \$80,000 per year.

Housing is considered affordable if the rent is less than 30 per cent of gross household income or mortgage payments are less than 35 per cent of gross household income. They are the measures we use. A really good example of this is the Fitzgibbon development in the north of Brisbane. Two-thirds of the dwellings have been provided at below the median Brisbane house price, which is currently around \$460,000. This development will eventually deliver some 3,000 residential dwellings, providing accommodation for up to 7,000 people. With prices starting at around \$200,000, the Fitzgibbon dwellings will be affordable for key workers such as nurses, police officers and teachers.

CHAIR: One of those areas, I understand, is in Ripley within my electorate.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Certainly the addition of areas that we have identified for the future—not declared yet, but that will be part of the process this year. I am looking forward to it.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms NELSON-CARR: With reference to the commencement of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009—SDS page 2-77—can the minister provide an update on the review of the Iconic Queensland Places Act 2008?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Ms Nelson-Carr for the question because they do interplay on each other. Just to set the scene, the Iconic Queensland Places Act commenced in March 2008 in response to community concerns about new regional councils that might overlook distinguishing characteristics when assessing development applications in former local government areas. Independent panels were established and operating in the iconic places of Douglas, Noosa, Blackall Range and the central Capricorn Coast, which might be otherwise known as the old Livingstone shire localities. The act works to preserve an iconic Queensland place by ensuring council must consider iconic values in decision making; planning scheme provisions that currently protect the iconic values cannot be altered without due consideration; and local laws protecting the iconic values of the place cannot be altered without the impacts being considered. Iconic panels oversee protection of the iconic values in the development assessment process, and that is probably the part that gets the most attention.

The Iconic Queensland Places Act requires me to undertake a review of the operation and effectiveness of the act within three years of its commencement. I have commenced that process and started that review to ensure it is done in a timely manner and to enable a parliamentary report to be

prepared and tabled ahead of that three-year deadline. The report will contain the outcome of the review and the way forward for the protection of iconic values in Queensland. I am pleased to advise the committee that a discussion paper will be released at the end of this month for feedback in areas affected by this legislation. Submissions to the discussion paper will inform the review, and I encourage all stakeholders to get involved. I have already had some feedback from mayors and, indeed, some local members in those regions, both in person and via some written correspondence, and I welcome their input to the review.

The commencement of the Sustainable Planning Act last year requires that local governments update their planning schemes to reflect the council amalgamations. That is really ensuring the next stage of moving on from where we had those old local planning schemes from the old local authorities. This will ensure the councils assess things in a single planning scheme and have that level of consistency across their area. I am keen to see councils take into account the role of those iconic places in developing those new planning schemes.

CHAIR: We now turn to non-government questions.

Mr GIBSON: I refer to SDS page 2-77 and the implementation of the Housing Affordability Strategy. Is the minister satisfied with the performance of his department and departmental officers as the responsible minister for the implementation of this government's housing affordability policy?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for the question. Certainly one of the key issues that is vitally important to the activity of my portfolio is the support of housing affordability. As you may have already heard me say in answer to a question from the chair of the estimates committee, I am very aware of the complex issues that affect housing affordability—issues that are complex, that do not just involve things such as land supply, an efficient planning system and those sorts of issues but also the nature of choices that people, the market and industry make around housing. That is where it was important that we identified the importance of those multifactorial elements in terms of the context of things that happen in the planning and building system. Beyond that, there is a whole range of issues that relate back to much broader issues including, of course, the supply of finance and the cost of that finance for people who might be buying a home to live in or those people who might be investing in order to provide more homes into the market, affecting our broader housing affordability.

That range of factors has a significant role. Certainly you might be referring back to the release of the Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy in 2007, which aimed to streamline the planning and development system and to support the land supply and infrastructure funding systems to ensure that we did have a whole range of options there and supported the improvement of housing affordability.

We have delivered, and I have been very happy with the work that has been undertaken in the department on delivering on elements of the strategy including, most significantly, the establishment of the Urban Land Development Authority. Again, I refer you to my answer that I was giving in response to a question from the chair about the importance of that as a lead-up and a demonstrator not only to local authorities but also to the planning system in general and to industry on how you can support more efficient and effective delivery of affordable housing.

The other issues that I would highlight in terms of delivery on that strategy would be the implementation of changes to the planning and development system process as undertaken within some of those 200 reforms that were part of the Sustainable Planning Act and the designation of land suitable for development in the shorter term on which we have done continued work with local authorities.

Mr GIBSON: I have a supplementary question with the same SDS reference on page 2-77. Minister, if it is your view that the department has been achieving the 2007 Housing Affordability Strategy, why is it then necessary to totally restructure with the establishment of Growth Management Queensland? Does the formation of this new agency not highlight the failure of you as minister to deliver a coordinated approach to growth management in Queensland and a failure of the department to provide linkages necessary between land use planning, infrastructure delivery, economic development, protection of environmental assets, expansion of green space and affordable housing?

CHAIR: Before you answer, Minister, are you casting a reflection upon the professionalism of our Queensland public servants in relation to this?

Mr GIBSON: Not at all. If that was the case, I would be happy to have that removed.

CHAIR: Yes, I think you should clarify that. Minister, if you would like to respond now.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank you for clarifying that matter and seeking a clarification from Mr Gibson. I think Mr Gibson has the wrong end of the stick here. This re-ordering, this establishing of Growth Management Queensland as a key delivery agent of the government's agenda around managing growth not only in South-East Queensland but across the whole of the state, is a demonstration of our recognition of how important an issue this is. That is not only on the basis of the work that has been undertaken over some period of time by the planning officers within the Department of Infrastructure and Planning but also to recognise that there was a need to bring together further capability to support this

issue. It is not that people had failed; things had continued to be worked on. However, what we needed was further capability. That is why you have instances such as some of the officers who were formerly attached to the Department of Transport and Main Roads being brought together with our planning officers in the Department of Infrastructure and Planning to create Growth Management Queensland.

Growth Management Queensland was identified as an outcome of the Growth Management Summit—one of the key deliverables that provides the opportunity to shape the way in which we deliver on our agenda about managing growth here in South-East Queensland. The immediate priorities of Growth Management Queensland are to improve the development approval processes and time frames—continue to have that focus—to establish and implement delivery timetables for land supply—continue to have that focus—and, most significantly, to expedite development of infill sites and delivery of priority transit oriented development precincts and to develop responses to issues around those liveability issues including enhanced green and open space requirements—things that were not key features of the Housing Affordability Strategy, you might note. I note Mr Gibson bled from one question to the next. His follow-up question widened the scope, and appropriately it did. That was the same sort of thing that we did as well with Growth Management Queensland in responding to the issues that arose at the Growth Management Summit.

I think it is appropriate that we have the right set of arrangements in place under the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer of Growth Management Queensland, Paul Low, to have that work being undertaken in delivering on those key tasks—outputs that were identified at the Growth Management Summit—in consultation with a whole range of people across Queensland.

Mr GIBSON: I can move on to the Growth Management Summit, SDS page 2-73 under 'Strategic Issues'. There are numerous examples of failure after failure of this Labor government to deliver on plans. Indeed, in estimates last year, in reference to the Southern Moreton Bay Marine Infrastructure Master Plan we were told that that draft would be completed by August 2009. Nothing has happened. Is it not true that the recently announced Shaping Tomorrow's Queensland is just another plan—another plan that comes on top of all the other plans that either were undelivered or have not worked? Why should Queenslanders have any confidence that this plan will be delivered upon?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for the question. Before I come back and make reference to the southern Moreton Bay infrastructure plan, let me make reference to his casting doubts around the agenda, the work and those key action items—

Mr GIBSON: Stating a fact, Minister.

Mr HINCHLIFFE:—around the delivery of the issues arising out of the Growth Management Summit. What we have done here is establish Growth Management Queensland to be directly responsible for the delivery of those key action items that have been identified in that program. That is work that has been undertaken already and is well in place. Programs have been put together to address each and every one of those issues and are on task and are moving ahead very well. I have been very impressed by the way in which we have been able to take those matters forward, listening to the people of Queensland—listening not only to people from South-East Queensland and not only to mayors who came from across the whole of the state and people within industry, but also to general community members who were invited to have a role in the Growth Management Summit, either in person or by being involved in any number of the online processes that allowed for people to have a say. In fact, some 10,000 online viewers of the summit webcast are people who made inputs during that whole process.

I refer now to the issue Mr Gibson raised in relation to the Southern Moreton Bay Marine Infrastructure Master Plan study. Certainly I acknowledge the timeline that he made reference to, which was brought to the committee's attention last year. That plan is aimed at preserving jobs, stimulating additional employment and providing development proponents with more certainty in relation to the future of development proposals. One of the key issues is about identifying a marine development area as a confirmed site best able to provide sustainable outcomes for the environment and communities, with overall benefits to the state. We have been engaged with key marine industry representatives, environmental groups and other recreational users. It was originally proposed, absolutely, to have a draft master plan out for public consultation last year. However, a series of issues in relation to dredging have been raised and they need to be properly resolved first. My advice from the Department of Transport and Main Roads is that that release date has been deferred pending getting those issues right. That fundamentally needs to be part of the issue of how that is responded to.

Mr GIBSON: SDS 2-73: I go to another program. In 2008 the South-East Queensland Metropolitan Development Program was announced. However, there is no further reference to the program either on the departmental website or in the 2008-09 annual report. Can the Minister advise what funding has been allocated to the activities of the South-East Queensland Metropolitan Development Program, what activities have been undertaken and what reports they have produced since their announcement in 2008?

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, are you referring to public reports?

Mr GIBSON: Yes, public reports.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I want to clarify that there is not a reference in the budget?

CHAIR: Yes, there is.

Mr GIBSON: There is: 'collaboratively plan sustainable and dynamic urban and regional communities', SDS 2-73.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In terms of that reference back to the 2008 budget, as you might have noticed—

Mr GIBSON: Not budget; the announcement was in 2008.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As you might have noticed, I was not the minister at that time. I might take that one on notice and try to get some more information back to you very soon.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr GIBSON: Minister, page SDS 2-74, on progressing the government's growth summit agenda arising from the Queensland Growth Management Summit, on Wednesday 24 March 2010 we watched during a people's question time about population growth as time after time the Premier came in at the end of your answers to clarify them or to get them back on message. It clearly appeared that the Premier did not have confidence in your answers. If you do not have the confidence of the Premier, how can the people of Queensland have any confidence in your ability to deliver on the outcomes in the budget papers?

CHAIR: Before you answer that, Minister, I would regard that as being a personal reflection on the minister. I believe that that should be withdrawn. I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr GIBSON: Madam Chair, I am happy to withdraw.

CHAIR: Thank you. Can we go to the next question please?

Mr GIBSON: Certainly. Minister, I refer you to SDS 2-74 and the highlights with regards to SEQIPP. I note that last week in Estimates Committee D, in response to questioning, the Minister for Main Roads indicated that it is too expensive to do P-ratings on projects that may not stack up. This apparently included projects listed in SEQIPP. With each blow-out in time lines, industry sources now deride the document as being an aspirational one. Minister, with the apparent lack of confidence in SEQIPP, why should Queenslanders have any confidence in your ability to deliver on SEQIPP?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for the question. I want to clarify about the P-rating. You are referring to the probability rating?

Mr GIBSON: A P-rating is a tool that Main Roads uses for progressing a project. Apparently, with regards to SEQIPP, they do not do them if they do not stack up, even if the project is listed in SEQIPP?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I might reiterate that SEQIPP is not a budget paper.

Mr GIBSON: I understand it is not a budget paper. However, at SDS 2-74 it is listed as one of the highlights, so it is appropriate for this committee to discuss it.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Hence I provided it to the committee.

Mr GIBSON: Thank you. I am saying that you have the main roads minister saying that they do not do P-ratings on projects even if they are in SEQIPP. Clearly, he does not have confidence in SEQIPP. Why should we or the Queensland public have confidence in SEQIPP?

CHAIR: Are you asking the minister here today to comment on another minister? Again I think that is inappropriate.

Mr GIBSON: I am asking—

CHAIR: Can you be more specific in what you are asking the minister, please?

Mr GIBSON: Sure. Other ministers do not have confidence in SEQIPP.

CHAIR: You are stating that.

Mr GIBSON: The other minister stated that last week in the hearing of Estimates Committee D. If they do not have confidence in SEQIPP, why should the people of Queensland have confidence in SEQIPP?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for clarifying the question. You have confidence in SEQIPP because of what it has already delivered. Over five years, SEQIPP has delivered an extraordinary number of projects in South-East Queensland. We can point to projects such as the Ted Smout bridge, which was opened recently. We can visit the Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge. We can visit projects like Clem7, which is not a state project but nevertheless is a project that was provided for and identified in SEQIPP as part of the program. The reality is that we are seeing projects delivered out of SEQIPP right now and we have seen it over the past five years. SEQIPP provides huge confidence to industry about the delivery of projects in South-East Queensland, hence the support that there has been for the

government's decision to progress SEQIPP to forming part of a statewide Queensland infrastructure program. In relation to the role of the probability of cost issue, I am happy to ask the director-general to make some comments in relation to that, drawing on his experience as a former Main Roads official.

Mr Jensen: I assume the committee is actually asking a question regarding the probability, for example, of P80 and P50. I have never heard it called a P-rating before. Given that it is actually talking about P50 and P80, the SEQIPP document contains all of those P-ratings. Any project in SEQIPP already has a probability of being delivered on cost within it, including all Transport and Main Roads projects.

Mr GIBSON: How would we be aware of that P-rating, because it is not obvious in the document?

Mr Jensen: I would have to check the document for the actual language, but it is actually listed as being a concept price. A project that is still 10 or 15 years out simply has a concept price around it.

Mr GIBSON: So it is different terminology?

Mr Jensen: Different terminology. However, a project that has gone out to tender and has actually had the tender awarded obviously has a very high probability of not exceeding it because it is a contract price.

CHAIR: We only have a very short period. Member for Gympie?

Mr GIBSON: I am happy to ask the question and for the minister to take it on notice. Minister, I refer to the regional coordination committee meeting on 3 December 2009. This links into SDS 2-75 under the South-East Queensland Regional Plan. At that meeting you endorsed 25 implementation priorities for the South-East Queensland Regional Plan for 2010. I would ask what allocation of resources has been made by the department to achieving priorities five, eight, 11, 17 and 23? I appreciate you may not have that list in front of you. Unfortunately, I have written across mine so I cannot provide you with it. If you wish to take that on notice and come back, I am happy to do that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Can you repeat the numbers?

Mr GIBSON: Of the 25 priorities, I am looking at the ones numbered five, eight, 11, 17, and 23.

Mr Jensen: Do you wish to know if they have been resourced?

Mr GIBSON: Yes. I am asking if they have been resourced.

CHAIR: Minister, you might want to take that on notice. That is a pretty specific question that you have been given.

Mr GIBSON: With the limited time, I rejigged it.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The answer is that if they have been prioritised by the Regional Planning Committee, as it is now known, they are on a program that is resourced.

Mr GIBSON: I am looking for the amount of resource allocated to them in this financial year.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In this financial year?

Mr GIBSON: In the budget papers, yes.

CHAIR: Minister, will you take that on notice?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes.

CHAIR: We now move to government questions. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs SCOTT: Can the Minister explain how the Queensland Greenspace Strategy, currently being developed, links to the objectives of the South-East Queensland Regional Plan as referred to in SDS 2-74?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mrs Scott for the question. I acknowledge her particular ongoing support of the South-East Queensland Regional Plan and the role it is playing in providing a better lifestyle for South-East Queenslanders. We all know that Queensland is renowned for its climate, and beautiful beaches, parks, rivers and outback scenery in South-East Queensland play a real role in people's lifestyle. So balancing our significant population growth with our environment, development and infrastructure provision is a complex and important challenge for the government and, indeed, for the wider community. The South-East Queensland Regional Plan is the government's long-term vision for the region. It remains the pre-eminent planning document for the state and local governments. The regional plan establishes land-use categories, including the urban footprint and the regional landscape and rural production areas. These categories already protect some 85 per cent of the region as green space, secured from further urban development. The plan's vision includes a future where the community has access to a range of quality, open-space and recreation opportunities and where ecologically and culturally significant landscapes are valued, celebrated, protected and, indeed, enhanced.

The Queensland Greenspace Strategy, of which a draft was released for community input earlier this year, will align with visions of the South-East Queensland Regional Plan and build on the 85 per cent of green space protected by the plan. The Queensland Greenspace Strategy will help deliver on the strategic directions of the regional plan through actions such as facilitating public access to state

owned land where possible, developing a land register and website for the promotion of green space, encouraging recreation on private land and developing a community green space network plan by the end of 2011. When developed, that community green space network plan will be an important tool as part of the implementation process of the South-East Queensland Regional Plan, something that Mr Gibson was just asking about.

An important part of our long-term green space strategy in Queensland will be the protection and transformation of interurban breaks, which are defined in the South-East Queensland Regional Plan. You can see them quite clearly on the maps. They protect our region from urban sprawl. These green wedges, as they have been sometimes referred to, where possible should be used sustainably for purposes such as agriculture, nature conservation, scenic amenity, green space and, indeed, outdoor recreation. I am committed to the Queensland Greenspace Strategy being linked back to the South-East Queensland Regional Plan and integrated with other deliverables of the plan, including the outdoor recreation strategy, the rural future strategy, the active trails strategy and the natural resource management plans. Some of those things are part of the action plans that Mr Gibson was referring to earlier.

Mr WATT: Can the Minister provide an update on the Alpha Coal Project assessment and its related processes?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Watt for his question. The Galilee coal basin is a large undeveloped series of coal resources located north-west of the Bowen Basin. In September 2008, Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd submitted a proposal to establish a large new coalmine and associated rail and port infrastructure in the Galilee coal basin. The capital cost of the project was likely to be around some \$7.5 billion—\$3 billion for the construction of the mine, \$2.5 billion for rail and \$2 billion for port development. In October 2008, the Alpha Coal Project was declared a significant project pursuant to part 4 of the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. The declaration initiates an environmental impact assessment project that will be managed and assessed by the Coordinator-General.

Hancock Coal, the project's proponent, is currently preparing the project's environmental impact statement. In the fourth quarter of 2010, the proponent expects to submit the environmental impact statement to the Coordinator-General. The environmental impact statement will cover the project's mine and rail components. On 2 July this year, the rail component corridor was awarded infrastructure facility of significance status under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act.

The project will utilise North Queensland Bulk Ports' new Abbot Point multicargo berthing facility, for which North Queensland Bulk Ports is seeking environmental approvals. The proponent has been awarded preferred developer status to develop a 30 million tonne per annum stockpiling facility as part of the X110 Abbot Point port expansion. The approval for the X110 will also be undertaken by North Queensland Bulk Ports. Once the environmental impact statement has been received, the next step will involve a four- to six-week consultation period, when the public will have the opportunity to comment.

As you can see, this is a massive project and, appropriately, these sorts of massive projects relate back to the coal plan and will be assessed in that context but still with these processes allowing for the widest number of stakeholders and members of the community to have input, to have their say, into the appropriate assessment of massive projects such as this \$7.5 billion project.

CHAIR: The LNG industry provides the potential for the development of many thousands of new jobs and massive investment in our state. Can the minister advise on the progress of this developing industry and also securing the Callide Infrastructure Corridor to provide a gas superhighway from the west through to Gladstone?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the chair for the question. The extension of the Gladstone State Development Area in August 2008 included an industrial precinct on Curtis Island in preparation for the establishment of large scale liquefied natural gas production, storage and export facilities. In March 2009 the Premier committed to acquiring a land corridor to co-locate underground gas pipelines from the Callide region to the proposed Curtis Island Industry Precinct. The purchase of this corridor will provide certainty for all the project proponents and the community regarding the location of those gas pipelines.

From April 2009 representatives of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning regularly consulted with the Gladstone Regional Council, elected representatives, relevant state agencies, the directly affected landowners or landholders and the project proponents as it undertook the process to assess and identify a corridor suitable for the project. The Governor in Council declared the Callide Infrastructure Corridor as a state development area on Thursday, 1 October last year. The Governor in Council also provided the development scheme for the Callide Infrastructure Corridor State Development Area at that same time.

The Callide Infrastructure Corridor State Development Area is a linear corridor approximately 44 kilometres long and generally about 200 metres wide. In specific areas where environmental, geographic and construction issues exist, the corridor is wider for pipe separation and construction

purposes. The department is currently finalising the corridor to continue this gas superhighway through the Gladstone State Development Area to the industrial precinct on Curtis Island. Project proponents have provided their finalised alignments within the Callide Infrastructure Corridor State Development Area and recently provided their final alignment within the corridor in the Gladstone State Development Area.

The final stage of this process includes—and this is very, very significant—crossing The Narrows to Curtis Island. The department in this area is working with other key state and Commonwealth agencies and project proponents to complete the necessary tenure requirements, agreements and environment approvals for the infrastructure corridor. This is a great example of how we are delivering upon commitments that were made. I made reference in my opening statement to the importance of this gas superhighway. This is a key element that government is undertaking to support this sunrise industry—this great opportunity of the liquefied natural gas industry. I would particularly like to commend the officers in my department who have worked very hard on this particular project.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I am sure your officers deserve medals for the great work they have done in relation to this. I call the member for Mundingburra.

Ms NELSON-CARR: The Northern Economic Triangle Infrastructure Plan has Townsville as one of its key centres. Can the minister provide an update on the progress of the implementation of this plan and its key projects for Townsville?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Ms Nelson-Carr for her question. Obviously she is very consistent on raising the issues of how Townsville plays a key role in the development of our state. The Northern Economic Triangle—or NET, as it is generally known—Infrastructure Plan's vision is to foster sustainable economic, social and community development and growth through the emergence of Mount Isa, Bowen and Townsville as those key points on that triangle of mining, minerals and processing, and industrial development. Over the course of the next half century—the plan is a very far-sighted process—the current focus of the NET Infrastructure Plan for the economic centre of Townsville is on the promotion and development of the Townsville State Development Area, the Port of Townsville and the infrastructure networks required to provide efficient transport of minerals from the north-west and north-east minerals provinces for processing or export. Competitively priced energy for industrial development also remains a key priority.

In May 2010 the Premier announced the Townsville Futures Plan, and that highlighted the important role that the Northern Economic Triangle will play in enhancing Townsville's strengths in minerals processing, tropical sciences and tourism. The first 25-year Port of Townsville Master Plan is being implemented to guide a potential trebling of port trade. Planning for the port expansion is ongoing, with work commencing on the preparation of the environmental impact statement. Construction on the \$110 million marine precinct project commenced, as I am sure Ms Nelson-Carr is aware, in May this year and is expected to be completed by the end of 2011. Negotiations for the berth 8 upgrade are ongoing, as are negotiations between state and Commonwealth governments for funding of upgrades to berth 10. Design works for the eastern reclaim are also ongoing.

Also, construction of the \$190 million Townsville Port Access Road, which began in 2008, stage 1—the Stuart Bypass included—was completed in January this year. When completed in mid-2012, the major road corridor will provide a direct link from the Bruce and Flinders highways and the Townsville State Development Area directly into the Port of Townsville. The project is really significant. It is a big part of this NET story. I should acknowledge that it is funded not only by the Queensland government but also by the Commonwealth government. It is a great example of the way the Queensland government and the Commonwealth government are working well together to develop the north—to develop the great opportunities that are represented by the mineral wealth of the north and the industrial processing opportunities that are well represented in Townsville and also potentially in Bowen.

Mrs SCOTT: Minister, this year's budget allocated significant funding for the acquisition of land for industrial development in regional Queensland. Can the minister provide advice on that allocation by region and estimated area of land to be acquired and provide some examples of the type of industrial development this program has supported in the regions?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mrs Scott for her question. I know her commitment to employment land for people in her part of the world. The land acquisition activities by the Property Services Group is an example of the government's and the department's commitment to and ongoing investment in the Q2 target for a strong Queensland through supporting a resilient, flexible and diverse economy. PSG, as the Property Services Group is generally known, holds improved and unimproved land throughout the state in order to ensure a pipeline of future employment land. In essence, PSG is a long-term developer of industrial land to support a strong Queensland. PSG is the delivery mechanism for the Industry Location Scheme, which has the goal of encouraging business and industry to locate in Queensland by ensuring appropriately zoned and serviced land is available at a competitive price.

Developments undertaken cater for a wide range of industry sectors. This represents a positive investment to provide the building blocks for longer term growth opportunities in employment throughout the state. These developments form a catalyst for private sector investment in regional Queensland.

Examples of the success of this program include Portsmouth Industrial Estate in Cairns, Bohle Industrial Estate in Townsville, South Mackay Industrial Estate in Mackay and the Clinton Industrial Estate in Gladstone. The program is self-funded, importantly, via the Estates Construction Fund, where revenues generated from the sale of developed land in the state are utilised to undertake further developments in all parts of Queensland.

In 2010-11, the Land Acquisition Program is targeting acquisitions in the following regions: \$6 million to purchase approximately 120 hectares of land for future development in the Mackay region; \$5.5 million to complete the acquisition of approximately 3,600 hectares of land to support the Abbot Point State Development Area; \$1.8 million to acquire approximately 13 hectares of land to support the development of the Amberley Aerospace and Defence Support Centre; and \$1.4 million to secure 260 hectares of land at Mica Creek, Mount Isa to provide a major industry site. They are the examples specifically in this year's budget, but it is part of that wider issue of how we see the development of industrial land and how that supports employment opportunities across the length and breadth of the state.

Madam Chair, while I have a moment, if you do not mind, there was a question I took on notice from Mr Gibson about the document that was tabled at the RPC—the numbers and the format and the priorities. It would be extremely helpful to get a copy, if it is possible, of your document—if you could table that—so that we can identify and ensure that we are answering the right things.

Mr GIBSON: I am happy to write them out. I would prefer not to table it. I have made a lot of notes on it.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Sure.

Mr GIBSON: But I am happy to write it out and provide you with those items.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The sooner you can write that out, the sooner we can be answering it.

Mr Gibson interjected.

CHAIR: I think the minister is genuinely asking—

Mr Gibson interjected.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It is nice to acknowledge that the odd cheap shot was there.

Mr GIBSON: The odd cheap shot to amuse myself.

CHAIR: No cheap shots while I am the chair, let me tell you that right now. I call the member for Everton.

Mr WATT: Minister, page 2-77 of the SDS refers to the draft Queensland Greenspace Strategy that was released for public consultation earlier this year. Will the minister please explain to the committee the opportunities for this strategy to align with government initiatives to protect koala populations in South-East Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Watt for his question. I know that he is keenly interested in the protection of the koala population in South-East Queensland. With over 2,000 people, as I have already highlighted, making Queensland their home each and every week—be it new births or be it new citizens—our environment and lifestyle are under increasing pressure. Population growth and climate change will have social, environmental and economic impacts across the state. Those two factors coming together are an issue in relation to this.

That is why in our urban areas we need to ensure there is green space set aside for Queenslanders to play and relax in their own neighbourhoods, and GMQ is doing the planning to make this happen. But we also need to protect Queensland's unique flora and fauna. To this end, new conservation recreation areas like the Daisy Hill koala area and, indeed, the Kangaroo Point Park on the south side and the Fitzgibbon bushland to the north of Brisbane are being acquired and preserved. The government's recent commitment to protecting North Stradbroke Island is further evidence of our dedication to preserving our environment for future generations.

In addition to those immediate actions, the government released the draft Queensland Greenspace Strategy, which I have spoken about already. While we are talking about it, I want to thank everyone including the councils, individuals and community groups who made submissions to that strategy—some 244 submissions in fact.

I was pleased to see that koalas were one of the common themes that were addressed in the submissions with reference to recent government actions to protect koalas through the Koala Response Strategy. The Koala Response Strategy initiatives include: protecting additional koala habitat, including 900 hectares at Thornlands in southern Redland Bay; ensuring environmental offset options contribute to a net gain in bushland koala habitat; and allocating some \$15 million for koala habitat protection and restoration programs.

For the benefit of the committee, I should reiterate that it is envisaged that the final Greenspace Strategy will work in tandem and interplay with the Koala Response Strategy to ensure that land acquired for koala protection is also considered as community green space and suitable for public

recreation wherever possible. Obviously, that is public recreation that is compatible with koalas. Together the two strategies will optimise the community benefit from the government's investment in land for koala habitat and deliver substantial green space outcomes for the wider community.

CHAIR: We are now moving to non-government questions. I call the member for Gympie.

Mr GIBSON: The SDS at page 2-78 makes reference to the mandatory sustainability declaration. With reference to the introduction of this document—a document around which the arrogance of this Labor government is perhaps best personified by its refusal to listen to the concerns that were raised by me and others in the parliament and its having to change the form not once but twice—can the minister advise what audit or review of the effectiveness of this document has taken place or has it become just another piece of bureaucratic green tape with no real value or benefit to Queenslanders?

CHAIR: Just to clarify, what sort of audit are you talking about—a financial audit or what?

Mr GIBSON: An audit of the effectiveness of the document.

CHAIR: So you are asking the minister about an efficiency audit.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair. I thank Mr Gibson for the question. I will just put this in context so everyone understands what has happened rather than having to rely on some of the spin that was part of the question. Following the introduction of the initial version of the sustainability declaration, public and industry feedback suggested that it could be simplified. Consultation that occurred in February this year allowed the government to respond to the feedback and produce a more user friendly form.

The Real Estate Institute of Queensland has had ongoing consultation with the department and provided very valuable input into the redesign of the form and continued feedback. Mr Dan Molloy, the Managing Director of the REIQ, has publicly welcomed the introduction of the revised form. Warwick Temby, the Executive Director of the Housing Industry Association, described the revised form as user friendly and 'a very important educational tool'. He noted that the revised form was easier to understand and offered considerable flexibility.

The declaration continues to inform potential buyers about the sustainability features and how these features can lower the ongoing operating costs of homes. It provides sellers with an opportunity to showcase the hard work that they have done to make their home more energy and water efficient. The energy and water sections of the form have been simplified and made more user friendly on the basis of that feedback. You either listen and respond to it or you do not. That is what we did. The access and safety sections have been amended to allow a greater level of flexibility about how homeowners can identify the features that are in their homes.

To put this in context I will reiterate that the Queensland declaration is quite distinct from models that have been adopted in other places. The model adopted in the Australian Capital Territory means that owners are only required to disclose the home's energy performance level to a prospective purchaser. This can cost between \$200 and \$250. Inspectors have to come in and do that sort of work.

We published a reference guide and simplified the form so people can complete it themselves. Admittedly, we are still in the early stage of this being in place. As I was highlighting at the time of its introduction, it is very much an educative tool to encourage people to understand this process. While there is some research that identifies that there are benefits in advertising the sustainability features of your home in terms of the sale price that is achieved, it is still very early days. At an appropriate time we will need to review and audit the success of the program. That will have to come at an appropriate time and once it is bedded down.

Mr GIBSON: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I think you have selectively forgotten—and *Hansard* could refresh your memory—about the points that we raised during the consideration in detail stage of debate on that form and the refusal by government members to even consider that the font size at point 8 was too small.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie.

Mr GIBSON: I will come to the question, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, we are not going to have statements here. You are here to ask questions, so please ask your question.

Mr GIBSON: I refer to the SDS at 2-77. The Sustainable Planning Act has placed more emphasis on council planning instruments being consistent with state planning policies. We have seen, with the boost in the significance of SPPs, an increase in the number of SPPs being developed across a range of state government departments. Will you identify which SPPs are being developed or are to be developed and an agenda for them as your department has the whole-of-government coordination role of SPPs?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for the question. The state planning policies are very important elements in the cascading instruments involved in the planning process. We start with the Sustainable Planning Act and go down to the role of state planning policies, including regional plans. That cascades down into informing the local planning processes that are undertaken by local authorities. They are informed by all of those key and important state instruments.

I acknowledge Mr Gibson's acknowledgement of the importance of those state planning instruments. That is why we have made a commitment to articulating the program of development of state planning policies. We have released the state planning initiatives that are part of that program. There will be an annual report published of those plans that have been developed. That will set out the program for when those plans will roll out and also identify when current state planning policies need to be renewed or need to be reviewed. That will be an important part of the transparency and availability of those important documents to all Queenslanders, but, most particularly, to local governments which need to rely upon them in the development of their local planning schemes.

Mr GIBSON: I have a supplementary question on that. If I understand you correctly, the annual report that you just referred to will have an agenda of upcoming state planning policies? It will obviously have new ones as well as—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is right. It will highlight those that are in the process of being developed.

Mr GIBSON: I now move on to SDS 2-78 and priority infrastructure plans. Under this Labor government we have seen the Queensland Competition Authority conduct a review of local government infrastructure charging schedules. We now have priority infrastructure plans, PIPs, and infrastructure charging schedules. I am advised that local governments have spent over \$30 million in preparing priority infrastructure plans and infrastructure charges only to now find that they are facing a new infrastructure charging arrangement. Minister, is not the establishment of the Infrastructure Charges Task Force an admission that under Labor infrastructure charging arrangements have got out of control, making housing unaffordable for ordinary Queenslanders?

CHAIR: Just before you answer that, Minister—member for Gympie, what is the SDS reference?

Mr GIBSON: 2-78. I did say that at the beginning, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr Gibson. I think it is again important to put this in context so that everyone—particularly the committee—can understand the role of priority infrastructure plans. These plans are about helping local government plan appropriately for their infrastructure requirements. The work that they undertake in preparing priority infrastructure plans is not all about infrastructure charging. It is about managing their infrastructure requirements and the infrastructure requirements that they will have for many years to come.

What we are doing with the requirement around the development of priority infrastructure plans is requiring them to manage their assets well. Some 36 councils have commenced their PIP process. That is to be commended. The PIP provides them with a great deal of assistance beyond issues around infrastructure charging. Certainly the current regime allows for those priority infrastructure plans to be used as the method of calculating infrastructure charging in the development process.

An outcome of the Growth Management Summit has been the establishment of the Infrastructure Charges Task Force. It will review the infrastructure charging arrangements in order to simplify and standardise charging arrangements without adversely affecting the viability of industry and councils and housing affordability, as was referred to by Mr Gibson.

I should note for the committee that the members of that committee are: Mr Paul Low, the Chief Executive Officer of Growth Management Queensland; Jude Munro, the outgoing Chief Executive Officer of the Brisbane City Council; Greg Hallam, the Executive Director of the Local Government Association of Queensland; John Mulcahy, the former Chief Executive Officer of Suncorp Metway; Chris Freeman, the former Chief Executive Officer of Mirvac; Grant Dennis, the Executive Chairman of Dennis Family Holdings; Alex Beavers, the Deputy Under Treasurer, Queensland Treasury; Warren Rowe, the Director of Planning, Environment and Transport from the Gold Coast City Council; and Jim Long, the Divisional Development Manager of AMP.

That task force has a focus on identifying the current issues relating to infrastructure planning and the funding framework for local government infrastructure in Queensland and establishing a set of principles that will provide the basis for proposing improvements to the current arrangements. All of that will be based upon good PIPs work which underlies the good planning that is required by the local authorities in relation to this issue.

Mr GIBSON: I will continue with SDS 2-78 and PIPs. The feedback I am getting from a lot of local governments is that they have undertaken a great deal of work, within a fairly constrained framework, to submit their PIPs to the department. There is a great deal of concern that the department is not properly resourced to be able to process those PIPs and get them back so that they are in force. I am aware that to date we only have one PIP in force—the Gold Coast City Council's area.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is right.

Mr GIBSON: Can you advise what progress your department is making to speed up the finalisation of the PIPs that have been submitted?

CHAIR: I want the SDS reference.

Mr GIBSON: I did say it at the beginning again. It is 2-78.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair, and I thank Mr Gibson for his reference to the SDS as well. I am not advised that there is a delay in the PIPs process. The key work that is being undertaken here is by local governments in developing those PIPs. Those PIPs are vital work for the local government to do in order for them to inform themselves about the nature and requirements of the infrastructure that they need in their local areas and what is needed in the context of the development that is possible and permitted by their planning schemes.

That is the key work. We are certainly working closely with local governments that are preparing their PIPs as a department and indeed working with the QCA on seeing those PIPs as they come forward being assessed properly and advanced. In the context of the work that is going on around the infrastructure task force and indeed the key challenge we know that the development of these PIPs is—do not get me wrong; I understand what a big task it is—we have extended the deadline for doing that work to 30 June 2011. That was one of the key things that we have done in order to demonstrate the department's commitment to working with local government and working with the QCA as part of this process of review of those individual PIPs.

I have also been at pains to remind local government in the face of concerns around the infrastructure charging impact of the PIPs process that a PIP does not necessitate the charge. The PIP identifies what is needed. They can make decisions as a local government about how they do the charging. They can make decisions about how much they subsidise these sorts of costs on infrastructure from their rates revenue or other revenues. They are able to make those sorts of decisions. Sometimes you get this view coming from local government—and I reflect this back on the affordability issues that you made mention of—that the PIP system is the thing that is driving up their infrastructure costs. The reality is that their infrastructure costs are rising; the PIPs process is capturing that information. They need to make decisions and judgements about how they get the revenues to address those infrastructure costs.

Mr GIBSON: Just to follow on from that, Minister, and again referring to the SDS at page 2-78 just so I have it clear, with the extension of time would you see the remaining councils that have to finalise their PIPs getting that done within the latter half of 2010, or is that something you think would be into 2011? I appreciate it is a view more than anything else.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Sure. While you have got a covering reference to PIPs in the SDS, I am not sure if my speculation about the local authorities' ability to do their work is really my role here. But I acknowledge the question from Mr Gibson and the spirit in which it is asked in that he is seeking to understand how the PIPs regime will impact upon local government and impact upon the availability of this system for it to be used in order to inform the delivery of the infrastructure and the appropriate charging that might address the delivery of the infrastructure.

In that context, with 36 local authorities progressing the introduction of the PIP I can acknowledge in the short term that the Queensland Competition Authority has reviewed six PIPs and is currently reviewing a further eight. So there is a fair bit of work that is going on there at the moment. There is further progress that local authorities will have to do on progressing those PIPs, and that is where I cannot be Nostradamus in knowing how they are going. But certainly we are working with them and providing every assistance we can in helping them develop those. The recognition of the challenge that it represents is part of the extension of time. Also the understanding of the key work that the infrastructure task force that the Premier initiated arising out of the Growth Management Summit and the feedback we had from the community and from industry and from local government at that key engagement process is important to be recognised, and that has informed the decision to extend that time frame.

Mr GIBSON: I refer to the SDS at page 2-77 which provides an overall outline of the department's significant achievements in 2009-10 and lists such things as the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act. However, in July 2009 you released the South-East Queensland Rural Futures Strategy, a supporting document to the South East Queensland Regional Plan. As we are all aware, the South-East Queensland farm dependent economy generates about \$8 billion a year or nearly 12 per cent of South-East Queensland's gross domestic product. Minister, listed with the Rural Futures Strategy are strategic action items. Of those, the department is listed as having responsibility for four of them, and I am happy to provide you with a copy if you need those four. I am just wondering if you can advise the committee on the progress of those items, and they are highlighted for your benefit.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Sure; thank you.

CHAIR: I think we need to table that.

Mr GIBSON: I am happy to formally table it. It is a publicly available document.

CHAIR: Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

CHAIR: Minister, you will obviously have to look at this before you can answer that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes. If I can get a chance to see it, I would appreciate that.

CHAIR: The document is now going over to the minister to have a look at.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The Rural Futures action plan has some of the action items here identified, and there are a number of areas that Mr Gibson has kindly highlighted—

Mr GIBSON: It is all part of the service.

Mr HINCHLIFFE:—where it refers to the Department of Infrastructure and Planning. One makes reference to the South-East Queensland Regional Outdoor Recreation Strategy. That is a piece of work that I made reference to earlier when I was referring to the Greenspace Strategy. They are things that are interacting with each other and informing each other. When I made broader reference earlier in an answer to a question around regional planning, I certainly made references to the implementation actions of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, and this is under that progress. Certainly we have got issues that have been identified as being progress on that.

Mr GIBSON: Madam Chair, given the time, the minister may wish to take it on notice and come back later.

CHAIR: Minister, we have run out of time for non-government questions at the moment. Given that you will have another slot, we might want to come back to that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Sure; absolutely. We can do that.

CHAIR: It is now time for government questions.

Mr WATT: Minister, I am sure that you would agree that I am a living example of the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle. I can see that you agree wholeheartedly, as does the rest of the committee! With reference to 'Recent Achievements' in the SDS at page 2-75, can the minister please update the committee on the government's recent efforts to help Queenslanders lead healthier, greener lives with more opportunities to walk, ride and play in the south-east corner?

CHAIR: Minister, I do not know where we go from there. Obviously we have the healthiest man in the Queensland parliament asking the question so, Minister, if you would like to respond.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair, and I thank Mr Watt for his living example of the question. On 27 March this year the Premier announced the protection of 40 hectares of state owned land for public recreation and community green space at Fitzgibbon—not very far away from Mr Watt's part of the world. This new bushland park in the residential estate being developed by the Urban Land Development Authority will have recreation tracks through the bushland, a grass multipurpose playing field and picnic shelters and barbecue facilities, which I am sure will involve some healthy barbecuing options for the member. Also at Wyaralong near Boonah the government is working with the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors to develop a 745-hectare site as a trail bike park. This is scheduled to be opened in 2011. It is probably pretty active to lift the bike up, but the petrol will keep you going there.

Significantly, in 2007 the government allocated some \$8.8 million to develop three new regional recreation trails and to implement the South-East Queensland active trails strategy over five years. New sections of these trails are being opened as they are completed. For example, 100 kilometres of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail will be completed and opened on 31 July 2010. Indeed, I will be opening the Maroochy River Canoe Trail on 14 August 2010. New land for public recreation is being provided through the government's \$12.6 million redevelopment of the Kangaroo Point TAFE site, and that is certainly a site where you see many people leading active and healthy lifestyles around our city. It provides a great scenic viewpoint and public art opportunities but is a great venue for walking and accessing the rest of that area of the city. This project demonstrates how investing in development of strategic sites not only provides community green space but also provides community green space with real opportunity for recreational experience within metropolitan areas.

In response to the population growth in South-East Queensland, the government is particularly focused on providing new community green space in the western corridor where much of the region's new residential development will occur. I have made mention of the Wyaralong trail bike park, but additional green space in the area will include expansion of the Boonah to Ipswich and Brisbane Valley rail trails. New community green space is also being provided by the government outside South-East Queensland. For example, the \$13 million redevelopment of the Fitzroy River banks in Rockhampton provides an example of that sort of work as well.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Minister, in relation to the answer to the previous question, you say that you have recently opened 21 kilometres of those regional recreational trails. Have you told us where all of those sites are, or can you elaborate and pursue that now?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Sure; terrific. I thank Ms Nelson-Carr for the question because it gives me a chance to provide more information about that. As I said, we had that commitment dating back to 2007 to the development of three regional recreational trails—the Boonah to Ipswich trail, the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail and the Maroochy River trail. I officially opened the 21 kilometres of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail in July last year, and that is cited in the achievements in the SDS. This was in addition to the 38.5 kilometres that was already opened to the public. Then in November last year our colleague Wayne Went, who is not only the member for Ipswich West but also the chair of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Steering Committee, opened on my behalf a further seven kilometres near Toogoolawah and arrangements are currently being finalised for the official opening of the 100-kilometre section of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail on 31 July, as I mentioned earlier.

This latest section of trail includes the 70 kilometres between Glenmorgan Vale at Wanora Road near Ipswich and Toogoolawah and the 30 kilometres from Moore to Blackbutt. I am also pleased to be officially opening the Maroochy River trail with the Mayor of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Bob Abbot, on 14 August. I think it will be great for us to dip an oar in the water. Maybe I will play the banjo while he plays the harmonica as we go down the river. These three new trails are all for non-motorised trail use—that is, horseriding, walking, hiking, mountain biking, bush running and, in the case obviously of the Maroochy River trail, canoeing and kayaking.

Access to quality outdoor recreation areas is important for physical, social and economic wealth of local communities and indeed to enhance that way of life that I was talking about earlier that Queenslanders value so much. Regional recreation trails are an effective way to significantly enhance that outdoor recreation opportunity for people across the region and they are part of the wider goal of the Toward Q2 ambitions of a green and also healthy Queensland. Recreation trails help boost the economies of rural communities by encouraging tourism and business opportunities in these regions, and I certainly know that in the Brisbane Valley the tourism impact is being acknowledged already. Recreation trails are an integral part of the Queensland government's commitment to protect and deliver 50 per cent more land for nature conservation and public recreation by 2020.

CHAIR: When you go up to the Sunshine Coast and open their trail, you might have to make sure they can all swim.

Mrs SCOTT: The latest reiteration of the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 promotes accommodating growth around activity centres along public transport corridors and in new development areas, such as noted on page 2-77 of the SDS. Can the minister explain to the committee how the Yeerongpilly transit oriented development site assists in delivering this? What does it mean for existing suburbs of Brisbane?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mrs Scott for her interest. The recently established Yeerongpilly transit oriented development—or TOD—represents an excellent opportunity for the demonstration of those transit oriented development principles and to be a model for similar developments elsewhere in Brisbane and, indeed, South-East Queensland or beyond.

The Yeerongpilly TOD is to be developed on a state owned 14-hectare site located within six kilometres of the Brisbane CBD and adjacent to the Yeerongpilly rail station, the State Tennis Centre and, indeed, the Brisbane River. So it is well located. The site is considered to be highly suitable for a demonstration TOD project due to that locality as it will soon become vacant with the activities of the Animal Research Institute being transferred to new facilities. It has few interface issues with other urban development and has few environmental and infrastructure constraints. So it is a really great opportunity to demonstrate a TOD.

The development will also benefit the transit network by providing increased patronage on the rail network due to almost the entire site being located within 400 metres, or a five-minute walking distance, of the Yeerongpilly train station, and it will provide a convenient and high-quality public realm experience for patrons arriving for events at the adjoining State Tennis Centre. I do not know if anyone has arrived there, but when you come off the station and you head towards the Tennis Centre it is a bit of a no-person's land at the moment. But this will be the opportunity—a catalyst—for addressing that. This renewal development will accommodate growth by providing for diverse housing options, including key worker housing and a range to low to medium and mixed-use medium-density developments. The number and form of housing to be delivered will be determined through the plan of development, and that is going to be completed in late 2010.

But significantly, this TOD development could not have been possible without the establishment of the implementation partnership, which is jointly chaired by me and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Campbell Newman. This partnership demonstrates the government's leadership in ensuring that growth can be managed while best making use of public infrastructure and delivering on policy imperatives.

The first community newsletter about the development was released on 5 July—this month—inviting nominations for the community planning representative group and seeking the community to complete an online survey or to be kept up to date by joining a mailing list to receive regular updates on progress of the project. It is expected that the land parcels will be ready for uptake by the market in early 2011, providing exemplar sustainable urban design outcomes that can be delivered in other infill developments and TOD precincts across Brisbane while preserving our valuable green space and the majority of existing low-density neighbourhoods. It is hard to argue that this government has not seriously been delivering more houses to the market. This is another demonstration of the way we are doing that, this time in close partnership with the Brisbane City Council.

Ms NELSON-CARR: The Urban Land Development Authority has had great success in delivering land and housing to the market quickly and at an affordable cost, with the Fitzgibbon urban development area a key example of this. Can the minister provide details of how the ULDA is helping to deliver land and housing to the market quickly throughout Queensland and the benefits that these will provide to local building industries in these areas? That is page 2-77.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Ms Nelson-Carr. Let us start with the development of the Fitzgibbon urban development area, or UDA as they are known. It is an excellent example of how the ULDA is helping to deliver land and housing to the market quickly. Fitzgibbon will provide a level of choice of housing, employment, recreation and public transport that is rare in suburban Brisbane and it provides a model for other home builders to emulate as they may seek to get their housing product to the market. So it is about demonstration to industry just as much as it is about delivering housing to the market.

The Urban Land Development Authority has made quick progress on the planning and development of its Fitzgibbon Chase development since the development scheme was approved in July 2009. The authority has proven that land can be brought to market within 12 months of declaration. Over the next 15 to 20 years in the Carseldine urban village and Fitzgibbon Chase we will see some 3,000 residential dwellings being constructed for approximately 6,000 to 7,000 people. Fitzgibbon Chase will deliver half of these dwellings in just five years.

Currently, 279 dwellings have been approved to be built in stages 1 to 4, and the development works are now well underway. Stages 1 and 2 are complete and all lots committed. Stage 3 was released to the market in January 2010 and stage 4 in March 2010. A total of 1,624 full-time job equivalents, with 1,010 jobs directly relating to the development, will be generated by Fitzgibbon Chase over the next five years. Fitzgibbon Chase is not only affordable but high quality, being the first project in Australia to receive full accreditation under the Urban Development Institute of Australia's EnviroDevelopment version 2.0, which recognises six key areas of sustainability: ecosystems, waste, energy, materials, water and community.

I should highlight for the committee's benefit over and above that example that the authority is also undertaking key housing affordability projects across Queensland. In April this year it declared the three UDAs in coastal regional cities as part of the regional diversity program. By supplying a diversity of housing styles and types and a diversity of price points, this means that housing has become more affordable to people in those regions. One of the three sites in that program is Oonoonba, which Ms Nelson-Carr would be familiar with in Townsville—an 83-hectare site, three kilometres south of Townsville's CBD delivering some 882 lots. Land development and dwelling construction will create more than 1,500 jobs over about 6½ years. Then there are also examples in a similar program in Clinton in Gladstone and Andergrove in Mackay.

CHAIR: Minister, I have a question in relation to page 2-74 of the SDS. The Queensland Growth Management Summit held earlier this year was heralded as a great success by many people who attended. Can the minister explain the importance of community engagement initiatives like this summit in planning for the future of our great state of Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thank you, Chair. As I think we have established through a bit of discussion around growth issues already in this hearing, Queensland is a popular state. Since we started recording population figures as an independent state more than 150 years ago, our population has been doubling basically every 50 years or so. That has been the trend. The current forecasts predict that Queensland's population of four million could again double in less than five decades. This growth is driven from overseas migration and natural increases. They are the two major elements of it these days.

These are not things that the state government can control, but we can manage the impacts of this growth, harness the opportunities it brings and mitigate the risks that come with it. To look at how we as a state can do this, the government convened the Growth Management Summit on 30 and 31 March 2010, bringing together more than 200 representatives from all levels of government, planners, industry bodies, environmental groups, economists and the wider community to discuss population issues. With the summit streamed online, it was a unique opportunity for thousands of people to get involved in what this means for them. As I mentioned earlier, some 10,000 people were viewing the summit webcast online and there were thousands more visitors to the website itself over a period of time in the lead-up to the summit.

The summit even generated social media interest, featuring strongly on Twitter and attracting hundreds of fans on Facebook. Indeed, the summit provided a true form of debate, discussion and decision, generating about 1,400 solutions and ideas for managing population growth. That is what came out of the process—really strong engagement to deliver a process. These ideas and issues then formed the basis of the government's response to the summit, released by the Premier in May 2010. *Shaping tomorrow's Queensland* focuses on six priority areas and details 22 new initiatives and 25 supporting actions. It provides a road map as to how the government will take action in shaping the future of our state.

The summit was a resounding success, in my view. It certainly gave people an opportunity to be heard and the government to set in place strong action for the future. The government received resounding support from industry representatives such as the Planning Institute, who said—

People felt they could connect into the conversation about growth regardless of their views.

The development industry representatives commented that—and I will quote Guy Gibson—

Nobody could complain that they haven't been engaged enough.

And Warwick Temby said that the summit had played a catalytic role in harnessing the thinking and energy of disparate stakeholders. Local governments also commented that the summit was a worthwhile experience that was well run and thoroughly canvassed the broad ideas and views. That is what Paul Bell was saying about it. Indeed, even the nay-sayers provided their support, with a comment from a community delegate who said—

I really came here to be a troublemaker, because I thought the summit would be really development focused—

I did not just look at you, Mr Gibson, when I said 'troublemaker'—

and I have been very impressed with the breadth of views that we have been subjected to and the attitudes coming out of the group work. This has been much broader than it would have seemed at first.

Mrs SCOTT: I refer to page 2-74 of the SDS where it mentions that the Queensland government has established the office of Growth Management Queensland within the Department of Infrastructure and Planning to focus the government's efforts on managing the opportunities and challenges of this growth. This clearly shows that the Bligh government is serious about addressing the growth pressures across Queensland. Can the minister explain what the key priorities and deliverables over the next 12 months will be for growth management in Queensland?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mrs Scott for her question.

CHAIR: Minister, you can have the full three minutes to answer this. We are just about to run out. We have 27 seconds, but I am just saying that you can have the full time to answer this. It is an important question.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I might provide some answers to some questions that were taken on notice during this process as well.

CHAIR: Yes, that would be good.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As has been highlighted in answers that I have given already, we really have been shaped by the Growth Management Summit and *Shaping Tomorrow's Queensland*. It focuses on six priority areas, and that gave us a road map on how government will take action in shaping the future of the state. But I want to make mention—it does fit in with this issue Mr Gibson was asking about earlier—of what areas of SEQIPP had been brought forward and prioritised as a result of the issues arising out of the Growth Management Summit. I think that makes a lot of sense.

One of the ones I highlighted was the Springfield passenger rail line stage 2. I am sure the chair knows that \$650 million was brought forward by two years in relation to that project. We have also seen the completion of the Bruce Highway upgrade—an area where Mr Gibson will take an interest—from Cooroy to Gympie. The Sankeys Road to Traveston Road section has been brought forward at some \$673 million. The Queensland Children's Hospital is being brought forward by one year to 2014, with the completion of that at \$1.39 billion and the Port of Brisbane Motorway, Lindum Road to Pritchard Street, being brought forward by five years to 2012 at a cost of some \$650 million, as identified in the 2010 dollars in SEQIPP. All of those things are the SEQIPP dollars. That is some element of answer to the question that the member for Gympie, Mr Gibson, raised earlier.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for clarifying those issues. As I stated earlier, Estimates Committee E has granted leave for the member for Coomera to ask a question. Member for Coomera, would you please ask a question of the minister?

Mr CRANDON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, I refer to page 2-74 of the SDS outlining the department's 2010-11 highlights. I know you referred to finalising the strategic cropping strategy and continuing to deliver the Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland green target for protecting 50 per cent or more land for nature conservation and public recreation. On 26 May 2010 the Premier issued a media release or statement titled 'Growing green wedges to avoid urban sprawl'. In it the Premier specifically mentions the purchase of canefields in Woongoolba and Norwell as well as pine forests in Beerburum. The inference is that the government is going to buy land as it becomes available in and around the

Woongoolba and Norwell areas specifically for public use. Can you advise what steps have been taken so far and what further steps will be taken, and when, to ensure adherence to the time frame referred to by the Premier?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Crandon for his joining the committee and asking his question, obviously focused in an area that he has a keen interest in. As has been outlined, part of the response to the Growth Management Summit saw the state government announcing that by mid-2011 a new 10-year strategy would be developed to ensure that green lands on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast would remain green and would be used for a range of purposes, including agriculture, green space and outdoor recreation.

As part of the strategy some of the farmland and forest between South-East Queensland's urban areas would be transformed into major new parks, nature reserves and outdoor recreation areas—some. This will ensure that large parts of those green wedges are accessible to people so that families can enjoy walking through these spaces, indeed be a place that they can take a day trip to and have a picnic with family and friends. This includes interurban breaks at places such as Woongoolba and Norwell or indeed Beerburrum that Mr Crandon made mention of.

This strategy will protect the region's rural interurban breaks and they would be officially protected as buffers against urban sprawl. The message from the community that came back through the Growth Management Summit was that we must avoid a continuous urban strip from the Gold Coast to the Sunshine Coast at all costs. That reiterated the emphasis and the commitment we have in the South East Queensland Regional Plan to protecting those interurban breaks. The land is currently dominated by rural uses such as sugarcane farming and pine forests in the different parts that we are talking about.

Now, land would be purchased as it comes to market and as budgets become available. Prior to any commencement of land acquisition the Department of Infrastructure and Planning will engage with local community groups, landholders and local councils to find and develop these areas into accessible green assets for all Queenslanders. That will help deliver the Toward Q2 target of delivering 50 per cent more land for public recreation by 2020. This is a core element of what we are seeking to do to deliver on that. The importance of that green wedges outcome is not only informed by the South East Queensland Regional Plan and the importance of interurban breaks but also the outcomes of the Growth Management Summit.

Mr CRANDON: May I ask a supplementary question?

CHAIR: You are getting a bit cheeky. You are lucky I am in a good mood. Yes, you can ask a supplementary question.

Mr CRANDON: The Premier's statement clearly puts a time line of mid-2011 for the new 10-year plan to be in place—by mid-2011. Many landowners in the canelands have been in limbo for up to 10 years because of actions and inactions by this government that has acted to their detriment. The Premier stated that land would be purchased as it came on the market. There is an abundance of land on the market now. Landholders have seen a glimmer of hope from this statement made almost two months ago.

Minister, in the statement you say that you want to engage with local community groups, landholders and local councils. Here we are two months down the track and nothing has been started. Can the minister give a commitment that a time line for the necessary steps to have the strategy in place by mid-2011 has been budgeted for and will be advised to the people of the canelands forthwith?

CHAIR: Minister, I think the member for Coomera shows his impatience with the two-month issue there, but you might like to answer the question.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I acknowledge your concerns about his patience, but I will respond to Mr Crandon's question. I think it is a fair question to get clarified. As the Premier made the commitment that there will be a 10-year strategy in place by mid-2011, doing the work of engaging with the community over this next 12 months is vitally important to inform that strategy. The acquisition of properties should only happen once you are in a position where you have got the strategy in place or, indeed, are well informed enough by the progress of the strategy to make appropriate decisions around those sorts of things.

I am not going to anticipate things that might happen over that period. We need to do that where it engages the community. Certainly I can confirm that we have a work plan in place in relation to the actions arising out of the Growth Management Summit in order to deliver on those actions, including the establishment of a 10-year strategy by mid-2011. That will involve engagement with landowners, engagement with the community and engagement with councils in those relevant areas. I thought I might provide some feedback about a question that was taken on notice earlier. If I could give that information now?

CHAIR: Please do because we are running out of time.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In response to Mr Gibson's question regarding the Metropolitan Development Program, I can advise that this program has been renamed the Growth Management Program and is referenced on page 2-75 of the SDS and further in the summit response. It is built into that. A Growth

Management Program is being progressed in accordance with the time frames established and agreed to at the South-East Queensland RPC at a meeting in December 2009 with the initial release planned in late 2010. It is being resourced through the Regional Planning Program of the department.

CHAIR: We only have nine minutes to go of this session, so if you have any other information to put on the record you have nine minutes to do that. In the meantime I will call the member for Gympie.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I do have something now. I made reference to the South East Queensland Regional Planning Committee. The member asked about the priorities that were established by the RPC. I can provide an update on the status of the regional planning implementation priority actions as endorsed by the SEQRPC. On specific actions that you have inquired about, I can advise that we have allocated for action item five, outdoor recreation strategy. There is a capital works allocation of \$8.8 million over five years. I have made reference to that a couple of times here. That dates back to 2007 for regional recreational trails that have been made. The department has allocated one full-time officer for that strategy.

In relation to action item eight, the Social Infrastructure Guideline—the Social Infrastructure Guideline was first released in 2007 and is currently being reviewed. An allocation of \$50,000 has been made to conduct this review. For action item 11, TOD guidelines—the TOD guidelines are due for release later this year. We have a major section of Growth Management Queensland dedicated to TOD implementation outcomes. For action 17, SEQIPP—SEQIPP, as you may have noticed, is a \$134 billion program that has five full-time equivalents allocated to its support and its transition, particularly now, to the Queensland Infrastructure Plan. For action item 23, the land use for regional activity centres—this is a coordination role with the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors. It is primarily driven by COMSEQ. Our resourcing allocation—part of one officer—is to basically coordinate meetings. Actions are being advanced by the councils.

Mr GIBSON: In light of what you have just indicated with regard to the Metropolitan Development Program, in the announcement in 2008 it did say that it would be an annual state government document prepared in consultation with local government and the development industry. I appreciate what you said about it being renamed, but from its time in 2008 had the MDP produced an annual document in any way, shape or form?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In answer to Mr Gibson's question, it is being managed through the development of reports monitoring land supply and tracking development against dwelling targets, which is a key element of the actions of growth management in the South East Queensland Regional Plan. That is where it has all been focused on. Those land supply and development assessment and approval tracking processes have been matters of key cooperation and work between the Department of Infrastructure and Planning and local authorities.

We did not have in place previously, particularly under the Integrated Planning Act, a process that required the collection of that sort of data to be able to report on. We are now in a better space working with that, not only with the introduction of the Sustainable Planning Act but also with the introduction of the new Local Government Act in order to have that data-collecting relationship so that we can provide these annual reports. This is a matter that we are now in a position to implement in the form that it was first flagged.

Mr GIBSON: Under your watch we have seen a fairly critical Auditor-General's report being issued with some concerns in relation to departmental failure to extend planning to the management of congestion, thereby negatively impacting on South-East Queensland's quality of life. The audit report has amongst its findings that the department decides on the delivery of infrastructure under SEQIPP prior to undertaking a business case. I refer to SDS 2-73 and ask: what has your department learnt from the massive blow-outs and waste of funds by your government in the rushed \$9 billion water grid or the failed Traveston Crossing Dam?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank Mr Gibson for the question. I think I would reiterate in the first instance the important role of regional planning in making decisions around what is required in terms of the development of infrastructure into the future. I think that is an area where this department has contributed very, very well in providing the right framework. In fact, we have award-winning regional planning documents that have been recognised Australia-wide as best informing infrastructure delivery in a high-growth area such as South-East Queensland or, indeed, in Far North Queensland.

But I go on, to respect Mr Gibson's question and his relating it back to the water grid, and I would remind him and remind members of the committee that between 2005 and 2009 the water supply to South-East Queensland's two million residents effectively stopped being replenished from natural means. It was the worst drought in 100 years that saw a very, very dire circumstance in which we needed to act and act decisively. The development of the water grid has resulted in a huge improvement of our capability and ability to respond to such a dire circumstance again should it occur. Let me touch some wood somewhere and trust that it will not. But we are in the position to protect ourselves from that worst occurrence. We had to drought proof ourselves. As a result, the state approved and started constructing projects like the Wyaralong Dam and the Tugun desalination plant.

The state's \$348 million Wyaralong Dam, in conjunction with the Cedar Grove Weir, will supply enough water for 300,000 people each year. It is now well underway. Work also began on the Northern Pipeline Interconnector Stage 2, the second stage of the reverse cycle pipeline between Morayfield and Noosa to link the Sunshine Coast to the South-East Queensland Water Grid. When complete the pipeline will have the capacity to transport 65 megalitres of water in either direction. This will be regulated by the South-East Queensland Water Grid Manager.

I think what we have done is demonstrated our commitment to water security and how we can provide that. Certainly we did it in trying circumstances, but we have now got that in place and we are a better region and a better prepared region for it.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Minister, we have only a couple of minutes left if you have anything more to add before we finish.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: There was a question that I took on notice from Mr Gibson that I would like to respond to. It was the second question that we took on notice. I would like to clarify that the documents the *Port of Gladstone Western Basin Master Plan*, the draft *Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan* and the draft *South East Queensland Climate Change Management Plan* that he mentioned during the hearing are not actually referenced in SDS page 2-73 as he had indicated. Further, I would ask the member to refer himself back to his question on notice that he asked on 9 June 2010, question on notice No. 1084, a copy of which I will table with this answer. In SDS book 2, part of the state budget 2010-11, reference is made to releasing the *Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan* on pages 2-74 and 2-77. The climate change management plan is mentioned on page 2-77. In relation to costs, they are contained within the overall costs for delivering planning services that are detailed at—

Mr GIBSON: Minister, the question was about detailed costs and your failure to provide them. If you are happy to provide the committee with the costs, otherwise I—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The budget allocation—

CHAIR: Hang on. He just wants to table it. Do you seek leave to table the documents?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Yes.

Leave granted.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Let me go to the costs. The costs on the department for the projects—the draft SEQ climate change management plan. The cost to develop the draft CCMP, which is staffing and then publication costs, is estimated at \$200,000.

CHAIR: Minister, we are right on time. Be very quick.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The costs to develop the draft *Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan* is some \$575,000. The cost for the *Port of Gladstone Western Basin Master Plan* to develop, consult and finalise the master plan was \$143,446 of which \$57,378 was acquitted in the 2008-09 financial year.

Mr GIBSON: That has been agreed to. If you can just table that document.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning has now expired. Can I thank you, Minister Hinchliffe, and your advisers for being with us today.

Mr GIBSON: Excuse me, Madam Chair, the document looks like it is about to be altered. We have agreed that the document would be tabled. The minister looks like he wants to have the document altered.

CHAIR: No, no.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It is tabled.

CHAIR: Touchy!

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr GIBSON: What have we got here? A minister who wants to hide things!

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Have a look at it and see if there is anything that you think I was hiding.

CHAIR: No, settle. Everybody settle. Minister, it is now time to finish off—thank God. I just want to thank you, Minister Hinchliffe, and your advisers and also all the public servants whom you have had working on this. Can you please pass on to them our committee's appreciation?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I certainly will. I thank the committee. I thank all the staff from the Parliamentary Service including the Hansard staff and the attendants and, indeed, opposition staff who have been supporting this process. I also thank my advisers and assistants here and in other places. I want to thank the committee for its commitment to the process. I appreciate the spirit in which people have committed to it, particularly at the end of a very long day.

CHAIR: Yes, it has been a very long day. With those words, I would like to declare this public hearing closed at 6.33 pm.

Committee adjourned at 6.33 pm